

# Mystical Rose

by Ignacio Apolo

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## Notes on cultural references

### **The Play's setting**

The main characteristic of the area surrounding the suburbs of the city of Buenos Aires is the juxtaposition of the extremes of social classes. Private neighbourhoods (of the higher classes, fenced in, and guarded by private security) and areas of the lower middle class and shanty towns. It's not uncommon that to reach a high class pocket an extremely poor and marginal area has to be crossed.

The land "occupied" by extremely poor people who live in shacks and with no running water sewers or electricity are the so called "villas miseria".

Rosa's family is lower middle class but, evidently most of her neighbourhood is working class and the adjoining area is a shanty town (villa miseria).

### **Poor people's drug**

In the play "crack" is mentioned but the drug actually being used is called "PACO" It's the basic paste of cocaine (PBC), the drug used by the poorest. Together with glues etc which can be inhaled it's the cheapest substance on the market. It proceeds from one of the stages in the production of cocaine and is not suitable, as is, for human consumption because it's so toxic. Nevertheless it's being used. It's smoked in pipes made from aluminium tubes (what is generally used is a TV antennae or a curtain guide), it's devastating, ten or twenty times as bad as cocaine, its secondary effects include anorexia, which means a consumer can reach a severe stage of malnutrition. In its last stages it induces a loss of contact with reality, agitation, paranoia, aggressivity, hallucinations, which can last for weeks or months. This stage is called "cat's head" by specialists (because of the constant swaying as if looking for someone) as if it were a permanent hallucination where a persecutor appears on scene.

### **Racism**

Even though the word "blacks" or "niggers" is used, racism in the play- and in Argentine society at large- doesn't segregate people from African descent (there are very few anyway). It is addressed to those who don't descend from Europeans: Indigenous, creoles and immigrants from neighbouring countries. Basically to all lower class people.

### **Narcocommerce and politics**

The play deals with a badly kept secret: that narcocommerce is managed at high levels by the governing class. The greatest volume of commerce is carried out in the largest province of the country, Buenos Aires (which is ruled by a central governor and then by local mayors which rule each individual district).

The power conflict in which father Camilo mediates, as is suggested in the play, is between the governor ( or the higher echelons of the provincial government) and the mayor of a particular district, directly related to narcocommerce. The police intervention as well as the disturbances are due to this logic of power and interests and are actually coordinated by political delegates.

**Millstone and the death flights**

The passage in the Bible where it is suggested that a millstone be tied to a person's neck and that person be thrown to the bottom of the sea, has actually a strong political connotation in Argentina. Last year the president of Argentina had the military bishop removed from his post after he'd suggested that the Minister of Health should be punished in this way (that is that a millstone etc etc)for promoting legal abortion.

It should be remembered that during the military dictatorship it was normal procedure to get rid of the "prisoners" by throwing them into the river Plate from airplanes.

Ignacio Apolo

**TRANSLATOR'S NOTE**

Hopefully this translation should enable the reader to understand the story, follow the dramatic action and get the feel of the characters and their intentions.

However, depending on the director's choices, according to the specific audience it will be directed to (country) the dialogue should be adapted to what is normal to that audience's ear. To an Argentine ear the priest sounds a little pompous, Rosa a little stilted (a normal child that age would speak quite differently) as if she'd taken on a more grown up persona. Her mother and father have no distinct characteristics, both belonging to the lower middle class echelon of society. Lauchi on the other hand belongs to the outcasts, probably very little schooling and his speech has a lot of slang.

Another director's choice, of the same nature, would be to set the scene in Argentina and keep the character's names in Spanish as well as words such as: piquetero, cartonero, mate, paco, and trust to the audience's understanding from the context.

Mary Sue Bruce

## NAMES

Most of the names of the characters who live in the shanty town are nick names, which have a meaning- the meaning is generally mocking, sexual, derogatory-

The other characters in the play or don't have a name (Rosa's mother and father) or a neutral names (Camilo for the priest, Ayala as a surname).

Rosa's name obviously is the same as the flowers- many flowers are women's names in our language.

As to the rose, besides, it's a religious symbol associated to the Virgin Mary in the Lauretean litanies.

## LIST OF NAMES AND MEANINGS.

Characters:

LAUCHI: It's a short form of the diminutive of mouse, Lauchita.

Other names mentioned by Lauchi in reference to neighbourhood characters

Page 11

Jeta: jeans big-mouthed or sometimes face.

Conchi (the baby killed by a bullet): short form for Conchita, meaning, vagina.

Page 12

Ladilla (one of the participants of the disturbances): louse

Page 13

Teti (participant): From tits because she has big tits.

El Yerba: grass or yerba mate.

Page 22

Peloncha ( Launches friend who gives out holy stamps): short for "pelo de concha" vagina hair.

Page 27

Petera (Conchi's mother): from "pete", fellatio.

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## CHARACTERS

Rosa, 11 years old  
Lauchi, 12 years old  
Rosa's Father  
Rosa's Mother  
Priest

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Outskirts of the city of *Buenos Aires*.

## 1: Penitential Rite

*Mass.*

*Rosa standing, her Father behind. The priest's voice can be heard together with the congregation's.*

PRIEST'S VOICE

My brothers and sisters,  
To prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries,  
Let us call to mind our sins.  
And let us ask for God's mercy

FATHER

*His voice fades into the congregation's murmur*

I confess to Almighty God  
and to you my brothers and sisters,  
that I have sinned through my own fault...

ROSA

*Repeating a beat after her father*

That I have sinned through my own fault...

FATHER

...in my thoughts and in my words,  
In what I have done  
And in what I have failed to do

ROSA

*Repeating a beat after her father*

.....in my thoughts and in my words,  
In what I have done  
And in what I have failed to do

FATHER

*Takes Rosa's right hand and has her beat herself three times on her breast*

...through my own fault (*beat*), through my own fault (*beat*), through my own grievous fault (*beat*).

ROSA

*Repeats, moved, while the father lets go of her hand and continues praying*

Through my own fault  
Through my own fault  
Through my own grievous fault.

FATHER

*Continues praying with the rest of the congregation*

And I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin  
 All the angels and saints,  
 And you my brothers and sisters,  
 To pray for me to the Lord, our God

PRIEST'S VOICE

May almighty God  
 Have mercy on us,  
 Forgive us our sins,  
 And bring us to everlasting life

FATHER

*Together with the rest of the congregation*  
 Amen.

ROSA

*A second later*

Amen.

*The voices of the priest and the congregation fade out.*

## **2: Go in peace**

*After the mass has come to an end*

ROSA

Dad. I've been thinking...

*A beat*

Dad.

FATHER

Yeah.

ROSA

Jesus died for our sins. Once and for all. And with his blood he redeemed humanity of its sins... since then, and for all the generations to come.

FATHER

Yes. Of course.

ROSA

But we go on sinning.

FATHER

Well, yes. It's part of human nature.

ROSA

And each time we commit a sin, Christ dies once again on the cross

FATHER

Yeah? Where did you get that from?

ROSA

Dad! That's basic catechism. My sins are the nails...

FATHER

*Observing her seriously*

What's the matter, darling?

ROSA

I'm... trying to understand what I did wrong.

FATHER

Haven't you been to confession this week?

ROSA

Father Camilo was very upset. About the little saint.

FATHER

*Smiles sarcastically*

The little saint.

ROSA

I didn't want to ask him. I was afraid to.

FATHER

Afraid to? Well, that's okay. It's not a bad thing to be afraid sometimes. It's better not to become too involved in these matters; it's better not to know too much. So did you confess or not?

ROSA

Yes.

FATHER

So you can rest easy then; God loves you.

*Pause*

*He's about to leave, but Rosa stays behind*

What's the matter, Rosa? What's bothering you?

ROSA

My thoughts won't stop.

FATHER

That's what they do, they never stop.

ROSA

But I can't help having bad thoughts. And with each thought I nail Christ on the cross once more.

FATHER

Is that so? And what do you think about?

ROSA

Sins.

*He bends over her and takes her by the shoulders. He interrogates her.*

FATHER

What do you think about, Rosa? Tell your father about it. It'll be better that way.

ROSA

People are saying he's a little angel. That he's in heaven and they're asking him to work miracles for them. They're saying he's already complied...

FATHER

"People", "people". Who, Rosa? Rosa, who have you been talking to?

ROSA

They've made him an altar. People pray to him, they take him offerings. I hate him, daddy; I hate him!

FATHER

Why, Rosa? Don't get mixed up with that stuff, why does it bother you?

ROSA

They say he's worked a miracle.

FATHER

Where did you get that from?

ROSA

Lauchi has been telling me all about it.

FATHER

Who?

ROSA

Rubén Lautaro. Gregoria's grandson. One of her ...grandsons. A grandson of Gregoria's.

FATHER

I don't like you talking to those people.

ROSA

We give them secondhand clothes dad. It's parish work.

FATHER

If you have to talk to those people you'd better start by not believing everything they say.

*He looks at her seriously.*

*Rosa nods.*

*Father straightens up.*

Talk to Father Camilo.

ROSA

*After a beat.*

They say he's a little angel who flew straight up to heaven. That he's innocent; that's why God listens to him.

FATHER

*Threatening.*

Rosa. Stop it. You're making me angry.

ROSA

So why did he die so young then? Because God wanted him to be with him!

FATHER

*Annoyed, he holds her firmly.*

Listen to me carefully. Look into my eyes, Rosa. Listen carefully. Nobody is innocent, Rosa. Do you understand? No-bo-dy is i-nno-cent.

### **3: Take your cross and follow me**

*Rosa and Lauchi, standing on the sidewalk outside a shack. Rosa has a plastic bag full of clothes.*

ROSA

...look at it like this, if you can get it into your thick head. Angels don't have bodies, they're spiritual beings. Spiritual, get it? Like ghosts. They can visit you for a second, to bring you a message. But that hasn't happened in a long while, not since it did to the Virgin Mary.

LAUCHI

*Shrugs his shoulders*

I'm only telling you what they say.

ROSA

Well don't believe them! We human beings don't turn into angels, and angels don't turn into human beings. God made angels first and they existed before we did and before everything else. Do you understand what I'm saying?

*Lauchi nods.*

So get this straight: he's not an angel. Angels are not babies who've died, do you get it?

LAUCHI

A little saint.

ROSA

Okay, enough. Take this.  
*She hands him the bag. Lauchi doesn't take it.*

LAUCHI

My aunt, my grannie, everybody prays to him. They light candles to him cause he's a saint.

ROSA

My God, imagine! Only the Pope can say who's a saint, Lauchi. Look, stop talking rubbish and take this.

LAUCHI

I think he's a saint, too.

ROSA

*Angrily leaving the bag on the floor.*

Are you the Pope then? Is your aunt the Pope? He has to have died full of "heroic virtues", and a small baby hasn't had the time to fill himself with virtues. And he has to have worked a miracle after he died, and a committee of experts has to have proved it and that's just so that they can name him "pious"; then for a second time, Lauchi, he has to work another miracle, and the committee of experts has to prove it again and only then can the Pope come along and say he's "Saint So and so". And only then can you pray to him and light candles! Don't you see?

*Lauchi shrugs.*

*Rosa calms down a little.*

Or if not he has to be a martyr: they have to kill him because he's a Christian.

LAUCHI

But that's what happened to Conchi ...!

ROSA

They killed him by mistake, not because he was praying, Lauchi, for God's sake!

LAUCHI

You're saying all of this because you're Father Camilo's telltale, and he doesn't like anybody.

ROSA

*She takes hold of one of his hands and forces him to take the bag*

I'm fed up of listening to you. Take this to your family.

LAUCHI

*Putting it down on the floor.*

If this is from Father Camilo's church, we don't want it.

ROSA

Who says?

LAUCHI

My aunt.

ROSA

Tell her... Tell her... Oh, Lauchi. I'm going to end up saying what my father always says, that people deserve what they get. That you...

LAUCHI

What?

ROSA

Find a way for them to accept this.

LAUCHI

They won't.

ROSA

But there are some things that have to be accepted. Let them follow my example. You are my cross, Lauchi, and I accept you. You're my cross and I accept you.

*She leaves.*

*Lauchi picks up the bag and takes it with him.*

#### **4: Painful mysteries**

*Rosa sitting with a rosary in her hand. She takes hold of the cross in order to start praying.*

ROSA

On the sign of the cross,  
O Lord,  
deliver us from our enemies.  
In the name of the Father  
and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

PRIEST'S VOICE

We'll now meditate on the Sorrowful Mysteries. The first Sorrowful Mystery, the agony in the Garden.

*The priest's voice drones on. Rosa prays in a low voice; their voices fade into each others.*

ROSA	PRIEST'S VOICE
<p>I believe in God the Father Almighty            Creator of Heaven and Earth,            I believe in Jesus Christ,            His only son, our Lord,            He was conceived by the Holy Spirit            And born of the Virgin Mary            He suffered under Pontius Pilate,            Was crucified, died, and was buried            He descended to the dead.            On the third day He rose again.            He ascended into Heaven            And is seated at the right            Hand of the Father.            He will come again to judge            The living and the dead.            I believe in the Holy Spirit,            The Holy Catholic church,            The communion of saints'            The forgiveness of sins,            The resurrection of the body,            And the life everlasting            Amen</p>	<p>A reading from the Holy Gospel            according to Luke.</p> <p>"And He came out and went            according to His custom to the            Mount of Olives and the disciples            also followed Him, he said to            them: Sit here, while I take some            time to pray.</p> <p>And taking Peter with Him and the            two sons of Zebedee, He began            to feel sadness and anguish.</p> <p>And He withdrew from them            about a stone's throwaway and            he knelt down and prayed:            "Father if you are willing remove            this cup from me. Yet not my will            but yours be done".</p> <p>And being in agony he prayed            more earnestly and his sweat            became like great drops of blood            falling down upon the ground".</p>

### 5: False witness

*Rosa's parents in the kitchen.*

*Her Father, wearing his uniform, is having breakfast. Her mother remains in silence, red eyed, sitting straight in her chair.*

FATHER

Don't you get all het up about this business; this riff-raff is all the same. What you can be sure about is that this bloke was up to no good; the creature's father, I mean. And you can't be sure about the mother either. What a coincidence! They said they had witnesses, and now nobody's showing up. So where are they? Why don't they simply show up to testify if they saw what they're supposed to have seen? If they'd seen what those people said they saw, they'd have showed up like you're meant to, to say "Look I saw this, this and that". But if now they're blathering on about being afraid, if they're asking for "guarantees", there's only one explanation. They're not witnesses: they're criminals. Don't I know them!...! Now they're "missing"

and nobody's making a big deal about them going missing See? And if we start counting all the juvenile delinquents and criminals that have gone "missing" in this neighbourhood, the ones that are hiding in some hole somewhere... It's the same people who're covering up for them. . So now they've lost a child they want to kick up a fuss, ask for justice. Yeah? And what about before? When they're going around with a gun, mugging left right and centre? Then they don't ask for justice, what for? What do they care, they don't steal from each other. While they're dealing drugs and they're hooked on crack till it kills them, they don't ask for anything, they don't want anyone investigating, you can't butt in. And now they want "justice" . You know what? You know what you've got to know? You've got to know who taught them that word. Cause this riff-raff can't talk. There's someone behind all this. These blacks have no brain left, they're burned out! They wouldn't even have realized that one of their babies had died if they hadn't been told: these little black girls have already had ten kids by the time they're twenty and they don't even know who the fathers are. They don't even know how they got to be pregnant because they fuck them since they're ten and they start breeding like rabbits... I could just go on and on about it all!

*Beat.*

*Rosa's mother dries her eyes with a paper hankie.*

*Barefoot, snotty, full of nits.*

*Beat.*

*He dips the last bit of his croissant into his coffee and eats it.*

And just let them grow a bit... if they survive They're burned out because of crack by the time they're twelve or thirteen, lost for ever. "The little dead ones" they call them. They send them up front, to do the dirty work for them; who cares they're juvenile delinquents. They're set free as soon as they've stepped into prison, a hundred times until they meet their end or are shot down.

*He fishes for the crumbs floating in the coffee with his spoon and leaves them on the saucer.*

Of course now that one of their kids has died on them in a legal proceeding, they're scandalized. So they kick up a fuss. It's those damn old cronies, but it's not really them. That's what I'm getting at. We've got to find out who is behind all this. These people don't have the brains to organize a demonstration...

*He stirs the remains of the coffee with the spoon and leaves the spoon on the saucer.*

Today they're going to kick up a fuss outside the police station. So let them carry out their march; then we're going to find out who's behind all of this. Then we're going to find out.

*He finishes off his coffee and stands up.*

*He kisses his wife on the cheek.*

And don't you spend the day in front of the telly watching the news; you know it's not good for you. Doctor's orders. Just relax.

*Threateningly.*

Or I'll send you to your mum's.

*He puts on his policeman's cap and leaves.*

## 6: Thy kingdom come

*Lauchi leaves the bag with clothes and some food on a table, while he speaks to his family (who can't be seen or heard)*

*Simultaneously, in a different space, Rosa takes the first bead of her rosary and prays.*

<p>ROSA</p> <p>Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses As we forgive those who trespass Against us, And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.</p> <p><i>She takes the first small bead and begins the first series of five Hail Marys.</i></p> <p>Haily Mary, Full of grace, the Lord is with thee, Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of hour death, Amen.</p> <p><i>This goes on until Lauchi's lines where it indicates it stops.</i></p> <p>Haily Mary, Full of grace, the Lord is with thee, Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.</p> <p><i>Etc.</i></p>	<p>LAUCHI</p> <p>It's like a virus, like the virus that causes AIDS, but we're all born with it. That's what she says. And it reminded me of Jeta's kids, Jeta, Moli's son in law...</p> <p><i>A beat</i></p> <p>What you used to say: that they were all going to die. And last year they all went and died! You used to say that Jeta lived longer because he kept the medicine for himself and sold some, that's what you said.</p> <p><i>A beat</i></p> <p>Original sin comes from the parents. That's what she says. We're all born with it and if they don't baptize you there's no cure and you go to hell. And they didn't manage to baptize Conchi, so how can he be a Saint?</p> <p><i>Beat</i></p> <p>She don't say it herself; a Saint wrote that: That unbaptized babies go to hell. Saint Augustine said that.</p> <p><i>Beat</i></p> <p>Because God –or the Devil–sets the fire real low, so it don't burn too much. But that's what Saint Augustine wrote, about the fire being low as well, really; she didn't make that up.</p> <p><i>A short beat.</i></p> <p>Well...</p> <p><i>Beat</i></p> <p>That's why even though he died from a gun shot, Conchi's death is the same as if he'd died of AIDS. Are you going to go on praying to him? <i>(Short beat)</i> Are you?</p>
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	<p><i>(Short beat) Cause that's the way it is. The only cure is baptism. Rosa's space fades out and so does her voice. Only Lauchi remains</i></p>
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LAUCHI

*Takes a few things for himself.*

It's all the parents' fault. First take a look at what Conchi's parents were up to. Conchi was no angel. Remember that: No-bo-dy is i-nno-cent  
*He leaves.*

### **7: Whoever is free from sin**

*Nighttime. Wasteland next to the little Saint's home.*

*Rosa leaves a rucksack on the floor.*

*Lauchi is in the middle of a conversation.*

LAUCHI

No, the police don't come here; that's a lie. They only come here if the people from the telly come, but they've moved to the police station. If you want to see them you've got to go to the police station.

ROSA

I don't want to see them.

LAUCHI

Ever since it all started, they're there. Let's go; we can watch from a distance.

ROSA

I've no interest in the Police Station.

LAUCHI

It's great. I was there myself in the middle of it all! We nearly set fire to it. We were about to but they started shooting at us with rubber bullets. They hit Ladilla on the leg...

ROSA

It was none of your business to be there.

LAUCHI

Who says! I threw about ten stones and they didn't get me.

ROSA

They will get you, Lauchi.

LAUCHI

*Covering his nose and mouth with a handkerchief.*

I covered up. Guerrilla! <sup>1</sup>

ROSA

What an idiot.

LAUCHI

*Uncovering his face*

Just cause you're scared shit. Juana and Teti and all the girls were there. Rosa turns her face and begins to observe what's on her right. Lauchi goes on.

We were all there, didn't you watch the telly? Teti was on the telly; (he grabs a "tit") "come and suck on this" she shouts at them! Teti's the best. Then Yerba smacked her one for being a slut, but then he always does.

*He laughs briefly.*

*Then he gets closer to Rosa, to see what she's looking at.*

ROSA

I can't understand why the police aren't keeping guard here, if this is where the real problem is.

LAUCHI

You don't get it, do you?

ROSA

Excuse me, *(saying his nickname with irony)* "Lau-chi-ta", but you can't talk about what I know or don't know.

LAUCHI

What do you know, if you weren't even there?

ROSA

Those who don't understand are precisely those who go to those marches like sheep...

LAUCHI

What's got into you, you baby?

ROSA

You are taken there like sheep, and you are made to fight there like animals.

LAUCHI

Ha ha. Up yours...That's what you know!

ROSA

Much more than you do.

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<sup>1</sup>The word in Spanish is not guerrilla, but piquetero, jobless people who protest by cutting off highways.

LAUCHI

But if you don't even know what a blow job is, baby!

ROSA

So that you can even start to speak about ignorance, learn to brush your teeth first, little Laucha.

LAUCHI

*Pushing her*

What's up?

ROSA

To brush the few teeth you have left, while you've still got them. Homeless <sup>2</sup>.  
*Lauchi hits her on the face with the back of his hand.*

*Rosa stays still.*

*Pause.*

LAUCHI

*Fearful.*

You're an asshole.

*Rosa offers her other cheek.*

ROSA

Now hit me here.

LAUCHI

*Scared stiff*

Wacko.

ROSA

Hit me, you idiot.

LAUCHI

I don't want to.

ROSA

You poof.

*Lauchi hits her.*

*Rosa closes her eyes, and makes the sign of the cross.*

LAUCHI

You're crazy.

I'm getting the hell out of here.

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<sup>2</sup>The word in Spanish is *cartonero*, carton is cardboard, so *cartonero* is someone from the outskirts of the city, who at nighttime looks through people's rubbish for recyclable goods

ROSA

Take off, Lauchita. Take off.

*Lauchi remains and observes her.*

*Rosa takes two stones the size of a fist out of her rucksack; one she keeps in a pocket and the other she holds in her hand. She puts the rucksack on her shoulder and it is obvious she has more stones in it.*

LAUCHI

Throw all of them. If you break the glass with the first one, you'll knock over the candles with the rest. They're always lit and there can't be anyone praying at this time.

*Rosa looks at him trying to gauge his meaning.*

That's it, baby. If you knock over the candles you might set fire to the altar. That's what you prayed for wasn't it? Didn't you want it to burn? Break the glass, and you throw three or four more before beating it. And then it all burns down.

ROSA

Come with me.

LAUCHI

I throw stones at the police and at the fags from Granate<sup>3</sup>. Conchi's family never done me no harm.

ROSA

But this is important.

LAUCHI

'Course you're right.

*He looks down; puts his hands in his pockets.*

*Pause.*

*Rosa turns round; Lauchi stops her.*

Wait you idiot, wait.

*He takes off his hankie and puts it on Rosa's FACE, covering her nose and mouth.*

*For a second they look at each other closely.*

*Rosa takes off at a run.*

*Lauchi stays still watching.*

*Pause.*

*He scratches his balls.*

*He spits from one side of his mouth.*

*He leaves.*

## 8: Eternal fire

*The priest and Rosa's father sitting in an office in the Police Station.*

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<sup>3</sup>Granate is a football club

PRIEST

Sin is not so much the problem. The problem is being unaware, letting your instincts get the upper hand.

*Pause*

What's really dangerous is forgetting that hell exists: it's a real physical space that you can't escape from.

*Pause*

Do you believe in hell?

FATHER

I believe... I believe in God... *(repeating)* almighty, maker of heaven and earth...

PRIEST

Hell is a dogma of the faith, it's a revealed truth: those souls who die in mortal sin go to hell after they die and there they are tormented. Do you believe in Hell or not?

*Pause*

FATHER

Yes.

PRIEST

Then never allow yourself to forget it. As Saint John Crisostomos said: "whosoever despises hell or forgets that it exists will not escape from it".

FATHER

*Smiles and recites.*

"Be alert, because nobody knows either the time or the day..."

PRIEST

"Eternal fire" is not a metaphor, it's physical torment. The "pain of the senses", a positive pain: the Gospels are very clear when they speak of the cries of pain and the sound of teeth grinding, the anguish and the torment.

*Pause.*

Torture. Everlasting. Eternal. Because there is no forgiveness after death. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?

FATHER

Yeah... I guess.

PRIEST

A Saint saw it all. Saint Faustina Kowalska, apostle of the Divine Mercy. In 1936, God showed this Polish nun a vision of hell, with all its systems of torments, so that she could write about it. I learnt it off by heart, word for word.

FATHER

*Smiles, trying to make light of it.*

I don't know if it's really necessary to...

*His smile stiffens, he's uncomfortable.*

PRIEST

*Recites.*

"Today I was taken by an angel to the abyss of hell, a place of great torments. And these were the tortures I saw: The first one was the absence of God; the second perpetual remorse; the third is that the sentence will never change; the fourth the fire that penetrates the soul without destroying it. Fifth, darkness and an excruciating smell; the sixth one is the constant company of Satan, the seventh, horrible desperation, hating God, foul words, swearing and being blasphemous. These tortures are suffered by all, but that's not the end of it."

*Pause.*

*Standing up.*

"There are special tortures, designed for each particular soul. These are the torments of the senses: indescribable sufferings for each soul, according to the sins he has committed. There are caverns and torture halls, where each agony is different from the other".

*He closes his eyes*

"I'm writing this down, ordered to by God, so that no soul has the excuse that they didn't know that hell existed, or that nobody has been there".

*Opens his eyes.*

*Sitting down.*

The saint finishes with a prayer in favour of mortification: "Oh, my Jesus, I'd rather live in agony until the end of the world, suffering the greatest pains, before offending you with the smallest of sins".

Do you understand now?

*Pause*

FATHER

Yes.

PRIEST

You know what you have to do.

*He gets up.*

*So does Rosa's father taking the priest to a n exit.*

It's an act of mercy towards these lost souls.

*They shake hands.*

FATHER

*Signalling to someone outside the room.*

Ayala. Please take Father Camilo to the entrance door.

*The priest leaves.*

*Rosa's father breathes in.*

*Crossing towards a door on the other side of the room, he leaves.*

*Before closing the door an electric spark is seen and a scream is heard.*

## 9: The Altar

*Rosa is having a glass of milk in the kitchen with her mum.*

*Her mother remains silent, her eyes are red, straight as a rod in her chair.*

ROSA

Mum, did you know that they threw stones at the Altar of the little Saint the other night? Well, I guess there was no way you could know because... because no-one found out. I'm the only one who knows, out of us I mean. I was told by Lauch... Rubén Lautaro. Gregoria's grandson. One of her...grandsons. Of Gregoria's. Do you remember Gregoria? Well, I met him at Sully's when I went to fetch the dish you had lent her; he... Rubén Lautaro mows her lawn. And he sometimes takes the clothes from church, the ones we give him. And he's also Gregoria's grandson. Gregoria, Ma. She used to work here. Well. Never mind. He told me as a secret. That someone throw stones through the window. Six stones it was, can you believe that? Six is a lot for one person to throw without being caught. He says that she... he, that the first stone broke the glass and the rest overthrew all the candles. And it seems that an embroidered tablecloth caught fire, a white tablecloth embroidered in white; they say the altar was a small sideboard with a tablecloth covering it and on top of that they'd placed the clothes Conchi was wearing when he died ; a small coat and the vest they wear when they're babies; which they'd washed, but anyhow they say you could see the bloo... the stains. And they'd set up an image of the Virgin Mary, but with an ear of wheat, as if it were San Cayetano <sup>4</sup>, because these people don't know a thing, can't do a thing about it though. The Virgin with the wheat and the baby's clothes and the candles; that was it, because they didn't even have a photo of the baby; they even say they didn't really love him, that he was underweight, he was a bit sick ... But that's not what Lauch...taro, told me, this time I mean. It seems people were leaving him offerings: little things made of plastic, toys, and I don't know what else. Any old rubbish they had at home, and those things didn't catch fire. Because if they'd caught fire everyone in the house would've died. When plastic burns it lets off a gas that leaves everything black. But it was the virgin. Even if they'd put an ear of wheat like to San Cayetano and they'd used her to pray to a false little saint, the Virgin wasn't going to let them die just because someone had thrown stones at them...Besides the person who threw the stones didn't mean to, I mean: the person who threw the stones didn't mean to kill anyone .

*Pause*

They didn't tell anyone. They changed the tablecloth for a cheap one and they moved the altar to a corner with the candles to one side. And they didn't say a word to anyone. They didn't report it, do you see? They didn't want anyone to know. I can only imagine what those people are up to, not wanting to report it when someone nearly burns down their home

*She takes a biscuit from the plate.*

*She gets up and leaves.*

---

<sup>4</sup>*San Cayetano is a very popular saint who people pray to and visit to ask for work, hence the wheat signifying bread*

MOTHER

I never knew of any Gregoria. I used to have an embroidered white tablecloth. But you can no longer get a decent maid. They all steal from you.

### 10: Sacramental Secrecy

*The priest and Rosa's father sitting next to each other on a bench in the church. They speak in a low voice.*

FATHER

...the other guy was a little more willing to talk, and he was brighter, if you see what I mean? The tough guy doesn't even know his own name, he's so past it. But this one's a different kettle of fish. He understood at once who he was dealing with .  
*Beat.*

He didn't get off scot free of course; he had to learn a lesson. Himself. And a message for everyone.

*Pause.*

Well, so the guy came clean. It's all been fixed, at a high level: they're organizing the marches in the province to fuck up the mayor; they want him out of the drug business or force him into accepting new rules.

*Pause.*

If you ask me both sides have had enough and they won't let the situation get out of hand. They've told us to keep a low profile while they're negotiating; but they've already let me know that they want none of the little Saint business; they'll give me the names of the people the father of the baby worked for, so that everyone can see that they were nasty pieces of work, and we hand over the officer who shot the baby: he confesses now and at the latest in five years time he's free.

*Silence.*

PRIEST

What about your family? Your wife? Your daughter?

FATHER

Well.

*Pause*

Well.

As far as possible.

We all carry our cross.

*Pause.*

The girl ... is growing up. I'm worried about what will happen when she reaches an age where she ...An age where she needs more of her mother. But for the time being it's okay; right now she isn't ... she isn't interested in anything. Any of... that. She's very much into all the catechism stuff; well you must know about that. So much so that it sometimes worries me that she'll get a fixation , or something like that.

PRIEST

Any excess of zeal is a sin: pride. Even in the most passionate commitment the saint is humble, because he recognizes that it is not his work but the Grace of God's.

*Pause.*

But you needn't worry. She's a good girl. What motivates your daughter, at least so far, is Grace, not an impure desire.

*Thoughtful silence.*

FATHER

About this other thing. If there is anything else I can do...

PRIEST

Take it easy. It's just a matter of being discreet with the information you give me. Go in peace.

*Rosa's father is about to get up but he is stopped by the priest, who raises a hand.*

God, merciful Father, who reconciled the World through the death and resurrection of His son and spread the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins, grant you through the ministry of the church, pardon and peace. I absolve you of your sins...  
*At the same time blessing him with the sign of the cross.*

...in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

FATHER

*After making the sign of the cross and kissing his finger.*

Amen.

*Uncomfortable Silence.*

*Rosa's father stands up.*

*He leaves.*

## 11: Blessed of my Father

*Lauchi and Rosa.*

*Rosa takes some holy stamps<sup>5</sup> from a box and splashes them one by one with holy water. She kisses them and then puts them into another box.*

LAUCHI

But they must have already been blessed before they're sold.

ROSA

Don't be an idiot, Lauchi. Who's going to bless them? The owner of the print shop?

LAUCHI

And what about you? Are you the Pope's daughter?

---

<sup>5</sup>*Holy images, small children give out in trains and subways in order to be given money for them*

ROSA

This water has been blessed.

LAUCHI

My aunt has a lot of holy water; she brings it from Luján<sup>6</sup> (6) and sells it. Well she says she brings it. She sells a lot of it in the Hospital.

ROSA

This is from our church.

LAUCHI

So what? Why doesn't Father Camilo himself bless them then?

ROSA

Because you don't take them for him to bless! That's why!

LAUCHI

Well. Why doesn't he come here?

ROSA

You know he won't come, not while people are getting together to pray to little "saint Conchi".

LAUCHI

*Alter a pause.*

And do they let you come? What does your mum say?

ROSA

My mum is not, for the time being, in any position to say what I can or can't do.

LAUCHI

Er...

Right. But if your dad sees me he'll shoot me to bits.

ROSA

Why? What are you up to?

LAUCHI

Nothing, moron. For being with you.

ROSA

You re not "with me". I came.

---

<sup>6</sup>Very popular church about 60 kilometers from the city of Buenos Aires, dedicated to the Virgin of Lujan purportedly sighted in this town

LAUCHI

Even worse. Why don't you leave?

ROSA

Because I'd like you to take these They're Saint Augustine. He'll make the truth be known about the false little angel.

LAUCHI

Okay, hand them over.

ROSA

I'm blessing them.

LAUCHI

Don't bother. Who cares.

ROSA

But you're going to go out to work with them!

LAUCHI

I don't work them, I told you! I give them to Peloncha, he works on the train.

ROSA

Well, it's the same. He's going to give them out, and you know there're people who keep them, and pray to them. So that at least...

LAUCHI

So let them; what do you care?

ROSA

I do care.

LAUCHI

You don't know them; you don't know what they do, nothing. Give them out as they are.

ROSA

It's important, Lauchi. "I was hungry and thou gavest me food. I was thirsty and thou gavest me water".

LAUCHI

Here we go again... Let's see.

ROSA

What ever I did for the humblest son of God, I did for Christ.

LAUCHI

What a bore. Finish that off and give them to me.

ROSA

Lauchi, Lauchi. Let's see if you can learn something: *(by heart)* When the Son of Man comes in all his glory accompanied by all his angels, he'll sit in his throne of glory. Gathered before him will be all the nations, and he'll separate one from another like the shepherd separates the sheep from the lambs.

LAUCHI

Ha; lambs! And what are we Argentines? Patagonian lambs<sup>7</sup>?

ROSA

*Goes on reciting*

He'll put the sheep to his right and the lambs to his left. And then the King will tell those on his right: "Come blessed of my Father, receive the inheritance of the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. Because I was hungry and thou gavest me food. I was thirsty and thou gavest me water. I was a foreigner and thou gavest me shelter; I was naked and thou clothed me; I was sick and thou called upon me; I was in jail and thou camest to see me".

LAUCHI

What the hell are you talking about, "gavest", " thou camest"?

ROSA

And then the just will answer: "My Lord when did we see when you were hungry, and gave you food; or thirsty and we gave you water?

*Looking into Lauchi's eyes seriously.*

When did we see you sick or in jail and go to visit you?"

LAUCHI

*Looking back at her.*

Kiddo, you scare me when you get like this...

ROSA

*Getting closer, right up to his face.*

And the King will say to them: "In truth shall you know that whatsoever you did for any of these, my smaller brothers, you did unto me".

*She touches his face, like a caress.*

*Lauchi takes her hand. He lowers it.*

LAUCHI

*Alter a beat, quite still, he makes the sign of the cross.*

Fuck you...

---

<sup>7</sup>Patagonia in the south of Argentina is very famous for its lambs

ROSA

*Serious; almost angry, she turns round and takes the cards to go on blessing them.*

"Get thee behind me, you damned souls, to the eternal fire prepared by the Devil and his angels. Because I was hungry and you didn't feed me; I was thirsty, and you didn't give me anything to drink; I was naked and you didn't clothe me; I was sick and in jail and you didn't visit me".

*Lauchi taking hold of the last cards and a little water.*

LAUCHI

Can I?

*Rosa turns round to look at him still angry.*

*She studies him for a second.*

*Then she smiles at him illuminated.*

ROSA

Yes, of course.

*She gets near him. She takes his hand with the water, and moves it to splash the cards, while whispering a prayer.*

LAUCHI

*His happiness bordering ecstasy, also whispering*

What are you saying?

ROSA

A prayer. Repeat it secretly.

*She murmurs in his ear, while they splash.*

*Lauchi repeats, giggles, then laughs outright.*

*They keep at it while the light fades out.*

## 12: The humility of the small ones

*Rosa takes the second large bead of her Rosary and prays.*

*The priest's voice overlaps her prayer.*

ROSA	PRIEST'S VOICE
<p>Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.</p>	<p>A reading of the Holy Gospel according to John.</p>
<p>Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.</p>	<p>"And Pilate came out to the crowd and said to them: I find him guilty of no crime.</p>
<p>Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.</p>	<p>And yet it is that you have the custom, that one should be set free at Passover . Do you want me then to set free the King of the Jews?</p>
<p>Lead us not into temptation and</p>	

<p>deliver us from evil.</p> <p>Amen.</p> <p><i>She takes the first small bead and begins a new series of Hail Marys- which come to an end seconds after the priest has finished.</i></p> <p>Haily Mary, Full of grace, the Lord is with thee, Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of hour death, Amen.</p>	<p>They shouted back once again : Not him; we want Barabbas! And Barabbas was a thief.</p> <p>Pilate then took Jesus and ordered him whipped” .</p> <p>This is God’s word.</p>
---	--

*Lights dim on Rosa.*

*The priest is intensely lit standing and facing the audience.*

*Hands outstretched he looks to one side as if reading the daily mass during a celebration.*

PRIEST

*Solemnly.*

...so that we may always remember the Virgin of Rosary’s promises: “don’t be surprised if in this battle the fallen ones are those who haven’t wanted to use or haven’t been able to use the weapon that I myself have given them: my own simple humble prayer of the Holy Rosary. Don’t be afraid. Satan’s pride will be defeated once again by the small and humble of this earth” .

*He lowers his hands. His solemnity vanishes.*

*He sighs and sits down.*

*Lights fade. He remains seated and partly visible during the next scene.*

### **13: On the Righteous and the Sinners**

*A deserted corner of the neighbourhood.*

*Lauchi waits impatiently.*

*Rosa arrives.*

LAUCHI

Did you bring it?

*Rosa nods in silence and hands over a little bottle to Lauchi.*

ROSA

There’s not much left. You could go to the church...

LAUCHI

*Raises the bottle and looks at it against the light.*

It's okay. Come on, take it.

*Handing it over.*

ROSA

What.

LAUCHI

I brought more stamps. For you to...

*He gestures "splashing".*

*Rosa remains still.*

What. Here.

*Rosa, as if in another world, takes the bottle.*

*Lauchi takes out a stack of stamps and hands it over.*

*Rosa observes the stack for a while; finally she accepts it, serious.*

ROSA

Well. Come... come and fetch them in the afternoon. Tomorrow.

*She turns to leave; Lauchi takes hold of her arm.*

*Surprised Rosa remains stiff as if they'd pointed a gun at her.*

*She turns to face the boy once again.*

*Tense pause.*

*Rosa gives in. She hands over the stack to Lauchi.*

ROSA

Hold them for me. Hand them over to me one at a time.

*Lauchi hurriedly does so.*

*Rosa, against her will, blesses them in a low voice.*

LAUCHI

*As he hands over the stamps.*

Yesterday they caught two of them...

*Pause.*

They put them in jail, I mean. Thanks to you.

ROSA

To me, what?

LAUCHI

To Saint Augustine. The people asked for justice and he answered them. Now they're asking me for more.

ROSA

They ask? You?

LAUCHI

For more of these: blessed.

ROSA

But that's not what they were for!

LAUCHI

You "blest" them. They know.

ROSA

They were to... to prove... that the little angel doesn't exist...

*Lauchi shrugs.*

*Rosa pauses, and looks at him almost desperately.*

*Lauchi, immutable, offers her the next stamp.*

*Rosa goes on, even slower this time.*

LAUCHI

It's okay; it was the dealers who sold stuff to Tira and Petera, Conchi's parents. The ones they caught, I mean: the ones who sold the drugs to them.

*Pause.*

Cause the drug they sold was sold to them by big fish. Everyone's saying that now. They say that when the cops had surrounded their house, Tira shouted out the name of one of these two big fish.

*Rosa trembles.*

*Undecided.*

*Goes on blessing.*

And it seems that Pete, Conchi's mum, had fallen out with him and Tira lost his stirrups and beat her up. He broke her arm, and it was then when the cops turned up. If not he might've killed her.

*Engrossed by his own tale, he interrupts the blessing to act out the next scene.*

And she grabbed the baby with her other arm and carried it with her to escape, so as not to leave him with the father, and use it like a shield in case Tira got even crazier, see?

*Rosa brings down his arm with the stack of stamps.*

ROSA

Yes.

*Sighs.*

No... No there's not much water left.

LAUCHI

There are only a few left; go on.

*Pause while the ceremony continues.*

That's how he died. The kid. See? They say Pete wanted to use him as a shield to protect herself from her husband, and then when the cops started shooting as well, the first shot hit the baby. Bum! The bullet went right through the baby's head and it hit Petera right here...

*He points at himself showing where; Rosa pulls his hand to stay quiet...*

*...beneath the nape of the neck, see? How can it hit you here?*

*He lifts his hand up and Rosa pulls at it even more annoyed.*

How can the same bullet go through the babies head and then hit you here?  
Ha?

*More heatedly.*

Where do you have to put the baby for the bullet to hit you here?

*Explaining with both hands.*

You have to put him here!

*Rosa drops the bottle which crashes to the ground.*

ROSA

Stop it!

*Pause.*

Stop it, Lauchi; there's none left. There's no holy water left.

LAUCHI

What got into you, you moron? There were only a few left.

ROSA

There wasn't any left

LAUCHI

Let's go to the church. You can take a bit.

ROSA

Why don't you ask your aunt for some water, the one she sells in hospital?

LAUCHI

Because it's fake you asshole!

ROSA

So what if it's fake, you weak minded idiot? If they give them to anyone on the train. So what if they're fake, if you don't know them, and you don't know what they do!

LAUCHI

Not these! These aren't for just anyone you idiot!

*Sudden pause.*

*Rosa tries to understand what the boy just said.*

ROSA

*Reacting, very tightly.*

Give them to your friend... Peloncha. But don't tell him they're blessed.

LAUCHI

Why not?

ROSA

Don't. Do me... the favour.

LAUCHI

Now what's got into you?

*Rosa takes off suddenly.*

*After this, we see her enter the space where the priest is.*

*Lauchi remains quite still while the lights fade on him and the action begins in the next scene.*

#### 14. Charity begins...

*Rosa sits on a small chair at a certain distance from the priest. She's trying to calm down and breathe regularly, she looks down while listening to the priest.*

*The priest, sitting in the same place as he was in the previous scene, helps himself to mate<sup>8</sup> while carrying on with what he has already started saying.*

*He looks closely at the kettle, the mate, the water. He doesn't look at Rosa.*

PRIEST

...that you ask two things before carrying out charity. Two simple questions.

The first one is almost obvious: What I'm freely giving, does it belong to me?

*Pause.*

And the second which is equally important: this that I am now giving: Does it really reach the needy?

*Pause*

The needy: the poor, the blessed poor of spirit. Not criminals, Rosa.

*He picks up his gaze to look at Rosa.*

*Pause.*

ROSA

I... sometimes ...I can't. I feel I'm not able to tell the poor from the criminals

PRIEST

Nobody is asking you to do that. We take care of that. All you have to do is bring us what you want to give away.

ROSA

There is so little that I can do...

*The priest observes her in silence.*

*Rosa fearfully carries on.*

Do you understand father? I feel that there is very little that I can do. Very little.

PRIEST

And who are we to judge if what we do is a lot or is a little? Who is your model to follow Rosa? The model for all women.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Mate is a popular beverage taken at all times of day. You need a gourd where the ground mate leaves are placed, hot water to pour over them and a long stem to suck the infusion*

ROSA

The Virgin Mary.

PRIEST

And what does the Virgin ask of us?

ROSA

Prayer. Sacrifice. Penitence.

PRIEST

*Nods and then says.*

And this is within everyone's reach. Each one of us according to his or her possibilities.

ROSA

Yes; I've been thinking that...

PRIEST

*Raising his hand slightly he interrupts her.*

Don't overdo it Rosa. Don't try to take on what's beyond your reach; you're only going to get yourself into trouble.

ROSA

That's why I've been thinking...

PRIEST

Don't think so much, Rosa. Don't think, full stop.

Just meditate on the words of the Virgin deep down in your heart. Prayer.

Sacrifice. Penitence.

Three words, Rosa. Prayer. Sacrifice. Penitence.

That's enough.

*Silence.*

*Rosa seems to be taking this in, head lowered.*

*The priest looks on at her, a slight smile on his face, the kettle quite still in his hand, the mate half way to his mouth.*

ROSA

*Almost whispering*

I'd like to...

PRIEST

What?

ROSA

Start up a chain of prayer of the Rosary.

*Pause.*

With your permission, Father.

*Pause.*

A chain of the Rosary. In the neighbourhood.

*Pause.*

I think ...that's what we ...need. More than ever. Because of what's happening with... the little saint.

*Pause.*

If you give me permission.

*Pause.*

And if you let me announce it on the ... the parish notice board.

PRIEST

*Neutral.*

I think it's an excellent idea, Rosa.

*Leaving kettle and mate on a table, he gets up to leave.*

*Rosa hesitates. She's uncomfortable. She picks up the courage.*

ROSA

When can we...When can we start?

PRIEST

Whenever you want.

ROSA

It seemed to me we ought to start. We should have a meeting to start the chain. In the parish. Call people to pray together. I can do that.

PRIEST

Granted. The hall is free on Tuesday at five, it's yours.

*Rosa doesn't take her eyes off him, waiting.*

Anything else?

ROSA

*She hurriedly prepares to leave.*

No, nothing, nothing.

*Clumsily she leaves.*

### **15.The sword and the cross <sup>9</sup>**

*The scene remains divided into two spaces: the parish hall and Rosa's father's office.*

*Rosa sitting in the hall waiting, her rosary in her hand. Every now and then she goes to the door to check if anyone's coming.*

*In his office Rosa's father is also waiting. A few seconds later, the priest walks in and sits down in silence. The conversation starts up as if it had already begun.*

---

<sup>9</sup>The Spanish Conquistadores brought the sword and the cross to America

PRIEST

*Twisting a Rosary in his hands. Smiling.*  
You worry too much.

*Pause*

Do you know what this is?

FATHER

A Rosary.

PRIEST

And a Rosary is protection, a shield. It's not the object itself...  
*He keeps twisting the Rosary sensually*  
...but prayer. The virgin herself appeared to Saint Dominic and taught him to pray it. And she told him to use it against the enemies of the faith.  
*He fingers a few vedas while gazing at it.*  
It destroys vice, frees people of sins and knocks down heresy.

*Pause.*

*He puts it down on the desk.*

*Rosa's father remains silent, attentive.*

*The priest takes a stack of holy cards from his pocket and sets them next to the rosary.*

And these? Do you know what these are?

FATHER

*Examining them.*

They're holy cards. Strange ones.

*Reading more carefully.*

Saint Augustine's. It's the first time I've seen them.

PRIEST

I can imagine. Because they truly are very special. Unique I'd say. You see: this Rosary has been blessed. By the bishop. These stamps, even though you may not know it, have also been blessed.

FATHER

*Incredulous.*

The bishop blessed these stamps?

PRIEST

No. Rosa, your daughter, did.

*Pause.*

FATHER

I don't get it.

PRIEST

These are the same stamps that kids give out in the train, but they are valued differently. Very highly valued, apparently. Because Rosa has blessed them.

FATHER

What nonsense! Now these ragamuffins sell them at a higher price saying my daughter has blessed them? Just let me catch one of them...

PRIEST

*Calmly interrupting him.*

These stamps are not for sale. Neither these ones nor the common ones. The kids give them out to the passengers, and you give them a coin if you want. The curious thing is that these ones... these ones are not given out. They're not for anyone. They're for a very very few chosen ones. They're beyond the ordinary rules of commerce, of charity.

FATHER

What do you mean?

PRIEST

To get one of these...you have to win it.

*Pause*

Those who have one don't want to give it up. They've placed their faith in them. They ask for miracles. You don't want to know more about this, believe you me.

FATHER

But what does Rosa have to do with this aberration? That's what I want to know.

PRIEST

She took some holy water from the church. She got together with one of the boys who gives them out, and she blessed them. One at a time. I have good sources and...sorry to say this but I can believe it's true.

*Father tenses up, he tightens his fists and looks down.*

Don't worry. It's not a serious sin; it's not even a sin. To bless is asking God to bless us, it's to praise him. It's not what she did that you should be worrying you, but with who.

*Pause.*

Don't overdo the worrying but watch her. It's not too late.

*Silence.*

*Priest picks up his Rosary and gets up.*

*Before leaving.*

About the other business... don't worry. Just you do your duty and put your trust in God. The officer who shot the kid has given himself in. Now the second part of the agreement is missing, and that's partly your responsibility. You're being asked to clean the streets, discreetly but with a firm hand. Given the times we're living in, you have the okay to be... inflexible. The political agitators who are behind the demonstrations are letting up and the borders of the safe areas have been clearly defined. Everything... *(emphasizing)* EVERYTHING beyond those limits is your responsibility.

*Pause.*

*Rosa's father nods.*

Your daughter is in the parish hall, she must have finished by now. Take my advice... don't be too hard on her. Don't punish her. I think you'd be better not to even mention this incident.

*The priest leaves.*

*Rosa's father goes to find his daughter.*

## **16. God's calling**

*Parish hall.*

*Rosa's father walks in.*

*Rosa looks at him surprised. Her eyes are red.*

ROSA

Dad.

FATHER

Rosa. Are you okay? Have you been crying?

ROSA

No.

*Her father comes nearer, caressing her face.*

*He kisses her cheek.*

FATHER

Let's go? I'll take you home.

ROSA

I wanted...

*Making an effort not to cry again.*

Nobody came, dad. To start the chain of prayer. Nobody.

FATHER

Don't get upset. God knows you tried.

ROSA

I can't just leave like this, dad. Please sit with me. Let's pray together.

FATHER

I can't... I have no time now.

ROSA

Then, when?

*She starts crying, in spite of herself.*

FATHER

Rosa, don't cry.

*Serious.*

Rosa. Look into my eyes. You've got to listen to me.  
*Raising his voice.*

Listen to me, Rosa. This is a conversation between father and daughter. Rosa!  
*Rosa looks at him.*

If nobody came today that means something. It means something. You've got to take that in. God knows what he's doing.

*Pause.*

God is saying something to you: he's saying not to worry anymore, that he doesn't need you. For this .

*Silence.*

Is that clear?

ROSA

*Seriously stiff.*

Yes.

FATHER

Good.

*He kisses her, she barely reacts.*

Let's go.

*He offers his hand. Rosa takes it. They leave.*

## 17. Pew

*Rosa's mother and father sitting on a sofa watching telly.*

*She has a small plastic table in front of her, on her lap, her hands are on top. The remote control is in one of her hands*

*The screen, lights up their faces*

*She watches, inexpressibly and quite still*

*He's not looking at the screen; his eyes are on it but aren't taking it in. There's a rosary in his hand. He handles the beads mechanically*

*The news can be heard.*

ANCHORMAN IN THE STREET

*Halfway through.*

...in a new demonstration asking for justice on behalf of Jonathan Giménez, the five month old baby shot in the head, in another episode of policemen shooting irresponsibly. Very few people have attended this demonstration, compared to last week's, which ended in a violent confrontation between the demonstrators and the policemen guarding the police station of the neighbourhood of "La Lonja" where the policeman who shot the baby worked. It seems that after the policeman, Rafael Regalía, was arrested the animosity has calmed down.

ANNOUNCER IN THE STUDIO

And what do people say? Do they trust that the investigation will proceed?  
 And that being the case, what's the reason for this demonstration?

## ANCHORMAN IN THE STREET

The people's mood has changed, it's not what it was a few days ago, I'd say by the looks of it that there is more calm and resignation, because we can't speak of victory when the subject is the life of a small human being. But why don't we listen directly to a few testimonies we were able to record a few minutes ago. What do you say?

## ANNOUNCER IN THE STUDIO

Go ahead.

## A MAN'S VOICE (interviewee)

This is a popular uprising. See? Popular! We are all here, in a spirit of peace, all of us. Because if the neighbourhood don't get together and rise, if the neighbourhood don't get together, it all comes to nothing. This guy Regalía, the murderer, had already beat up some of the kids who'd been arrested. He's got a criminal record but you know what they did, they accused him for the beating up, and instead of being sanctioned they sent him off on holidays. And after that they reinstated him at the police station, without a murmur. There's what goes on here, there you are.

## A WOMAN'S VOICE (interviewee)

All we're asking for is justice. Justice. That's all we want. Here they all cover up for each other. They didn't even want to give the body up, to the family; they took the little corpse and they held it for twelve hours. All we ask is for justice, that's all. Justice. We don't want anything else. Here they all cover up for each other. Imagine they wouldn't even give the little corpse to the family; they took it and kept it for twelve hours. "Police proceedings", is what they said to us; what they wanted was to cover up the murder. But you see they weren't able to. They can't because Conchi, from heaven, is a little angel who looks on us and helps us.

## ANCHORMAN IN THE STREET

What we've just heard are the testimonies of those who are close to the family. What is clear now is that Regalía's arrest, and that of the two suspects believed to be the two drug dealers who initiated the shooting in which Jonathan died, seems to have calmed down the situation. Regalía is to declare before the State Prosecutor, who has momentarily categorized the investigation as manslaughter or possible murder, with sentences that vary between 8 and 25 years and...

*Rosa's mother begins channel surfing.*

*Rosa's father looks at her but says nothing*

*She stops the zapping to watch an advert from "TV Shopping" an advert for Table Mate<sup>10</sup>.*

*The father stands up, leaves the rosary on the little plastic table and leaves.*

*The mother continues watching the advert, which we can hear.*

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<sup>10</sup> Real product on sale on TV. Can be replaced by similar table.

According to the description we hear we find out that the little table the woman is leaning on is a "Table Mate".

ANNOUNCER OF TV SHOPPING

...Table Mate is the most comfortable table to have something to eat in front of the telly or to use a lap top. Just watch and see how it can be adjusted to three different heights and in three different positions. It can be used as a desk as a reading table or for your children to write draw or play games o. Table Mate adapts perfectly as a support for your computer's keyboard as well.

*She takes the Rosary which her husband left, leans her forearms on the table and almost imperceptibly begins to murmur a prayer.*

ANNOUNCER OF TV SHOPPING.

Table Mate slides using only one finger; it can be put together in two minutes and needs no tools nor screws. It's ideal for those who don't have much space, such as the elderly or students. You can easily carry it anywhere because it's so light and folds up: take it when you go camping, to events, take it wherever you want. Call the number on the screen now and buy a Table Mate at an incredible price...  
(etc.)

## 18. Homily

Mass.

*Rosa standing alone. Her voice can be heard together with the priest's and the congregation's.*

<p>ROSA <i>Together with the congregation</i> I confess to Almighty God And to my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault In my thoughts and in my words, In what I have done And in what I have failed to do <i>She beats her breast with her fist three times</i> Through my own fault (beat),</p>	<p>PRIEST'S VOICE On this day, as we celebrate Christ's victory over sin and eternal death, Let us admit that we are in need of the Lord's mercy To die our sins and resurrect to a new life.</p> <p>CONGREGATION</p> <p>I confess to Almighty God And to my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault In my thoughts and in my words, In what I have done And in what I have failed to do  Through my own fault, through my</p>
--	--

<p>through my own fault (beat), through my own grievous fault. (beat)</p> <p><i>She stops and keeps quiet while the congregation goes on.</i></p> <p><i>She beats her breast once again</i> Through my own fault</p> <p><i>And again</i> Through my own fault</p> <p><i>And again</i> Through my own grievous fault</p> <p><i>And again</i> Through my own fault</p> <p><i>And again</i> Through my own fault</p> <p><i>And again</i> Through my own grievous fault</p> <p><i>And again</i> Through my own fault</p> <p><i>And again</i> Through my own fault</p> <p><i>And again</i> Through my own fault</p> <p>Amen</p>	<p>own fault, through my own grievous fault.</p> <p>And I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin All the angels and saints, And you my brothers and sisters, To pray for me to the Lord, our God</p> <p>PRIEST´S VOICE Humble and penitent: As the publican in the temple, let us get nearer to our Lord and ask him to have mercy on us, who are also sinners. You who are the path leading us to the Father: Lord have mercy.</p> <p>CONGREGATION Lord have mercy.</p> <p>PRIEST´S VOICE You bring light to those in darkness: Christ have mercy.</p> <p>CONGREGATION Christ have mercy</p> <p>PRIEST´S VOICE You raise the dead to life in the spirit: Lord have mercy.</p> <p>CONGREGATION Lord have Mercy.</p> <p>PRIEST´S VOICE May almighty God Have mercy on us, Forgive us our sins, And bring us to everlasting life</p> <p>CONGREGATION Amen.</p>
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*Rosa turns round praying.  
The priest appears and says his homily.*

PRIEST

Brethren. Jesus Christ deeply loved his country . On returning to Jerusalem, where he was about to be crucified and on beholding the city from a hill he broke down. Jesus cried for his country, because he loved it and because he saw the misfortune which would befall it. And like Christ we likewise cry when we behold our country because our fatherland is divided and sick as was the Jerusalem of those days.

It's not sick because of the economic crisis; it's sick because of its moral crisis. And a moral crisis is a cancer which destroys from within the soul our relationship to God and disables our chances for an authentic national reconstruction.

Brothers and sisters. This evangelical warning is, specially, for those who, because of the authority bestowed on them by God, must be an example and guide: when a government doesn't take the necessary measures for reconciliation and peace, that government is sowing hatred and is leading to sin.

And that mortal sin acquires an extreme gravity because of the authority of the person committing the sin. That's why those who sow discord among the people should pay attention today more than ever to the words of Christ: "beware those of you who would scandalize one of my chosen ones, it would be better if they hung a millstone round his neck and threw him to the bottom of the sea".

*Pause.*

If they hung a millstone round his neck and threw him to the bottom of the sea.

*Pause.*

Brothers and sisters.

Let's put our trust in Jesus Christ God and Lord of history and in Mary, Mother of the church, who invites us to prayer, sacrifice and penitence.

*Starting up the Creed, the priest leaves.*

I believe in God almighty , Creator of heaven and earth  
And in Jesus Christ his only son, our lord,  
Who was conceived... *(etc.)*

## **19. From your hands this sacrifice**

*Wasteland next to the little saint's shack.*

*Rosa enters following Lauchi who, with pliers in his hand, is looking for wood from an abandoned set of shelves.*

LAUCHI

Piss off, Rosa, piss off. Before I get nasty.

ROSA

You know I'm right, and you know that what I'm asking for is fair. I'm not leaving until you give them back.

LAUCHI

But I don't have them anymore, I've told you! What do you think? I don't work on the train; I told you they were Peloncha's. I gave them to him.

ROSA

Don't lie to me! You haven't! You kept them and you've been selling them; everybody knows.

LAUCHI

So what! You wanna buy? You cunt.  
*He ignores her and sets up the shelves to take them apart.*

ROSA

*Pulling his arm*  
Why did you do this to me, Lauchi?

LAUCHI

Let me go, I'm busy.

ROSA

Why?

LAUCHI

Let me go.

ROSA

If you helped me to bless them; if you were ....moved. You've got a good heart.

LAUCHI

Let me go and don't make me get angry. Let go!

ROSA

Why are you so busy? What are you, a cartonero now?

LAUCHI

*Taking her violently by her t-shirt*  
What's the matter you cunt? "Cartonero" so what? So what, what? Don't you bug me again cause I'll smash your brains in.  
*He pushes her.*  
*Rosa stumbles and charges back.*

ROSA

You know this is about something else! You know I couldn't care less if you're poor. We can be friends, but don't lie to me, do you get it?

LAUCHI

No! I don't get it, I don't want to. Leave me alone and don't drive me crazy. Do you get it? Huh? Don't pester me.

ROSA

Lauchi...

LAUCHI

But what is it you want? You want war? You want me to fuck you up your arse, you fucking cunt?

ROSA

I want you to give me back the stamps you've still got; I want you to stop selling them. I want you to tell me who you sold them to; to help me find them to explain to those people that I'm not...

LAUCHI

What the fuck's got into you, you crazy cunt? Leave people be, what the fuck do you care what they do with...?

ROSA

It's my penitence!

LAUCHI

What rubbish. Did your cop of a father tell you off? Did he send you to jail, beat you up? "Penitence" is for kids, you asshole. Don't get me mixed up in...

ROSA

*Red eyed*

I'm not getting you mixed into this, Lauchi; it's my duty. Only mine.

*Whispering as if lost in a World of her own*

Mine, mine, mine, mine.

*She comes back though not completely.*

You've got to help me. Help me with this, only this. Please, please, please...

*She kneels*

I've got to do whatever I can to repair the damage, I've got to make up for it, see? That's my prayer, my privation, my sacrifice.

LAUCHI

Get up you idiot.

ROSA

It's okay if you humiliate me, Lauchi.

*Her tongue stumbles momentarily*

B... be... b...because I've sinned a lot, in thought, Word and in what I've failed to do.

LAUCHI

*Taking her by her hair*

Get up or I'll beat you up.

ROSA

*Suffering and resisting*

It's my pp... p...penitence, Lautaro Rubén. Because of the n... n...nature of my sins. I've got to find those who because of me were fooled, make up for the harm, pray for them and explain...

LAUCHI

*Letting go of her violently*

Get out of here.

*Turns round and immediately starts taking apart the wooden shelves taking out the nails with the pliers.*

ROSA

*On hands and knees, getting over it*

I'm not leaving. I'm staying. Penitence is, above all, accepting our cross patiently.

LAUCHI

*While pulling out the bigger nails holding the shelves together he also hits them using the pliers as a hammer, to loosen them up.*

I'm just bloody well fed up with you, you asshole. You liquefy my brain with all your nonsense and then you break my balls. Fuck off. Let me work I'm not going to give you a goddamned thing back, I sold everything, get it? People bought off me cause they believe me. They believe you blessed them and they know that's true, they know you really blessed them And they have faith in you! Faith. And you whine and cry like an asshole. But, you know what? They have faith in you cause they don't know you, because you don't break their balls, like you do me, get it? They don't know you're crazy as a coot.

ROSA

Who did you sell them to? Please, please. Where did you sell them?

LAUCHI

I don't know. Shut up.

ROSA

Where did you sell them? Tell me!

LAUCHI

Shut up or I'll beat the hell out of you.

ROSA

*She starts getting up and remains kneeling*

Did you keep one? One for yourself?

LAUCHI

*Taken by surprise*

Of course.

*Reacting.*

No, I don't know!

ROSA

Give it to me!

LAUCHI

No!

ROSA

*Standing up.*

You've got a stamp of mine! You have faith in me? Ha? Tell me, do you have faith in me?

LAUCHI

No!

ROSA

*Going towards him*

Why do you keep a stamp of mine if you don't have faith?

LAUCHI

Shut up or I'll beat you up...

ROSA

*Grabbing him by the shoulders*

Tell me why you have a stamp of mine, too.

LAUCHI

*Shaking himself free he pushes her, and straightens up*

Let me go, don't touch me, you asshole.

ROSA

Why? Why?

LAUCHI

*Desperate about to cry*

I don't want you to touch me, you fucking cunt, I don't want you to touch me.

ROSA

*Not giving up.*

Why? Why? Give it to me.

LAUCHI

I won't give you a thing, don't touch me!

ROSA

*Trying to get her hands into his trouser pockets*  
Give it to me, give it to me!

LAUCHI

*Tucking her hands tight between his legs*

I won't give you a thing, let go, let go, you bitch.

*Rosa is paralyzed.*

*They remain breathing together; the girl's hands in Lauchi's crotch. The boy's hands holding them there.*

*Time stops.*

*Suddenly Lauchi pushes her far away and wields the pliers as a weapon.*

*Rosa starts to scrub her hands obsessively trying to clean them.*

*Lauchi, terrified, hammers the bigger nails compulsively .*

ROSA

*Breathing heavily, always scrubbing her hands.*

Give me, give me, give me. Give it to me. Give me, give me, give me...

*Lauchi hammers. Rosa approaches him, scrubbing her hands madly.*

LAUCHI

*Hammering away. Taking a big nail, he hammers into the wood in three strokes.*

Go away, go away.

ROSA

Give me, give me, give me. Give me, give me, give me.

*Lauchi, in a frenzy, takes another nail and sets it ready to hammer.*

LAUCHI

Go away. Go away.

ROSA

*Putting her hands on the wood, her eyes lost, imploring.*

Give me, give me, give me.

LAUCHI

*Crying through clenched teeth.*

Go away you crazy mother fucker. Please go away.

ROSA

Nail me you gay faggot.

*She says the following words chokingly*

Fucking... freak. Nail me if you are a man. Nail me if what you have hanging between your legs is good for anything, *(screaming)* nail me!

*Lauchi hammers the nail into the palm of her hand. The nail goes right through her hand and into the wood. Rosa's cry is mind-blowing, perfectly neat and neverending.*

ROSA

*Aaaaaaahhhh.*

*Lauchi lets his arm fall weakly next to his body  
The pliers fall a second later to the ground.*

LAUCHI

*Slowly almost in a whisper*

*You're the faggot.*

*You mother fucker.*

*Rosa, making an effort and with a shout takes her hand away from the wood and raises it up to her eyes.*

*The nail is still in her hand. She shows her bleeding palm to Lauchi, who runs away.*

ROSA

*May the Lord receive from these hands this sacrifice*

*To the eternal glory of his name*

*For our good and the good of all his church.*

## **20. The enclosed pure garden**

*Bench in the corridor of a hospital, with a statue of the Virgin Mary on the wall lit by an electric candle. Plastic flowers.*

*Rosa's mother is on the bench. Approaching steps can be heard coming down the corridor.*

*Happily reciting fragments of Song of Songs.*

MOTHER

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,*

*for thy love is better than wine:*

*because of the savour of thy good ointments*

*Thy name is as ointment poured forth:*

*She takes a long deep breath.*

*Lauchi appears with some flowers. He stops a few steps away from the mother.*

*She laughs for an instant, like a girl. She holds out both hands as if to receive the flowers.*

*Therefore do the virgins love thee,*

*knowing of your graces and sweetness:*

*Pause.*

*She remains alert, waiting for Lauchi's reaction.*

*Lauchi doesn't know what to do. He gives her the flower. She embraces them.*

*Draw me, we will run after thee,*

*don't fear, for we will never tire.*

*She laughs like a child.*

LAUCHI

They're not for you.

MOTHER

Hush, hush. We'll be found out.

LAUCHI

The flowers are not for you, mam.

MOTHER

We'll be found out, inside here. That's why you mustn't speak, silly; don't say a word. Don't sing, don't howl, don't purr. My husband used to say that. When he wasn't my husband yet. He was the boy from next door. Afterwards they obliged him to.

LAUCHI

They are for Rosa.

MOTHER

They're not roses.

LAUCHI

They are for your daughter, mam.

MOTHER

My daughter was nailed. She didn't nail herself. If not what is this? What would it be if not? She's not going to nail herself. They nailed her, they nailed her...

LAUCHI

I came to see how she was.

MOTHER

And who are you?

LAUCHI

I'm Lauchi. Rubén Lautaro. Gregoria's grandson. One of her grandsons. Of Gregoria's.

MOTHER

I know who Gregoria is. I had a maid who was called Gregoria.

LAUCHI

I am one of her grandsons. Lauchi, they call me.

MOTHER

They all steal from you. If they don't steal one thing it's another. Or they steal the "other", ha ha. They offer their "other" and your husband fondles it.

*Lauchi is visibly very uncomfortable; he steps closer to take away the flowers from her.*

LAUCHI

*Holding out a hand*

Erm... Give them to me, I'll take them to her, give them to me.

MOTHER

*Takes hold of his hand with energy and twists it round to show him what she's saying.*

A hole this size she had poor little thing, here, a hole that was infected, rotten. Those weren't Christ's wounds! It was a hole.

*Lauchi pulls trying to free his hand, but she doesn't let go.*

She didn't say a word, she kept quiet about her infected hole. Until she got a fever, see? And that's why we had to hospitalize her. It was lucky.

*She lets go of him. She becomes serious, sad.*

The doctor says it was lucky that her temperature went up very quickly. *She speaks normally as if she were in her right mind.*

It was thanks to the fever that we brought her in, and the doctors gave her antibiotics; they opened up her hand, and thank the Lord, the Lord and the Virgin Mary, she's out of danger. Our baby is okay. And they were able to save her hand. She's okay. Resting. Our baby is okay.

*She lowers her head. She remains in silence.*

LAUCHI

Where? Which is her room, mam?

*Pause.*

Can she be visited?

MOTHER

*Raising her head suddenly, looks at him fixedly.*

Do you know what happened?

Tell me.

LAUCHI

Erm. An... accident. That's what they told me.

MOTHER

She won't say a word. Not to anybody. She shut up. And now you turn up with flowers. Who are you, her boyfriend?

LAUCHI

No.

MOTHER

It's very suspicious.

LAUCHI

My... grannie sent me. Gregoria. They're from her.

MOTHER

What?

LAUCHI

The flowers.

MOTHER

Why doesn't she come. Herself. The bitch.

LAUCHI

Mam...

MOTHER

She also shut up when she was screwed. She didn't say a word to anyone, what do you know? What did you come for? Who is your mother? Who is your father? What did you come for?

LAUCHI

I came...I was sent. To see how Rosa was.

MOTHER

She's the same, always the same. She was born that way. There's no help for it.

LAUCHI

I'd better get going...

MOTHER

You're not going anywhere! Listen carefully.

*Reciting softly*

The king hath brought me into his chambers,  
we will be glad and rejoice in thee:

*She makes an obscene gesture with her hands*

*Lauchi steps back; she continues.*

We will remember thy love more than wine,  
the upright love thee:

*Lauchi gives another step back.*

A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me,  
he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts...

*She sighs and puts her hands on her thighs.*

LAUCHI

I'm leaving.

MOTHER

Bye dear, bye. A blessing.

*She wets her finger in the small bowl of blessed water next to the image of the Virgin, and splashes him.*

*She laughs like a child.*

*Bye dear, bye.*

*Lauchi leaves.*

*After a pause.*

*Bloody blacks.*

## **21: Queen of Confessors**

*The priest and Rosa's father, sitting in an office.*

*Then the scene moves momentarily to an adjoining space which looks like a dungeon or warehouse.*

FATHER

...and myself, are eternally grateful to you father. As you said, the disturbances have lost political support. We received the order to enter the house of "the little saint". The altar was no longer there, that surprised me. But most amazingly there was no need to plant any drug: there was some there already! The women had it. Those pious and devout ladies! They carried out their dealings there.  
*Pause.*

I wanted to find out what had happened to the altar, they wouldn't tell me. But in the end, with these people... one ends up finding out everything.

*He moves momentarily to the adjoining space.*

*There is Lauchi, standing, nervous, serious.*

*Rosa's father sits down to listen to him; Lauchi remains standing.*

LAUCHI

I only want to say that it was Rosa who threw stones at the altar. Five or six they say. I wasn't there. I had left, I wasn't about to throw stones at Conchi's family because they ain't done me no harm; but she put them in her rucksack, and went and threw them. And they say she burnt the altar, that it was half burnt, but she burnt it. That's what they say. Nobody kicked up a fuss cause she's your daughter, but...

FATHER

And how did they know it was my daughter?

*Pause.*

Who told them it was my daughter?

*Silence.*

LAUCHI

It was her who blessed the stamps. People know that and people believe; and those who bought the stamps don't sell them and have kept them; they pray to them much more than to the little saint, who was a fake after all, but not the stamps. She blessed them, that's not fake. In the end she asked me to hand them back; she regretted what she'd done, but I didn't see any harm in it. Why couldn't people love them and keep them?

FATHER

Did you give her the money?

*Pause*

Did you give her some part of the money you made at least, or did you keep it all?

*Silence.*

LAUCHI

She was upset; upset. She went crazy; she said it was a sin. That she had a penitence. She made a hole in her hand on purpose. They weren't the nails of Christ, as the old cronies say; that sure is a lie, I swear it...

*He kisses his fingers making the sign of the cross with them.*

...cause I saw it, I was there. I was taking the little altar apart. They threw it away; Conchi's mother and great aunt. The drug they'd hidden there nearly got burnt up. Cause your daughter threw the candles down with the stones she'd thrown, and set fire to the tablecloth. It was an old wooden sideboard they had there, which also caught fire. They kept the crack there, the old cronies. It nearly caught fire. They moved it from one place to another till they finally got rid of it cause it was no longer good for anything. I went cause I wanted the boards. We collect boards. I was taking it apart to take the boards and then Rosa came crying to ask me for the stamps. I didn't have them anymore. And she got upset.

*Suddenly thoughtful.*

Why would she be upset, if in the end she had won? Cause in the end she won: she made them get rid of the altar, and the little saint is a "goner". And besides they've been put into jail, haven't they? They found the drug in the house.

*He is carried away by his confession.*

But Rosa insisted it was all her fault. "You didn't do a thing, Rosa", I says to her. She says "nobody is innocent", she says. And she wants to take the stamps off me, and as she can't find them she goes crazy and starts hitting herself with the boards, and nails her hand with a nail. She got hold of a board with a nail this size, and she nailed it into her hand.

And then she showed it to me.

I swear.

"My sacrifice", she said.

*Silence.*

That's why I've come to talk to you. Cause everyone is being fucked over; everybody's being caught. Everyone is being jailed, and new people are taking over. And I don't want anyone to fuck me over. I want you to know how things happened. I want you to know how they are. I want you to know that...anything you want to know, I'll inform you... I can help you.

FATHER

The doctor said she'd fractured her second and third metacarpals, these little bones. But not with the nail; the nail miraculously went right through the middle. The nail didn't cause the fracture. Except someone hit her. Except someone hammered it in.

*Pause.*

But how could she? Alone? With the left hand?

*Pause*

And with what hammer? With a stone? With the pliers?

*Silence.*

*The scene momentarily moves to the priest's office, who has remained there.*

PRIEST

It's a load off my heart knowing Rosa's well. And that all that business of the accident has been cleared up. That's just what we needed in the neighbourhood after the "little saint", a case of "stigmata". The popular mind is the ideal place for superstitions to breed in...

*The scene goes back to the adjoining space.*

*Lauchi is now sitting in a chair, hands tied behind his back, his head fallen on his chest.*

*Rosa's father walks around him.*

FATHER

...she went to take food and clothes from the parish for you to give them out. As usual. She went to look for you to the wasteland. And you son of a bitch tried to take advantage of her. But as you're an asshole it didn't turn out as you'd planned, and Rosa defended herself... Get it? Get that into your brain. And she'd managed to force herself free but you made her trip and fall on top of the boards. She put out her hands like this.

*He acts putting his hands in a position as if to protect himself from a fall.*

*He realizes Lauchi isn't looking at him.*

*He slaps him and lifts his face to oblige him to look.*

You made her fall on top of the boards and she put out her hands like this. With the weight of her body and yours on top. Bang. She nailed her hand and fractured it. Okay? Get it?

And you... You, shithead, you took off and left her there.

*He thinks for a second and smiles sarcastically.*

*He slaps him.*

Only a son of a bitch would do something like that.

*Pause.*

And she's only a kid, and she was ashamed of what had happened, and didn't want to blame you because she is very devout. So she covered up for you.

*He gets closer to his face and looks into his eyes, breathing very closely.*

So is it clear now how it all happened, you little shithead? Huh? Answer me!

*Lauchi nods.*

*Rosa's father steps away and thinks.*

Okay... What a son of a bitch! You left her as she was. She nearly died of an infection, did you know that? Did you know that, you son of a bitch?

But sinners pay. Do you know what happens to perverts like yourself? Do you know what's done to them? Or do you think that the Reformatory is any different to prison?

*Lauchi lowers his head and it is barely noticeable that he's crying.*

*Rosa's father takes out a Rosary from his pocket, kisses it and hangs it on the boy's neck.*

Take this it's Rosa's she asked me to give it to you, if I saw you

*Lauchi's crying intensifies.*

*Lights fade on him, the scene goes back to the priest's office, where Rosa's father also moves to.*

FATHER

Yes, the boy is already in the Reformatory, at the judge's disposal. He was the grandson of a maid we once had. My wife and Rosa were always taking her things, food, clothes, can you believe it? We found some stamps and Rosa's rosary on him, it seems he'd stolen it. And Rosa wouldn't say a word, she didn't want to accuse the little bugger.

PRIEST

Rosa needs a firm spiritual guide. I'd very much want to see her and speak to her, when she's better.

FATHER

*Smiling.*

She's fine. She asked me to come; she's waiting outside. Shall I ask her to come in?

## **22: Vocations**

*The chair where Lauchi was, lights up and we see Rosa, sitting waiting. Father comes to fetch her and shows her in.*

PRIEST

Daughter.

ROSA

*Timidly, standing next to the door.*

Father.

PRIEST

Come closer.

*Rosa looks shyly towards her father, who remains standing next to the door. He nods his approval and remains watching the scene. Rosa approaches the priest.*

ROSA

I've been ill.

PRIEST

I know. We already know everything. Are you going to come nearer or not? Come...

*Rosa gets nearer and the priest puts a hand on her head.*

*Then he caresses her cheek and kisses her.*

*Looks at the father, nodding his head.*

*Rosa's father smiles, satisfied.*

Rosa, we are proud of what you did. The lord listened to your pleas. And finally your devotion, your prayer, your wholeheartedness were fruitful. We are all very happy...

ROSA

*She steps back, confused.*

But the chain of prayer was a failure, father. Nobody came... and... besides I...

PRIEST

A failure? Your prayer a failure? Even if nobody came, even if we preach in the desert, God listens to us, Rosa. You might not know about it but there no longer are any profane altars in our community: the false gods have been revealed, those who were guilty have been arrested, the leaders of the disturbances we had to put up with will appear in court, the streets have been cleaned up of corruption and there is a spiritual revival in the parish, Rosa. The flock has come back to the fold. What more can we ask for? Hmmm? And you think all this has happened just like that?

*Rosa's eyes brim with tears.*

Nothing happens if God does not allow it. This is the consequence of prayer, my daughter. God has blessed you with the gift of perseverance. And I want to thank you personally.

*The priest stands up.*

*Rosa's father makes an effort not to cry.*

We haven't got many catechists as young as you in our parish, Rosa. *He puts both hands on her shoulders, consecrating her.*

But we are going to make an exception.

*Rosa looks into the priest's eyes, surprised.*

Go and see sister Mirta so that she can prepare you.

*Rosa, exultant, embraces him.*

*The priest embraces her back and looks at the father.*

## 23:Heaven

*Visiting room of the Reformatory.*

*Rosa, sitting, waits with a discreet briefcase.*

*Lauchi enters pushed in by somebody.*

*Rosa stands up. Lauchi remains standing still.*

ROSA

Hi, Lautaro.

LAUCHI

I don't want to see you. I was obliged to come.

ROSA

I asked to see you. I'm my father's daughter; I can get many things done. Why don't you ask me for what you need? If it's within my reach...

LAUCHI

Get me out of here.

ROSA

I can't...

LAUCHI

*Whispers.*

Bitch.

ROSA

...and besides I don't want to.

*Lauchi stares at her.*

We all have to pay for our misdoings, Lautaro. Dad... dad told me what you did...

*Looks down blushing.*

...what you tried to do to...me. He explained why you're here.

*Silence.*

*She looks at him.*

This is for your own good. Here you're going to be safe from...

LAUCHI

You fucking moron.

*A door is heard opening behind Lauchi.*

*Rosa looks over the boy's shoulder signalling that there is no problem.*

ROSA

Lautaro. I'm the new catechist. I'll be coming in often to bring things for the younger ones. Maybe later on... you might want something. You might need something.

LAUCHI

Or you, might be needing something you little whore.

*Grabbing his balls.*

These, for example.

ROSA

*Keeping her dignity, straight as a rod, begins reciting in a low voice*

...because I was hungry and you gavest me food, I was thirsty and you gavest me something to drink; I was naked and you clothed me; I was in jail and you came to visit me...

LAUCHI

*Smiles. A couple of teeth are clearly missing*

This. Ha ha. Thissssss. You little cunt.

*He sits down on a chair spreading his legs open.*

Thissss.

*Rosa begins praying the litany of Loreto.  
The congregation will respond, and the other characters will appear on scene participating in the prayer as shown.*

<p>ROSA</p> <p>Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Christ, graciously hear us. Christ, hear us.</p>	<p>CONGREGATION</p> <p><i>Repeating</i> Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Christ, graciously hear us. Christ, hear us.</p>
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*Lauchi spits into Rosa’s face. Rosa goes on leading the prayer, while she dries her face and walks towards the front.  
The remaining characters will respond to the Litanies and walk until they are standing one step behind her.*

<p>ROSA</p> <p><i>Reciting the litanies.</i></p> <p>God, the Father of heaven, God the Son, Redeemer of the world. God the Holy Spirit. Holy Trinity, one God.</p> <p>Holy Mary Holy Mother of God, Holy Virgin of virgins, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church, Mother of divine grace, Mother most pure, Mother most chaste, Mother inviolate, Mother undefiled, Mother most amiable, Mother most admirable, Mother of good counsel, Mother of our Creator, Mother of our Saviour, Virgin most prudent, Virgin most venerable, Virgin most renowned, Virgin most powerful, Virgin most merciful, Virgin most faithful, Mirror of justice, Seat of wisdom,</p>	<p>CONGREGATION</p> <p><i>Answer, repeating as shown.</i> Have mercy on us</p> <p><i>They answer correspondingly.</i></p> <p><i>Change answer to:</i> Pray for us</p> <p><i>Rosa’s mother enters and joins the congregation answering</i></p> <p><i>Rosa’s father enters and joins the congregation answering</i></p>
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<p>Cause of our joy,          Spiritual vessel,          Vessel of honor,          Singular vessel of devotion,          Mystical rose,          Tower of David,          Tower of ivory,          House of gold,          Ark of the covenant,          Gate of heaven,          Morning star,          Health of the sick,          Refuge of sinners,          Comforter of the afflicted,          Help of Christians,          Queen of angels,          Queen of patriarchs,          Queen of prophets,          Queen of apostles,          Queen of martyrs,          Queen of confessors,          Queen of virgins,          Queen of all saints,          Queen conceived without original sin,          Queen assumed into heaven,          Queen of the most holy Rosary,          Queen of families          Queen of peace.</p>	<p><i>The priest enters and joins the congregation answering</i></p>
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*Continuing the prayer,  
 the priest takes center position, in front; everyone else a step behind- except Lauchi.*

<p>PRIEST</p> <p>Lamb of God, You take away sins of the world.          Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world.          Lamb of God, Your take away the sins of the world.</p> <p>Jesus, hear us          Jesus, listen to us</p>	<p>CONGREGATION</p> <p><i>Answering</i>          Spare us , O Lord</p> <p>Graciously hear us O Lord.</p> <p>Have mercy on us.  <i>Repeating</i>          Jesus, hear us          Jesus, listen to us</p>
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*Lights go down on everyone while the prayer comes to an end, except on Rosa, whose light becomes brighter, extremely bright, until it reaches a mystic quality.*

PRIEST

*Each time a little darker.*

We gather under the shelter you offer, Holy Mary Mother of God. Do not ignore the prayers that we offer you in our time of need, but rather save us always from danger, glorious and blessed Virgin. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

CONGREGATION

*In semi darkness*

...That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

PRIEST

*In darkness.*

O God,  
you willed that, at the message of an angel,  
your word should take flesh  
in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary;  
grant to your suppliant people,  
that we, who believe her to be truly the Mother of God,  
may be helped by her intercession with you.  
Through the same Christ our Lord.

ROSA

*The only remaining light on her.*

Amen.

*BLACK OUT*