

Land and Liberty

Ricardo Flores Magón

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CHARACTERS

DON JULIÁN, rich landowner **RAMÓN**, peasant

DON BENITO, priest **TERESA**, Ramón's companion

JUAN, peasant **JAILER**

MARTA, Juan's companion **MINISTER**

MARCOS, peasant **LÓPEZ**, labor leader

ROSA, Marcos' companion

SEÑORITA SOFÍA MERINDIETA, professor at a teacher's college

OFFICIAL, **ASSISTANT**, **SENTINEL**, **DELEGATE**, first, second, third, fourth fifth **PEASANT**;
soldiers, peasants of both sexes and of different ages; workers of the city

The action occurs in Mexico.

ACT ONE

The stage decoration represents a path through a forest.

SCENE ONE

DON JULIAN AND MARTA

DON JULIAN (*Emerging from the left and halting in the middle of the stage.*) This time the girl will not escape me. How absurd that a man like me, powerful, owner of one thousand square kilometers of land and with great influence before the President would permit myself to drool over a wretched peasant like that Marta! (*Looking towards the right.*) She should not be long in passing through here. (*Consulting a gold watch.*) It is ten minutes to eleven, the hour when she carries the food to that imbecile Juan. And the food that those pigs devour my dogs wouldn't eat! But that is what those people deserve. How pretty it would be if they ate what their masters ate! As much as that girl is pretty. She has only been married to Juan for three months; I know that they love each other well, but I am the master and I have the right to her. (*Looking towards the right.*) Here comes Marta; I will hide myself. (*He crosses towards the left and hides himself behind a tree.*)

MARTA (*She emerges from the right carrying a basket in her arms and stops in the middle of the stage.*) (*Sighing.*) Poor Juan! He works so much and I bring him nothing more than beans. My heart breaks before such injustice, and in my breast I feel I know only mute rage. I am an ignorant person, but to me it is unjust that he who works lives in misery, while those who do nothing useful live enjoying all classes of comforts. (*She puts down the basket; she kneels and puts herself to arranging the napkin.*) (*Sighing.*) I know nothing, but I think that it is not just that those who work the land, sow the grain, and reap the harvest have less to eat than those who live in a continuous holiday without doing anything useful. (*Turning her head in all directions.*) Poor Juan! Not only do you wear yourself out and sacrifice yourself in your work so that your masters live in leisure, but they are not even satisfied with making you the victim of their exploitation; they try to snatch away the only happiness you have, your only treasure, which is my affection. You do not know that Don Julian persecutes me without rest. Despicable rich people! they do not content themselves with sucking blood; they are not satisfied with destroying our health with their prison labor: they also want our heart. Scoundrels, scoundrels!

DON JULIAN (*He emerges from his hiding place and approaches Marta.*) Good morning, Marta.

MARTA (*Without turning her face towards him.*) Good morning.

DON JULIAN (*Trying to embrace her around her waist.*) How beautiful you are! (*Marta rejects him.*) Why do you reject my affection?

MARTA Because I love Juan.

DON JULIAN Juan is a poor wretch, while I am rich.

MARTA But Juan I love, and you I hate. (*Energetically.*) Go away!

DON JULIAN Come on, calm down, little lady, you do not know what you are doing. Know this: hundreds of women would feel happy if I only directed a word at them. I am so powerful that I can obligate you to surrender your heart to me. Do not reject me, because the love that you deny me today with such pride you will have to come offer me tomorrow on your knees, and I will reject it then with the point of my boot.

MARTA (*Showing terrible agitation.*) Impossible! This never! I would rather die than be humiliated! Get away from me!

DON JULIAN Don't you realize my power? Well fine, know this: I can make them arrest Juan. I have influence with the Government and your husband can be recruited as a soldier. With one word from me, the political boss can hand him over to the Court to be killed like a dog at the side of the road. I can ...

MARTA (*Interrupting him in a lively manner.*) Do not touch him! Do not touch him! What crime has Juan committed to merit being treated in this manner?

DON JULIAN (*With dignity.*) I am the master here, and I can do whatever pleases me.

MARTA We will complain to the Government.

DON JULIAN Ha, ha, ha! We rich are the Government!

MARTA Get away from me!

DON JULIAN Love me; I need your love like thirst needs water, like the lungs need air. Decide: me or no one. Decide before it becomes too late. Remember what I have told you. I can order the arrest of Juan; I can order him to serve in the Army; I can hand him over to the Court to be killed like a dog; I can ...

MARTA (*Interrupting in a lively manner.*) Impossible! Impossible! What wrong has Juan done to anyone?

DON JULIAN He has not done anyone wrong; he is a good laborer, compliant, hard working, honorable, but I am the force and I can determine your future, your tranquility, your life. Well, then, decide on you action.

MARTA Impossible! (*She runs off and disappears left.*)

DON JULIAN (*Watching her run*) It is good; in a few minutes you will know how powerful I am. (*He leaves right.*)

(*Change of stage decoration*)

The stage decoration represents a labor camp.

SCENE TWO

JUAN, MARTA, DON BENITO, DON JULIAN, AN OFFICIAL AND SOLDIERS

JUAN (*Put in a ditch up to his to his waist, he persistently removes the ground from the bottom with a shovel and accumulates it on one of the edges.*) (*He dries the perspiration from his face and directs a look towards the sky.*) It is now almost midday and Marta has not arrived with the food. What could have happened? She never fails to be here at eleven and soon it will be twelve. (*Far away twelve bell strokes slowly toll.*) Twelve o'clock and Marta has not shown up. This lateness fills me with anxiety. (*Pause.*) How lovely is my Marta...! She is my blessing, she is my solace. (*Pause.*) But what will happen? Why does Marta not come? (*Resuming his task.*) The boss wants this work to be finished today, and finishing it requires three days, but it has to be concluded today because the master can fine me, he will fine me, if I don't complete it. (*Straightening out*

his body and clutching his gut with his left hand.) I am so tired ...! What a great disgrace it is to be poor! (*Looking towards the right.*) Here comes Marta! (*Astonished.*) But how strange she seems to me. (*He leaves the ditch to receive her.*)

MARTA (*She appears from the right with her hair in disorder and throws herself in the arms of her Juan.*) Oh Juan! My Juan! (*Sobbing.*) Have you had to wait long?

JUAN (*Alarmed.*) What happened? Why are you crying? Are we not happy with our love in spite of our misery? (*Caressing her.*) Calm yourself and tell me what has happened. (*They sit down on a rock.*) Never have I seen you cry.

MARTA (*Drying off her tears.*) We are disgraced

JUAN Yes, we are poor, we do not rely on good fortune; we live day to day, but our hearts are lucky: our love is a treasure and we are the owners of it. Who could snatch away this blessing?

MARTA The master.

JUAN The master? The master will be able to wither me up in work, giving me prison tasks in exchange for a few cents each day, like he is doing, like he has always done, like he did with my father and with the father of my father. But how could he rob us of the blessing of our love? As long as you love me, what can the master do?

MARTA (*Embracing Juan.*) Oh Juan, my poor Juan, the master wants me to become his; he has told me so many times; he just told me so and he has threatened me with taking you and sending you to a military barracks or with shooting you down as a fugitive if I do not submit my body over to him. Let's escape, Juan, let's escape the plantation.

JUAN (*Somberly.*) Escape ...! And to where? To another plantation? To the city? Where would we go that the master would not know?

MARTA Let's implore a judge to do us justice. The Law will protect us.

JUAN (*Somberly.*) The Law! Look, my Marta, the Law is a thing which does not benefit the poor. In the name of the Law they collect payments from the poor; in the name of the Law, they obligate the poor to donate their free services to the Authorities; in the name of the Law, they pull away the poor from the bosom of his family to make him a soldier, and if the family, abandoned in this manner, must rob or prostitute themselves so they do not perish from hunger, in the name of the Law they punish it ... The Law has been made by the rich to protect the rich ...!

MARTA (*Looking towards the left.*) (*Exaltedly.*) Here comes the priest Don Benito; he will save us.

DON BENITO (*Entering from the left.*) The Lord is with thee, my children. Such a warm day!

MARTA AND JUAN (*In one voice.*) Good afternoon, father. (*Vehemently.*) Save us, father! (*They kneel.*)

DON BENITO Save thee from what? What is happening? Tell it to me and with the help of All Powerful God I will save thee. (*He makes them stand up.*)

MARTA (*Sobbing.*) We are very unfortunate.

DON BENITO Yes, thou art poor; but poverty is a virtue; with it thou shalt open the doors of heaven.

MARTA We do not complain of poverty, but of injustice.

DON BENITO (*With unction.*) Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for theirs shall be the kingdom of heaven.

MARTA The master wants to force me to love him, and threatens me with sending Juan to jail or handing him over to the Court to be killed if I do not surrender myself to his whims.

DON BENITO (*Feigning amazement.*) But, my children, what are you saying! How dare you offend the Lord Our God with such slanderous fabrications.

MARTA We are not lying: we are telling the truth.

DON BENITO Thou shalt die in mortal sin if thou insist on thine calumny. Don Julian is an honorable and very pious man. He has done more for the Church in my parish than any other man. He confesses, takes communion, and attends the sacred mass on all the holy days. He is a man who, when he dies, will die in the scent of saintliness.

MARTA (*With energy*) What we are telling you is the truth.

DON BENITO What has happened is that thou dost not live in fear of God. Juan will have committed some crime when the master tries to hand him over to the law.

MARTA AND JUAN (*Speaking at the same time in a lively manner.*) We have not committed any crime.

DON BENITO This is what thou sayest, but thine irregular life makes me suspect that thou will have committed some crime. I'll bet thou are not even married by law. All you people do the same.

JUAN Father: we are rustic people who are ignorant of everything, but we believe that, for a man and a woman to live tranquilly, loving each other and helping each other in life, they do not need to report their union to anybody. It is the same as when you make a friend. Nobody is given a report of it, neither the State nor the Church ...

DON BENITO (*Arrogantly.*) Silence, blasphemer, thou art offending God with thine words. (*Aside.*) So it is with almost all these people: they marry without giving an account to either the State or the Church, to either God or the Devil. (*To them.*) Thou art excommunicated. (*Marta and Juan, horrified, raise their hands to their temples.*) (*Aside.*) If the poor devils only knew that I do not believe what I say. (*To them.*) God, justly offended by thy sins, has punished thee here on Earth. However, the day shall arrive when he shall punish thee after death with the fires of Hell. (*Aside.*) If I do not fill them with dread, they are capable of killing Don Julian - and me as well. (*To them.*) God wants to test thee; he wants to give thee an opportunity in which thou shalt demonstrate that thou shalt fear him and thou shalt revere his sovereign will. (*Aside.*) I have to defend Don Julian, the source of authority, so that this rabble does not rebel. (*To them.*) Thou shalt suffer with patience all the pains of this life; thou shalt resign yourself to all the sacrifices; it is God who ordains suffering in order to reward you over there. All thine sufferings here down below shall be rewarded up there by All Merciful God. All that happens on the Earth occurs because God has ordained it there in Heaven. Well, then, suffer in silence and pray to God to save thy souls.

JUAN Pardon us, Father: will the soul of Don Julian be saved?

DON BENITO (*Indignantly.*) Silence, blasphemer! Only God shall judge mankind. (*Aside.*) If we would permit these people to make use of their reason, to what end would Don Julian and I come?

MARTA (*Calling attention to the left.*) (*Astonished.*) A crowd approaches. What does it mean?

JUAN They are soldiers; I also see Don Julian.

MARTA Juan, they are coming to take you, let's flee

JUAN (*Dejectedly.*) Flee ...? And to where? Where can the poor slave go that his master's dogs do not overtake him?

MARTA (*Agitated.*) Let's flee, let's flee! (*Directed to Don Benito.*) Save us, Father!

DON BENITO Calm yourselves, my children. Let the will of God be done. The rich are the representatives of God on the Earth and one must obey them. (*Aside.*) If I don't preach these things, some day the poor will rise up against the rich.

DON JULIAN (*He appears from the left in front of an official and a platoon of soldiers.*) (*Pointing Juan out to the soldiers.*) This is Juan, the thief who stole the steer. Take him!

OFFICIAL (*Pistol in his hand.*) (*To Juan.*) Give yourself up! Do not move or I will order them to kill you like a dog! (*Directing himself to the soldiers.*) Tie up this man. (*The soldiers approach him and tie his hands together.*)

JUAN (*Supplicating.*) Do not harm me; I am innocent; I am an honorable man who lives from his labor. I have never stolen anything from anyone; I have as witnesses all the peasants on the plantation; if I have done anything throughout my entire life, since I was a child, it has been to work. Don Julian knows well that I have always worked. Let me go free! See that I have a young wife who needs my support. (*Desperately.*) Ah, I'm going crazy! (*The soldiers pull him and he resists.*) Do not take me away! Let me go, let me go!

OFFICIAL (*To the soldiers.*) Hm, force him to march with you to the jail. (*Juan throws himself to the ground, resisting them.*) Make him march to the blows of your rifles. (*The soldiers assault his fallen body with their kicks and the blows of their rifles.*)

MARTA (*Embracing Juan.*) (*Desperately.*) Kill the two of us! (*The soldiers strike both of them.*) (*Panting.*) The rich ... drink our blood ... rob our tranquility ... kill us ... scoundrels, scoundrels, scoundrels! (*She faints.*)

OFFICIAL (*To the soldiers.*) Bring some stretchers to lift up those dogs. (*The soldiers march quickly to the left.*)

DON BENITO (*Approaching Don Julian.*) So shall it be by the love of God! (*Speaking to his ear.*) I know everything! Now it is necessary that the people do not realize the story of the true cause of this violence. I have been able to notice in the people an uneasiness which I had little recognized before. Throughout the country, the peasantry are rising up in insurrections against the landlords. The inhabitants of this plantation have always been very peaceful, but some time ago I have noticed the unequivocal sign of something fermenting in the base of the working class. An infernal leaflet, an abortion of the Devil with the name "Regeneration" has successfully been introduced into the peasant's shacks, mocking the vigilant squeeze of the authorities, and the people are waking up more than is necessary, damaging the Church and the sacred principle of Authority. I have striven from the pulpit to return the people to their simple ignorance so they will remain comfortable with their condition, but I observe that my words do not have the influence now that they had before: a spirit of rebellion floats in the air and rumors of revolt circulate all over. (*Exaltedly.*) Don Julian, I foresee that the end of our empire over the disinherited class is approaching with giant steps: a social cataclysm is about to happen; the masses are rising up against their masters, and a new social order might result from this unrest, from this discontent which agitates the proletariats ...

DON JULIAN (*Angrily.*) That mob will not dare to make an attempt on the lives of their masters!

DON BENITO Such confidence thou demonstrate, Don Julian, and that is because thou art not in contact with the people; but I, who discovers in the confessional the most intimate thoughts of these people, can tell thou that we are nearing a formidable catastrophe. Until a short while ago, the people lived in fear of God, respecting their masters and the Government, and waiting for their salvation after death. Now, I greatly fear that they want their redemption in this life,

and only God shall be able to save society from the ire of the people. (*Vehemently.*) Don Julian, we need to impress the people with solemn religious sermons, we must paint Hell with terrible colors so they submit to it, and for all this, the Church needs money.

DON JULIAN (*Boastfully.*) Money thou shalt not lack, beloved father, for I shall give thee all that thou might need, for in the end all that I spend for this shall come from the ribs of those dogs.

DON BENITO Understood.

ACT TWO

The interior of a hut with no furniture other than rough pieces of wood and stones that serve as seats; a petate, a flat stone for grinding corn, is placed by the side of an extinguished hearth, composed of three rocks, upon which rests a smoking pot. In a corner hangs a hammock made from a sack which functions as a cradle. The body of a baby wrapped in cloths of uncertain color rests in the cradle. A door is on the right. From one corner to another, some coarse pieces of men's and women's clothes hang to dry from a cord. The cord should be high enough so that it will not obstruct the view of the characters. In another corner, a trunk and, on top of this, a cot rolled up into a mat.

UNIQUE SCENE

ROSA AND MARCOS, THEN RAMON AND TERESA; FIRST, SECOND, THIRD, FOURTH, AND FIFTH PEASANTS; MEN, WOMEN, OLD PEOPLE AND CHILDREN OF THE WORKING CLASS; DON BENITO, OFFICIAL, AND SOLDIERS

ROSA (*Rocking the cradle with a cord.*) I do not know what we are going to do; each day we are more poor, and each day the master becomes more demanding. Today the majordomo, on behalf of the master, tells me that I am not permitted to bring up my hens on the land of the plantation, and that I have to eat them or sell them to the master's chicken coop; and I know what that means: that I make a gift of my animals.

MARCOS (*Scratching his head.*) I do not know what we are going to do. The administrator tells me this morning that I owe the plantation two hundred thirty pesos, because the hundred seventy pesos which my deceased father owed has been charged to me. We will be lucky to obtain a single cent when we sell the hens to the plantation. The price, calculated by the master, will be so low, that it will be deducted from my debt. (*He spits with rage and yells*) Rosa, this is intolerable. Such injustice has to stop.

ROSA (*With conviction.*) Yes, it must stop. (*Calling to the door*) Who is it?

RAMON (*From outside.*) It is Teresa and I. Open up immediately! (*Marcos opens the door and Ramon and Teresa enter showing signs of great agitation.*)

TERESA Do you know what has happened this afternoon?

MARCOS AND ROSA (*Speaking at the same time.*) What?

TERESA The master has ordered Juan to be arrested.

MARCOS (*Astonished.*) Has the master ordered the arrest of Juan?

ROSA (*Astonished*) But Juan is perhaps the finest man in the region!

RAMON Yes, the master has ordered the arrest of Juan. The master tries to seduce Marta. Marta rejects the master's flattery. The master sees that the obstacle is Juan, for whom Marta feels profound love, and to get rid of Juan, the master has ordered his arrest, accusing him of robbing a steer. Juan has been taken to the city jail, where they will make him enlist as a soldier.

ROSA (*Indignant*) This is more than I can support.

MARCOS (*Furious*) Such an infamy demands a quick end.

RAMON My friends, we must do something. Some neighbors on the plantation will soon be coming, who desire that you Marcos, who knows how to write with such great style and who has read so many books and so many newspapers, writes a petition for them to the Government, calling their attention to the injustices of which we are the victims, so that they apply a remedy.

MARCOS A petition to the Government?

RAMON Yes, in it you will tell them that we all find ourselves in misery: that we need land for sowing for our own well-being; that we be freed from the debts that we have with the plantation, that ...

MARCOS Enough! I will not participate in making petitions of this nature.

ROSA Very well, Marcos, now is not the time to beg, but to take. (*A murmur of voices is heard from outside.*)

RAMON Here come the neighbors.

ROSA Let's open the door. (*Marcos opens the door. Some thirty people enter, men, women, old people and children, all belonging to the working class of the country.*)

FIRST PEASANT (*Entering.*) Good evening.

ROSA, MARCOS, RAMON, AND TERESA (*In one voice.*) Good evening

FIRST PEASANT We come to ask you a favor, Marcos. Will you, who knows how to write so well, write a request to the Government so that ...

SECOND PEASANT (*Interrupting him.*) Do you know yet what happened to Juan this ...?

THIRD PEASANT (*Interrupting him.*) Don't forget to say, Marcos, that we need land to cultivate for our ...

FOURTH PEASANT (*Interrupting him.*) Also water for irrigating our ...

FIFTH PEASANT (*Interrupting him.*) And to put an end to the draft, Marcos; and don't forget to tell them that we want them to pardon the debts which we have with the plantation.

MARCOS (*Impatiently.*) Enough! You are little children, so innocent like some little children. For you, it is as if time has not passed. You think and work like your fathers thought and worked a hundred years ago, like your ancestors thought and worked five hundred, a thousand years ago. You want the Government to free you from tyranny and save you from misery ... Innocents! When have you seen the Government give bread to the hungry or freedom to the slave? (*He pauses.*) (*He walks intently throughout the hut. The spectators exchange astonished looks and whisper words in each other's ears. He stops and continues his speech.*) I do not need to tell you this; the facts speak for themselves: all government is bad for the poor!

FIRST PEASANT (*Convinced.*) What Marcos says is the real truth, and ...

SECOND PEASANT (*Interrupting him.*) My parents were as wretchedly poor as I am, even though they lived under a government and ...

THIRD PEASANT (*Interrupting him.*) Also my grandparents said that, in their long life, they never saw the Government protect the poor, and ...

FOURTH PEASANT (*Interrupting him.*) Also the truth is that I do not remember a single time when I have seen the Government protecting the weak, nor ...

FIFTH PEASANT (*Interrupting him.*) My father died in prison; my brother, in a military barracks ...

MARCOS And with all this experience you still wait for justice from the Government? Open your eyes! What we poor need is for us to take justice with our own hands. We must rebel!

ALL, EXCEPT MARCOS AND ROSA (*Crossing themselves.*) Hail Mary the Virgin!

MARCOS (*Indignant*) Are you afraid? Well then, bow down your ears and remain bent under the weight of your shame. If you don't hurt yourselves, at least you do not add a new humiliation to those you already have. What a serious humiliation it would be to ask our torturers for justice when dignity cries to us that we must tear it by force from the hands of our oppressors. Leave me in peace! Go away! (*Vehemently*) I feel the earth tremble with indignation under the footsteps of your herd. (*All remain in their respective places; dismayed, most scratch their heads.*) Go away! Return to your trenches to weed them with your sweat so that your tyrants profit from the harvests; go receive, as a prize to your meekness, the rape of your daughters by the masters, and the military barracks, being shot down a fugitive, or prison for yourselves. This is what people deserve when they do not rise up to stop the committing of a crime. Ask? (*Scornfully*) Well good, accept what they then give you: slavery, degradation, and death.

RAMON (*Calm.*) We are not afraid, Marcos. Is death not a thousand times sweeter than the torments that the poor suffer? We are not afraid of dying, but what do we gain by rebelling? If we knew that by rebelling we would ensure bread for our children and would secure their liberty, we would not hesitate in doing so; but it does not happen like this. We have had many revolutions and what has always happened? One bad government falls in order to establish another one which is just as bad as the one that fell. The poor always remain poor.

MARCOS The poor always remain poor because, in raising their arms, the poor hope for a new government to make them happy. The Government will not free anyone from the misery of poverty, because that is not its mission. The mission of the Government, of any government, of all government, is to protect the interests of the rich, interests which can only prosper by means of the sacrifice of the poor. If the poor will work only for himself and for his family, what would the rich eat? From where would the powerful then obtain the luxuries they flaunt? So that the rich enjoy is precisely why the poor suffer. Well then, what is needed is that there be no more rich, that we all be equal, and to accomplish this, there is only one method: To seize from the hands of the rich the land, the houses, the machines, everything that exists, and to make all of it the property of everyone. In this manner, we will not need to rent our bodies to any master, and all that the workers produce will be for the workers, and the comfort which the rich enjoy now will be enjoyed by all the workers.

ROSA (*With conviction*) This has been our mistake: that we have raised ourselves in arms to topple one government and to put another one in its place, instead of snatching the riches from the hands of the rich. (*A knock on the door. All exchange astonished looks.*)

MARCOS Who is it?

DON BENITO (*From outside.*) Open up, my children.

ALL, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MARCOS AND ROSA (*In one voice.*) Father Benito! (*Rosa rushes to open the door.*)

DON BENITO (*He enters making blessings to his right and left.*) (*With unction.*) Good evening, my children.

ALL, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MARCOS AND ROSA (*Kneeling.*) (*In one voice.*) Good evening, Father.

DON BENITO (*Aside.*) Those condemned Rosa and Marcos are heretics. (*To all.*) Rise up, my children, so that God may bless thee. Are thou entertaining thineselves? Are thou celebrating some special occasion? (*Aside.*) How will I justify my presence in this place and at this hour. I will tell these brutes some little lie. (*To all.*) I was passing on the priestly road when I was surprised

to see a light through the cracks of the door. Someone is sick, I told myself, and I ventured to call at the door. (*Hypocritically.*) It is so sweet to console those who suffer!

MARCOS Here we do not celebrate any special occasion nor has anyone contracted a sickness. As for how many suffer ... It is all of us!

DON BENITO (*With unctious.*) Blessed are those who suffer on the Earth, because theirs will be the kingdom of Heaven.

ROSA (*With cunning.*) And those who are happy on the Earth, can they also enter the kingdom of Heaven?

DON BENITO Naturally, my daughter, naturally if they are good Christians.

ROSA Well then, it would be good if all of us will enjoy everything here, on the Earth, and in the kingdom of Heaven. At least, this would be just. A truly just God would devote himself to making sure that we all would be happy, like a good father of a family devotes himself to the happiness of all his children.

DON BENITO No one may judge the works of God. (*Aside*) Damn it, how this rabble has woken up! (*To Rosa.*) The divine wisdom wants there to be poor and rich, in order to determine which are the good ones who maintain, with humility, their poverty, and merit, for the same reason, to enter the kingdom of Heaven, and which are the disobedient ones, for whom exist the fires of Hell. (*All, with the exception of Marcos and Rosa, exchange horrified looks and make the sign of the cross.*) (*Aside.*) I must terrify the people by painting hells and devils because, if I didn't, poor rich people and we poor representatives of God: we would have to work to eat. (*To all.*) To what, my children, does this reunion owe itself?

RAMON Father Benito, we have come to ask Marcos to write us a petition to the government requesting justice.

DON BENITO (*Feigning amazement.*) Justice! But what happened to thee?

RAMON They have taken Juan, accusing him of robbing a steer. Juan is the most honorable man of the plantation, agreeable, hard-working, a good neighbor. He is a man incapable of committing a crime ...

ROSA (*Interrupting him.*) (*With contempt.*) Tell the truth, Ramon: they have taken him because Marta is pretty and he is the obstacle that prevents the master from making her his own.

MARCOS The same story as always: we have to sweat for the boss and we have to have a woman for the boss. (*Spits with rage.*)

DON BENITO (*Feigning amazement.*) But is this possible?

FIRST PEASANT Don't you remember, Father, that the Court killed Melquiades the herdsman because he accused the master of dishonoring his daughter?

SECOND PEASANT And who has forgotten that Santiago, the cart driver, rots in jail just because he made the master see that the blanket he sells us in the wage store, besides being bad, is expensive?

THIRD PEASANT But without going very far, how many days ago was Gregorio the gardener sent as a recruit to the military barracks, just because somebody warned the master that he walked around saying that we are made to work like men, but we are fed like dogs.

FOURTH PEASANT We want justice!

FIFTH PEASANT We want land to work for our own benefit!

DON BENITO (*Aside.*) Land to work for their own benefit, and then who will work for the master, for the Government, and for me. (*To all.*) My children, God, great and merciful, put thee on the Earth to see if thou were strong enough to endure all the miseries in this valley of tears

and then later to lift thee up to his breast. The more thou suffer here, the more probability thou have of ascending to Heaven. (*Aside.*) I am going to make myself laugh with such lies: if these idiots knew that there is no heaven, they would want to enjoy life here; and then this would bring ruin to all of us who do not know how to work. (*To all.*) Do not covet the goods of the Earth. The master, all the rich, administer these riches for your benefit. What would you do without the rich? Who would pay your salaries? (*Emphatically.*) You would die of hunger!

MARCOS (*With disgust.*) Only those who would not want to work would die of hunger!

DON BENITO (*Caustically.*) What are you saying, foolish man?

MARCOS (*Firmly.*) What you hear, imposter!

DON BENITO (*Trembling with rage.*) Thou art excommunicated! Hell awaits thee! (*Aside.*) This one must be made to disappear.

MARCOS Hell? Will there be a Hell worse than what the poor suffer? If there were a Hell, it would be filled, not with miserable wretches like me, but with crooks like you, who use fear to bind the hand of the poor so that it does not raise up against its oppressors.

DON BENITO (*Hiding his anger.*) God told me to have compassion for sinners. Therefore, I pardon you, Marcos. (*Aside.*) Pardon him, a demon! He will soon see what awaits him. (*To all.*) My children, it is already quite late and I must retire to my bed. (*Consulting his watch.*) Hail Mary the Virgin! It is ten o'clock in the evening. (*Aside.*) In five minutes, I am going to talk to the leader of the military detachments and to see that he softens that Marcos. (*To all.*) Remain with God, my children. Good evening. (*Nobody salutes him; he goes towards the door.*) (*Aside.*) The people do not fear God, the kingdom of injustice is going to tumble down.

ROSA (*Embracing Marcos effusively.*) My Marcos, how proud you are!

MARCOS (*Radiant.*) Death to the rich!

ALL (*In one voice.*) Death! (*They surround Marcos and embrace him.*)

MARCOS To your arms, brothers, to take back what belong to us! Long live the Social Revolution!

ALL (*In one voice.*) Viva!

OFFICIAL (*From outside, he pounds the door with the hilt of his sword.*) (*With a thunderous voice.*) Open this door in the name of justice!

MARCOS (*Indignant.*) The priest has denounced us.

OFFICIAL (*From outside.*) (*With a thunderous voice.*) Open up in the name of justice, or this door will be brought down! (*He repeatedly pounds with the hilt of his sword.*) Soldiers, bring down this door with the butts of your rifles ... ! (*The racket of rifle blows is heard accompanied by cries of "Death to the bandits!" "Long live the Supreme Government!"*)

MARCOS Comrades: if any victim has to be taken, I will be that victim! I will accept all the responsibility!

ROSA (*Vehemently.*) And me too! (*She moves herself to Marcos' side.*) (*The door falls down, and the official and ten soldiers hurriedly enter pointing their guns.*)

OFFICIAL (*With a thunderous voice.*) Surrender, bandits! You here have conspired against Law and Order. (*Aside.*) With this deed, the government makes me a colonel. (*He gets in front of Marcos and, putting the point of his sword in his breast, shouts at him.*) Surrender, wretch!

MARCOS (*He rapidly removes the sword from his breast. At the same time he draws out a dagger which he secretly lifts from beneath his shirt and stabs the official in the heart.*) (*Energetically*) Take this! (*The official falls dead at his feet: the soldiers, astonished, lower their arms.*) In the name of the Law you came to apprehend me; well then, in the name of Justice I defended myself. (*To*

the soldiers, in a solemn tone.) Death has come to your oppressor. Would you now dare to take your brother? *(He pounds his fist against his chest.)* All of you are poor like all of us, and by supporting the government with your rifles, you support that which makes wretched ourselves and yourselves as well. Your families live in misery, suffer hunger, nakedness and oppression, and you, with your rifles, sustain that which causes the suffering of your own people, of the flesh of your flesh and the blood of your blood. *(With vehemence.)* The soldier is the oppressor of his own parents, brothers, and children. Remember that you are men and unify with us to demolish the oppression of the accursed trilogy who have disgraced human beings with poverty: the bourgeoisie, the clergy, and the government.

SOLDIERS *(In one voice.)* Long live the revolution!

ALL *(In one voice.)* Viva! *(The soldiers and peasants embrace each other.)*

MARCOS Comrades: we must not lose time: The hour for the liberation of slaves has rung. Everyone must call from door to door announcing the good news so that we may gather together all those who have a heart to redeem Juan and Marta immediately, and to take, for once and for all, possession of the plantation for the benefit of all the workers. Let's go! *(Directs himself to the door and exits, accompanied by Rosa, who has taken the child in the cradle.)*

ALL *(Directing themselves towards the door and exiting.)* *(In one voice.)* Death to the rich! Death to the priests! Death to governments! Long live land and liberty!

ACT THREE

The stage decoration represents two prison cells, separated by a wall which divides the stage in two parts. A straw mat and a pitcher in each of the cells.

UNIQUE SCENE

JUAN, MARTA, DON JULIAN, DON BENITO, JAILER, MARCOS, ROSA, RAMON, TERESA, PEASANTS OF BOTH SEXES AND DIFFERENT AGES

MARTA *(In the cell on the right, sitting on the mat.)* *(Sighing.)* Where will Juan be? *(Pauses.)* Will the Court have killed him? *(She lifts herself, seized with great excitement.)* *(Yelling.)* Assassins! Villains! Scoundrels! *(She shakes her arms with desperation and finally lays down on the mat, hiding her face in her hands.)*

JUAN *(He paces along his cell; he stops.)* What will become of my Marta? Will she have surrendered to the appetites of the master? *(Desperately.)* Ah, it is driving me crazy. *(He paces.)*

MARTA *(Sitting up.)* If only they would have allowed me to see my Juan for the final time ...! *(She sobs.)* *(She remains seated with her head between her knees.)*

JUAN *(He stops.)* *(Lifting his hands to his head.)* My head is going to explode! *(He hurls himself to the mat and reclines, remaining motionless.)*

MARTA *(She stretches out her hand to the pitcher and drinks; she places the pitcher back in its place.)* *(Bitterly.)* How disgraced are the poor! We are not even the masters of our own bodies! *(The noise of the latch comes from the door; she throws herself upon the mat and pretends to be sleeping.)*

JAILER *(He opens the door and appears brandishing a garrote in his hand, fastened by a cord; he approaches Marta.)* *(With an imperious voice)* Do you sleep? *(Marta does not move; he shakes her with the tip of the garrote.)* Wake up, pig!

MARTA *(Grumbling.)* Ay, I suffer so much!

JAILER That will teach you to respect your masters. Imbecile!

MARTA *(Sitting up.)* I respect everyone; but the master does not respect me.

JAILER *(Irritated.)* And who are you that the master should respect you? A poor wretch!

MARTA (*Firmly.*) I am a human being; I am a woman. What would you feel if the mother who carried you in her womb was in my place?

JAILER (*Impatiently.*) Bah, enough philosophies! What you must do is comply with what the master requests of you.

MARTA Would you be capable of submitting the woman you love to the caresses of the master?

JAILER (*Irritated.*) Enough! I did not come here for you to confess to me, do you hear? Two hours ago, they took your brute of a husband, with his elbows tied together, to the city ...and you know, already on the road ... (*he coughs*) on the road ... (*he coughs and smiles derisively*) on the road thirst will attack him. and how it breaks the hearts of us government employees to see our neighbor suffer. Well, then, give him your "water". Ha, ha, ha!

MARTA (*Horried, she stands up.*) (*She yells.*) It is a lie! It can not be like this! Bring me to my Juan or kill me with him!

JAILER (*Clapping her back.*) (*Paternaly.*) Calm down, little lady, calm down. There is still time to return you to your Juan. It can be arranged with a telephone call to the places where he will pass with his escort, that they bring him back, and you will return to having him with you. (*Clapping her back in a wheedling manner.*) Foolish woman. In your hands is the life of Juan! Surrender yourself to the master!

MARTA (*Disgusted, she recoils from the jailer.*) (*Resolutely.*) This never! I would rather die than offend Juan. Ah, my Juan, I am sure that you would prefer to die, better than seeing me in the arms of the master. (*Lifting both hands to her temples.*) How much I suffer. (*She hurls herself upon the mat.*)

JAILER (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) Good, now you know. On you everything now depends. (*He spits with scorn and leaves. The noise of the latch is heard*)

JUAN (*Sitting up.*) If only I knew how Marta is! Poor darling! How great a heart is hers! To share blows with me ...! (*He stands up and resumes his pacing.*) (*Feeling his body.*) My body hurts so much even though I am accustomed to abuse ever since I was a child. How much will she suffer? Scoundrels! Cowards! (*The sound of a latch is heard; he resumes his pacing.*)

JAILER (*He opens the door and appears brandishing a garrote in his hand, attached by a leather strap. Juan continues his pacing without fixing his attention on the visitor. The jailer gives him a terrible garrote blow on the back, which spreads him down on his face; soon after, he kicks Juan to make him stand up.*) Get up, dog!

JUAN (*Alternately rising and falling to the kicks.*) (*Pleading.*) Do not ... strike .. me your grace. I am so ... ti.red. (*He succeeds in standing up.*) You don't hit a defenseless man. See that I am a harmless man.

JAILER (*Sarcastically.*) Yes, quite harmless, such a harmless little angel that if he will be allowed to flutter his wings he would end up eating all the master's bulls.

JUAN (*Desperately.*) I am innocent!

JAILER (*Irritated.*) Innocent, you say? (*Scornfully.*) Bah, nobody innocent falls into the hands of Justice! Look at the master, at Father Benito, at all the good men, at the employees of the Government: when does the Law put its hand upon them? (*Emphatically.*) The sword of Justice does not fall upon honorable men. (*Insolently.*) Look at me!

JUAN (*Desperately.*) I am innocent! I am innocent! My crime is to be married to a beautiful woman!

JAILER (*Scornfully.*) Your wife, bah, a tramp!

JUAN (*Panting.*) What do you say about my Marta?

JAILER (*Sneering.*) And so Juan Lanas dares to call to (*emphasizing*) his Mar-ta! Do you know what (*emphasizing*) your Mar-ta is doing while you, idiot, find yourself here?

JUAN (*Desperately.*) What? What? Speak, please, or I will go crazy!

JAILER (*Sneering.*) She is amusing herself with the soldiers ... Ha, ha, ha!

JUAN (*Lifting his hands to his temples and staggering like a drunk.*) (*Bitterly.*) What is this I hear? Ah, I feel like dying! My heart cries blood! (*He sobs convulsively.*)

JAILER (*Aside, smiling.*) It appears that he is swallowing the fish hook. (*Rubbing his hands with satisfaction.*) If I win Marta for the master, they will make me a political boss. (*To Juan, clapping him compassionately on the back.*) Do not cry, silly, do not worry. There are so many woman in the world! Abandon Marta, who does not deserve your sacrificing yourself for her. (*From outside is heard the racket of drunken people, the laughter of men and women; later, various voices sing: "The old gray mare, she ain't what she used to be, ain't what she used to be, many long years ago." Explosions of laughter, howls, and out of tune shouts interrupt the song. The noise ceases.*) Do you hear? There is Marta. (*Aside, smiling and rubbing his hands with satisfaction.*) They will make me a political boss, they will make me governor.

JUAN (*Supplicating.*) Ah, leave me alone, please. I am so disgraced! I have lost my treasure, the love of Marta! (*He sobs.*)

JAILER (*Compassionate, slapping him on the back.*) Do not torture yourself, Juan. (*Aside.*) Who will be able to prevent me from ever becoming the President of the Republic? First, political Boss; then Governor; from there to the Senate, to the Ministry, and, finally, I will see myself occupying the presidential seat. Then who will snort at me? I will rule with an iron fist. (*Exalted.*) Yes, the people need an iron fist so they don't fling themselves against honorable people. Damned wretches! What would happen to the goods of the rich if there were no authority? (*To Juan.*) Do not torture yourself. Look: you are talking with an honorable man with a good heart who is going to give you some advice for your own good: abandon Marta.

JUAN Ah, I feel like I fainting. (*He hurls himself on the mat and remains immobile.*)

JAILER Think carefully, Juan. (*He goes towards the door.*) (*Aside.*) He is going to abandon her. My political career is guaranteed. (*Exits, closing the door behind him; the sound of a latch is heard.*)

MARTA (*Sitting up.*) If I die, what happiness! (*The sound of a latch is heard.*)

JAILER (*The door opens and the jailer appears followed by Don Benito.*) (*Showing her to Don Benito.*) She is awake. I am retiring to bed, Father, so that you can devote yourself in peace to the sacred functions of your ministry. (*He leans over, kisses the priest's hand, and leaves.*)

DON BENITO (*Approaching Marta.*) (*Paternal.*) Good evening, my daughter.

MARTA (*Sadly.*) Good evening, Father.

DON BENITO (*Hypocritically.*) Understanding that you suffer, I come to console you. (*Raising his hands up high.*) Merciful God, take pity on your sheep; let your divine hand cover the heart of the sorrowful, so that it revives the hope in them. Illuminate me so that I may give consolation to this unfortunate woman. (*He sweetly places his hands on Marta's tilted head.*)

MARTA (*Bitterly.*) I suffer so much!

DON BENITO (*Aside, smiling.*) So much the better; I will attain my objective more easily. (*To her.*) Resign yourself, my daughter, to know the worst thing.

MARTA (*Standing up hastily.*) (*Panting.*) Have they already killed Juan?

DON BENITO (*Caressing her cheeks.*) No, I don't want to say that. Simply that it is best that you are prepared for the worst. The crime of Juan is serious, very serious. It has greatly offended God, who in his divine wisdom ordained: Thou shalt not steal!

MARTA (*Desperately.*) Juan is innocent! Juan is innocent!

DON BENITO (*With conviction.*) Juan is guilty, my daughter. His crime is one that the Lord Our God punishes with the eternal flames of Hell, and the government of Earth with the death penalty. Juan is going to die ...

MARTA (*Interrupting him in a lively manner.*) Lord! Lord! I would give up my own life if only you save Juan. (*She falls to her knees; she embraces Don Benito's legs and sobs convulsively.*)

DON BENITO (*With a triumphant smile.*) (*Aside.*) I see the bishop's office in my future. (*To her.*) Juan was already handed over to the Court, and at this hour he should already be at the point of suffering the pain of human law, after which he will receive the punishment of God, who is All Merciful. (*Smiling, aside.*) How boldly merciful it is to burn someone for all eternity! Luckily these idiots do not reason. (*To her.*) Resign yourself and pray for his soul.

MARTA (*Lifting her arms toward Don Benito.*) (*Desperately.*) Save my Juan for me, Father, save him for me. Ah, I am dying of anguish! What will I do to save him? What will I do? (*She remains on her knees, crying, with her head hidden in her hands.*)

DON BENITO (*Aside*) This is the moment, Benito; take advantage of it or say goodbye to the bishop's crown. (*To her.*) Ask the master for forgiveness and ... (*He pauses.*)

MARTA (*Lifting her head.*) (*Lively.*) And what?

DON BENITO (*Slowly*) And if he caresses you, you caress him as well.

MARTA (*Lifting herself up indignantly*) This, never! This, never! (*She twists her arms, seized with great agitation.*)

DON BENITO Well, then, upon your head will weigh the corpse of Juan and the remorse will gnaw away your heart until death! In these very moments, Juan marches surrounded by his escort. Imagine it! Imagine it! His guardians ride on their horses, cheerful like those who go out for a stroll. So travel those who carry out their duty to keep vigil over the sacred interests of society! Him, on foot, his elbows tied together, collapsing of fatigue, thinking of you ... (*Getting more excited.*) Thinking of you, of the selfish woman who is not capable of sacrificing herself to save him from death! (*Insinuating.*) Do you see it? How great is his fatigue! He slows down his steps; now he can no longer walk anymore; from his face the sweat pours copiously ... with the tips of their sabres they scratch his kidneys, and it livens up his step! Do you see it? Do you see it? In his mind arises an image: it is you, whom he adores. (*Marta sobs convulsively.*) Now, he can hardly take a step. Do you see it? He has just fallen down, and the jabs of the sabres make him get up. "Oh, Marta, Marta, save me!" he screams in his pain. He can not do it anymore; he throws himself to the ground ... and a bullet ends his tortures ...

MARTA (*Desperately.*) Ah, I belong to the master! I will surrender myself to the master! Just return me to my Juan! (*She throws herself sobbing upon the mat.*)

DON BENITO (*Aside, smiling and rubbing his hands.*) I have won the bishop's crown! I will be a bishop! Blessed is God! Halleluyah! Halleluyah! (*To her.*) I will run to give notice to the master that he should instruct the authorities by telephone to return Juan. God wants your sacrifice to make it in time! (*Aside, smiling.*) If only that stupid woman knew that the only thing that separates her from Juan is this wall! (*Touching his forehead with the point of his index finger.*) For genius, only a minister of the Lord! (*Going to the door.*) Now, to see what they sniffed out in Marcos' house. (*He exit.*)

JAILER (*Sticking out his head.*) (*Aside.*) It appears she is sleeping. I will take my turn. (*He leaves, making the latch sound.*)

JUAN (*Sitting up.*) How sweet it would be to die!

MARTA (*Sitting up.*) When will the slave break his chains?

JUAN I feel I will not survive my sorrow! (*He lets himself fall to the mat.*)

MARTA If my caresses were poison, I would lavish them so passionately upon the master ... (*She lets herself fall to the mat.*) (*The latch in the door rumbles.*)

DON JULIAN (*He enters and closes the door behind him.*) (*Aside.*) Will what the priest told me be true? (*To her.*) Good evening, Marta. (*Marta does not answer.*) That rotten woman would be asleep! (*He approaches her, sits down on the mat and surrounds her waist with his arms.*) (*With feigned sweetness.*) Awaken, my love, awaken, for here is the man who would give all his fortune for your love. I have already given the authorities the order that they set free that stubborn Juan. What other proof of my love do you want?

MARTA (*Sitting up.*) (*Supplicating.*) Have compassion for me; do not add the sting of your mockery to my immense pain. You do not feel love for me. (*Energetically.*) You feel the appetite of a beast: satiate it, monster! Love can not reside in your heart, or is there perfume in the mud? (*Like a dream.*) Love is the sunrise of life, love is the light that bathes the heart in the clarity of dawn. (*Becoming excited.*) Appetite snakes down the tortuous paths of crime to obtain its object: love does not crawl; it has wings! (*She lets herself fall to the mat.*)

DON JULIAN (*Inflamed.*) However it wants to be: you will become mine. That I crawl... If you were of my class, I would not crawl; but you are so low that I have been forced to crawl!

MARTA (*Sitting up.*) (*Lively.*) Abuse your force, tyrant, while the hour of vengeance rings. (*Desperately.*) I am yours! Devour me! (*She lets herself fall upon the mat; Don Julian embraces her and kisses her with ardor; but at the same time, the song of the Anarchist Marseilles is heard, intoned by men, women and children, mixed with shouting, rifle shots, and the clash of combat.*)

"To the proletarian revolt,

"The day of redemption already gleams;

"That the sublime ideal liberty

"Will be the North Star of the rebellion.

(*This verse is repeated.*)

"Let us dignify the life of man

"In a new social organism,

"Destroying the causes of evil

"Of this vile accursed society.

"Workers, to the struggle!

"To the revolution!

"With the decision

"To conquer

"Our emancipation."

DON JULIAN (*Standing up excitedly at the commencement of the song and the rumble of combat.*) (*Juan and Marta do the same.*) (*Alarmed.*) What do I hear? What does it mean?

MARTA (*Elatedly.*) It means the people are breaking their chains!

JUAN Will the sacred day of vengeance have arrived? (*He paces nervously.*)

JAILER (*He hastily enters Marta's cell.*) (*Trembling with fear, to Don Julian.*) Sir, we have lost! The peasants have rebelled! Some soldiers have made common cause with the populace!

DON JULIAN (*Alarmed.*) And what does this rabble want?

JAILER Land and Liberty! (*The jailer and Don Julian remain annihilated. Marta is radiant with enthusiasm.*)

JUAN (*He stops.*) The moment longed for, finally it arrives! (*Resuming his pacing.*)

MARTA (*Yelling.*) Rebellion, how blessed you are!

DON JULIAN (*Startled.*) We must flee!

JAILER (*Discouraged.*) It is useless; the jail is surrounded by the rebels. All exits are cut off. The loyalists battle with valor for the Supreme Government and the sacred interests of society, but the bandits are more than them. We are doomed!

DON JULIAN (*Astonished.*) Nevertheless, we must try to escape.

JAILER (*Somberly.*) There remains for us no exit other than the cemetery. The reign of injustice is ending!

MARCOS (*The noise of the latch in Juan's cell door is heard. Marcos enters accompanied by Rosa, Ramon, Teresa, and some peasants of both sexes and of different ages, armed with rifles, hoes, scythes, sickles, pistols, and garrotes. One of the peasants carries a red flag which shows in white letters this inscription: Land and Liberty.*) (*He throws himself in Juan's arms.*) Brother, you are free in the name of the Revolution. Now, let us go to liberate Marta.

JUAN (*Astonished.*) How! Hasn't she been seized?

MARCOS All the time she has remained in her cell like you.

JUAN (*Elated.*) Ah, how happy I am! The jailer lied to me so I would reproach Marta! Let's go liberate her! (*Juan and Marcos exit followed by the others.*)

JAILER (*Leaning out the door.*) (*Trembling.*) The rebels are closing in.

DON JULIAN (*Looking in vain for a refuge in the cell.*) Mercy! Mercy! (*Marcos, Juan, Rosa, Ramon, Teresa, and the others who entered Juan's cell appear. Some of the peasants push Don Benito to make him walk, his elbows tied together.*)

JUAN (*Throwing himself in the arms of Marta.*) (*Sweetly.*) My Marta!

MARTA (*Sweetly.*) My Juan! (*They remain embracing each other.*)

MARCOS (*Directing himself to the jailer, Don Julian, and Don Benito*) (*Solemnly*) Tyrants: for centuries and centuries, you have sucked our blood. The tears which you have made us spill would be enough to drown you. The people have waited patiently for the arrival of a Messiah who would save us: but all the Messiahs have turned out to be traitors to the cause of humanity, The people had allowed you to live and with you the institutions you represent. Now it is different. You are going to die and with you will die Authority, Capitalism, and the Church, the three oppressors of the human species. From today forward, there will not be a man who dares to make others obey him; there will not be a man who exploits the work of another man, there will not be swindlers who between popular justice and crime set fire to the flames of Hell in order to protect those on top from the rebellion of those below. (*To the revolutionaries*) Comrades: we must complete social justice. Let us cut off the head of the hydra and take possession of all that exists for the well-being of all. Long live Land and Liberty!

ALL (*In one voice.*) Viva! (*They seize the prisoners and conduct them outside of the cell with their arms tied together.*) (*All exit.*)

ACT FOUR

The stage decoration represents a field on the edge of a settlement composed of shacks. Disseminated groups of male and female peasants of different ages, sitting on blankets,

form a border in which others eat and drink happily. Male and female peasants circulate everywhere, expressing great rejoicing in their attitudes. Children frolic. In a prominent place, the red banner with the inscription "Land and Liberty" in white letters. Weapons in a pavilion are mixed with farm instruments.

SCENE ONE

JUAN, MARTA, MARCOS, ROSA, RAMON, TERESA, SENTINEL

MARCOS (*Juan, Marta, Marcos, Rosa, Ramos, Teresa and others form part of one of the groups.*) (*Smiling.*) It has been only twenty four hours that this old sun has toasted the backs of the herd, and today it kisses the fronts of free men. Still yesterday we were not owners of a clod of earth to recline our heads; today everything is ours.

RAMON (*Enthusiastically.*) We owe everything to you, Marcos. Comrades: a round of applause for Marcos. (*Many of those who walk about and even those who form groups approach.*)

MARCOS (*With liveliness and dignity.*) Stop there! Nothing is owed to me. Here each one of us has wanted to be free, and to be free each has accepted the necessity of fighting for the liberty of the others, for no one can be free when others are slaves. In this manner, all of us are courageous and commendable at this time. Do not begin, comrades, to make leaders, because by tomorrow they will transform into tyrants. When one man convinces himself that the liberty of a people is owed to him, that man comes to believe himself superior to the others.

ROSA (*Animated.*) Very good! Very good! Let us applaud everyone; let us congratulate everyone, because we owe each one and all of us for this beautiful day when we can celebrate the festival of brotherhood, equality, and liberty.

TERESA All that you say is very well said, but if Marcos had not persuaded us of the uselessness of asking for justice from our tyrants, we would be waiting and we would continue to wait, for centuries, that a shred of liberty, a scrap of justice, or a crumb of bread would come to us from the heights, when we have done no more than decide to raise up our fists in order to become free people and the owners of social wealth.

MARCOS Comrades, the experience acquired in these last twenty four hours teaches us the great wisdom of the maxim which says "the emancipation of the workers must be the labor of those same workers." If the workers of the cities would do the same as us ...! But no, manipulated by astute politicians, they have entrusted the Government with the task of emancipating them, which is like entrusting the wolf with guarding the lamb. Now, brothers, to work the earth for our exclusive well-being, but without abandoning the rifle. The enemy is not sleeping; in the city they will conspire against the revolution of the peasants.

ROSA (*Enthusiastically.*) Yes comrades, alert! The workers of the cities, ignorant of the solidarity that should exist between all the exploited, have made common cause with the political parties and are against us. They wait for a government to emancipate them. Poor misled brothers! What government has benefited the poor? The Government, all government, has to be the oppressor of the worker and the guardian angel of the bourgeoisie! Death to all government!

ALL (*In one voice*) Death!

SENTINEL (*Entering hastily from the right.*) (*Agitated.*) The enemy is approaching the canyon of La Quemada.

ALL To arms! Long live land and liberty! (*They take their weapons and the red flag; at the same time, they intone the second stanza of the Anarchist Marseilles.*)

"No more to the governing master

"For a vile salary do we want to serve;

"No longer the humiliating charity,

"No longer do we beg or ask.

(*This verse is repeated.*)

"When the proletariat asked for bread,

"With an impotent voice because hunger accosted him,

"The rifle of the uniformed oppressor,

"Murderous and ferocious, answered him.

"Workers, to the struggle!

"To the revolution!

"With the decision

"To conquer

"Our emancipation."

(*They leave singing, towards the right, expressing great enthusiasm and combative ardor.*) (*The stage decoration changes.*)

The stage decoration represents the office of an important character.

SCENE TWO

MINISTER, SENORITA SOFIA MERINDIETA, LOPEZ, DELEGATE, ASSISTANT, WORKERS

MINISTER (*Smoking a cigar at the side of his desk; he consults his watch.*) (*Yawning.*) May lightning strike down that Lopez! It is eleven twenty five in the morning and he still hasn't shown his nostrils. (*He blows smoke trails from his cigar.*) If those labor bosses weren't so useful to capitalism and to the Government, I would lift them out to the trashcan, not pay them more salary. But what would we do without them? If the workers were allowed to work for their own initiative ... goodbye, capitalist system! However, we have bosses, and we and these bosses understand each other, and those bosses take charge of making them sleep. Without bosses, the workers would have already cast themselves upon the machinery to work it for their own account, like the peasants are taking possession of the land to make themselves economically independent; but the bosses use their cunning to entertain those blockheads with reforms and only with this can we assure that the system of private property does not come crashing down. (*The sound of an electric bell is heard.*) Finally that damned Lopez has arrived! (*An assistant enters with a tray on which there is a card. The minister picks up the card and reads, aside.*) "Miss Sofia Merindieta, Professor." (*To the assistant.*) Let her in! (*The assistant exits.*) (*Rubbing his hands.*) That little schoolteacher is so pretty. (*Miss Merindieta enters.*)

SENORITA MERINDIETA (*Bowing.*) Good day, Sir.

MINISTER (*He lifts himself from his chair and effusively shakes the hand of the visitor.*) Good day, Madame. Please sit down. (*They sit down on a sofa.*) (*Honey voiced.*) Please tell me how I can be useful.

SENORITA MERINDIETA We are in misery. We need any kind of employment. My family is dying of hunger

MINISTER Yesterday, I received the communication that you requested this audience, and of course I agreed to receive it today, for our duty as government officials is to attend promptly to all petitions. (*Emphatically.*) For this we exist: to serve the people

SENORITA MERINDIETA Thank you, Sir.

MINISTER But I have the pain of telling you that the government is going through a terrible crisis. The country is infested with bandits raised up in arms, who respect neither property nor persons and who threaten to destroy the social order, and we government ministers must make all kinds of economic decisions, to reduce all expenses to the point of sacrifice, so that we can confront the situation. For such a reason, Madame, it grieves me to inform you that, at least for today, it is impossible to give you any position. Later, we will see. You will have to present us with your name and your address so that a call can be ordered.

SENORITA MERINDIETA (*Expressing great sorrow.*) Sir, my mother is sick in bed; my little brothers ask for bread ... (*She sobs.*)

MINISTER (*Smiling, aside.*) All the better, with more ease will you accept my caresses. (*To her.*) My heart breaks before such suffering. (*Hypocritically.*) Why else would God give me such a sensitive heart?

SENORITA MERINDIETA (*Supplicating.*) Please help me, Sir. Since yesterday, not a morsel can be found in my house, my mother does not have her medicines, the children are cold and hungry ... (*She sobs.*)

MINISTER (*Smiling, aside.*) She will be mine! (*To her.*) For the love of God, you are killing me with your sorrow! (*She sobs convulsively; he surrounds her figure with his arm; aside.*) She has to fall, she has to fall. If there were no pain below, from where would we on top draw our mistresses? (*The door opens.*)

ASSISTANT Mr. Lopez!

MINISTER (*Aside.*) May lightning strike him down! (*To the assistant.*) Let him in. (*To her.*) Please come tomorrow at eleven so that I may endeavor to alleviate your situation. You have not touched a heart of stone. (*Shaking her hand effusively.*) Until tomorrow.

SENORITA MERINDIETA (*Desperately.*) Twenty four more hours of agony! (*She leaves sobbing.*)

MINISTER (*Furious.*) What bad timing this Lopez has! Ten minutes more and .. she falls.

LOPEZ (*Entering.*) Good morning, Sir.

MINISTER Good morning, Mr. Lopez. (*He shakes his hand.*) Please take a seat. (*They sit down.*)

LOPEZ Conforming to what you and I agreed upon yesterday, I spoke last night with members of the labor unions. They seemed very distrustful, saying that the pact made between them and the Government has not produced one more crumb of bread, and in no way has it reduced working hours. (*Solemnly.*) I have been able to detect symptoms of rebellion, Sir. I don't know how, but that damned newspaper those Californian renegades publish, that tabloid called RE-GENERATION, has been able to slip into proletarian homes; in any case, I have seen it in more than one home and its influence is disturbing, because it kills the workers' faith in the church and in their leaders and awakens in them the desire to take possession of the social riches, as the only way to escape misery and tyranny. They did not receive me as well as before, and they did not confide in me as they usually do. I don't know how they have come to notice that obviously I get paid to discuss social problems in a manner that benefits the Government.

MINISTER These are bad symptoms, Mr. Lopez.

LOPEZ Very bad, Sir. They already dislike the labor unions. They say that the unions do not aid the worker. Before long, they will want to devote themselves to the expropriation of the social riches, like the workers of the fields have done. I have tried to convince them that violence does not lead to anything good, and that workers should strive for their emancipation using only peaceful means, especially when they can rely on a government which is a friend to the workers.

MINISTER Bravo! Bravo, Mr. Lopez! With labor bosses like you, we will keep those bums under our thumbs.

LOPEZ They did not remain very satisfied, and decided to send a commission this day to solicit a promise of help from you. Ha, ha, ha! The idiots!

MINISTER Ha, ha, ha! Those suckers still swallow the fishhook! The reign of exploitation has more years of life! *(The door opens and the assistant appears.)*

ASSISTANT *(Going towards the minister.)* Sir, some workers desire to speak with you.

MINISTER Let them in immediately. *(The assistant exits.)* The circumstances are turning this into a comedy. Contact with the mob fills me with such disgust ...!

DELEGATE *(Various worker delegates enter. From the torpidity of their movements and the awkwardness of their attitudes, one can guess that finding themselves in an environment so different from their own perturbs them greatly.) (Fidgeting with his hat.)* Good morning, Sir. *(To Lopez.)* Greetings, comrade.

MINISTER Good morning, sirs. *(He hurries to give them his hand, which he surreptitiously cleans off in the folds of his jacket.)*

LOPEZ Greetings, comrades. *(He chuckles, aside.)*

MINISTER Sit down, my friends. *(All sit down; some scratch their heads, others fidget with their hats, and some do not know what to do with their hands and their feet.)* Make yourselves at home. To what do I owe the honor of having shaken these honorable hands?

DELEGATE *(Perturbed, fidgeting with his hat.)* Well ... well ... already the gentleman here *(designating Lopez and scratching his head)* ... says, already comrade Lopez will have given you some details of what we workers want.

MINISTER If effect, already Mr. Lopez tells me that you would come to see me in order to solicit the Government, of which I have the honor of forming a part, for the security of its support. *(Emphatically.)* The Government is with all of you, noble sons of Labor. *(He pats the delegate's knee, then immediately cleans off his hand in the folds of his jacket.)*

LOPEZ Yes, comrades, I have just had a long conversation with the minister. I have explained your situation to him, the misery you suffer because the salaries you receive are so stingy, and the minister, with his good heart, has felt pity for your sufferings and has sworn to put those capitalists in line in order to alleviate your situation; but because we are struggling with great difficulty fighting against many bandits raised up in arms, it is not possible to put into practice the reforms that will have to emancipate you, the worker, from the capitalist yoke. It is necessary, comrades, that you give all your support to the Revolution Made Government to secure peace and to help together in the great work of national reconstruction.

DELEGATE We are ready to spill the last drop of our blood in defense of the Government.

MINISTER *(Aside.)* They will fall for it! *(To them.)* I could not hope for another thing from the noble sons of the workshop, the forceful heroes of the factory, the champions of the hammer and the square, than that they be on the side of the Revolution Made Government to vanquish the bandits. *(Solemn.)* In the name of the Fatherland I salute you, soldiers of justice. The peasantry of

the plantation of La Purisima rose up last night in arms and committed a thousand crimes; the bandits will violate women, will rob, will commit arson, will murder, and will carry their audacity to the degree of declaring themselves owners of the plantation. What will these outrages do to society? These peasants are your worst enemies, because with their acts of savagery and their constant rebellion retarding the advent of peace, business stagnates, salaries can not increase, and the country loses its international reputation.

LOPEZ Death to the bandits! (*The workers stand up and shout: death!*) Comrades: exterminate those vipers who prevent the Government from putting into practice its redemptive reforms. (*The workers: death to the bandits!*) Fly to join together with all your comrades! The military commander will provide you with arms and munitions. March like men to vanquish the reactionaries. A special train will put you at the scene of the action in three hours. Long live the Social Revolution! (*The workers shout: viva!, and, after giving their hands to the minister and to Lopez, they hurriedly exit the office. The door closes. Lopez and the minister look each other in the eyes and burst into uproarious laughter.*)

MINISTER (*Disgustedly cleaning his hand.*) If they were not idiots, what would become of us?

LOPEZ (*With conviction.*) If they were not idiots, we would have to sweat to win our bread. Without workers who have no class consciousness, so much of the bourgeoisie, as well as the priests, the government, and the many parasites who live off the sweat of the poor, would have to roll up our sleeves and to adjust to the pick and the shovel if we would not want to perish of hunger.

MINISTER Thank god the number of imbeciles is infinite.

LOPEZ Yes, but they are waking up. Be careful that we don't sleep. Well, I am leaving. Good evening, Sir. Tomorrow we will know the results of the encounter between the workers of the city and those of the field. Brothers against brothers! Blessed is the ignorance of the masses that assures our tranquility! (*He gives his hand to the minister and leaves.*)

MINISTER (*Disgustedly cleans his hand.*) I have to give my hand to Judas! (*Change of stage decoration.*)

The stage decoration represents a mountainous place. On the right, large crags form a natural rampart. Peasants of both sexes and different ages lie dead in different places, mainly at the foot of the large rocks on the right, where the majority of the defenders of the rampart, men and women, are to be found. The children strip the dead of their ammunition and deliver it to the survivors. Some children leave to the enemy field to strip the dead supporters of the government of their ammunition and they return carrying it in baskets. The red flag, in a prominent place. General shooting.

SCENE THREE

JUAN, MARTA, MARCOS, ROSA, RAMON AND TERESA

MARCOS Arise, comrades! The anarchist poet Praxedis Guerrero tells us "Live to be free or die to cease being slaves." (*He shoots his rifle.*)

ROSA (*At Marcos' side.*) Long live the Mexican Liberal Party! (*All reply: viva!*) Long live Anarchy! (*All reply: viva!*) Long live Land and Liberty! (*All reply: viva!*) (*She falls down dead.*)

MARCOS (*He leans over and places Rosa's head upon his knees.*) (*Sadly.*) She is dead! (*He kisses her.*) She has ceased to be a slave. (*He embraces her with tenderness.*) Those are not the tyrants

who have wrenched away your life, my Rosa. It is a proletariat who has struck you down dead. The assassin is your brother, is Cain! You wanted to break his chains, and he has paid you with death. Ah, what hell awaits this deluded slave! He will return triumphant to his home, with his hands painted in the blood of his own people, of those of his class, but without a crust of bread for the children who faint from hunger. Then he will comprehend that he has murdered you in order to ensure well-being for the rich and to refasten his own chains. *(He embraces her.)* Sleep, my Rosa, sleep. In a few minutes, I will be with you. *(He kisses her tenderly and gently rests her on the earth. He raises up and continues shooting his rifle. From outside are heard cries of "Surrender bandits!" "Long live the Supreme Government!" The defenders of the rampart intone the third stanza of the Anarchist Marseilles.)*

"The privileges of the bourgeoisie

"Let us annihilate them with a tenacious arm,

"And the fields of the tyranny

"Be the pasture of a voracious fire

(This verse is repeated.)

"We do not remain under the heel of the state and its laws,

"That always enslaved the people ferociously

"And the ignorance expires which it conserved

"With its Fatherlands, its Gods, and its Kings

"Workers, to the struggle!

"To the revolution!

"With the decision

"To conquer

"Our emancipation."

(The defenders go falling dead)

JUAN *(He seizes the red flag and waves it over the parapet.) (Directing himself to the enemies.)* Brothers, workers of the city: this flag represents the blood of all the oppressed of the world. She has the color of your blood and of our blood. Unite with us, who are your brothers of class, and let us fight together against the common enemy: the bourgeoisie, the priesthood, and the government! Long live Land and Liberty! *(Those outside: death to the bandits! Juan falls, wounded, in the arms of Marta.)* They have wounded me!

MARTA *(Reposing him in her knees, she separates the hair of his forehead.)* Murderers! Assassins! *(She kisses his forehead.)* Each death of ours is one link more you add to your chains. *(She raises her hands to her head.)* I am wounded. *(She falls.) (Those outside shout: Long live the Supreme Government! The defenders respond: death!)*

TERESA *(She lifts the red flag and shakes it.)* We die, but the idea that this flag represents will not die. *(Directing herself to the enemy.)* Tomorrow, when the tyrant wounds your flanks with his spurs, you will remember us, and the remorse will gnaw away your hearts. Then you will lift up this flag which death tears from our hands. *(She falls down dead.)*

RAMON *(He bows down and kisses her.)* One more victim of bourgeois brutality. *(He stands up and shoots his rifle at the enemy.)* Kill us, for liberty needs the blood of good people, but also it is nourished by the heads of tyrants. *(He falls down dead.)*

MARCOS The enemy advances its assault on our rampart! Everyone here, let's receive it with a volley of bullets. *(All respond to the call and prepare their rifles.) (A voice from outside: surrender!) Fire! (All shoot; those outside respond to the shots and all the defenders of the rampart, with the*

exception of Marcos, go falling to their deaths, until only Marcos remains.) (A voice from outside: surrender!) (Energetically.) An anarchist does not surrender! (A shot is heard and he falls down wounded. He gets up unsteadily.) You who sustain crime should surrender to me, who represents justice. Drink my blood, you senseless fools, and carry my heart to your hungry children for them to devour, because your masters will not toss them a single bone from their banquet. (From outside: surrender bandit!) (Starting to spin.) Ah, all are dead: but while there is hunger and injustice, the revolution will continue forward. (He unfastens his shirt and places his hand over his chest.) Kill me! Murder your class brother, so that your oppressors will be happy! Give me death without delay so that you may return to the city to receive the kicks of your masters as a reward for your treason. Long live Land and Liberty! (A voice: fire! A shot is heard. He falls down dead.)

END

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Land and Liberty
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Translated by Mitchell Verter

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