

100m₂

by Juan Carlos Rubio

translated from the Spanish by Roger Pettitt

Vertigo - Cinco Jotas - Txalo Producciones presentan

María Luisa
MERLO

Miriam
DÍAZ-AROCA

Jorge
ROELAS



"100 m² provoca risas y lágrimas,
una comedia viva y conmovedora,
con humor mordaz y diálogos brillantes"

The Miami Herald

Fotos: Sergio Parra

100 m²

una obra de teatro de **Juan Carlos RUBIO**

 Festival Internacional de Teatro y Danza
San Sebastián (Donostia)

 Festival Internacional de Teatro y Danza
San Sebastián (Donostia)

 Festival Internacional de Teatro y Danza
San Sebastián (Donostia)

 TXALO

 Distribución
www.txalo.com/producciones
m

“ Life is what goes on while you are busy making other plans”

John Lennon

Characters:

Lola
Sara
Agent

The action takes place in the flat belonging to Lola

Scene 1

(Darkness)

AGENT: Well then, here we are ...

The agent enters.

AGENT: What awful rain! It's like ...but, come in, come in. Let me put the light on.

The agent puts on the light. Sara enters.

AGENT: What, what was I telling you? Come and look from the balcony ...

Sara goes to the balcony and agent follows.

AGENT: It's really nice ... You must agree with me that the views are magnificent ... In spite of the clouds ... you can see the hills ... Do you like it?

SARA: Are you selling the view too?

AGENT: Very good! I love people with a sense of humour. My father always said that that was the sixth sense ... "Pity the man who can't laugh at everything ..." But my mother on the other hand, thought the sixth sense was common sense ... "Pity the man who laughs at everything ..." They got divorced two days before my eleventh birthday. Isn't that strange? But tell me, how do you like it?

SARA: Do you mind if I finish looking at it before I answer that?

AGENT: Of course not ... Let's carry on ... The lounge! Obviously it needs a good make over ... a complete makeover ... But you'll agree with me that basically it's good ... high ceilings, majestic balconies, a good situation and ...

SARA: How many square metres is it?

AGENT: Square metres? Let's see ...
The agent consults his papers.

AGENT: A hundred ... It's a hundred square metres.

SARA: I meant the lounge ...

AGENT: The lounge? The lounge is large, but ... I don't know exactly ...

The agent takes out a basic tailor's rule.

AGENT: I can measure it in a flash if ...

SARA: With that rule?

AGENT: Yes. I won't take long to ...

SARA: It doesn't matter ... Do go on ...

The agent folds the rule up and continues the explanation.

AGENT: The building! ...The building passed the environmental tests a couple of years ago. With these old buildings you never know if ...

SARA: Heating?

AGENT: Central.

SARA: Caretaker?

AGENT: Yes. That's a miracle these days ... It's a dying profession. Who would want to be a caretaker? It's a job that no ...

SARA: What's the maintenance charge?

AGENT: Well ... I don't know exactly ... You see ... I've not being doing this job for long ...

SARA: You don't say.

AGENT: But I'm sure the bill will be very small, you know ... these old buildings. I can call you later to confirm it ... , and the heating is included. That I know for sure.

SARA: That's lucky. *(indicating the door that we assume leads to the bedrooms)* May we?

AGENT: Of course we may.

Sara goes towards the door. At that moment the agent's mobile rings.

AGENT: Sorry ... It's the agency ... If you'd like to take a look at the rest while I ...

Sara, without waiting for the agent to finish the sentence, has disappeared through the door.

AGENT: Hello ...(...) Yes, I'm here ... (...) Yes I've included everything ... And she is quite cool. She wanted to come and see it immediately (...) Well, I don't know, she's a little bit dry ... very dry ... I don't want to put her on the spot ... It's all the same if she doesn't have it ... (...) Well, of course I'm going to negotiate! Don't threaten me, OK? Don't ... threaten ... me ...

Sara comes back in and looks at the Agent.

AGENT: If this shitty flat doesn't sell, it's because it doesn't sell and not because I ...!
(He notices Sara and goes quiet) Listen, I'll call you later... OK ... OK ...Bye.

The agent puts his mobile away.

AGENT: Managers ... Don't you hate them?

SARA: No. I'm a manager.

AGENT: Ah ... Well? Shall we have another look around?

SARA: That won't be necessary. I've seen it all.

AGENT: Look, sincerely ... you must agree with me that at this price you're not going to find anything better. It's a good neighbourhood, you know?

SARA: I know.

AGENT: And also you know what it costs per square metre in this area. If you multiply the one hundred of this flat by ...

SARA: I know that too. It's a special price, bearing in mind ...

AGENT: Bearing in mind the "inconvenience"...

SARA: Exactly.

AGENT: If the "inconvenience" didn't exist it's value would be ...

SARA: Double ...

AGENT: Double! Did I tell you before we came up?

SARA: You told me before we came up.

Sara goes towards a big cupboard in the lounge.

AGENT: Yes, I did mention that before we came up.

SARA: And this door?

AGENT: A cupboard ...

The agent tries to open it but he cannot.

AGENT: Perhaps I've got the key here ...

The agent looks clumsily here and there for the key.

SARA: Forget it, it doesn't matter. A cupboard is a cupboard. How old is it?

AGENT: *(looking at the cupboard)* How old is it? *(Sara sighs)* Oh, you are referring to the ...

SARA: Yes. I'm referring to the ...

AGENT: She doesn't look it, but she's 73, seven three ...

SARA: That's not so old. My grandfather is 84, eight four ...

AGENT: Your grandfather doesn't smoke like a factory chimney and drink like a fish, in spite of having had two heart by-passes ... Or does he?

SARA: And what do the doctors say?

AGENT: The doctors have absolutely forbidden her from smoking and drinking. But she doesn't take any notice. She carries on just the same ... You know? ... She's the type of person who ... *(He goes silent)*

SARA: Listen, would you mind finishing your sentences?

AGENT: She's the type of person who's always contrary, you understand ... You say yes, so I say no ... That type, that type of person ...

SARA: And what does she think of the terms?

AGENT: She's delighted! All that money in cash and she can live in her flat up to the last moment ... which won't be too long the way she's going on ... Think about it ... Think about it ... But don't take too long. There are other clients who ...

SARA: No, please ... Don't give me that line about other possible buyers and, above all "one of them who is very, but very interested". Save me that, I beg you.

AGENT: But it's true ...

SARA: It's always true ... I also sell things. Less tangible, but I know the business. We're here, and you've done your job well. Relax ...

AGENT: I'm relaxed, I am relaxed ...

DSARA: Where is she now?

AGENT: The "inconvenience"?

SARA: I'd be glad if you'd stop referring to her as the "Inconvenience". "You must agree with me" that it's not very polite.

AGENT: Mrs Cruz is out walking ... She always does it when I bring someone to look

at her flat. And so? One last look? There's no hurry.

SARA: It's enough. I have seen all I want ... We can go?.

AGENT: Yes, we can go.

The agent puts out the light. He picks up his bag and his umbrella, and goes towards the door after Sara.

AGENT: Can I drop you off somewhere? It's still raining.

SARA: No thank you. I'll walk.

AGENT: Walking clarifies your ideas.

SARA: I've got my ideas clear ... When can we sign?

They go out. From the cupboard door the agent tried to open appears Lola.

(Darkness)

Scene 2

The doorbell rings.

LOLA: *(from the kitchen, off stage)* Come in, the door's open!

Sara comes in.

SARA: Lola? It's Sara ...

LOLA: *(from the kitchen)* OK ... Come in, come in, have a seat. I'll be out in a minute!

SARA: Lola, don't be too long, the traffic's dreadful ...

Sara goes to the balcony to look down at her car.

LOLA: *(from the kitchen)* The traffic, the traffic, it's a terrible problem, the traffic ...

SARA: I've left the car double parked.

LOLA: *(from the kitchen)* Richard will see to it.

SARA: Richard?

LOLA: *(from the kitchen)* He's the caretaker ... he's about to retire. Well, if they ever retire. He doesn't want to of course. Who likes to be reminded that they're worth nothing?

SARA: He was sweeping the pavement when I came in. I don't think he saw me.

LOLA: *(from the kitchen)* Richard sees everything that happens within a five mile radius. If the car is a problem, he'll let us know.

SARA: But he doesn't know I'm here.

LOLA: *(from the kitchen)* He certainly does know you're here. Everybody knows you're here. You're the sensation of the neighbourhood.

Lola comes out of the kitchen with a tray in her hands. She sits at the table and starts to eat her breakfast.

LOLA: Do you like magdalenas? They're very good, made by the nuns of Paular. Well, that's what it says on the packet, typical marketing. Of course, I don't care who makes them. I eat them and that's it ... But, sit down woman.

SARA: Sorry Lola, but we can't breakfast ...

LOLA: No?

SARA: No.

LOLA: And, any special reason why not?

SARA: They're waiting for us at the solicitors.

LOLA: Oh, that ... (*carries on eating, dunking her magdalena in her cup*) They're better dunked ... Listen, do you know if there are any nuns at Paular?

SARA: We're going to be late.

LOLA: No, we're not going to be late. Relax. Have a coffee.

Sara sits opposite Lola, resigned to have a coffee.

LOLA: Sugar or sweetener? That's the great existential doubt of the human being in the 21st century, don't you think? The era of 'to be or not to be' has moved on to a better life, now things are different. The triumph of content over content ... sugar versus sweetener ... Of course, you are in such good shape girl, I envy you. I lost my waistline some time during the eighties and never found it again.

SARA: I have it without sweetener or sugar.

LOLA: Naturally, who could? ... For good, strong coffee; from Cuba ... Do you know Havana?

SARA: No.

LOLA: Havana, what a city ... you should go ... I saw it last week... A wonder, that Malecon and those houses, so old, but so beautiful that it doesn't matter. Don't you think that something can be beautiful?

SARA: Yes, yes.

Lola is looking at Sara, smiling.

SARA: What?

LOLA: I'm very grateful that you've come to see me.

SARA: A pleasure.

LOLA: I must confess that I wanted to see you on your own. We've never been alone together ... you and I ...

SARA: Is there something you want to tell me?

LOLA: No ... Are you sure you don't want a magdalena – they're to die for.

SARA: Sure.

LOLA: Well, I'm going to eat another one.

SARA: Sorry, Lola, but ...you just said that you wanted to be alone with me.

LOLA: Yes ...

SARA: Perhaps you want to ask me something.

LOLA: No, no I don't want to ask you anything. I just wanted to be alone with you ... Don't you think it's great to be alone with someone? Silence is worth so little these days. You have very pretty hair .. So blonde ... Perhaps I'll go blonde now.

SARA: Now?

LOLA: When I've finished the magdalena.

SARA: Are you going to the hairdressers?

LOLA: Me? You must be mad ... No, no. They charge you a fortune and you come home a nervous wreck from all the noise of the hair dryers and so many absurd women reading absurd magazines while they sound off about the lives of absurd people they will never meet ... No, no ... but, tell me about you, please ...

Lola stops eating and uses a serviette.

LOLA: I was going to eat a third, like in the song, but I'm going to be restrained and stop at 2.

Lola takes out a packet of cigarettes and her lighter and lights one. Sara looks at her watch nervously.

LOLA: Don't worry woman. Why are you worrying?

SARA: I'm not worrying ...

LOLA: Yes, yes you are. You look at your watch, you frown, you purse your lips ... So much anxiety. And, besides, you're going to have terrible crease lines.

SARA: I hate not being punctual.

LOLA: There are worse things in life than arriving late.

SARA: Well, to me it seems disrespectful.

LOLA: Wasting a little bit of time isn't so bad.

SARA: I've always thought it's impolite to make other people wait.

LOLA: Do you think I'm an impolite person?

SARA: Lola, please, what I think is that you should ... you should finish breakfast and get dressed ... Come on ... please do ...

Sara gets up.

SARA: Do you want me to help you?

LOLA: What I want is for you to sit down.

Sara sits again.

LOLA: Thank you ... When your watch says nine o'clock we will be going through the door.

SARA: *(looking at her watch)* Five minutes isn't long enough for you to get ready ... Or, are you going like that?

LOLA: What do you take me for? I'm thinking of putting on my finest clothes. It's almost a year since I left the flat.

SARA: A year? But weren't you in Havana last week?

LOLA: No, I said "I saw" Havana ... and Australia and Hawaii ... Oh, how lovely Hawaii is, with such volcanos ... and Kilimanjaro and its eternal snow, which is melting at a hair-raising speed ... I have been to every place that fits on the 42 inches of my tv screen ... extra-slim screen, listen, it's so thin you can't even put a picture frame on top ... they gave me an electric eye lash curler when I bought it ... if they bring the world to my lounge, why do I need to go looking for anything? No, no, I haven't been out for months and months ... not even when that mad man from the agency brought people to see the flat ... Can you keep a secret?

SARA: Yes.

Lola goes to the big cupboard which was shut when Sara first saw the flat. She takes a key from her pocket and opens it. It is spacious enough for a person to fit in it comfortably and there is a chair visible inside it.

LOLA: A cupboard isn't only a closet my dear ... I don't know why those gays want to come out of them, to me it seems divine to be inside.

Lola sits on the chair inside the cupboard.

LOLA: My balcony to the world ... And, by the way, I'm grateful for you asking him to stop referring to me as the "inconvenience" ... It's not that the name bothers me, it has its humour and all but ... it made me want to see someone face to face ...

That's why I wanted to see you alone and invite you for coffee ... Nothing else ... It was my way of saying thank you.

Lola gets up and comes out of the wardrobe.

LOLA: But I see now that you are a practical, modern woman ... One mustn't waste time ... No sir ... bad habit ... or, at least, obsolete ...So, I'll come to the point. Can you answer me a question?

SARA: If I know the answer ...

LOLA: What are you buying this flat for?

SARA: Because I like it.

LOLA: That's the answer to a 'why' not to a 'what for' ...

SARA: I'm buying it as an investment.

LOLA: An investment for the short or long term?

SARA: I don't know. I only know I was lucky to find something at this price.

LOLA: Mm. Lucky. Unless I'm not polite enough to die as soon as possible ...

SARA: Pardon?

LOLA: You've already fixed a date for my burial. "That mad woman has only about a couple of days left".

SARA: I've never said that.

LOLA: Perfect politeness consists in never saying anything which you don't really think.

SARA: Lola ...

LOLA: No, let me finish ... What is left of my life separates you from these four walls ... How many minutes of waiting could it be per square metre? Are you going to be patient? Or will you be in a hurry to get to the finishing line like this morning?

SARA: I'm sorry if I've offended you with something I said.

LOLA: Good heavens, no ...You haven't said anything offensive. You haven't done anything offensive ... if I was six years old. But I'm seventy three ... I was already here when your mother wasn't even a project ... So, don't treat me like a child ... And don't give me lessons on politeness. A lot of people would say that what you have done to get this flat was a little bit impolite.

SARA: I don't like the tone of this conversation ...

LOLA: And?

SARA: It's not too late if you don't want to go to the solicitors. Nobody made you put the flat up for sale.

LOLA: What do you know of my life?

The two women remain facing each other in silence. Sara picks up her bag and gets up, ready to leave.

SARA: This is absurd.

She heads for the door.

LOLA: If you go through that door, we'll lose something that we both want ... Think about it.

SARA: I've got nothing to think about. It was you who started this argument. And, of course, I don't know why.

LOLA: Because I like to have things clear. And this wasn't clear. Now, yes ... I want your money to miss-spend it for however much life I have left ... You want my flat as an investment, to live in or whatever ... And you need me to die within ...?

SARA: A couple of years ...

LOLA: Bravo ... And now ... Shall we go on with the show or bring down the curtain?

SARA: I've never liked leaving things half finished ... Let's go for goodness sake?

Lola goes towards the cupboard.

LOLA: Yes, yes ... Let's go, let's go... The wolves in sheep's clothing are waiting for us ... Red Riding Hood and the grandmother are going into the wood.

Lola sits on the chair in the cupboard and puts on her shoes.

LOLA: And, talking of grandmothers, mine was an extraordinary woman ... She was called Asuncion, pure Cordobesa ... she used to say, "Lola, child, if you wear good shoes and have your hair neat and tidy, you can go out with your head held high" ...

Lola puts on a blonde wig which she takes from the head of a manequin.

LOLA: ..."It's those two things that make a lady a lady"... You see? We're both blondes today, like I told you ... I never lie ... Some good shoes and hair tidy ... I like to add a little inherited personal touch to those two ends ...

Lola takes from the cupboard a beautiful mink coat.

LOLA: My late sister's husband was always very generous. Every time he threw out a lover he gave something to the poor. And the younger the lover, the more expensive the present ... This one for me ... she was under-age ...

Lola picks up the cigarette packet and takes out a cigarette which she lights.

LOLA: And now we can go ... After being alone, making things clear and having breakfast .. At least I did ... Sure you don't want a magdalena? Now that I think about it ... I don't think there are any nuns in Paular ... Bloody advertising.

(Darkness)

Scene 3

The two women are together just inside the front door.

LOLA: Apologise ...

SARA: Yes, I'm sorry about what happened the day of the signing. I didn't mean to argue with you.

LOLA: "The cementeries are full of good intentions". Good quote eh?

SARA: I see you're still annoyed.

LOLA: A month later? Not at all ... My anger never lasts more than a day. The same one I mean. It's healthier to have a new one every 24 hours ... Now I'm angry with the other residents. They refused to install a satellite dish. They're just old folk who carry on with the same old aeriell they've had all their lives. A satellite dish is the modern way, don't you think? I think a lot about the present. You're a girl of the future aren't you? What's that you're hiding?

Sara hands her a package she has brought with her.

SARA: Your future ...

LOLA: Is it a tasty future?

SARA: Marzipan and chocolate.

LOLA: The doctor has banned me from having sugar. My sugar levels have shot up. The sweet sensation of being rich I suppose.

SARA: I'm sorry.

LOLA: You didn't need to have brought me anything.

SARA: It's Christmas, the season of presents.

LOLA: I hate Christmas, you know. My theory is that it was invented by Harrods.

SARA: Christmas?

LOLA: Yes.

SARA: Interesting.

LOLA: Very ... Did you say marzipan?

SARA: And chocolate.

Lola grabs the package from Sara and opens it.

LOLA: It's Christmas, how silly! And, anyway, what's going to happen? I might die? Have you brought them for that?

SARA: I would prefer not to make jokes on that subject.

LOLA: Why? Death is our only certainty and, in spite of that, noone wants to talk about it ... It's there, just around the corner ... Well, in my case it may have doubled back and everything ... Why not laugh? Someone said, "Every time someone laughs he adds a couple of days to his life". Ah, is that why you don't want me to?

SARA: Lola, please ...

LOLA: Don't you want to try one?

SARA: No, thank you.

Sara seems bothered. She walks around the room.

LOLA: You never eat ... Last week I saw a film about some robots. They seemed totally human but they never ate ... You're not a robot are you? That was something else. They didn't know they were robots. Imagine how bad they felt when they realised. They were so sad that ... Oh, for goodness sake sit down, you're making me feel dizzy ... Why are you wandering about so much?

Sara sits down.

SARA: You see ... The day we signed, when we argued ... you asked me why I was buying this flat ... I told you it was for an investment and ...yes, it was a good price, very good, but there was another reason ... The main one ... I've been married nine years. Robert is nice, intelligent, funny, grounded ...

LOLA: "But" ... After four compliments there's always a "but" ...

SARA: I'm not really sure if I want to be with him for the rest of my life ... I'm not talking about taking a decision right now. I'm OK at the moment ... more or less ...

LOLA: "More or less"? How romantic ...

SARA: I'm not talking about romance, I'm talking about reality ...

LOLA: At your age, reality should be romantic... How old are you?

SARA: Thirty nine.

LOLA: Definitely: until you're forty you have to be solidly romantic. Leave the faint cynicism for your fifties. And the radical disillusion for retirement. Carry on.

SARA: There isn't much else ... I don't know if I want to grow old with him, I don't know if I want him to be the father of my children, if I ever want any ... I feel as if there are some pieces missing in this puzzle ... So I've given myself a couple of years breathing space ...

LOLA: That famous couple of years ...

SARA: If I haven't managed to regain some hope ...

LOLA: ... You'll get a divorce and you'll come to live in this flat ... Am I right?

SARA: Yes, you're right ...

LOLA: I am Plan B ...

SARA: I like to be sure I'm doing the right thing.

LOLA: To be sure I'm doing the right thing ... What a grand phrase ... (to Sara) And does he know? About the pieces missing in the puzzle?

SARA: No ... Why should he?

LOLA: Perhaps so that he could try to find them.

SARA: The missing pieces are mine, not his ... He's OK. He's not a complicated man.

LOLA: Good. Complicated men only complicate life.

SARA: And that's all ...

LOLA: And why are you telling me this now?

SARA: You asked me that day and, well, I didn't make myself clear ... You were right, there was a reason.

LOLA: After a whole month you have an attack of sincerity? What a strange person you are.

SARA: More or less than you?

LOLA: Let's call it a draw.

SARA: I felt that you needed an explanation ... Don't you ever regret anything?

Lola goes silent for a moment, as if remembering something.

LOLA: Come on, let's have a drink ...

Lola goes to the bar and takes out two glasses.

SARA: Didn't the doctor ban drinking?

LOLA: Yes ... and for God's sake take your coat off.

Sara gets up.

SARA: Actually, I have to go.

Lola makes her sit down again.

LOLA: Not yet, tell me something else about yourself ...

Lola goes to the bar, takes out a bottle, and fills the two glasses.

LOLA: You're my "beneficiary". Let me get to know you a bit better. What do you do for a living?

SARA: I work for an insurance company.

LOLA: And that's why you're not keen on risks?

SARA: I've always been like that: sensible. Do you think that's a defect?

LOLA: Do you think it's a virtue?

SARA: I asked first ...

LOLA: But you're in my house.

SARA: Technically no.

LOLA: Ah, well done ... Smart eh? Have a drink and let it all out ...

SARA: I don't usually drink alcohol.

LOLA: Oh I see ... Miss Sensible has come to town.

Sara takes a glass.

SARA: I said "not usually" ... but every day is different.

LOLA: What type of insurance do you sell?

SARA: Guess ...

LOLA: Cars? Homes?

SAR: I thought you were more canny.

LOLA: No ...

SARA: Yes ...

LOLA: No ...

SARA: Yes ...

LOLA: Life insurance? I don't believe it!

SARA: 'Happy End Limited'.

LOLA: 'Happy End Limited'? A PR genius, the one who invented that, eh? 'Happy End Limited' ... (sighs) Death pursues me. It's my destiny ... Well, it is for everyone. Let's toast the insurance industry. To insurance! And for the 'Happy and Bitter ends'!

The two women toast and drink. Lola takes out her cigarettes.

LOLA: Don't you think it's more fun to do sinful things two at a time?

SARA: Sorry Lola, but didn't the doctor ban you from smoking?

LOLA: Yes ... The doctor has banned me from anything which gives me the slightest pleasure ... What a farce!

SARA: You're risking your health.

LOLA: Just a minute, just a minute ... Let's get something clear ... If the doctors have lost all hope, who am I to disagree with them? I don't know how much longer I've got, but I'm going to live it how I want to ... Full stop. And now, shall we continue with ... Rupert?

SARA: Yes, Robert.

LOLA: How did you meet him?

SARA: Nothing original ... The birthday of a friend we had in common ... "I really like you" ... "I like you even more" ... "How about seeing each other again?" ... "Look, how amazing, we've been going out for two months" ... "Would you like to meet my parents?" ... "I've bought you this ring". Grand wedding, honeymoon in Acapulco ... First anniversary, second, third ... "Sorry I forgot the date my love, I've been very busy" ... "Don't worry, I might have forgotten too" ... And I did ... And the worst is that when it happens again, it doesn't bother you any more and ... without knowing why, you end up buying a flat 'just in case' ... And that's it.

LOLA: And I call that an excellent resumé ... Let's toast it.

Lola and Sara clink glasses.

SARA: And you? Tell me about your husband.

LOLA: About George? It would take too long. And it's a while since you looked anxiously at your watch ... Are you going Christmas shopping?

SARA: I've got an appointment at work.

LOLA: Those complicated policies full of words, waiting to be sold to the highest bidder.

SARA: I'm buying a flat. I need to save to pay for it ...

LOLA: A flat, how lucky ... and is it nice?

SARA: It could be nice with a bit of work done on it ... Too many internal walls for my liking ...

LOLA: Well, take them down dear ... away with dividing walls ... Or is there some "inconvenience"?

SARA: Yes, and I hope for a long time.

LOLA: At least that Richard ...

SARA: As for Robert, whatever happens, happens ...

LOLA: Thanks, I'm grateful for the extra time. Although I assure you I'm prepared to wait for the end of the game.

Sara picks up her things.

SARA: Do you know, it's the first time I've ever talked to someone about the crisis with my husband ... Actually it's the first time I've talked to anyone about things not to do with work ...

LOLA: As Benjamin Franklin said, 'Two people could keep a secret if one of them was dead' ... Now I understand why you have confided in me.

SARA: (*looking in her bag*) Sorry, but could you give me something for a headache. I haven't got anything in my bag.

LOLA: Aspirin? Paracetamol? Nurofen? Or something more spectacular like Nolotil?

SARA: An aspirin would be good.

LOLA: The advantage of being retired is that you can traffic with every kind of

drugs and not end up in jail.

Lola goes towards the kitchen.

LOLA: They're soluble, they don't damage the stomach so much ... Because that's another thing. You take one thing to solve a problem, but then another one appears as a result of the wretched side effects ... Oh, life is like a game of bloody ping pong.

Lola goes into the kitchen. Sara takes advantage of her absence to take out a laser measuring device with which she starts to measure the size of the room. Lola comes out of the kitchen with a glass of water with an aspirin bubbling in it. Sara puts the device away quickly.

SARA: Thanks. I've had a headache for a few days now ...

LOLA: What was that device?

SARA: Which?

LOLA: What you've just hidden in your bag ...

SARA: My mobile.

LOLA: Yes and I'm Lola Flores ... Sorry, but I haven't had time to put on my fancy costume.

SARA: *(for the aspirin)* Thanks.

Sara tries to take the glass but Lola withholds it.

LOLA: On the TV shop they advertise an ultra modern measure with a red light. Thirty nine euros ... and they give you a free clock.

SARA: Lola, I ...

LOLA: You were measuring the room?

SARA: I never got to know the exact size and I wanted to ...

LOLA: Measure it ...

SARA: Yes, measure it.

LOLA: And why were you doing it furtively like a criminal?

SARA: *(at the same time as Lola)* I didn't know how to tell you without seeming ... I don't know ...

LOLA: ... You start me on all this honesty kick, regrets etcetera ... You blush when I talk about death ...

SARA: (*at the same time as Lola*) I don't want to make you feel bad ...

LOLA: You put on a saintly face and say " ... and I hope for a long time" ...

SARA: (*at the same time as Lola*) I really meant it and if you think that ...

LOLA: ... And when I half turn away, zap, a knife in the back ...

SARA: Well, OK. I don't know what to say ...

LOLA: Don't say anything. Don't make it worse. Silence is the only way out for a liar ... Finish measuring what you want, but don't do it behind my back, for God's sake.

SARA: I've got nothing else to measure.

LOLA: Then go. And look out for their deaths column in El País. The day you least expect it I'll give you a lovely surprise.

SARA: Well look, no. I don't want to go leave like this ...

LOLA: What?

SARA: I'm fed up! Don't you want me to treat you like an adult, without being patronising?

LOLA: Well, within reason...

SARA: What's the idea then? You point your finger at me and dissect everything that I do or don't do ...

LOLA: You're never honest with me!

SARA: And you are?! What have you told me of your life? What have you shared with me? Have you apologised for the argument on the day we signed? Have you recognised, even for one minute, that you have faults too? Who do you think you are? Miss Perfect?

Lola makes a move as if to start speaking, but Sara gestures her to stop.

SARA: No, you listen to me now! I agree, there are times when I put my foot in it ... But at least I know I'm doing it ... And try to rectify it! Which is much more than you do, hidden in that cupboard, like a moth, waiting for everyone to pour out their sorrows, making a note of them and then rubbing their faces in them using tricky phrases and shabby quotations ... I came with good intentions, believe it or not! And what I've told you has been the truth, believe it or not! I can't imagine why I

felt the absurd need to see you again and share my life with you ... Perhaps because I feel lonely and you're even more lonely than me ... And, of course, I committed the mistake of not measuring the lounge in front of you, but, what do you want me to say? I'm not used to these things, it's the first flat I'll have bought with someone in it ...

Sara goes towards the door.

LOLA: Wait ...

Sara stops.

SARA: What?

LOLA: Your bag ...

Sara grabs her bag.

LOLA: If you come back, it'd better not be for something you've forgotten, but because you want to ...

SARA: I don't think I will, to be frank ...

LOLA: Shame ... I'd have liked that. You know I'm always at home. Inside or outside my cupboard ... I didn't mean to argue with you.

SARA: "The cemeteries are full of people with good intentions" ... It's a good quote, don't you think?

Sara goes out. Lola drinks the aspirin. She puts out the lounge light, goes to a chair and sits down.

LOLA: You see, George, that's how things are ... Yes, she's not a bad woman ... A bit uptight ... And she looks so sad ... (...) Yes, I know we hardly know each other, but ... I live in her house ... Now it's her house ... (...) If she wants to measure the lounge, she can do it! What's she afraid of? (...) Don't talk nonsense, I don't frighten anyone ... (...) OK, I'll call her. I'll call her and bring her round ... (...) I miss you ... Every day ... And now it's Christmas, even more ... (...) OK, OK, I know you never liked it (...) Yes, from Harrods, it's something from Harrods ... (...) George, I forgive you, I forgive you for all the things I couldn't forgive you for when you were with me ... I made a mistake, George, I made a mistake ... And now ... (...) Where you? ... Is it a nice place? It's just that, when you aren't a believer, it's hard to imagine it ... Will I be happy there? Will we be happy? Happy Christmas, George.

(Darkness)

Scene 4

The two women are next to the door as in the previous scene.

SARA: Apologise?

LOLA: Yes. Apologise for what happened the day you came to apologise for what happened the day of the signing ... Oh, what gibberish.

SARA: Why do we always end up arguing?

LOLA: Because we're both characters. Without character there's no argument. I adore character, but then I adore arguments.

SARA: Well I don't. I think they're a waste of time ... Where does arguing get you?

LOLA: A better understanding of each other?

SARA: For better understanding you have to talk, not argue.

LOLA: An argument is a chat, but a bit more spicy. Wouldn't life be boring without different points of view? You don't trust someone who always tells you the truth. They're hiding something ... And now ... let's argue.

SARA: I don't believe that. "If one doesn't want to, two can't argue" Do you know that?

Lola takes out an envelope from her housecoat and hands it to Sara.

LOLA: The tax on the flat. It came to me, but you have to pay it ...

SARA: It's for you, the one who lives here.

LOLA: Temporary occupation, to use and enjoy. And I don't enjoy taxes I assure you. It's yours.

SARA: It doesn't seem right to me.

LOLA: And when has it been right to pay taxes.

SARA: Listen, I'm sorry say this, but you're being a bit cheeky here.

LOLA: If you don't try it on at my age when can you? But, don't worry, it's been paid.

SARA: And so why ...?

LOLA: I've told you: I love to argue.

SARA: I don't like the way you carry on.

LOLA: Lie. You love it. That's why you've taken your coat off for the first time in this flat. You feel comfortable. You want to be my friend.

SARA: Me, your friend? Please ... I took my coat off because I was too warm. So what?

Lola takes a joint out of the pocket of her house coat.

LOLA: D'you want a joint?

SARA: What?

LOLA: Do you want a joint? I've a plant on the balcony ...

Lola goes to the balcony.

SARA: What?

LOLA: I've got a plant on the balcony.

SARA: I heard you!

LOLA: Then why did you say, "What?" ?

SARA: Because I couldn't believe it. You have a cannabis plant on the balcony of my house?

LOLA: Who paid the tax? Me! So I'll plant a eucalyptus tree on the balcony if I want to.

SARA: And if someone sees it from the street?

LOLA: In the hypothetical case that someone should know that it is cannabis, the most they could do is ask me for a bit, not denounce me. Which world do you live in?

SARA: In a legal world.

LOLA: Well, what a boring world. Do you want a joint or not?

SARA: Of course not!

LOLA: Well, I'm going to smoke it, listen Mogollon relaxes me ... and it would be great for you, for your headache.

SARA: You're mad. A visitor could arrive and ...

LOLA: Oh, yes, so many people coming to this house ...

SARA: A neighbour!

LOLA: Then we'll invite them to have a drag ...

SARA: Don't you realise that drugs change your perception of reality?

LOLA: And why do you think I take them?

SARA: Drugs only create problems ...

LOLA: Look, darling, OK? Did Hitler take drugs? The presidents of countries which send poor innocents to war, do they take drugs? The bankers who move money around every day, do they take drugs? No! The poor specimens of the human race, those who've looked for the biggest problems for us, they don't take drugs. Understand! It might be good for them if they did distort their reality and stop being real ... a drag?

SARA: No.

LOLA: Why are you so rigid?

SARA: I'm not rigid, I'm consistent.

LOLA: With what?

SARA: With my principles, with my values, with my way of understanding the world.

LOLA: To understand the world you have to put yourself in the wolve's mouth, Red Riding Hood ...

The door bell rings.

SARA: Don't open it!

LOLA: And lose your look of horror? Never!

Lola goes to open the door.

AGENT: Hello, Happy New Year ... Do you remember me?

LOLA: Impossible to forget you. And I have tried.

AGENT: May I come in?

LOLA: Come in, sunshine ... *(pointing to Sara)* You're in her house.

The agent comes in carrying a small suitcase.

AGENT: Well, you!

SARA: Yes, me. I bought the flat.

AGENT: Well, yes, but I didn't think that you and her ... *(he stops and changes tack)* ...and the lady were going to be so ... friendly.

SARA: How are sales going?

AGENT: Flats aren't selling. I'm not working in the property business anymore.

LOLA: A great loss for the industry.

AGENT: You're right, but it wasn't really me .. But I've got lots of work... A great opportunity came up. My brother works for a multinational and they need executives, specialists in distribution ...

LOLA: Salesmen?

AGENT: Yes, salesmen ... And I'm making use of old contacts from the agency to ... to promote the products ... Have you heard of the Wellington?

LOLA: The Duke?

AGENT: Who?

SARA: What products are they?

AGENT: The best on the market! American. And for me American means quality .. The range of products. We ...

SARA: Something wrong?

AGENT: No, well, yes ... Either I'm imagining things or that's a ...

SARA: No, it's not a ...

AGENT: Yes, yes, that's a ...

LOLA: A joint ... Want some?

SARA: Lola!

AGENT: Oo, it's a long time since I smoked pot ... I'm easily corrupted.

SARA: Well, don't smoke ...

LOLA: Just a little drag.

The agent takes the joint and has several drags.

AGENT: Wow, that's great, tastes good ...

Lola goes onto the balcony to show him her plant.

LOLA: Home grown ..

The agent goes with Lola to the balcony.

AGENT: I had a great one in a pot at home, but the cat ate it ... poor thing.

The agent tries to pass the joint to Sara.

SARA: No, thanks.

LOLA: Smoke, smoke, it'll relax you ...

AGENT: Well, as I was telling you, Wellington products are... Oh, I'm a bit dizzy.

The agent, dizzy, sits on a chair.

LOLA: No.

AGENT: Yes, yes, yes, yes ... That's a hell of a joint you've got there.

SARA: Are you OK?

AGENT: Not OK, no ... I'm great, but (*starts laughing*) Great, really great ... And I've had some days I wouldn't like to talk about, because if I tell you ...

Sara and Lola go out of the room without the agent seeing them.

AGENT: It's just that I'm so lonely .. I can't find my place in the world ... And you have to try to make the most of life, don't you? That's what they say, those that know about these things. Plant a tree, write a book and have a child ... I haven't done any of those things. I've always managed to live and try to be happy, but, now that seems useless and that I've failed ... It's just that I never liked to think about tomorrow ... and I've always just thought about today and what I had near and was easiest suited me best ... (*He realises he is alone and laughs heartily*) That's so funny, I'm driving you away!

The two women return to the room.

LOLA: No. no. Listen, chuck, I was thinking ... Why don't you show your Wellingtons to the lady in flat B on the first floor?

AGENT: You want me to show my Wellingtons to the lady in flat B on the first floor?

LOLA: Yes ..

AGENT: But I'd like to show them to you first ...

LOLA: She always takes her Yorkshire terrier out at three for a walk.

AGENT: Is it already three o'clock ...

LOLA: Go, tell her everything and come back up here afterwards.

AGENT: Do you mind?

LOLA: Not at all.

AGENT: Another little drag?

The agent takes a drag on the joint.

AGENT: It's so good, that cannabis is good ...

LOLA: Yes, but don't take it with you ...

LOLA: Bye, honey, bye.

The agent goes out.

SARA: You drug him and then send him off to a neighbour?

LOLA: What alternative did I have? Suffer the whole range of Wellington products?

SARA: And when he returns?

LOLA: I'm not opening my door again today. Two visitors are quite enough.

SARA: I get it. I'll go. I don't want to bother you anymore.

LOLA: You're no bother. OK?

SARA: OK ... But it would be better if I went. We've forgiven each other, so there's nothing else to say and it's late (*she looks at her watch*) Yes, it's late.

LOLA: The watch, the watch, always looking at her watch!

SARA: It's just that it's lunch time!

LOLA: So what?

SARA: Well, you have to eat! And me! I'm hungry!

LOLA: And so? Can't we eat together?

SARA: Together?

LOLA: Yes. Why not? We're friends ... At least he (*pointing to the door*) thought so ... And, you know? One can end up being what one seems ...

SARA: We're not friends ... We're ...

LOLA: What?

SARA: We're ...

LOLA: What?

SARA: No idea.

LOLA: Think about it during lunch. Meat or fish?

SARA: Fish.

LOLA: OK, I'll do a steak.

(*Darkness*)

Scene 5

Sara comes in and starts to hang a decoration on one of the walls.

LOLA: *(from inside the cupboard)* Ready?

SARA: No. *(continuing to arrange the decoration)*

LOLA: Now?

SARA: No! ... Will you shut up? You're going to make me fall.

Sara finishes the decoration and gets down from the chair.

SARA: Now!

She waits but Lola does not come out.

SARA: Lola?

Sara approaches the cupboard and opens the door. Lola is sitting inside, still, with her eyes shut.

SARA: Lola?

Sara touches Lola's face, fearing that she's dead. After some seconds, Lola opens her eyes and frightens Sara.

LOLA: Boo!

Sara jumps back.

SARA: But I ...

Lola laughs.

SARA: That's not funny, d'you hear me?

LOLA: You should see your face.

SARA: What face do you expect? I thought ...

LOLA: What?

SARA: You're an idiot! And on a day like today ...

LOLA: What better day to say goodbye to this cruel world than my birthday ... It would be perfect, the squaring of the circle ... Well, anyway, let's see the

decoration you've put up. (*looking at the decoration*) Is that it?

SARA: What did you expect? The Rio carnival?

LOLA: Thank you very much. I don't know why you bothered.

SARA: I know why. Perfectly well. You've been coming out with the same old tune for two months: "I haven't had a party for years ..." "If I reach my next one it would be marvellous to celebrate it ..." So now you come out with all that nonsense ... I nearly went mad trying to find that shabby old garland.

LOLA: What's a party without decorations? It's not every day you have a 74th birthday ...

SARA: You don't look it ...

LOLA: But I am. One after the other ... Or, rather, one on top of the other.

Lola takes out some little party hats. She offers one to Sara.

LOLA: And now ...

SARA: Don't ask me to put me one of these on.

LOLA: What's a party without a party hat?

SARA: I've never liked these things. They make me feel stupid.

LOLA: Hey, here it's all or nothing.

SARA: Oh no.

LOLA: Oh yes.

SARA: Are you going to take some photos?

LOLA: Do you doubt it?

SARA: OK, OK ...What's a birthday without photos.

Sara, resigned, puts on the party hat.

LOLA: Besides, I've got to christen the digital camera I gave myself for my Saint's day. I bought it from the TV shopping channel. And they gave me a free orthopaedic pillow ... A bargain ... Of course, now I'm rich, everything seems like a bargain ...

Lola takes out the digital camera.

SARA: What do you want a digital camera for? You never go out.

LOLA: Perhaps here inside you can take photos?

SARA: You know what I mean ...

LOLA: Quiet! Don't be so realistic, it doesn't suit you ... Everyone builds his world where it suits him best ... Mine is here ... And come ..

Lola sits next to Sara.

LOLA: That's it, the two of us, like in 'Thelma and Louise', when they set off on a journey ... I loved that film, didn't you?

SARA: Yes, very much. But not the end.

LOLA: It was the only end possible: Freedom.

SARA: Death is freedom?

LOLA: In some cases, yes ... But let's not talk about that subject, it's taboo in this family ... Come on, the birdie ...

The two pose for a photo.

LOLA: Let's see the result ...

Lola manipulates the camera skilfully.

SARA: How come you can manage those electronic things so well?

LOLA: Why should I have to manage them badly?

SARA: No, no, no reason ...

LOLA: Go on, say it ...

SARA: Say what?

LOLA: "People of your age usually manage them badly".

SARA: "Peolple of your age usually manage them badly":

LOLA: Well, no. What happens with people of my age is that they prefer things already done. You say, "Oh, these modern gadgets ..." and there's always a simple soul ready to sort it out. But it's not that you can't, it's that you don't want to. *(looking at the photo)* Look, look, what a couple of beauties ... I'll send it you by email.

SARA: Email?

Lola takes a laptop out of the cupboard.

LOLA: Don't tell me off ... I always wanted a laptop ... And a wireless connection, what speed, so many megas ... What did you say?

SARA: You shouldn't spend so much money ... You never know .-..

LOLA: You never know? What a scream ... I despair woman!

SARA: You don't have to repeat it every five minutes ...

LOLA: Well, understand for once! I've got no-one to inherit from me. And I'm not giving a cent to the nuns. Especially those from Paular – the swindlers.

SARA: Well, with all the technology you've bought, you're going to think I've bought you a fossil.

LOLA: Give it me, give it me, give it me!

Sara gives her a bag.

SARA: Happy Birthday ...

LOLA: What is it?

SARA: Open it ...

LOLA: I like to play at guessing.

SARA: I don't think you'll manage it.

LOLA: A fan ...

SARA: No.

Lola opens it. It IS a fan.

SARA: Why do you like to spoil happy moments?

LOLA: Because I can't be doing with so much silly theatricality ... But I'm grateful to you ... Very ... It's like Dante's inferno here in the summer. You'll find out when you live here... Whenever that is ... Thanks a lot! And, now the cake.

SARA: Is it in the fridge?

LOLA: No ... you brought it.

SARA: I haven't brought a cake.

LOLA: Why not. You were the one who was going to buy it.

SARA: No. You were.

LOLA: Me?

SARA: You ...

LOLA: No ...

SARA: Yes ...

LOLA: A cake? Not in your wildest dreams.

SARA: I'm sorry ... What a mix up. Well, you could always blow out the candles on one of your famous magdalenas.

Sara takes out the cake from another of her bags.

SARA: What's a birthday party without a cake?

LOLA: I knew you were lying.

SARA: No, you believed me.

LOLA: No. People like you never forget something like that.

Sara goes towards the kitchen.

SARA: I'm not going to fall into the trap of asking you what people like me are like ...

Sara enters the kitchen.

LOLA: Better not ...

Lola starts to unwrap the cake. Sara comes out of the kitchen with some plates, a knife and 2 spoons.

SARA: What are people like me like?

LOLA: *(looking at the cake)* What is it? Chocolate and cream?

SARA: Do you want me to answer?

LOLA: People like you always do what they have to do ... People like you never forget their obligations ... People like you know the right moment, the right place,

the right way ... People like you take the trouble to prepare a birthday party for a sick woman who has no one else in the world ... I was going to say, who has nowhere to fall down dead, but I preferred to use another phrase, given the delicate circumstances ... People like you show me that, in spite of my suspicions, it's worth carrying on having faith in human beings ...

Sara goes to the table with the little plates.

SARA: *(she has been moved by that speech but doesn't want to show it)* Yes, it's chocolate and cream ... But you can only eat a little or your sugar level will go up and ...

LOLA: And, so what?

SARA: Nothing ...

LOLA: You're crying ...

SARA: No ...

LOLA: What do you mean, "No"?

SARA: OK then, yes ..

LOLA: Child.

SARA: That's it. It's over..

LOLA: If I knew you'd get like that I wouldn't have explained what people like you are like ...

SARA: Robert has a lover.

(Pause)

LOLA: Shit ...

SARA: Yes, shit. I suppose that these things happen to people like me.

LOLA: Do you want to talk about it or pretend we've not mentioned it?

SARA: Pretend it's not been mentioned. I don't want to spoil the party.

LOLA: Don't be an idiot. You are the party. Tell me.

SARA: Well, nothing madly unusual ... You pick up his mobile to make a call because yours doesn't have a battery and ... you can't avoid it, you look at his messages. And you discover one that ... you shouldn't have discovered ... mistake ... and the mistake is called Sandra. She's a colleague at work. How does

that sound to you?

LOLA: Normal ...

SARA: Normal?

LOLA: Normal, yes ... What world are you living in? Everyone hooks up with a work colleague once in their life.

SARA: Not me!

LOLA: Well, you should! It would be very relaxing.

SARA: Oh ... Just like that?

LOLA: Yes, just like that .. What's the problem? You've been nine years together and, pardon the expression, he fancies a bit on the side. Don't you fancy a bit on the side?

SARA: No!

LOLA: Well, he does And he's got the itch.

SARA: And that seems OK to you?

LOLA: It seems normal, as I said ...

SARA: If I knew you were going to react like that, I wouldn't have told you all this. A fat lot of help you are!

LOLA: (*dramatically*) Oh, my God! Off with another woman? What a bastard! Put his bags on the doorstep and change the locks! (*Normal again*) Has that been helpful?

SARA: Seriously, don't you value the word 'fidelity'?

LOLA: I don't value any word. I value only facts. What are words? Concepts, intentions, justifications ... it's facts that count.

SARA: Very well! The fact is that he's with someone else!

LOLA: No ... The important, vital fact is that you don't know if you love him.

SARA: I do love him!

LOLA: That's not what you were saying just now ...

SARA: I have realised that I do love him.

LOLA: No, you have realised that you could lose him. And that's what's getting to you, darling.

SARA: Well, you could be right!

LOLA: Well, that's it! But that's not love, it's fear of loneliness.

SARA: And what about you? Have you never been afraid of being alone?

LOLA: Yes. Often I have been, I am ... And that's why I know what you're talking about ... And do you know why I ended up alone? Why I've been alone more than thirty years? Because I didn't know how to forgive George. I didn't know how to distinguish between a simple itch between his legs and love ... And I sent him packing ... And I left myself without the love of my life. Because I was very much in love with him! And he with me! And, if one day someone you truly love goes to bed with someone else, it doesn't mean anything. What matters is the day to day ... the faithfulness to love, to your feelings and not to an outdated idea of belonging to someone, which only makes us unhappy ..-

Lola takes off her hat and throws it on the floor.

LOLA: And that's the reason I have no wish to live, because there's no one by my side who cares if I go on or if I'm dead! And, although you don't realise it, you've got an itch!

Sara, after a pause, picks up Lola's hat and offers it to her. She takes it and puts it on again. Sara puts the candles in the shape of a number on top of the cake.

SARA: Blow the candles out ...

LOLA: You've put 47: I'm grateful for the thought, but it seems excessive to me ...

Sara alters the numbers.

LOLA: Sara ... The important thing is that you know for sure what you want. And you go for it. Without losing another minute. What do you think? That you can stop life with a remote control and start it again when you feel like it?

SARA: Time is slipping away.

LOLA: Well change. Think about it.

SARA: Another day.

LOLA: No. Today!

SARA: Today I've got a headache ...

LOLA: Your head's always aching. I'm not surprised your husband's

got a lover.

SARA: D'you want to blow the candles?

LOLA: Not until you put the lights off ... What's the use of blowing out the candles without having the lights out?

Sara goes and switches off the lights.

SARA: Of course I've got an itch ... But I've not cheated on him.

LOLA: Well, more fool you ...

SARA: Let's drop the subject. Make a wish, go on ...

LOLA: Sara ...

SARA: What?

LOLA: Can I dedicate this wish to you?

SARA: Birthday wishes are for yourself.

LOLA: Well, I want to dedicate it to you.

SARA: Well, do what you want, you always do.

LOLA: Well, I will ... As I blow out these candles I wish Sara will manage to satisfy her itch ...

SARA: Crude ... *(after a moment she cannot avoid a smile)* Thanks.

Lola blows the candles.

SARA: "For she's a jolly good fellow, she's a jolly good fellow, she's a jolly good fellow and so say all of us" ... Lola?

Pause.

SARA: Are you going to start with your little games?

LOLA: *(breathing with difficulty)* I've cried wolf so many times and now Little Red Riding Hood doesn't believe me ...

SARA: Do you want some water?

LOLA: What I want is that, while I take off this lovely little hat, you call an ambulance ...

Lola takes off the hat with difficulty.

SARA: My God! ... Lola, Lola! No, no ...

(Darkness)

Scene 6

The fan which Sara gave Lola is going. We hear its insistent sound as it oscillates from side to side, spreading the air round the room.

Sara enters. She collects the Happy Birthday garland and the things on the table. She suddenly begins to cry inconsolably. The door bell sounds. Sara recovers and goes to answer it.

SARA: Yes? Oh, thank you Richard, thank you ...

Sara replaces the phone. She finishes collecting the things and goes into the kitchen.

Lola enters, sitting in a wheelchair and with a little bag on her lap, pushed by the agent we already know. Only now he is dressed as an ambulance attendant.

LOLA: Home, sweet home! Can I say that, even though the deeds are not in my name?

Sara comes out of the kitchen and gives her a kiss.

SARA: How are you?

LOLA: Delighted to be back in your house ... and delighted to see you. *(pointing to the attendant)* And delighted to see him ...

ATTENDANT: Hello ...

SARA: I don't believe it ...

LOLA: Nor me. Prick me and I don't bleed.

ATTENDANT: I don't sell Wellingtons now. Now I drive an ambulance.

LOLA: "You will agree with me" that this is a real coincidence.

ATTENDANT: *(to Sara)* I've pushed this silly thing all the way.

LOLA: Sonny, it's just that you're the only person in the world who uses that expression, " You will agree with me .."

ATTENDANT: Inherited from my father ...

LOLA: Your father was the one with the sense of humour, wasn't he? And your mother the one with common sense.

ATTENDANT: And how do you know that?

SARA: Lola always knows everything. And what she doesn't know she makes up.

LOLA: Don't get at me, I'm still convalescing. A little respect.

Lola gets up from the wheelchair.

SARA: Where are you going?

LOLA: I'm not playing Ironside anymore ... How silly bringing me in a wheelchair ... I'm perfectly OK. And I want to go to the toilet. To my toilet.

SARA: Do you want help?

LOLA: No. If one of the bypasses fails again I promise to whistle ...

Lola disappears through the door to the passage.

SARA: And how's the new job?

ATTENDANT: Well, between you and me, I can't imagine spending all my life doing this. Going hither and thither with that siren on the roof ... The other day a young lad died on me, it was horrible ... He wasn't more than fifteen or sixteen ... He was going on his motorbike and splat ... He went straight into a lorry ... They spent more than half an hour trying to revive him, but nothing, no way... What's life like eh? You're here and suddenly, pum, you're not here ... Just like that, with no half measures ... So, I've decided to change my job, to do something that I like for once, something that satisfies me ... I've always dreamed of being an artist ... If I could explain something ...

SARA: I'll listen.

ATTENDANT: You know, I'm just as useful for one thing as any other. (*quietly*) And what about what you're after? Huh, health! ... The doctors don't seem to have got it right with her. Drinking, smoking, even cannabis! By the way, you haven't got a little bit left that ...

SARA: No, there's none. The cat ate it.

ATTENDANT: (*Laughing*) Very good ... But what a shame, it was excellent ... Well, patience eh, Sooner or later the time comes for everyone ...

SARA: Absolutely.

ATTENDANT: By the way, you don't need medical insurance do you?

SARA: No, thank you.

ATTENDANT: They're fully comprehensive policies that I'm selling and ...

SARA: Goodbye ...

Sara shuts the door on the Attendant without hearing more. Lola returns to the room. She looks for something on the table.

SARA: Lola, I would have liked to fetch you from the hospital, but ...

LOLA: No, no what are you talking about? It's not worth mentioning ... Besides, shouldn't you be at work now? ...

SARA: Might I know what you're looking for?

LOLA: Nothing ...

SARA: Oh. I thought you were looking for something.

LOLA: Me? No ...

SARA: Do you know, they said on the news that it would go up to thirty eight degrees today, and we're only in June ... It would be a good idea to get air conditioning. This fan doesn't ...

LOLA: It's fine ... Where have you hidden it?

SARA: What?

LOLA: Don't kid me.

SARA: I don't know what you're talking about.

LOLA: Yes you do. I haven't even found what I kept under the mattress.

SARA: Under the mattress, in the medicine chest, in the pressure cooker ... But the cistern wins the prize ...

LOLA: Look, I've been twenty seven days and four hours dreaming of this moment. Give it me.

SARA: I've thrown them away ... all of them.

LOLA: You wouldn't have dared ...

SARA: You can't smoke.

LOLA: Yes I can smoke.

SARA: You can, but you shouldn't.

LOLA: No, I shouldn't but I can. And I want to. And I'm going to.

SARA: No, you're not going to ...

LOLA: I don't want to beg you ... (Pause) Please ...

SARA: No.

LOLA: OK. I don't need you. I will tell Richard to buy some at the shop.

SARA: Richard won't buy you anything ... He's on my side.

LOLA: Lies ... Richard is my friend.

Lola goes to the door phone.

LOLA: Richard? Richard? (...) Listen, can you buy me a packet of ciggies, the ...? (...) Richard, after so many years you're telling me that ...? (...) I know perfectly well what's good for me or not! (...) Well, you should know why you're going to retire in a month, and I'm going to make sure personally that you're thrown out. Lousy Scab!

Lola, hangs up the phone, very angry.

SARA: Lola, you've been nearly a month without smoking. Why not stop once and for all?

LOLA: Because I don't want to! I like smoking ... And I will do until the day I die!

Lola goes towards the outside door.

LOLA: But, don't worry, they're not going to accuse you of being an accomplice to a murder. I'll go myself.

Sara takes out a packet of cigarettes and hands it to her.

SARA: Do what you like.

LOLA: The day I find a good reason for giving it up, I'll give it up.

Lola lights the cigarette and smokes with pleasure.

LOLA: There's nothing better than this in the whole world ... well, there is, but it's so many years since I've done it that I can hardly remember ... And, well, how's everything going? Bring me up to date.

SARA: I'm sorry I couldn't visit as much as I'd have liked to ...

LOLA: You don't have to make excuses ...

SARA: ... but I've been a bit busy.

LOLA: Those goddammed policies?

SARA: No.

LOLA: Robert?

SARA: No. The thing with Robert is sorted.

LOLA: So! You've forgiven his little infidelity? Well done.

SARA: No. I didn't need to. He wants the divorce.

LOLA: Aha!

SARA: His lover is pregnant.

LOLA: Aha!

SARA: They want to get married. And live together. In our house.

LOLA: Aha!

SARA: Can you say something else instead of just "Aha"?

LOLA: If something half coherent occurs to me I swear I'll say it.

SARA: You don't need to die. I'm living in an apartment I've rented.

LOLA: I understand very clearly, girl. Very positive about all this in spite of ...

SARA: It's that now there's something more important in my life than Robert ... How should I start? I could give you the long version, detail by detail, report after report, but, frankly, I prefer to spare you and spare myself ... I'll be brief ... D'you remember my headaches? They weren't caused by stress, you were right ... They are because of a tumour the size of a pea ... *(she touches a part of her head)* Here, in a part where I can't even repeat the name of it ... They've done all manner of tests, which is why I couldn't come to see you more often ... I didn't want to tell you anything until you were back home. You had enough to worry about getting your heart valves under control. They're going to operate next week, urgently ... According to the specialist, there's no time to lose ... It could be successful ... It's possible, "You're young, your body will respond ..." ...Or it could go wrong ... "It's a very delicate zone ... and it could be very dangerous ..." But if I don't do it, what is certain is that I won't see the end of the year ... We're in June now, aren't we? Six months ... Yes, the end of the year ... The other day I read a quote from John Lennon: "Life is what is going on while you're busy making other plans" ... How true, eh? Had you heard it before? I hadn't ... And, well, to say that I'm scared would be an understatement ... I'm terrified, because this wasn't part of my plan, because I'm only thirty nine and I always thought that being forty was going to be hard to swallow ... and at least I'm not going to have to go through that ... See, it'll

save me that ... So, you see, Robert became less important ... like my work too ... like this flat ... like everything that I thought my life was ... How stupid ... So much looking around and the missing piece of my puzzle was here ... *(she touches her head)*

The two women stay silent for a moment. We only hear the insistent sound of the fan. Lola gets up and picks up her bag.

LOLA: I'm going to take the things out of my bag ... I should have put on a washing machine ... I don't think I have any detergent ...

Lola finally collapses and starts to cry unconsolably.

SARA: Lola ...

Sara hugs Lola tenderly.

SARA: It's OK, It's OK ...

LOLA: No, Sara, no! It's not fair! It isn't! These things shouldn't happen! These things should not happen ... No! No!

Sara hugs her more tightly.

(Darkness)

Scene 7

The estate agent comes on to the stage with a guitar. He sings a song (*with little success*). The song deals with the absurdity of life. On finishing, he remains silent, awaiting a reponse.

VOICE OFF: Thank you. We'll let you know ... Next!

The agent leaves the stage, looking despondent.

Scene 8

Lola, looking glamorous (actually looking much younger than at the beginning of the play) comes out of the kitchen and approaches the balcony. She takes a packet of cigarettes out of her pocket. She opens it and takes out a nub end.

LOLA: Ooh ... what's left.

She puts it in her mouth and sucks it anxiously.

LOLA: Ready?

Sara is in the cupboard.

SARA: No.

LOLA: Now?

SARA: No!

LOLA: I've seen quicker ...

SARA: And I've seen less grumpy ...

LOLA: It's for today, my lovely!

SARA: I feel ridiculous!

LOLA: You've always been ridiculous ... Come out! Or I'll throw this stupid cigarette end away and smoke a proper cigarette as I should ...

The door of the cupboard opens and we discover Sara. She has on a blonde wig, high heels and Lola's fur coat.

SARA: Happy?

Sara emerges from the cupboard.

LOLA: Give it a bit more elegance, darling ... more style, "Style is the clothing of thought" ...As Seneca said.

SARA: I'd like to have seen Seneca with this wig ...

LOLA: It looks divine ...

SARA: D'you think so?

LOLA: Yes ...

SARA: Thanks. You look pretty divine too ...

LOLA: It's just that it doesn't take much and I look fantastic ...

SARA: I don't know, I'm not convinced ...

LOLA: If you're not convinced, it's because you have bad taste ...

SARA: I agree. Buying this house with you inside it was the best example ...

The door bell rings.

Lola goes to answer it. It is the estate agent, the Wellington salesman, the ambulance driver, ex-singer and now the caretaker of the flats. He has a packet in his hand.

CARETAKER: I've just brought you this package, Mrs Lola.

LOLA: Don't call me Mrs, it puts years on me ...

CARETAKER: The lady on first floor number 3 insists that I address all the residents like that.

LOLA: The lady in 1B still hasn't realised that Franco is dead.

CARETAKER: *(joking)* What, Franco has died?

SARA: How are you?

CARETAKER: Oh, sorry, I didn't recognise you with ... with ...

SARA: Hair?

CARETAKER: Yes, that's it, with hair ... How are you now ...?

SARA: Much better, thank you ... *(to Lola)* I'm going to be a while changing.

LOLA: Of course. Carry on ...

Sara disappears through the door to the bedrooms.

CARETAKER: Perhaps I was a bit ...

LOLA: Yes son, you were a bit ...

CARETAKER: It's just that one never knows how to deal with these things ...

LOLA: How about just naturally?

CARETAKER: I hope she recovers ... she's a good person ...

LOLA: Yes, yes she is ...

CARETAKER: And you are too ...

LOLA: A good person?

CARETAKER: A great woman ... and I ... (*gets emotional*) I'm so grateful to you that you helped me and ...

LOLA: If you start crying, I shall ask the next tenants meeting to throw you out ...

CARETAKER: No, I'm not going to cry ... well, I am emotional, but only a bit ... Thank you, really.

LOLA: You're welcome ... And, do you like the work, kiddo?

CARETAKER: Yes. It's a nice job, nice ... And I get a free flat.

Sara comes in. She has a scarf on her head.

SARA: "High ceilings, splendid balconies and a good situation".

CARETAKER: And a hundred square metres ...

LOLA: Not one more or one less ... She measured it with a high- tech measuring device she always had hidden in her bag ...

CARETAKER: Sara ... you're very beautiful, with hair, without hair ... Because you're beautiful. Do you know? Beautiful where you must be beautiful ...

SARA: Thank you ...

CARETAKER: Well, I must go, I have caretaker's work to do ...

SARA: Bye ...

The Caretaker goes out.

LOLA: Work? What a laugh ... I've never seen anyone work less, either as an estate agent, door to door salesman, ambulance driver or caretaker ...

SARA: And what have you bought now from the shopping channel?

LOLA: You mean, "What have WE bought?"

SARA: We?

LOLA: Yes ... Sit down and I'll tell you ...

SARA: I prefer to stand ...

LOLA: The doctor told you not to tire yourself ...

SARA: I'm not tired.

LOLA: In that case I'll stand up too ...

SARA: OK. I'll sit ...

LOLA: We'll both sit.

The two women sit.

LOLA: Let's see, I'll tell you straight away, that I've been practising ... Since they've taken out that pea you had in your stubborn head and you're not going to die ... for the moment ...

SARA: Thanks a lot ...

LOLA: It's a pleasure, darling ... To continue ... And since I haven't any symptoms of dying ...

SARA: For the moment ...

LOLA: You've taken the words out of my mouth, darling, so kind ...

SARA: It's a pleasure ... What are friends for?

LOLA: And since I've given up smoking and drinking and all the pleasures of life and, since that will prolong my existence even more ...

SARA: Your three by-passes and I are very grateful to you ...

LOLA: Because of all I've said and explained, I think the moment has come to take a sensible decision ...

SARA: That I should come and live with you ...

LOLA: No ...

SARA: Oh, I thought ...

LOLA: Well, you thought wrong.

SARA: Sorry, sorry ...

LOLA: Why do you have to spoil special moments?!

SARA: You spoiled my surprise with the fan ...

LOLA: God, you're going to compare this to a fan?!

SARA: OK, go on ...

LOLA: I don't want to now ...

SARA: Please ...

LOLA: No!

SARA: Go on ...

LOLA: D'you want to come and live with me?

SARA: Oh, I'd be so grateful Lola. You don't know how much ... You're so charming, amusing, generous, lively ...

LOLA: A bit over the top ... four consecutive compliments ...

SARA: But ... I don't want to be a burden ... I don't know what you expect of me.

LOLA: Honey, who knows? Who know what anyone expects of us? Today ... within a minute ... I should have started to get weaker months ago ... Say yes, please. If not I'll die of grief and you're going to end up living here anyway ...

SARA: With one condition ...

LOLA: Well ...?

SARA: Can we take down the internal walls? They've always seemed silly to me ...

Lola starts to laugh.

SARA: What's so funny?

LOLA: I knew ... I knew that's what you were going to ask me.

SARA: No, you didn't know...

LOLA: Yes ...

SARA: No ...

LOLA: Oh yes ...

Lola takes two electric hammers out of the box that the caretaker brought up.

LOLA: Two for the price of one ... and they gave you a free avocado peeler ... Let's take them down ... I don't want "inconveniences" in our relationship.

SARA: Are you serious?

LOLA: I'm too old to go around joking ... (*She hands a hammer to Sara*) Let's demolish them!

SARA: We don't have to do it now, woman ... Later ...

LOLA: No ... Now ... Now Sara ... Always now ...

Sara looks at her excitedly and takes the hammer.

SARA: You're mad ...

LOLA: No, I'm alive ...

(Darkness)