

# THIS IS A COUNTRY THAT GOES FORWARD

by P.R.Berton

## PROLOGUE

*A man in his mid-twenties, mixed race, sitting somewhere in the middle of nowhere drinking beer. After a while of staring at the table, he stares at different people in the audience as he speaks.*

NEPHEW - I am the scum of the world. And I am also the scum of this play. I don't have a name, by the way, no one has around here. You're going to think the other three guys who are going to show up here today are more important than I am. *(Brings a smile.)* But you are very wrong. I'm just as important as they are. Or even more... I don't know how to photograph, I'm not even a candomblé priest and I don't have the slightest idea of the difference between the Peer Gynt suite and the Carmen's Habanera. But I know how to live, which is far from those three suck... I mean, two *(formal)* because I have a lot of respect for my uncle, after all I'm going to inherit the barbershop. *(Naughty.)* Bah, a kinda cool barbershop, four upholstered chairs, mine, yeah, I have one just for me, yay, mine has the Colorado flag, because red is my heart color, it's *the* heart color. *(Unfunny.)* But apparently everyone here likes red a lot. My uncle because he's Spanish, the other graybeard because he's a communist, as far as I understand and the fag because... oh, I don't know. Actually, he might prefer pink, because red is a cock color... *(Drinks the beer.)* Oh, very good. They don't know what's good. I don't know if you already know, but I'm dead, but I still don't know. *(Opens a smile.)* That's why I'm so happy. For me, it's just for a beer on my side that I'm fine. I'm not a demanding guy. But I died. There's always one that dies, it's no use. I hope no one tells my uncle, otherwise he'll kick the bucket. *(In a tone of confession.)* It's just that the old bean has a son, fruit loop too *(surprised)* wow, how many fairies around here! And this cousin of mine doesn't even want to know about the barbershop and I ended up getting his spot. I wasn't really into it either, but it's a gentle job, just cutting the hair, shaving the beard *(laughs visibly drunk.)* I even like to mix that white cream. *(Laughs.)* But now it's too late. *(Becomes serious and thoughtful.)* I am the scum of the world. The barbershop won't stay with me. I will never have a name. If I were to name a barbershop I would call it Barbershop Brazil. I think it's an imposing name. So, since there's no more barbershop, the name stays with me. You can call me Brazil.

## ACT 1

*A barber shop. Ground floor with direct access to the street. Building from the beginning of the 20th century. Four traditional barber chairs visible to the public. A large portrait of a woman. A family coat of arms. A statue of Xangô in contrast to the sober decoration. Each chair has a surface on the side with barber material. The chair in front left. Ready to receive the first customer of the day. All material organized. A red cloth over the chair. An open razor standing inside a transparent container. The chair in the back left. No*

*material. Vacant. The chair in the back right. Facing chair in front right. The disorganized and incomplete material over a Sport Club Internacional team flag. A dirty little cup of coffee from the day before. An open comic book on the chair. The chair in front on the right. An old photograph with two adult men and a little boy. All material organized. A stuffed bull's head in front of the chair. Two men around sixty. One is sitting in the chair at the front on the right reading the newspaper. Wears glasses and has trouble reading. The other is standing in the front chair on the left, examining photographs. Without glasses. Switches his gaze between the photos and the other man. When he fills his chest with air to say something, the other folds the newspaper, gets up from his chair, turns on the radio and starts packing his things. On the radio, Chopin's funeral march. The man without glasses goes into a room inside the barbershop. The man with the glasses sees the portrait of the men and the boy and looks at it. The other comes back with a gourd of chimarrão, fixing the bombilla. Slows down as he approaches the other. The man without glasses notices the arrival of the other and is embarrassed. He reaches for the chimarrão gourd. The man with the glasses takes it.*

RIVAL - There's brewed coffee too.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Speaking of coffee, look at the state of it here. (*Raising the dirty coffee cup.*)

RIVAL - I didn't want to bring it up again, but since you started...

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*Arranging the disorganized material from the chair in the background on the left*) - Holidays always slow down the movement, and besides, everyone should be enjoying this morning sun. It always rains on All Souls' afternoons.

RIVAL (*Awkwardly*) - That's not what I'm talking about.

(*BARBER SHOP OWNER does the cleaning with the glass in his hand.*)

RIVAL - It's half past eight already.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*sighing*) - But today is a holiday!

RIVAL (*chuckling*) - I'm amazed at what you do for this boy and don't do for your own son.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*annoyed*) - Oh no. For God's sake. So I'd rather talk about our usual problem: the lack of customers... (*goes towards the street and looks outside for a few seconds*) the competition...

RIVAL (*upset*) - All right. Sorry. (*Pause.*) Raise your head, because today it seems it's you and me.

(*RIVAL makes a move to take the chimarrão from the BARBER SHOP OWNER's hand.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - And is this something new?

RIVAL (*pointing to the gourd*) - Done?

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*looking at the street*) - But I still have hope in him. He will straighten up. It's in the blood.

RIVAL - Hope. (*Sips the chimarrão.*) In the blood. (*Takes the razor from the container to close it.*)



BARBER SHOP OWNER (*smiling*) - Oh, here he comes.

RIVAL - From the direction of the square?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Hu-hum.

(*BARBER SHOP OWNER turns angry with RIVAL.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - What a nuisance. Don't forget he's my nephew.

(*A young man enters the barbershop, out of breath. He goes straight to the chair with the Sport Club Internacional flag and starts clumsily packing his things. BARBER SHOP OWNER goes to him happy. NEPHEW turns to him with the flag, the magazine in the arms.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - The bus lines...we immediately imagined (*looks at RIVAL who shakes his head negatively, disappointed with BARBER SHOP OWNER*)...want a chimarrão?

RIVAL - Your nephew doesn't drink chimarrão.

(*NEPHEW and BARBER SHOP OWNER look at RIVAL, who takes another sip of chimarrão.*)

NEPHEW (*to BARBER SHOP OWNER*) - Uncle, I'm sorry...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Of course, my son... the only problem is that your chair is still...

NEPHEW - I'm finding a way.

(*NEPHEW quickly leaves for the adjoining room at the back, taking the stuff that was on top of the chair. BARBER SHOP OWNER takes a deep breath.*)

RIVAL - The only problem with this barbershop...

(*NEPHEW comes back out of breath.*)

NEPHEW - Uncle, I just wanted to buy a cigarette... it's just that mine ended... and I...

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*with a heavy voice*) - Go. But don't be late.

(*NEPHEW looks at RIVAL and leaves quickly. RIVAL looks at BARBER SHOP OWNER while drinking his chimarrão.*)

RIVAL - His customers will line up.

(*BARBER SHOP OWNER goes to the adjoining room to fetch NEPHEW's box of materials in silence.*)

RIVAL (*fills the gourd again*) - Really, this guy is the future of your barbershop.

(*BARBER SHOP OWNER comes back and starts packing NEPHEW's stuff.*)

RIVAL - Full of potential, enterprising, disciplined. I even think he is much more suited to this here than your son...

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*turning angrily to RIVAL*) - First of all I don't have any children. He died. (*Going towards RIVAL, who is cringing as BARBER SHOP OWNER approaches him.*) And then, I don't need your sarcasm. I trust my nephew and I'm sure (*going back to NEPHEW's chair*) that he will replace me very well... (*looks at the old photos in the mirror in front of his chair and approaches them*) on the day that I'm not here anymore.

(*Tense pause.*)

RIVAL - Sorry. Once again. Lately...

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*turns to RIVAL*) - I was going to ask you. I'm finding your way strange, you have been so... ironic? It even looks like my wife. If the kid isn't adapting, that's my problem. And then, he's just starting, he's only been here for seven months. (*Turns to the pictures.*) It was also difficult for me when I started. (*Turns to RIVAL.*) And you know that very well. (*Short pause.*) How long have we known each other?

RIVAL - I just wanted to open your eyes.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - No need. If I can't see, it's my bad luck. I already said: my nephew is my problem. Is that clear to you?

RIVAL (*shrugs*) - That's right. What time does the other guy come for the interview?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - When I started I didn't have four chairs, but only two: my grandfather's and my father's. I would stand around watching them shave the customers. And I had to stand! Without sitting down! My father was a very angry man, but I never gave him a reason to hit me, only when he was very young. When I was mischievous and stayed with my mother at home. But after my father sold that piano my mother used to play all day, everything changed. So I practically lived here. My mother was sad.

RIVAL - I remember well. She was very sad.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - But my father was right, after all, she put aside her obligations to play that piano. She burned the food, didn't control my sisters, and there were five female daughters, huh! My father was lucky to have had at least one son. (*Pause.*) But that piano sounded so sweet...

RIVAL - Your father was not very fond of me.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Of course, you kept bouncing up and down instead of having a decent job! (*Embarrassed.*) You know what my biggest humiliation in this life was, don't you?

RIVAL - Why remind you of that?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - It's funny that on All Souls' Day we keep talking about those who are gone. But that slap my father gave me in front of my sisters I will never forget.

RIVAL - If it weren't for you, I'd be tortured. Surely. It was the heaviest time of the dictatorship, the military didn't even want to know, the business was to torture as many people as possible to scare everyone.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I don't remember anymore if my mother was already dead...

*(Melancholic pause.)*

RIVAL *(breaking the unease)* - And where's this kid who doesn't arrive?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I didn't tell you to leave the kid alone that...

RIVAL - I'm talking about the interview. I don't care about him.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - If you had had a son...a disappointment, like the one I had, you wouldn't be acting this way. And the strangest thing about me is that you know, more than anyone, how important this barbershop is to me, it's everything, it's my life. If my nephew doesn't work out *(knocks three times on wood)* and he will, yes, I... I'll just give up.

*(RIVAL looks at BARBER SHOP OWNER with pity.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(going to the front)* - As if this colorful salon in front wasn't enough. *(Short pause. In a low voice.)* My son.

*(A man of indefinite age enters, somewhere between 25 and 40. Only the lips and hair reveal black ancestry. Too well dressed for the occasion and the place.)*

RIVAL - There he is. It's him.

INTRUDER - Excuse me. *(To BARBER SHOP OWNER.)* Good morning. *(To RIVAL.)* How are you?

RIVAL *(in a friendly tone)* - Take a seat. The boss's chair is the best place to...

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER nods for INTRUDER to sit in RIVAL's chair. RIVAL is embarrassed. BARBER SHOP OWNER and INTRUDER stare at each other for some time. INTRUDER decides to sit in the indicated chair.)*

RIVAL - A chimarrão? Coffee?

*(Silence. INTRUDER and BARBER SHOP OWNER continue to look at each other. A defiant look.)*

INTRUDER *(still looking at BARBER SHOP OWNER)* - I don't like chimarrão.

RIVAL *(trying to break the unease)* - Do you prefer that I talk to him? The cemetery will start filling up soon.

INTRUDER - Oh, I'm sorry, if you prefer that I come another day to do the interview, I can...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Nobody died.

RIVAL - He usually visits...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - First of all I would like to say that this barbershop is a family business, opened by my grandfather, continued by my father and now by me.

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER waits for a question from INTRUDER. INTRUDER gives a very subtle smile.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - As I have no children, my successor will be my nephew.

RIVAL - At the moment he is...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - My nephew went out to buy cigarettes, but he's coming back.

*(RIVAL withdraws to have chimarrão in the background of the barbershop.)*

*(Short pause.)*

INTRUDER - Does this mean that if I am selected, I will have two bosses?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I didn't say that. The boss is me.

INTRUDER - Oh, yes.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - And I'm the one asking the questions here.

INTRUDER - Perfectly.

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER is uncomfortable with INTRUDER's self-assurance. The two stare at each other for a while longer.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Professional experience?

INTRUDER - All my courses are on my curriculum here.

*(INTRUDER hands a brightly colored folder to BARBER SHOP OWNER. He takes the folder and, not knowing what to do with it, hands it to RIVAL who begins to examine the paperwork inside it.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - We...(clearing throat)...I'm looking for a barber who is competent, disciplined and...

RIVAL - ...is never late.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Right.

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER waits for another INTRUDER comment in vain.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Do you cut and shave?

INTRUDER - Cut, shave, trim, machine shave...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - We don't have a machine here...

INTRUDER - So I'll adapt to the material that exists.

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(suspiciously)* - Hmm...

INTRUDER - When would you like me to start?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I... first I need to interview other... two more candidates, and then...

INTRUDER - I've taken excellent courses and I have a good number of customers that can recommend the barbershop to their friends. I even have awards from the gaucho beauty parlor contest.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Beauty...parlor?

INTRUDER - Nowadays you can't be selective, where a job appears, we take it. The competition is great.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Even right here in front opened a damn (*emphasizing with clenched teeth*) American beauty salon, from one of those multinational chains.

INTRUDER - But I believe that your clientele does not frequent this type of place.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Yeah. It's not a place for men.

INTRUDER - Excuse me?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - What?

INTRUDER - I don't understand.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Didn't understand what?

INTRUDER - What did you mean?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Did you mean with what?

*(Embarrassing silence.)*

INTRUDER - My salary claim is in the folder.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - This barbershop is modest. You won't think that we'll pay what the gringos pay up front.

INTRUDER - Are they in need of people?

*(Short silence.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - That's no place for a man.

*(INTRUDER stands up.)*

INTRUDER - I'm not going to steal your time anymore. You still want to visit your dead relatives, don't you? *(Offers his hand to say goodbye to BARBER SHOP OWNER. He hesitates, but shakes INTRUDER's hand.)* Shall I call to find out the result?

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER doesn't know what to say.)*

RIVAL *(Looking at the papers)* - Call. Yeah, do it. *(Gets up and makes a move to hand the folder back to INTRUDER.)*

INTRUDER - You can keep it. *(For BARBER SHOP OWNER.)* They are copies. The original is with me. *(Smiles.)* Goodbye. *(Leaves.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I don't understand. *(Imitating INTRUDER's voice.)* The original is with me.

RIVAL - This boy has a lot of experience. I would take him.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I don't know if he will get along with my nephew. He seemed like a very delicate boy to face the day-to-day life of a barbershop.

RIVAL - With the movement we've been having lately...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - With or without movement, I didn't like him.

RIVAL (*putting the folder down on the table next to the chair on the far left*) - You don't even need to say this. It was pretty obvious.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Better so. So he knows from the start who's in charge here.

RIVAL - Are you going to stay with him then?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I don't know. I'll think about it. I have more important things to worry about today. I still have to buy the flowers. If my wife were a real partner, she would go with me.

RIVAL (*disguising interest, plays with the razor*) - And won't she?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - As if you didn't know that one there. My company must be a martyrdom for her. What she likes most is traveling abroad without me. Watching those musicals and concerts without me. And I actually thank God, so I can watch my soccer in peace on television without having to listen to her sick chatter. I think if we met today, we wouldn't get married.

RIVAL - Oh! (*Drops the razor on the floor.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - How did this razor escape like that?

RIVAL - I don't know! I was fixing it here and suddenly...

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*bandaging his rival and laughing*) - I'm remembering something.

RIVAL - What?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - From when I had to bandage you after you were beaten by those soldiers.

(*RIVAL is embarrassed.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - You don't have to make that face, I'm not charging you anything. I did it for our friendship, after all you have always been very supportive and by my side here at the barbershop. We are even.

RIVAL - No. We will never be even. I will always owe you. Forever.

NEPHEW (*enters abruptly*) - Uncle, I'm hanging my head in shame, but I won't be able to stay today.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*looks at RIVAL. Finishes the bandage. Turns to NEPHEW*) - What happened? This time.

NEPHEW - It's just that I had forgotten to mention, you know, today is a very important day for my wife, she is very religious, you know, and she said that I had to go there to the cemetery with her, because I have to set an example for the children, I said that I had a commitment with you, after all, you already made do for me those three days I was absent, but the woman insisted and when a woman messes with something, even more mine.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*professorial*) - All right. Today is an exception. The movement is very weak. Holiday.

(*NEPHEW hugs BARBER SHOP OWNER who stiffens and pulls his head back a little uncomfortable with the hug.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - But I hope this doesn't happen again.

NEPHEW - Bah, thank you very much, uncle. I don't even know how to thank you. You are like a father to me. I'll be back tomorrow, very early. I swear.

(*NEPHEW comes out humming some current popular tune.*)

(*BARBER SHOP OWNER looks at RIVAL waiting for him to say something.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Satisfied?

RIVAL - I don't care, I told you.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Women when they mess with something... my poor nephew. (*Turns to RIVAL.*) Listen, I never asked you that... I don't think ever, when he started talking about his wife I thought of you, something I've always been curious to ask you. (*Looking at RIVAL.*) Don't you feel very alone? (*Goes to the front of the barbershop.*) Because I have my differences with my wife, but she is there, on my side. Now, being alone for so long, a whole life, arriving at home at night with no one waiting for you with dinner on the table... it's weird... (*short pause*) those sons of bitches, they were right in our noses. That pissed me off, they steal up on us, from nowhere and suddenly, from one moment to another, we find ourselves trapped, there's nowhere else to run. But we'll get out of this. I'm sure we'll get out of this. I will honor the blood that runs here, inside my veins. Oh, if I will. I certainly will.

## INTERMEZZO 1

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Monolith. That was the word my son used to compare me to something, or rather, to compare my feelings to something. Because for him I have no feelings. I don't need to say what my wife thinks about it, do I? When I arrived at their grave, where I will also be buried when I die, the first thing that came to me was this strange word: monolith. Strange, because everything that comes from my son, a son I don't even consider anymore, is strange. The clothes, the way he sits at the table, the conversations... the look... the guffaw he gives because I listen to classical music at home while he goes to give his ass to I don't know whom. Bastard sissie. If only he knew the value of good music! I wanted so much to tie him to a bed and let him listen to classical music for a long time. A couple of days...no, five...a week, that's it. I'd play Wagner...no, I'd play Peer Gynt's suite when his mother dies, so he can absorb what the monolith feels for him. And I have no feelings. "You sir are a monolith!". And then I lost control and let rip. I called him a dirty fag and that the door was open for anyone who wanted to leave. Today I think that was tough. It might not be easy being a sissy. (*Straightening up.*) But not my son, not him and that's it. Breaking a tradition of three generations... you have to have a lot of guts to do that. (*Pause.*) Funny, I don't think I'm that dry. Just because I don't like people talking to me when I'm watching my soccer on TV or because I refuse to go out with my wife because I'm ashamed of her blatant way it doesn't mean I'm dry. Monolith. Do they think I'm dry at the barbershop too? Dry is that kid who

showed up there, that's right. Dry and too polite for my taste. I don't want to admit that he might be a...a...(swallows) but the award for the gaucho beauty parlor contest is a bit too much. As if it were not enough that weird thing they built right in front of my barbershop and which is also called "parlor", it's a lot of coincidence, isn't it? An exaggeration of colors, shapes, strange people who come and go. Lots of folks. Of course they won't steal my customers, after all my barbershop has years of tradition and my customers wouldn't even have the courage to go into that shack. One fine day, a bunch of faggots decide to set foot right in front of my barbershop and they think they rule the roost. Ah, you're huffin' for a snuffin'! I throw my bull's head at you and break the glass all over, and then I spank you, one by one to learn. And who knows, they might even stop being fags. And they decide to come work for me. (Shudders.) What the craziest idea, what is happening to me? My goodness. My father and grandfather, help me to carry this burden. I'm getting old, it's time to rest. I know there's still a good ten years ahead of me and I guarantee I can take it, I won't do anything bad, don't worry. But then what? I try to hold back, but he's right: my nephew is a score of zero. After all, with that mixed blood of his. He must have lost his Spanish impetus by now, la fuerza. I need to start being tougher to show who's boss in here, especially with the rookie. (Astonished.) Wait, so I already consider him the fourth barber in the house? (Laughs.) That chair was never lucky. Before that coffin-dodger was fired, there was that madman who had an epileptic fit every now and then and ended up driving away a good part of our customers. But I think I'll stay with that kid. Who knows he even befriends my son. But what is this? I don't have any children. I have to stop deluding myself. The monolith has to be brave. And if I am not, who else will be? The cemetery was full, and I hate a full cemetery. People greeted me and I pretended not to see them. The grave is in need of a good cleaning. But where will I find the time to do that? My wife, no way. (Laughs.) Does everyone who gets old wonder why the hell he ended up marrying that person? At first it was good. She did her part and I did mine. She struggled in the kitchen. She was always at home when I arrived. Funny, it looked like she was acting, it didn't look real, waiting for me in an apron. But I liked it, oh, how I liked it. Afterwards, she relaxed and didn't do anything else what a good wife should do: she forgot to iron the cuffs of my shirts, I missed some good food, woke up late and when she sat next to me to watch TV, she kept chatting, but it was a conversation with herself, where she asked herself and answered and didn't even look at me. I know that what made her the happiest were the trips I paid for, so I wouldn't be bothered. Every four years. When our... her son was already walking, then every three. She glowed. When I used to take her to the airport, her smile was the same as the day we got married. It was sunny. She was all in white, with a veil over her face. The kiss she gave me at the end of the party, empty room, dirty dishes, was the sweetest kiss of my entire life. That kiss was a promise of eternal happiness. But it stuck to the promise. No, she was definitely never going to come clean my grave. My sisters, not so much. A bunch of poor things. One more miserable than the other. They didn't deserve the life they had. It must have been my mother's fault that she didn't know how to educate them. Spent the day playing that piano. I liked it, but I never told my father. When I went to fill a bowl to put water on the flowers that I had taken to the cemetery, I heard the sound of an organ. A funeral was taking place. And I remembered my mother, because the music that was being played, she also used to play. And especially on the sunniest days. I finished tidying up the grave and went to the funeral, like someone who doesn't want anything. First I checked to see if it was

anyone I knew. Luckily it wasn't. As I got closer I had an odd feeling that I would laugh if I found my mother inside. The music became more and more melodious, sometimes it seemed to be the Peer Gynt suite, when the mother dies. I passed a young man who was sitting on a bench listening to something with his headphones. I remembered my plan to lock my son in the bedroom. I entered the room. Few people. The music continued in a monotonous tone, though charming. I only saw four chairs. Amazingly, they were all empty. I was suddenly embarrassed to be there among those strange people and decided to sit down. I closed my eyes. I thought it was awkward those empty chairs that seemed to be waiting for me. I put my hand in front of my face. Now the music was indeed the Peer Gynt suite. I opened my eyes and looked in the direction of the organ. A not very old lady was on her back, almost in a playing trance. The figure looked familiar. I kept looking at her. I started to get slightly dizzy. Suddenly, she stopped playing the organ. She sat still for a while with her back to me looking at the white wall in front of her. Then she turned slightly and smiled at me. It was my mother.

## ACT 2

*The same barbershop as in the first act. The front chair on the left. INTRUDER is focused and fascinated looking at some photographs that are inside a box that is on the chair. The red cloth is neatly folded over the back of the chair. The back chair on the left is covered with a colored cloth. The work material is organized on the auxiliary table. Each bottle has a label identifying it. Lots of colored creams and shampoos. Magazines stacked on the underside of the side table. The back chair on the right. The upholstery has a rip at the top that is covered with tape strips. The Sport Club Internacional flag serves as a rug for the side table. Few products on the side table: an open pair of scissors, a shaving brush dipped in cloudy water, a cheap towel crumpled up. NEPHEW is sitting in the chair at the front right with his feet on the side table. The table products were pushed to one side.*

NEPHEW - ...the one with dyed red hair came close to me and asked: what's up, alone? (*Laughs.*) I was kind of embarrassed, because I never thought she would arrive so fast (*squirming*)... oh how horny!

INTRUDER - Spain must be a very interesting place. This can only be there.

NEPHEW (*sitting with the spine straight in the chair*) - I looked at her and said: are you up for it? She winked, no, dude, but a wink so smart that I thought I was going to die (*turns to INTRUDER*) and the friend here was already armed.

*(NEPHEW watches INTRUDER looking at the photos. He stands up, goes to the chair in front on the left, and pulls out the red cloth.)*

INTRUDER - No, it's going to wrinkle (*trying to take the cloth from NEPHEW.*)

NEPHEW (*using the cloth as a bullfighting cloth*) - Olé!

INTRUDER - Give it to me. In a little while our colleague will arrive and his cloth will be all crumpled.

NEPHEW - I want those two to blow each other up... the uncles... the pops...

INTRUDER - I want to see when your uncle sees the mess you made in his things.

(*NEPHEW looks at his watch.*)

NEPHEW - It doesn't matter, bro. The old bean always arrives punctually at quarter to seven.

INTRUDER - So let me put away these photos at least.

NEPHEW (*curling himself in the red cloth*) - And we danced very tight, and she would rub my dick, and I was going crazy and I kept thinking I have to take this woman to a place far away from here, I was dying to fuck her...

INTRUDER - Would you live in Spain?

NEPHEW (*surprisingly*) - What?

INTRUDER - I asked you if you would live in Spain. You know where it is, right?

NEPHEW (*disappointed*) - Oh, man. I'm telling you about the hot girl and you come to me with this chat...

(*INTRUDER takes advantage of NEPHEW's distraction and takes the cloth from him.*)

INTRUDER (*shakes the cloth and places it on the chair in front left*) - Let me shake, it must be full of this bitch's clap.

NEPHEW - Hey, man, what's up? Are you going to tell me that you're not big on a spree?

INTRUDER (*with malice*) - I am. Yes I am. But my binges are...different. And I think you'd better go packing your uncle's things there. It's already seven forty-three. And yours too.

NEPHEW - You know I think you're a bit strange looking.

INTRUDER - Oh, yeah?

NEPHEW - Yeah.

INTRUDER - Everyone is a stranger to others.

NEPHEW - Oh, don't come to me with those philosophy that I don't like. You even look like the uncle in the red cloth. I'm like *my* uncle. (*Looks at the bull's head and laughs.*) The one with the horn...I'm a simple guy. Rice and beans on the table, a booze, a hot woman, a little paGode going on...

INTRUDER - And your wife must love it...

NEPHEW (*annoyed*) - What's your deal, huh? My wife is my problem. You know what your problem is, I already figured it out hours ago.

INTRUDER - Which one?

NEPHEW - You don't like women. You are drawn to a sword.

(*INTRUDER blushes. Awkward pause. NEPHEW looks at INTRUDER. INTRUDER is at a loss for what to say. BARBER SHOP OWNER enters and goes straight to the adjoining room at the back without greeting anyone. NEPHEW hurries to the side table of BARBER SHOP OWNER and starts to fix it with haste. NEPHEW finishes tidying up and goes to set up his*

*own side table. BARBER SHOP OWNER returns wearing an apron. He stops in his chair and turns to face INTRUDER.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I need to tell you something, my boy.

*(INTRUDER straightens up.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I'm not happy with the way you're cutting our customers' hair.

INTRUDER - Ours?

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(losing patience)* - Of course, before they are yours they are the barber shop's customers.

INTRUDER *(turning to the colored shampoo bottles he shakes and observing the liquid inside the tube mixing)* - And... where am I compromising the barbershop?

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(swallowing hard to keep from exploding)* - Your haircuts are very different from the way we usually cut the hair.

INTRUDER *(looking at BARBER SHOP OWNER)* - Different. How different?

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(looks confused at NEPHEW)* - Hmm...different. Exotic. Fancy. That's it. Fancy.

*(NEPHEW hides the laugh.)*

INTRUDER - So how would you like me to cut the clients' hair?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Well, I'm not going to teach you. I accepted you... I chose you for your curri... curri...

INTRUDER - Curriculum?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Yeah. That's it.

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER turns around, takes a rag and starts cleaning the bull's head.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(cleaning the horns)* - I already have enough worries. *(Stops cleaning and turns around.)* This bunch of fuckers who opened this *(with irony)* beauty parlor, that's enough to leave me with insomnia.

INTRUDER - But I also have to confess that my job is getting more and more difficult: first you demand that I only demand materials that you consider suitable, then you want me to cut as you do, even without having learned to cut this way and having to, from one moment to the next, change the way of cutting. *(Sighs after the long sentence.)* It won't be easy.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Unfortunately you will have to adapt if you want the job.

INTRUDER - I just wanted you to explain something to me: if the clientele is increasing, why should I change the way they have their hair cut?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Who said it's increasing?

INTRUDER *(pointing to RIVAL's chair)* - Yours, or rather, our colleague.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*indignantly*) - He's been meddling too much where he's not called. (*Punch the side table. A vial of red liquid falls to the floor, the lid opens and the liquid spills onto the floor.*)

NEPHEW (*as if to clean up*) - No, you can leave it to me.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*to INTRUDER*) - Did you see what you made me do? You and that... our colleague.

INTRUDER - And so?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - So what?

INTRUDER - Didn't the clientele increase after I arrived?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Smug. It even looks like my son.

(*INTRUDER shudders.*)

NEPHEW - This is already a slash force. Okay, the clientele wasn't the best...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - You too? Is this a plot?

NEPHEW - No, uncle. Of course not.

INTRUDER (*turning his back to the two and arranging the colored cloth on the chair*) - If everyone took it together here...

NEPHEW - He means me.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*Going to the center of the barbershop and lifting his finger towards INTRUDER*) - Look here, my boy, if you think I hired you to save the barbershop, you are very wrong. This establishment has existed since the beginning of the century and will not close if one (*looks at NEPHEW*) or the other (*looks at INTRUDER*) leaves. I own it, the soul of the business, the heart of it here. That's why it's good to respect me because I'm finding you very sneering lately.

(*INTRUDER points to himself with an ironic laugh.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - And on top of that, that mocking laugh... by the way, don't you know my son?

INTRUDER (*surprised*) - And... should I?

NEPHEW - And there's more, uncle, he's already stolen two of my clients, the little guy who works at the bank and that fat guy with the glasses. The two simply decided to have him cut their hair.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*shouting*) - If you're not satisfied, just move to that little salon across the street, there you'll be able to use the machine and do whatever you want with your customers' hair.

(*RIVAL enters and stands between INTRUDER and BARBER SHOP OWNER, looking alternately at the two.*)

RIVAL - For God's sake, but what the heck? We can hear you screaming from afar. (*Looks at NEPHEW*) From your drinking shack.

NEPHEW - Oh, don't fussle with me I am quiet here in my lane. And besides, it's the purest truth that he stole my clients.

RIVAL - Stole? What do you mean? What are you talking about?

(*BARBER SHOP OWNER slowly goes to his chair.*)

INTRUDER (*in a low voice to RIVAL*) - A complete sordid thing.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*with a heavy voice*) - This is the end.

(*Awkward silence. INTRUDER and RIVAL look at each other. NEPHEW walks over to BARBER SHOP OWNER and leads him to the front right chair. NEPHEW sits BARBER SHOP OWNER in the chair. NEPHEW leaves for the back room.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Since they arrived, the other one was still there in your place, the clientele started to drop. At first I thought it was a thing of the moment, fashion, that would pass soon. And three days passed, a week, a month, and things got worse and worse. I don't know what people find so interesting about the place: just that color at the entrance makes me dazzled. Dizzy.

(*NEPHEW comes back balancing a cup of coffee on a tray and goes to BARBER SHOP OWNER. BARBER SHOP OWNER looks at the coffee for a while, then looks at NEPHEW. BARBER SHOP OWNER stands up and goes to the front of the barbershop. NEPHEW looks at RIVAL and INTRUDER.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*laughing melancholy*) - We don't even know how to pronounce the name properly. I don't know why to put these names in English that nobody knows what they mean. I think that's it. It's for no one to understand.

(*NEPHEW returns to the back room with the tray.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*sighs deeply*) - But we'll get out of this. (*Look at RIVAL.*) Even if there are people who are trying to trick us...

(*INTRUDER sees the box of photographs on the chair on the front left and gives it to RIVAL.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - ... we're going to turn around and show these shitty gringos that we got here first and that people aren't stupid enough to buy a pig in a poke!

INTRUDER - I was just looking at them.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*shouting*) - And when I say people, I mean the two of you. (*To RIVAL.*) One keeps saying things when I'm not around (*to INTRUDER*) and the other... that's why we're sinking deeper and deeper, there's no union, there's no cooperation (*goes to his chair.*) I can't look at this guy's face, I remember my son, that idiot, that bastard who dishonored the whole family, a tradition of almost a century... (*almost whimpering*) why is it so hard to work with me, to stay away from my side, help me... help...

*(NEPHEW enters from the back room with his head down and approaches BARBER SHOP OWNER wanting to ask for something. INTRUDER makes a move to advance towards BARBER SHOP OWNER and say something but RIVAL stops him.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(going to sit in his chair)* - What a disappointment for a father to have a son like that. *(With wounded pride.)* Thank God my father can never say that. Not even feel. I have always been the exemplary child.

NEPHEW - Uncle, I want to...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I've never done anything that was a cause for disappointment. Never.

NEPHEW - Uncle, I... *(voice tone changes)* it's a shame that I had so little contact with abuelo, but the memories I keep are all very nice.

*(RIVAL shakes his head in disbelief.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Well, my son, it's a pity he's no longer with us.

NEPHEW - A father is a very important thing, don't you think?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - It's the base, the foundation.

NEPHEW - For this reason I wanted to be by my father's side at this difficult time in his life.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - What's wrong with him?

NEPHEW - He's in the hospital. The old man is bad. I don't think he'll outlive today.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Your mother didn't say anything to me.

NEPHEW - You know how tough she is...Spanish blood...she doesn't want to give in after all she's been through with him. But I am his son. I think I have an obligation to be on his side right now.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Of course, if you had told me before I would have released you.

NEPHEW - I didn't want to interrupt what you were saying... I even agree with everything *(laughing triumphantly)* I sign below. *(Looks at INTRUDER and RIVAL who return a damning look. To BARBER SHOP OWNER.)* So, can I go?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Of course. God be with you.

*(NEPHEW runs to the back room and comes back soon after with a plastic bag full of things.)*

NEPHEW - See you later...colleagues. *(Leaves.)*

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER stands up from his chair and begins to organize his work supplies. RIVAL glances at INTRUDER who returns the look.)*

RIVAL *(looking at BARBER SHOP OWNER)* - I think it is your barbershop that will end up going with God.

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(without understanding)* - I beg your pardon?

RIVAL (*annoyed*) - After all this speech against colleagues who don't collaborate, who don't play together, who play against... you decide to release the most irresponsible of us all...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I didn't give you freedom...

RIVAL - Now you're going to let me talk.

(*INTRUDER embarrasses himself and sneaks into the back room.*)

RIVAL - Stay.

(*INTRUDER stops. BARBER SHOP OWNER is surprised.*)

RIVAL - I want him to stay to hear what I have to say.

(*Embarrassing silence.*)

RIVAL - Once and for all, you have to realize three things: first, that your nephew doesn't work at all; second, that this boy increased the number of customers at the barbershop, yes; and third, criticizing his work and benefiting the eternally absent other, you are boycotting your own barbershop, and ultimately, yourself. (*Pause.*) It's a suicide.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*hurt*) - I thought that our friendship of so many years... that I didn't have to go through this. Hearing these things in front of strangers. (*Goes towards the photographs of the father and grandfather and admiring them.*) This is a big plot. They're all against me. You, my nephew, these people from the barbershop over there, my son and my wife. (*Laughs sarcastically.*) Yeah. Wife, so to speak, because...

RIVAL - You shouldn't be so ungrateful. You don't know how to appreciate what you have.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*calmly*) - That's your problem. The loneliness.

RIVAL - How so?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - When we're alone, or rather, in your case, who has always been alone, we think a lot about nonsense.

RIVAL - But what do you know about my life to say that?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I'm sorry, but you only got here, alive, thanks to me.

RIVAL (*laughing*) - Ah, that's a good one.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - And isn't it true? Who hid you from the military? Who would risk getting hurt because of you?

RIVAL - There's a lot you don't know about me and I...

INTRUDER (*holding RIVAL*) - No.

(*RIVAL and INTRUDER look at each other.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - But that's life. When we turn our backs, everyone stabs us. It's just that a friend's stab hurts more.

RIVAL - And what about a wife's one?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Funny. When we get old, we don't even remember when we started to like our wife. Or if you ever liked it.

RIVAL - You will end up losing your wife.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I lost her a long, long time ago.

RIVAL - Never had her. That's the truth.

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER looks puzzled at RIVAL. Long pause.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I... today is Father's Day, isn't it?... Sometimes I miss my father a lot... I'm going to pay some bills. *(Goes out to the back room.)*

RIVAL - But what happened to him? Did he get what I said?

INTRUDER - You were out of your mind. When we're out of control, the best thing is to close your mouth so you don't say what you don't want.

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(coming back. laconic)* - You take care of the barber shop for me. I will not be long. *(Leaves.)*

INTRUDER - You both seem like cat and mouse, so always making out.

RIVAL *(laughing)* - Really?

INTRUDER - Wow!

RIVAL - Yeah. Patience has limits. I'm getting old too.

INTRUDER - What nonsense. *(Arranging the work material.)* Nobody coming today again?

RIVAL *(in the front of the barbershop looking out)* - You know, I've known your boss for many years. We have an old friendship. I think in every way.

INTRUDER - There's only one thing I can't understand.

RIVAL - What?

INTRUDER - What made you endure so many years here in this barbershop. It certainly couldn't have been just your friendship.

RIVAL - Funny. I was going to ask you the same question. Why did you come to work here, with that great salon over there, which has much more to do with you.

INTRUDER - I...

RIVAL - Okay, forget it.

INTRUDER *(sighs)* - No. I will tell you. I need to tell someone, otherwise I'm going to explode.

*(The rival waits in silence.)*

INTRUDER - I'm gay.

RIVAL - Everyone knows that.

INTRUDER (*pointing to the barbershop owner's chair*) - Even him?

(*The rival nods his head.*)

RIVAL - Was that the secret?

INTRUDER - No. Don't you want to know why I came here?

RIVAL - If you want to tell me...

INTRUDER - Because of his son.

RIVAL - His...

INTRUDER - Yeah. We've been together for a little while. I actually didn't want to start another relationship because my old boyfriend...oh never mind, that's not important. And then he insisted, I was unemployed. Today I think he was trying to kind of apologize to his father, but through me, you know?

RIVAL (*stroking the red cloth on her chair*) - Funny.

INTRUDER - There's nothing funny about it. I would have gotten out of here by now. As a matter of fact, I sign under everything you said to him before, this thing is going from bad to worse and I give it about three months to close. I feel sorry for him, but what am I going to do? I'm not worried, because I get a job easily. I know I'm good at what I do.

RIVAL - And you know why I'm here?

INTRUDER - Hmm?

RIVAL - Because of the mother.

INTRUDER (*jumping up for joy*) - Oh, I knew it, I knew it. (*Concerned.*) But you two...

RIVAL - Once. Unforgettable.

INTRUDER - One? Only one?

RIVAL - A long time ago.

INTRUDER - And after that?

RIVAL - Not with her anymore. Only with others.

INTRUDER - Fucking hell.

RIVAL - I think the time has come to solve this.

INTRUDER - Are you going to tell him?

RIVAL - She's been looking for me a lot lately, but I run away from her.

INTRUDER - But he himself said that they don't have a couple life anymore.

RIVAL - I don't know what to do.

INTRUDER - If you need anything... You know, I've never had a real father. Mine is a corporal in the army and because of that, intolerance is extreme. I left home early. I don't even talk to my family, just to my mother, who I find in hidden places. I wish I had a father to hug me, to comfort me. Sometimes a fear hits me, a feeling of great abandonment. It feels like I'll be alone forever. And then I feel cold. (*Starts to cry.*) Everything goes dark. (*Cries more.*)

(*RIVAL goes to INTRUDER and takes him in his arms.*)

## INTERMEZZO 2

INTRUDER - After I said it, I regretted it. It's okay that I sympathize with the daddy and that he showed the greatest confidence in me telling him about his passion for the other's wife, but who guarantees that he won't open his jar for his friend? And then I'm the one who's screwed. I already said I don't care about the job. The problem is another. What the fuck, and I'm lending him a hand with this story, I've never been with a guy so special. But I have to be more positive. Xangô, my father, watch over me. Speaking of him, I had to go on, but I'm afraid of hearing things I don't want to know. Fucking hell. When I was a kid I had nothing to lose among those horrible people, not to mention Mom, of course. But today I have something conquered, I can't do nonsense. But there are times when you want to throw everything up, oh yeah, there are. And the old man keeps comparing me to his son all the time, if he suspected the truth... You know I feel very sorry for him, even more so after I found out about his wife's betrayal. Yeah, it's not really cheating, but it's like it were, and who can ensure that the guy told me the whole truth? Wasn't he testing me to tell everyone else everything? (*Shudders.*) Oh, my father, that service is damaging me. It's true that I'm saving up a nice little money to do my business school, because I'm not crazy about opening a salon without knowing how to manage my own business, something his father must never have even thought of doing, but that sucks. Every day the old man comes up to me with rudeness. I just don't work against him, because he's my father-in-law. (*Laughs.*) Oh, how ridiculous. Father in law. With so many clothes to iron and I'm here thinking about that simpleton. Imagine if the son looks like his father when he gets older? Jesus! Knock on wood. By the way, he's taking his time. Where is he at this hour? I feel lonely when he doesn't come early. If only he would agree to buy me a toy poodle to keep me company... But hey, when I have my salon, by the way, I thought the color they painted the front salon was very messy this time, when I have my salon, I'm going to be late to get revenge and leave him thinking I'm in a motel. With another guy. (*Laughs.*) What a poor thing! It seems like I never left that miserable slum. These days I thought it was great when Mom was here and praised our little apartment. Jesus. This one right here is an egg. The ass rubs against the sink when we open the fridge. The bathroom opens into a ditch where we hear everyone pooping and peeing. Not to mention the rest. That's very unpleasant. But soon we'll go to a better place. For that I need money, a lot of money. That fifth category barbershop isn't working anymore. It's even good that they stop, so I leave there in a good way and no one (*looks at an imaginary door, screaming*) no one will blame me for anything! Who knows, I might even end up in that beauty parlor across the street. Just for a while. I even made an effort to give the place a lift, but the old man just scolds me: "smug", "debauched", "extravagant". And the nephew, then! This guy is still going to get me one, I can feel it, envy runs rampant around there. That baggy chair, glued

together with tape, that the uncle doesn't see. But it's alright. I am more myself. I assure you. If I've already taken the boat this far, that's not what's going to bring me down. You can write what I'm saying.

### ACT 3

*The same barbershop as in the first act. The front chair on the left. Several photos around the mirror in front of the chair. The chair is facing the photos. The back chair on the left. An orthopedic backrest. A vase with flowers on the side table organized for work. The back chair on the right. The Sport Club Internacional's red flag is wrapped around the chair, covering the holes underneath. Red and white ribbons hang from the chair. The chair is facing forward. The front chair on the left. The material is organized for work. The chair is covered with a white sheet and facing the bull's head. On the floor, next to the chair in the back on the right, a bunch of keys and a box of condoms. RIVAL is standing in the middle of the stage, looking at the painting of BARBER SHOP OWNER's wife that hangs in the center in the background. After some time, NEPHEW arrives visibly drunk. RIVAL turns to look at him. NEPHEW hesitates before gathering the keys and the box of condoms from the floor. NEPHEW drops the objects on the chair in the back on the right and leans on it. NEPHEW takes the box of condoms and show it to RIVAL.*

NEPHEW - See how careful I am?

RIVAL - Have you ever thought if in your whole life you had fucked just once? One little time. And that fuck would have been the best thing that ever happened to you.

NEPHEW - A-ha! I wouldn't be able to hold back. I would want to try it again.

RIVAL - If that moment were recorded in your head like a movie and that movie you would be forced to watch all day. (*Pause.*) Every single day.

NEPHEW - But if it was good, I would like to see this movie... I mean... I would want to direct this movie, right...

RIVAL - No. I'm going to change the story a little. It wasn't the only fuck of your life. But the only one with a certain woman. With the right woman.

NEPHEW - For me, there's no such thing as the right woman. Every woman is right. (*Laughs.*) I mean, there are some ugly ones that I can't face... but when the good time comes, anything goes...

RIVAL - We had a coffee near the cathedral. The sun forced the search for a hiding place. As the gardens of the Reales Alcazares were right there, we escaped there.

(*NEPHEW arranges his work table with difficulty.*)

RIVAL - It was full. It seemed that all of Seville had decided to go there. August. Hell heat. We sat on the grass. We didn't take our eyes off each other. We couldn't take it anymore. I don't know what we were waiting for.

NEPHEW (*looking at his watch*) - Today I arrived very early. You are my witness. So I think I have every right to leave early too.

RIVAL (*looking at the picture*) - Suddenly I took her hand and we ran away. We passed the tobacco factory and crossed the Guadalquivir. The water reflected the sunlight. It was blinding. And we blind with desire for each other. The flesh burning. We ran into the hotel and goodbye, marriage, friendship. We wanted each other.

NEPHEW - Must have been a fucked whore. Smart guy fucks must be different than mine.

RIVAL - A fuck is always a fuck. A fuck with desire is eternal. What's good doesn't last long. Why? Fuck. Fuck. Fuck!

NEPHEW - Don't you agree I have the right to leave early?

RIVAL (*holding NEPHEW by both arms tightly*) - Don't you understand that I'm fucked up? Desire is an animal thing that consumes us and either we satisfy it and destroy something or we shrink and wither, die, disappear. And I don't want to disappear anymore.

(*RIVAL stares at NEPHEW for a while. RIVAL is embarrassed and releases NEPHEW. RIVAL goes to the front left chair and starts putting the hanging photos inside a box.*)

NEPHEW - Do you know that my aunt and my cousin, our boss's son, your colleague for years, also liked to travel a lot?

(*RIVAL drops the box. The photographs are scattered on the floor. RIVAL kneels and gathers the photographs. NEPHEW stands watching.*)

NEPHEW - But my uncle never liked to travel. She always went alone

RIVAL (*kneeling*) - You're stepping on my photograph. Take your foot.

(*INTRUDER arrives with a bouquet of flowers. INTRUDER is appalled by the scene.*)

RIVAL (*standing up*) - They... fell.

(*RIVAL hits his knees to clean himself. INTRUDER gathers a photograph that is close to him and gives it to RIVAL. INTRUDER and RIVAL look at each other. RIVAL leaves with his head down to the front left chair and places the box on his side table. INTRUDER goes to the back chair on the left. INTRUDER places the flowers on your side table.*)

NEPHEW - Hmm... for whom, huh?

INTRUDER - For a person who likes me very much.

(*The phone rings. Nobody answers. The phone rings again. RIVAL leaves for the back room.*)

NEPHEW - You're going to have to hold on today, because I arrived very early and I'll have to leave earlier.

INTRUDER (*in a low voice*) - Hmm. Today?

(*INTRUDER picks up a broom and starts sweeping near his chair. RIVAL returns.*)

RIVAL (*in a hurry*) - I forgot to get the foam we had ordered. He's mad.

*(RIVAL leaves.)*

NEPHEW *(watching the intruder sweep)* - Sweep here too, oh.

INTRUDER - But you're really lazy.

NEPHEW - Or do you think this is male service? Since we don't have a cleaning lady, this thing is going from bad to worse, who's left to clean?

*(INTRUDER finishes cleaning and throws the broom to NEPHEW. NEPHEW can't hold it in the air. The broom falls to the floor.)*

NEPHEW - Will you want to break the barbershop too? Isn't it enough to steal from my clientele?

*(INTRUDER looks at NEPHEW and leaves for the back room.)*

NEPHEW *(shouting to the back room)* - Look here, look, if we're all fucked up, the main culprit is you, see!

INTRUDER *(coming back)* - Did you see the coffee maker?

NEPHEW - Don't pretend to be ignorant that even sending clients to that salon in front of you, you're sending them.

INTRUDER - God, it sounds like the uncle talking.

NEPHEW - Look here, the faggot...

INTRUDER - If I'm a fag, it's my problem and nobody else's! And there's more. If you're such a homophobic, why don't you say that to your candomblé priest? Huh? Because the old fag will like to hear that. *(Goes to his chair. Stops. Turns around.)* And Father Xangô too.

NEPHEW *(startled)* - Where do you know my candomblé priest from...

INTRUDER - I know a lot of things that you have no idea. And I think it's good that you keep taking those guides out of your dirty chair because your job is pig and filthy and Father Xangô must be ashamed of his son.

NEPHEW *(pulling the red and white ribbons from the chair in the back to the right)* - Okay. It's OK. But tell me where you know my priest from.

INTRUDER - I've been in this religion for much longer than you, my son. I was born inside a terreiro. I grew up there. Receiving. And I'm not ashamed of it. I don't need to hide from anyone.

NEPHEW - Okay, sorry. I already said. Just don't mess with me. Leave Father Celso out of it.

INTRUDER - And there's something else. *(Going to NEPHEW.)* The one who's demolishing this barbershop is you and your uncle. If you had shame on your face, you'd gather your rags, that stinking flag of yours *(smells the flag)* that you've never washed, and go away from here never to appear again. If his son is his shame, you are his humiliation. And the day he recognizes that will be a God help us.

*(INTRUDER sees a dropped photo. INTRUDER picks the photo up from the floor.)*

NEPHEW - For God's sake, don't fuck with me. If I'm sent away, I have nowhere to drop dead. I'm nice to my wife. I even carry a packet of condoms with me. And then there are the children. When you have yours you will see. My uncle doesn't need to know anything. I will improve. I promise. I don't even have to leave early anymore today. I leave last. *(Going to get the broom.)* I might even sweep the barbershop.

*(INTRUDER looks at NEPHEW with disdain. INTRUDER keeps the photo in RIVAL's box.)*

NEPHEW *(sweeping the barbershop and whimpering)* - Oh, I'm sorry. I was kidding when I called you fa...that. It's just that I have Spanish blood like my uncle. I say things without thinking.

INTRUDER - But I'm already through with your Spanish blood. And the first one that comes at me... I don't know what I'm capable of.

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(entering)* - ...then use another name. But not mine.

RIVAL *(entering behind BARBER SHOP OWNER)* - But it's the only name he has!

BARBER SHOP OWNER - But I don't care. This is my name. Make up a name, I don't know. *(Noticing NEPHEW with the broom in his hand.)* And what is going on here?

NEPHEW - Good morning, uncle. I was cleaning it up, because I know that the clientele likes a clean place, and so do you, right? Mainly.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - You have no idea what that bastard cousin of yours did. What he had the courage to do. *(Goes to the pictures of his father and grandfather in front of the front chair on the right.)* He tarnished our name, our honor.

INTRUDER - What happened?

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(surprised)* - This is family business and none of your business.

INTRUDER - He has every right to use the name. After all, it's his too. As much his as yours.

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER looks indignantly at RIVAL.)*

NEPHEW - This guy is crossing the line. Taking advantage of the fact that you are so indignant with my cousin, I think you have to know something, if you don't already know.

*(RIVAL makes mention of going to NEPHEW. RIVAL stops with NEPHEW 's speech.)*

NEPHEW - I will speak, yes. Uncle has to know. If the barbershop goes down, it's his fault. And this story of a different cut, customer leaving, colored shampoo, all of this has a reason. It's because our friend there is a fag.

*(Awkward silence. The BARBER SHOP OWNER hides his face in his hands. INTRUDER glares at NEPHEW. RIVAL looks at INTRUDER and goes to BARBER SHOP OWNER.)*

INTRUDER - I'm going to the bank to pay some bills. *(Leaves.)*

*(RIVAL puts a hand on the shoulder of BARBER SHOP OWNER.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*jumping up*) - I don't deserve this. This cannot be happening to me. It's a punishment, it can only be.

NEPHEW (*approaching BARBER SHOP OWNER*) - Uncle, let's get this guy out. He's worth nothing.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - And that smell. Have you drunk? It's not just him I'm disgusted with. It's you too. Because you were my last hope. The last one, did you hear? And every day you only disappoint me more. You came out just like your father, that old loser. May he rest in peace. I'm angry with those who drink, anger, you heard that!

(*NEPHEW moves away from BARBER SHOP OWNER.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Look at that ragged chair. I never fixed it on purpose, because I had the illusion, the illusion that you were going to straighten out. (*Looks at RIVAL.*) Unfortunately, I have to face it that this drunkard is really worthless. There's not a customer of yours that leaves here satisfied. Of the ones left, of course.

NEPHEW (*with a low voice*) - I'll get better, uncle, I promise.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Get better? Stop bothering me. You at least have mixed blood, it's not pure, that makes me feel more relieved.

(*BARBER SHOP OWNER goes to the back room.*)

RIVAL - Yeah. Your time would come. Sooner or later.

(*NEPHEW curls up in the back right chair and turns away from the audience.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*entering*) - And speaking of Spanish blood, the wife is going to Spain again.

(*RIVAL stands up.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I don't know why she likes that country so much. (*To RIVAL.*) She spent the whole week talking about Seville. Seville here and Seville there.

NEPHEW - Uncle, if you want...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Shut the fuck up! I don't want to hear your voice so soon. (*To RIVAL.*) And you know better what she said to me. (*Goes to RIVAL. Facing him.*) That she would rather go with you than with me. If she had to choose.

(*Silence.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - And do you know what I replied?

RIVAL (*swallowing*) - No...

(*Short break.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Then go.

(*Short break. The two look at each other.*)

RIVAL - I... the two of us...

*(RIVAL looks out of the barbershop. BARBER SHOP OWNER follows RIVAL's focus. BARBER SHOP OWNER sees INTRUDER leaving the beauty parlor in front.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I knew it. I knew it.

*(RIVAL and BARBER SHOP OWNER watch INTRUDER approach and enter the barbershop. INTRUDER goes to the back chair on the left.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(with a satisfied smile. For the photos of his father and grandfather)* - I'm going to do something I've been wanting to do for hours. To clear the name of you and our establishment.

*(INTRUDER and RIVAL look at BARBER SHOP OWNER. NEPHEW turns around in his chair and looks at BARBER SHOP OWNER.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(for the photos)* - And y'all get ready, because this is just the beginning. *(Going to INTRUDER.)* You're fired. *(Goes back to his chair and starts making the shaving foam.)*

INTRUDER - You're trying to put me out on the street, is that it?

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(to RIVAL)* - Was I not clear? Was I or wasn't I?

INTRUDER - I'm being fired for what reason?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Doesn't matter. For none in particular. Or better. For all.

INTRUDER - All?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Yeah.

INTRUDER - For being gay, for example?

RIVAL - Wait a minute. He's nervous, he's rushed. *(To BARBER SHOP OWNER.)* Maybe we'll go out to unwind a little and then...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Then what? Then I send him away again?

INTRUDER - You'll have to excuse me, but I don't understand that. That man is a barbarian and on top of that you...

RIVAL - Boy, I didn't give you the right to...

INTRUDER - You didn't, but you'll end up crashing yourself. I don't need this shit job. I'm here because...

RIVAL - Stop. *(To BARBER SHOP OWNER.)* Come, let's get some air, you're excited...

INTRUDER *(losing patience)* - That's the end of the sting! You treat him as if he were your son, why protect him, he doesn't need it. *(Holds RIVAL's arm.)* You no longer have your whole life to think about what is right and what is wrong. If you don't go now, when will you go? The worst thing is what you're doing. The important thing is you!

BARBER SHOP OWNER - What's going on here? I fired you, my son.

INTRUDER - I'm talking to my friend and not to you, so excuse me. *(Turns his back to BARBER SHOP OWNER.)* Happiness is something that...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Out! You fragrant little fag, unhappy fruit, when I get back I don't want to smell you anymore. Got it right?

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER rushes out of the barbershop. RIVAL looks astonished at BARBER SHOP OWNER walking away and at INTRUDER.)*

RIVAL - I can't leave him alone. Not now.

*(RIVAL leaves quickly.)*

INTRUDER *(watching the two walk away)* - That's what my father did to me. My father. That wasn't a father. It was anything.

*(INTRUDER is looking out. NEPHEW turns slowly in his chair, lifting a small bottle of sugar cane liquor. NEPHEW gets up from his chair and approaches INTRUDER.)*

NEPHEW - Look...

*(INTRUDER turns around.)*

NEPHEW - I'm very ashamed of what I did. Honestly, I can't even stand up. I drank too much. Can you notice?

INTRUDER - Imagine.

NEPHEW - My uncle was very hard on you. Didn't need that much. I was even sorry.

INTRUDER - You don't have to feel sorry for me. I can take it.

NEPHEW - I need to... talk to someone. I'm feeling like shit. I think I lost the job.

*(NEPHEW stumbles and INTRUDER hugs him.)*

NEPHEW - If I lose this job, my wife will kick me out of the house. I will have nowhere to sleep.

INTRUDER *(thoughtful)* - And that would be the biggest humiliation for you?

NEPHEW - No. The biggest no.

INTRUDER - And what would be the greatest humiliation for you?

NEPHEW - The biggest humiliation?

INTRUDER - Yeah.

NEPHEW *(laughing)* - Ah, it would be fucking a man, for example.

INTRUDER *(triumphantly)* - You don't worry, I won't let your uncle send you away. Let me take you to a place close by so you can recover from this drunkenness. You will like it. I know. I'm sure you will really like this.

*(INTRUDER carries NEPHEW out of the barbershop with a smile of triumph.)*

### INTERMEZZO 3

RIVAL - It was close. Yeah, this time I barely escaped. *(Thoughtful.)* But what did I escape from? Fuck, when am I going to stop fooling myself, this constant procrastination.

Moron. Moron. (*Pause.*) And she appeared. Finally. Who knew, huh? If Mohammed doesn't go to the mountain...my father liked that one a lot. Poor old man. Well, he tried to fight, but with that reactionary monster married to him... oh, I'm already wanting to run away from the streak again. Leave the old man alone. Wherever he is. I was talking about her. About my... about the woman I want. About the woman I love. And so. So it was a Friday, everything always happens on Fridays, I was in the lab developing some photos when I heard the bell. Nobody ever comes to my house, so I didn't mind. When I heard it the second time, I thought, it's him. I dried my hands on the first cloth I saw and was quick to peek into the peephole. Relief. Relief? There it was the woman I'd been wanting for forty years and I couldn't decide myself! She hadn't played a third time. Had she thought there was no one at home and decided to leave? I didn't have the heart to peek through the door one more time. I had the impression that she saw me. But I was shaking. Had to look. I approached it very slowly. The iron of the peephole burned the part of the face that touched it. She was still there. And how beautiful, I thought. (*Pause.*) Enough of the bullshit. I turned the key. I pulled the door. Locked. How maniac to pass the key twice in the door. I turned her again. I put my hand on the lock. The phone rang. I hesitated. Damn, that phone never rings. I looked at the door. I opened. My God. I don't even believe in God, but at that time anyone would. She looked at me holding the bag in both hands. There's a woman's age when her face is marked by wrinkles and tiredness from life's headbutts, but a force comes out of her eye that magnetizes and knocks down anyone who is more attentive. And I was very attentive. Then I realized that the phone was still ringing. I ran to answer. I couldn't believe it: it was her husband. Dead. Found dead. Who? I couldn't quite understand. She standing in the doorway. I was thinking of Seville. In the color of the water of the Guadálquivir. At our hotel. Who, I repeated. My nephew, he said. His voice was low, it almost disappeared. It didn't look like him. She was looking at me. The shadow around the eyes brought out the eye color. I signaled her to come in. I had to go see him, he said. I turned my back to her so I could concentrate. The nephew had been found hanged in the barbershop. A red cloth. The police were there. I had to. Everything is fine. I hung up. I turned to her. She looked at her giant poster on the wall. I was helpless. That was the moment, but say what? Anything would spoil it, she would magically disappear. That woman in my living room, in front of me and the other one hanging inside the barbershop. Miserable. I'll have to leave, but you stay, I'll be back soon, quick little thing, unexpected, there's mineral water in the fridge, with gas that I know you like, feel free, the house is yours, I'll get a coat, sit down, no don't sit down, come here, I want you, I'm crazy about you, what are we waiting for all these years, now no one separates us anymore, life, light, mouth, delirium. (*Pause.*) When I came back from the barbershop, after we resolved everything with the police, I came back. The boy's mother was inconsolable. The children, poor things. I had to invent some nonsense, I don't even know what I said anymore. I just couldn't take him to my apartment. I never took him there. Patience. Friendship has limits. I opened the door. The empty room. I searched the apartment. Anything. She was gone. I went back to the living room and noticed that she had left water in the glass. The bubbles broke free from the bottom and rose to the surface in a funny rush. Life was funny. And sitting on the cushion that she had also sat on and we could have made love, I made a very important decision: I was going to tell him.

#### **ACT 4**

*The same barbershop as in the first act. The back, left and right chairs are diagonally facing backwards. Both are without the side table. On the chair in the back left a box and two colored bags. The front chair on the left. The number of photos in front of the chair has increased a lot since the last act. A red cloth over the chair. On the side table a glass of water and a razor dipped into it. The front chair on the right. The side table is disorganized. Some products without caps. A glass of water. Magazines on the side table. Several brown boxes piled up in the background of the scene. On the wall only a portrait of a woman. BARBER SHOP OWNER reads the newspaper sitting in his barber chair. RIVAL looks out of the barbershop standing by the proscenium. RIVAL is restless.*

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*without taking his eyes off the newspaper*) - Has everyone been warned?

(*RIVAL goes to his chair, takes the razor from the glass, dries it on a cloth and looks at the portrait of a woman.*)

RIVAL - They were. Is this the only one that will stay?

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*without taking his eyes off the newspaper*) - I don't intend to take it with me. What does it matter, I've already taken it off.

RIVAL - The horns...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - The bull's head I hung in my TV room. (*Looks at RIVAL.*) Now that I...

RIVAL (*hurriedly*) - And the statue of the saint?

(*The two look at each other for a short while.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*leaning back in his chair*) - I didn't know who to give it to. His mother is Catholic, as the Spanish family tradition says. The woman, that poor thing, is from that other religion. It could have dropped into our (*looks at the American salon across the street*) competitor's stuff.

RIVAL - It was a shock for his family.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - It was the definitive end of the barbershop, my friend. After that day I realized that nothing would ever be the same again.

RIVAL - But you know very well that things were already going from bad to worse, and he wasn't going to be the salvation.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - No. It's a very different feeling. (*Laughs.*) A sense of peace. A feeling of end. Mission accomplished.

RIVAL - I can't even believe what I'm hearing. You're not the guy I met a long time ago who hid me from the police at the beach house.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - In the same way, you are no longer the guy I used to hide from the police at my father's beach house. And you are no longer the same long before I became this other person you speak of.

RIVAL - Is the chimarrão packed too?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Despite that, I'm very sad. I'm sure my father and grandfather must be very disappointed with me, because I couldn't carry this establishment forward...

RIVAL - Oh, stop it, you know very well that...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - ...I couldn't convince my son to stay here by my side, and my last hope... one fine day I find him hanging...

RIVAL (*goes to BARBER SHOP OWNER and holds him by the shoulders*) - Look, I was looking at the portrait and I remembered something I saw in Cappadocia, on one of my trips. There in the caves, Christians painted many frescoes on the walls. When the region was conquered by the Muslims, the eyes of the figures were all scratched out, because they thought that the gaze has a very great power that must be destroyed at any cost.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Funny, there's a woman sitting in the coffee shop around the corner who looks like...she keeps looking here and at her watch. She must have an appointment with someone.

(*RIVAL advances to the front of the barbershop and closes his eyes.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Nonsense. Must be a whore. And an old bitch. Whores are getting older and older.

(*RIVAL opens his eyes.*)

(*BARBER SHOP OWNER goes to get a box. He places the box on his chair. He starts putting away the material that is on the side table next to his chair.*)

RIVAL - But what if someone comes?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - And yours?

(*RIVAL watches the scene in astonishment.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - My wife left home. Finally.

RIVAL - Left? All of a sudden? Unexpectedly?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - You know better than anyone what was going on between the two of us.

RIVAL - Me? Why me?

(*BARBER SHOP OWNER and RIVAL look at each other.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Because you are my best friend.

RIVAL (*going to his side table to touch the razor*) - And... where is she now?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - With her guy. She got herself a male. That one doesn't last long alone.

RIVAL - A guy.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I'm very happy to be alone now in that house with no one to bother me. No wife and no child. If I ever had either one.

RIVAL - And you know this guy?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - And what difference would it make if I knew? He must be a crook of the same ilk. Or a muggle to put up with her. Yes, because now that she's gotten a taste of betrayal, she's going to jump from branch to branch.

RIVAL - Look...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Why do you keep this razor in your hand all the time? Thief will not enter here.

RIVAL - I have to tell you something.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I'm already tired of hearing the things people tell me, or worse, do to me. I think an adulterous wife, a homosexual son and a suicidal nephew is enough. Is it not? Don't you think so? Don't you?

RIVAL - But I can't keep taking into account everything that happens around me and it has nothing to do with me to have to postpone it again...

BARBER SHOP OWNER - So the death of my nephew and the deviation of my son don't concern you? Does the end of this barbershop that we fought for so many years to put up has nothing to do with you?

*(Tense pause.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - He was my nephew, after all. That's what he was. It looked like one of those butcher's pieces of meat. I talk like that, but it hurts me. *(To RIVAL.)* I know that for a lot of people I'm a stone, a monolith, as the other said, but I suffer just like everyone else, but for that I don't need to go out screaming to the four winds.

RIVAL - The guy who... this guy who's living with your wife...

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(aggressive)* - What's wrong, do you know him?

RIVAL - This guy, who stole her from you...

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(grabbing RIVAL by the collar)* - Speak, you son of a bitch, do you know him or don't you?

RIVAL *(shouting)* - And if I did, what difference would it make?

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER lets go of RIVAL and goes to his chair. RIVAL goes after him.)*

RIVAL - Huh? Why know, to feel even more cuckold?

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER throws the box onto his side table on the floor. RIVAL looks at the material lying on the floor.)*

RIVAL *(gathering material)* - No, that's not it. Everything is wrong. That's not how it has to be. *(Sitting on his knees.)* And why does it have to be?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - What does it have to be? I knew she was going to leave. Sooner or later.

RIVAL - And she ended up going late.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Late?

*(INTRUDER enters. Looks at RIVAL and then at BARBER SHOP OWNER.)*

INTRUDER - Good afternoon.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Take care of it. I'll be back when I'm done.

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER leaves to the opposite side of the coffee shop where the woman is sitting.)*

INTRUDER - It's no use. It will never change. It has to end on its own.

RIVAL - How is it there?

INTRUDER - In the salon? Awesome. In a short time I did everything he never let me do here: I cut, trim, shave, dye, do whatever I want. My clientele is huge. I'm very happy.

RIVAL - Good.

INTRUDER - And you two are together, aren't you?

RIVAL - The barbershop is closing, didn't you know?

INTRUDER - No, silly, you and...*(looking at the portrait)*...her.

RIVAL - Why?

INTRUDER - You think I'm silly or what?

RIVAL - Who told you?

INTRUDER - OK, never mind. It's your problem and you solve it. I already told my partner that I'm going to tell the old man everything, now I don't need to hide anything anymore, after all, I'm already out of here and this barbershop karma is closing.

RIVAL - Will you tell? And what does his son think of that?

INTRUDER - He wants to face it too. No more lying, I can't stand lying, it makes me sick, I get migraines, gas, bad mood. And I'm a free person, I'm not afraid of anyone. I want to live my life! Well, enough with the speech, let me get my little things, it's all here, right?

*(RIVAL nods his head.)*

*(INTRUDER looks at RIVAL and drops the packages back onto the back left chair. He goes to RIVAL.)*

INTRUDER - I know I have nothing to do with this, and you're old enough to be my father, but you know what?

*(Short pause.)*

*(INTRUDER returns to his chair, takes the packages and leaves without looking at RIVAL. RIVAL keeps looking towards the coffee shop on the corner.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER *(entering)* - She's still there.

RIVAL - Who?

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*gathering his things from the box scattered on the floor*) - No one deceives me here. I still own this place.

RIVAL - But I never did it out of spite.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - What did you do? I'm talking about this crook who just got out of here. He was quite fast. (*Puts the box down on his chair. Goes to supervise the back left chair.*) Took it all, I hope. That when this building comes down, let none of it come together. Especially since I buried the pictures of dad and abuelo in that slab that is loose in the back room.

RIVAL - What did you do?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - That's what I asked you before. (*Stares at RIVAL.*) You're trying to tell me something. What is it, huh?

RIVAL - I'm not me.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Well, then, before you start, because apparently something heavy is coming, I'm going to sit in your chair, look, I've never sat on this red cloth, pretend it's a tribute, homage to the barbershop owner, to the king, deposed king. (*Short pause.*) Come on, what are you waiting for. Come shave me. May it be the last.

RIVAL - Last?

BARBER SHOP OWNER - When you were younger, at the time of the most ...consistent militancy, let's put it this way, I knew exactly when you were going to start philosophizing. I saw it all in the first sentence. Something I didn't understand, but I pretended to understand to let you continue and see where it would go. Come here, are you going to leave me here with this cloth tied around my neck?

RIVAL - I'm keeping an eye out of that woman from the coffee shop. The mysterious woman. The bitch.

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*laughing*) - Interested you, right? I knew it. You've always been into a whore. Decent women tire you.

RIVAL - There are many things that tire me.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - So see if you can do what you have to do at once.

(*RIVAL moves the razor in the glass of water for a while.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER (*serious*) - Is she still there?

RIVAL - Hu-hum.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I always knew everything.

(*RIVAL begins to shave BARBER SHOP OWNER with the greatest care.*)

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I always knew that my son lived with this little guy who just left here.

*(RIVAL passes the razor in the face of BARBER SHOP OWNER.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I always knew that my nephew was a good-for-nothing and that he would never be able to do anything to get the barber shop out of the hole.

*(RIVAL passes the razor in the face of BARBER SHOP OWNER.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - I always knew that my father and grandfather drank a lot, that they had no limits, that they were two drunkards, soakers, rummies...

*(RIVAL passes the razor in the face of BARBER SHOP OWNER.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - And I'm very proud of not having turned out like them. *(Turns his face to RIVAL.)* But now I'm tired of knowing. I don't want to know any more. Did you understand me?

RIVAL - On the contrary, I've reached a point where I can no longer hide something very important that I have to tell.

BARBER SHOP OWNER - It's hard for a friendship to last as long as ours. Usually people end up taking different paths that distance themselves from each other. You see, I walked away from my wife, my son, my nephew, everyone. Only you left. My friend. The one I helped so many times, when he was at his worst. When he had nothing to eat and I stole from my father's pantry, because you were persona non grata at home. The one I hid when the police wanted his body. The one who talked about Marxism and revolution with the barber's son. So many stories, so much to remember.

*(RIVAL wipes the foam off BARBER SHOP OWNER's face and starts shaving BARBER SHOP OWNER's face with just the razor without cleaning it in water)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Is she still there? Must be. Today is the first day of carnival. Saturday. Quite busy for a bitch it must be carnival.

*(BARBER SHOP OWNER shudders in his chair every time RIVAL shaves his face. The light is getting dimmer and dimmer.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Everyone having fun. Each with his wife.

*(Break.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Is she still there?

*(Break.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - That moment when I asked you what you had done, I really don't want to know. You are my friend. The only one. Whatever you do I sign below. If I'm not going to trust you, who else can I trust?

*(Pause. Almost complete penumbra.)*

BARBER SHOP OWNER - Just one last request. *(Shudders.)* Do you know the picture? Scratch the eyes of the portrait for me. So I know *(shudders)* that she'll never be able to look at me again.

*(Break.)*

## EPILOGUE

*A man in his mid-twenties, mixed race, sitting somewhere in the middle of nowhere drinking beer. After a while of staring at the table, he stares at different people in the audience as he speaks.*

NEPHEW - I'm back. Yeah, the barbershop story didn't work out very well. I swear I tried to make an effort: I arrived early, ate crow, had to put up with my uncle's lecture, that dude robbing my customers shamelessly in front of me, and then it ended up me being the guilty one. But it's ok, it will return. You'll see. I ended up losing myself badly in the play and... it worked out. Bah, man. The shame was too great. When I woke up hugging that guy, hey, I ran to the bathroom, tried to vomit and nothing came out. I despaired. Best. I cleared my name. My race. Bah, my abuelo and his father would be proud of me. because not just anyone would have the courage that I had. *(Drinks a sip of beer.)* When I pass by there today, it hurts. That pile of rotten boards nailed to the door, the sign for rent has even been stolen. And just look across the street that we see that place more and more colorful. And that unfortunate person, the one to blame for me, is happy so it's done. Among those people of his. *(In a low voice.)* I can't speak too badly about him because you know how it is, he's a religion practitioner, and it was because of this religion story that I ended up softening and the rest you already know. Oh, oh. But that's it. Do what? It's not possible for everyone do well in life, right? I'd rather stay here quietly in my corner before going back. Here, there are no family or professional commitments to disturb the guy. I'm alone in the barn. The scum is left alone in the bait. *(Takes another long sip.)* And that name thing I had come up with at the beginning of this play, you never mind. If the barbershop didn't work, it's because the name wouldn't work either. It's a shame, because it had everything to go right. I swear I don't know at what moment the thing started to go downhill... anyway. Do what? *(Stretches himself.)* Well, I'm going to take a little walk around here, to see if there's anything interesting to do. *(Takes the beer bottle in hand.)* See you later! *(Leaves.)*

**THE END**