

BARCELONA, MAP OF SHADOWS

By Lluïsa Cunillé

Librettist Mallory Catlett

Working from Marion Peter Holt's translation

Composer Mikael Karlsson

CHARACTERS:

He - Lower class husband of SHE (*played by John Kelly*)

She - Upper class wife of HE

Woman - French teacher and friend of HE.

Young Man - Second String Soccer Player/Security Guard

Foreign Woman - Latin American Immigrant

Doctor - Brother to SHE

SCENE 1 (8 pages into 12 page scene)

HE:

I haven't always lived in the Eixample.
My father was from Murcia,
A crane crushed his head while he was working.
But strangely, during the war
he didn't want us to go to the shelters.
My mother and I had to hide under the stairs.
Pause.

WOMAN:

For years I had a room near the cemetery,
but when they started building the Vila Olímpica
I moved to the Raval,
which was fine,
til the developers turned up again
and the joggers.
It's inevitable.
Before, when someone ran down the street
you could be sure there was a good reason.
The police or running late for a wedding.
The act of running has lost all transcendence.
(*Pause. Turns on the radio. Pause.*)
Callas isn't singing.
Pause.

HE:

So you leave tomorrow?

WOMAN:

Monday.

HE:

It can't be after Monday.
Don't forget to tell your students

WOMAN:

I think I'll tell them to beat it.
I'll translate cookbooks and how-to guides.
There's no better way to give into the world
than cooking and hobbies.

HE:

Why don't you ask your old friends for work?

WOMAN:

They'll only give me work to sooth their conscience,
Then I'll go back to French classes.

I like myself more teaching French.
Like being photogenic
Like Juan Rubio Macías,
dancing naked over the corpse of his mother

HE: (*Looking at the photograph.*)
Why is he completely naked?

WOMAN:
Maybe to feel more authentic.
Haven't you ever felt the need to undress
so that people really look at you?

HE: (*Long pause.*)
Sometimes at the Liceu, as a young man,
I disguised myself in secret.
I'd go to the wardrobe room
and try on costumes, from every period.

WOMAN:
Alone?

HE:
If anyone had seen me,
I would have been fired
immediately.

WOMAN:
So no one has ever seen you in disguise?

HE:
No.

WOMAN:
Would you have liked that?

HE:
I don't think so.

Pause. Lights down.

Scene 2

A very tidy room in the same apartment. The same night. The YOUNG MAN is stretched out on the bed and is only wearing walking shorts. SHE is standing. There is a television turned on without the sound. There is a pistol on the night table.

SHE:
You're not going out tonight?

YOUNG MAN:

No. I hurt my knee

Monday they take an x-ray.

Pause.

SHE:

Have you told them at work?

YOUNG MAN:

Not yet.

SHE:

Have you told them you're moving Monday?

YOUNG MAN:

Not Monday.

I need time to find someone to help.

SHE:

Then when?

YOUNG MAN:

Next Friday maybe.

It's a lot of going up and down stairs.

Pause.

SHE:

It makes me nervous to know

there's a pistol in my house.

YOUNG MAN:

It's not loaded. *(The YOUNG MAN opens the drawer of the night table and puts the pistol in it without closing it. Pause.)*

I'll return it tomorrow.

SHE:

Aren't you afraid they'll fire you?

YOUNG MAN:

I'll leave before they throw me out.

They're short of hands and they don't pay well.

Pause.

SHE:

Why don't you call your wife?

To help. . . with moving.

YOUNG MAN:

It's been a while.
She's going out with another guy now.
A taxi driver.
I thought I would take his cab,
have him drive me all over Barcelona,
then when it's time to pay,
take out the pistol,
And give him a little scare.
Pause.

SHE: (*Looking at the television.*)
Why is there no sound?

YOUNG MAN:
I turned it off.
Pause.

SHE:
It's Barça's playing?

YOUNG MAN:
It's an old game.
I can't stand the sportscasters,
They know nothing about football.
Pause.

SHE:
I don't see you.
Are you playing?

YOUNG MAN:
I never played on the Barça's first team.
I play on the Jupiter team now.

SHE: (*SHE sits in a chair.*)
You keep your room very tidy,
such a tidy room. (*Pause.*)
Did you hear all the commotion this afternoon?
When it's not a Gaudí year it's a Dalí year,
All that noise makes me nervous . . . (*Pause.*)
Do you know
I've never climbed
the Sagrada Familia?
For years I haven't gone to a museum
When I was young the museums were empty.
There were no guards.
Anyone could grab a painting and carry it home.

YOUNG MAN:

The museums are still empty.
People would rather steal from shopping malls.
That's where everyone goes now.

SHE:

Do you work in a shopping mall?

YOUNG MAN:

I move around.

SHE:

Do you have a lot of work?

YOUNG MAN:

We can't keep up with the demand
As the rich get richer
they're more and more afraid
That someone will rob them
of all they can't spend.
Pause.

SHE:

Have you seen my husband?
He went out and still hasn't come back.

YOUNG MAN:

We spoke a while.
He asked when I was leaving.
Three times.
Pause.

SHE:

I went to a bullfight this afternoon.
When I was a girl, I went out with a boy,
who liked bullfights.
I didn't tell anyone at home.
They wouldn't have let me go.
I've never gone back til today.

HE:

Did you enjoy it?

SHE:

No. I left before the last fight. (*Pause.*)
Have you ever stopped doing something
or seeing someone, for no reason, all of a sudden?
My father desperately wanted a son.
He ignored me and took refuge in his factory.

After years of trying to be a boy
I wanted someone to set it on fire.
So he would finally pay attention to me.
Then my brother was born.

Pause.

YOUNG MAN:
And your mother?
Did she give you any attention?

SHE:
My mother was hopeless.
When she got married,
she erased her personality.
She did everything my father said
and I soon lost all respect for her.

YOUNG MAN:
People only respect what they're afraid of.

SHE:
I can respect what I admire.

YOUNG MAN:
Did you admire your father?

SHE:
No. I loved him and that was all.

YOUNG MAN:
I've only admired a few football players
now I find football boring.

SHE:
So why do you watch it?

YOUNG MAN:
It's the only thing I understand.

SHE:
Is this a good game?

YOUNG MAN:
No, it's lousy.
They've cut out the dead spots.
I wish I could do that - .
cut out the times in my life
when nothing is happening.
What would be left?

Pause.

SHE:
How old are you?

YOUNG MAN:
Thirty-one.

SHE:
I'm sixty-seven,
I'd like to be thirty years younger.
Thirty-seven is the ideal age for a woman.
not too young or too old
Not too late to change.

YOUNG MAN:
What's the ideal age for a man?

SHE:
I'd have to be a man to know that.

YOUNG MAN:
I'd say fifteen.

SHE:
You're still too young to know.

Pause.

SHE:
What you ought to do is look for a job
That you like and try to keep it.

YOUNG MAN:
I always think that someone else
can do what I'm doing better.
Maybe you've found someone
better than me for this room.
I could stay in the front room, by the door
You'd never see me.
You can pretend I'm not here.

SHE:
I can't pretend I don't see you. (*Pause. SHE looks at the TV.*)
Who won?

YOUNG MAN:
In these old games, Barça always wins.

SHE:

My father went to Barça games, weekly.
Even after he lost the factory.

YOUNG MAN: (*Sings the Barça team song softly.*) “Tot el camp, és un clam. Som la gent blaugrana, tant se val d’on venim, si del sud o del nord. Ara estem d’acord, estem d’acord, una bandera ens agermana. Blaugrana al vent, un crit valent, tenim un nom al cel companys: Barça, Barça, Barça.”

(*SHE gets up.*)

YOUNG MAN:

Stay . . .

SHE:

It’s late.

YOUNG MAN:

I’m not sleepy.

SHE:

My husband is very late.

YOUNG MAN:

Are you afraid he won’t come back?

SHE:

We were supposed to listen to the opera
on the radio.

It’s already started.

Callas is singing. (*Pause.*)

We met at the Liceu,

It was raining.

While I was waiting for a taxi

he told me the story of

how he met Callas.

Apparently, her puppy

got loose on the Ramblas

and he found it.

YOUNG MAN:

Your husband asked me how to load the pistol.

SHE:

Did you show him?

YOUNG MAN:

I told him I had no bullets.

SHE:

He's more afraid of guns than I am.

YOUNG MAN:

Have you ever fired a pistol?

SHE:

Never . . .

My grandfather had one.

He bought it during the labor uprisings.

He was afraid that the workers would lynch him.

The pistol ended up in the back of the closet.

YOUNG MAN:

Do you know how to load it?

SHE:

No, and I don't want to.

I'll lock it up.

SHE gets up, goes over to the open drawer. It appears that SHE is going to take the pistol, but what SHE finally does is close the drawer. Pause.

YOUNG MAN:

Nobody wants a pistol

in plain sight,

but everybody wants

to have their money protected.

You can tolerate

a nightstick but not a pistol.

Your husband's not

so hypocritical.

SHE:

My husband's ill.

It's better to leave him alone.

YOUNG MAN:

When I rented the room

I thought you wanted

someone to keep you safe at night.

SHE:

You're hardly ever home.

YOUNG MAN:

At work they think I live with my mother.

They don't like their guards to live alone

or have marital problems.

At first you treated me like a son.
Ready to waste a Sunday to see me play.

SHE:

I don't know a thing about football.
I don't like it either.
Until you came to live here,
I didn't know anyone who liked it,
not even my father.
A lot of Sundays
Going to see Barça meant
going to the whorehouse.
We all knew it.

YOUNG MAN:

Maybe that's where your husband's gone tonight.

SHE slaps the YOUNG MAN. Pause.

SHE:

Did I hurt you? *(The YOUNG MAN takes her hand and lifts it to his lips and then to his cheek. Pause. SHE withdraws her hand.)*

YOUNG MAN:

I have insomnia.
Stay until I fall asleep.
(SHE sits on the bed. The YOUNG MAN lies back and SHE turns off the TV.)
Don't turn it off. *(SHE turns the TV on again.)*
The last hour,
before your shift ends,
is the longest hour.
With the strangest sounds.
You hear everything.
Things that are never heard.
Voices of people
who aren't there.

SHE:

I hear voices too,
but I don't listen to them.
When I hear them,
I start singing.

(The YOUNG MAN closes his eyes. Pause. SHE sings a passage from the fourth act of Puccini's La Bohème.)

“Sono andati? Fingevo di dormire/ perché volli con te sola restare./ Ho tante cose che ti voglio dire./ O una sola ma grande come el mare,/ come il mare profunda ed infinita . . ./ Sei il mio amor . . . e tutta la mia vita.”

Long pause. The YOUNG MAN still has his eyes closed. SHE gets up slowly, opens the drawer without making a sound and takes the pistol. Lights down.

Scene 3

A very small room. It is the same night. HE is asleep in an armchair, the photograph the WOMAN gave him in his lap. The FOREIGN WOMAN turns on the light, looks at him a moment, then picks up the photograph, looks at it, and puts it down again. HE wakes up. The FOREIGN WOMAN is five months pregnant.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Are you all right?

HE:

Yes, I'm sorry. *(HE sits up and puts the photograph in a pocket.)*

FOREIGN WOMAN:

No, don't get up.

HE:

Sit down. You must be tired.

FOREIGN WOMAN: *(Sits in the armchair.)*

Thanks. *(Takes off her shoes and HE puts them aside.)*

HE:

Still working?

FOREIGN WOMAN:

I'll last till next month.

I move slowly, like a scorpion going backwards. *(Smiles. By the chair there is a fish bowl with two fish, and SHE begins to feed them very carefully.)*

Were you waiting for me?

HE:

Yes, but I fell asleep. *(Pause.)*

Do you need help on Monday?

To move.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

I have friends to help me.

HE:

From the restaurant?

FOREIGN WOMAN:

No. They load trucks with spoiled fruit.

They throw out so much food here.

It's terrible *(Pause. Looking at the fish.)*

They never bump into each other.
That's why I bought them.
This room is so tiny
you can't ever forget
you're in it,
not even in the dark.

HE:
I didn't think you'd stay so long . . .

FOREIGN WOMAN:
I didn't either.
It stuck to me like a shell.
Pause.
I didn't know you rented this apartment.
Your wife told me.

HE:
More than thirty years.
What else did she tell you . . .

FOREIGN WOMAN:
She asked if I'd come to visit.

HE:
She did?

FOREIGN WOMAN:
I don't know if she really meant it.
You can speak to me in Catalan
I need the practice.

HE:
Do you understand it?

FOREIGN WOMAN:
In the restaurant, in the kitchen,
I understand everything.
The funniest word to me
is the word for crawfish - escarmala

HE:
Will you keep working at the same place?

FOREIGN WOMAN:
Nobody's offered anything better.
Some woman stopped me in the street
and asked me to work for her.
I played detective.

What she really wanted was my baby
when I had it.
She said it in a different way,
but I knew which way the wind was blowing.
Pause.

HE:
What are you going to name the baby?

FOREIGN WOMAN:
I still haven't decided. (*Pause*)
Look me in the eyes.
No one here looks me in the eye.
Not even when they want to take your baby.
What would you name it?

HE:
I don't know.

FOREIGN WOMAN:
What about escarmala? (*Pause.*)
I was joking.
Your wife didn't know either.
Here when people don't want to answer,
they say -
I don't know,
and when they don't know,
they say -
I don't want to answer.

FOREIGN WOMAN:
Why have you never asked about the father?

HE:
I thought you'd tell us if you wanted.

FOREIGN WOMAN:
What if I told you it's yours?

HE:
Mine?

FOREIGN WOMAN:
You never thought about it?

HE:
It was only once.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

The night you told me you were sick.

HE:

If you hadn't been here,
I don't know what I would have done.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

It was a sad night for me too.
Kicked out at work, without pay.

HE:

I thought you did it out of pity.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

That too.
I don't want to lie to you.
I thought of having an abortion.
My friends all said I should.
That you were old.
That the baby might not be normal.
But I decided - no.
With a child, I wouldn't feel so lonely.
Pause.

HE:

Have you told my wife?

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Did your wife ever eat anybody?
Did you ever see her eat anybody?

HE:

No . . .
I'm not afraid of her.
Pause

FOREIGN WOMAN:

I'm going to leave the fish and the bowl for you.

HE:

No. Take them

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Something to remember me by - a gift.
Don't feed them too much or they'll burst.
Pause.

HE:

Do you know which hospital?

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Why do you want to know now?
You never showed any interest before.

HE:

I was always in bed when you came home . . .

FOREIGN WOMAN:

But tonight you waited up
Or was it your wife who told you to.

HE:

She had to go out . . .
I wanted to know if things were all right.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

For whom?

HE:

You.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

I'm OK.
And what about you,

HE:

I get tired but I'm fine.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Does it hurt?

HE:

Not much.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

I'm scared it's going to hurt
when the baby comes out.
Don't know if I can stand it.

HE:

During the war,
I wasn't sure I could stand it
But, I got used to it . . .

FOREIGN WOMAN:

I told you not to mention the war
or dead people.
In my house everybody talked
about the dead, day and night.

Nothing smells worse than a wake.
If you were little, you could escape,
play in the street,
but when you grew up,
you had to go a lot farther.

HE:

They shouldn't force anyone to go to a wake.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Did I say force?

Did I say that?

Having to live in this tiny room,
that's what I'm forced to do.
Working all day in a roasting kitchen,
that's something else I'm forced to do.

HE:

That's true.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Don't just agree with me
the way you do with your wife.
I'd rather you argued. (*Pause.*)
Sometimes it's better to get angry
than agree with everybody.

HE:

That's true.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

You're hopeless. *Pause.*
Your wife asked me for my new address.
I avoided the question.

HE:

Pause.
We could do something.
I ask you a question.
You ask me another.
To tell the truth.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

What do you want to ask me?

HE:

You ask first.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

I'd rather you go first.

HE: All right. (*Pause.*)

Why didn't you tell me before about the baby?

FOREIGN WOMAN:

You waited up for me tonight.

HE:

Only because of that?

FOREIGN WOMAN:

You think I want your money? *Pause.*

Now I ask you a question?

HE:

Yes

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Who's the man in the photo?

The one in your pocket.

Is he a friend?

HE: (*Takes out the photograph.*)

No. Someone gave it to me.

He killed his mother

and started dancing on her.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

On his mother?

Why did he kill her?

HE:

I don't know - insanity.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Why did they give it to you?

HE:

I didn't want it.

It was a gift . . .

Like the fishbowl.

Pause.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Can I ask another question? (*Pause.*)

Why do you dress up like a woman? (*Pause.*)

The other day . . .

the bathroom door . . .

half open . . . *(Pause.)*

You don't have to answer.

HE:

When I worked at the Liceu,
sometimes I disguised myself in the costumes.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

As a woman?

HE:

I could dress up as all sorts of things.
When you put on a costume,
you could be another person.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

I put on a costume for a carnival once.

HE:

No, I do it here, at home, just for me.
Pause.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

The dress wasn't very pretty.

HE:

Yes. I know.
Will you tell anyone?

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Does your wife know?

HE:

Yes.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

What did she say about it?

HE:

She didn't say anything.

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Wait . . . *(SHE gets up and searches in a make-up bag.)*
Just putting on a dress isn't enough.

HE:

What do you mean . . . ?

FOREIGN WOMAN:

Raise your head, look up.

You mustn't move. (*SHE starts to put make-up on him. HE grabs her arm to stop her.*)
Did you ever try it?
It'll only take a moment. (*SHE begins to put make-up on him.*)

Lights down.

Scene 4

A large room in the same apartment. The same night. SHE dials the radio to get the opera. When SHE turns around, SHE notices the presence of the DOCTOR who is seated in the shadows.

DOCTOR:
Did I frighten you?
I slipped in as someone else was leaving.

SHE:
I must give you a key.

DOCTOR:
You don't need to.
Pause.

SHE:
It's "La Bohème."
Do you remember it?

DOCTOR:
Bits and pieces . . .

SHE:
It's the third act,
Mimi goes to see Marcello,
the friend of her lover Rodolfo.
Rodolfo intercepts him.
She hides and while she's hidden,
she hears Rodolfo tell Marcello
that she's sick and going to die.
(*Pause*)

You look tired. Have you eaten?

DOCTOR:
At the hospital.
In front of four anorexic girls
I was teaching to eat.

SHE:

They don't know how?

DOCTOR:

They've gotten out of the habit.

SHE:

Why don't you transfer to another area?

DOCTOR:

I'm both fed up and fascinated by it.

One of them told me

that people in the street

look at her as if she's a pig

someone's fattening for the slaughter..

SHE:

Couldn't you go back to surgery?

DOCTOR

What she is isn't enough,

what she appears to be is more important.

That's how women,

before they reach twenty are broken

SHE:

What about men?

DOCTOR:

We take a little longer.

(End of excerpt. 3 pages into an 8 page scene)