Gorda

By Ramón Griffero

1994

Translated by Adam Versényi

2015

Cast:

PANCHA

GORDA

THE LIFEGUARD (JORGE)

A YOUNG MAN

THE VOICE

*Set description:*

 *The stage space encompasses both the interior and the exterior settings of the play. Downstage, the beach with a small strip of land—the Lifeguard’s place. Upstage, a balcony with a beach chair, framed by the curtains of an apartment with sliding glass windows, at the back a fragment of a bed.*

*The Voice parallels the characters’ actions.*

 THE WOMEN

(*Strong sun, noises of the sea and people on the beach, music from a radio. Pancha speaks from beneath white sheets.*)

PANCHA: Ayy, Gorda, please, turn off the radio, close the curtains, this dawn sun overwhelms me, it makes my eyelashes twitch, it wrinkles my skin, I’ll get zits, herpes or who knows what. Have you ever seen anything worse than the sun at 10AM?

(*Gorda slowly closes the curtains.*)

THE VOICE: Gorda approached the sliding glass windows and, with her big round eyes, her lips painted red, sketched a small smile of satisfaction. Jorge turned his back to her and his red elastic bathing suit made the roundness of his buttocks and the narrowness of his waist stand out; when he turned his head, Gorda timidly raised her hand, knowing that, from the beach, she was nothing more than a silhouette, a shape camouflaged by the folds of the curtain.

PANCHA: Gordita, the curtain, please, I’m exhausted, those brutes left me worn out, coke cut more each time, it seemed to me that they were snorting anesthesia or amphetamines, you used to wake up feeling marvelous and now it’s like you’d snorted sulphur . . . Ay, I don’t know. Come here, you’re going to die when I tell you, Gorda, you can’t imagine how much fun I had, I got in some car, suddenly I was in a jeep with those big wheels, surrounded by some seventeen year old boys. I couldn’t believe it, they treated me beautifully, it was marvelous, and I felt like Cleopatra attended by four slaves. What more could you want? On the whole, before you’re eaten by worms, better to be eaten by Christians . . .

(*Pancha has a coughing fit.*)

THE VOICE: Gorda closed the curtains, and sat on the edge of the bed. Pancha’s stories, whether they were true or not, were at least entertaining . . . When it reached 10PM she brought Pancha her glass of orange juice.

(*Gorda enters with the orange juice.*)

PANCHA: You’ve outdone yourself, Gorda, I’d better get up . . . Ay, I don’t know

what to wear . . . Let’s see, the shirt with the mini skirt, nothing doing, or lycra with Bermudas, no, too aerobic, the matched set and ready . . .

(*Gorda opens the curtains and sees Jorge who takes shorts and a shirt from a bag, fastens his sandals, and, sipping a drink, looks at the horizon . . .*)

THE VOICE: She imagined he was looking at her, that he felt her solitude, her need for

companionship and, uniting her gaze towards the horizon with his, they absorbed the ting-a-ling of Valparaíso’s lights together.

PANCHA: Ay, Gorda, someone’s at the door, go open it.

(*Gorda lets in a young man, tan, with a wide smile.*)

YOUNG MAN: Hi, is Pancha ready? Tell her to hurry up; they’re waiting for us, nice

 place . . .

(*Gorda disappears and then spies on them.*)

PANCHA: Hi, where’s Felipe?

YOUNG MAN: Who cares about Felipe? You look fantastic.

(*They embrace and begin to get excited.*)

PANCHA: Okay, let’s get going or we never will . . . Loreto . . .Bye . . . We’ll

 meet them somewhere . . .

THE VOICE: Gorda sat in the armchair, hit the remote control, and watched the evening

programs thinking of Jorge, about his diet, about the day he was going to take her in his arms . . .

(*She sleeps. Daybreak, Pancha enters.*)

PANCHA: Divine, Gorda, . . . divine . . . It was divine. Ayy, bed looks so good,

 I’ll tell you everything tomorrow.

(*Gorda, carrying a coffee, sits on the balcony . . . she looks at the horizon waiting for Jorge to arrive.*

*When he enters the sun brightens, she takes off her shirt, puts on a straw hat, lies back in her beach chair and, contemplating him, paints her nails, reads magazines . . . the two of them seated watching the horizon. Pancha wrapped in the sheets.*)

PANCHA: Ayy, Gorda, bring me some mineral water . . . You’re so loving, thanks.

THE VOICE: Thus, the day went by, him on his lifeguard’s podium, she on the seventh

 floor balcony . . . And she, adjusting her chair, thought . . .

GORDA: This is quite the summer.

THE VOICE: When it was 5PM (*She looks at her watch*), she put on her sandals and a

long, flowery dress and went down to walk among the rocks and the breaking waves . . .

GORDA AND THE SEA

(*She’s on the beach, washing her face with seawater, looking for mollusks . . . jumping from steep rock to rock. Music.*)

THE VOICE: At the highest point she stopped and, wrapping her dress around her legs,

 tried to guess which of the hundreds of tiny figures was Jorge.

GORDA: If I threw myself in the water, and let myself be gulped down by the marvelous

oscillation of the waves, he would see me, he would run to save me, he would take me in his arms and I’d feel the warmth of his breath, and I would revive and thank him for his bravery. I’d invite him to tea and make him the apple küchen I do so well. And I’d ask Pancha to do us a favor and leave us alone for the afternoon.

IN THE APARTMENT

PANCHA: Gorda, you’re finally here, I was very upset, where could she be? I couldn’t

find you anywhere . . . Ay, but Gorda my big bird, tell me something, look at me, here . . . Do you see? My eyes are blue! Caroline lent them to me. Don’t they look great?

GORDA: They’re beautiful on you, Pancha.

PANCHA: And what have you been up to? Tell me, I came down out of pure

boredom, I didn’t feel like doing anything, but then this stupendous guy, much better looking than the one who drove you crazy in that video clip, laid a towel at my feet, I was so nervous, I was so not dressed, well, I’ll make it brief, we ended up talking about everything, and now he’s probably desperately waiting for me in Charlies, I’m super late . . . kisses, Gorda, don’t open the door for anyone.

GORDA’S ILLUSION

(*She turns on the radio, wildly dances to reggae . . . Jorge appears.*)

JORGE: Let’s sit down.

(*Jorge takes her by the hand.*)

GORDA: He’s going to tell me that this is the unmistakable heat of love.

(*Jorge kisses her.*

*Worn out, Gorda hugs a pillow . . . then she pulls at the rolls of flesh around her waist, gets depressed.*)

THE VOICE: She’s been told she writes well, perhaps if she wrote some letters to Jorge,

he would realize that there was someone else who shared the same feelings. She opened her writing pad and began what would be a long correspondence with her lifeguard.

GORDA: “You might find it strange to get this letter, you don’t know me, and I’m sure

that for you I’m nothing more than one of the thousands of grains of sand you contemplate on a daily basis, I don’t want you to think that I’m fresh or forward, but tell me, when you look at the sea, do you always imagine the land on the other side of the horizon and do you think that there are other young people like us there, who are thinking about us? When you receive this, and if you agree, wave it, I’ll see you, pardon me once more.”

He probably gets hundreds of letters, he’ll think I’m ridiculous, he’ll think I’m crazy, what can I offer him?

THE VOICE: Conquering all her fears, with the greatest sense of daring in her entire

life, she gave the missive to a boy who ran along the coast . . . At 3PM Jorge waved a letter in the air.

(*A suggestion: when Gorda finishes writing the letter, she makes a gesture with it in the air, the same gesture the lifeguard makes with the letter . . .*

*Gorda is overjoyed.*)

THE VOICE: She felt like a beauty queen being crowned, she heard the hurrahs, the

 acclamations, and she could only hide her face in her hands.

THE SECOND MISSIVE

GORDA: “Jorge, you can’t imagine the happiness you produced for me with a gesture

that for you is surely so small, but when you raised your hand, it was so important for me, I’ve always thought, as I observed you opening umbrellas and planting them in the sand, that you feel like a magician planting wonders in a desert plain, if this is true, raise your hand please.”

THE VOICE: At 4PM Jorge once more waved a paper in the air. Gorda was unable to

 do anything more than kneel, raise her head to heaven and declaim . . .

GORDA: Thank you Lord, My God, for giving me the happiest moments of my life.

THE VOICE: Serene now, sure that an unmistakable union had been established, she

 wrote her third message, revealing her first feeling.

GORDA: “Jorge, I hope you won’t get scared or think I’m a witch, since I’ve discovered

your thoughts twice now, but I was so sure . . . Before I introduce myself, if it’s not too much trouble, I’d like your response, when you see so many bodies burning in the sun, turning themselves black, doesn’t it make you think of a gigantic grill and the smell of the tanning oil or boiling oil? I love you, your unknown friend.”

THE VOICE: At 5:30PM Jorge got up and waved the paper in the air for more than a

 minute, trying to discover the author of these unusual messages.

GORDA: Ayy, Loreto, pinch yourself! So you know you’re not dreaming.

THE VOICE: When she wrote her fourth missive she no longer enjoyed the same feeling

 of ecstasy, only a heavy weight on her chest.

GORDA: “Jorge, you have given me the most marvelous moments of my life, I will no

longer ask you to wave your arm, I will no longer bother you with my writings, I know that we love each other and want this to last forever, in another moment you will meet me.”

THE VOICE: Gorda took a pin and pinned the missive to her chest, she turned off the

radio, straightened Pancha’s bed, opened the sliding glass windows wide, extended her arms and ran through the apartment, the armchair, the pillows, her bag, the little lamp, the chair on the balcony and Pancha’s towels paraded before her . . .

(*Beach sounds, the sea. A flash of light blasts and ignites the scene. Gorda lies with her hands open and her missive on her chest. The Lifeguard stands up on his podium, euphorically blowing his whistle.*)

THE VOICE: A gigantic roar runs across the beach, as the center of the local volleyball

 team makes the winning point.

THE END