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GINA AND FIDEL
By Zsolt Pozsgai

Cast:

GINA , world famous Italian actress, 43, 45 or 47 years old

FIDEL, "dictator" of an island nation, 48 years old

Setting

1974, in the capital city of an island nation.

The piece builds on Gina Lollobrigida and Fidel Castro's actual meeting, but does not use any elements of either the actual report, or any actual written documentation of the meeting – it's entirely fantasy. The Yevtushenko poems in the play are the Stanley Kunitz and Anthony Kahn translation.

FIRST MEETING

/A hotel room, there appears to be no one there, though Fidel is sitting behind a curtain. Gina comes in from sun-tanning and swimming. She's dressed in a light robe, takes the wet swimsuit off underneath it, makes to head towards the bathroom./

FIDEL'S VOICE

Don't leave the room, sit down on the couch, and answer my questions.
/Gina shrieks in fear. Thick cigar smoke comes from behind the curtain./

FIDEL'S VOICE

And don't shriek. My people are standing outside, and they'll think that I'm hurting you.

GINA

What... who... how do you think.... why... hey... hello! Hola!

FIDEL'S VOICE

You speak Spanish well.

GINA

You're getting this from one word?

FIDEL'S VOICE

No. We listened to you in the car that brought you from the airport to your hotel. You spoke very well with the chauffeur.

GINA

Why...Italian is close to Spanish... does it not bother you, that I'm like this...

FIDEL'S VOICE

It doesn't bother me. Since, as you see, I'm not here in the room anyway.
Answer.

GINA
Why?

FIDEL'S VOICE /*impatient already*/
Because I asked you to.

GINA /*frightened*/
Okay... I learnt, secretly...

FIDEL'S VOICE
Secretly? Why secretly?

GINA
Because there was a director, with whom... but this doesn't concern you.
And if it's possible, I'd like to pull on some underwear...

FIDEL'S VOICE
Please, continue. I feel flustered, and it's better if we start by talking
about neutral topics. I hate feeling flustered.

GINA
Don't you want to come out from behind the curtain?

FIDEL'S VOICE
Not for now.

GINA
Are you smoking behind it? And if the curtain lights on fire?

FIDEL'S VOICE
I'll put it out. We'll change the curtain. So? Why?

GINA

In Italian... director, a kind of artist... I would have liked to make an internationally acclaimed film with him....

FIDEL'S VOICE

But you didn't meet his expectations.

GINA

No. He said that I had sold myself out to my audience so much that I wouldn't be able to be in a real artist's film... but why am I talking about this with you now?

FIDEL'S VOICE

Because you're flustered, like me. And you even learnt Spanish before meeting him. So that you would meet his expectations. And then you didn't. That director is stupid. You're capable of anything.

GINA

Do you think?

FIDEL'S VOICE

Yes. You are such a talent, only this fate can await. A fantastic talent, so much so, that you yourself are your own impediment. Your talent.

GINA

How do you mean?

FIDEL'S VOICE

After a certain level, talent does not recognize compromises. It becomes honest, harsh. There were times when this is what they valued. Today, it is not so. Fuck, it really did light on fire...sorry...

/He visibly puts out the fire with his hands, the curtain is moving strongly/

FIDEL

So. Done.

GINA

You won't come out?

FIDEL

No.

GINA

You can see... through that curtain...?

FIDEL

Of course. I'm not stupid, that I'd sit here blind.

GINA

In that case... you're peeping...

FIDEL

No. Every day the CIA organizes new assassination attempts against me. I have to be careful. I had to make sure that you came in alone, and that you didn't have a gun.

GINA

Now you can be sure of that. You can come out.

FIDEL

You're dressed scantily. I don't want to jeopardize your integrity.

GINA

I understand. Should I get dressed?

FIDEL

If I could request it. I don't request it willingly, because right now you're exactly like, like in the film titled "The Queen of Sheeba"....when the angel stands there... in the gauzy robe...

GINA

And you liked that? How I stood there?

FIDEL

Well... if it's permitted to say something like this...I liked it better than the Communist Manifesto. Apologies, to make that comparison...but... */Gina doesn't answer, just permits the man to suffer/*

GINA

But...?

FIDEL

Well, I watched your films, those which were available to me.... and in those...

GINA

In those?

FIDEL

You were adequate.

GINA

I'll get dressed, if you'll allow it.

FIDEL

I wanted to ask. It's preposterous that you're standing here... and there's nothing underneath...this, within reach of a sensitive man...

GINA

You're a sensitive man?

FIDEL

At any rate, a man. That's for sure... I'll turn around until then.
/he turns around, but becomes ensnared in the curtains, the curtains fall down, Fidel falls to the ground, but is already jumping back up. Gina laughs loudly/

GINA

This dressing gown is enough. I'm used to it. This is how half the world sees me. It'll be good enough for you.

FIDEL

I think.... that you are very beautiful and alluring... especially when you cover up what regardless shouldn't be permitted to be seen.

GINA

You've seen all my films?

FIDEL

Just those which they could obtain for me... the embargo pertains to films as well.

GINA

How many films did you watch yesterday?

FIDEL

Three. Two of yours.

GINA

And the third?

FIDEL

My secret service's movie about Nixon, the American president, set in his home. Sunday. He cooked, did laundry. Eventually bathed. A strange thing from an American man. He has no staff. A dangerous man.

GINA

Was it interesting?

FIDEL

No.

GINA

Now which film are you talking about?

FIDEL

The Nixon. It wasn't interesting. Your two films, I enjoyed.

/silence/

GINA

Won't you sit down?

FIDEL

No. Then I feel exposed. And the other armchair is in a bad angle.

GINA

What do you mean by that?

FIDEL

They could shoot in the window. It wouldn't be hard.

GINA

And you're standing in a good angle now?

FIDEL

Yes.

GINA

I understand. Thank you for replying to my letter.

FIDEL

My secretary wrote. I don't have time for that kind of thing.

GINA

Regardless, you permitted me to come here and prepare an interview with you.

FIDEL

Yes. You were honorable.

GINA

Did you know beforehand who I was?

FIDEL

No. I don't watch films. But when you wrote, I asked that they obtain a few.

GINA

But not because I'm world famous.

FIDEL

No.

GINA

That's flattering. Won't you take your hands out of your pockets?

FIDEL

No.

GINA

You're clasping a gun in there.

FIDEL

Yes.

GINA

Are you afraid of me?

FIDEL

No. I'm just cautious.

GINA

But you invited me.

FIDEL

No. You asked that I receive you.

GINA

True. But you still had to have trusted in me, if you let me in here.

FIDEL

The two aren't connected. My son's mother wanted to kill me as well, when they took her to the United States, and she came back as a CIA agent. I was happy for her. I thought it was because of me.

GINA

Your first wife.

FIDEL

Yes. Our first encounter was like...just... like a ... entirely like...

GINA

Don't force it. I understand.

FIDEL

I thought it was just because of me. She pulled a gun on me in bed.

GINA

Do you think she could have been able to kill you?

FIDEL

She didn't have time for that.

GINA

Is it not possible that she would have done it just for revenge?

FIDEL

What kind of revenge?

GINA

If I've heard correctly, you kept her here as a lover... maybe in this very hotel?

FIDEL

Yes, she lived here. But I don't want to talk about that.

GINA

She lived here for years. You occasionally came in between two state functions. She conceived the children, yes?

FIDEL

Yes.

GINA

You didn't trust her either.

FIDEL

No.

GINA

They drugged her at seven months pregnant, perhaps in this very room...and they took her to another city, to the hospital, right?

FIDEL

I don't want to talk about this.

GINA

Marita thought they would kill her child, but no. They just removed the baby before it was due. It lives today. It wasn't easy, but they kept the baby alive.

FIDEL

I asked you for the interview materials and your questions ahead of time. This wasn't amongst them. And you have reason to think if I behave this stupidly at our first encounter, that you can do whatever you like with me, but you're mistaken.

GINA

The male child is healthy. They cut him out of his mother at seven months, and the doctors brought him up. There are wonderful people.

FIDEL

With regards to healthcare, I successfully built that up, according to anyone. Healthcare is accessible to everyone. When I was born, every second child died, every second sick individual died even from malaria, because they didn't have money for a doctor or hospital! Today, no one dies of malaria, or anything else, no one! I brought this into being, me and my revolution!

GINA

Why did you do this with her? I mean, you married her, she was your wife.

FIDEL

Why am I answering this for you? What reason do I have to do so?

GINA

The reason that I'm here, half naked. And in this state, a person is disposed to open up. Even in their first encounter. Don't worry, it's sympathetic to me if someone behaves so stupidly if they see a beautiful woman. At least they're honest. They're not pretentious. I like that. So?
/silence/

FIDEL

Not me... I just...I knew that they wanted to take her away, back to the United States to her parents, keep the kid there too... I couldn't let this

happen. But I didn't think this is what would happen. I just asked my people to somehow impede this. This is how it happened. And they stole Marita from me, they brought her back, with force. Even though she wanted to stay... even after the surgery she wanted to stay...

GINA

You were in love with her. I know.

FIDEL

How do you know...

GINA

I met her. She came to me in Rome. It's from her that I know everything. That's when you and the revolution started to interest me.

FIDEL

I understand. Incidentally, the boy is healthy, and so is Marita...

GINA

Yes. She survived. What's more, since then she birthed another child. Everything's in order. It started to interest me, who you actually were. I was in Moscow, before I came to you, I met with Yevtushenko, do you know him...?

FIDEL

The poet. Yes.

GINA

You're familiar with Russian poets, but not with world famous Italian actresses?

FIDEL

He came here. For the Russian secret service. He was on a poetry tour. In the meantime he was taking pictures of military compounds. In between

two poetry readings. I had to get involved personally... so that he wouldn't put an end to his life's work.

GINA

The Russians....the Soviets are your key alliance, no?

FIDEL

Correct.

GINA

And yet they're spying on you?

FIDEL

Our friends are who we truly need to watch. It's in them that we can be disappointed, and that can be a fatal error. That kind of thing isn't possible with one's enemies.

GINA

Yevtushenko is a good poet. He, for example, adores you.

FIDEL

Okay.

GINA

If you cut a child out of a woman, and that woman is still in love with you, and if a genius poet, albeit at once a Russian spy as well, adores you – this is fascinating for a woman like me.

FIDEL

Yevtushenko is only a spy because before his travels they took his family from him and forced him to take photographs of me. I knew. That's why I didn't execute him.

GINA

You executed others?

FIDEL

You have to, with spies. It's an occupational hazard. They're aware of it. Or we exchange them, but that's rare.

GINA

I have a book of Yevtushenko's poems here with me. In a Spanish translation.

FIDEL

Interesting.

GINA

I'd like it if you read some of them for me. Just a few lines.

FIDEL

I... don't do that type of thing.

GINA

I'm asking you.

FIDEL

Why?

GINA

I'd like to get to know you better, before we start the interview.

FIDEL

/he is quiet, stares/

GINA

I'm asking you. Let go of the gun in your pocket.

FIDEL

That can be arranged.

/Gina goes to her suitcase, grabs the book, Fidel watches her in the meantime with wonder, Gina looks for an appropriate page. She opens the book, goes to Fidel/

GINA

You shuddered, as I got closer...

FIDEL

It happens.

GINA

Are you still cautious around me?

FIDEL

Marita put together her gun from boxes of women's face cream.

GINA

Please, read this aloud...

/Fidel takes the book, but only with one of his hands, the other continues to grasp the gun/

FIDEL

/he reads increasingly smoothly and nicely, there are no traces in his reading of his prior nerves/

Think of me on spring nights
 And think of me on summer nights,
 Think of me on autumn nights,
 And think of me on winter nights

Though I'm not here, but somewhere gone,
 Far from your side, as if abroad.
 Stretch yourself on the long cool sheet
 Flat on your back, as in the sea,

Surrendering to the soft slow wave
With me, as with the sea, utterly alone.

GINA

/takes the book/

I want nothing on your mind all day.
Let the day turn everything upside down.
Besmudge with smoke and flood with wine,
Distract you till I fade from view.
All right, think of nothing by day
But in the night – only of me alone.
/silence, they look at one another/

FIDEL

That was enough. Tomorrow we'll start the interview, as we discussed.
You'll be notified of the exact time.

GINA

Let's discuss it now.

FIDEL

It's not possible. Ten minutes beforehand. Be ready.

GINA

I understand. So that even accidentally I wouldn't know when it is. So I
wouldn't be able to perhaps prepare an assassination against you.

FIDEL

And I only have a half hour for you. Every day just a half hour. This is an
exceptional situation. Certain reporters wait months for me. That is how it
usually is.

GINA

Yes, I know.

FIDEL

You cannot leave the hotel. You can only swim in the pool when my people have emptied the surrounding area. I don't want a panic.

GINA

The women here are beautiful. Some of them are much more beautiful than me. And they swim in the ocean, laughing. Why do you fear for the people?

FIDEL

I don't fear for them. I fear for you. You're in danger, because you wanted to meet with me.

GINA */laughs/*

This paranoia! You're sick, General!

FIDEL */seriously/*

I'd like it if you stayed alive.

/silence, they look at one another, Gina feels that the man is speaking seriously/

GINA

I'll try...

FIDEL

Okay. I'll notify you.

GINA

Is this how you imagined the first...?

FIDEL

Myself yes. But you... I didn't know, that you were so beautiful... sorry. This flustered me slightly.

/He begins to leave outward, Gina calls after him/

GINA

You...you read the poem nicely. Really.

/ Fidel doesn't turn around, just leaves, Gina stares straight ahead. Scene change, during which plays a portion of the movie "Solomon and the Queen of Sheeba," and a speech by Fidel, which occurs outdoors at a large gathering /

SECOND MEETING

/A beach house, the sound of the waves crashing is audible, and an image of the ocean is projected on the background, Gina paces, nervous. From outside are commands, noises. Fidel steps in./

GINA

I want to know why they brought me here!

FIDEL

You dressed up nicely. Good.

GINA

It was discussed that the first interview would be in the hotel's meeting room.

FIDEL

Yes.

GINA

And instead of that, more than four hours ago soldiers came for me, threw me in a military jeep and brought me here.

FIDEL

It's beautiful here. You can hear the ocean. And the sun will go down, if it's true. If the Americans don't take it away from us.

GINA

What?

FIDEL

The sunset. It might be part of the embargo.

GINA

Why did you have me brought here?

FIDEL

I'm tired.

/he falls onto a chair/

GINA

We had agreed upon the meeting room!

FIDEL

They're renovating it.

GINA

It was standing there yesterday, actually, freshly painted.

FIDEL

But today a plastic bomb exploded in the ornate legs under a Peruvian table. At two in the afternoon.

/silence/

GINA

That's when we would have...

FIDEL

Yes.

GINA

But they brought me here four hours ago! You couldn't have known yet then!

FIDEL
I knew.

GINA
If you knew, why didn't you do anything to stop it?

FIDEL
You were right the other day. I'm paranoid. All right. I'm not going to fight the enemy, I'm simply not going to go where they want to kill me.
/Gina moves closer, Fidel is sitting with closed eyes. Silence/

GINA
Did you... fall asleep? They've never dared to do this beside me...

FIDEL
No. I'm just resting my eyes. */laughs/*

GINA
Don't laugh, it doesn't suit you. You've been drinking!

FIDEL
Yes.

GINA
A lot?

FIDEL
A lot.

GINA
What?

FIDEL
Rum. What.

GINA

But why?!

FIDEL

Because rum is a byproduct of sugar production. And we're just living off sugar now, the Soviets buy that too.

GINA

That's not what I meant. Why were you drinking when you knew there would be an interview?

FIDEL

I always drink a half liter of rum after a failed attack. Do you want some?
/he takes out a big bottle of rum and a giant cigar, which he lights!

GINA

Where is my camera man? I hope you brought him with you as well.

FIDEL

No. They'll bring him. They'll bring him here. Or somewhere else.

GINA

You don't take me seriously.

FIDEL

That's what you want, for me to take you seriously?

GINA

Yes.

!Fidel holds out the bottle!

FIDEL

Here you go. Drink, and I'll take you seriously.

GINA
You think I've never drank rum?

FIDEL
That's what I think.

GINA
You're right. In our country that's the drink of down and out immigrants. Why would I drink it?

FIDEL
There are two possibilities right now. Either you wait while I sober up, which comes with some sleeping, and after sleeping a bad mood, bad breath and a bad conscience.... or you drink too.

GINA
Give it here.
/She takes a gulp from the bottle/

GINA
It's pretty good.

FIDEL
It's our national drink. There's nothing better.

GINA
Give me some more.

FIDEL
Here you go.
/Gina takes another gulp/

GINA
There's some kind of... peculiar aftertaste...

FIDEL

Because the rum that they prepare for me, beforehand they pour it all the way along the bodies of virgin girls. From the neck down... all the way across their papayas...

GINA

Across their what?

FIDEL

You don't know that Spanish word? True, it's local slang...

GINA

Now you just want to be clever.

FIDEL

No, it's really like that. You like the drink this way?

GINA

No. I just understood now what you said. That is, if we had been in the meeting room... I would be on the wall.

FIDEL

Your hair would have been tousled, at the very least. Yes. Because as soon as I would have smelled the wick burning, which usually precedes the explosion by a few seconds, I would have picked you up, tossed you out the balcony, and then it would have only been me who died, and your cameraman.

GINA

Give me more. Whether they poured it down the papayas of virgin girls, or not, it's still good.

FIDEL

Do you want a cigar with it?

GINA
Hold on!
/She drinks/

GINA
I want one.

FIDEL
And this one...

GINA
They rolled it on the thighs of virgin girls. I know. It's a little bit much, with the virgins. It looks like the men here are only good for harvesting sugar.

FIDEL
How's the cigar?

GINA
Disgusting. But together with the rum, it's okay. Today I wanted to ask about your childhood.

FIDEL
Why?

GINA
Because it's moving. And a lot can be learned from it. Until the cameraman arrives, let's prepare. Tell me about it.

FIDEL
Where were you born?

GINA
Subiaco. A beautiful mountain village in Lazio. The little houses clinging to the rocks, the castle up high, in the middle a thousand year old church. My mother gave birth to me there, it came on in the middle of mass, the priest

helped, and the women. By the time the doctor arrived I was already talking. They brought me in front of the church, showed me off; here she is, she arrived. I looked around. Narrow little streets drove down into the village, the colors of summer glistened between the stones, a thousand flowers, sunshine. This is Italy, I told myself, good. I'm alright here. You can put me down.

FIDEL

Where did they put you down?

GINA

Into the love life of a beautiful woman and a carpenter who made beautiful furniture.

FIDEL

You have to be born in a village. A small village. Like me...

GINA

Yes, because you're all shielded against the big city's grime.

FIDEL

There's nothing to substitute this later, nothing.

GINA

The river crashing down from the mountains, it split the mountain village into two, above it the Saint Francesco bridge, under which I hid so many times, I hid happily, you know, do you know what happiness is, if a little girl cries with joy under a bridge because she's in a good place?

FIDEL

Your mother?

GINA

A big-mouthed mountain woman, there were four of us siblings, she had enough to work for, and she led the church choir. That's where the mountain

women gathered, and whatever they couldn't discuss, they sang it out in the church. I often spied on them, it was like some kind of secret seance. They were holding each other's hands around the altar and singing. The most handsome men were there - in our village - and that's why they were singing in happiness.

FIDEL

Your father?

GINA

A carpenter... he was. He's still alive, but paralyzed, he became paralyzed four years ago when my mother died. The tool fell out of his hands. According to the doctor, he doesn't have any internal injuries. No stroke, either. My mother was the driving force within him. My mother died, he became paralyzed, that's how it is. I can't watch it, I spend a lot of money for his care-taking. I visit him often. We hold each other's hands and look at one another. He can't even talk. Often I get him up to the piazza in front of the church, halfway up the mountain, where I was born. And I talk to him. And he stares.

FIDEL

The carpenters make good money in Italy.

GINA

What do you mean?

FIDEL

Everything is an art there, everything is precious. Those things all need to be restored periodically.

GINA

Because the Italian people don't throw anything out. They enjoy the past, in everything, in the furniture, the houses. That's what their history taught them. Under my father's hands old furniture got new life, everyone brought something, even from Rome they came to him. I

helped him. If somebody touched a piece of furniture like that, it made you sing, just like my mother's choir. My father just whistled to it.

FIDEL

What did he whistle?

GINA

You won't stump me, I can show you! This is what he whistled.
/She starts whistling, Fidel listens, then laughs, Gina laughs too./

FIDEL

We don't throw anything out either. You've seen the cars on the street, Everything that's old is good. The new is dangerous. One of my pilots only flies old planes, because according to him the new ones can crash at any time.

GINA

What's the name of the pilot?

FIDEL

How would I know... why are you interested?

GINA

Because the rum is strong. I still want to ask things from you.

FIDEL

Ask. How can a country mouse become such a famous actress?

GINA

Don't insult me. I don't deserve that. Everything is because of men, Everything!

FIDEL

And because of women.

GINA

That's right! Everything is because of the men and the women. My father restored the old furniture, but I wanted to create something new and lasting, do you understand? Once... I carved a small statue in the workshop, from the garbage that my father had left there, a piece of wood. My father, when he first saw it, gave me a slap on the face because he thought I was stealing the good wood...but, then he saw my creation... a small, fat woman, a true Etruscan...an Etruscan goddess...she had such eyes...but it was just the light, I didn't glue anything in there, it was just the light...

FIDEL

The light is the eyes. We don't have light on the outside, we just have eyes. That's what makes the light.

GINA

My father stared at it, turned it around in his hands. For a long time. Then he started crying. Luigiana, he said...

FIDEL

Who is Luigiana?

GINA

Me. Gina is just from later...Luigiana! Then he hugged me, kissed me, you can be anything I couldn't be, he said, then he ran out into the little street and started yelling, look at it, you animals, look at what my daughter carved! She carved Italia, she carved Lazio... everything is inside it! The people congregated, they laid my father down. Then it was silent.

FIDEL

And the statue?

GINA

Jeez! Someone can really handle their rum...it's not fair like this! Drink more!

FIDEL

However you want. What happened to the statue?

GINA

How do you know that something happened to it?

FIDEL

That's why you told a story about it, no?

GINA

They loved it. They put it in a small glass case in the church. They lit it nicely with candles. Etruscan foremother in the Catholic church, that's why they put her into the glass, so that she can't escape. That's where she was. And I looked at it proudly, on the way to school I always went in...that particular light instead of her eyes... and when the war started... she started crying...when I was born, it used to be Etruscan country, there were thousands of years of culture, and everyone felt it there...

FIDEL

Weeping Madonna. We have one of those here too. The wonder.

GINA

It's no wonder. My friend Mario got her out of the glass case once, he brought her to me, we cut her in two, he put some kind of liquid in it, I don't know what, which expands when it's warm...that's what wept. But the people came. Even Duce heard about her. The money poured. We split it fifty-fifty with the priest. When it became warm, the liquid poured, and she wept, if it turned colder, she stopped. Hot-cold, hot-cold, hot-cold.../she laughs loudly/ Tell me more about yourself.

FIDEL

That's why you became an actress? So you could fool people?

GINA

Come closer... I can only whisper this, because they'll hear...I never became an actress, do you understand? Never. I never was one. I never will be. Done. I went to the Roman academy to study painting and sculpture. That had meaning.

FIDEL

Such small hands, and sculpture...

GINA

Small hands can hit hard...acting...do you know, why I started in that?

FIDEL

I wanted to ask already...

GINA

Lucia Bose. She is the reason for everything.

FIDEL

I've never heard that name.

GINA

EXACTLY! WHO HAS HEARD THIS NAME?! NO ONE! Lucia Bose. "Bose"... it's as if I had said "shit" Bose. There was a beauty pageant in Lazio, I entered. At sixteen years old. I was beautiful, sun-kissed, a sixteen year old Italian girl from the mountains, the boys were pulling numbers with my father, everyone wanted to catch me...and then this Bose....can you figure out what happened?

FIDEL

She came in first.

GINA

Yes. Have you heard of her?

FIDEL

I just figured it out. And you came in second.

GINA

Like hell, third. Second place was already given out to the mistress of Duce, we knew that, that was okay. Third! And this Bose...she walked in front of me, in the cross fires of the photographers... "I want to be an actress," she chirped...you know what, missy! I'll be one too. I'll finish my art classes, and I'll catch up. I'll stomp you, push you, squeeze you, do you understand, missy?! I didn't even have to wait that long, I started modelling in the academy, I needed the money, there was a gathering in front of the art class... the many stupid painters were staring at me, I could go into my own studio to pour the bronze... have you ever poured bronze?

FIDEL

One time in Mexico we were counterfeiting silver money with the partisans, but I think...

GINA

When you have the type of material that you can't control for the first glance. You can't form it. It starts doing what I want it to do, it slowly takes form, from what comes from within me...like magma, it's like that, right? Like the lava...the melted ash, and you pick it up, and before it gets stiff, it becomes a thought, your thought, and no one can ever steal that away from you...the statue yes... the thought, no... even if they remelt it, still no... did you know that you can't form the re-melted bronze like you could before?

FIDEL

I didn't know. I just speculated. */laughs/*

GINA

Don't laugh at me, understand?! Don't you dare laugh at me! I could have been a big artist, if that little Bose didn't exist...then, I felt that I had to win her over, but I should have won myself over... I was walking on the street, in Rome, a big wig approached, you have to be an actress, I beg you, come to the try out... "will Lucia Bose be there?" I asked.... "she already tried out, but the producer didn't like her..." I got the part. I earned it. And I was good in it! I was good in it! That's when I should have stopped, I should have sent a bouquet of roses to Lucia Bose, and stopped...then, yes... then...so that just the statues...just the canvases...just the pictures...what sort of thoughts can you have in a movie? Nothing. Others think for you, you have to represent the thoughts of a stupid writer or producer...then everything disappears, for a few weeks in the theatres they come, watch it, they play it on tv, then that's all it was... after that, only...but thoughts poured into bronze or marble... what an idiot I was, I should have got another slap on the face from my father, but he could not hit, or from my mother, but the dead do not slap, although it would have been good, if they could slap me, you go out to the grave, my mother I did this and that, then she leans out, and slaps, a well deserved slap, and I would just kiss the slap-delivering hand...this isn't well arranged with the dead. Then one year in Hollywood... or two... doesn't matter...one slobbering millionaire... he'll make me... he'll make me... I DON'T NEED TO BE MADE! Done, I left that idiotic America, went back to my village, got another slap from my mother, we screamed at each other for awhile, then we hugged each other as we've never hugged before. My mother is a bronze, a marble, I was in her, as hers and my father's thoughts, their thoughts in love, that's why I'm looking for that material, and that place... where everything stays...everything. Lucia Bose! She played parts in movies, of course, in artistic movies, but who saw those movies, nobody... I only took successful parts, those which would be a success... then after each filming I was running to my studio... we were filming in Sicily, there was a big rain, everything was muddy, we had to stop for two days, the producer said. I kneeled in the mud, made the statues, a whole bunch of mud, I formed a whole army...forty mud statues, forty naked men and women's figures, and amongst them...I won't

tell you, what was amongst them, but there were two amongst them that were neither woman nor man...the love... there were two loves amongst them from mud. The next day the Sicilian sun came up and dried out my statues. They stayed there, until the rain washed them out again.

FIDEL

And your husband? How did he handle this?

GINA

What sort of husband? What do you want with this?

FIDEL

Tell me about him.

GINA

How does my husband come into this?

FIDEL

I read it in the report of my secret service. About your husband.

GINA

Oh, Milko? Well.... his work occupied him. A doctor. That's why I married him. Healthcare is very expensive in Italy. Because of the war, it wasn't running smoothly. I married him. It's okay. I loved him, or not...I needed a successful doctor beside me. Even if he's Slovenian. It turned out like this. He even looked good beside me, particularly when he put on his Slovenian national suit...

FIDEL

Your son is from him.

GINA

My son is from us... yes... now he... he's still elsewhere, somewhere... in Slovenia at his father's... or, I don't know...but he comes, he sometimes finds me. He sometimes finds me. I hardly ever see his father. My son too. Drink some more, or give some to me.

FIDEL

When did you divorce?

GINA

Three years. When I said that there would be no more films. No more anything. Just fabric, marble, stone, ore...and the strength that I might carve my thoughts into them...then I threw everything out, him too... everything... though he's a good man, a good doctor. I watched the others' pitiful exertions... they tried to stay twenty...Sophia... with her expensive boobs...and her panic, that over and over something else will sag on her, and that needs to be pinned up, to be operated on, or to be put back... marble does not sag, nor I. I don't want to worry about this. An actress, if beautiful, should die at age forty. Disappear. She should leave the whole thing, don't you think? As one of my friends... the one...Marilyn...she knew, they killed her, of course. Not accidentally. She wanted it like that. And what happened? Legend. This is how you should do it. Somebody could have killed me too, publicly. I have a room in my villa, you know, one of those prayer rooms, photos on the wall of people I worked with... lots of them... Belmondo...and the rest... Marilyn... smiles at me, and that gives me strength. That she's gone. Perhaps it will work for me too.

FIDEL

You're not serious.

GINA

You're right. That's not how it is. Just partially. Or it is how it is, but still not quite. There are... actresses out of marble...you see, really, there are... now that I am interviewing you, I realize a lot of things...because you listen well, like the bronze, your silence is made out of bronze...Marina Vlady... oh yes, she doesn't need to be afraid of time...or Irene Papas...her either...they stayed actresses...I couldn't work with them, only a little, it was good, it was the nicest, but no more... they moved forward, and I went back to the studio. And Lucia Bose...am I not right, she became an artist, an actress in artistic movies, she is still filming today, but nobody knows her, though the movies are good...but they don't know her, and will never

know her. And me? The Divine Lolo is over, the producers, the directors, just because I looked...and I can bravely say, I look today...just because...Gerard Philip whispered once...too bad they don't trust us, if they trusted us, I wouldn't have to die young, because I'm going to die, so that nothing will be revealed...he was right...he died too, before... if I don't have the studio, I'm not here anymore. And then... I would not be here with you either.

/silence/

FIDEL */softly, seriously/*

It's good that you're here.

/silence/

GINA

I blabbered, huh? A lot.

FIDEL

It was a pleasure.

GINA

Yes?

FIDEL

It was a pleasure to listen to you.

GINA

I don't feel too well.

FIDEL

It's still new... for you, this rum...

GINA

Not the rum. It's this filthy fucking life. Wait... how did you know about my husband...my son...

FIDEL

I told you already. You were investigated.

GINA

You should be ashamed of yourself. Where's my cameraman? He's not here yet? We could start the interview.

FIDEL

I'll look. He should be here already.

/Fidel goes out, Gina stands up, she stumbles/

GINA

What sort of a stupid idiot I am...

/she goes out to the bathroom, but only water is audible, she washed her face, comes back, Fidel arrives back as well/

FIDEL

Unfortunately... we can't count on the cameraman...

GINA

What kind of tick... trick is this again?

FIDEL

He had a small accident.

GINA

The Jeep...

FIDEL

No. They stopped at a sugar cane plantation owner's house on the way here.

/he's smiling already, Gina sees that there's no problem/

GINA

Are you trying to say...

FIDEL

He tasted Cuban rum. The real kind.

GINA

And?

FIDEL

He's laying in the car outside.

GINA

Because he can't handle it. I can handle it. Is he plastered? I'm going to kick him out! This is no way to work!

/she starts to laugh, Fidel laughs with her, Gina starts out towards Fidel, trips, falls onto the man, they continue to laugh together. In the background is a projection, pictures from Fidel's life, from Gina's movies, the photos of Fidel and Gina fade out on the canvas/

THIRD MEETING

/in a small meeting room in the hotel, Gina waits, Fidel arrives/

GINA

I've been sitting here for an hour.

FIDEL

I apologize, I had to arrange...and then...

GINA

Which, incidentally, is progress from last time's four hours. You're increasingly punctual. Perhaps a week and you'll arrive on time.

FIDEL

You forget who you're talking to.

GINA

I didn't forget. Wait. Who are you again?

FIDEL

I had to arrange today's meeting in Juan de Lives.

GINA

What's that?

FIDEL

A little village in the mountains. Tourist attraction.

GINA

But that's not where we're meeting!

FIDEL

Exactly. One of my look-alikes sat in the car with your look-alike, they're on their way there.

GINA

What look-alike?! I don't have a look-alike here!

FIDEL

We looked for one. It wasn't easy. The women here aren't as pale. We had to bleach someone, a dancer.

GINA

A dancer? Who do you think I am?

FIDEL

She's the most beautiful girl on the island... we needed someone who could compare to your beauty...

GINA

Okay. Stop this. Sit down. Not there... there.

FIDEL

That's not good, here in the window...

GINA

I don't care. Right now I matter. I'm sitting here, because the light hits me well here. You're sitting there, worst case scenario they'll kill you, I'll prepare an interview with Mao.

FIDEL

In the end.... to everyone's knowledge, we're on the road towards the village. Big crowds are gathering on the roads, waving. And we're sitting here in the hotel.

GINA

We have to discuss everything before the cameraman comes in and we start the work.

FIDEL

I don't have that much time.

GINA

If possible you'll say what we discussed before. This can't be unusual in a country where they don't know democracy.

FIDEL

What's the problem?

GINA

Problem? What kind of problem?

FIDEL

Last time you behaved in an entirely different way.

GINA

Last time you humiliated me. I lowered myself for you. This isn't possible.

FIDEL

Last time we laughed together at...

GINA

Last time you made me drunk. I showed myself to be someone...someone I wouldn't like to be. Do you do this with everyone?

FIDEL

I made you drunk?!

GINA

You played that you were afraid of assassination. You made me drunk in a beach house, obviously you counted on the fact that I would lose my head completely. A lot of producers thought this. And directors. There were some whose egos were hurt. You're a head of state, though. You didn't just make me drunk, you made a whole nation drunk. You make them drunk and then belittle them.

FIDEL

Are you this embarrassed that you opened up to me?

GINA

I came here to prepare an interview with you. My personal life has nothing to do with that.

FIDEL

I don't understand. I was listening with pleasure...

GINA

Your pleasure does not interest me. I've reached the age now that only my own is important. You have nothing to do with my parents, my former husband, or my son.

FIDEL

I understand. I stand at your disposal. I have a half hour, the Bolivian president is arriving.

GINA

Oh. You mean the one you wanted to overthrow.

FIDEL

Where are you getting this nonsense?

GINA

Don't you dare talk to me like this! Right now I'm not under your influence, you didn't fill me up with some poisoning swill, you didn't daze me with your stupid cigars.

FIDEL

That reminds me, I should light up...

GINA

Don't you dare smoke a cigar, because my clothes will be so stinky again that I'll throw up in my room from it.

FIDEL

I don't understand... what kind of words are you using?

GINA

I hate when people take advantage of me, I hate it when they take advantage of the situation. That's what you did last time.

FIDEL

Alright, alright. Now there's only twenty five minutes left.

GINA

You wanted to overthrow the government in Bolivia, right?

FIDEL

I wrote that in the interview these kinds of things...

GINA

You sent your friend there. The legendary Che Guevara, right?

/silence/

FIDEL

Really?

GINA

So that he could start a Communist revolution. And organize guerillas. You sent him, because you were busy here. Or you were just scared of the assassins.

FIDEL

I'm not scared of the assassins. I'm scared for you.

GINA

A fiction. You sent him there, though you knew that they weren't prepared for a revolution. Or maybe they didn't even want one at all.

FIDEL

Where are you getting these things?

GINA

I knew where I was coming. And the Italian government has secret service too. I investigated you, as you investigated me. I lied to you, your first wife did not visit me. I only know of her from them. Of her story.

FIDEL

Twenty minutes.

GINA

He was your best friend, right? Che. Your best friend. But still, when you were settled in, it started to be uncomfortable. And then you sent him. So that he could export the revolution.

FIDEL

These aren't your words.

GINA

I'm just preparing you for my questions. There will be these kinds of questions.

FIDEL

I'm not going to answer these.

GINA

But these are an interesting turning point in your life. For example, Che Guevara's friend. They win the revolution here, you sit in the president's chair, and your friend can go further. To Congo. Angola, right?

FIDEL

Are you related to Che? You came to hold me responsible? What do you think of yourself? A European, well to do, aging actress! What do you want from that man?!

GINA

I just wanted to understand you, understand your intention, that's my job now. I'm quite young for a reporter, it's the big relationships that interest me! Did you send Che Guevara away, or not?

FIDEL */it appears to be a very sensitive subject/*

They needed him all around the world, in a lot of places, yes.

GINA

No. It was uncomfortable for you. He defended the Communist organization more vehemently than you, right? He wanted to speed up the centralization. But you just wanted a nice, easy pace...finally you rose to power with American aid...it's not simple to betray those who helped you...

FIDEL

The CIA fed you these things. They prepared you. A woman doesn't talk like this.

GINA

Don't continually use that as a shield. An actress speaks just as she wants. This is the trial, the trial for the series of interviews. I need to know what will cause you to lose your temper.

FIDEL

You can't rattle me. Ten minutes.

GINA

Why didn't you rescue him from Bolivia?

FIDEL

What kind of...

GINA

You rescued him from Angola, from the Congo...and several more places where Che Guevara's role was the exportation of the revolution...

FIDEL

I don't want to hear this once more, this cliché western propaganda...

GINA

Why didn't you rescue him?!! Why did you leave your best friend there to die?!

FIDEL

I see that you're organizing your guerillas well...

GINA

Those, yes. But you couldn't convince the people of Communism. To leave their own ancient culture, their everything, and join, following Cuba's example. Or the bare-foot Congolians, expecting they should fall into a trance at your example...what piteous arrogance! Why did you leave him there to die?!

FIDEL

You know nothing about this! Nothing!

GINA

You're right! The CIA looked for me too, in Moscow, when they knew I was coming. What's more, they paid for my plane ticket to Florida, did you know?!

FIDEL

I knew.

GINA

But I'll tell you this, because I'm honest, I'll tell you that the CIA recruited me, basically I should report to them about your every word which you tell me, I should be writing it down. But I don't do that, because I'm creating now, from marble, from bronze, and the secret service has nothing to do with it! I'm interested in the material itself, not what they eventually want to do with it! Why did you leave him there to die?! I read your biography for several days and I was always hung up at Che Guevara's part. If you didn't cripple him with your beliefs, he would still be a happy hospital administrator living in one of the Argentinian hospitals!

FIDEL

I didn't cripple him! For Che, fighting was everything, the revolution! You're lecturing here to me about a peaceful mountain village where you were born, they lifted you up on the piazza towards the sky! Then you whined beside your father and you couldn't decide where to live out your exhibitionist tendencies, in sculpting or in acting! I was born on a sugar cane plantation where my mother was one of the servants of my father, because to him it didn't matter who bore his children, just that there be many, and if possible all boys! He kept my mother as a slave, and his real wife went into Mayari in a four-horse carriage! But I was a boy, that's fine, that works! My father often used to pat my neck in satisfaction, I hated him! I could have lived in the house, as an illegitimate child, but I slept with the others outside on the floor. They worked from dawn to dusk, crippling work! What do you know about this?! They couldn't study, they couldn't live, they were beaten, most of the time by my own father! They lived in a poverty the likes of which you could never comprehend. And not just them! The whole island! I took advantage of that, the fact that my father tried to love me, he favored me, I was his favorite illegitimate child, he chose me, wanted to send me to a prestigious high school, and I accepted it! He sent me to the best Jesuit university, and I accepted it! Do you know why?! So that I could go back at one point and cut his throat with a sugar cane knife! His neck, and those of his kind! And that's how it happened! I got the very best upbringing at the high school, I could absorb everything that you could call culture from the best teachers, the Jesuits taught me not to back down for anything, to get my goal across any hurdle, I needed some Jesuit egoism and cruelty! And I knew then why I existed! So that those people there, on my father's sugar cane plantation, could stand tall! They chased me out of here, I went to Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, anywhere where I could provoke people, the last slave Indians, I was preparing for a return, yes! And then I met somebody for whom borders of countries didn't exist, for whom the revolution – not the revolution! To free the people with me, that was what he held as his life's goal! Yes, this was him, my best friend, with whom I fought every fight to the end! And it was successful! And here I am! I'm here talking to you, a heavily made-up actress, me, the vanquisher and leader

of the revolution! And he wanted to go further, I didn't send him! Whatever those big-headed people in the stupid secret service told you! He went on his own accord, everywhere where his help was needed! Yes, the people often didn't want it, the black Congolians weren't interested in what Che Guevara called freedom. They didn't know what it was. It would have been a bigger effort on their part to learn what freedom was, to figure out why they walk on two feet and why they stuff their faces with meat with their hands! Yes! And he went to Bolivia on his own too! I know the propaganda whispered that Fidel's best friend was increasingly uncomfortable for him, that the big leader was leaning more towards compromises, but go into the streets and ask any of the shoe shine children what the truth is! They'll tell you! And you know what? I'll tell you something too, something which was a state secret until now, understand, no one knew about it! But I'll tell you, and it's possible that, if I tell you, the Bolivian president turns back and starts a war with us! I went for Che, where he was fighting! I sat one of my body doubles in my chair, there are enough of them, only my brother Raoul knew, nobody else! I went for him by boat, by fisherman's boat, then through the Amazon, with three of my soldiers. I wanted to find him, to bring him out of there, because I saw the same thing you saw, that the time for a revolution hadn't yet arrived, Che couldn't yet accomplish what he went for! For weeks we cut our way through, trying to avoid the villages! And I reached the destination, I reached it! Just too late...I saw two days too late... Che Guevara's body was cut in four pieces. And in front of a church in a small town... his head... and his torso... one part... without arms... his insides were hanging out... they already took his heart, cut it out, ate it, I don't know... that's where I met with him... that's where he was... it was late night... I remember... out of my rage I killed at least twenty locals... for what, it wasn't necessary, what could they have done... they were there. The heart... I would have brought it, held it to my face, if I could... but I was late for that too... I was late... from then on I would never be late from anywhere! NEVER! FROM ANYWHERE!!!! Do you see this belt on me?! I even have it at night... this is his belt, I took it off his bloody pants there, his abused body hung on a hook above me... that's enough.

GINA

Don't worry, I won't tell this to anyone...

FIDEL

Get the hell out of here. With your stupid camera man, and your European questions...this here is my land, there is nothing here for you. I can't offer you a film role, your Spanish accent annoys me...go.

GINA

This was a rehearsal, Fidel... I just wanted...

FIDEL

I don't care about what you wanted. I'll attain a jet for you tomorrow with which you can fly back to Florida. And you can do whatever you want.

/softly/ Get the hell out of here.

/silence. Gina stands up, thinks, then starts to leave, she turns around, but Fidel doesn't look at her. Gina leaves. Fidel sits. He stares ahead. On the canvas in the background are photos of Fidel's life, he shakes hands with people, then Gina's photos of people. For a moment it's as if Fidel and Gina's photos run together, but then they separate and are increasingly distant from one another/

FOURTH MEETING

/An airport's glass terminal. In the background pictures are projected, the airport, planes are coming and going, Gina sits by herself with a small suitcase. Fidel arrives./

FIDEL

It's possible that the jet is a little bit late.

GINA

I'm surprised. Where are you travelling?

FIDEL

I'm not travelling anywhere. Not now.

GINA

Then you came to the wrong place. There are travellers here.

FIDEL

I came after you.

GINA

Did I leave something behind in the hotel?

FIDEL

Yes.

GINA

What?

FIDEL

Something... that I can't show you.

GINA

Yevtushenko.

FIDEL

What?

GINA

Nothing. It just came to mind. You wanted to say something poetic.

FIDEL

Possibly.

GINA

What should we do? This is how it worked out. One man cannot be both a good statesman and poet.

FIDEL

Are you travelling?

GINA

No. I came to the zoo. Is this not it?

/Fidel laughs, sits down/

FIDEL

In this kind of glass terminal...

GINA

It's particularly opportune for being shot in the head from any direction. I know. I learnt this here. How much is the plane delayed?

FIDEL

I'd like if you stayed a bit.

GINA

Then I'll go with the Bogota plane. There's a connection to Rome from there as well.

FIDEL

We didn't finish the interview.

GINA

Yes. We finished it. Moreover, I can't even be upset with you. You were right.

FIDEL

Perhaps I reacted...a little more strongly...than was necessary.

GINA

You reacted as you should have. And you were right. Here is a stupid actress, who in essence lives just from her past, with regards to the movies, she figures out that she wants to sculpt again, that's fine. You

don't hurt anyone with that. But I figured out that I'm going to do interviews. With big names, I started with Yevtushenko. It didn't work out. A poet, he can't talk, just write. The whole thing was a struggle. He was just staring at me after each question, just staring, never said a word. He was tugging on his fifty year old red suit, and staring, staring under my skirt, it was very annoying, I didn't know how to place my legs.

FIDEL

We didn't hear his voice here either. He just learnt this much in Spanish:
I want another rum.

GINA

And you were going to be the second. But this is a profession. And I failed. I'm going home, and I'm not going to do this kind of stupid thing anymore.

FIDEL

But then you won't get the money from the RAI. They promised you a lot, a thousand for the interview. Fidel doesn't give everyone an interview.

/silence, Gina stares at Fidel/

FIDEL

Four million lira. Not a small amount of money. From that you could pay the creditors who want to take away your villa. Via Appia Antica 1. Right? It must be beautiful. I've seen it in pictures. Perhaps, if I make it there once...I'd like to make it there once. The Via Appia Antica... the road more than a thousand years old... ancient trees. It must be beautiful.

GINA

How in the hell...

FIDEL

If you don't want an interview, I would be able to offer a starring role in the best theatre here. You'd be a big success. Everyone would want to see you. That slight accent wouldn't matter.

GINA

Sorry. I hate the theatre.

FIDEL

Me too.

GINA

Well we have something in common after all.

FIDEL

Then stay here. Be my cultural minister.

/Gina laughs/

FIDEL

I'm speaking seriously.

GINA

It'd be good. Gina Lollobrigida minister at Fidel's.

FIDEL

There's lots to do yet. Okay, we implemented the compulsory education...did you know that my mother didn't know how to write? She was illiterate. But she could tell beautiful stories. She learnt from her mother, and her mother from the sea gods, from Jemanz, or someone else. Religious icons hung in her room, with the stories of the saints. I stood beside her, and she told me the stories. She told stories beautifully. How did she learn them? I don't know. She couldn't have read it anywhere. She couldn't write, but she collected many pictures, actually, she painted herself. She mixed paint from the sea algae, from all kinds of flowers. Then she went out to the rocks, she painted on those. I went out

there not long ago. I restored them. One of my assassins was a restorer and he renewed my mother's colors, that's how he stayed alive. I let him go. They're there since. They just soak in the ocean winds. But the situation is different now. Everyone knows how to write, to read. There's electricity everywhere, I made sure the entire country had electricity. That's how the revolution works. If I watch the smiling faces of children going to school... we need Yevtushenko for that, to write about what I feel. Now that they know how to write, and they see what they're writing, now they need someone to tell them what and how to write. How. How can they be useful for one another, if they write, if they shine. I've been looking for a man for that for a long time.

GINA

You keep many poets and writers amongst your people, why not pick one of them?

FIDEL

This is the most important, this I can't entrust to just anyone. I'll give you five thousand pesos monthly, you'll get a car and suite in one of the better hotels. We'll enter into a five year contract.

GINA

I hurt you this much yesterday?

FIDEL

Yes. You hurt me yesterday, but this is how I usually repay it.

GINA

We have nothing to do with each other...Fidel. You're right. I'm a spoiled Italian actress, you're one of the most important figures of world history. Even if you're called a monster, or a murderer. Napoleon was that too, the Duce as well, Caesar too, and all the rest. What do I want here? What kind of questions can I ask you? Aside from that I'm flustered. I played historic parts in films. But to meet with the real thing. Who, moreover, is not even old. Or I mean, still has things ahead of him to do. A dictator,

with a future. Frightening. What can I ask you? My first question about your friend brought a tantrum out of you. Because I asked it badly. This doesn't work for me. And if you answer, and I record it? It's possible that you might do something in a year that makes the whole thing questionable. No, you need someone else for this.

FIDEL

You could make another attempt.

GINA

Where is my cameraman? He should have been here a long time ago.

FIDEL

I had him brought back to the hotel.

GINA

Why? Is the plane delayed that much?

FIDEL

No. Just because I knew you wouldn't travel away anyway.

GINA

Arrogant president. I've never seen such an arrogant president. That is... you're not angry?

FIDEL

Not angry?

GINA

Could we continue... the work?

FIDEL

Could we continue the work?

GINA

We're not going to get anywhere if you just say whatever I say.

/Fidel jumps up/

FIDEL

We'll never accomplish anything like this. I'll arrange for your luggage to be brought back to the hotel. Is it satisfactory for you there?

GINA

Why, is there a better hotel?

FIDEL

No. But I moved you to another suite from which you can see the ocean.

GINA

Finally. I figured, until now...

FIDEL

I didn't dare. It's easiest to shoot from the direction of the ocean. There are even diver-snipers.

GINA

I'll...only rarely go out on the balcony.

FIDEL

We'll do the interview, either it will be good, or not. Either way they'll pay you, you'll pay out your house, done. It was already worth it.

GINA

You're right.

FIDEL

Then come on. I don't have time. Back to the hotel.

GINA

Is that an order?

FIDEL

Yes. And I really don't like when my orders are criticized

GINA

Okay. Then I'll give you another chance.

/they leave, Gina stops, slumps down/

GINA

Not working. I'd like to see you as a blood-steaming dictator, a stupid idiot serial killer, how they portrayed you before me in Rome, then in Florida. That's why they sent me. Or at least... that's why I wanted to come here. I wanted to tame a wild animal.

FIDEL

This...was partially successfully...I feel a bit tamed, since you're here... I don't kill as much as before.

/they laugh/

GINA

I'd like to go back with a taxi, not with your chain-wheeled tank.

FIDEL

So it shall be. We'll go out in front of the airport, hail a taxi, and full speed ahead. Let's live dangerously!

GINA

What a hero! My hero!

/they laugh, go out. Behind on the screen are pictures of Havana, travelling, people, faces/

FIFTH MEETING

/a hotel room, Gina is preparing for the interview, she's writing on papers, in the meantime Cuban songs play softly from an old music box. From outside, unexpectedly, two gunshots; Gina jumps up, but a smiling Fidel is already entering/

FIDEL

No worries, something was moving behind the big vase.

GINA

Assassin?

FIDEL

I don't know, I was hurrying, my people will look. Do you like it?

GINA

Do I like what?

FIDEL

The music. This is the player that I had brought.

GINA

I don't know, I've been preparing for the interview since dawn... I hope that you have time now?

FIDEL

Now I do. I would have gone to New York, to speak at the UN, but my American friend arranged that I wouldn't have to. That they wouldn't receive me.

GINA

I understand.

FIDEL

This is democracy for you people, I suppose.

GINA

This isn't my expertise. But we learnt to speak out. That's how it should be.

FIDEL

I don't mind. At least this way I can stay with you. What are these papers?

GINA

I told you. I've been preparing since dawn. Sit down there... or wait...no, the angle isn't good there because of the window...you're right, sometimes something pops up from the ocean, I don't really dare to go out on the terrace.

FIDEL

Those are my divers. They're watching out for you. And in their free time they shoot a lot of tuna under the water, that's what we supply to the hotel's kitchen. How do you want us to be?

GINA

I thought we'd discuss a few things ahead of time, but just briefly, in a few sentences, so that I'll know what to ask in front of the camera... whew, this is harder than I thought.

FIDEL

Can I suggest something?

GINA

Of course.

FIDEL

If you prepare an interview with Mao Tse-tung next time, don't let him know that you're inexperienced. You're a great actress, you can play anything. Even a professional reporter.

GINA

Of course, I'm not that stupid. But the situation is that the two of us... somehow we've become closer to one another...than that I could play the dancing monkey. At any rate...I saw in the news...the Bogota plane crashed into the ocean.

FIDEL

Yes, our planes are in very bad condition. No wonder. Continue.

GINA

First about your childhood... since that explains your later steps, I think.

FIDEL

Exactly. I already referred to this, what kind of relationship I had with my father and my mother.

GINA

Certainly. I remember this. I even wrote this down.

FIDEL

The number twenty six is dominant in my life. I was born in 1926, on August 13 – this is half of twenty six – at about two in the morning.

GINA

That's clear. That's how your soul is a guerrilla.

FIDEL

What do you mean?

GINA

The effect of the night, how we are born determines our nature, two in the morning is a time for conspiracies, that's how you became a conspirator.

FIDEL

I would like if you used the word revolutionary.

GINA

Of course, naturally.

FIDEL

Batista, the dictator of the island made a coup in 52, which was double 26.

GINA

You were twenty six at the beginning of the fight. Moncado's siege took place on July 26, that's how the July 26 Movement was born.

FIDEL

Exactly!

GINA

On the twenty sixth they landed on the shore of Mexico to overthrow Batista's regime.

FIDEL

And since you're here, you have to have this kind of number in your life.

GINA

There is. I'll be twenty-six years old. So... let's not get this far ahead of ourselves. I'll also ask what you remember from your childhood...

FIDEL

The cock fights. Every Sunday during sugar cane harvest they had a cock fight. The Haitian foreign workers and the other strugglers, they had no other chance to make a bit of extra money. They riled up the poor roosters – whoever won got a nice bit of money, whoever lost became even more destitute. No, no I didn't like this 'sport', I hated the cock

fights, but I saw hopeful faces in them. These pitiful faces had one hope, how a few infested roosters finish each other off...I never forgot those faces.

GINA

What sort of relationship did you have with the immigrants?

FIDEL

Me? None. I never made a difference. I knew that life was even harder in Haiti, we needed the physical work force for harvesting the cane. After the Spanish invasion, there weren't many left on the island. You know that this island, where we're sitting now, they exterminated the entire native population?

GINA

No, I didn't know that....

FIDEL

The entire native population. In some of the Latin American countries there are some indians left, here not even one.

GINA

Your father also came from Spain...

FIDEL

But not during the inquisition... a little bit sooner. My father lived in a two by three meter rented house on a Spanish plantation, and struggled with my mother. They heard they could come here, they'd get land, everything for the Spanish. That's how they came here.

GINA

Did they baptize you?

FIDEL

Yes. But way after I was born. One priest came out here to our region annually, and he didn't always have time to baptize everyone. I was about five, I was already going to the local school, I learnt to read, to write. I was trying to get ahead as quickly as possible so I could teach my mother as well, who...

GINA

Was illiterate, I know...was it successful?

FIDEL

No, because my father would have feared a woman who could read and write. That's another reason why he sent me to the capital city to study further. So I would not teach my mother. He was afraid of us. An educated, literate, mother-son pair would have easily figured out how they could get their legal rights. That's why they didn't let the women learn how to read and write.

GINA

Did you have holidays... like Christmas, that kind of thing... did the capitalist Santa-figure reach here?

FIDEL

No. We always had only the three wise men, who were going on a camel. Little boys had to write letters, I wrote my first letter to him at the age of five, I asked for all kinds of things, I put the hay and water under the bed...

GINA

Water and hay?!

FIDEL

For the camels. That was the custom. But it didn't matter, I never got anything. The camels ate the wet hay, but there were no presents. Back

then I thought it was a stupid custom, that we put out food for the camels but not for the three wise men.

GINA

That's okay, that's not so... you'll tell me in front of the camera...67

FIDEL

If I got anything, I took it over to the Haitian families, gave it to one of the kids. The regime of general Batista treated them as slaves, but he fed us, and housed us, because he needed us. Sometimes they even sent doctors to the compounds. But they did not care about the Haitians, let them die, worst case they'll take them back. Once a big ship came for them, for the dead or dying Haitian workers, and their families...they threw them onto the boat with a pitchfork. I fell in puppy love with a Haitian girl... they threw her up there too, she was sick, they pierced her body, that's how she got on the boat. She only survived for a few minutes. I was there. I climbed up on the ship. They drove the bodies on in thousands. Whether they'd take them home, or threw them into the ocean along the way.... who knows... I think they took them home, because they asked for money from the relatives there... and they didn't want to lose that money. I was about six or seven... I wanted to burn the ship down, they were transporting petroleum, I lit it and was screaming from the deck, I think I was screaming for a very long time... in front of me was the Haitian girl's pierced body... yes, I remember this exactly, they threw me in the water, started to extinguish the boat, my father came for me, beat me. What's it to you, he said? I knew already what my fate would be. Do you have any questions about how I became a revolutionary? Why we wanted to break Batista's reign?

GINA

I would have until now, but not anymore...

FIDEL

In 1898 the island became independent, when the Spanish were beaten by the Americans, but the people of the island immediately renewed the fight

against the new rule. The Americans could not defeat us, the island remained independent. I used to say this was the last century's Vietnam for the Americans. But they quickly recovered, helped people like Batista to power, who completely handed the nation to them, they could buy the land, the mines, the utilities, everything...

GINA

I would like to get your own personal side in this interview...

FIDEL

Are you afraid?

GINA

Of what?

FIDEL

That you may have to take sides later.

GINA

Yes, I think I'm afraid, a little.

FIDEL

So.

GINA

Because this is a dictatorship, and you're a dictator. Everyone knows this.

FIDEL

I had my first encounter with Marxism in law school.

GINA

I didn't ask this.

FIDEL

I thought that Marxism was the only theory in whose name you could fight against all the repressors. And it was completely in line with my upbringing, with the Jesuits. The Jesuits are Marxists, if I really dig deep. They demand the same from life and from society. The bible is the first Marxist text. Have you ever thought of that?

GINA

A Communist society based on Marxism completely put half of the world into poverty...

FIDEL

Could be. There are some places where leaders like Batista come to power. For their own interest. But there are others who come into power for beliefs. I, for example, for beliefs. Dictator! Do you know how many of us reached the shore in Mexico, to overthrow Batista?!

GINA

I read there was about seventeen...

FIDEL

Old weapons. And from this became a revolution! Do you think we didn't need a nation for this? The entire population of the island? What dictator? Wherever the majority of the people make decisions, why is that a dictatorship?

GINA

The people, in free elections...

FIDEL

A crippled, illiterate nation, without roads, schools, hospitals, without sewer systems, without drinking water, housed in shacks, do you expect these kind of people to have a general electoral right?!

GINA

Don't yell.

FIDEL

While they can see that behind the high stone fences the upper class lives well in unbelievable, luxurious surroundings?! In my opinion, the injustice was unimaginable, the humiliation of other people...

GINA

Thank you, but in front of a camera, don't...

FIDEL

If I take everything into consideration, all the moral values which the Jesuits ingrained in me, the vocation of Jesus for the poor, the things I learnt at law school, a lot of things, that I started to value and respect, human dignity, the sense of duty, all this is the base for my gaining a political consciousness! And in my case it wasn't because it was a pre-destined order, that I have to live in poor, proletariat, peasant surroundings, because my father wanted to give me everything – my conviction is the result of thinking, common sense, emotion, and deep, deep beliefs.

GINA

Light one up. I'll allow it.

FIDEL

I had to go my own way! To work out the revolutionary beliefs! Communism is much closer to God than capitalism ever will be! Communism holds the same values important that the Christian church does, capitalism was built on the destruction of these values! What did you say before...

GINA

To light up. I can see you're agitated.

FIDEL

I'm not agitated! You said... that you can't handle cigar smoke...

GINA

But I can handle it now. And give me one too.

FIDEL

I brought...a slimmer one for you...meant for women...

GINA

And where did they roll this one...

FIDEL

On the thighs of young, virgin men.

GINA

Really?

FIDEL

No.

/silence, Fidel calms down/

FIDEL

I became a supporter and admirer of José Martí... he was a leader of the struggle for independence in the last century...even then a believing Marxist. I was a deeply committed admirer of the of the people's heroic struggle and fight for independence. José Martí's struggle for independence was full of martyrs... the Spanish blackmailed him, if he steps on the island, they'll execute the university students who were just preparing to rebel... José Martí hesitated, but the university students got guns and in massacre shot one another, themselves, so that Martí could step on the island. Even today... not many people know this. I didn't know then what there was elsewhere, in China or the Soviet Union, or other communist countries... we knew the plight and misery of Latin America. And the "Communist Manifesto." That's how we got back the people's power.

GINA

Thank you, that's enough. What was your favorite sport?

FIDEL

No one wanted more parties then, to organize a communist party. I had to see after coming to power that the real colonization was not the acquisition of land. It was the exploitation of the economy. That the current fees be paid to an American capitalist here on the island. If you want to build a road, you can't do it with your own people, because you have to use a stipulated American company for it. If you want a bank, it can only be American, with American profits.

GINA

Your favorite food? Do you remember what kind of things your mother cooked?

FIDEL

These things had to be changed. Nationalization. That's what they call it. Give power into the hands of those who live here, who work here. It wasn't easy. It was the most difficult. You can attack a country with military forces, fight in guerrilla warfare, it's all nothing compared to this. When a global agglomerate welfare state feels itself under threat because of aspirations for independence... then you get true difficulties. Then they call you a dictator, a mass murderer, an executioner, they try to turn your fellow fighters against you, to twist your every word... that's not easy. Che Guevara didn't easily handle this. He really wanted to kill, he wanted something else than what I had imagined... I thought, as a lawyer I thought that this can be done legally, as a Jesuit I thought that this can be done in faith... that's why I sent him away to „export the revolution,” as you said. And now we're sitting here, no? In an economic embargo for decades. We have our own oil, industry, vision. And added to it, thirty year old American cars that were left here. You can't take everything off an island. It's crazy. What they left here, we use. That's it. Like the Italians. We insist that what we have we renew, we like.

GINA

Can we prepare for the interview?

FIDEL

I apologize. I forgot myself.

GINA

What is your favorite sport?

FIDEL

In school, soccer and basketball. Then basketball stayed my favorite, I favor it today.

GINA

Your favorite dish?

FIDEL

Refried beans with stewed beef.

GINA

Your favorite author, or book?

FIDEL

Marquez. 100 Years of Solitude.

GINA

Really? I don't know it...

FIDEL

They'll eventually translate it to Italian. For sure.

GINA

I don't know it. Later will you say a few words about it on camera?

FIDEL

Gladly.

GINA

What did you want to be as a child?

FIDEL

A boat captain.

GINA

Lovely. Can I call in the cameraman? Are you prepared?

FIDEL

Of course. Call him.

GINA

Right. And please...

FIDEL

Don't worry. I'm not going to put you in a difficult position. You haven't asked my favorite color yet. That's a good topic too. And what I think about women, I like and respect them. They remind me of my mother, and for a while I didn't have time for my home life, didn't have time to spend on my personal life. There are, there were, relationships, for longer and shorter times, from which I have kids, but because of my work I unfortunately don't see them enough. Is that good?

GINA

Yes, that's fine.

FIDEL

And I'm striving to reach a compromise founded on a mutually beneficial basis with the United States of America.

GINA

They said if you bring this in... it will be a true sensation.

FIDEL

I'll bring it about.

/Gina starts outwards/

FIDEL

Wait!

GINA

Yes?

FIDEL

I watched two more of your movies last night. You truly are a superb actress.

GINA

You're kind.

FIDEL

That Fellini is a moron. He ought to offer you roles.

GINA

Where are you...

FIDEL

I read an interview with you.

GINA

I would have liked to work with him. True. But... it didn't work out. And not even with those like...Antonioni, it was real with him... then not. I couldn't be the first, the second place was occupied, the third remained.

FIDEL

Like the beauty pageant.

GINA

Like there.

FIDEL

And you want me to lie? To talk about my favorite dog?

/silence, Gina thinks/

GINA

No. You're right. Please, talk about the things that you started... about the revolution... how you had the strength and faith through all this to the end... and with who... and what you think of the fact that they hold you as a mass murderer, that the way they teach it is that Fidel has journalists with differing opinions carried out, the nation is miserable, but they are silenced, I'm asking, tell me your own position on this... because this is democracy, that I'm representing here... if possible in such a fervor as you previously said. Just don't raise your voice so much because the audio recording will be bad. Just keep your voice level. We couldn't bring the best technology.

/silence, they smile together/

FIDEL

But your television won't play that.

GINA

Either they'll play it or they won't. If not, let them rot. And I'll pay for the house in some way. Are you ready?

/Fidel just waves an affirmative. Gina goes out of the room, Fidel is alone. In the background, on the canvas, appears a compilation of contemporary Cuba, laughing people, dancing groups, amongst them Gina, looking in amazement./

FOURTEENTH MEETING

/In a cathedral, Fidel is kneeling in a pew, Gina waits. In the background appears a projection of pictures of the Santiago Di Cuba basilica/

GINA

How long are you going to be praying for?

FIDEL

I'm not praying. I'm remembering.

GINA

It's the same thing.

FIDEL

Yes. I think you're right.

GINA

How surprised you are...

FIDEL

Why would I have been surprised?

GINA

That now and then a woman is capable of saying something meaningful.

FIDEL

You're provoking me in vain. I told you that I won't make any statements about my personal matters, because there's none to make.

GINA

Thank you... for bringing me here. I thought that after the several days long interview you'd put me on a plane, and done. Home.

FIDEL

You can't edit this so that they'll broadcast it in your country.

GINA

I'll... accept a part in some television series. They've called until now, I never went.

FIDEL

And I thought... I'd take you around the country. Who knows when you'll come next. I figure you'll never come here again.

GINA

It's far. That's true. It was a nerve-wracking trip. I could have asked why we were sitting in a rickety military helicopter, when in the middle a snow white presidential plane went... but I realized on my own.

FIDEL

In the case of assassination, they would have shot down the white plane.

GINA

How is it possible to live in this kind of fear?

FIDEL

You asked this the day before yesterday as well, in front of the camera.

GINA

You didn't answer.

FIDEL

Because I don't live in fear. You see, here we are together. I was baptized in this cathedral. That's why I became Fidel, because my father was one of the main creditors, and his business partner had just stepped into the cathedral, he came for the due installment, my father yelled „Fidel!,” the priest wrote it in. It could have gone worse.

GINA

And landed here... at that time from Mexico... in the Gulf of Mexico.

FIDEL

Yes.

GINA

And your role model was buried here... José Martí too... you wanted to take me there... to those places...

FIDEL

Yes.

GINA

I'd like to see his grave.

FIDEL

This is possible. It wasn't in the program anyway.

GINA

Then it's possible.

FIDEL

Then yes.

GINA

And when they baptized you... here in this church...did you already have your beard?

FIDEL

Yes. And that's when I lit my first cigar.

GINA

And the others weren't astonished?

FIDEL

No. Everyone lit up, laughed. They filled the church with smoke. The devil ran so far from here, he still hasn't found his way back.

GINA

I'm not sure whether they'll believe me at home... that you, in a church...

FIDEL

That's their job.

GINA

Because their regime doesn't believe in God.

FIDEL

The regime, no. But the people, yes. Do you know how powerful the cult of Our Lady of Mercy is here? Even this basilica was built for her. I think in the history of humanity there was never a people to whom piety was not present.

GINA

Can I sit here beside you?

FIDEL

Of course.

/an organ softly sounds from above/

When Columbus arrived here with his church, ultimately he arrived with the sword and the cross. The sword sanctified the right to conquer, the cross blessed it. Even the Indians who lived here had religious beliefs, every one of them. Those who gave it up, they could join, those who didn't, they executed.

GINA */her voice sounds under Fidel's previous statements/*

A Communist leader! I've never seen eyes like this. Though the Italians know how to look. How many Italians have in some way dizzied themselves in the world. But in these eyes are fresh sunshine. Like fresh tomatoes. God trickles out of them.

FIDEL

When Cortes arrived in Mexico, he found such widespread religiosity, which not even Spain had. The Aztecs were more religious than the Spanish, indeed extremely religious. The man with the victims. Well, the Christians came, shocked at the atrocities in their morals. Though the Aztecs didn't sacrifice people out of cruelty, but rather placed the highest privilege on sacrifice. Just as they think it a privilege in India that the wife burn herself to ashes by the side of her husband. They hold this as the biggest happiness, the biggest reward. The Peruvians were even more religious than the conquerors... I can picture an Aztec, who goes over to Europe before the conquering, because afterwards it would have been increasingly difficult, because they wiped out most of them in the name of Christianity. But when they do. It's possible that they may have called the cassock priest standing in the blazing sun cruel, would have been amazed at the burning at the stakes in the Inquisition... the religious sanctions... or let's just see, how many Christians were killed in your Rome after Jesus?

GINA / *her voice sounds under Fidel's previous statements/*

I counted everything. I'm not playing stupid mother roles. Perhaps, I should stay here? The church is painted so beautifully. It's not paint, that doesn't fade so brightly, the colors faded brightly, and as they fade, more brightness, more joy. What kind of nation is this, what kind of person? Beautiful in decay? Because everything here is a museum, the houses, the cars, the people. And? Don't we need museums? The entirety of Italy lives from them, from its museums and its churches. How he's talking! What beliefs, even these clichés, that such a person can kiss? How stupid you are, Gina, and this in a church... stop these fantasies immediately. Concentrate on the church architecture, after all that's your profession. There is an arabesque influence... there... interesting, Asian...Egyptian?!... how did that come to be here?

FIDEL

In three hundred years how many Christians? While the powerful Catholic church was developed? And Protestantism? How many casualties came with the emergence of Protestantism? Can you tell me? Every new regime, every new church, is born in blood. Not much blood poured here. We

didn't kill priests. Why would we? Christianity and the original Cuban religions resulted in such an interesting mixture, which is the basis for many types of religions... anxiety for the possibility of a world of solace, the release of death, the rationale for birth, everything that is unexplainable. In this cathedral, where we are now, there will be mass with a smiling priest, afterwards they'll dance and sing, first in here, then out on the streets. I should ban this? I should prosecute this? Why?

GINA / *her voice sounds under Fidel's previous statements/*
This country ought to be left to be whatever it wants to become. It would be worth a try... how interesting, at home I already planned that I'll disappear from the world, I'll wile away my time with sculpture, photography, then I'll arrange a stunning death for myself, spectacular, beautiful, so that they'll remember me. But now, that he's talking all kinds of nonsense here beside me, now I want to live! I want to live! / she laughs/

FIDEL

Hey, you're not even paying attention to me!

GINA

Of course I am! Don't tell me that the persecution of the churches is just Communist propaganda...

FIDEL

I don't know how it is in other places. I live here. Amongst a religious, historically divided, downtrodden people. And my job is to make sure they live their lives more easily.

GINA

More easily... for that you could come to us, to Italy, to the Germans, the British... they live much easier. They live in the lap of luxury. And sixty

kilometers from here in Florida, the people live with dignity, as I know... in Florida, or in Paris, I haven't seen tin shanties...

FIDEL

Not yet. You haven't seen them yet. You will. The tin shanty is a stage. We're still here, yes. I used to walk out to the suburbs, the situation is aggravating, of course through the eyes of a European. But even from there they're taking the children to kindergarten... there has never been this kind of institution in this country. Since we've been in control ten thousand nursery schools have been built, did you know? And if there's some kind of problem, they go to the doctor for free, or to the hospital. Have you seen our hospitals?

GINA

Okay, let's say, those are in order...

FIDEL

Or you just go out to the beach, dance, and you're healed. Do you know why there's such prosperity everywhere you turn?

GINA

Because humanity turned their inventions towards prosperity, not towards war...

FIDEL

Because for now there is a balance at work. Half the world lives in Socialism. Half! That's not a few. Yes, these are closed societies, they don't let their members out to capitalist countries. That's why they themselves can live so well. But this is a very delicate balance. They tried to break it. How many Vietnamese lives did it cost? Three to five million?

GINA

Why? How many people's lives did the Angolan exported revolution cost?

FIDEL

You see. Balance. And did they win in Vietnam?

GINA

No. Did they win in Angola?

FIDEL

Yes. There, yes. Give another example. They won, just as here. Because here there wasn't a socialist revolution, as with you in Europe, at least as they teach it. Here there was a social revolution. The affluent capitalists put the indigenous Central Americans in such deep poverty that there was a necessity for a true revolution, so that these people can live like they do now. But that just worked here. And now there is some balance. As the imperialist forces win...

GINA

Jesus, it's as if I was in some kind of seminar!

FIDEL

Sorry, I'm almost done... as they win, if they win... and the awful crowds swarm your prosperous dreams with demagogic propaganda, looking for prosperity, freedom, or what they think it is... do you know what happens then?

GINA

You're trying to say that the reason we live in comparative prosperity is because the other half of the world is captive? Yes, captive, because they can't move freely, they can't think freely. You, too, lock away journalists if they speak against the regime, you shut them in prison, whoever dares to open their mouth against the regime, no? You deny this too? Don't deny this, everyone knows this. Okay, we lock away the most extreme leftists at home, we remove the extreme communists from the streets at

home, that's true, but it's just because of order, because there needs to be order. And yes, you may be right in that, if socialism suddenly and unexpectedly disappeared now, it's possible that those who until now lived locked up would overrun us, and so, we'd endure it somehow, and perhaps you're right, that the women here do not necessarily yearn to run around expensive stores and shriek for the newest face creams, perhaps that's why they're so beautiful, but at least they should have the opportunity to choose. Of course, if you gave it now, who would stay at home, right?

FIDEL / *his voice, we hear it as under Gina's previous monologue/*

Since when do you not use your perfume, dizzying, entirely dizzying, particularly how you speak. The first day I thought that I would pass out from the cloud of fragrance, but you noticed, since then you don't use anything. Women think that they truly undress if they take off all their clothes. No, it's if they let out the true female scent from themselves, the scent which was packed into them by the creator, from which flows the woman, the young girl, the Virgin Mary's scent, forgive my mother, that I say this right in your house, but she's never been this close beside me, and you know, you know how I feel, what I mean, you know, how I feel, she put down the lies for my sake, and accepted the charms given by nature. Every woman has a scent that no one else smells, just the person to whom it calls, who exhales from herself. And there is no more sacred initiation. Gratitude stems from it, thankfulness. I'll confess for these thoughts, or I'll tell the party secretary.

GINA

Right? I'm right? I can see on your face that you thought about what I said now!

FIDEL

You're going away from here, in Florida the CIA will immediately bring you in, kindly question you. You'll have to say what you talked about

with me, then they'll look at the film. That you've recorded with me to this point.

GINA

Yes, because this is the law.

FIDEL

You'll go home, the Italian secret service will be watching you for years, they'll tap your telephone, they'll question you there too... and this film will never be aired. Even if just because of democracy.

GINA

Don't count on that. It's possible that Italian democracy is strong enough...

FIDEL

So be it. Do you see how beautiful that portrayal of the Virgin Mary is?

GINA

I noticed it already. It's as if her eyes were real. Her gaze.

FIDEL

That's why I brought you here. So you'd see that too. For me, this neighbourhood... this part of the island... is my strength. My perseverance. My everything. I've shared this with very few people until now...

GINA

And here in this basilica you feel safe...

FIDEL

Yes. They haven't yet tried to assassinate me in a church. The church is able to stop this kind of murderous intent. This... it's not like this in Europe.

GINA
No.

FIDEL
I could have offered that you shoot a movie here. A major role. Whatever you want.

GINA
You know I wouldn't have been able to accept it.

FIDEL
But you thought about it?

GINA
Yes... under the palm trees, a good movie... with a good cast... I won't say...

FIDEL
But then they would never again employ you at home.

GINA
Probably not.

FIDEL
That's why I didn't offer. You would have been capable of accepting.

GINA
Thank you. About these... religious questions, it would have been good to record a few minutes... about what you think about this.

FIDEL
It's still possible today. Once we get back.

GINA
You're willing?

FIDEL
Why not?

GINA
Well, then we'll prepare a few shots of the basilica... of the inside...

FIDEL
The camera man is out with my bodyguards.

GINA
I know.

FIDEL
You're not calling him in?

GINA
Just shut your mouth for a little bit. Let there be a bit of silence. After that.

GINA
Give me your hand.

FIDEL
Why?

GINA
My father said. The prayer is stronger if someone is holding your hand. He always held mine at church. Give it here. I want to pray.
/Fidel stares at Gina in wonder, reaches out his hand, Gina holds it, prays. Fidel stares at the woman. The organ strengthens, in the background are Latin American pictures of god, a panorama comprised of statues of god. It's now evident that Gina is sobbing. Fidel anxiously moves closer, but Gina prevents his movement, snatches back her hand, and runs out of the church, Fidel stares after her in surprise./

FIFTEENTH MEETING

/ in the glass terminal of the airport. Fidel and Gina stand facing each other/

GINA

I only have to wait about six hours for the connection, first in New York, then on to Rome.

FIDEL

And why are you saying this now?

GINA

Isn't that what you asked?

FIDEL

No, I asked if you enjoyed yourself here.

GINA

That's what you asked? When?

FIDEL

Immediately before you would have answered something else.

GINA

Sorry. The planes are clamoring here.

FIDEL

I hope that you enjoyed yourself here.

GINA

Yes. It was a pleasant trip. The inaccessible Fidel!

FIDEL

We left the coconuts in your luggage, though it's against the rules to take them. And they're heavy.

GINA

I'm not the one carrying them. My cameraman is. You inspected my suitcases?

FIDEL

It's mandatory.

/silence/

GINA

You think that... we'll meet again?

FIDEL

We're too far apart. I don't mean...

GINA

I know what you mean. Or not.

FIDEL

I'm happy to wait.

GINA

How long?

FIDEL

I'll try to live for a long time. So that perhaps there's a chance... that we might meet again.

GINA

I could undertake this too. I'm trying to live as long as possible.

FIDEL

Of course, we can't take it too far. But if you live for a long time, and I do too, and I know that you're still alive, though we both lived for a long time already, and we're both very old, then I'll know that you're living because you think we'll still meet. And also because I think so too.

GINA

Maybe this is the secret of eternal life.

FIDEL

And if so... if we can compete in this... then perhaps there was truly a reason that you came.

/silence, they look at one another/

GINA

I think... right now, I'd really... really like if you hugged me.

/Fidel wordlessly hugs her, they stand like that/

GINA

Were you always wearing... how do they call it... a bullet-proof vest.

/silence/

GINA

But not now. Now you're vulnerable.

/they're standing, hugging one another. In the background we see an airplane taking off, on the projection screen the blue sky, the plane, eventually the picture changes. We see the RAI presenter's newscast and hear: DEAR VIEWERS, I CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO A CHANGE IN THE SCHEDULED BROADCAST. THE EIGHT O'CLOCK PLANNED FILM INTERVIEW HAS BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO TECHNICAL ERRORS. IT WILL BE PRESENTED AT ANOTHER TIME. WE APOLOGIZE. IN ITS PLACE PLEASE WATCH CHIAO CHIAO BELLA ISOLA...the voice gets quieter, Gina and Fidel continue to be on the stage in silhouette, unmoving./

**Performance rights must be secured before production. For
Contact information, please visit the [Gina and Fidel information page](#).**