

THE WAFER

by

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*The time... anytime.
The place... anywhere.*

Scene 1. The Haunting

(There is darkness. A shaft of light outlines the top of a jagged, high wall. A man appears, walking slowly along the wall. He stops at the center and leans against it .)

VOICE: *(whispering)* Turn around! Turn around!

OTHER VOICES: Turn around!

(The crowd of voices repeat the phrase over and over each time more loudly. Suddenly, there is a scream. The whispers continue. Other screams are heard in the distance. The man does not move. A dull, mournful chant begins behind the incessant whispers. The piercing scream again, followed by sobbing. As the clamor builds, the man turns his face into the wall.)

VOICE: *(sharply)* Turn around Juan Castia!

(The crowd voices stop. The man straightens up. As he slowly turns his head, a bright shaft of light covers him. He raises his hand in front of his eyes.)

VOICE: Turn around!

(He drops his hand, turns to face the light, and squints at its glare. He begins to sway, rolling his head. The chanting begins again.)

VOICE: We are waiting.

MAN: Waiting? Who are you?

VOICE: What are your words?

MAN: Words? What words?

(The chanting becomes louder.)

VOICE: Have you nothing more to say... to the people?

MAN: People? I don't see any people... I can't see anyone.

(He tries to step forward.)

Wait! Who are you?

OTHER VOICES: *(whispering repeatedly)* Words...Words...Words!

VOICE: Speak quickly, Juan Castia, the people are impatient.

MAN: The people? The people?

SECOND VOICE: Say the truth!

MAN: Yes...The truth.

THIRD VOICE: Say guilty!

MAN: *(quietly)* Yes... guilty.

(There are shouts and cheers.)

MAN: *(angrily)* WAIT!

VOICE: You say, guilty, Juan Castia, to all the charges?

MAN: Guilty to the charges? Guilty? I don't know what the charges are.

(There is jeering laughter from the crowd.)

OTHER VOICES: The wall! The wall!

(He feels behind him, turns frantically, runs his hands along the wall, turns back.)

MAN: Why am I here?

VOICE: You say you are guilty?

MAN: Guilty?

(He tries to peer into the darkness.)

Of what?

VOICE: Robbery, guilty! Rape, guilty! Murder... Guilty!

MAN: No... No!

OTHER VOICES: Say the truth. Say the truth.

MAN: The truth, yes... I am guilty... No, not of those things.

(The crowd hoots and jeers.)

WAIT! I've never murdered anyone. I'm guilty of murder, but I've never murdered anyone. I'm guilty of rape, but I've never raped anyone. Don't you understand? I've done nothing against the people, my crimes are...

VOICE: We've heard your confession, Juan Castia.

MAN: NO, NO CONFESSION!

VOICE: We've heard your confession... of... treason!

MAN: What? How can you say treason...

OTHER VOICES: Treason! Guilty! Treason!

MAN: I am Juan Castia.

VOICE: You are a traitor!

MAN: I am Juan Castia... they love me... I am their hope...

OTHER VOICES: *(whispering)* Traitor! Guilty traitor! Traitor!

MAN: *(screaming)* I AM NOT A TRAITOR!

(He searches the darkness desperately, trapped by the light and the confines of the wall.)

MAN: I'm guilty, yes, but not of any crimes, not of treas... I have given my life to give the people their lives.

VOICE: The pride of a murderer.

MAN: *(angrily)* I AM THE PEOPLE... *(quickly)* and they are me!

(The chanting is heard again.)

VOICE: You and the people are one? Is that your defense? Then listen to them, listen to yourself.

(The voices of the chanting crowd grow louder, more violent. Words are layered on top of each other: "guilty, pain, robbery, murder, traitor". Suddenly it stops.)

MAN: *(quietly)* Yes. *(The crowd hoots and yells.)*

VOICE: Your words, Juan Castia, your last words.

(The MAN holds up his hands, opens his mouth wide and flaps his jaw, but cannot speak to the laughter and delight of the crowd.)

VOICE: Where is your courage when faced with your guilt? Are you also a coward?

OTHER VOICES: *(whispering)* Say anything! Say anything.

MAN: Yes, I will say anything...

(He pushes himself forward)

Only... from the wall, take me away from the wall.

VOICE: Are you also a coward?

MAN: Guilty... yes, guilty of everything... at the wall.

ANOTHER VOICE: Please Juan, come away.

(The lights begin to change,)

Juan, it's cold and damp.

(The voices and sounds fade into a series of rolling echoes. The MAN begins to step away from the wall. The lights now reveal two small rooms with a table and a few chairs. A woman stands by a table lighting a candle.)

ANIA: Come on now, sit here.

(She pours him a drink. He looks at her for a moment, tries to look back at the wall, but can't. He slowly wipes the sweat off his face, comes to the table and sits.)

JUAN: What time is it?

(She watches him for a moment, touches his face, softly.)

ANIA: They'll be here soon.

(He smiles, sips the wine, lights a cigarette which they both share.)

JUAN: Did I sleep?

ANIA: If you want to call it that. You still have that damn fever, you still have the...

JUAN: The shakes, right?

ANIA: Right!

JUAN: Did I talk? Was I crazy?

ANIA: Of course. *(She puts her arms around his head.)* As crazy as ever.

JUAN: I can't sit still like this, while they're out there. Can't use the radio, nothing!

ANIA: *(pushing away)* Hey, you think this is fun for me, a vacation? I'm a rumbler, a player, not a nursemaid.

JUAN: *(smiling)* You're a good man, Captain Ania, and a good soldier.

(She whacks him on the head.)

And a good lover.

ANIA: *(smiling)* How would you know? Do you know how long it's been?

JUAN: I don't keep track.

ANIA: Well I do. I cut notches in my leg.

JUAN: *(softly)* Tough guy!

ANIA: *(softly)* Tough guy!

(A wave of shivering goes through his body. He begins to shake. She quickly takes a blanket, wraps it around him, holds him.)

What's happening to you?

JUAN: I can't stop it. I can't shut it out.

ANIA: What? Shut what out?

(He throws off the blanket and pushes her away)

(Blackout)

Scene 2. The Victory

(A yell from outside. Suddenly, RAMON bursts into the room and throws his arms around JUAN. PEDRO follows him.)

RAMON: Hey, Juan. A perfect success. A smashing success. Man, it couldn't have been smoother. Right now, they're completely lost on the other side of the hills looking for us.

PEDRO: Don't worry, they'll come through here tomorrow.

JUAN: Ania, more glasses.

PEDRO: Your tactic was perfect, they never suspected an ambush.

(The others come into the room yelling and laughing. They greet JUAN, remove their weapons and sprawl around the table and floor. ANIA passes glasses and a bottle around to them.)

MANUEL: It was a good haul, maestro. Ammo, and gas and lots of medical stuff.

ROSA: And two chickens and a duck, already cooked. A real fat, juicy duck. I dream about ducks.

BERNARDO: Instead of men!

ROSA: Instead of you!

(Their noise drifts into an uneasy silence as they all drink.)

MANUEL: Garcia!

(Every one looks up.)

They caught Garcia, but they didn't take him alive.

JUAN: He was a good man.

ROSA: His wife nearly went out of her mind.

MANUEL: Now the Citizen Pig is drinking his blood.

ROSA: He should drown in it.

BERNARDO: Fucker!

MANUEL: Did you see his face? He didn't want to die, he...

JUAN: All right, all right! Stop it! Stop it! We'll debrief later.

RAMON: But brother, Garcia was...

JUAN: *(takes his knife and jams it into the table)* I said stop it!

(Everyone freezes)

ANIA: *(after a moment)* Hey, how about all that great food? We have to eat don't we? You want me to cook, or do you just want to drink?

MANUEL: Ah-ha, Captain Mama...

(She moves to slap him.)

Life goes on, right? Right! Let's go. Let's unload the shopping cart.

RAMON: You look tired.

JUAN: Just a little . Go ahead, help them. We'll talk later.

RAMON: Okay, but lots of talk.

(JUAN nods. RAMON leaves with the others. PEDRO stays. He pours a couple of drinks, touches glasses with JUAN.)

JUAN: It went very well.

PEDRO: It went very well.

(He comes to the table and pours himself another drink.)

But each time we lose more of our friends.

JUAN: Each time we die a little more.

PEDRO: Yes, each time.

JUAN: And what we lose we lose forever. I feel the weight, Pedro, so heavy I can hardly breathe.

PEDRO: It was good you stayed back today, you're exhausted.

JUAN: I am... as tired as an old man who's seen too much to sleep.

PEDRO: Just fatigue. We're all...

JUAN: *(his face tightens)* No, my friend! It's fear, doubt! See that?

(He throws his arm straight out in front of him. His hand begins to shake. He brings it back in a tight fist.)

JUAN: My mind is like that... it shakes with the doubts I have in myself. Nothing is clear anymore. I find myself living in the past before it began, and living in the future when it'll finally be over. *(sharply)* Doesn't that disgust you?

PEDRO: *(quietly)* No.

JUAN: Doesn't that make you sick?

PEDRO: No.

JUAN: It makes me sick to my stomach. It makes me want to throw up until I choke on my guts. *(with a tight smile)* Do you know what I dream about? Night after night? The wall. The wall! It haunts me. Now it's the face of Garcia, and all the others. And for the first time in my life...

(They stare at each other for a long moment.)

JUAN: It's a risky proposition,

PEDRO: *(hesitates, speaks quietly)* Of course it's risky, everything we've done since we came to these hills has been risky... but such small risks.

JUAN: Garcia was no small risk.

PEDRO: Small risks, Juan, small. That's why the Pig still sits in his palace grinning at us, grinding his heel into our face.

JUAN: And if we fail?

PEDRO: *(smiling)* Then God has failed.

(JUAN catches his eye.)

You've said many times that God is on our side because we are right.

JUAN: *(sharply)* I've said that to the people because it has to be said. We're right only if we

win, and gods have nothing to do with it.

PEDRO: *(smiling)* That's true. Nursery rhymes for children.

(He watches JUAN for a moment, senses the timing, continues in a calm, deliberate tone.)

Oh yeah, the risks have been enormous. And this time? If it fails... disaster! We would lose everything. But if it works... if it works! Think what it'll mean...to us, to the people. They'll lift themselves from their own pain and march out into the countryside and scream with a million voices: This land is ours, no more chains, no more hollow bellies, no more rotting babies. Think of it, Juan, you'll give them... salvation again... the only way it can be given. *(He drinks, staring at JUAN over the rim of the glass.)*

JUAN: I have no yearning to be a saint.

PEDRO: *(laughing)* No one yearns to live in the sky except fools... and intellectuals.

(He moves in closer.) It's all been arranged. There's time for doubt.

JUAN: You're a man of pure action, Pedro, you always move straight ahead. And me... I wander.

PEDRO: *(with a slight smile)* You think... that's why you're the leader.

JUAN: *(to himself)* I think, and I wander... like a dream. Damn, if only I could sleep without dreaming. *(to PEDRO.)* And the delivery?

PEDRO: It's all been arranged.

JUAN: *(with a sickly smile)* Is it a lamb or a calf? *(PEDRO doesn't answer.)* And the... return?

PEDRO: It's all been arranged.

JUAN: When?

PEDRO: Tonight.

JUAN: What about the others?

PEDRO: They're believers, so their belief has to be preserved. As you've always said, faith is a delicate thing. It's never the object that matters, only the way it's flashed before the eyes of the faithful.

(They stare at each other for a long moment.)

JUAN: How?

PEDRO: Someone has to carry the message to the Pig. It has to be someone he'll believe. *(he leans in)* It has to be Ramon!

(JUAN is stunned, he backs away, drops into a chair.)

PEDRO: He's the only one who can carry it off . After all, our local Pig is his uncle. He's always protected him. He'll believe him. And the others will never know who did it.

JUAN: Ramon... he's so young, just a boy.

PEDRO: We were all boys once, huh? Look at us now. How did you put it? Like old men. We were boys too, but not for long. Ramon is no longer a boy, he's 19. He's seen a lot of action with us, he's faced the same dangers we have... he's no boy!

JUAN: I don't know if he'll do it . He's good and he's proud...

PEDRO: And he loves you. You're a brother to him . If you approached him in the right way, if you made him understand without understanding too much. *(JUAN looks at him warily.)* He's a believer too, Juan, he wouldn't be able to take it if he knew everything. His faith has to be protected like the others.

JUAN: Poor Ramon... like a brother, and I have to give him a job that might break his back with guilt.

PEDRO: He's strong, he won't break, Juan...

JUAN: How can I tell him...

PEDRO: Only enough! Tell him only enough, from your heart to his, and he'll trust you for as long as he has to. When the time comes, he'll understand.

(They stare at each other for a moment.)

Listen to me...

JUAN: *(raising his hand)* No, you listen to me. You're right!

(He puts his hands on PEDRO's shoulders.)

There's no other way. It takes pain to cure pain.

(PEDRO nods.)

A man of action. Without you, we'd still be in the hills hunting goats and old horses.

PEDRO: No, I've only been a follower. You are the movement.

(JUAN embraces him.)

JUAN: You've been a good friend... not just to me, but to the people.

PEDRO: I wish I could be the one instead of you.

JUAN: I believe that! But someday, they'll honor you the way they should,

PEDRO: *(smiles strangely)* Someday... maybe.

(Blackout)

Scene 3. The Days End

(Everyone is sitting around the table drinking. PEDRO is picking at a guitar. MANUEL is arranging salt shakers, spoons and other items as he describes the day's action.)

MANUEL: And... we screwed em! *(Everyone laughs.)* The whole truck column... they never knew what hit them.

ROSA: You hit them, Manuel! *(Everyone laughs again.)*

MANUEL: When they were sitting there waiting for the bridge to go down, like this, I went right up to the first truck and said: Hey, Bro! What do you mean Bro, he says. You got a butt, I says. You got a light, he says. Sure, I says, I got a lighter. And I give him my lighter, a nice green round one with the pin pulled out. Thanks, he says. Thanks! *(He bursts into laughter.)* Bowroom... he goes... ass up in ten different directions. And before any of those bastards knew what was happening, zoom go the trucks down the road. And their faces...they looked like they were pissing all over their boots.

BERNARDO: And when the troops came looking for us, nobody saw nothing. Old Raphael told the captain that he thought he heard some motors go by, but he couldn't be sure because he has gas and sometimes he farts so bad it sounds like a diesel engine.

MANUEL: Let's see, it was, how can I put it? Very cool, eh Juan?

JUAN: *(smiling)* Very cool.

MANUEL: Hey Bernardo, *(winks at Rosa)* what about that little spitfire riding with you? Gave you a real hard time. *(BERNARDO throws his knife into the table.)*

BERNARDO: Bitch! *(He staggers to his feet.)* Doing her a favor... just giving her a ride, she scratched me... with her nails.

ROSA: How come every time you talk about a woman, you gotta stick your knife into something?

MANUEL: That's what he does best, sticking things into things. *(He finds this deliciously funny and rolls on the floor with laughter.)*

BERNARDO: *(grinning)* How come you're always watching me?

ROSA: Don't flatter yourself!

BERNARDO: How come you're so attracted to me?

ROSA: I like freaks!

BERNARDO: I bet you do. I bet you like little goats and big horses too !

MANUEL: *(howling)* Hooooo...

*(ROSA grabs a bottle and lunges at BERNARDO.
MANUEL pushes her out of the way.)*

MANUEL: So... hey, Bernardo... why the hell did she scratch you?

BERNARDO: Fuck, she was trying to hustle me. So I said to her: You keep your hands out of my pockets, anywhere else you can put your hands, but stay out of my pockets.

ROSA: What's the difference, Bernardo, no matter where she put her hands, she'd have a hard time finding anything,

MANUEL: *(howling)* Hooooo...

(BERNARDO snaps up his knife and lunges at ROSA. MANUEL tackles him and holds him down.)

MANUEL: Hey, Pedro... a little louder...calm the beasts here!

(PEDRO plays louder and more rhythmically. The tension evaporates. ANIA comes in and out, talks to JUAN, banters with the others. ROSA and BERNARDO are still slapping at each other.

(Blackout)

Scene 4. The Brothers

(All are sitting around the table digging into a heap of food. There's laughter and singing. JUAN is sitting at one end of the table and RAMON at the other end flinging pieces of meat with his fork. After a few moments JUAN rises walks to RAMON and whispers in his ear. RAMON shrugs his shoulders. JUAN grabs him by his shirt and drags him up. They walk into the other room. Only PEDRO notices them going.)

JUAN: Close the door.

RAMON: Why all the private stuff, spies?

JUAN: No, you little maniac, I just wanted to talk to you before supper.
Do you want a drink?

(RAMON nods and takes a glass.)

JUAN: How's your mother?

RAMON: Fine. She asks for you. I wish you'd come and eat with us. It's been so long,

JUAN: I know, I haven't had much time to slip away.

RAMON: You look like you could sleep for a couple of days... alone !

JUAN: *(laughing)* You're right... alone.

RAMON: Hey Juan, I met with that guy again, last night... you know, the one from the States.

JUAN: And?

RAMON: And, he wants to get more involved... not just with money... his whole group wants to come down here, and get involved.

JUAN: Here? Why here? Their money is enough.

RAMON: Because they feel the way we do. They want to,,,

JUAN: Fuck their feelings, Ramon... they feel nothing. They call themselves radicals, they come to us with a smirk on their face and a lust for kicks, and words, theories they get out of books.

RAMON: That's not fair, Juan. They're working for revolution...

JUAN: How can you have a revolution in the U.S.? Who do they revolt against? Themselves?

RAMON: What about all the Black people, they're down. You've said yourself, that...

JUAN: Yes, that's true. But revolution? They're have-nots and they want to have. Not just enough, but as much as! Their poor are rich compared to us. Look at our people out there. What do they want? I want some bread today, I want my baby's fever to go down, I want to sleep without someone smashing in my door and dragging my husband and my sons away. I don't want to be raped any more. And what do they cry for in the States? Bigger and better jobs, a better car, a better TV, better lipstick. No, little brother, let 'em stay home and make their billionaires into presidents and their athletes into kings. Let them do for us what they do best... talk and send money.

(ANIA opens the door.)

ANIA: There's no room service in this hotel. .

JUAN: *(laughing)* Isn't she beautiful, and what a hostess.

ANIA: Look, Mr. Maestro, there are only two reasons why I do this cooking shit: One, so we can eat some human food, tonight, instead of that crap you feed us out in the hills, and two, because in spite of myself, I need to take care of you.

RAMON: *(mockingly)* She loves you.

ANIA: *(as she leaves)* Make sure the little boy washes his face. He looks like a goat... and smells like one too.

JUAN: (*closes the door*) Ramon, listen to me. Forget about the adventurers from the States. We have to face our problems in our own way. And our problem is with the people.

RAMON: What do you mean?

JUAN: The most valuable treasure we have is their faith, their belief in us. We've accomplished a great deal so far. The movement has grown into a rebellion, and from that it has to flower into a full revolution.

RAMON: And it will. That's what this guy was talking about...

JUAN: Listen to me! (*He begins to pace.*) It's not happening fast enough. Each day the regime moves more troops and more weapons into the province. Each day they crush another village and grind the people into dirt. They begin to doubt, they wonder what it's all about, why they have to suffer so much.

RAMON: We explain to them... in every flyer, every broadcast.

JUAN: It's not enough. We have no symbol for them to hold on to, to revere. One thing they can pour their emotion into and convert it into action, do you understand? We need a symbol, Ramon, a human symbol... a martyr!

RAMON: A who? What kind of hokey shit is that?

JUAN: It's not shit! It's political reality, it's meaning. One person will make that sacrifice, give meaning to the people... so they will come out from under their fear and doubt and say look, there is a man who fought for us and now dies for us. Look, there is a man who has been murdered by those Pigs because he tried to help us. His cause is our cause, we have to make his sacrifice count.

RAMON: A lot of men have died already,

JUAN: A martyr, Ramon, not a battle casualty... to make the people think and speak and act. Do you understand?

(He moves to the window and turns away. He speaks quickly and coldly.)

Since we are the leaders of this movement, it must be one of us. And since I'm the one they know best, it will be me.

(RAMON stares at him in disbelief.)

RAMON: What are you saying? Are you crazy? I can't... A martyr!...You?

JUAN: I will make the sacrifice because it's the right thing to do, and the right moment to do it. There are others who can lead the revolution, but no one is in a better position to do this than I am.

RAMON: (*jumping up*) What the hell is wrong with you, Juan? What's going on in your head? Martyr? You? Some sleep, you need some sleep.

JUAN: Listen to me, Ramon...

RAMON: *(yelling)* NO, I WON'T LISTEN TO YOU! If the people need a martyr, let them make one. If the cause needs a martyr, there are a lot of us it can take. But you, Juan...

JUAN: I'm only one! We've all pledged to give our lives. We have, haven't we?

RAMON: *(wildly)* YES!

JUAN: No sacrifice is too great... is it?

RAMON: *(pleading)* Juan...

JUAN: Then now... at this moment, the right moment!

RAMON: *(pulling away)* It's fucking sick! What are you talking about... to be some kind of king... a tin christ!

JUAN: *(sharply)* You know me better than that.

RAMON: We need you... we need you... *(unable to control his tears, he turns to JUAN)* I need you. *(Embarrassed, he turns away.)*

JUAN: My little brother, listen to me. In every good cause there comes a point where each one must give up the most precious possession he has, regardless of his own personal desires.

RAMON: Bookshit!

JUAN: We have many good leaders, you're a good leader, Pedro is a good leader, but the people know me, the regime hunts for me. If I...

RAMON: You can't just hand over your life like that!

JUAN: Garcia did!

RAMON: I DON'T GIVE A FUCK ABOUT GARCIA. I don't care about the others.

JUAN: Now you're talking like a boy, and you're not a boy. What we've done has been the work of men. And we'll keep... Listen to me, Ramon!

(RAMON sits with his hands over his face.)

RAMON: I'm listening.

JUAN: I'm not trying to be a holy man, to sacrifice myself for some kind of storybook glory. This is an act that will create a symbol, and that symbol will create the faith. And that's what this country needs... faith... in us. Do you believe that? *(RAMON nods slowly.)* This is not an easy decision. But it has been decided. Now is the time. *(He moves away.)* Tonight... *(RAMON is stunned.)* Tonight the police will find me and take me away. Then

they'll give us their greatest mistake. They'll hold a public trial to make an example of me. They'll display the hero and destroy him. Every person will feel the pain burn through him. Instead of fear, there will be sorrow, and anger, and finally rage. You'll see to that! Then they'll fight... and they'll win.

(He paces for a moment, comes back)

Now I especially need your help, my little brother.

(Puts his hands on RAMON's shoulders.)

You must be the one who tips off the police!

(RAMON whirls half out of the chair. JUAN pushes him back.)

You're the only one your uncle will believe...the only one I can trust.

(RAMON pulls free of JUAN's grip and lunges away from the table.)

RAMON: Now, I'm to become your tin judas... Juan, what kind of nightmare is this?

JUAN: No, not a judas.

RAMON: *(wildly)* SHOULD I KISS YOU TOO... RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES?

JUAN: Please listen...

RAMON: I am... listening to you read your own suicide note. And I'm the one who signs it...to betray you like a filthy bastard... like some slimy stoolie...

JUAN: It isn't betrayal... don't you see? It's an act of trust. You're the only one who can do this for me. No one will ever suspect you, no one will ever know.

RAMON: *(loudly)* I'LL KNOW! I'll twist my guts out with knowing.

(He leans heavily on the table.)

RAMON: Juan... how can you ask me to help you destroy yourself?

JUAN: Because you are like a brother to me. Because I love you like my own blood.

(He gently places his hands on the back of RAMON's neck.)

Do you remember when you first came here? Sixteen rears old, skinny, full of fire. And I said to you: If you tell me you're a man, I'll believe that you're a man.

RAMON: *(whispering)* Don't smother me with words!

JUAN: And later, when we were trapped in that farm house, you said to me, this is the only way that men can become brothers. When the chips are down, you can see a man's truth. Do you remember? *(RAMON nods.)* So the chips are down again, and you will act for me as

a brother, not as a betrayer...you will give me your truth!

(He pauses for a moment, takes a deep breath.) We' re going to finish eating now. I'll send you out for something. You go to your uncle and tell him you know where to find me, what I look like. He can arrange to follow you, and you can point me out.

RAMON: *(whispering)* Twisting my guts...

JUAN: Believe in me, Ramon.

(RAMON whirls around. They stare at each other for a long moment. Finally, JUAN moves to the door, stops, turns back.)

JUAN: I believe in you.

(He opens the door, PEDRO steps in. JUAN offers his hand to RAMON, who pauses for a moment, takes it and leaves with him. PEDRO moves to the table, pours himself a drink. The others can be heard in the background as they begin the meal. He takes a sip and swishes the wine in his mouth, spits some out. He smiles and spits the rest out on to the table. as the lights fade.)

(Blackout)

Scene 5. The Last Feast

(MANUEL is dancing. He wobbles over to the others, opens his arms wide and begins singing. BERNARDO laughs and claps his hands.)

Suddenly, RAMON appears at the door. His hair is wet and loose, his face shrunken. He fixes his eyes on JUAN, tensely walks over to him, and sits down. JUAN smiles. RAMON turns away.

MANUEL: Ay, yai, yai, yai, in China they don't eat chili...

BERNARDO: *(singing)* So here's a verse, that's worse than the other verse, don't dance her around again Willi.

MANUEL: *(singing)* Oh Rosa loves men that she hits, she even loves men without wits, She can tame them with ease, 'til they all say please...

BERNARDO: *(bellowing)* Then she smothers them to death with her tits!

(The two men roar with laughter, sing out a loud chorus of "Ay, yai, yai". ROSA jumps on to the table.)

ROSA: *(singing)* So here's a verse, that's worse than the other verse, you can dance me around again Willi. Bernardo gave sex up for Lent, 'cause his dick was so long it was bent. See, to avoid any trouble, he'd put it in double, and instead of coming he went!

(Everyone finds this hilarious.)

MANUEL: Hey, dance... come on Ania... Ania... dance.

ANIA: Go find your whores, they'll give you a better time,

BERNARDO: Come on Ania, relax, give us a dance.

ANIA: Look you...there are only two reasons why a woman dances: One, because it's a wedding or a party, and two, because some man wants to see her jiggle so he's got a good excuse to play with his balls. This ain't no wedding, and I don't jiggle!

MANUEL: Hey, Captain Mama...this is a party. We're celebrating a victory, come on, dance with me.

(He grabs her and whirls her around. She slaps him on the head, breaks into a smile, and begins to dance with him. He stumbles with her against the table, scrambles up on top of it, pulls ANIA up with him as they continue to dance.)

BERNARDO: What about you?

ROSA: What about you?

BERNARDO: Me? Can't even stand up.

(She laughs and pulls his hat down over his eyes. MANUEL spins ANIA on top of the table. He sits with a thud, laughing. He begins drumming on the tabletop. ANIA picks up on the sounds of the guitar and the drumming as she dances around him. Everyone is caught up in her movement, clapping and whistling.)

(A soldier with a rifle appears at the door. An officer with a pistol stops next to him. As ANIA whirls around, she sees them and stops suddenly. The others finally notice her and freeze. The officer moves into the room.)

OFFICER: You will remain perfectly still. The house is surrounded.

(A soldier moves quickly behind JUAN and points the rifle at his head.)

Juan Castia!

(JUAN slowly turns away.)

Raise your hands and place them on your head.

(JUAN hesitates.)

We know who you are! Do it, or we'll shoot them first, one by one.

(After a moment, JUAN raises his hands. The soldier clamps on handcuffs and pulls him up toward the door.)

The rest of you up against the wall. Do it!

(The others move slowly to the edges of the room and turn away.)

Now, what do we have here? A party? A celebration? I think I have the pleasure of meeting Castia's own general staff. It smells like it.

(JUAN is pushed out the door into the hands of other soldiers. The first soldier comes back and begins searching the others.)

We'll soon find out who you are!

(Blackout)

Scene 6. The Awakening.

There is darkness. A shaft of light outlines the top of a ragged high wall. JUAN is lying propped up against the wall. He looks tired and disheveled. The whispering is heard again, the laughter and screams, and the chanting. But this time, JUAN is unmoved, uninvolved. The lights come up on the room. ANIA is standing at the window. The others, except for RAMON, are sitting at the table and on the floor.)

MANUEL: Raphael said he looked pale.

ROSA: What else would he look like!

MANUEL: If they touch him, if they put a finger on him!

ROSA: They can't hurt a man like that.

ANIA: He's only a man.

BERNARDO: The way it happened... they just took him like a sick dog .

ANIA: And the rest of you sick dogs just stood there and watched.

BERNARDO: What else could we do?

ANIA: *(angrily)* What else could you do? You could have helped him... you could have helped him! *(She spits on the floor.)* He puts up his life for... for a bunch of sheep!

(BERNARDO jumps up. MANUEL stops him.)

MANUEL: We didn't even have our weapons,

ANIA: You had your hands and your feet and your teeth.

PEDRO: *(firmly)* There was nothing to do! Juan refused any help. He motioned us away.

ANIA: *(bitterly)* If only you tried.

PEDRO: *(sharply)* What were we supposed to try? What's the matter with you? Stupid heroics achieve nothing. He didn't count on this. It was a dirty coincidence... he's talked

about it before.

ROSA: What time is it?

BERNARDO: Who knows!

ROSA: Asshole!

MANUEL: *(slapping his own face)* I've had it, I'm going after him. I'm going to take the men and get him the hell out of there.

PEDRO: Take it easy, Manuel

MANUEL: You heard me! We'll take the rockets and the heavy stuff and we'll blast our way in there... we'll smash the place up!

PEDRO: You're not going anywhere!

ANIA: *(shouting)* I'm with him, let him go, Pedro!

PEDRO: So he can kill Juan before they do! *(Everyone stops.)* Listen to me, all of you! You're not going to break in there and you know it. It's a fortress. Manuel, you've seen it. They've got tanks at the walls, machine-gun bunkers, a couple of hundred troops. You think they've got him in a hotel suite? He's down at the bottom where the wall is. Even if you got through, you think they'd let you take him alive? You lead the men in there and you'll lose them, every one of them. And what happens to the movement? Finished!

MANUEL: *(after a moment)* He's right,

ANIA: *(bitterly)* He's always right... Smart Pedro!

PEDRO: Just...take it easy!

(MANUEL throws his hat across the room. ANIA kicks it back to him.)

ROSA: What time is it?

BERNARDO: *(angrily)* I don't know!

(The silence becomes more tense. Suddenly RAMON appears. He is breathing heavily. Sweat pours down his face.)

RAMON: They're going to do it. *(He begins to cry.)* The radio... on the radio.

(BERNARDO takes out a small radio and runs the aerial wire out the window. The others gather around it. PEDRO stands off to one side. RAMON is holding on to the door, shaking.)

(JUAN still sits against the wall. The whispering voices become louder. One dominant voice hangs above the clamor: "The prisoner will rise... Juan Miguel Castia... guilty... murder... rape... the state and people... the sentence... Death!" There is a loud commotion,

a mournful chant in the background mixed with whispers and laughter. The staccato sounds of marching and barked commands are now heard through the radio, a garbled voice describes the events. The clamor rises to a pitch. Suddenly, shots ring out. The noise stops. JUAN bolts to his feet.)

RAMON: They did it... they did it!

(RAMON sinks to the floor. Ania moves toward him, but PEDRO grabs her arm and squeezes it tightly. The others sag. PEDRO stiffens his back and stares at them. JUAN slowly sits down, leans his head against the wall, and folds his arms across his eyes. Music comes from the radio. PEDRO reaches and shuts it off. He walks around the edge of the room.)

PEDRO: *(quietly)* No... we're not going to sit around like this.

MANUEL: *(moaning)* Maestro...

PEDRO: *(quickly)* Maestro is dead.

ROSA: *(moaning)* They couldn't hurt him...

PEDRO: *(quickly)* They did!

BERNARDO: *(moaning)* I don't know what to do...

PEDRO: *(quickly)* I'll tell you!

(He paces around the room faster, driving his own tension. ANIA stalks him.)

ANIA: Tell us what?

(He cuts her off by throwing his arm straight out with his hand up. She tries to continue. He makes a fist and twists it in the air with a cutting motion. She backs off. He moves quickly to each of the others, shoving them with his hands, pushing them with his foot.)

PEDRO: I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to get off our asses and move! *(His tone becomes harsher, more demanding.)* A good and beautiful man just gave his life for us, for all of those people out there. And we're going to move! We're going to run out into the countryside and we're going to start screaming. We're going up into those hills and we're going to yell our lungs out until we get an echo, and another echo, until we get a thousand echoes, until every damn human being in this country screams with us, Revenge! Revenge for our martyr, Juan Castia!

(He stops. In the sudden silence he poises himself, waiting for a response. The others begin to stir.)

Manuel, you go to the South. Bernardo, to the North. Rosa, the East, Ramon, to the West... into every village, into every hut, and tell them, Did you feel the bullets? Did you taste the blood? Juan Castia just died for you! He suffered and died for you so that you can live better and be free, without fear, without the Pig!

(His voice pitches to a frenzy.)

Do you hear me? Do you understand? Juan Castia has given us... a revolution!

(The others begin to yell and scream.)

Do you hear me?... Now!

(MANUEL, ROSA and BERNARDO rush out of the room. PEDRO moves to the door. He reaches for RAMON. ANIA moves to stop him. He catches both of her wrists, tightly, and shoves her hard against wall, pushing her hands into her face. She is unable to move in his grip. He holds her for a moment, shakes her free. He goes to RAMON, again, lifts him to his feet, forces his face up,)

PEDRO: Do you hear me?... Now!

(RAMON blinks his eyes, stares at PEDRO for a moment and runs out of the room. PEDRO turns to ANIA. Her face is knotted with anger. They glare at each other. He turns and looks across the darkness at JUAN. Finally, JUAN looks up and meets PEDRO's eyes. PEDRO smiles. He carefully puts on his gloves and walks out the door. The lights fade as ANIA moves into the darkness toward JUAN.)

(Blackout)

Scene 7. The Resurrection

(JUAN rises and slowly walks along the wall. The lights outline a small, cave-like room, simply furnished with a rough table and chairs. He takes his coat and drapes it over his shoulders. lights a cigarette, looks back at the wall. The shaft of light there begins to fade along with the distant traces of whispers and chants. He sits. ANIA appears in the shadows, she watches him for a moment, goes to the table and lights a candle. She takes off her scarf and puts it on him. He doesn't move. She strokes his hair and puts her arms around him. He kisses her hand.)

ANIA: I thought you were a sleep.

JUAN: No.

ANIA: I'll make you something.

JUAN: I'm not hungry.

ANIA: Why don't you go out for a walk? It's so bright and sunny,

JUAN: No, no. You hear the sounds of the guns? I might be seen.

ANIA: It's all right, you've been out before.

JUAN: Only at night, or way up in the hills. I might be seen.

ANIA: You're so pale.

JUAN: I sleep too much.

ANIA: Well, tonight I'll make you a special drink, you'll sleep just enough.

(He looks at her and smiles. She kisses him.)

I think I'll go up on the ridge tomorrow and pick some flowers. That's what this dump needs, fresh flowers.

JUAN: Are they out already?

ANIA: It's almost spring, you know.

JUAN: *(quietly)* Almost spring.

(She watches him for a moment, breaks into a broad smile and takes his hand.)

ANIA: Juan... when it gets dark, why don't we sneak out to the village? You know, we'll wear our big hats, and just walk around, maybe even sneak into the little cafe for a drink. *(She tries to pull him up from the chair.)* Remember the last time we went to the lake, just the two of us? You wore that silly fishing outfit and the big floppy hat, so nobody would bother you. Oh, that was so long ago. And the mosquitoes only bit me, not you. Not a bite. And you thought that was so funny. Remember?

JUAN: *(quietly)* No. I don't think about it... so, I don't remember.

(Her smile disappears. She drops his hands.)

ANIA: *(sharply)* That's great, wonderful. A man with no memories, not even good ones. That makes me a woman with an absent-minded man. What should I do, drill a hole in your head so you can be a happy fool?

(She grabs his head. He brushes her hands away.)

So be a sad fool. But not me. I know when I'm being had. And this setup is all wrong.

JUAN: There's nothing wrong. We have to wait.

ANIA: *(sarcastically)* Right.

JUAN: We have to give it enough time.

ANIA: Right!

JUAN: We have to wait for the word...

ANIA: Okay!

(They are uncomfortably silent. Finally, she turns to him.)

I... I contacted him. *(JUAN is startled.)* He's in the area. They took a message to him.

JUAN: A message?

ANIA: He should be here soon.

(He begins to straighten his clothes and hair.)

JUAN: Finally, after all of these months... we have to talk.

ANIA: What's there to talk about? The last time he was here...

JUAN: The last time was different. He was hurt, on the run. But now, it's almost over. Now he'll tell me!

ANIA: What? What will he tell you that you don't already know?

JUAN: *(sternly)* We'll talk... that's all!

ANIA: Will he tell you why we've been trapped in this mud hut all these months? Will he tell you why no one comes to see you, why the guards turn away when we walk by them? He doesn't have to tell you... you know.

JUAN: I know what?

ANIA: The truth!

JUAN: *(painfully)* Why do you keep clawing at me like this...I can't stand it...why do you...

ANIA: Because I care for you, because I'm sick of living like a ghost, like a nameless, faceless nobody.

JUAN: Then why don't you just let go, get away!

ANIA: *(glaring at him)* Don't ever say that to me again!

(There is a sharp rapping outside. PEDRO appears . He is dressed in a uniform, with boots. They eye each other for a moment, JUAN rushes to him, motions as if to embrace him, but doesn't.)

JUAN: Pedro... Pedro, it's good to see you, come in.

(PEDRO steps into the room, brushing the dust from his shirt.)

PEDRO: Hello Juan... Ania,

JUAN: *(hesitantly)* How good you look...the uniform.

PEDRO: All goes well.

JUAN: It must, you look so... tell me, what about the fighting... is there...

PEDRO: It's near the end. We now have all the provinces. By Sunday, we'll be in the capital, and the Pig will be hanging from a pole, along with his counter-revolutionary friends.

JUAN: That's wonderful! Do you hear that, Ania... Sunday! Almost a year now. Mygod, it's been a long time. And the others... how are they?

PEDRO: Fine, Juan, Fine.

JUAN: And... Ramon?

PEDRO: Very fine. He's quite the hero, a leader of the commandoes. A real ninja.

JUAN: Commandoes? Wonderful! *(He begins to pace,)* And the people...

PEDRO: The people always suffer no matter what side they're on. *(He takes off his gloves.)* That's a fact... political reality, you used to say. And you? How are both of you getting along?

JUAN: Counter-revolutionaries? The soldiers made a hard fight of it, didn't they?

PEDRO: Of course. But there are others, sick, corrupt fools in the cities. The tribunals deal with them as quickly as possible.

ANIA: *(sharply)* I hear it's a hundred a day!

PEDRO: That many? Maybe. A cleansing process, that's all. Whatever it takes... for the good of the people.

JUAN: *(smiling)* For a minute, you sounded like someone in the regime.

PEDRO: *(laughing)* Politics has a stink about it, doesn't it? Listen, I can't stay very long... your little message said something about "urgent"...

(His abruptness disorients JUAN.)

JUAN: I... I don't...

ANIA: I sent the message!

PEDRO: You!

ANIA: We want to know what's happening.

PEDRO: I just told you that...

ANIA: We want to know about us, and this...

PEDRO: I really have to go. *(He turns to leave.)*

JUAN: PEDRO! (*PEDRO stops.*) TALK TO ME!

PEDRO: (*smiles*) Talk? About what?

JUAN: Don't play captain with me! I'm ready to come down from these fucking hills.

PEDRO: Come down? To where? You can't go anywhere, Juan.

ANIA: What does that mean?

(*PEDRO motions her away with his hand. She slaps his hand out of the air..*)

PEDRO: (*smiling coldly*) Don't you understand what's happened? It's because of your... sacrifice... your... martyrdom... that this revolution became a reality, just the way we planned. And the people are grateful. They revere you for it. They strike medals in your honor... Juan Castia, standing bloodstained at the wall. They're going to make statues of you. They call you... the Blessed Juan... Saint Juan.

JUAN: (*stunned*) Saint Juan?

PEDRO: That's right. You're more than a national hero, you're almost a god,

ANIA: And you're full of shit!

PEDRO: (*sardonically*) Shit? Saint Juan? (*He slams his fist on the table.*) It's a game... And these are the rules.

(*JUAN slaps his hand on top of PEDRO's.*)

JUAN: (*bitterly*) I am aware of the game! Do you think I've been sitting here all of these months thinking about flowers. (*He jabs his finger at PEDRO.*) I know who you are, and I know what to do about you. I faced myself at that wall, and I shrank from my own fear. But I'll face it again, I'll go down and tell them...

PEDRO: You'll go nowhere! You'll tell them nothing, because there's nothing to tell! This is where you'll stay. Tell it to Ania, she listens well.

(*His anger begins to rise. He moves away from the table to contain it.*)

You're a danger to me, Juan, to all of us. Do think that the guards I've posted up on the ridge are for your protection? They're protecting the people from you. You! And if you go near your... beloved people... they'll simply eliminate you. The only reason you remain alive is because of a memory, a soft spot I have, here. (*He points to his heart.*)

JUAN: Poor Pedro, never understood. Poor Juan, understood too much. And the people?... understand nothing.

PEDRO: (*exploding*) The people, the people! You were the people, I am the people, all of those others are just cinder blocks waiting for the builder to come along and arrange them, pile them into a great state monument. Don't be so simple and naive. The state, the new

state has what it wants now... a saint, a martyred saint. Hallelujah! I crucified you! And when I wanted your spirit resurrected, I resurrected you! And when I want you canonized, I will canonize you! The whole movement has gone past you. You live in a different world, on a different planet. Out there you are the symbol of a great revolution. In here, you're just the husk of that symbol. You had your revolution... at the wall, and it's over!

(He gets hold of himself and smiles.)

Listen Juan... Go out and tell them? They'll pull you apart and burn each piece in their hatred. Your people, Saint Juan, will eat you alive and vomit you into the sewer.

JUAN: *(begins to laugh)* I only wanted to be free, to live my life as a man, not a hero. But all they wanted was to believe.

PEDRO: Of course they believe... in the death of the man who took your place at the wall. His blood is your blood. Faith, you used to say, is not the symbol but the way you flash it in front of the eyes of the believers. Believers? True believers? Let me show you some of your faithful.

(He moves to the entrance and waves his hand. MANUEL and BERNARDO step in. Their faces are set cold and tight.)

JUAN: So, my old friends... Manuel, Bernardo?

(They stare at him and then down at the floor.)

ANIA: Jackasses...you balless jackasses!

(She shoves both of them with her hands, BERNARDO pushes her aside. RAMON appears at the door. He walks in stiffly. JUAN's face changes, softens. RAMON is dressed in the same style as PEDRO.)

JUAN: It's good to see you, little brother.

(RAMON just stares at him.)

Tell me... are you too a saint!

RAMON: Of course. Tin holds up well, don't you see?

JUAN: I see a smartly dressed military man. I see a whole group of smartly dressed military men.

RAMON: And do you see, what was his name, your brother at the wall?

JUAN: *(quietly)* Every night.

RAMON: And what do you feel?

JUAN: Pain. And what do you feel?

RAMON: I feel nothing!

(RAMON turns to leave. JUAN runs and grabs his arm. MANUEL lunges at JUAN. BERNARDO flashes his knife. ANIA yanks a pistol from her jacket and cocks it loudly. Everyone freezes. She holds the gun with both hands takes a step forward, pointing it at BERNARDO. He lowers the knife. She turns quickly, points the gun at PEDRO. He doesn't flinch, just smiles. She turns her head toward RAMON, throws the gun down at his feet.)

ANIA: *(sarcastically)* Do it right this time! Finish what you started!

(RAMON's face tightens, both of his hands rolled into fists. He looks at JUAN.)

RAMON: Stay well... brother ! You deserve to live forever.

(He turns on his heel and strides out. MANUEL and BERNARDO follow)

ANIA: *(to PEDRO)* Why don't you just end the game, let his "friends" kill him?

PEDRO: Kill him? Haven't you heard? He's already dead.

(He walks to the door, puts on his gloves, turns back)

Take care of him, Ania, take good care of that body. The rest has been entrusted to me!

(He leaves. She moves to JUAN, holds him for moment, strokes his hair. He rises, moves away from her toward the wall—now lit with the shaft of light. She turns, walks to the door, stops, leans against the ledge.)

ANIA: Juan...What will you do?

(He moves along the wall, stops, sinks to the ground.)

JUAN: Become... a saint!

(The lights fade out.)

THE WAFER