

# **MacRune's Guevara**

**(as realised by Edward Hotel)**

**a play by**

**John Spurling**

The worst of dying was, to Mrs Touchett's mind, that it exposed one to be taken advantage of."

Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*

MACRUNE'S GUEVARA was first published in Great Britain 1969 by Calder & Boyars

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MACRUNE'S GUEVARA was first performed on 8 February 1969 at the Jeannetta Cochrane Theatre, London, by the National Theatre Company of Great Britain. The play was directed by Frank Dunlop and Robert Stephens and the cast was as follows:

EDWARD HOTEL.....	Derek Jacobi
MARX, MACRUNE, BLACK JACQUES.....	Robert Stephens
CHE GUEVARA .....	Jeremy Brett
GUITARIST.....	Rod Wilmot
COCO, FELIPE, BENJAMIN.....	Harry Lomax
SERAPIO, WILLY, MANAGER, BRAULIO .....	Gary Waldhorn
TANIA.....	Jane Lapotaire
JOAQUIN, DEBRAY, SKILFUL SURGEON.....	Ronald Pickup
NARRATOR.....	Gillian Barge
ISABELLA, ANGELIQUE.....	Jeanne Watts
RAIMUNDO, SOREL, LORO.....	Charles Kay
DEBORAH, MRS RENT .....	Gabrielle Laye
FRANK, 1 <sup>ST</sup> PEASANT, MARCOS.....	Lewis Jones
ROLANDO, BUSTOS, 2 <sup>ND</sup> PEASANT .....	Peter Penry-Jones

Other parts were played by members of the cast. The scene "Rosaura and the Renegade" was omitted from the first production. This text incorporates some later revisions from the radio adaptation broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in 1993.

PROLOGUE

*Enter EDWARD HOTEL*

HOTEL: Ladies and gentlemen, well aware as I am how unusual it is for an author to appear on stage, let alone in advance of his own work, may I be allowed to plead two extenuating circumstances? *(smiles, pauses)*

In the first place, I am only partly responsible for what is to follow. Leaving aside my beautiful and talented cast, the real author is, of course, MacRune. In the second place, the peculiar nature of the event – I hesitate to call it a play – does, I think, call for a little explanation. *(smiles, pauses, bows head)*

To begin with our author, the amazing MacRune. Who was MacRune? He was a painter. He lived, latterly, in this very studio and he died last April of pneumonia, complicated by malnutrition. We know next to nothing of his life. He seems to have been of mixed Scottish and Irish ancestry. He was born in Torquay. *(smiles, pauses)*

What did he paint? That is the rub. Had MacRune died the summer before last instead of last April, we would have said – except that there would have been no occasion for us to have said it – that he painted flower arrangements, pub-signs and portraits of famous personalities derived from their photographs as reproduced in the newspapers.

Let us be perfectly frank about this: his work in these genres was primitive, not to say crude, and could have had little appeal for art-lovers, even if they had known of his existence. *(smiles, pauses, puts hands behind back)*

But few people did know of his existence – his landlady, a distant relative in Oban, the odd official at the National Assistance Board, as it then was, and the sparse band of his customers. I personally knew nothing of his existence until after his death. *(closes eyes)*

That sad event occurred, as I've mentioned, in April. In the early days of May it so happened that I was looking out for new quarters, and that was how I first set eyes on this room. Taking an instant fancy to the place I closed with the landlady on the spot. Only then did she draw my attention to the walls, explaining that she was sorry they were not yet repainted – she had made arrangements for them to be done and if I had come in a week's time... *(smiles, pauses)*

Well, what, apart from the normal accumulation of grime, the yellowing paint and here and there the peeling plaster, was wrong with the walls?

Those walls, ladies and gentlemen, those perfectly ordinary blank walls, had been covered – inch by inch – with work, MacRune's work, work of MacRune's final and most astonishing period.

What, then, had he left us, this amazing old man, this Michelangelo of Primrose Hill? (*walks round stage as if in studio*) A vast design, an unfinished Sistine Chapel, a spider's web of miraculous complexity, replete with detail of potentially quite staggering beauty and originality; drawings, sketches, quiet conversation pieces and panoramic vistas, intimate groupings and violent landscapes; more than that, notes about colour and contrast, slogans, sections of dialogue, statements of faith, explanations, direct speech contained in what I can only describe as cartoonists' balloons; in short, the last (Bolivian) campaign of the Argentinian guerrillero Che Guevara, as seen – no, let us say, envisioned by – and why be afraid to cry it from the rooftops – one of the few indubitable artistic geniuses of our time. In a word, a masterpiece. (*Pause, he goes limp*)

And the whole thing, ladies and gentlemen, executed in pencil. HB.

*He retreats a few steps and summons on stage his cast. As they enter and take up their 'rest' positions, he continues to address the audience, but in a more rapid and conversational manner than before.*

For several weeks I racked my brains for a way of realising MacRune's masterpiece. You must understand, of course, that it is not in itself really there; or only partly there. We can follow the lines, some of the writing, the outlines of the figures, the rough composition of groupings, some of the general design, but only with the utmost difficulty. It is all so faint, so very much missing at so many crucial points. It is not, I must admit, always easy to distinguish MacRune's own handiwork from what may have been an existing mark, or even crack, in the plaster. No, its whole essence is the idea, not just the general idea, but the detailed données, the sparks it strikes in the beholder, the extraordinary juxtaposition of what may or may not be references... and so on and so forth. I don't want to get involved now in a full critique.

It was at once clear to me that it was a masterpiece. But would it, I asked myself, be clear to anyone else? Certainly the landlady thought nothing of it. I invited various friends in to see it – highly educated, highly talented, highly thought-of people, many of them experts in artistic fields – critics, academics, dealers, etc. None of them thought anything of it. The plain truth was that I and I alone was able to appreciate what MacRune had left behind, in the form that he had left it. That was the crux. MacRune's masterpiece demanded to be interpreted, realised, and happening as I do to have a certain expertise in the theatrical field – other fields besides, of course, but that is by the way – I decided that it must be realised in dramatic, in plastic, in animated terms. I gathered a select group of suitable – more than suitable – performers and we set to work.

The result amounts to a compilation. The basis, the great First Causer, the Rock upon which we stand, is MacRune. But upon that basis I have erected a scaffolding of suppositions, glosses, expansions and even the edited records of some of our working discussions. Please, note, however, that nothing here is

improvised. Much may be the direct result of improvisation, but it has all been given final shape by me. Thank you. *(makes to retire)*

*(returning)* One final point, forgive me! MacRune, there can be no doubt, felt for his subject – Che Guevara – something akin to idolatry. I suspect that MacRune, who began as an orthodox Marxist, had become by the end, though without really knowing the difference, an exponent of armed revolution in the Third World. Now I myself tend to sympathise with the established authority in a given country, whatever that may be. For me, order and stability come first and theories and ideologies a long way afterwards. Had I been born a Bolivian, I am sure I should have been a steady supporter of President Barrientos and his regime. However, my difference with MacRune on this matter of political allegiance is not at all germane. As an artist he has passed beyond such temporary trivia and it is as an artist that I salute him and that I hope to win for him your salutes. Thank you.

*He goes and sits down, talking inaudibly to one or two members of the cast.*

2

THE GHOST OF MARX

*Seated at a small table, full face, CHE GUEVARA. His head is lowered, he is penning a letter. Standing behind him, also full face, a tall heavily bearded figure dressed in a sheet – KARL MARX. One arm is raised at right angles to the floor and the index finger pointed straight forward. On the desk beside Che's letter lies his beret. He is smoking a Monte Cristo No.4 cigar.*

MARX: *(in sepulchral voice)* Che!

CHE: *(speaking some phrases from his letter aloud as he writes)* ... renounce my positions in the leadership of the Party... post of Minister of Industries, my rank of major... my Cuban citizenship.... modest efforts against imperialism wherever.... *Patria o muerte!*

MARX: *(retaining pose, but turning head towards HOTEL)* You're positive it is the ghost of Marx?

HOTEL: It's recognisably Marx and since he died in 1883, it can only be his ghost.

MARX: To my eyes it could equally well be an Old Testament prophet.

HOTEL;: In the context it's more likely to be Marx.

MARX: Couldn't I float down from above? I am a ghost, after all.

HOTEL: *(angrily)* I'm trying to realise MacRune's vision, not ponce about with special effects. Again, please!

MARX: Che!

CHE: *(writing)* ... leadership of the Party, my post as Minister... rank of major... modest efforts... *Patria o muerte!*

HOTEL: Yes, not bad, but it lacks something.

CHE: Shouldn't there be some dialogue between them, since they're only together on this one occasion?

HOTEL: The scene speaks for itself. Marx is sending Che to Bolivia and Che is writing his letter of resignation to Fidel Castro.

MARX: Wouldn't this be a good moment for a short resumé of Marxism?

HOTEL: Too boring.

MARX: But couched in the form of an argument. After all, Che was not an orthodox Marxist. Marx might have wanted to level a few reproaches, score a few points.

HOTEL: We're not interested in Marx. He's served his turn.

MARX: Back to Highgate Cemetery!

*He lowers his arm, turns and walks stiffly away. Pause. CHE stands up briskly, puts cap on pen, puts beret on head and marches off to his 'rest' position.*

ACTRESS: Shouldn't Che show some emotion? Shock, fear?

HOTEL: No, darling. Che is a man without fear, and besides the ghost is no more than symbolic.

MARX: I still don't think we got the most out of that ghost.

HOTEL: Oh, for Heaven's sake! Do you want to hog the whole play?

MARX: But I really feel we're losing something here. The possibilities are endless when you think about it.

HOTEL: Very true. But looked at from another point of view, it's a totally spare scene. Che turns up in Bolivia. Fair enough. Does it matter what gave him the idea?

MARX: *(bitterly)* Better cut it, if you feel like that.

HOTEL: As we have it, it's the optimum length. It makes its point, but it doesn't get on anybody's wick. We'll do the scene again.

CHE: With the letter?

HOTEL: We can take the letter as read, but this time try one good draw on your Monte Cristo no. 4. *(Pause)* Ready?

CHE: Ready.

MARX: Che!

*MARX retires as before, Che puffs violently on cigar, then screws cap on pen, puts beret on head and retires as before.*

3

THE TABLES OF THE LAW

HOTEL: And so to Bolivia! There is very little doubt in my mind that when MacRune pencilled in this section of his masterpiece he was thinking of the scene in the Old Testament where Moses comes down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone and finds the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf.

ACTRESS: But didn't you say that the whole scene should be rather trashy?

HOTEL: Yes, that's very important. What we are trying to put across is a group of bandits in the middle of a South American jungle having an orgy. But it must be second-hand. We have no evidence that MacRune ever met a bandit, ever set foot in a jungle, least of all in South America, or ever witnessed, let alone took part in, an orgy.

CHE: What you're asking for is a scene from an American musical?

HOTEL: Precisely.

*The actors take up their positions. The whole available cast is used, including HOTEL as a minor figure. The impression given, whether entirely without props or with everything money will buy, is of a concourse of piratical, Mexican-Western villains grouped about a small clearing in the depths of the jungle. In the centre is a large wood fire. Down left – a group of bandits playing cards for money. Down right – another group playing dice. Beside the fire a guitarist is singing and playing. Everyone is drinking freely and most are already drunk. There is a total absence of discipline, a constant ground-bass of loud voices, quarrels and some physical knockabout. There are women present and they are involved most of the time in sexual by-play and fore-play. With one or two exceptions all the bandits are either ex-taxi-drivers from La Paz, or ex-tin-miners from Catavi. They could wear distinguishing hats. The orgy is divided into sections, which can be joined together in any order, performed simultaneously, or repeated ad. lib.*

SECTION I

*The GUITARIST sings, accompanied by a CHORUS*

GUITARIST:                    Woman, woman, woman  
  Woman, woman  
  Woman, woman, woman  
  Woman, *Ole*.

CHORUS:                        Woman, woman  
  *Ole*.

GUITARIST:                    A man, a man, a man  
  A man, a man  
  A man, a man, a man  
  A man, *Ole*.

CHORUS:                        A man, a man  
  *Ole*.

GUITARIST:                    A man and a woman  
  Woman and man  
  A man and a woman  
  Aaaaaaaaah!

CHORUS:                        Woman and man  
  Aaaaaaaaah!

SECTION II

*A man and a woman do a suggestive Spanish dance, using castanets, while GUITARIST accompanies them and CHORUS claps hands.*

SECTION III

1<sup>st</sup> GUERRILLERO: More wood on the fire!

2<sup>nd</sup> GUERR: More money on the cards!

3<sup>rd</sup> GUERR: More money on the dice!

WOMAN: *(to 4th GUERRILLERO)* More, more, more!

SECTION IV

*COCO PEREDO steps out in the middle and addresses the gathering in an exaggerated Latin-American accent.*

COCO: Comrades!

ALL: Ah!

COCO: Comrades, are you all enjoying yourself?

ALL: Ah!

COCO: Didn't I tell you this is the good life? Back in La Paz when many of you were taxi-drivers, did I not say you were living like dogs?

SOME: Ah!

COCO: And back in Catavi when many of you were tin-miners, were you not living like dogs?

OTHERS: Ah!

COCO: Then you were exploited, but now you are guerrilleros. The life of a guerrillero is a good life. It is a free life, a life of pleasure, where a man is a man. Now we are preparing ourself, but when the time is ripe, we shall strike. We shall strike when the iron is hot. And then all Bolivians will be free.

1st GUERR: What? *Presidente* Barrientos?

COCO: Not *Presidente* Barrientos, no. Barrientos will be dead.

ALL: Dead!

COCO: But all other Bolivians will be free.

2nd GUERR: What? The friends of Barrientos?

COCO: Not the friends of Barrientos, no. The friends of Barrientos will be dead.

ALL: Dead!

COCO: But all other Bolivians will be free.

ALL: Free!

SECTION V

*SERAPIO steps forward*

SERAPIO: We shall overcome!

ALL: We shall overcome!

*SERAPIO sings accompanied by GUITARIST:*

SERAPIO: Patria o muerte

This is the life for me

Buena es la suerte

Bolivia shall be free.

ALL: Bolivia shall be free.

SERAPIO: Si, buena es la suerte

The soldiers shall be shot

Patria o muerte

And we'll take what they've got.

ALL: And we'll take what they've got.

SERAPIO: Patria o muerte

Who is talking of fear?

Buena es la suerte

The Revolution's here.

ALL: The Revolution's here.

SERAPIO: Buena es la suerte

The jungle grows its flowers.

Patria o muerte

Bolivia shall be ours.

ALL: Bolivia shall be ours.

## SECTION VI

*A quarrel breaks out between two dice-players, one a driver, one a miner:*

DRIVER: Filthy tin-miner!

MINER: Filthy taxi-driver!

DRIVER: Unspeakable digger!

MINER: Unmentionable driver!

DRIVER: Underground sod!

MINER: Four-wheeled slob!

DRIVER: Dirty-faced grub!

MINER: Pot-bellied chauffeur!

DRIVER: Earth-worm!

MINER: Cabbie!

*They draw knives and circle round one another. They close and draw blood. Their comrades bind their wounds.*

## SECTION VII

*A man and a woman, lying close to the fire, exchange kisses, caresses and love-bites.*

MAN: Come into the bushes, beautiful!

WOMAN: I am afraid of the snakes.

MAN: Come by the river, greasy-face!

WOMAN: I am afraid of the alligators.

MAN: Come up into a tree, hot-feet!

WOMAN: I am afraid of the pumas.  
MAN: Where else, big thighs?  
WOMAN: Right here, ramrod! I'm not afraid of men.

SECTION VIII

*A quarrel breaks out between two card-players, one a driver, one a miner:*

DRIVER: You cheated me!  
MINER: You lost, taxi-driver! Pay up!  
DRIVER: Dirty tin-miner!  
MINER: Four-wheeled slob!  
DRIVER: Underground sod!  
MINER: Pot-bellied layabout! *(draws knife)*  
DRIVER: Filthy sewer-rat! *(draws knife)*

*This time the fight becomes general, as all the miners and drivers draw their knives.*

MINERS: Tin-miners!  
DRIVERS: Taxi-drivers!

*The fight continues until everyone, except one or two non-miners, non-drivers and the women, is engaged, some struggling on the ground, some still on their feet. At this point CHE appears at the back of the stage. He remains quite still and silent, but slowly all heads turn to him and everyone freezes in the position he or she has reached. Hold this tableau for some seconds.*

COCO: *(speaking very quietly in tone of horror and shame)* Che.  
ALL: *(whispering, severally)* Che. Che. Che.  
CHE: *(To COCO)* Where are your sentries?  
COCO: Here, Comandante! They left their posts only for a moment to join in the fun.

*COCO pushes a man forward. The man stands, his head hanging, to one side. He is joined by two or three others, who stand beside him in the same manner. CHE walks slowly down to centre, kicking men to their feet as he comes. All draw back and leave a space for him. He stops.*

CHE: Discipline is essential. Soldiers should sleep and wake at fixed hours. They should not be allowed to idle their time away at games. Alcohol is prohibited. No fires are to be lit at night which might give away the guerrilla position.

*Long pause. The actors retire to their rest positions.*

4

THE CONCERT

*To the accompaniment of part of Falla's Harpsichord Concerto, or any other harpsichord piece, CHE, TANIA and JOAQUIN form a group which imitates as closely as possible the painting "The Concert" which hangs in the Pitti Palace, Florence.*

*In the centre, CHE, his bare head turned over his left shoulder to look at JOAQUIN. CHE's body is facing half-stage-right and his hands are on the keys of an ancient typewriter which stands on a high table.*

*All three actors are standing.*

*To CHE's left, JOAQUIN, whose body also faces half-stage-right and whose head follows the body's direction, so that he is looking into CHE's eyes. The fingers of JOAQUIN's right hand are just visible on CHE's left shoulder. In his left hand, JOAQUIN holds a rifle, whose barrel runs diagonally across his body from bottom left to top right.*

*To CHE's right, hidden by his body and the table with the typewriter, except for her head and the right half of her bust, stands TANIA, wearing an exotic sombrero, perhaps with a feather. The distance between her head and CHE's is about one third that between CHE's head and JOAQUIN's. TANIA is turned half-stage-left, but, though her head follows the line of her body, her eyes face out to the front.*

*All three remain frozen in these positions through this scene. When the music has finished, a pause.*

HOTEL: MacRune's design for our last scene was undoubtedly based, as I mentioned, on traditional representations of the Old Testament story of Moses coming down from Sinai with the Tables of the Law. Our next also clearly derives from an Old Master original, a famous Renaissance painting of three figures, two male and one female, grouped around a keyboard. But in fact several revolutionary commandments, culled from the writings of Che Guevara and Chairman Mao - such as that just uttered by our actor representing Che Guevara - are written on the wall of MacRune's studio, in between the one drawing and the other. Since it is not at all clear which particular drawing they refer to - perhaps both - we will hear the rest of them now.

1st ACTOR: In order to become a true crusader, the guerrilla fighter's behaviour must be morally impeccable. And he must exercise strict self-control.

2nd ACTOR: He must be ascetic.

1st ACTOR: Men who are dedicated in this way must have an ideal, one that is clear, simple, and worth dying for.

2nd ACTOR: Farm labourers are motivated by the right to have their own land and to enjoy fair social treatment.

3rd ACTOR: Industrial workers by the right to a job, a decent wage and social justice.

1st ACTOR: With students and professional workers, the ideal is more abstract; for instance, freedom.

4th ACTOR: If there is no barber, never mind. If there are not enough cooks, any member of the company may be assigned to the preparation of food.

5

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONCERT

*The three actors remain grouped as in Scene 4 while HOTEL fields questions from members of the cast, including, if desired, any of the three in the group.*

1st QUEST: Isn't all this rather obscure?

HOTEL: No. Enigmatic.

1sr Q: What's the difference?

HOTEL: It's not difficult to find meanings in it. The only question is which meaning you prefer.

1st Q: And which meaning do you?

HOTEL: There's no official version. To every man his own interpretation.

1st Q: Aren't you trying to say one thing rather than another?

HOTEL: Certainly not. I am implacably opposed to all forms of authoritarianism in the arts.

1st Q: But shouldn't Art communicate?

- HOTEL: That question raises several issues, all irrelevant. In the first place, this may or may not be Art. In the second place, it may or may not communicate. If it is Art, but fails to communicate, then your original proposition is *ipso facto* incorrect. If it's not Art and fails to communicate, your proposition is still unproven. If it's not Art, but does communicate, what are you worried about? And if it is Art and does communicate, we're laughing.
- 1st Q: Very clever! But suppose we find no meaning in it at all?
- HOTEL: Quite possible. Indeed probable.
- 1st Q: What would be the point of it, if it had no meaning?
- HOTEL: There might be no point in it.
- 1st Q: So we might easily do without it?
- HOTEL: Oh, easily.
- 1st Q: Why don't we?
- HOTEL: We could equally well do without it if it did have a point. We do without things that have point every day of our lives.
- 2nd QUEST: What does the visual element of this scene – the group of three figures round the keyboard - have to do with the quotations?
- HOTEL: I thought I'd already explained that, but perhaps you weren't listening. The group is a faithful realisation of one of MacRune's sketches, the quotations were written on the wall near it.
- 2nd Q: Yes, but I still don't grasp the connection.
- HOTEL: Nor do I. Perhaps there were other sketches nearby which have been erased or perhaps MacRune never got round to illustrating the quotations at all, if he ever intended to. Or perhaps he just wrote them down on a convenient space on the wall in order to memorise them. In the absence of any obvious logical connection, I thought it best to keep them together just as I found them.
- 3rd QUEST: Where is the human interest in all this farrago? Where is the warmth and emotion?
- HOTEL: What led you to expect human interest and warmth?
- 3rd Q: I always expect it. I can't do without it.
- HOTEL: Oh, dear! But don't despair! I will try to do something for you.
- 3rd Q: Thank you.
- 4th QUEST: Can you give us a run-down on the figures themselves?

- HOTEL: Reading from the left, I take them to be a girl known as Tania, Che Guevara himself, and a man known as Joaquin.
- 4th Q: It seems to be a direct copy of a painting called "The Concert" by Giorgione.
- HOTEL: Well done! You are evidently a cultured person. The painting hangs in Florence to this day. It has also been ascribed to Titian, among others.
- 4th Q: I suppose you are referring to Domenico Compagnola and Sebastiano del Piombo?
- HOTEL: I can't think of any others off-hand.
- 4th Q: But you said the sketch was MacRune's.
- HOTEL: I think I suggested that MacRune was making a conscious reference to the well-known painting in the Palazzo Pitti.
- 4th Q: A conscious reference is a polite way of putting it.
- HOTEL: We shouldn't underestimate MacRune. I'm sure he chose to imitate the painting for the very reason that it is well-known. It is well-known partly because of its enigmatic subject-matter. MacRune, no doubt, wished to imply that his own subject-matter was also enigmatic – I mean the relationship between these three guerrilleros.
- 4th Q: Unless he just happened to have the postcard by him.
- HOTEL: An interesting suggestion, which does not invalidate my own theory.
- 4th Q: Are we to have a reproduction of the Mona Lisa as well?
- HOTEL: MacRune does not appear to have borrowed from the Mona Lisa.
- 4th Q: You've taken a load off my mind.

6

THE HUMAN INTEREST

*The group of three actors as in "The Concert".*

HOTEL: And now for the human interest.

*Romantic music.*

- HOTEL: Tania.
- TANIA: The *nom de guerre* of Laura Gutierrez. Ran a Miss Lonelyhearts radio show in Camiri. Used it as a means of communication with the guerrillas.
- HOTEL: Joaquin.
- JOAQUIN: Veteran of the Sierra Maestra campaign. With other Cubans, followed Che to Bolivia.
- HOTEL: Tania and Joaquin died in the river Masicuri, near where it joins the Rio Grande.
- TANIA: We were fording the river with eight comrades....
- JOAQUIN: Bolivian soldiers were in ambush on both banks...
- TANIA: The water was breast-high when they began firing...
- JOAQUIN: The date was August 31st, 1967.

*The group breaks up. Lights down except for a spot on HOTEL.*

HOTEL: So moved was I by the discovery of these bare facts, so inspired by the mute gravity of MacRune's group, so conscious that many here would be craving for a little warmth, a little naked emotion, that I found myself composing a Five-Act Drama around these three characters. Of course, such a shadowy situation allows of many possible interpretations and I claim no special authority for my own, but I believe you will find it not the least tender, not the least touching section of our presentation. Designed as it is especially for those among us with a lingering nostalgia for the drama of past ages, containing as it does in ample measure those elements of romance, of sentiment, which once filled our theatres with tear-stained faces, nevertheless the overriding advantage which my Five-Act Drama enjoys over those of the past is that, riding as it were on their coat-tails, it is able to dispense with so much of their unnecessary contents. Here you will find all the essentials without the accompanying tedium. My Five-Act Drama – I say it quite without vanity – is a miracle of compression.

*ACTORS hold up large banner or board with the following inscription:*

EDWARD HOTEL'S FIVE-ACT DRAMA

'TANIA AND JOAQUIN'

Characters:

ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA, a guerrilla chief

JOAQUIN, another guerrilla, his friend

TANIA, a guerrilla girl

BRAULIO, a non-speaking guerrilla

3 Peasants and 7 other guerrillas

Scene: Bolivia

Time: AD 1967

HOTEL: Act One. Scene One. The guerrilla camp near Nancahuazu. Night.

*The moon is slanting through tall jungle trees. South American night-time jungle noises. CHE is seated on a packing case, reading from a volume of Baudelaire's poems. Enter JOAQUIN, with two tin mugs of coffee. He gives one to CHE and seats himself sideways to CHE, his back against the second packing-case. Pause.*

CHE: Joaquin, you first joined me in the Sierra Maestra of Cuba. Now you are my closest friend.

JOAQUIN: I would willingly die for you, Che.

CHE: If you are willing to die for me, it is because I would willingly die for freedom. It is the cause makes the man.

*Pause*

JOAQUIN: What about women, Che?

CHE: Women too can die for freedom.

JOAQUIN: But the love of men for women?

CHE: It is not a thing which concerns us here or now.

*Pause*

JOAQUIN: Che, I want to confess to you that there is a voice we hear on our radio, the voice of a woman...

CHE: I know the voice.

JOAQUIN: I cannot sleep at night for hearing that voice.

CHE: You must put it behind you.

JOAQUIN: Do you never think of women, Che?

CHE: I did once. But now I think of them only as soldiers in the cause of freedom.

JOAQUIN: I too will try to think of them like that.

*CHE finishes his coffee, rises, puts hand on JOAQUIN's shoulder,*

CHE: Come, we will inspect the sentries.

*JOAQUIN finishes his coffee, rises and follows CHE out.*

HOTEL: Act One, scene two. Daytime in the guerrilla camp.

*CHE is standing at the typewriter, tapping the keys. Enter JOAQUIN*

JOAQUIN: The woman is coming here. To this camp.

CHE: What woman?

JOAQUIN: The woman with the voice. Tania.

CHE: And what of that, Joaquin?

*JOAQUIN goes and stands at CHE's left, as in the original group.*

JOAQUIN: What am I to do, Che?

CHE: You must think of her as a soldier, not as a woman.

*TANIA enters at back and takes up position as in original group.*

TANIA: Is it Che?

*CHE holds JOAQUIN's eyes, as in original group.*

CHE: *(to JOAQUIN)* Repeat after me this passage from my handbook of Guerrilla Warfare: "Women, although weaker than men, are no less resilient..."

JOAQUIN: *(in trembling voice)* "Women, although weaker than men, are no less resilient..."

TANIA: *(speaking straight out to front)* I am standing next to the greatest man in the world. If I reached out my hand, I could touch the pocket of his khaki shirt...

CHE: "They can be used in many capacities, particularly in communications..."

- JOAQUIN: "They can be used in many capacities, particularly communications..."
- TANIA: Little he knew when he was far away in Cuba, I was here in Bolivia, thinking of him every minute of the day. Now, if he turned his head, I should feel his breath on my face....
- CHE: "If captured, they will invariably be better treated than men, no matter how brutal the enemy..."
- JOAQUIN: "No matter how brutal the enemy..."
- TANIA: For the past seven years I have kept a photograph of him in the pocket over my heart. It was only a clipping from a newspaper and it has rotted away so much that if I was searched by soldiers from Barrientos' army, they could never prove it was not a photograph of President Johnson or General Eisenhower...
- CHE: "They can cook for the troops and perform other duties of a domestic nature..."
- JOAQUIN: "Of a domestic nature...."
- TANIA: But now if this man here were to turn round towards me, his face would not be that of President Johnson or General Eisenhower, but Che Guevara...
- CHE: "... teach the soldiers, nurse the sick, help sew uniforms..."
- JOAQUIN's mouth opens and shuts, but no sound comes out.*
- TANIA: Che Guevara, Che Guevara, Che Guevara....
- CHE: "And if necessary, even bear arms..."
- JOAQUIN: *(hardly audible)* "... even bear arms..."
- TANIA: This is my god and I am standing within arms' length of him.
- Pause. Hold this fraught tableau, then CHE turns to TANIA and extends his right hand.*
- CHE: Tania, you are a brave fighter for freedom and you are welcome to our ranks.
- TANIA: (looking at him, almost overcome with emotion) Che.
- She bends and kisses his hand.*
- JOAQUIN: (looking at TANIA, overcome with emotion) Tania.
- CHE: Welcome, Tania! *Patria o muerte!*
- He embraces her, Castro-style.*
- TANIA: (limp in his arms) .... o muerte!
- JOAQUIN: (sagging at the knees as he watches) O muerte!

*Pause. Hold tableau.*

HOTEL: Act Two. In the hammock.

*CHE lies in a hammock. TANIA smooths his brow, JOAQUIN looks on from a distance.*

JOAQUIN;: Che has gone down with one of his bouts of asthma. Tania looks after him like a sleepless angel. As for me, I am dying by inches, my throat constricted, my pulse racing, my head hot, a fever in every limb.

TANIA: Years ago I read how Che on the boat that brought Fidel and the few to Cuba went down with asthma, and I often dreamed that I was there to nurse him. Now in Bolivia dream becomes reality. *(to JOAQUIN)* Bring another vaporiser from my rucksack!

JOAQUIN: I don't exist, except as a pair of hands. But in giving me orders she lends me a temporary existence, which is better than none. And I shall put my hands in her rucksack.

*Exit*

TANIA: How are you now, Che?

CHE: Better for your care, Tania.

*He raises his head feebly and kisses TANIA's cheek. TANIA, her hand to her cheek, slips to the ground below the hammock.*

CHE: You've tired yourself out. You ought to rest.

TANIA: Being near you is the only rest I want.

*Pause*

CHE: *(to himself)* For a man who has read Hemingway I've acted like a fool. A woman who nurses an officer in the field is certain to confuse her devotion to duty with her service to the officer.

TANIA: *(to herself)* I've told him how I feel. What will he say?

CHE: *(to himself)* I ought to speak to her now, put this idea out of her head. But I'm too weak to cope with an emotional scene. I will say nothing and pretend to sleep.

*He turns over.*

TANIA: He has not heard me or has not understood.

*Enter JOAQUIN*

JOAQUIN: I come from rummaging in her rucksack. I feel guilty. But can one accuse oneself of lust towards a rucksack? *(to TANIA)* The vaporiser.

*TANIA takes it, not looking at him.*

JOAQUIN: Her hand is shaking, her breath as racked as his. What has happened between them?

HOTEL: Act Three. Up the tree.

*CHE, TANIA and JOAQUIN are perched in the branches of a tree. CHE is looking out through field-glasses.*

CHE: The Bolivian troops are moving up the far bank of the river, hoping to encircle us.

JOAQUIN: *(to himself)* My mind is a swamp treacherous with alligators. What happened that day when I was fetching the vaporiser?

TANIA: *(to herself)* Since Che's bout of asthma I have sometimes imagined he recognised my feelings for him and perhaps returned them. We went bathing one day in the river. I sat on a rock and he took my photograph. What does that prove? Does he carry my photo where I carry his?

CHE: Return to camp, Tania, and order mobilisation!

*TANIA climbs down tree and exit*

JOAQUIN: Why not send me to strike at the troops, Che?

CHE: Suicide!

JOAQUIN: That's how I want it. I have nothing to live for. You must have noticed. What I have to live for can never be mine.

CHE: You have something to live for as well as die for. The Revolution.

JOAQUIN: I have forgotten the Revolution. I am rotten with love for Tania.

CHE: Why not marry her, Joaquin?

JOAQUIN: She doesn't look at me.

CHE: I will speak to her.

*Enter TANIA, limping.*

TANIA: They are mobilising.

CHE: *(handing glasses to JOAQUIN and getting down tree)* Keep watch! *(taking TANIA aside)* During the Cuban Revolution we arranged several successful marriages among the guerrilleros. Does the idea appeal to you?

TANIA: It depends who I'm to marry.

CHE: Joaquin wants to marry you.

TANIA: I don't love Joaquin.

CHE: He loves you. He is my second-in-command and our best man. You are our best woman. This marriage would please me and assist the Revolution.

TANIA: I don't see him as our best man.

CHE: What is wrong with him?

TANIA: Nothing is wrong with him except that there is one man better.

CHE: If you have respect for the cause, respect for me...

TANIA: I have more than respect for you, Che. When you were only a name, a photograph, I thought I saw the cause in you. Now I have lost sight of the cause and I see only you in you.

*She sinks to the ground.*

CHE: What is the matter?

TANIA: I injured my foot running back from the camp.

CHE: Joaquin!

*JOAQUIN comes down from the tree*

CHE: We shall shortly break camp. You, Joaquin, will command the rearguard. Tania has injured her foot. Because of her injury, she will have to travel with your party.

*Exit CHE rapidly. JOAQUIN assists TANIA out.*

HOTEL: Act Four. At the farm.

*Three PEASANTS seated at a table out of doors. Enter JOAQUIN, TANIA and BRAULIO with guns levelled*

JOAQUIN: Have no fear, comrades! These guns are to protect us not to threaten you. We want food, but we have money to pay for it.

1<sup>st</sup> PEASANT: Guerrilleros?

JOAQUIN: Soldiers of the National Liberation Army.

2<sup>nd</sup> PEASANT: Guerrilleros.

TANIA: Yes, guerrilleros. And why? Because Bolivia is a prison. Bolivia feeds a dictator, the people starve and groan. With these guns we shall buy freedom, ours and yours.

JOAQUIN: Food, comrades. Show my friend to your larder!

*BRAULIO goes with 3<sup>rd</sup> PEASANT*

JOAQUIN: *(to himself)* We have passed two months in hell. Losing track of Che in the jungle, we have been searching for him, the troops on our trail. Morale is low among the men, but Tania is on the verge of hysteria.

TANIA: *(to herself)* If this were one of my nightmares – perhaps it is – these peasants would turn into soldiers. Under the table I would see their bare feet suddenly sprouting boots.

JOAQUIN: *(to himself)* Was Che in love with Tania? I believe he was. But he put the Revolution first. What a man! I have tried to follow his example, living, eating, sleeping beside Tania, but as though a pane of glass divided us.

TANIA: *(to herself)* Is Joaquin still in love with me? I don't think so. I am continually ill, his manner is distant. Men soon get tired of sick women.

1<sup>st</sup> PEASANT: Are you two married?

JOAQUIN: No.

2<sup>nd</sup> PEASANT: Just good friends.

TANIA: To hell with these stupid animals! Where's the food? Find Braulio and let's go, for God's sake!

JOAQUIN: I'll get Braulio.

*Exit*

1<sup>st</sup> PEASANT: Why take to the trees, sweetheart? Aren't there enough hairy gorillas in town to satisfy you?

2<sup>nd</sup> PEASANT: How many men have you got there all to yourself, sweetheart?

1<sup>st</sup> PEASANT: Why do you want to carry a gun, lovely? It's the men should carry the guns.

2<sup>nd</sup> PEASANT: Have you slept in Che Guevara's hammock, sweetie-pie?

TANIA: You pigs! Don't speak Che Guevara's name! It gets filth all over it in your mouths. No, you'll never be free, because you're not fit. Not if a Che was born every generation and every generation risked his life for your sake, your freedom. You're only fit to crawl, creep, cringe, to stink, to be slaves, to die in your own dirt.

*She begins to shoot wildly, while the PEASANTS take cover. JOAQUIN rushes in and she stops when she sees him.*

JOAQUIN: Braulio's got the food, we're going.

*TANIA goes out.*

1<sup>st</sup> PEASANT: Your girl's had as much as she can take.

*Enter BRAULIO*

JOAQUIN: We want to cross the river Masicuri. Do you know the best place?

1<sup>st</sup> PEASANT: Surely. Do you want me to show you?

JOAQUIN: Tomorrow?

1<sup>st</sup> PEASANT: Tomorrow's fine. Send a man to fetch me and I'll guide you.

JOAQUIN: Thanks, comrade.

1<sup>st</sup> PEASANT: Sorry about the girl.

JOAQUIN: Till tomorrow!

*JOAQUIN and BRAULIO go out.*

1<sup>st</sup> PEASANT: Jorge, get your boots on and make tracks for La Laja. The lads are waiting there. (*spreading map on table*) This is the crossing place, O.K.?

2<sup>nd</sup> PEASANT: O.K., corporal. Trust me! We'll cover that spot.

HOTEL: Act Five. Across the river.

*The river Masicuri. Five o'clock in the evening. Jungle noises, noise of river. BRAULIO appears stage left and with great caution crosses river/stage and steps on bank, stage right. Pause while he looks about, then makes the 'come on' signal. The rest of the guerrilleros cross the river in single file, TANIA and JOAQUIN last. When they are all strung out in the river, gun-fire breaks out from both sides. BRAULIO is seized from behind, the guerrilleros in the river fall one by one. TANIA and JOAQUIN struggle to get out of their rucksacks, but failing to, stand back-to-back trying to return fire. TANIA is hit. JOAQUIN turns and supports her. He too is hit. Arm-in-arm, facing each other in a close embrace, they sink down into the river.*

*CHE comes forward.*

CHE: The radio announced that ten guerrilleros died in the river Masicuri. I don't believe it. They report that Tania's body was found washed up on the banks of the Rio Grande. This doesn't have the ring of truth.

7

THE STORY OF RAIMUNDO THE RICH BOY

or

HE CAME FROM A GOOD HOME

*FELIPE and his wife ISABELLA, both elderly, are seated at a breakfast table laden with real silver. On the floor nearby is a large box wrapped in gaily-coloured paper and tied with a huge satin bow. The NARRATOR, an actress, sits near the front of the stage, to one side.*

NARRATOR: Raimundo Las Vegas Manana came from what is usually known as 'a good home'. From his father, Felipe, a university professor in La Paz, capital of Bolivia, Raimundo might have been expected to inherit what are usually known as 'brains'...

*FELIPE clears throat, puts on pince-nez, opens book, and leaning one elbow on table, with fingers against his mighty brow, reads.*

NARRATOR: From his mother, Isabella, daughter of an enormous landowner, Raimundo might have been expected to inherit what is usually known as 'wealth beyond the dreams of avarice'.

*ISABELLA, holding up one hand at a time, puts enormous rings on every finger.*

FELIPE: Is Raimundo coming down to breakfast, or isn't he?

ISABELLA: He promised me he would.

FELIPE: I shall be late for my lecture.

ISABELLA: Have patience, dear! His birthday only comes once a year.

FELIPE: It's my belief we've spoilt that boy.

ISABELLA: I won't have you say that, Felipe. He's a lovely boy.

FELIPE: In the course of my general reading I have come across many historical parallels for our son Raimundo...

ISABELLA: I've always believed that Raimundo would be a historical parallel.

FELIPE: The sort of people he puts me in mind of are: Caligula, Heliogabalus, Edward the Second of England, Bonnie Prince Charlie, and coming nearer our own time, the eldest son of Kaiser Wilhelm.

ISABELLA: That's a very distinguished list, but I don't quite understand what they have in common.

FELIPE: Many things in common, but notably that after a remarkably bad beginning they came to a remarkably bad end.

ISABELLA: But, Felipe, you really oughtn't to compare Raimundo to people in history. When you come to think about it, they nearly all came to a bad end.

NARRATOR: As he entered the breakfast-room on the morning of his twenty-first birthday, Raimundo Las Vegas Manana couldn't recall one single moment of his life when he had been truly satisfied.

RAIMUNDO: (*entering languidly in shot silk dressing-gown*) I cannot recall one single moment of my life when I have been truly satisfied....

ISABELLA: My darling boy, many happy returns of the day. Kiss your mother...

RAIMUNDO: (*kissing her absently*) And it is all the fault of my mother who chooses my present every year and every year fails to satisfy me... yachts, cars, shares, estates... God, what a lack of imagination that woman has!

ISABELLA: Felipe, aren't you going to kiss your son on his twenty-first birthday?

*FELIPE rises and does so.*

RAIMUNDO: And the fault of my father who doesn't seem to care whether I'm satisfied or not.

ISABELLA: Won't you look at your present now, my darling?

*RAIMUNDO casts a blase glance in the direction of the present and sits down.*

RAIMUNDO: All right. Ring for someone to open it.

ISABELLA: But, Raimundo, you must open it. Listen: this year to mark your coming of age, your father chose the present. Even I don't know what it is.

RAIMUNDO: (*jumping to his feet*) I feel a sudden thrill of anticipation. Could this be the present I have been waiting for?

*He tears off wrappings.*

ISABELLA: This is exciting, Felipe. Whatever can it be?

RAIMUNDO: (*staring into the now open box*) Good Heavens!

*RAIMUNDO puts both arms into the box and brings out a large rucksack. He holds it up and looks at it with a rapt expression, then puts it down on the ground and begins to undo the straps.*

ISABELLA: But what is it, Felipe?

RAIMUNDO: (*looking into open rucksack*) Wow!

*One by one he puts the contents on the table. As he does so, the NARRATOR reads the following passage, each item that RAIMUNDO takes out of the sack corresponding to the item mentioned by the NARRATOR:*

NARRATOR: For us in Cuba, the necessities were as follows: hammock, nylon rain-sheet, blanket; jacket, trousers, shirt, shoes; rucksack; basic provisions such as butter or oil, tinned goods, salt-fish, condensed or powdered milk, sugar, salt. Useful but not essential were: plate, spoon, knife; rifle-oil, pull-through and patches; a good quality cartridge-belt; canteen and medical kit; tobacco, matches, soap. We also found a use for: compass, spare nylon rain-sheet; change of clothes, underwear; towel, toothbrush and toothpaste; books for spare-time reading, e.g. biographies of heroes, histories and books about economic geography; also a machete; a bottle of petrol to set light to campfires, a notebook, pen or pencil, piece of rope and sewing-kit.

RAIMUNDO: Father, how can I ever thank you? *(puts things in rucksack)* Mother, goodbye! I'm satisfied at last.

*He goes out with rucksack.*

ISABELLA: What have you done, Felipe?

FELIPE: Raimundo always struck me as belonging less to us than to history.

NARRATOR: So Raimundo Las Vegas Manana, with his new rucksack on his back, whistling a revolutionary tune, made his way to the guerrilla camp at Nancahuazu. The next thing he knew Raimundo was on sentry-duty...

*RAIMUNDO is discovered lolling in a hollow, concealed by a bush. A rifle lies beside him.*

RAIMUNDO: I am so very happy. At one with Mother Nature. Earth below, sky above, trees around. Life as it should be lived. Mammals, birds, reptiles, insects going about their business, and man too. The wind ruffles his whiskers, the rain wets his nose, the sun warms the top of his head. So natural and right. And then all my comrades in the camp... good fellows, first-class fellows.. class is bound to be a barrier at the beginning... they'll soon come to like me as much as I like them...

NARRATOR: But as Raimundo, lulled by the afternoon sun and his own sententious reflections, dozed beside his rifle, a party of soldiers came up the forest path.

*Three SOLDIERS form a group in the shadow near RAIMUNDO and whisper together.*

RAIMUNDO: *(waking with a start)* I had a terrible dream. It was my twenty-second birthday. On the patio stood my present, an anti-tank-gun wrapped in blue tissue paper, with pink satin bows tied round the barrel. I rolled it right up to the breakfast-room and poked the barrel through the open French windows. Inside the room my mother was eating a Danish pastry at the table and smiling at me, just as she always does whenever she catches sight of me. I pulled the handle and blew the room, the table, the Danish pastry and my mother to smithereens. Then I heard a lot of whispering behind me. *(becoming aware of*

*the soldiers*) Ah, that's the explanation. I'm trapped. Asleep at my post. But I have to warn the comrades.

*He picks up the rifle and fires it in the air. The SOLDIERS scatter, then fire back. RAIMUNDO drops rifle, clutches side and rolls over. SOLDIERS pick him up and run off with him.*

NARRATOR: In hospital, Raimundo's life was saved by a skilful surgeon.

*RAIMUNDO discovered on an operating table. Beside him stands the SKILFUL SURGEON holding up a small object in a pair of forceps.*

SURGEON: There we are, my boy. There's the cause of all the trouble. A little bit of lead on the loose. You'll be quite all right now, I've saved your life. Don't thank me! But try to avoid little bits of flying metal in future. They don't do any of us any good.

*Laughing at his own joke, the SKILFUL SURGEON goes out. The three SOLDIERS enter and pick up RAIMUNDO.*

NARRATOR: A letter from the authorities informed Isabella that her son was recovering from his wound and was receiving a course of physiotherapy...

*The three SOLDIERS drag in RAIMUNDO. The light is dim. They beat him up quietly for a while, then retire, leaving him lying centre.*

RAIMUNDO: It is not by any means so bad as you might think, physiotherapy. In the first place, you are in real physical contact with other human beings. That is something I personally appreciate enormously. In the second place, if you refuse to talk when they ask you questions, you soon gain the respect of your physiotherapists. Not being the active type, I have always found it well-nigh impossible to gain people's respect and I suppose this must be one of the few ways you can gain respect by remaining perfectly passive. In the third place, I don't find the pain absolutely unpleasant. No, all things considered, I am very satisfied with my lot.

*The SOLDIERS again close in on him and when they retire, RAIMUNDO lies inert. The SOLDIERS look at him, at each other, shrug and, putting their cigarettes in their mouths, carry him out.*

NARRATOR: Raimundo's parents received a second letter from the authorities informing them that their son had run away from his place of convalescence and expressing the hope that should his parents come to hear of his whereabouts they would immediately make a full report. His mother believed this letter, but his father did not. And so, according to their respective temperaments – Isabella in hopes, Felipe without any – they continued to live quite happily for some time after.

DISCUSSION ABOUT RAIMUNDO

*NARRATOR, RAIMUNDO, FELIPE and ISABELLA join EDWARD HOTEL at the front of the stage.*

NARRATOR: Did you find a drawing of Raimundo on the wall?

HOTEL: No.

RAIMUNDO: Then you just invented the whole sorry tale?

HOTEL: Yes and no. If you look very closely you can just make out what seems to be the rucksack and its contents. A most intricate still life, in effect.

NARRATOR: And what's the story meant to say?

HOTEL: What do you think?

NARRATOR: I suppose it's a warning to parents not to spoil their children.

FELIPE: Rubbish! It's about the law of Nature, or Jungle Law. Raimundo's a harmless simpleton arsing about in a vicious environment.

ISABELLA: No, he's a hero, a holy fool, like Dostoevsky's Idiot. First, he utterly rejects all the materialistic paraphernalia of the affluent society – cars, yachts, houses, shares, money, clothes. Then he goes into the wilderness and finds himself much happier, but realises that it's not enough to cut himself off from a wicked world; and so he returns to the world and accepts all the terrible things his enemies do to him – with a most beautifully patient spirit.

RAIMUNDO: That's a load of horseshit! The boy's an open-and-shut case of masochism, with Oedipal complications. Take that dream of his – putrid with sexual symbolism - that anti-tank-gun poking through the French windows – it's love for his mother showing through in the guise of hatred for his mother, as in Hamlet. Hence the Danish pastry his mother is eating, of course.

HOTEL: I believe I was thinking more on class lines. In a Revolution the upper classes always lose out, whichever side they join. So the moral is: if you happen to belong to the upper classes, try to avoid Revolutions starting at all. I'm sure MacRune would have taken the same view, except that where I tend to sympathise with the upper classes, he would have welcomed their extinction.

*They all retire to their rest positions.*

THE GHOST OF MACRUNE

*EDWARD HOTEL is sitting at a small table writing a scene. Behind him materialises a large bearded figure wrapped in a sheet. Raising its right arm perpendicularly to the floor, the forefinger pointing forwards, the figure speaks:*

GHOST: Edward Hotel!

HOTEL: By George! This is unexpected. Alone at my desk in the watches of the night, composing a scene for my play, I am the victim of a sudden attack of the willies. *(turns head)* The Ghost of Marx!

GHOST: You bastard!

HOTEL: But a Scotch accent! Or would it be Irish?

GHOST: Stand still, ninny, and hear what I've got to tell you!

HOTEL: *(taking a few steps forward and peering at ghost)* MacRune!

MACRUNE: Ay, his ghost. *(advancing towards HOTEL)* What have you done to me, you tiny smooth-faced twot?

HOTEL: *(backing away)* Nothing to you, MacRune. Your work... I must admit I've been working on that.

MACRUNE: What does a maggot of your colour know of my work?

HOTEL: I don't claim to know it, only to admire it. I think it's great.

MACRUNE: Your opinion is not worth a dumb duck's quack. You're no Marxist.

HOTEL: I admit that.

MACRUNE: A political eunuch.

HOTEL: I wouldn't say that.

MACRUNE: To what end are you plagiarising my work, Hotel?

HOTEL: I must dispute...

MACRUNE: I'll tell you to what end. To cast rotten eggs at the only political analysis which makes sense of history. Don't dribble in my soup, Hotel! You care no more for me and my work than I care for you, and that's less than a windy day for a small fart. What you're after is a chance to sneer, to snigger for the applause of a corrupt and decadent society at the courage, faith, truth and self-sacrifice of a

few mighty spirits, who, make no mistake, will see your children, if not yourself, into the dank and dirty ditch you deserve, and there you'll bide, believe me!

HOTEL: Your strong convictions, MacRune, fill me with respect. But can't you allow, if only for the sake of argument, that you might be wrong?

MACRUNE: I see no future in arguments based on false premises.

HOTEL: We had better drop the subject, then.

MACRUNE: You are a pathetic faggot, Hotel. When politics – which is to say realities – alarm you, you want to bring them down to the level of art. A typical bourgeois reaction: when you don't understand something, when it frightens you, sop it up with the sponge of culture.

HOTEL: You're not doing yourself justice. The art you've created...

MACRUNE: It's not art, you gullible nit!

HOTEL: Allow me to be the judge of that!

MACRUNE: Can't you recognise trash when you see it?

HOTEL: Your work? Trash?

MACRUNE: Unadulterated garbage. Wall to wall bollocks.

HOTEL: What are you saying, MacRune? From the other side of the grave, if I may put it so without offence, all human artefacts may inevitably appear inadequate, but surely – cast your mind back to those last months of your life, the flush of red-hot inspiration, the mighty project growing under your racing pencil – surely then you felt you were creating something of permanent value for mankind?

MACRUNE: I'll give you an answer to that, Hotel.

HOTEL: I wish you would. Nothing excites me so much as a revelation of the inner workings of the true artist's mind.

MACRUNE: Five or six months before my last rattle...

HOTEL: That would be... November?

MACRUNE: The thought grew strong in my mind that I'd wasted my entire life. Flower-paintings! Portraits of personalities!

HOTEL: Pub-signs.

MACRUNE: What were they for? To please people. What was the value of pleasing lice, tell me that?

HOTEL: You had to live. But I admit they were poor stuff, very poor when you consider what was to come.

MACRUNE: They were good. Too good to be wasted on lice.

HOTEL: You thought they were good? Really?

MACRUNE: Of course they were good. I've no time for art, none at all, but let's face it, if anybody ever painted good pictures, I was the man.

HOTEL: I must have another look at them.

MACRUNE: I came to a decision. I'd hit them in the only place they really understood, the pocket.

HOTEL: Good!

MACRUNE: I was on my last legs by then. The old bag was taking every penny I had for rent.

HOTEL: I knew it. Exactly how I pictured you.

MACRUNE: When I'm gone, I said to myself, the old bitch will have to let this lousy place again. Right, we'll foul her up there, we'll scribble all over the walls.

HOTEL: So that was the origin of your inspiration!

MACRUNE: I had designs on the ceiling, but death cut me off... *(shakes head gloomily and relapses into silence)*

HOTEL: You know, this doesn't worry me in the least. Fascinating as it is to glean such information from the artist's own lips, the sordidity of the motive is totally irrelevant to the quality of the work produced.

MACRUNE: And you, Hotel, you have to be the one that takes the room. I was enjoying myself those last five months – could I have known the whole effort was wasted, my final satisfaction torn from me by a retarded connoisseur of graffiti... *(retreating)* My ghost will never rest quiet, Hotel, you bastard...

HOTEL: I find that funny, MacRune, forgive me, most amusing. *(laughing quietly, he sits down at desk)* Almost a paradigm of the anti-artist's dilemma in an age of increasing eclecticism. Well, well. But why choose Guevara as your subject?

*MACRUNE is still retreating. HOTEL doesn't turn.*

Of course, because he too was trying to destroy the existing order, just as you wanted to spoil your room. And as things turned out, you were both failures at it. Well, well. Poor MacRune. Poor old Scotch fanatic. Or were you Irish?

*Turns and sees that MACRUNE as gone. A cock crows.*

Shall we never know the answer to that vexed question?

## ROSAURA AND THE RENEGADE

*Guerrilleros form a stiff, front-facing group – with ROSAURA at the centre, in a much higher chair than the others – reminiscent of an Italian Primitive altar-piece and of a nineteenth-century family photograph. EDWARD HOTEL comes forward at one side and addresses the audience.*

HOTEL: We now come to one of the most remarkable sections of MacRune's masterpiece: the series of panels with which he has decorated the entire skirting-board of the east wall. These panels, so far as can be ascertained, tell the story of a student of philosophy called Rosaura Sanchez, who acted as a contact for the Bolivian guerrilleros. The whole series inevitably calls to mind the predella of an Italian Primitive altar-piece – Duccio, Giotto, who-have-you – in which, as you know, the artist was accustomed to depict scenes from the lives and deaths of the saints featured in the main altar-piece itself. But if there can be no doubt that MacRune was consciously imitating this genre, equally there can be no doubt of a more contemporary influence on the artist: I refer to the Strip Cartoon and particularly that branch of it which celebrates the cult of the Super-Woman or Belted Girl.

*HOTEL retires, his place being taken by the NARRATOR. The group disperses.*

NARRATOR: Chunky, raven-haired Rosaura Sanchez, an expert in philosophy and judo, is on her way to the guerrilla camp in Nancahuazu. Round her waist, a belt containing one thousand five hundred dollars in cash, funds for the guerrilleros. She has reached a prearranged rendezvous in the jungle.

*ROSAURA discovered beside a tree, down right.*

ROSAURA: Thinks: what's gone wrong? I had word the guide would meet me here.

*COQUE LOPE discovered behind another tree, up left.*

NARRATOR: But, unseen by Rosaura, a guerrillero called Coque Lope, nicknamed "Meanface", is keeping the appointment.

LOPE: *(peeping out from behind tree)* Thinks: They little know that I am fed to the teeth with guerrilla life. But my luck's in. *(dodges behind tree)*

ROSAURA: I thought I heard a movement in the undergrowth. *(looks behind her and puts hand on belt)*

LOPE: *(peeping round other side of tree)* First I'll have the bird and afterwards the cash. Then it's a new name for Coque Lope and quick tracks for the frontier.

ROSAURA: *(turning back)* Getting jumpy. Relax, girl! *(relaxes)*

LOPE: (whistles like an owl)

ROSAURA: That's the signal. There are no real owls in these parts. *(also whistles like an owl)*

LOPE: *(coming round tree)* Venceremos!

ROSAURA: *(seeing him)* Venceremos!

LOPE: Hi there! You're the best sight I've clapped eyes on in twenty weeks.

ROSAURA: Take me to your leader, comrade!

LOPE: You must be tired.

ROSAURA: Tired of waiting. Let's go!

LOPE: Not so fast, lovely. *(draws gun)* I'm for a little lie-down, myself.

ROSAURA: All right, you win.

*She lies down full-length.*

LOPE: Good girl. Mind if I join you?

ROSAURA: Come on down, comrade!

*LOPE, still holding gun, kneels astride her.*

LOPE: Won't you loosen your belt, comrade?

ROSAURA: Give me a hand, comrade!

*As LOPE's left hand and glance go down to her belt, ROSAURA catches his right wrist, expertly relieves him of the gun, throws him over her head in a somersault, and rising to her feet in the same movement, covers him with the gun.*

ROSAURA: On your feet, comrade! The English philosopher Hobbes had a phrase for you: nasty, brutish and short.

*LOPE gets to his feet*

ROSAURA: Let's go!

*They walk in a circle, LOPE in front, ROSAURA behind with the gun.*

NARRATOR: But clever, muscular Rosaura has one weakness: she is always ready to believe the best of people.

*LOPE stops.*

LOPE: You must think I'm no good.

ROSAURA: You don't make a good first impression, comrade.

LOPE: I don't know what came over me.

ROSAURA: It was fairly obvious to me.

LOPE: *(kneeling down in front of her)* Give me a break, comrade! I've lost my self-respect. I would rather you shot me here and now than tell Che and the others when we reach the camp.

ROSAURA: Your feeling does you credit, comrade. As the French philosopher Rousseau said: "Conscience is the voice of the soul: the passions are the voice of the body". Please get up, comrade.

LOPE: You promise to keep it quiet?

ROSAURA: *(giving him gun)* Put this back in your pocket, comrade.

LOPE: You're too good to me.

ROSAURA: Come on!

*Side by side, they walk in a circle.*

NARRATOR: But Coque Lope is not the man to be won over by kindness... As they reach a bend in the jungle path...

*LOPE suddenly steps sideways, draws gun and covers ROSAURA.*

LOPE: Right, baby, strip that belt and throw it on the ground!

ROSAURA: This belt contains money for the cause.

LOPE: Don't I know it? The cause you're referring to is my retirement in Argentina.

ROSAURA: I trusted you, comrade.

LOPE: More fool, you! Strip off and throw down, baby, or take what's coming to you!

*ROSAURA undoes belt and throws it down between them. Gingerly, LOPE edges forward, covering ROSAURA with gun, and stoops to gather belt. In a flash ROSAURA has the gun out of his hand and the man staggering back from a kick in the chest accompanied by a karate chop to the back of the neck. She stands over the groaning LOPE.*

LOPE: *(cowering)* Comrade, I beg you, don't shoot! If you ever had a father, don't shoot! I have twelve little children who look to me for everything. Think of my children, not of me!

ROSAURA: Were you intending to take your children to Argentina?

LOPE: I was, I was. It was for them I wanted the money.

ROSAURA: (*picking up belt and putting it on, flourishing gun*) Get up and get moving!

LOPE: Are you taking me to the camp?

ROSAURA: No, you're taking me.

LOPE: I am a worm, comrade, a real *gusano*,. But if you take me to the camp, Che will surely put a bullet through my head. I've seen him do it on a matter of discipline. It would be better if you were to shoot me now.

ROSAURA: It might be better for you, but I need someone to show me the way.

LOPE: Comrade, although I take all the blame for this accident on myself, some of the blame was yours.

ROSAURA: You mean, I should have let you rape me and take the money?

LOPE: No, but if you had been a man, such a bad thought would never have come into my head.

ROSAURA: I can't hold myself responsible for not being a man.

LOPE: No, but if when it happened the first time, you had not been weak and given me back the gun, it would not have happened the second time.

ROSAURA: That's a better argument. As the English philosopher Locke said: "All men are liable to error; and most men are, in many points, by passion or interest, under temptation to it." But even if I gave you too much temptation, you still acted like a worm.

LOPE: I did, comrade. But why? Because of my miserable life. No one wants to be a *gusano*, but what has made me a *gusano* is the Bolivian political system.

ROSAURA: True. As the American philosopher Emerson said: "What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered." Get up, comrade! I have decided to say nothing of all this to Che, in the hope that from now on you will cease to be a weed and a worm.

LOPE: (*getting up*) I shall, comrade, you'll see how I repay your generous instinct.

*They go out.*

NARRATOR: Arrived at the camp, Rosaura says nothing about what happened. Shortly afterwards, Che leaves the camp on a training march and Lope takes a group photograph.

*The guerrilleros form a group as at the opening of the scene, with ROSAURA in the centre. General laughter.*

ROSAURA: Maybe we shouldn't take photos.

COCO: Why not? We want to show our grandchildren who it was that set Bolivia free.

ROSAURA: But for security reasons.

PABLO: Che had pictures taken when he was in Cuba.

ALL: Get on with it, Lope! Think of our grandchildren!

LOPE: Ready, comrades?

ALL: Ready.

COCO: But you won't be in the picture, Lope.

LOPE: Don't worry, Peredo. It's not my face I want to remember. Watch the bird, comrades!

*Laughter. LOPE takes a photograph.*

LOPE: And another. *(he takes another)* And a third. *(takes another)* And another. *(takes another)*

PABLO: How many do you want, comrade?

LOPE: I want to be sure we get a good one. The light's not too good under the trees. *(takes another)* Thanks, comrades!

*They disperse.*

NARRATOR: But when Che returns and hears about the photos he orders all the copies which have been distributed to the guerrilleros to be confiscated and buried in a metal container. That way, if the guerrilleros finally win the war, they can return and recover the photos, but if they lose, the army will never find them to use as evidence. Lovely, athletic, philosophic Rosaura returns to the capital where she continues to study philosophy and to act as a contact with the guerrilleros. But soon, pressed hard by the army, the guerrilleros have to abandon their camp at Nanchahuazu and during the move Coque Lope disappears. Has he been captured by the army or has he returned to his family of twelve children? Neither...

*Enter LOPE with a shovel. He walks about with his eyes on the ground, searching for something. Then he straightens up and makes a 'come on' signal. Enter LIEUTENANT and two SOLDIERS.*

LOPE: *(prodding ground with foot)* X marks the spot, Lieutenant.

LIEUT.: Get digging, then!

LOPE: I was paid for information, Lieutenant, not for manual labour.

LIEUT.: You are disgusting. I'd as soon shoot you as have your beastly information.

*LOPE begins to dig, watched by SOLDIERS.*

NARRATOR: Back in her third floor flat in the capital, Rosaura is expecting the usual message from the guerrilleros to be pushed through her letter-box...

*ROSAURA walks in, reading a book, while LOPE, leaning on his shovel, hands LIEUTENANT a metal box. They are opening it and examining the contents, while ROSAURA speaks.*

ROSAURA: "What experience and history teach is this – that people and governments never have learnt anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it." *(shuts book and puts it under her arm)* This is a discomfoting observation by the German philosopher Hegel. Was I wise to trust Lope a second time? Hegel is probably wrong.

*Heavy rapping on door. LOPE has now gone off.*

Who is that?

*Enter LIEUTENANT and SOLDIERS.*

LIEUT.: Miss Rosaura Sanchez?

ROSAURA: What do you want?

LIEUT.: *(bows politely)* May I be permitted to remark that your photograph, taken as it is in a bad light and by an amateur operative, does you less than justice? *(to one SOLDIER)* Door! *(to the other SOLDIER)* Window!

ROSAURA: What do you want?

LIEUT.: Cigarette, Miss Sanchez? *(offers silver case)*

ROSAURA: I don't like people smoking in my room.

LIEUT.: *(sitting down and lighting his own cigarette)* I'm told you study philosophy, Miss Sanchez.

ROSAURA: What about it?

LIEUT.: I myself once followed a short course of philosophy.

ROSAURA: I should think the army was more your level.

LIEUT.: I still remember a saying of the Frenchman Voltaire: "It is said that God is always on the side of the big battalions".

ROSAURA: Did Voltaire even believe in God?

LIEUT.: It was foolish of you to stray outside the limits of your chosen subject into areas you don't understand.

ROSAURA: I had no choice in the matter. The Greek philosopher Aristotle said: "Man is by nature a political animal".

LIEUT.: Indeed yes, but you must bear in mind the words of the Russian Lenin: "It is true that liberty is precious – so precious that it must be rationed".

ROSAURA: I am an admirer of Lenin. But I prefer in this context to remind myself of the Two Ways posited by the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard: "One is to suffer; the other is to become a professor of the fact that another suffered".

LIEUT.: A foolish distinction. As the Roman Cicero observed in Latin: "Nothing so absurd can be said, that some philosopher has not said it".

ROSAURA: What do you want with me?

LIEUT.: Do you not enjoy a philosophical discussion, Miss Sanchez? I assure you that for me it is a rare pleasure. So few of my colleagues in the barracks have the necessary education to satisfy my thirst for an exchange of views...

*A letter drops through the door. The SOLDIER there picks it up and gives it to LIEUTENANT.*

*(opening letter)* Yes, yes, I will return tomorrow, Miss Sanchez, to continue our conversation. Many thanks for the pleasure. Oh! These two gentlemen have been good enough to agree to remain behind, so that your studies will be quite undisturbed. Good afternoon, Miss Sanchez!

*He goes out. SOLDIERS salute. Pause. He re-enters. SOLDIERS salute.*

LIEUT.: Good morning, Miss Sanchez! The communication you received yesterday was greatly appreciated by my superiors. Much enlightenment all round. As the American Thoreau remarked: "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk".

ROSAURA: One of your heels watched me take a bath. The other stayed all night in my bedroom.

LIEUT.: They have strict orders, Miss Sanchez, and I shall ask you to inform me of any serious infringement. Nevertheless, do try to look at it from their point of view! It is not at all easy for a man, however well-disciplined, to keep an eye on a philosopher of your shape without some physical strain to himself.

ROSAURA: Do you enjoy being the tool of a dictatorship?

LIEUT.: I look at it rather differently. We must accept the human condition for what it is. In the words of the Chinaman Lao-Tzu: "Heaven and earth are not ruthless; to them the ten thousand things are but as straw dogs".

*Letter drops through door. SOLDIER brings it to LIEUTENANT.*

Excuse me! *(opening and glancing at it)* Yes, yes, we shall have to resume our dialogue tomorrow, Miss Sanchez. Good afternoon!

*SOLDIERS salute as he goes out and again, after pause, as he re-enters.*

Good morning, Miss Sanchez! A slight *contretemps* has arisen. Delighted as they were with your second communication, my superiors feel some sort of reply is called for. Is that your typewriter? Shall we compose a suitable reply together?

NARRATOR: But as the Lieutenant passes beautiful, white-faced Rosaura and looks into her black glinting eyes, he suddenly sees nothing but stars...

*As LIEUTENANT bends to pick up the typewriter, ROSAURA catches him a forearm smash, which knocks him down. Diving for the door, she kicks the SOLDIER there in the crotch. But she is brought down by the SOLDIER from the window before she can get out. The LIEUTENANT, holding one hand to his face, covers her with his revolver, while the SOLDIER holds her arms behind her back and puts on handcuffs.*

LIEUT.: Regrets, Miss Sanchez! I had hoped to keep our relationship on a civil footing. However, as the Greek Heraclitus said: "All is flux, nothing stays still". I'm afraid, in view of the pain in my mouth, I shall have to return tomorrow. It grieves me still more that you will either have to sleep in your clothes or ask these gentlemen to assist you out of them. Good afternoon, Miss Sanchez!

*SOLDIERS salute as he goes out and again as he re-enters.*

LIEUT.: Good morning, Miss Sanchez! It is doing me the world of good, fitness-wise, climbing all the way up to the third floor day by day. How are you? I am quite refreshed, but for the loss of one tooth since an emergency visit to my dentist yesterday evening. I suggest that we begin right away today with our projected literary collaboration. *(sits down at typewriter)* How should I begin? "Greetings, comrades!"?

ROSAURA: I use a special secret stamp in the place where the address usually goes.

LIEUT.: A very sensible precaution. Where is this stamp?

ROSAURA: It's in my bedroom. Shall I fetch it?

LIEUT.: No. Lomez will find it if you tell him where to look.

ROSAURA: The bedstead is made of brass. At the centre of the bar at the head is a large hollow brass ball, which unscrews. The stamp is inside the brass ball.

*LIEUTENANT nods to SOLDIER by window, who goes into bedroom.*

LIEUT.: We should never have thought of looking there.. And now, to lose no time, how shall we start the message?

ROSAURA: I suggest the words of the English philosopher Bertrand Russell: "Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark".

LIEUT.: *(as he types)* This is a rather pessimistic statement, Miss Sanchez. Is it a code?

ROSAURA: No, not a code, but I suppose you might say it's a coda.

NARRATOR: Then, brave, beautiful, gymnastic, philosophic Rosaura takes the philosopher's last leap...

*Leaping the sofa, ROSAURA reaches the window and jumps through it. Sound of smashing glass.*

The next moment she's gone into the unknown.

*LIEUTENANT and SOLDIER by door go to the window and peer down through it.*

SOLDIER: My God, that's the worst waste of a nice bit of property I ever saw, sir.

LIEUT.: Stop gawping, you idiot! Get down the stairs like a demon out of hell! If people see she's wearing bracelets, we're in trouble.

*SOLDIER goes out of door as the other SOLDIER, LOMEZ, enters from bedroom with brass ball.*

LOMEZ: Two points to report, sir: first, this ball's solid; second, there's nothing in it.

*He salutes.*

11

THE AMBUSH

*The following is read by CHE over a loudspeaker:*

CHE: There is another manoeuvre which we frequently use to exhaust a numerically superior enemy. It is called "The Minuet".

*Seven SOLDIERS assemble*

For example the enemy is advancing in column.

*SOLDIERS raise rifles*

The guerrillas lie in wait at the four points of the compass.

*SOLDIERS move downstage. A shot and one soldier falls. The rest turn to face down right*

The dance begins as one point opens fire on the enemy. The enemy of course moves towards that point.

*Remaining SOLDIERS move down right. A shot and a second soldier falls. The rest turn to face up left.*

Now a second guerrilla point opens fire and draws out the enemy in a new direction.

*Remaining SOLDIERS move to up left. A shot and a third soldier falls. The rest turn to face up right, then move up right. A shot and a fourth soldier falls. The rest turn to face down left, then move to down left. Shot and a fifth soldier falls.*

So when the partners at all four points have entered the dance the enemy column is immobilized.

*Remaining SOLDIERS turn to face up right, then move towards up right. A shot and a sixth soldier falls.*

And without damage to themselves the guerrillas inflict considerable casualties on the enemy, causing him to waste ammunition and lose morale.

*Last SOLDIER moves from up right to centre stage. A shot and the soldier falls.*

*Pause. As EDWARD HOTEL comes out front, an angry member of the audience, played by an ACTOR, leaps on to the stage or addresses him from below.*

ACTOR: You've no comments to make?

HOTEL: Should I have?

ACTOR: I get the impression with a writer of your colour that you've generally got a lot more to say about what you've written than you've been able to or willing to say in it.

HOTEL: People must occupy their thoughts with something. They must have topics of conversation.

ACTOR: Look, what's wrong with you, Hotel, is you've spent so long locked up with yourself in your study, you really think books are the same as people. You're living at one remove from life. You're only half a man, Hotel.

HOTEL: Less. I'd say I was one-fifth man and four-fifths synthetic.

ACTOR: You admit it?

HOTEL: You don't think that other authors are equally deficient?

ACTOR: No, I don't. Shakespeare, Ibsen, D.H.Lawrence – those were real men.

HOTEL: But, then, isn't there a tiny niche for me? Among all those real men, isn't there some call for one genuinely synthetic author?

ACTOR: There is not. We'll give you two minutes to get clear of the building, Hotel, and if I were you, I'd keep it as unobtrusive as possible.

- HOTEL: *(starting to go, then turning back)* Are you yourself a full man?
- ACTOR: What are you implying? I can prove it to you any time you like. A man in every sense of the word.
- HOTEL: I think not. I think that if you examine yourself more carefully you will find that you are no more than the receptacle for a vast clutter of received ideas, ideas which have been propounded long ago, imitated and imitated again by countless generations of cheap authors, television script-writers, newspaper columnists, letter-writers and camp-followers of every kind. What is so very real about you? No author would dare to create a character as artificial, as second-hand, as unmemorable as you.
- ACTOR: All I'm saying is that you're short on emotion. You don't feel anything.
- HOTEL: I feel very strongly about this.
- ACTOR: You analyse everything out of existence. What the hell has all this got to do with Guevara, with seven dead men, for God's sake?
- HOTEL: What have he or they got to do with us?
- ACTOR: Good God, man, they were real... real human beings... that's what they've got to do with us.
- HOTEL: Real to themselves, no doubt. But no more real to us than - what shall we say? - these actors, or the parts they are playing. No more real to each other. You don't suppose that if these seven men had been real to Guevara he could have done that to them, do you?

*Repeat opening sequence, with the seven SOLDIERS dressed as skeletons.*

## THE MISSING YEARS

*A large flat is wheeled or lowered on to the stage, coming to rest at a point roughly left and up centre. The flat is painted with an enormous square of prison bars, behind which are the head and shoulders of a prisoner with a large Mexican moustache. A balloon emanates from the prisoner's mouth bearing the words "VIOLENCE IS THE MIDWIFE OF REVOLUTION." EDWARD HOTEL comes and sits down left, looking at the flat. From behind it steps the living spitting-image of the prisoner and at once begins to address HOTEL in excitable tones and a French accent:*

SOREL: *Moi, Julien Sorel, I lodge au rez-de-chaussée, on the right as you enter from the street. Monsieur MacRune was acquainted with me.*

HOTEL: Really? Did you know him well?

SOREL: For a brief honeymoon period we enjoyed a cordial exchange of views. After that, there was no lost love at all. *(Pause)* You are looking at a portrait of myself. This was executed by *Monsieur MacRune* at my request and depicts the intellectuel in prison, but his ideas nonetheless cannot be silenced. In this picture I wished to declare my solidarity with my compatriot and fellow-intellectuel, *Monsieur Régis Debray*, now imprisoned for thirty years by the Bolivian dictatorship because of his association with the Revolutionary Hero, Che Guevara.

HOTEL: How did you come to quarrel with MacRune?

SOREL: It became absolutely clear to me that M. MacRune was opposed to *intellectuels*. We will not be silenced. *(Pause)* There is only one means of obtaining the Revolution and that is by total violence. This is the *intellectuel* position in a nutshell.

HOTEL: So the slogan on the wall – “Violence is the Midwife of Revolution” – represents your view of the revolution, not MacRune's?

SOREL: Absolutely!

HOTEL: It seems odd that he should put it there if he disagreed so strongly with the sentiment.

SOREL: Look at the drawing, *Monsieur Hotel!* Would you say it was a good likeness?

HOTEL: The moustache is very recognisable.

SOREL: This is not art, it is insult. He is making monkey of me and of the whole *intellectuel* position.

HOTEL: Did you tell him that?

SOREL: Of course. I told him that the revolutionary artist has a historical mission to be better than the bourgeois artist, not worse.

HOTEL: How did he take that?

SOREL: *Monsieur MacRune was a man of extreme violence. He was enragé. I was fortunate to escape downstairs and barricade my door. (Pause, lowering voice) Now, monsieur, I wish to unlock for you another door to which I alone hold the key. I speak of the Missing Years of the Maitre. Where was Che Guevara between the time when he resigned his official posts in Cuba and the time when he reappeared in Bolivia? Did he become a wanderer in many lands, striking terror into the hearts of evil men? Was he often in disguise? He did and he was... You are looking at me as if I was mad, monsieur.*

HOTEL: No, no, just concentrating.

SOREL: There are those who think I am mad, that I have lost my famous French reason. This is absolutely untrue. *(Pause)* I shall now reveal to you that throughout his wanderings the *Maitre* was accompanied by a single *confrère*. That sole witness to his deeds and sayings, that beloved disciple was myself, Julien Sorel. *Moi-meme*. This, then, is the story of the Missing Years.

*He goes behind flat. Arab music is heard faintly in the distance, then SOREL's voice continues from a tape-recorder in the wings.*

SOREL'S VOICE: I remember we had landed just before dawn from a small boat on the coast of North Africa. That evening we found ourselves in the red-light district of one of the larger cities of the region. It was a night-club known as The Secret of the Seven Veils...

*The tape-recorder clicks off, the Arab music grows louder and finally the flat is raised, or moved aside, to reveal a cafe table, at which are seated CHE, dressed in his battledress and smoking a Monte Cristo cigar, and SOREL. At the back of the stage, in a spotlight, appears a white WOMAN, wearing various filmy gauzes and performing the dance of the seven veils. When she is naked, she throws a white rose which lands on CHE's table. The spotlight goes off and the WOMAN disappears.*

SOREL: What do you make of this, *Maitre*? *(picks up rose and sniffs it)* Truly a compliment to us. We have been thrown the rose.

CHE: Give it to me!

*Reluctantly SOREL gives CHE the rose, which he examines closely.*

There is more to this flower than meets the eye.

SOREL: The promise of delights to come.

CHE: *(handing back rose)* Cast your eye over the petals, Sorel!

SOREL: *Mon Dieu!* False. This is a paper rose.

CHE: There is writing on the paper.

*SOREL whistles*

CHE: Quiet!

*CHE picks up the rose and twisting it idly in his fingers, smoking cigar with his other hand, glancing at the rose sideways, he reads aloud:*

CHE: "Have recognised you as the Revolutionary Hero. Need help. Deborah."

SOREL: *Zut alors!* Will you comply, *Maitre*?

CHE: Quiet! Our bird is approaching.

*The WOMAN, now re-clad, is walking slowly among the tables, apparently looking for an invitation. When she comes to CHE's table, she sits down and he clicks his fingers to a waiter and gives him an order in a low whisper.*

DEBORAH: *(leaning across table to CHE)* I will tell you my story as briefly as I can...

*MANAGER enters*

CHE: How are you fixed for tonight, darling?

SOREL: *Qu'est ce que c'est que ca?*

CHE: *(in low voice)* Retain your sense of discretion, you French nitwit, or you will sink the *bateau*. *(indicating MANAGER, who has now moved away)* You see what we are up against.

DEBORAH: *(in low voice)* I am a white slave.

*SOREL whistles*

CHE: Sorel, the first essential for a revolutionary is self-control. In bourgeois circles it may be permissible to raise your eyebrows and whistle, but if you continue to do it in my company, I shall shoot you dead. *(to DEBORAH)* Please continue.

DEBORAH: I was born and brought up in Gloucestershire, England. My father was a Brigadier in the British Army and I was sent to school at Cheltenham Ladies' College. Five years ago I met a young man from the Hong Kong Police. He was an Englishman himself, of course. Well, James had to return to Hong Kong when his leave was over, but we agreed to get married during his next leave.

CHE: *(leaning suddenly towards her)* You do something to me, darling.

*MANAGER passes beside the table.*

MANAGER: *(to CHE)* Good evening, *effendi*. I hope you are liking our hospitality?

CHE: Your hospitality is constructed on the most generous proportions and proves highly attractive to the weary traveller.

MANAGER: *(with oily smile)* A thousand thanks, *effendi*. But your friend is also a weary traveller, I think. Does he not wish to be entertained?

CHE: Ah...my friend...

*He beckons MANAGER closer and whispers in his ear.*

MANAGER: *(smiling and glancing at SOREL with interest, rubbing his hands)* I understand, *effendi*.

*Smiling, rubbing, bowing, with backward looks at SOREL he goes away.*

SOREL: *Maitre*, what did you say to him?

CHE: He was about to bring another woman to the table. I was forced to invent a special taste for you. *(to DEBORAH)* Continue, please.

DEBORAH: So James and I were engaged to be married. But then I did a very foolish thing. James was coming home by sea and his ship was to call at Marseilles, so I thought I would give him a real surprise and be on the quay at Marseilles to meet him.

SOREL: Pssst! Encore the Manager.

MANAGER: If your friend is impatient to begin, he need not wait for you, *effendi*. I have another customer who is very willing to accommodate this taste of your friend's.

CHE: How kind of you, to go to so much trouble on my poor friend's behalf, but unfortunately... *(whispers in MANAGER's ear)*

MANAGER: I understand, *effendi*. Not every doorway opens upon Paradise, as the good book says. I could almost desire myself to be one of your party.

CHE: How that would please me too, my friend, but alas I have also read that every man does not enter Paradise by the same doorway.

MANAGER: Very true, *effendi*. I see that you are not only a rare performer, but also a man of learning and religion. *Bon appetit, effendi*.

*He goes away*

CHE: Continue!

DEBORAH: While I was standing on the quay at Marseilles a kindly old Englishman approached me and told me he had known my father before the war. He

insisted on treating me to a drink at a nearby cafe and when I woke up I found myself on a boat bound for North Africa.

CHE: Listen carefully! Tell the manager that he is to expect us at the same time tomorrow night. You yourself will dance your dance as usual, taking special care to draw all eyes towards you. Any questions?

DEBORAH: No. I will rely on you. Thank you.

*She goes out*

SOREL: A fine woman! Perhaps we shall get to know her better.

CHE: She is much mistaken if she thinks that such a story can touch my heart. Why should I feel pity for the daughter of a British Brigadier just because she becomes a white slave?

SOREL: I see what you are getting at. She is one of the exploiting classes.

CHE: This whole outfit is corrupt, Sorel, from top to bottom, and there is no health in it that I can discover. We shall return tomorrow night.

*Arab music. The lights go down and come up again to reveal SOREL and CHE at the same table. A large hold-all is under the table by their legs. DEBORAH enters and begins her dance in the spotlight.*

Everything is going according to plan.

SOREL: But what is your plan, *Maitre*?

CHE: Quiet! (consults watch)

*The dance continues.*

Now! Follow me as quickly and quietly as you can!

*CHE leaves the table, closely followed by SOREL. They leave the bag where it is. The lights fade down on the night club, the music becomes very faint and CHE and SOREL appear at the front of the stage in a dim light.*

SOREL: What now, *Maitre*? Here we are in the street again, but nothing seems to have been accomplished.

CHE: We have only a moment to wait.

*Pause*

Now! Down!

*He pushes SOREL down and flings himself flat beside him. There is a flash and explosion, followed by the sound of falling debris. CHE gets up and begins to move off.*

SOREL: So there was a bomb concealed in the bag! But, *Maitre*, who has escaped?

CHE: No one but us. We have rid the world of a sink of corruption and the world is already a better place.

SOREL: What *simplicite!* What a brilliant solution to a tangled skein of intrigue. I salute you.

*A white rose falls at his feet. He stoops to pick it up.*

Qu'est ce que c'est que ca? Ah, poor woman!

CHE: Do not shed tears over the past, you sentimental French pouf. Other tasks await us in the glorious future.

*He leads the way out.*

SOREL's VOICE: *(from the tape-recorder)* During our travels, the *Maitre* and I entered the Congo. It so happened that I was carrying a letter of introduction, pressed upon me by a certain bourgeois contact and addressed to a Belgian estate-owner. This man, through all the troubles of that unhappy land, had clung to his possessions like a limpet to a rock; the successive waves of revolution, counter-revolution, counter-counter-revolution had failed to dislodge him.

*The lights come up to reveal the veranda of a tropical residence. Seated in basket chairs round a small iron table are CHE, SOREL and the BELGIAN, a huge man, black-bearded and fierce-looking. Long iced drinks are on the table.*

BELGIAN: Of course things are not as they were. You have to treat your workers as if they were made of Delft.

CHE: I suppose that every day the workers' demands grow stronger?

BELGIAN: You must be joking. I'm not known as Black Jacques for nothing. My workers are very good, very docile. But you can't flog them as you used to, you can't feed them to the monkeys after breakfast as you used to...

SOREL: But surely... monkeys... ?

BLACK J: Oh, even the monkeys are carnivorous round here, my friend. I'll fix you another drink, *mes amis*.

*He goes out with the glasses.*

SOREL: What are your plans for this heel, *Maitre*?

CHE: Quiet!

*BLACK JACQUES returns with refilled glasses.*

BLACK J: *(raising glass)* To civilisation, messieurs!

CHE: *(raising glass)* As we understand it.

BLACK J: That is the crux, *monsieur*. We have a duty to remain the masters, because we are the only ones who understand what *civilisation* is.

CHE: Tell me about yourself, *monsieur*! Are you all on your own here?

BLACK J: Why do you ask me this question, *monsieur*?

*He puts his hand to his head and goes out*

SOREL: It seems you have touched some nerve, *Maitre*.

BLACK J: *(returning and sitting down)* You asked me if I was all on my own here. If you had asked me this question yesterday, I should have replied: "*Non, monsieur*. Though I live in an isolated part of a savage country, in the heart of a black continent, I have all the company I desire. Over the hill, on the next estate, lives my best friend, my compatriot Frank Le Blanc, and here in my own house lives my dear wife Angelique." This is what I should have replied yesterday. But today... yes, today I am all alone here. Alone in the darkness of Africa. I will tell you what has happened and you may perhaps be able to give me some advice in return.

CHE: We shall be happy to do what we can for you, *monsieur*.

BLACK J: My friend Frank has been a frequent guest in this house. It is not too much to say that scarcely an evening has passed – when he, I and my wife have not been seated on this verandah drinking an *aperitif* before dinner. Our relationship has been like this for many years. My wife and I have lived most happily together and Frank has seemed content to share our happiness over the evening meal.

CHE: And now?

BLACK J: And now he has driven her into town to make some purchases and they have been absent the whole night.

SOREL: There could be reasons...

BLACK J: There could be. But I should not find them convincing.

SOREL: What is the course of action that you yourself propose following?

BLACK J: I propose to await their return...

CHE: And then?

BLACK J: I shall shoot them down as they as they leave the vehicle.

SOREL: Shoot them down? Without a word?

BLACK J: What is the good of words, *monsieur*? Unlike you, I am not an *intellectual*.

CHE: I see. May I ask you to fetch me another drink, *monsieur*?

BLACK J: With pleasure.

*He goes out with the glasses*

SOREL: There seems no need of us, *Maitre*. These three bourgeois elements will eliminate themselves without our having to lift a finger.

CHE: True. But we may be in a position to spark off an international incident, thus lending to what promised to be no more than a sordid private quarrel the glory of another nail in the coffin of imperialism.

BLACK J: *(returning with glasses)* Now, *monsieur*?

CHE: If you will be guided by me, you will permit *Monsieur Le Blanc* and your wife to leave their vehicle without a shot being fired.

BLACK J: For what purpose?

CHE: You will listen in a calm and civilised manner to whatever explanation they choose to offer.

BLACK J: *Impossible!*

CHE: And then you will challenge *Monsieur Le Blanc* to a duel on this verandah.

BLACK J: Ah, *bon!* But Frank is a poor shot. Very poor.

CHE: So much the better for you. The outcome will be the same, but this way civilisation will have been upheld.

BLACK J: *Monsieur*, you are right. *Civilisation* is the thing.

*Sound of vehicle drawing up, car doors, etc.*

They have returned.

CHE: *(to SOREL)* In the back of our Landrover you will find a cricket-bag. Please bring me that at once!

SOREL: I obey, *Maitre*. But what... ?

CHE: No questions.

*SOREL goes out*

BLACK J: *Monsieur!*

*He shakes CHE's hand with great fervour*

CHE: *Monsieur!*

*Enter FRANK LE BLANC and ANGELIQUE*

ANGE: *Bonjour, Jacques!*

BLACK J: *Bonjour, mes amis!*

FRANK: *Bonjour, mon ami!*

BLACK J: *You were detained?*

ANGE: *A puncture. It was most annoying.*

FRANK: *It necessitated spending the night...*

ANGE: *We saw no alternative.*

FRANK: *There was additional trouble with the radiator...*

ANGE: *It sprang a leak.*

*Pause*

BLACK J: *Enough! I accept your explanation.*

*Pause. FRANK and ANGELIQUE look very relieved.*

*And I challenge you to a duel with Luger Automatics.*

FRANK: *A duel!*

ANGE: *But, Jacques, you cannot do this. You know that Frank is a terrible shot.*

BLACK J: *Is that my affair? He should have thought of that before.*

ANGE: *Before what?*

BLACK J: *Before he decided to satisfy his appetite at my table.*

*He goes out.*

ANGE: *Courage, mon Frank! Even the best shot sometimes misses, even the worst shot sometimes hits.*

*FRANK, shaking all over, sits in a chair.*

*Frank, are you a coward? (to CHE) Monsieur, I don't know who you are, but you seem to know my husband. If you have any influence on him, appeal to him to have second thoughts. We were speaking nothing less than the truth.*

CHE: *Your husband, Madame, is immovable.*

ANGE: *At least try to move him!*

CHE: Useless! He is a survivor from another age. He is a dinosaur and dinosaurs must perish.

ANGE: But it is not my husband I am worried about. It is Frank. My husband is a crack shot.

CHE: You are all three dinosaurs, *Madame*, and I must tell you that the Ice Age is over.

ANGE: Are you an archaeologist?

CHE: I am not an archaeologist.

ANGE: You must be a professor of some sort. I have the impression you are out of touch with life.

*BLACK JACQUES enters with two revolvers.*

BLACK J: (*showing them to FRANK*) Choose your weapon, *Monsieur!*

ANGE: (*to CHE*) What is your profession?

*Enter SOREL with cricket-bag*

SOREL: Is this the bag you meant, *Maitre?*

CHE: That is the one.

ANGE: Are you a drainage expert?

CHE: I am not. (*begins to unclasp bag*)

BLACK J: (*to FRANK*) Choose, coward!

ANGE: A land surveyor?

CHE: (*busy in bag assembling something*) No.

ANGE: A carpet salesman?

CHE: No.

BLACK J: Then I give you this one, *monsieur*. It is the better of the two. (*presses revolver into FRANK's trembling hands*)

ANGE: A gold-prospecter?

CHE: No

ANGE: Water-diviner?

CHE: No.

BLACK J: Stand up, *monsieur!* We shall start back-to-back at the centre of the verandah, walk to the opposite ends, turn and fire. (*moves furniture*)

SOREL: Here is my arm, *monsieur*. Please try to stiffen your knees!

ANGE: A veterinary surgeon?

CHE: No.

*He comes down off verandah with bag. FRANK and BLACK JACQUES are now back-to-back, with SOREL still assisting FRANK.*

SOREL: Now, *messieurs*, when I give the word, let battle *commence*...

ANGE: Member of a visiting cricket-team!

CHE: No.

*He is now standing with his bag open beside him.*

SOREL: *Commence!*

*He comes backward off the verandah as BLACK JACQUES begins to take long strides towards his end and FRANK small stumbling steps towards his.*

CHE: Stop, *messieurs*, stop!

*They stop*

Face this way!

*They turn to face him, bewildered, guns drooping in their hands*

*Madame*, I will satisfy your curiosity. I am none of these professions, but a Revolutionary Hero. (*dropping the bag he is seen to be holding a machine-gun*) Little did you know when you entered upon your trivial sexual drama in the time-honoured bourgeois tradition that it would end in an international incident. I shall leave this machine-gun somewhere among the huts of your workers, *Monsieur* Black Jacques. No one will attribute your deaths to the monkeys. Belgians murdered by bloodthirsty tribesmen is how your European compatriots will understand the incident and tremble in their beds. But you alone will know that you die at the hands of none other than the famous Revolutionary Hero, Che Guevara.

SOREL: Bravo!

BLACK J: Sales cochons!

ANGE: Spare us, Revolutionary Hero!

FRANK: Take my hand, Angelique!

*After a moment's pause CHE sprays BLACK JACQUES, FRANK and ANGELIQUE with bullets. They drop dead on the verandah.*

CHE: Bring the cricket-bag and let's get out of here!

SOREL: I am overwhelmed, *Maitre*. This was your finest stroke yet. It will surely go down beside the exploits of Trotsky and Mao...

CHE: Let us not linger over past successes. The glorious future still beckons.

*He goes out, followed by SOREL. Lights down on the scene of carnage.*

SOREL's VOICE: (*on tape-recorder*) It was some months later, and after many adventures, that the *Maitre* and I again set foot on French soil. The place was Biarritz...

HOTEL: (*stepping forward*) There, I regret, we must call a halt to Julien Sorel's narrative. We wish to acknowledge his kindness in loaning us the tape-recording, from which we have freely dramatised a mere tithe of the material available...

13

OBJECTIONS TO THE MISSING YEARS

1<sup>ST</sup> ACTOR: This play is in terribly bad taste. Putting on stage a man who is a hero to millions, only just dead. And you make him out to be some sort of mad gangster.

HOTEL: Poetic licence.

1<sup>ST</sup> ACTOR: Don't give us that! The version of Che Guevara which you present through the mouth of your ridiculous character Sorel is completely at odds with the facts. Che Guevara did not go around bombing and machine-gunning people just for the pleasure of it. It's well known that he was an unusually humane man.

2<sup>ND</sup> ACTOR: He used to release all his prisoners.

HOTEL: I never meant to suggest that Che Guevara was himself a mad gangster – only that certain kinds of people – Sorel being a representative type – would like to think that he was. I agree with you that for Che Guevara violence was only a means to an end, but people like Sorel entirely lose sight of the end and become obsessed with the means – violence for its own sake.

1<sup>ST</sup> ACTOR: If Che were still alive, you wouldn't dare make use of him in this way.

HOTEL: Life is a complex subject. The artist must try to see it from all angles.

1<sup>ST</sup> ACTOR: Your angle is politically-motivated.

HOTEL: I would hotly contest that. I take a rigorously neutral stance.

2<sup>ND</sup> ACTOR: There's something very nasty about your stance.

1<sup>ST</sup> ACTRESS: This is like looking at a washing-machine. A lot of dirty linen whirling round...

HOTEL: A good description of life.

1<sup>ST</sup> ACTOR: Continual evasions! Where is the real Che?

2<sup>ND</sup> ACTRESS: What about a scene where Che makes an agonising choice between being a doctor and healing people and being a revolutionary and killing them?

3<sup>RD</sup> ACTOR: There ought to be a meeting between Che and a Catholic priest. Communism versus Christianity in the Third World.

1<sup>ST</sup> ACTRESS: We should be given a picture of what life's really like in Bolivia – Indian peasants with wooden ploughs, unrest in the mines, political factions in the capital...

3<sup>RD</sup> ACTOR: Surely it's significant that there have been 181 revolutions in Bolivia alone?

2<sup>ND</sup> ACTRESS: How many?

3<sup>RD</sup> ACTOR: One hundred and eighty-one. Che's would have been the hundred and eighty-second.

2<sup>ND</sup> ACTRESS: My God!

4<sup>TH</sup> ACTOR: It would be good to know why Che became the man he was – his early life...

1<sup>ST</sup> ACTRESS: His relationship with his Mum and Dad...

3<sup>RD</sup> ACTOR: His sense of humour...

2<sup>ND</sup> ACTRESS: The sort of books he liked – Jack London, Alexandre Dumas...

4<sup>TH</sup> ACTOR: Baudelaire.

5<sup>TH</sup> ACTOR: A killer is a killer. Isn't that enough said? Is there any point in delving into his past, is there any point in discussing him at all? Perhaps he was a sincere man, perhaps he thought he was serving a noble cause, but when you come down to it, what did he leave behind him? A row of corpses and a row of posters and T-shirts. I'm surprised at you, Hotel. You profess to be on the side of order, but what you're doing is contributing to a thoroughly dangerous myth, making violence look attractive...

1<sup>ST</sup> ACTOR: *(to 5<sup>TH</sup> ACTOR)* When you talk about “order”, what you mean is an armed regime which keeps the majority of the people in conditions of abject poverty and degrading slavery. Those are your killers.

6<sup>TH</sup> ACTOR: What about a nude scene?

*Laughter, cries of outrage, protest and ridicule.*

HOTEL: *(stepping forward)* Ladies and gentlemen, in deference to certain complaints voiced by my distinguished cast, I have undertaken to supply a short musical distillation of Che's life. My version centres on a single, unmistakable image on MacRune's wall. I mean Che's pipe – the famous pipe which he is said to have carved with the names of the battles he fought in Cuba.

*CHE and CHORUS sing:*

SONG: I WAS BORN IN ARGENTINA

CHORUS: I was born in Argentina,  
My heart grew hard in Guatemala,  
I carved my pipe in the hills of Cuba,  
And I died in Bolivia.

CHE: When I was a schoolboy in Cordoba  
I went to see the students in the jail,  
They told me: “Tramp the streets, Che Guevara,  
Show them that injustice has been done!”  
I replied: “Do you take me for a fool?  
I don't go on the streets without a gun.”

CHORUS: I was born in Argentina... etc.

CHE: When I was a student I went travelling  
And stood upon the heights of Macchu Picchu.  
My friend said: “If the government is willing,  
We could build a worker's kibbutz in the sun.”  
I replied: “What kind of lunatic are you?  
You won't make a kibbutz without a gun.”

CHORUS: I was born in Argentina... etc.

CHE: When I was a doctor in Guatemala,  
I saw a new regime come to power.  
But the Yankees didn't like it in their back parlour  
And pretty soon their troops came at the run.  
That was the moment when my mouth turned sour  
And I joined the Revolution with a gun!

CHORUS: I was born in Argentina... etc.

CHE: When I was a soldier with Fidel,  
We were twelve in the hills of Sierra Maestra,  
Twelve against Batista's island hell.  
But I carved my pipe with the battles we had won,  
And so at last we marched into Havana  
And made that Revolution with a gun!

CHORUS: I was born in Argentina... etc.

14

#### THE THREE JUDASES

HOTEL: High up on the west wall of his studio, in letters large enough to be clearly visible from ground level, MacRune has left us this legend: THE THREE JUDASES.

*TANIA, BUSTOS and DEBRAY enter with blackboard, which they set up on an easel.*

The drawing which appears beneath the legend is extremely faint, though we have succeeded in tracing what amounts to an almost abstract design: three discs enclosed in a rectangle.

*He draws on the blackboard*

Some of us have also detected a shadowy semicircle, but there are two schools of thought here. Some think the semicircle appears on the left, some on the right.

*He makes faint marks on the blackboard*

Beneath the rectangle three words have been written. The word on the left is, I regret, illegible. The other two are FEAR and VANITY respectively.

*He writes these words on the blackboard*

Now, how is MacRune's design to be interpreted? The three circles, I would suggest, represent three heads. The semicircle represents the top half of a steering-wheel. And the rectangle represents the windscreen of a motor vehicle, seen from in front.

*TANIA, DEBRAY and BUSTOS sit down on three upright chairs.*

Now why should MacRune designate these three people "The Three Judases"?

TANIA: In March, 1967, Tania brought two visitors to the guerrilla camp at Nanchahuazu. She met these visitors in La Paz and drove them in a truck to Camiri, the nearest large town to the guerrilla camp. The two visitors were a young French writer called Régis Debray and an Argentinian artist called Ciro Roberto Bustos.

HOTEL: We know that Tania was driving, but we do not know whether Bustos or Debray was sitting next to her. So...

BUSTOS: Whoever sat in the middle is alleged to have betrayed Che out of fear...

DEBRAY: Whoever sat on the left to have betrayed him out of vanity...

BUSTOS: Shortly after visiting Che, Bustos and Debray were arrested and we are told that Bustos made remarkably accurate drawings of the individual guerrilleros, which helped the authorities to identify them.

HOTEL: If this story is true, then he may have done so from fear of unpleasant consequences. Or perhaps it was out of vanity, to show his skill as an artist. However, let us place Bustos in the middle seat for the time being.

DEBRAY: We know that at his first meeting with Che in the camp, Debray was full of bold talk about his own contribution to the Revolution and that it was only after a few days of camp conditions that Debray's ardour seemed somewhat dampened. Again, when Debray was put on trial he denied taking any active part in the guerrilla campaign, though he later declared in dramatic fashion that he wished to be held fully responsible for it.

HOTEL: MacRune may have interpreted Debray's attitude as Fear or Vanity, but for the present let us call it Vanity. What of Tania's betrayal?

TANIA: We know that Tania left her truck parked in Camiri, where it was searched by the authorities and found to be full of incriminating documents. It has also been suggested that she had sexual relations with Che.

HOTEL: Should MacRune's illegible word read FOLLY?

TANIA: Or PASSION?

HOTEL: We shall never know. There is a further ambiguity. If the semicircle is drawn on the left of the picture as we look at it, why should the driver of a Bolivian vehicle be sitting on the right-hand side of the cab? Or does the semicircle in fact appear on the other side? But if it does, then Tania must be sitting where we have placed Debray, in which case the word VANITY applies to her, not to Debray. And now does the illegible word apply to Debray or Bustos? We are no wiser.

*Pause*

I have reserved the most curious point of all until last. Since MacRune's death a new story has come to light about Tania.

TANIA: It is suggested that Tania was trained in East Germany as a Russian spy, that she was sent to Cuba where she successfully infiltrated Cuban Revolutionary circles and that she was then posted to Bolivia by Che to act as his contact and by the Russians to keep an eye on Che for them. Orthodox Communism being against the idea of armed revolution in Latin America.

*Pause*

Well, when real life enters such devious and complex paths, the mere artist cannot hope to show the way through the wood, and so I have ventured no further inside the thicket than to construct a short trilogy for our three Judases, in which the ambiguities of their characters, the doubts even as to their identities and the total obscurity of their motives are to some small degree adumbrated.

TANIA: *(stage right)* Che is a beautiful man.

BUSTOS: *(centre)* One could love a man like that.

DEBRAY: *(stage left)* One could never forget him.

BUSTOS: Che is a beautiful man.

TANIA: One could love a man like that.

DEBRAY: One could never forget him. Che is a beautiful man.

TANIA: One could love a man like that.

BUSTOS: One could never forget him.

DEBRAY: Che...  
BUSTOS: ... is a beautiful man.  
TANIA: One could love...  
BUSTOS: ... a man like that.  
DEBRAY: One could never...  
BUSTOS: ... forget him.  
TANIA: A beautiful man...  
BUSTOS: Che.  
DEBRAY: A man like that...  
BUSTOS: ... one could love.  
TANIA: Forget him...  
BUSTOS: ... one could never.

*Pause, while they change places.*

DEBRAY: *(centre)* A man to die for.  
BUSTOS: *(stage right)* A cause to die for.  
TANIA: *(stage left)* A man and a cause to die for.  
DEBRAY: A man to die for.  
TANIA: A cause to die for.  
BUSTOS: A man and a cause to die for. A man to die for.  
TANIA: A cause to die for.  
DEBRAY: A man and a cause to die for.  
TANIA: A man...  
BUSTOS: A cause...  
DEBRAY: A man and a cause...  
TANIA: ... to die for.  
BUSTOS: A man...

DEBRAY: A cause...

TANIA: A man and a cause...

BUSTOS: ... to die for.

DEBRAY: A man...

TANIA: A cause...

BUSTOS: A man and a cause...

DEBRAY: ... to die for.

*Pause, while they change places*

BUSTOS: *(centre)* A Hero is not born every day.

TANIA: *(stage left)* A Revolution is not born every day.

DEBRAY: *(stage right)* A Hero and a Revolution together give birth to History. A Hero is not born every day.

TANIA: A Revolution is not born every day.

BUSTOS: A Hero and a Revolution together give birth to History.

TANIA: A Hero is not born every day.

DEBRAY: A Revolution is not born every day.

BUSTOS: A Hero and a Revolution together give birth to History.

*(R) Repeated section begins here:*

DEBRAY: A Hero...

BUSTOS: A Revolution...

TANIA: ... is not born every day.

BUSTOS: A Hero...

DEBRAY: ... and a Revolution...

BUSTOS: ... give birth...

TANIA: ... to History.

BUSTOS: A Hero...

DEBRAY: A Revolution...

BUSTOS: ... is not born every day.

TANIA: A Hero...

BUSTOS: ... and a Revolution...

DEBRAY: ... give birth...

BUSTOS: ... to History.

TANIA: A Hero...

BUSTOS: A Revolution...

DEBRAY: ... is not born every day.

BUSTOS: A Hero...

TANIA: ... and a Revolution...

BUSTOS: ... give birth...

DEBRAY: ... to History.

BUSTOS: A Hero...

TANIA: A Revolution...

BUSTOS: ... is not born every day.

DEBRAY: A Hero...

BUSTOS: ... and a Revolution...

TANIA: ... give birth...

BUSTOS: ... to History.

*(R) And the section from (R) to (R) is repeated faster and faster until the words become so blurred as to be unintelligible.*

TANIA: Here we are in Camiri.

BUSTOS: Now for Nanchahuazu!

DEBRAY: I hope Che will be pleased to see us.

*They remain where they are as HOTEL comes forward.*

HOTEL: I should perhaps point out that whether or not one accepts MacRune's judgment on these three unfortunates, whether or not they were fully fledged Judases or mere blunderers, they have all three paid their debts in full measure. Tania is

dead, Bustos and Debray are serving thirty-year sentences of penal servitude. Ours not to cast the first stone. I can almost hear MacRune's judgment of me...

MACRUNE's VOICE: Go home, wishy-washy liberal!

15

INSIDE MACRUNE'S SPORRAN

*EDWARD HOTEL is discovered at the top of a tall step-ladder. He is examining part of the wall with a powerful flash-lamp. Knocking.*

HOTEL: Come!

*Enter MRS. RENT*

RENT: *(holding up a small fur object)* What about this, Mr Otell? I've been through all poor Mr MacRune's effects, as you asked me, and this seems to be the only item which might yield the sort of information you're after.

HOTEL: *(coming down steps)* But what is it, Mrs Rent?

RENT: The old man's sporran.

HOTEL: By George! *(takes sporran and sniffs it)* It appears to be in a good state of preservation. Mothballs.

RENT: Naturally I took precautions. It's a fine bit of fur.

HOTEL: But what information could it yield?

RENT: Why, inside, Mr Otell, if you looked inside...

HOTEL: Haven't you done so?

RENT: Oh, no. I didn't fancy putting my hand inside a gentleman's sporran.

HOTEL: Then it may contain fantastic revelations.

RENT: I didn't care to be the one that discovered them.

HOTEL: Here we go, then! *(opening sporran and putting hand inside)*

RENT: Well?

HOTEL: *(brings out mothball, then puts his hand in again)* There is something here. Rather a tight fit.

*He brings out a small, thin red notebook and in doing so drops it on the floor.*

RENT: *(picking it up and giving it to HOTEL)* It's only his driving licence.

HOTEL: Ah, well, what could we really expect? *(riffing through pages)* No, we must be content to approach an artist only through his work, not pry into his secret thoughts... Good grief!

RENT: What is it?

HOTEL: The blank pages at the end, the pages reserved for endorsements, are covered with a minute script.

*He shows her the pages*

RENT: Mr MacRune's handwriting. When you think what a huge red fist he had....

HOTEL: *(reading with difficulty)* "Conversations with Che Guevara. When the doors and windows of my upper room were tight shut..."

*MACRUNE enters and lies on bed.*

MACRUNE: ... there appeared to me in ghostly form the Lord Che Guevara and after him many of his noble followers, the Cuban Comandantes, and what I saw and what he told me I wrote down, and my room became as it were a theatre where was enacted the tragic drama of the Hero's agony and death...

*Figures appear on stage, concealing HOTEL and RENT, who go off behind. Every figure carries a full-length mask, crude cut-outs depicting respectable businessmen with bald heads and business suits. They drift about the stage, singly and in groups, aimlessly and chaotically as though blown by the wind. If there is a choreographer in the company, this is his moment. If not, the figures can just weave about like an ill-trained Greek Chorus. MACRUNE writes in the back of his driving licence.*

MACRUNE: January the first, nineteen hundred and sixty-eight. A strange day and that's putting it with rubber gloves. I was prone and resting when upwards of one dozen persons entered the studio. The appearance of these persons led me to suppose them business types. Perhaps they wanted to hang their retiring Chairman on the Board Room wall.. I do not consider it wrong to accept money from Capitalist quarters. The money is not theirs to give, but I am certainly one of the people to whom it should be given.

*CHE, disguised by his mask, comes and stands behind MACRUNE*

CHE: Excuse the intrusion, *senor*. I believe I am speaking to Doctor Gonzalez.

MACRUNE: No, you are not.

CHE: The face is his.

MACRUNE: To hell with that! The face is mine.

CHE: You do not go under the name of Doctor Gonzalez?

MACRUNE: I go under no name but my own. MacRune, and proud of it.

CHE: There has been some mistake. Forgive us, *senor!*

*He retires.*

ALL: *(murmuring as they also retire)* Forgive us, *senor!*

MACRUNE: *(writing)* January the second. Today I received a second visit from the same mysterious but polite person.

CHE: *(standing behind MACRUNE)* *Senor* MacRune!

MACRUNE: Right!

CHE: It's possible you don't recognise me.

MACRUNE: I do. You were here yesterday afternoon and you were looking for a Doctor Gonzalez.

CHE: I am still looking for him.

MACRUNE: Well, for Christ's sake, man, I told you he doesn't reside at this address.

CHE: You really don't remember me, *Senor* MacRune?

MACRUNE: Don't give me that! I remember you well enough. You came with a crowd of your cronies yesterday afternoon.

CHE: We are all here again today.

*All come forward from the shadows at the back of the studio/stage and crowd round CHE and MACRUNE.*

MACRUNE: What is this? Keep off!

CHE: Please don't be alarmed, *senor*. We only want you to have a closer look at us. You still do not recognise us?

MACRUNE: Look, this is tiring me out. I recognise you very well. You were here yesterday.

CHE: But you don't penetrate our disguises?

MACRUNE: Frankly, I don't.

CHE: We wanted to show them to you.

MACRUNE: Very good. Most successful. Who the hell are you?

CHE: This is the way we entered Bolivia. In twos and threes. Leaving Havana we flew to Prague. From Prague to Frankfurt. From Frankfurt to Paris, from Paris to Rio de Janeiro. From Rio to Sao Paulo, from Sao Paulo to La Paz.

MACRUNE: You saw a bit of the world.

CHE: At La Paz we were met by a jeep and driven to Nancahuazu. We travelled under false passports, false names, false identities, wearing false clothes and false faces. The operation was a complete success.

*All strut about, showing themselves off, then turn to face MACRUNE expectantly.*

MACRUNE: Look, I'm sorry about this, gentlemen, I'm sure this impressive display was mounted for the benefit of Dr. Gonzalez. I am not that man.

CHE: Of course, Doctor Gonzalez was not his real name.

MACRUNE: That may be so, but I have never used a false name. My name is undoubtedly MacRune. Furthermore, I am MacRune.

CHE: We will now remove our disguises. *(Pause)* Hrrrp!

*All throw down their masks, revealing themselves as CHE GUEVARA and his COMANDANTES, bearded, and dressed in Cuban caps, bush-shirts and combat denims.*

CHE: *(turning to face COMANDANTES)* Today is a day of historic importance. Today begins the Revolution, the continental Revolution. Today we solemnly declare that America, our America, will be free. I want you all here now, as you drink this toast on Bolivian soil, you Cubans, you Peruvians, you Argentinians, you Venezuelans, you Bolivians, to understand that few as we are, we are the seed of millions. Out of this little seed, planted secretly in the shadowy depths of an obscure jungle, something is going to grow, something enormous which will break out of this skin and throw huge shoots across the face of Bolivia, huge leaves and roots across the face of America. It may be that not one of us here now will live to see that happen, but it will happen, from this moment we are going to make it happen. What does it matter, then, if we pay for this to happen with our lives? Death will taste very sweet, I promise you, so long as you never forget that at this exact moment of time, you knew what most men never know, why you were alive. *Venceremos!*

ALL: Venceremos!

CHE: *(turning to MACRUNE)* I think you know us now.

MACRUNE: If you are not Che Guevara himself, I am seeing visions and dreaming dreams.

CHE: I am Che Guevara. These are my Comandantes: Joaquin, Marcos, Rolando, Tania, Benjamin, Willy, Loro....

MACRUNE: But Che... the newspapers say you died several months ago.

*CHE sits down front stage, his back against a box or wall, his legs stretched out in front of him.*

CHE: October the ninth.

MACRUNE: Is there any truth in that story, or is it the usual business, you can't believe a thing you read?

CHE: What do you think? Are you convinced that I am Che?

MACRUNE: Pretty convinced. But what about these very circumstantial reports?

CHE: *(opens shirt)* See the bullet-holes!

MACRUNE: Yes. Tell me this, then, are you dead or alive? *(Pause)* Are you speaking to me from beyond the grave, or did you never come to that last resort?

CHE: I will tell you this, Mac. There is nothing beyond the grave.

MACRUNE: False reports again?

CHE: Perhaps you believe in heaven and hell?

MACRUNE: No such thing.

CHE: No such thing. *(Pause)* Transmigration of souls?

MACRUNE: No.

CHE: No again.

MACRUNE: Look, tell me straight, did they kill you or didn't they?

CHE: You should know, Doctor Gonzalez. You should know.

*He retires*

MACRUNE: *(writing)* All very puzzling. Whether or not he is Che Guevara, there is no room for doubt that he is still confusing me with this shadowy pseudonym, Dr. Gonzalez. And if I am imagining the whole thing, why the hell should I imagine he is Che Guevara's ghost imagining that I am Dr. Gonzalez?

*Pause*

February the second. I went to see my doctor, stupid fart! He told me I was anorexic. I told him I only knew one word of Latin – *anus-* and he gave me a pain in it. I am losing my strength.

*CHE and COMANDANTES come forward*

- CHE: We want to tell you how we celebrated Christmas Eve, nineteen sixty-six.
- MACRUNE: That would cheer me up, Che.
- CHE: We started operations from a farmhouse by the river Nancahuazu. Take it all in all, it was a happy time. We were getting to know the area, settling down to the outdoor life... Rolando...
- ROLANDO: I remember one morning I was sitting up there on sentry duty, above the gorge, all by myself, reading The Charterhouse of Parma, and thinking it was exactly like the movies or a really fabulous holiday. Down below, this big river racing along, rocks, the noise of waterfalls. Up above, this great mountain range, steep sides covered in jungle, the peaks hidden in mist. But all the lower part and the part where I was sitting had the morning sun on them.
- MARCOS: The camp looked like a bloody picnic-area, you know the kind, benches and tables made of logs all round an open shed in the middle of the clearing. Up the hill was the latrine, close by a cave with a sodding great radio transmitter inside it. We had to dig out the space for it. The first few months it seemed more like a picnic, but after that it was open-air murder.
- CHE: Marcos was to have been my second-in-command, but he went to pieces in Bolivia.
- MARCOS: Che gave me the choice of being reduced to the ranks or going home to Cuba.
- CHE: I lost patience. It was my fault.
- MARCOS: Look, the fault was mine. Let's forget it!
- CHE: Impossible to forget.
- MARCOS: It's just bloody depressing to think about it.

*Gloomy silence*

- MACRUNE: What about the Christmas party?
- CHE: Yes. The *piece de resistance* was a pig, but we nearly had to eat it dry.
- LORO: (*educated accent*) That was my fault. I didn't take any trouble. For instance, you'll hardly credit this, but in the middle of everything I disappeared for a week. I was in Santa Cruz with a woman.
- CHE: No harm was done. It was an error, but without repercussions.
- LORO: And I was the one who ditched the jeep coming down from La Paz. Well, I pranged it again a couple of days before Christmas. I fell asleep at the wheel. I was supposed to be liberating Latin America and I fell asleep at the wheel. It makes you despair, doesn't it? That was the sort of material Che had to work with.

*Gloomy silence*

MACRUNE: What about the party?

CHE: It went off well. Some of us got rather high...

MACRUNE: So the alcohol did arrive?

WILLY: There were 29 bottles of beer, 10 bottles of wine, 4 of rum. Also sweets, raisins, cheese and salad...

ROLANDO: And the roast pig, of course...

MACRUNE: Sounds as if you did yourselves well.

ALL: We did, yes.

BENJAMIN: And after we'd eaten we were dancing, singing, reciting. Che recited one of his own poems. Come on, Che, give us the "Song to Fidel"!

ALL: Che! Che! Che!

*They suddenly become very excited, moving about restlessly in all directions, waving their arms and wagging their heads. After a time, they form into a column of twos facing front and start to stamp out a strong rhythm with their feet, clapping in time with their hands.*

CHE: Let's go!  
Ardent prophet of the dawning day,  
Show us the secret telepathic way  
To liberate the land, the green land you love so.

ALL: Let's go!  
Down with the tyrant and fix your eyes  
On revolution's heroes like stars in the skies,  
And vow to take the victory or meet death's blow.  
When the first shot sounds and the jungle's hush  
Goes west, when her virgin heart with terror pants,  
There at your side we'll be, cool combatants,  
Count on us!  
And if we're stopped in our tracks by a piece of lead,

We only ask for the shroud of a Bolivian tear,  
We only ask that guerrilla bones lie here,  
Making a road for American history's tread,  
Nothing more!

*They stop as suddenly as they began and stand motionless and silent, looking at MACRUNE. He goes to CHE, putting his hand out.*

MACRUNE: That's great, man! That was moving. As a general rule poetry passes me by, but that was an uplifting experience.

CHE: It's not so good being bones under history's tread as you might think.

MACRUNE: No, but it's worth it. When the cause is big enough, it's worth it. I believe that.

CHE: You speak from ignorance.

*Pause*

MACRUNE: Have a heart now, Che! Think of what you died for! The freedom of mankind, the equality of all fellow creatures, the dignity of the human-being!

CHE: The campaign was a dismal fiasco. We died stupidly, for stupid reasons.

MACRUNE: You've entered a new phase, that's all. You've become a dead hero instead of a live one. You can't tell what may happen because of you, in your name, in the future that lies ahead.

CHE: *Nada.*

MACRUNE: The Revolution!

CHE: Nada, nada, nada.

*He retires*

MACRUNE: But you were never the man to countenance the counsels of despair. Difficulties are there to be overcome.

*Sound of heavy rain. MACRUNE lies on the floor.*

Rain, is it? Very good! Let it rain till kingdom bloody come, it'll not take the heart out of me! I've caught a cold, but what of that? I'm in the mood to enjoy a good cold.

*Knocking on door*

RENT: Mr MacRune, Mr MacRune, are you there?

*More knocking*

I know you're in there. You haven't been out for a week.

*More knocking*

Come on, now, Mr MacRune, it's Friday rent-day and I shouldn't have to break down my own door to get a civil answer.

MACRUNE: *(raising himself off floor)* Christ's blood, woman! I am just striking a match. If you continue with that racket I am going to set light to the sheets and in a few minutes you'll not have any doors left to break down.

*He pulls himself across to the bed and flops against it*

Where is my good friend, Major Che Guevara? If he is not willing or able to hold up the mighty torch of Revolution and put a bonfire under this stinking world, then here stands one that is and will.

*He pulls himself semi-upright, but falls again beside the bed*

What's the matter with you, MacRune? Up, man, up! *(falls lower)* Christ, my head's going round like an Eightsome Reel.

*Bagpipes play an Eightsome Reel. MACRUNE looks up in amazement, then as they continue to play he seems to regain his strength all at once and a moment later springs to his feet.*

Are you there, comrades? If that's not the pipes, it's a very passable imitation. And now I remember the last time I danced an Eightsome must have been in Port Harcourt. 1944. Do you know that part of the world at all? The armpit of Africa. You've heard what they say about Port Harcourt? It's so wet there that if you stay too long you grow webbed feet. As I recall it, we were footing the reels every night in Port Harcourt, the rain was beating on the roof like a bloody air-raid, and inside we were prancing about like dervishes. I used to say to the fellow behind the bar – a black man, we are all brothers – “Just observe this, sambo, observe this and learn a lesson, there's no savage like a civilized savage!”

*With a wild whoop MACRUNE draws the COMANDANTES into a circle to begin the reel. BENJAMIN drops out*

What's this now, Benjamin? Are you done up already?

BENJAMIN: I'm tired out.

MACRUNE: Where's your spirit, man?

BEN: I can't keep up with the column. I've lost the path. I'm clinging to this rock and the river's directly below me and I don't know what to do.

MACRUNE: Keep still, you bugger! I'm sending a man to get you.

BEN: I moved. I'm falling into the river, the current's taking me away. I can't swim!

MACRUNE: I'll have no weaklings under my command. Up and onwards, Benjamin!

BEN: I can't make it.

MACRUNE: To hell with you, then, Benjamin! The Revolution goes on without you.

*He rejoins the circle and with a whoop the reel begins. After a few figures, the music stops and the COMANDANTES, all but WILLY, spray outwards: LORO and ROLANDO to one side, MARCOS, JOAQUIN and TANIA to the other. WILLY remains up centre, MACRUNE down of him.*

MACRUNE: By God, what's up with you? Will none of you soldier to the end? Rolando...

ROLANDO: Shot in my own ambush! The enemy's stealing our tricks.

MACRUNE: There's a death to be proud of. I'll pay you the tribute of a few verses for that death, boy.

Brave Comandante, there your body lies,  
Dead flesh indeed and small as I behold,  
But see, its bulk already fills the skies,  
And every element transmuted into gold.

*ROLANDO goes out.*

LORO: They shot me too.

MARCOS: And me.

JOAQUIN: And me.

TANIA: And me.

MACRUNE: I'll make no epitaphs for any of you. You, Loro, I snap my fingers at such as you, the leisured classes playing at revolution. Don't come and lay your precious ideals at my feet if you haven't the self-discipline to support them!

*LORO goes off.*

As for you, Comandante Marcos, in days gone by no doubt you were a true man, but the past is done and the future will not be served with sour milk and water. I hope you died in a good temper, that's all.

*MARCOS goes off.*

And you, Comandante Joaquin, veteran of Sierra Maestra, veteran of Vietnam, where is my rearguard, answer me that!

JOAQUIN: We lost contact.

MACRUNE: At the bottom of the river is where they are and by Christ they're not doing a hand's turn for the Revolution down in that wet spot, Comandante! With veterans like you at my back, I'd sooner fight the enemy single-handed.

*JOAQUIN takes TANIA's hand and they go off.*

MACRUNE: Are you still here, Willy? (*shakes his head as he looks him up and down*) I will tell you this, as man to man, you do not inspire confidence. It would not astonish me if come the next skirmish you were to sneak away like a weasel under the hedge.

WILLY: At that date, the end of September, we were really in trouble. Only seventeen of us left, two thousand soldiers closing in. We had no food, we were half dead of thirst and we were moving at night. October the seventh, we arrived in a canyon and that was a very nice morning we spent there, resting up in the sun, with a bit of water to drink from the ditches where the peasants were growing potatoes. Che had a word for that place – bucolic. Well, about midday a peasant woman turned up with some goats. We asked her where the soldiers had got to, but she couldn't tell us, so we had to let her go. Finally when it got dark we started to move on through this canyon, but it was slow going and we stopped to sleep at two o'clock.

MACRUNE: Two in the morning?

WILLY: When we woke up it was light and we looked up to see what sort of day it was – this canyon was like a big bowl, you see, and we were at the bottom – we looked up and all round the top were the soldiers.

*SOLDIERS appear above*

The shooting began at half past one and continued for about two hours.

MACRUNE: Was this when you sneaked off, Willy?

WILLY: I was leading Che's mule. You know he rode a mule a lot of the time because his feet were bad and he was always half choked with asthma. Then he got wounded in the leg. So he came off the mule and he was dragged up the hill to a tree, and there he was leaning on this tree and still giving orders to the rest of us.

MACRUNE: Who dragged me up the hill?

WILLY: That was me. Then I stayed with him by the tree giving covering fire. And the end of it was, Che's rifle was shot out of his hand and I was shot dead beside him and that was it.

*He collapses*

MACRUNE: I formed a false impression of you, Willy. I'm sorry.

*WILLY crawls off. The music of the Eightsome Reel which has continued gently underneath all this while, fades out. Sound of knocking.*

MACRUNE: Is that you again, you old bag? I told you to piss off. I've a mind to throw you downstairs, but the truth is I'm lying here because I came over giddy and now I can't get up.

*CHE comes forward.*

MACRUNE: Who is that? Is it you, Che? I can't see a thing. Perhaps I'm dead.

CHE: Not dead, wounded.

MACRUNE: My head's in a twist. How can you be Che if I'm Che?

CHE: Please identify yourself!

MACRUNE: I am Che Guevara.

CHE: This is a pleasure, Major Guevara, a unique privilege. Yes, I can see that Che Guevara, whatever he may have suffered, to whatever physical condition he may be reduced, his dreams, his schemes in ruins, remains sublimely himself. My admiration for your exploits, Major, is boundless.

MACRUNE: Who might you be?

CHE: My personal identity is neither here nor there. I work for the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States. Call me Doctor Gonzalez!

MACRUNE: What do you want with me, Dr Gonzalez?

CHE: I want you to live, Major. To go on living, the embodiment of the hopes of so many millions of people throughout this unhappy world of ours. Don't think, just because I represent what you are pleased to consider an imperialist power, because I'm a middle-aged man, a little stout, a little balding, a little tarnished by time and expediency, that I can't understand what you stand for in the eyes of the young, the poor, the tyrannised. With your machine-gun in your hand you would break down the bolted doors of the orchard of happiness, let all men enter and plunder the forbidden fruit of knowledge and life. What a vision you have conjured up, Major, of the earthly Paradise and how joyfully we would all take our guns in our hands and follow you!

MACRUNE: I must suspect your motives, Dr Gonzalez, when you talk like this to a man who is a prisoner in the hands of his enemies.

CHE: Rather worse than a prisoner, I regret. To the world at large you are already dead. The Commander of the Division which made your capture has already announced that you were killed in action. The Bolivians are afraid of you, Major Guevara, and frightened men are the most dangerous of all.

MACRUNE: The thought of death does not frighten me.

CHE: Why should it? You have looked it in the eyes so often before. But think a little further, Major, consider your glorious work! You must conclude that it is unfinished. Doesn't the completion of a masterpiece require the master's own hand? We of the CIA also believe in the future. We need you to help us to find that future. That is why we are so anxious to calm the fears of the Bolivians and preserve your valuable life.

MACRUNE: I do not see myself entering the orchard in your company, Dr Gonzalez. I look into your eyes and I see not the fears of the Bolivians, but your own much greater fear. I see the doors of the orchard down and the people entering. I see them feeding on the forbidden fruit. But they are not led, as you suppose, by a sick man with a mere gun in his hand. No, it is a dead man they follow, a man transfigured by the price he has been willing to pay. All the guns in North America will not keep that dead man out of your orchard.

CHE: This is romantic nonsense, which you do not believe. Be rational, Major, you know that on this solid earth victories are won by living men.

*Enter BOLIVIAN SERGEANT with levelled gun*

History teaches us that we achieve nothing by losing patience and breaking all our toys. There have been so many revolutions. It's time to grow up. Ghosts have no part to play in the future.

MACRUNE: There is my victory, Dr Gonzalez, sitting on the muzzle of that Bolivian gun. No longer a poor tangle of flesh and blood, afflicted with asthma, with pains in the legs and a voice weakened by hardship, but an indestructible phantom, an enormous slogan floating across your reason like a fog, sweeping away your technological toys as a river swamps a raft. And this is what the slogan says:

*SERGEANT fires at him*

“CHE LIVES!”

*He falls dead. CHE and SERGEANT go off. Enter HOTEL and Mrs. RENT*

RENT: And there we found him, all of a heap in the middle of the floor like a great dead sheep. It must have been a terrible end.

HOTEL: To our way of thinking, perhaps, Mrs Rent, but not to his. He died a hero.

RENT: But, Mr Otell, that was a delusion. He wasn't right in the head.

HOTEL: It supported him, Mrs. Rent, it brought him through. There's something to be said for delusions, at least the harmless variety.

## THE LAUNDRY AT VALLEGRANDE

*On a makeshift table lies the body of CHE GUEVARA. He is naked to the waist, but he wears a tattered pair of denim trousers and faded green socks. Round the table are a DOCTOR and a NURSE, cleaning his hands, examining his wounds, etc.; a SENIOR ARMY OFFICER, holding a handkerchief to his nose; two JUNIOR ARMY OFFICERS with box cameras, taking photos; two JOURNALISTS with large cameras and flashlights, also taking photos; MACRUNE in the role of DOCTOR GONZALEZ; and a NUN.*

*All these people move round the table, their eyes towards the body, sometimes conversing in low tones with one another, sometimes silent, sometimes pointing to some detail. The JOURNALISTS and the OFFICERS are very busy with their photos. The NUN does not speak to anybody, but goes round and round the table smiling to herself and sometimes laughing aloud.*

## EPILOGUE

HOTEL: We have arrived, ladies and gentlemen, at our inevitable conclusion – the stage and wings replete with the barely breathing corpses of dead heroes. But who is our Hero at the end of the day? Is it Che Guevara, who after the traditional manner of military idealists translated his own violent dreams into other people's real life? Or is it MacRune, who after the traditional manner of romantic artists translated other people's real life into his own violent dreams? Perhaps our true Hero should be a man for whom life – however boring – would be simply life, and dreams – however intoxicating – simply dreams. But I will say no more. Far be it from me to suggest that I am my own Hero.

The End