Sebastopol (Desert Times)

By Ramón Griffero

(1997)

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Characters

Cristina/Mary Jo From the Future

Sidney The Young Chemist

Humber The Impresario

Mary Hellen British

Francis The Manager

Luis From the Present

Luis Miner

Manuel Miner

Estanislao Miner

Mariano Miner

The Press-Ganger

Sarah

1

A Beginning

Luis--Cristina

(*1997. Luis and Cristina run through the abandoned desert mine in Sebastopol. It’s getting dark.)*

LUIS: This is what they call an abandoned desert, nothing’s left and everything’s still

there. Life’s so fresh; death’s so fresh, a good phrase.

CRISTINA: It makes me sad, anxious, I don’t know, but I’m having a great time all the

same.

LUIS: A kiss in Sebastopol . . . I love you.

CRISTINA: It gave me goose bumps.

LUIS: A good sign . . .

CRISTINA: You can see the snow from here, so much frozen water, it’s like a joke.

LUIS: It’s the desert’s envy, let’s go . . . We should get back; they’ll be waiting for us at the bus.

CRISTINA: They’ll be bored already, let’s go, ---first one back’s a . . .

(*Cristina leaves, falls into a mineshaft.*)

LUIS: Cristina, can you hear me? Are you there? . . . Answer . . .

CRISTINA: It’s cold, Luis, it’s dark, get me out of here.

LUIS: Please don’t stop talking to me, do you hear? Rub your hands together . . . Cristina, please.

2

In the Port of Iquique

Sidney—Francis—Luis—The Press-Ganger

(*On the dock the workers brought from the south are washed and disinfected. Francis counts them and receives them. Sidney stares at the bay.*)

FRANCIS: 18, 19, 20.

THE PRESS-GANGER: I brought you twenty robust ones ready for the shovel, all single. It gets more difficult each time . . . They’re starting to talk in the south . . . You, come here, tell the man.

LUIS: They say there aren’t any grape arbors to lie under, no streams to plunge your hands in, that there’s more than one valley in drought, there aren’t any cows to herd, no trees in which to discover nests . . . But, mami, when I return I’ll buy you land and we’ll have kid goats for cheese and lots of fig trees for sweets . . . They say the white sodium nitrate burns your eyes, that there’s no time to think, that the exhaustion means that all you do is sleep and that you never sleep enough, that you keep working even in your dreams, that men burn themselves as if they were in hell, and their skin is torn off by the steam. But they also say you make good friends, you play at night and tell stories about the horizon and the frontier . . .

THE PRESS-GANGER: Okay, that’s enough.

LUIS: . . . that you meet people from China and blond girls who take you to immense lakes with their looks, they say that from here great mansions are built that the stars keep company . . . Mami, the house will have halls where we’ll put benches and sit grandmother down . . .

THE PRESS-GANGER: Hey didn’t you hear me? . . . As you can see, we’ll have to raise our commission for each head.

(*Sidney remembers his farewell with Sarah standing alone on the dock.*)

SIDNEY: Don’t cry, Sarah, there’s no need; I know that you love me and I’m carrying you with me.

SARAH: Sidney, I’m imagining silly things, that some savage beast will eat you, or you’ll be blinded by one of those strange tropical fevers.

SIDNEY: It’s a place in the desert, a working class city, full of industry; it’s not the jungle.

SARAH: You’re just saying that to calm me down, Sidney. How sweet you are . . . (*Shows him her breasts.*) . . . It’s my farewell gift, no man has ever touched them . . . (*Sidney desperately kisses her breasts.*)

FRANCIS: It’s a beautiful bay . . . Francisco Maclure, machine chief for Sebastopol Station. And you must be Sidney Coleridge, our chemist from Sussex.

SIDNEY: It’s a pleasure to meet you. This is truly impressive. The whole trip’s been like one of Darwin’s adventures. . . . I never thought that steam ships, electricity, trains . . . would have arrived so far away.

FRANCIS: You’ll be even more surprised, you’ll find everything here, but you’ll lack everything as well. It’s an ideal place for reflection, to play . . . we’ve got polo, cricket, tennis, whatever you want . . . Good beer, and plenty of vaginas, not as white as the English girls, but they perform the same function . . . You’ll love it, that is if you have a taste for the exotic and the inexplicable. You’ll never want to leave . . . This is wonderful, Sidney, we’re going to be great friends.

SIDNEY: “Francis was a friendly guy, with a profound disgust for the locals. He loved sports. When he shook my hand I had a presentiment that something terrible linked us together.”

SIDNEY: It’s a pleasure, Francis. On the steamship there were only toothless mechanics, gold bugs on their way to California, and an aristocratic family from Santiago that did nothing but go on and on about the lack of servants and fresh vegetables . . . insufferable. It’s really a pleasure.

3

In Sebastopol Station

Mary Jo—Mary Hellen

MARY JO: You know my name’s not Mary Jo! I was taking a bus tour; we were on the way to Esmeralda Station. From there we were going to Iquique . . . I’m at the English nuns school . . . I need to get back to Santiago . . . please . . . it’s . . .

MARY HELLEN: For the love of god, my dear, go on, tell me what’s bothering you now? Every time your fancies strike you start with your stories: you’re from Indochina and you fell in a boat, now this one about tours . . . Mary Jo, mirages happen in the desert. Out there you can imagine whatever you like, but don’t keep filling my house with stories. I told Humber: That little book about Alice in Wonderland wasn’t appropriate for children, and what did he do? Read it to you every night. . . . Bathe yourself, cover yourself in perfume, the young chemist from Sussex arrives today . . .

MARY JO: Mary Hellen, I assure you that my name is Cristina Fernández and I live near Nuñoa Plaza.

MARY HELLEN: Look, I asked the captain from the south, the one who’s always lived in Santiago, and there isn’t any Nuñoa Plaza. Please, Mary Jo, do me a favor and behave normally, merci . . .

MARY JO: Let’s go to Santiago together, mom.

MARY HELLEN: I’m not your mother. I’m your cousin, sister, your godmother, anything but your mother. Or do you think we have the same profile? Never! To top it all off, you’re the daughter of your abstemious father . . . Oh noo, the siren again . . .

4

The Reception

Humber—Sidney

HUMBER: Manchester is a children’s game . . . Here we build the cities of the future . . . We’re organizing them; we’re creating a new man, a worker, strong, one who is only in contact with his family, his friends, and his work. We’re the true conquistadores; we’re populating places where nobody would have even spent the night before. The only temptation here is nothing and we offer everything. Look at these bottles. Beer from München. There’s a tennis court, and soccer, we’ll teach you soccer . . . A dance hall . . . And why not swimming pools? It’s always fine weather, isn’t it marvelous? Sarah will love it. Yes, this is a challenge for a man. This is what God would want . . . We’re feeding Europe. One day they’ll thank us, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Fantastic, sir, it’s an honor for me to participate in . . .

HUMBER: Don’t be silly. Sebastopol is proud to have you among us. There’s no place on earth where you could live what you’re going to live here.

SIDNEY: The pleasure is mine, sir. And, as you charged me in your letter, I’ve brought several studies about accelerating the liquefaction of nitrate and bringing it to greater purity.

HUMBER: Good, good. Young man, we’ll put everything into practice. The ships await and the cargos are slow . . .

SIDNEY: Strange latitudes. I’d heard about them from friends who’d been in Suez. But I never imagined . . .

HUMBER: Forget about everything you’ve heard. Atacama will fill your head with fantasies not even the best French authors could believe**.(ever write)** . . . Look at this black sky; have you ever seen so many stars at night? There they are, for us, illuminating us, calming and guiding us, above all, Sidney, guiding us through this century that’s just beginning.

SIDNEY: It will be a great century, sir, technologically; new uses for electric energy are being discovered every minute. It will displace steam, and electric acoustics, sir; your voice will be able to travel for miles . . .

HUMBER: I don’t understand a lot of this. I apply it. I construct. Let it all arrive and let it be for the good of all. Isn’t that right, Sidney?

SIDNEY: And what’s it like further south in this country?

HUMBER: Chile? What a strange name for a territory. New Britain would have sounded better. It’s a dock, a freight platform. There isn’t any country; they fought with other savages over these lands. The Chileans are smarter and they won, period. But the rest we’ve done ourselves. Trains . . . ports . . . roads. We take the water from the sea and we distill it. Isn’t it wonderful, Sidney?

5

Luis’ First Day

Manuel—Luis—Estanislao—Mariano

(*White from the dust.*)

MANUEL: The grinders spit dust.

LUIS: It’s worse than swallowing a sack of flour. How do I get it off me . . .

MANUEL: Try this. . . . Welcome to Sebastopol, tomorrow you’ll already be a miner.

LUIS: Thank you. Luis Sanfuentes. I’m going to work hard so I don’t go back empty-handed.

MANUEL: Manuel Gómez, from Curicó . . . here we work and converse, don’t bother remembering anything: pastures, brooks, the women waiting . . . here you’ll become old and from here you’ll never leave.

ESTANISLAO: Estanislao Rojas Rojas, they found me out of work in Salamanca. When the siren sounds we’re going to swim in the stream. We’ll catch some good trout and dinner will be ready.

MARIANO: Mariano Ramírez, from Chillán. Here we play *brisca* and look at the moon.

LUIS: They say you can take a train through the nitrate fields, race mules, learn songs in other languages.

MANUEL: The only thing we’re familiar with here is the hills. That one over there is a

friend of mine, single like I am, with love troubles. But sometimes I wake up happy and suddenly it looks like a woman lying down and I, from a distance, caress her.

ESTANISLAO: If she’s such a good friend of yours, why don’t you ask her out? . . .

Me, tonight I’m going down to Iquique. I haven’t been down there in more than a month.

LUIS: The horizon is empty.

MARIANO: It looks empty, but it’s full of the spirits of those who are gone and those

who don’t want to leave. Those who’ve gone crazy and go howling through the rocks.

LUIS: They’re celebrating in the administration. . . . How pretty she is . . .

MANUEL: It’s not worth looking over there. It’ll just make you angry, they’re having a

party.

6

Mary Hellen’s Birthday

Humber—Mary Hellen—Sidney—Mary Jo—Francis

MARY HELLEN: Sidney, you don’t know how happy we are to have you with us.

SIDNEY: You’re too kind, mam.

MARY JO: I feel like you’ll understand me.

MARY HELLEN: Behave yourself, Mary Jo, he’s a terribly nice young man.

HUMBER: We’re building a country, Sidney, if we have enough of our own

coins.**(we even have our own coins )**

FRANICS: Up until now only tokens.

MARY HELLEN: I designed them. I told Humber that they needed to be metallic, but

he made them out of this strange material.

HUMBER: Rubber, my dear, it’s cheaper.

MARY JO: The cake’s ready. I made it from a recipe I saw on TV.

SIDNEY: TV?

MARY JO: Yes, a little box like a radio . . . but with people that you see . . .

HUMBER: Fascinating, Mary Jo.

SIDNEY: My congratulations, mam, I wasn’t aware that it was your birthday,

but permit me. (*He kisses her hand.*)

MARY HELLEN: Humber, didn’t you promise to change the name of the station for my

birthday and call it Mary Hellen? **(hellen)**

FRANCIS: It would have to be in Spanish, María Helena.

MARY HELLEN: If that’s the case we’ll keep calling it Sebastopol.

MARY JO: Father, when will you take me to the mineshaft where you found

me? Or let me go to Santiago? . . . Sidney will accompany me.

MARY HELLEN: Mary Jo, my dear . . . let it go or we’ll have to commit you and the

sanitariums are terrible . . . I just read about them in a novel . . .

HUMBER: Well, ‘Happy birthday to you, Happy birthday dear Hellen’. . .

FRANCIS: What’s all the fuss about?

MANUEL: The fuse exploded on Cirilo, he’s bleeding to death.

FRANCIS: What do you want us to do? Exhaust the mules? They’ll never

make it to Iquique. . . . Time for him to accept and go content. . . . Tell him not to take his eyes off the sky; it’s a splendid night. The angels will happily descend to look for him**.(to take him along)**

HUMBER: Come on, man, don’t cause a scandal. . . . The station will pay for

an urn. Oregon pine and bronze handles. It’s what those who die for progress deserve. . . . Mary Hellen, it’s time to listen to Bach. Put the Victrola in the window so that these wretches can calm down.

7

A Night at the Mine

Mariano—Estanislao—Manuel—Luis

MANUEL: They’re six of us and only three mattresses. You get old Arnoldo’s **( you get that one from old arnoldo) .** .

LUIS: It stinks. . . .

MANUEL: The old man gets drunk and pees. You’ll have to leave it outside to air. . . .

LUIS: I’d rather sleep on the ground. . . .

MANUEL: Calm down. Cigarette?

ESTANISLAO: (*Estanislao enters with a box full of chickens.*) I sold my gold tooth in Iquique and bought some chicks: Rosita, Pinteada, and Micaela. We’re going to have eggs and then we’ll make some great stews.

LUIS: We’ll make them grow with sodium nitrate.

MANUEL: Did you go see the Red Star of Tarapacá play?

ESTANISLAO: They could barely handle the Victoria Ramblers. . . . A little wine from Curaco?

LUIS: I like the desert. We’re going to have a good time.

ESTANISLAO: I bought two women, for the whole night. One of them put the question(HER VAGINA) to me here; the other worried(SCRABBED) me there . . . And the union sent you this. (a newspaper) Hide it, we don’t want any trouble. . . .

MANUEL: Don Luis is a prisoner again!

LUIS: The Worker . . . The Voice of the People.

ESTANISLAO: You know how to read?

LUIS: And add, divide, subtract, write.

ESTANISLAO: Let’s drink to that . . . To the educated worker!

8

About Friendship

Sidney—Francis

(*In the Sebastopol baths.*)

FRANCIS: You’re too white, Sidney. The Indian women are going to be after you for that. (IT’S A COMMENT TO THE SIZE OF HIS PENIS)We’re going to be great friends.

SIDNEY: “I don’t doubt that we’ll spend a lot of time together, and that there will be instants we’ll think we’re unique. Nor do I doubt that we’ll swear eternal brotherhood and that it will cheer us up for me to see you smile at the end of the day and for you to hear my stories. Nor do I doubt that at dangerous, or even sad moments, we won’t have another shoulder or hand than the other’s with which to feel the warmth of absent humanity. I predict that like you I become complacent. You’ll pick up my clumsiness and I’ll take on your deformed sensibility. . . . But, Francis, let’s not deceive ourselves. Even when you have to sustain me in my agony, we’ll never be friends. Just two people taking advantage of the existence of the other in order to survive the moment. I don doubt, Francis, that if I visit you in Santiago or you me in Southampton, that we’ll be friendly with each other and respond like the gentlemen we are, with hospitality. . . . But I’ve already given my friendship to someone who isn’t here and that relationship isn’t precisely what I want to establish with you. . . . Everything fine now and then travelling companions like before.” Of course we’ll be excellent friends.

FRANCIS: So much so that we’ll have to find a couple of twins or both marry Mary Jo.

9

First Meeting

Mary Jo—Luis—Manuel

LUIS: Manuel, there she comes.

MANUEL: (Those kind of girls) They’re afraid of us. If *she* (YOU GET)comes close she’ll take off.

LUIS: She won’t be afraid of me. . . . Miss Mary Jo, do you need any paraffin?

MARY JO: You know my name?

LUIS: Of course, you’re the most beautiful thing about **(in)** Sebastopol.

MARY JO: No, I’m not.

LUIS: You’re always looking at the horizon, as if you’re hoping for something.

MARY JO: I look at the mountains, the snow; it’s the last thing I saw.

LUIS: Yes, mirages on the desert. . . ***.Is the mirage of the desert***

MARY JO: And you, what’s your name?

LUIS: Luis.

MARY JO: Luis?

LUIS: Please don’t cry. I don’t know what to do. . . .

MANUEL: Let’s go. She’s pretty and the only one who understands us, but she’s sick. .

. .

10

Badminton Game

Sidney—Francis

SIDNEY: Francis, why do they scream so much?

FRANCIS: Don’t break my concentration. They burn themselves with the steam, then

they run out and scream.

SIDNEY: A few railings would be enough . . .

FRANCIS: You’ve been spending a lot of time with Mary Jo. Forgotten Sarah?

SIDNEY: Impossible.

FRANCIS: In solitude even the demented are attractive.

SIDNEY: I won’t hit you, Francis, out of respect for our friendship. . . . Keep playing.

FRANCIS: The English don’t know how to lose . . .

11

Burnt Hands

Francis—Luis—Sidney

(crab liv

FRANCIS: What good is a man with burnt hands? It looks like you did **(all do it)**it on purpose. .

. .

LUIS: The levers were boiling hot, and the steam . . .

FRANCIS: Where were your gloves?

LUIS: I don’t have any, sir.

FRANCIS: Ask for some then. . . . Now go count sacks. . . .

SIDNEY: Come, this will make it feel better . . . (*Takes out cologne, dabs it on a handkerchief and gives it to him.*)

FRANCIS: You’ve been taken in by the story of Florence Nightingale and the Red Cross.

12

The Call to Attention

Humber—Francis—Sidney—Mary Jo—Mary Hellen

MARY JO: Sidney, I suffered as well at the beginning. Then I told myself: this only an instant, nothing is eternal. Like nightmares, they disappear. For now you’re part of them.

FRANCIS: Mary Jo, don’t bother the young chemist. You’ll terrorize him with your bombs that will come and destroy everything. Cheers.

HUMBER: It looks like Sebastopol agrees with you very well, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Nevertheless, it never ceases to surprise me, sir. That’s precisely why I wanted . . .

HUMBER: Sidney, I’ve heard some strange things about you . . .

SIDNEY: You’re referring to my treatment of the Sebastopol workers, sir. . . .

HUMBER: Exactly, you have de-authorized certain practices that allow this station to function in an exemplary manner.

SIDNEY: I wasn’t brought up, sir, to accept punishments that are on the margin of labor relations.

HUMBER: Young Sidney, look out the window. What do you see? . . . Empty plains, millions of dry stones, the worst place on the planet, where neither the most detestable pus nor the meanest insect dares live. These men have only recently been introduced to civilization, Sidney. And I have the obligation to educate them, teach them. It is a harsh apprenticeship, Sidney, but they thank me for it. They are men in embryo and when they become men we’ll treat them like men. But for now I’ll ask you not to interfere in their formation. I’ll thank you for that.

MARY HELLEN: Humber, “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the King’s horses and all the King’s men couldn’t put Humpty together again.”. . .

FRANCIS: Charming, Mary Hellen. . . . Charming.

MARY JO: We’re in a world they invented and we live only so that we don’t die. Then there’s silence. A cognac?

13

Sunset

Manuel—Luis—Mary Jo—Sidney—Mary Hellen—Estanislao

SIDNEY: My god, it’s really impressive.

MARY JO: It’s the most entertaining part of the day.

LUIS: That’s the reason they say “my sun”.

ESTANISLAO: (*Opening the cover on the chicks.*) It’s time to stop pecking and sleep.

MANUEL: So should it be always.

ESTANISLAO: Colorful and fresh.

SIDNEY: It reminds me of Turner’s paintings. Sarah loves them.

14

The Harangue

Manuel—Luis—Estanislao

(*Manuel drags a chair into place, climbs up on it and harangues.*)

MANUEL: The day will come when the workers in the desert, the children of this earth, will be the owners of the riches this land has given us. If we have to live here, where the gold is white, the sediment from prehistoric seas left behind so a man could live in abundance, and so that his children could grow up with dignity. Foreign capital is robbing our riches in collusion with the oligarchs in Santiago. Those who have sold their country for some crumbs and some run down mansions. The working classes are the true patriots. We’re the ones who fought the war, who stain this desert with our blood. Our hands laid the railroad ties, it’s our skin that’s dried and wrinkled, our children who weaken in the fog of the desert and die by the train tracks waiting for medicine. We’re the ones who brought this desert to life. Our desert, from which springs the fresh green fields in the North and the South. Thanks to our labor people feed themselves. Europe eats and wheat fields grow higher than a meter. And how are we repaid? With exploitation and misery. Comrades blinded by steam. Amputated by the crushing machines. The hour has come for them to listen to us. For us to begin to organize with the other stations, the bakers, the stevedores. Together we’ll make them value the rights of the workers on this land. (*They sing The International.*)

15

Listening To The Workers

Sidney--Mary Hellen—Humber—Francis—Mary Jo

MARY HELLEN: Isn’t it fabulous? It must be the record that’s sold the most since that girl in ’17. Isn’t it marvelous, Humber? The way the same words and notes shouted by socialists in the parks of London now resound with the same flavor here on these horizons. It fascinates me. I remember Europe listening to them.

FRANCIS: There’s also that Argentine, with the name of a bird. He doesn’t do too badly with sales. Of course, I agree with you that he sings an incomprehensible dialect. . . .

MARY HELLEN: Rady was in Mexico and brought some fascinating recordings. A mixture of operetta with zarzuela and histrionic screams.

HUMBER: These people will do very well with music . . . But they don’t understand anything about trade unionism. . . . Have you noticed that their meetings all look like carnivals? They remind me of the Holy Week processions in Madrid.

MARY HELLEN: How depressing. Don’t even talk about it. When I was a little girl we saw one of those in Seville and let me tell you, not even the worst Lovecraft story can provoke such nightmares. . . . In order to get us to eat Nanny would threaten to send us to Spain. . . .

SIDNEY: The wind’s blowing. . . .

MARY HELLEN: Sidney, dear. . . . Open the window. I need to feel the freest wind in the world.

FRANCIS: There is the basis of liberty, it only exists in nothingness . . . .

HUMBER: Obviously. From the moment we become two we are restricted, and when we are millions, nothing is left of liberty. Not even the L.

MARY HELLEN: Humber, you’ve always been so good at politics. You should have stayed in London. You’d be in the House of Commons by now. . . . It’s a nice dream, but it’s just a dream. Cheers, Humber.

16

The Barrel

Manuel—Luis

MANUEL: Did they tell you down south that you’d have to empty the gringos’ shit?

LUIS: Why is it so heavy . . . ?

MANUEL: Because they eat and drink so much. Just think: Mary Jo’s shit is in there. . . .

LUIS: I feel like opening it. It would be the only contact I’ll have with her.

MANUEL: How will you know what’s hers? They’re all mixed together.

LUIS: Lovers recognize each other.

17

Another Sunny Afternoon

Mary Hellen—Sidney—Francis—Humber

MARY HELLEN: Another sunny afternoon. Doesn’t it seem completely out of place? . . . It’s no good for anything . . . Not even for a picnic. Not for wearing summer clothes, not for taking tea on the terrace, not for making the flowers bloom, not for lighting up the cathedrals, it’s completely awkward. . . . I tell you, Humber, at least let’s see a cloudy day. I’ve begun to think that rain never existed, that it’s nothing but a figment of my imagination.

SIDNEY: The opposite happened to me in Sussex. I began to believe that the sun had been extinguished. . . .

FRANCIS: Poor people. But at least you’ll never have to walk with muddy feet. Don’t you find, Humber, that there’s nothing more terrible than having to put up with all of these soaked people’s looks. With their oozing clothes. The brutes get a splash of victory and it leaks. In reality, rain is depressing.

HUMBER: They should be grateful the nitrate fields aren’t at the pole. If they were they’d have the right to organize themselves. Man will always find a reason to be unhappy. Have you ever seen a giraffe make a fuss because it hasn’t eaten, or because it’s wet, or because it lacks clothing . . .

MARY HELLEN: There’s too much progress, Humber, it does nothing but make people neurotic and envious. . . .

HUMBER: You think a lot, Mary Hellen, and it makes you, if you’ll permit me, talk more than is necessary. At times it’s a bit distracting. . . .

MARY HELLEN: You’re a true gentleman to tell me to be quiet. It so happens that you are my loving husband and have the obligation to listen to me so I’ll continue. By the way, I feel the noise of the train. There might be news from Norwich, or some missive for Sidney. . . . Well, I’ll go talk to my flowers.

18

The Robbery

Manuel—Luis—Estanislao—Mariano—Sidney—Humber

(*Playing Brisca.*)

MANUEL: Come on, place your bets, and take another token.

ESTANISLAO: I double . . .

MARIANO: Me too. . .

LUIS: How’s this? . . . It’s a bottle of iodine.

MANUEL: (*Breaking the bottle.*) They’ll cut your ear off for this in Sebastopol. It’s just Luis’ imagination.

FRANCIS: If it isn’t a bottle from my office, “Iodine From the Nitrate East Company of Sebastopol”.

(*Takes out a knife, goes to cut off his ear. A scream resounds in the desert.*)

SIDNEY: Sir, the conveyor belt. Pardon me, they’re . . .

HUMBER: Ears, a collection, Sidney. A gift from the Bangalu when I was in Ghana.

SIDNEY: I find them repugnant.

HUMBER: Don’t be silly. The more ears you have of your enemies, the less harm they’ll do you . . .

MANUEL: Be careful. They see everything here. For starting a union they tied Ermenigindo to a telegraph pole and left him there until he died of hunger and cold.

ESTANISLAO: Don’t cross yourself! This one will say that you’re drugged. Can’t you see that religion is the opiate of the masses?

MARIANO: There’s a comet. They come from other planets where they are watching us.

LUIS: From that hill you can see the lights of La Noria, you can see how in a ship sailing they’re eating in one window, someone’s undressing in another. I close the curtain, put a hand on her face and feel the moisture on her lips. It’s an old woman, a little boy, it’s my saliva and it’s so cold up there that I can’t feel my own body, or the heat of my blood. I get up and when I open my eyes everything is green, a flowering fig tree. I empty my purse and they look at me unbelieving and I tell them: “Mami, there’s enough here to buy the land.”

MARIANO: And the house, plus a plow. And I present her, “She’s my wife,” I say, and they take off the veil but everyone’s dressed in black and I ask, “Why are you in mourning?” And they respond: “Twenty years have passed.”

MANUEL: And over the administration office waves the red flag.

LUIS: Night, Manuel, is the only thing that’s left for us all.

ESTANISLAO: Until a sign appears that says: Don Humber’s Stars . . . Ya, I’m annoyed. I’ll bet all the chickens for three grocery tokens and one water token.

MANUEL: You lost. Go slaughter the chickens and we’ll build a fire . . .

ESTANISLAO: Rosita, Pinteada, Micaela, don’t look at me like that. Everything comes to an end one way or another. Nobody told you we’d be together forever. Of course, you’ll have to go like this, suddenly, without having really lived, not even laid any eggs, or knowing what it’s like to be confined for twenty days and then be happy with chicks scratching at your feet. You’re the only ones who listen to me in the afternoons and know my secret: that I’m never going to leave Sebastopol because I came here to hide from myself. Because the only thing I have in this world is the dry desert and you. You can never separate yourself from what you love the most. At least I’ve learned that. Don’t cry now, let’s go and hurt ourselves. . . .

19

Picnic in Atacama

Mary Hellen—Mary Jo—Humber—Sidney—Francis—Luis

MARY HELLEN: Humber, are you sure there aren’t any dynamite charges here?

HUMBER: Don’t be ridiculous, Mary Hellen. Lay things out, I’m dying of hunger.

SIDNEY: This is all splendid.

MARY HELLEN: Scones?

FRANCIS: Delicious.

MARY JO: Sidney, lemon pie. The only thing I learned in technical manuals.

HUMBER: Francis, the parasol.

MARY JO: That’s a strong wind across the plains. It sounds like words. Let’s see if we can hear each one.

MARY HELLEN: It’s like someone calling Maaary Heeeellen . . . Maaary Heeeellen . . . Someone’s calling me. It must be Aunt Virginia. I can see her running with a plate full of cookies. Maaary Heeeellen. Can you hear it?

FRANCIS: Much too romantic, Mary Hellen. . . . It’s more like the shouts from San Enrique. . . . Revoluuution . . . Revoluuution. . . .

SIDNEY: That seems a bit catastrophic to me. . . .

FRANCIS: Well then it’s saying, Saraaah . . . Saraaah . . .

HUMBER: It’s the sea. The sound of the sea. There must have been swells in the Pacific.

MARY JO: And you, Sidney?

SIDNEY: It’s wind, only wind. . . . Declaring itself and finding us in its path . . .

HUMBER: Enough of this nonsense. Put on the Victrola and let’s dance. . . .

20

The Rain

Mary Hellen—Sidney—Humber--Mary Jo

MARY HELLEN: Oh goodness. Mary Jo, I don’t know if you’re infecting me but I seem to have felt a drop . . .

SIDNEY: No, so did I.

HUMBER: Rain?

MARY JO: Make a wish. (*It begins to drizzle in the desert. The workers stop working. Everyone looks at the sky and makes a wish. . . .*)

21

The Wish

LUIS: A grilled roast.

MARY HELLEN: London, London . . .

MANUEL: That the miners unite.

MARY JO: Please, I want to go back.

HUMBER: Ten cents more on the pound.

SIDNEY: Sarah, remember me.

FRANCIS: Everyone under the umbrella.

ESTANISLAO: Honey fritters.

22

About Love

Luis—Manuel

(*Night cold.*)

LUIS: Imagine it. She comes and I tell her that I long for the same thing. But I don’t dare.

MANUEL: It’s a dream, kid, nothing more.

LUIS: No, Manuel. She looked at me and moved her lips without speaking. “I love you,” she said, “I love you.”

MANUEL: That would be rich, blondie. I’d give it to her all night long.

LUIS: Careful, she’s mine.

MANUEL: She’s whoever gets there first.

23

Francis—Sidney

FRANCIS: What color are Sarah’s eyes?

SIDNEY: Infinite green, like the fields of Scotland.

FRANCIS: I need to think about someone. How fortunate you are, Sidney.

24

Mary Hellen—Mary Jo

MARY HELLEN: It’s too uncomfortable and I feel the necessity of communicating it to you. It all began with a little tickling in . . . then I looked under my arms, in my hair . . . but it seems they only nest there . . . One knows that there are different kinds of fauna in distant territories . . . They’re like miniscule little spiders, tiny, inoffensive in appearance, but a terrible anguish has taken possession of me. Maybe they cause some sort of plague or provoke madness or perhaps death . . . Oh, my God, don’t tell me I’m the only one. I’ll have to tell Humber . . . Mary Jo, you’re my only friend, help me.

MARY JO: You’ve got lice,(CRAB LICE) Mary Hellen. Don’t worry; you’re not going to die.

25

Francis Punishes, Sidney Stops Him

Francis—Mariano—Sidney

(*Francis whips Mariano.*)

FRANCIS: So, you like to read? Answer me, imbecile! . . .

MARIANO: It’s not against the law, no . . .

FRANCIS: Law, law, what do you know about the laws, shitty nigger? Tell me who gave it to you. Answer me, you wretch . . . Or do you want me to kill you?

SIDNEY: Are you mad? (*He takes the whip from Francis.*) What are you doing?

FRANCIS: Don’t stick your nose in again or I’ll hang you by the neck . . .

SIDNEY: Francis, he’s a worker!

FRANCIS: It’s for his own good, don’t you understand? We’re transforming these savages into men. . . . But they’re not there yet, Sidney. And don’t you ever discredit me in front of a worker again.

SIDNEY: It’s only a newspaper. In Brighton there are . . .

FRANCIS: Forget about Brighton! Forget about the London School of Economics! Look around you. Do you see any mansions, any universities, any Ministries of Justice? Sidney, we’re creating everything anew here and it will be better this time. . . . This isn’t a school for sissies, and if you don’t like it, go back where you came from. . . .

SIDNEY: You’ve got a lot of problems, Francis. . . . Here. . . .

26

Humber’s Fury

Humber—Mary Hellen

HUMBER: They’ve put out a newspaper! Did you see, Mary Hellen? They’re editing a newspaper!

MARY HELLEN: I can’t imagine what the society pages will look like. . . .

HUMBER: This isn’t the time to hear one of your incomprehensible jokes. . . .

MARY HELLEN: It’s sarcasm, not a joke. . . . Humber.

HUMBER: Now that we’ve built everything for them they want to take control of everything we’ve achieved. How would you like to see yourself pulling a cart, Mary Hellen?

MARY HELLEN: It would be an experience. How touching . . . “the present is organized on the basis of egotism, which is the negation of love. There can be no love where there is exploitation and tyranny.” Look, Humber, they’re asking for compassion. . . . Let’s organize them some parties. . . .

HUMBER: Their ideas excite you, don’t they, Mary Hellen? . . . Do you hate me so much that the only thing you want is to see me destroyed? . . . You’ll go down with me, my dear. Without me Sebastopol doesn’t exist . . . It’ll go up in smoke. A stick of dynamite under every rock I’ve raised and another in the mouth of every one of these miserable wretches. . . .

MARY HELLEN: We need a vacation, Humber. Feel ourselves back in civilization. Here our ideas get all twisted. . . . Excuse me; I’m going to water the roses. . . . Ah, Humber, when will we get a telephone? . . .

27

Mary Jo and Luis Look For the Mineshaft

Mary Jo—Luis

MARY JO: Where did you say the fairies come from?

LUIS: I didn’t say. It’s what others have told me. . . . When you get lost in the desert they bring you water and guide you.

MARY JO: Come on, Luis. Maybe the fairies brought me here. We have to find them.(THE SHIFT)

LUIS: There are thousands of mineshafts, Mary Jo, thousands. They’ve asked me to direct at the Philharmonic. I’ll write a play.

MARY JO: As long as it’s not about cowboys and sauces and people eating grapes. I know that you like them, but it’s gotten boring already.

LUIS: No, it will be about the future that awaits us. When we’ll all be happy and equal. . . .

MARY JO: Communist.

LUIS: If you say so. Wouldn’t you like to act in costume? You’d make a good future.

MARY JO: I’d do it quite well for you. But don’t let anyone know.

28

The Assassination of The Servant

Sidney—Mary Jo—Humber—Mary Hellen—Francis—The Servant

SIDNEY: How agreeable to know that you’re a part of the Sebastopol countryside.

MARY JO: If I’m part of these walls, look at me always, help me.

SIDNEY: I’d do it even if you didn’t ask, but in what way? . . .

MARY JO: Don’t worry, I’ll tell you. English music is going to be so good.

SIDNEY: Let’s not waste time with that.

MARY HELLEN: Dear Francis, one never loses time here, time loses you. . . .

HUMBER: British women are surprising. Mary Hellen, you’re brilliant.

MARY HELLEN: Humber, remember that we can’t stand each other. You’re being much too affectionate. (*The Servant spills tea on Humber’s pants. Humber grabs the pot and smashes it against his head.*)

HUMBER: You nigger bastard! . . . (*Beating him.*)

FRANCIS: It seems you hit him a bit hard.

SIDNEY: He has no pulse.

HUMBER: Don’t be silly. Tricks. They invent all kinds of things, no . . . Get him out of here; the wretch did it on purpose. . . . My pants, Mary Hellen, you saw what he did to my pants. (*Kicks him where he lies on the ground.*)

MARY HELLEN: Atrocious, Humber. Calm down. That noise again, those grinding machines, insufferable.

HUMBER: There’s a job for you, Sidney. Get rid of the noise these machines make.

SIDNEY: I’m a chemist, sir. . . .

MARY HELLEN: All the more reason. . . . Music.

29

Sidney’s Dream of Sarah

SIDNEY: Sarah, I know this letter will not reach you. At least I got out of the war. I’m afraid for you, rather I’m afraid for me. . . . I can’t tell you that I’ve arrived in a country . . . it’s more like a territory. You can’t imagine, Sarah, there aren’t any trees . . . and that means so much. There isn’t any shade. There aren’t any branches, the leaves don’t fall, no worms climb up the trunk, no birds perch, no nests are built, the branches don’t turn coffee-colored, they aren’t covered in snow, you can’t lean against a trunk. . . . Sarah, I can see you beneath a tree. . . . and it’s so beautiful.

30

Mary Jo’s Secret

Mary Jo—Sidney

MARY JO: Sidney, shh, come here.

SIDNEY: What are you doing out at this time of night?

MARY JO: Come to the Philharmonic at nine, you’ll see me act, at nine. . . .

31

At the Theatre

Luis—1st Worker (Manuel)—2nd Worker (Estanislao)—3rd Worker (Mariano)—The Future (Mary Jo)—Chorus (All)

LUIS: The theatre group Art and Revolution presents “Workers Misery: Chilean Miner or Chilean Slave”, by Alejandro Escobar Y Carvallo, plus the socialist thinking of Don Luis Emilio Recabaren. . . . In the union hall, Sebastopol Station.

(*Three Workers and The Future.*)

1ST WORKER: Like large laborious beehives

they erect enormous stations resembling mysterious prisons.

There work dirty people

Fighting hand to hand with the hard crust

Sweat bathes the sunburned forehead

And the virile musculature trembles.

2ND WORKER: The pale women of the desert

grow old from anemia and chlorosis

And she who doesn’t engorge herself with greed

Is gulped down by tuberculosis.

3RD WORKER: The foreigner with arrogant gaze

is the tyrant of the trampled desert.

He is the cause of the Chilean living like

A miserable slave in his own beloved land.

THE FUTURE: Let there be no more laments and litanies in these stations. Let’s fight for the happy society of the future, where exploitation, hunger, and tyranny will all have ceased. Happy because art, culture, and all means of communication will flourish. Workers, unite beneath the sun of socialism that will transform egoism into love, destroying savage capitalism.

CHORUS: Let the people recover their power and break the chains that oppress them. Rise up, people, follow you destiny like Christ at the summit of Mt. Calvary. Have the courage to submit today to make Chile egalitarian tomorrow!

33

The Orgasm

Mary Jo—Sidney

SIDNEY: That was fantastic, Mary Jo, my most sincere congratulations. I’m left, nevertheless, worried about the possibility that they’ll find out . . .

MARY JO: Sidney, you’re so like the friends I had in Santiago. It’s like you’re from another time, that’s why I need to ask you for something.

SIDNEY: Mary Jo, you too are the person here most like my friends in Sussex.

MARY JO: And that gives you confidence?

SIDNEY: Yes, it makes me feel good.

MARY JO: Then take off my blouse.

SIDNEY: You don’t feel well?

MARY JO: And then take off my skirt and let your warm hand run wherever you like, Sidney. . . . If you don’t do it I feel like I’ll grow old, and this flesh will never be able to give itself without shame. . . . Please do it.

SIDNEY: I . . . want to, a lot . . . and yes.

MARY JO: I’ll start . . . close your eyes.

(*She undresses.*)

MARY JO: See, naked it’s like we were wherever we wanted to be. There is no place, there is no time . . . It’s like our eyes are the same pupils from centuries ago. It’s the same orgasm that people will have a thousand years from now. Isn’t it comforting to see things that way, Sidney? . . . And not lament about losing something or feel like days are passing without anything that moves us. . . .

SIDNEY: That was marvelous, Mary Jo.

MARY JO: Don’t call me Mary Jo, my name’s Cristina.

SIDNEY: “In reality, it was one of those experiences that without a doubt I will remember until I’m old and that I will tell my most intimate friends. It will be a secret that the woman I marry will never know. . . . I saw her eyes sparkle and my flesh trembled as if it were the first time. . . . Mary Jo, you could be the woman of my life, the one destiny offered me along the way, but who, on finding her, like now, I destroyed. . . . But I don’t believe it, and only believe that this impulse of hers confirms her demented state. But at the same time I know she’s the one protecting me and I will just have to reject her . . . I can’t distinguish between my reason and my feelings. I can’t know . . . if it’s a euphoric state possessing me, or her madness infecting me. I’ll know when it’s already too late. . . . But today, Sidney Coleridge . . . with the pain of knowing that I’m losing the most precious . . . “

SIDNEY: Mary Jo, I hope this won’t happen again, because it’s left me with a sensation of restlessness, while simultaneously feeling that I’m violating the kindness with which your parents have received me.

MARY JO: I know what you’re really thinking . . . I wouldn’t dare become involved with someone demented either. But you’ve given me enough strength to continue waiting until I wake up. . . . Goodbye, I understand you.

33

Mary Hellen’s Horrible Dream

Humber’s Indisposition

(*Mary Hellen dreams (and we see) two workers enter her room through the window. They maltreat her and rape her.*)

MARY HELLEN: Ah, it’s you. What a frightening nightmare, Humber . . . A shipwreck, in the middle of the Atlantic, we lost everything. . . . Ay, I hope it’s not an omen. . . .

HUMBER: Shall I get you some tea?

MARY HELLEN: Always so kind. No, I’ve pulled myself together. . . .

HUMBER: Dreams of shipwrecks, Mary Hellen? . . . You’ll find it amusing, but I was crying. . . . From my desk I looked at the station . . . I’ve done great things, Mary Hellen . . . I looked at the splendor of the lamps reaching the horizon like stars . . . I saw them happy, conversing . . . the men unloading tons . . . the sacks lined up like the Wall of China . . . it never fails to enchant me . . . We’ll put electricity in every house . . . the streets will be lit . . . The White Nail arrives tomorrow with five trucks, the best, Mary Hellen, with more than five tons of cargo. . . . We’ll begin building the school; we’ll have education and a library in Sebastopol. This is my ship, and I am its captain.

MARY HELLEN: Of course, Humber.

HUMBER: Nevertheless, today I saw it sinking . . . foundering . . . eaten away by the sand . . . the sails dropping, Mary Hellen . . . and that’s a torpedo . . . I’m scared to read the paper, afraid I’ll see some headline announcing saltpeter’s been discovered in the Sahara or the American desert. . . . You can imagine what will happen to us. . . . We’ll close up and go . . . Never! I’ll go down with it. (*Cries.*)

MARY HELLEN: Don’t torment yourself with fantasies. . . . But, Humber. Will we never return to London?

HUMBER: On vacation, Mary Hellen, only on vacation.

MARY HELLEN: (*Laughter.*)

34

The Future

Mary Jo to Luis

MARY JO: You won’t have much more time here Luis . . . they will close the station.

LUIS: Well, I’ll go to another.

MARY JO: They’re going to close them all. . . . They’ll take the wood from the windows. . . . The train tracks. They’ll leave the locomotives sleeping in their machine shops. . . . There won’t be any more stations.

LUIS: That can’t be. Where will all the people go?

MARY JO: They’ll put them all in a truck and they’ll leave them there, in front of the train. . . .

LUIS: Will I at least be able to save something?

MARY JO: I don’t know, Luis, but you’ll continue to worry about the workers, fighting against the industrialists, believing that the worker will build a better city.

LUIS: Yes, I’ll do that. Like in Russia, where there aren’t bosses and those of us who work own everything . . . and where no one is fired, there isn’t any misery, everyone can go to the doctor for free, and my children will be able to study.

MARY JO: And you will succeed. There will be miners as mayors, communist senators, even a worker’s president.

LUIS: Seriously, Mary Jo, so much happiness brings me pain. It’s a dream . . . I’ll tell Manuel, he’s done so much for this. And then?

MARY JO: What difference does it make, Luis? By then you’ll be like everyone else, buried. . . .

LUIS: Of course it matters! You give your life in order to put an end to exploitation. . . . It’s like the father of our country; he gave his life to create a country . . . even though he wasn’t even able to die within it. . . . That’s why. . . .

35

The Rose Garden

Mary Hellen—Sidney—Francis

MARY HELLEN: You have to be cautious in these places, Sidney. Hydrangeas, this little one, camellias, irises, flowers all year round.

SIDNEY: I can’t imagine your garden in Norwich.

MARY HELLEN: There were only bushes, Sidney, it wasn’t necessary . . . Have you visited the cemetery?

SIDNEY: Yes, extraordinary. A garden of metal flowers.

MARY HELLEN: Precisely, Sidney. Promise me that if I die in Atacama that by no means will you let them cover me with these oxidized metal crowns. I want flowers on my tomb, Sidney, real flowers, understand? You’ll do that, won’t you?

SIDNEY: If it comes to pass, I promise.

MARY HELLEN: That calms me down. Sarah hasn’t written?

SIDNEY: Not really.

MARY HELLEN: What a pity. Mary Jo, despite her poetic states, is a beautiful woman. Don’t you think?

SIDNEY: Yes, she’s enchanting.

FRANCIS: Am I interrupting?

MARY HELLEN: Not at all, Francis, but you know (*indicating one of her roses*) Carol is allergic to you, I’m sorry.

FRANCIS: Forget it. The reds are preparing a strike. Agua Santa station warned us. . . . Humber wants to talk to you.

36

The Strike

Humber—Sidney—Francis—Mary Jo—Manuel

HUMBER: I’m sorry, young man, but it looks like we’ll have a mutiny on board.

FRANCIS: The last thing we heard from Agua Santa is that the afternoon shift didn’t appear and that there are men from La Coruña on the outskirts of town.

SIDNEY: But is that legal?

HUMBER: Legal? Who understands that word, legal? They’ll eat us alive. At the least they’ll poke out your eyes and sack the administration. They’ll assault the general stores . . . and poor Mary Hellen and Mary Jo will have to get to know various black and foul smelling organs . . . it’s the bad luck of being women . . .

SIDNEY: Are you sure, sir?

HUMBER: Definitely.

FRANCIS: Keep singing whatever you want, but leave the administration immediately . . .

MAUEL: The workers of Sebastopol have eight demands; make sure the administrator hears them.

FRANCIS: You signed a contract and accepted . . . well then, what do you want?

MANUEL: They’re just and for the good functioning of the station . . .

1. An end to the tokens system.
2. The right to gather and petition.
3. The establishment of a primary school for each station.
4. An end to charging for drinking water.
5. An end to opening mail.
6. Job security, railings for the crushing machines, and compensation for accidents that happen on the job.
7. An end to the company store, free commerce.
8. An end to korporeal punishment.

FRANCIS: Corporeal punishment with a “k”, “company store” with lowercase letters . . . everything else good. But this station is a place for work and production, we’re not going to turn it into a playground . . . withdraw.

MANUEL: Sir, if you won’t consider our requests, we’ll have to call a strike.

FRANCIS: Call whatever you want.

HUMBER: But what do these imbeciles want? We give them shelter, food, teach them how to work. To revolutionaries you can only respond with a single word: No.

37

Sidney’s Retreat

Mary Hellen—Sidney—Mary Jo—Francis

MARY HELLEN: I really envy Sarah. I hope it will be a fantastic wedding.

SIDNEY: It’s been a pleasure to meet you and I’m very grateful for your hospitality. You’ve been very kind to take care of me.

MARY JO: You’ll miss me, Sidney. Here, may you have the biggest flowers in Sussex. (*Hands him saltpeter.*)

FRANCIS: We’ll wait for you. When you get back the cricket pitch will be ready and we’ll arrange something for Sarah. . . . Punctual, like the English trains you’ve told me about, bye-bye.

(*From the train.*)

SIDNEY: Thanks, Francis. Mary Jo, we’ll see each other soon. “I know perfectly well that I’ll never see you again, Francis, nor these hills, nor the houses lined up in Sebastopol. Nevertheless, I can’t help feeling enormous sadness. I’m incapable of assuming neither your great beauty nor your greatest misfortunes. Sebastopol, you’ll be nothing more than a name in my memory. The name of the first and last place from which I fled. Now all I want to see is the sea and the coast of Dover. Good-bye, Mary Jo, we’ll see each other in another life. Perhaps then Sidney Coleridge will dare tell you what he is incapable of expressing today. . . .”

38

Rebellion

Manuel—Luis

MANUEL: Go to San Gregorio. Tell them that crushers, rippers, and stevedores have all united. This will be the biggest strike the north has ever seen. They’ll have to listen to us now.

LUIS: Sebastopol finally rises. They’re not going to believe it. . . .

MANUEL: Luis, follow the telegraph poles, don’t lose them.

LUIS: Manuel, I’m so happy. Up with the soviets!

39

The Night Before

Humber—Mary Jo

HUMBER: Cover yourself, little girl, you should be sleeping.

MARY JO: Perhaps I’m sleeping now. Father, where did you find me?

HUMBER: There’s no point in asking about the past. You can’t go back. All you can do is prepare for tomorrow and hope that it will be better than today. If not, nothing makes sense.

MARY JO: Sebastopol is quiet.

HUMBER: A disturbing silence that won’t let me sleep. It would be better in the Scottish mines, at least they speak English . . .

MARY JO: You’ll go back and then you’ll want so much to be here again. . . . But there won’t be anything left. The only thing they won’t carry off will be the crosses in the cemetery. . . .

HUMBER: Let’s go in. Nights like this disturb the mind. . . .

40

The Strike Ends

Francis—Humber—Mary Hellen—Mary Jo

(*Receiving a telegram.*)

FRANCIS: Humber, good news. The army has put down the subversives in San Gregorio and now controls the situation in the whole region. . . . The revolt is over.

HUMBER: Jolly good. This army of the Chileans is a true army. It understands where the best interests of the country lie. Take out the glasses. . . . We’ll have to tell them in London to congratulate this prime minister in Santiago. They’ll be elated.

MARY HELLEN: I must admit, I was worried. Cheers.

HUMBER: Let the sirens ring! We’ll fire a number so they know how Sebastopol reacts.

FRANCIS: The first one to go will be the one with who you look for fairies and put on plays. We’re not stupid, Mary Jo.

(*Mary Jo’s crisis.*)

HUMBER: Hold her, she’s delirious.

41

The Farewell

Mary Jo/Cristina—Luis--Estanislao

ESTANISLAO: (*Carrying his chicken cage and the union banner. He runs, pursued by the administration’s horses, falls, the birds peck at his body.*)

LUIS: They shot them point blank, Cristina, they were singing. I don’t want to be Chilean, Mary Jo.

MARY JO: Go on, take this. . . . please run . . . hide yourself . . . go back to Ovalle . . .

(*The sound of horses is heard.*)

LUIS: Mary Jo, I love you very much . . .

MARY JO: Forward, Luis, always forward, I’m going with you.

LUIS: No, Mary Jo, stay, stay . . .

(*The galloping approaches, bullets whistle, two workers fall, a rope wraps around Mary Jo, a bullet hits Luis.*)

42

Epilogue

Luis and Cristina

(*1997. At the edge of the mine shaft Luis revives Cristina. The rope from the previous scene is what hauled her out . . . Luis gives her artificial respiration.*)

LUIS: Shh . . . You came back. Breathe, I love you so much. . . . You can’t leave me like this . . .

CRISTINA: The snow on the mountains.

LUIS: Yes, you remember . . . It’s a desert mirage*. (it’s the mirage of the desert)*

CRISTINA: Luis!

The End

Santiago—Sebastopol 1996-1997