

THREE RATS
Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero

CHARACTERS:
GONZALO
NITA (his wife)
ADRIAN (his best friend)

PLACE:
-- Forbes Park, a suburb near Manila.

SCENE:

The living room. A coffee-table in front of the sofa. On left side, a large balcony through which the street lights pour in. On a table near the balcony are a telephone and a lamp. A floor-lamp beside the sofa. Magazines on the tables. The room re-veals the refined taste of the owners.

TIME: Evening, about nine o'clock. August.

GONZALO is seated on the sofa, reading the paper. GONZALO is tall, with a compelling personality. About twenty-seven, he possesses a warm and attractive charm, except for his piercing eyes which can flash with contempt when the occasion demands. He wears a well-cut suit, and a flashing red tie. He speaks with a low caring voice.

NITA, his wife, comes in with a large tray, with a pot of coffee and two cups, etc. NITA is an attractive woman of nineteen. She is rather short, with laughing eyes and a gentle voice. Her expression is innocent, and there is a subtle air of adolescence about her. She wears a striking evening gown.

NITA. Here's the coffee, Gonzalo. (She sets the tray on the table.)

GONZALO (Without lifting his eyes from the paper) Is it hot?

NITA. (Laughing) -- Boiling. (She pours a cup and gives it to him.) Here. (He takes his cup, slowly sips it, without taking his eyes off the paper.) You must be tired from your trip to Baguio.

GONZALO. Not at all, Nita.

NITA Two whole weeks. Long enough for me. I was - lonely.

GONZALO Were you? (Looks at her briefly.)

NITA Of course, Gonzalo. I forgot to tell you. I dismissed the maid this morning. I couldn't stand her insolent ways.

GONZALO. Cora insolent? I never noticed it She was quite efficient, it seems to me -- and we've had her for a good many years

NITA. (Laughing again). No, Gonzalo, remember? We got her when we were married-- and we have been married only seven months (She sits beside her husband and puts her arm around him). Do

you know that the prices of canned goods have gone up?-- And it took me a long time before I could find the right pair of shoes to go with this dress.. Luckily I found what I wanted at Rustan's. By the way, Menchu came this. afternoon and brought me the towels

GONZALO. Hmm?

NITA. You aren't listening, Gonzalo.

GONZALO. Who did you say came?

NITA. Menchu. I had her initial the new towels They turned out to be perfectly charming. Your initials are in blue.

GONZALO. You said somebody came this afternoon?

NITA. (Laughing long). Yes, Menchu, the woman who does the embroidery.

GONZALO. Ah yes. Sorry, Nita. Who else?

NITA. No one else, Gonzalo. (She starts imperceptibly, a flitting across her face. But all this Gonzalo does not notice. Suddenly he puts down the paper and stares at her dress, NITA sits, inexplicably tense.)

GONZALO. Nita.

NITA. (With a slight trembling of the voice).. Yes?

GONZALO. How come?

NITA. What do you mean?

GONZALO. What are you all dressed up for?. (NITA relaxes and laughs again)

NITA. Like it?

GONZALO. Exquisite.

NITA. I'm glad it's to your taste. I'm merely trying it on for the big day tomorrow.

GONZALO. Tomorrow?

NITA. You haven't forgotten, Gonzalo?

GONZALO. Frankly-- it escapes my memory.

NITA. Our wedding sort-- of-- anniversary.

GONZALO. Our first anniversary?

NITA. (Bursting out Laughing.) No, no, Gonzalo We've been married only seven months. We decided, during our honeymoon -- remember? -- to celebrate our anniversary every month of our marriage.

GONZALO Ah, this beautiful forgetful memory of mine.

NITA (Playfully) Yes, I know it has been getting worse lately. Two weeks ago, before you went up to Baguio, we decided to go out and celebrate at the Jai-Alai that's where we met for the first time-- a year ago.

GONZALO. Or like it, definitely.

NITA. (Mockingly, but hurt). Well, I am flattered. Husbands are so hard to please these days.

GONZALO. Where did we celebrate last month?

NITA. We went to Hilton.

GONZALO. And the month before that?

NITA. May I refresh your failing memory? The month before last we had supper at Bon Vivant-- and the previous month we went to La Parrilla and afterwards to Manila Hotel for dancing.

GONZALO. The first month?

NITA. We went, to that panciteria on Carvajal street.

GONZALO. Couldn't we go tomorrow to another panciteria and just have siopao and arroz caldo?

NITA. Oh no, Gonzalo! I want to show off my beautiful dress!

GONZALO: As you wish, Nita. Know something?

NITA What?

GONZALO. You look as beautiful and as young as that night we met.

NITA, But, Gonzalo, do you expect me to turn into an old hag so soon?

GONZALO. I must buy you a present then. What would you like?

NITA. How much can you afford?

GONZALO. The sky's the limit--

NITA. Is business that good?'

GONZALO. I closed a big deal in Baguio-

NITA I saw a diamond bracelet at Estrella del Sur that simply took my breath away.

GONZALO. How much?

NITA. A bargain, practically.

GONZALO. How much of a bargain?

NITA. Ten thousand (GONZALO gives a low whistle. NITA laughs too. She stands up.) That's too much, I know. I was only kidding. But you did' say the sky's the limit, so—

GONZALO. You heard right, Nita. Buy it.

NITA. (Embracing him) -- Oh Gonzalo, thanks! I'm a lucky wo-man to have such a wonderful husband, (GONZALO smiles briefly, but there is irony in his smile. NITA starts putting the cups on the tray.)

GONZALO. Nita, did a man come this afternoon?

NITA. (Stiffening imperceptibly). A man? why-- no.

GONZALO. I mean-- I sent a man to fix the TV set.

NITA. No, nobody came-- aside from Menchu. But there's nothing wrong with our TV, Gonzalo. I was watching my favorite program half an hour ago. (GONZALO, aware that his wife is staring at him, tries to laugh it off.)

GONZALO. I'm sorry-- an agent was selling me a new TV set this morning-- and I thought I had bought it-- oh, what am I saying? This splendid memory of mine, Nita

NITA. (Smiling). And you at the decrepit age of twenty-- seven. GONZALO. (Changing the subject). The coffee still warm?

NITA. (Touching the pot). It is (She fills up his cup again. GONZALO has sat down... As he drinks his coffee, NITA, her back to him, is arranging the tray. GONZALO takes out a piece of paper and unfolds it. NITA turns and sees it.) What's that, Gonzalo?

GONZALO.. (Quietly). Cyanide.

NITA. Cyanide?

GONZALO. Potassium cyanide.

NITA. Is it dangerous?

GONZALO. It should be. People are known to commit murder or suicide-- with it.

NITA. Is it that fatal?

GONZALO. Those are the rumors.

NITA. (Alarmed). Why do you carry it around with you?

GONZALO. Oh-- just as a joke.

NITA. Gonzalo! Carrying poison around isn't a joke.

GONZALO. Well, it isn't the kind of a joke the average person would indulge in, but, Nita, don't bother your pretty little head about it. Cyanide is sold in drugstores, and you wouldn't order closing the drugstores because of it, would you?

NITA. (Sitting beside him). Why, in heaven's name, do you have that poison with you?

GONZALO: It isn't just ordinary poison-- it's an unusual one. I use it in my business. Cyanide is a necessary ingredient in the plating process. We couldn't do without it.

NITA. I understand now, Gonzalo. But I still think you should throw it away. (Taking two or three crystals of cyanide, GONZALO drops them inside the cup. NITA gasps softly.) Gonzalo!

GONZALO; Will you stop worrying? You can throw it away later

NITA. But the cup--

GONZALO You can throw away the cup and the cyanide together.

NITA But the cup is from my favorite coffee set. Adrian gave it to us.

GONZALO He did?

NITA It was his wedding present.... Oh Gonzalo, your memory!

GONZALO I can always buy you another.

NITA You wouldn't find another like it, even if you looked all over town.

GONZALO One set is as good as another.

NITA (Softly but with a strained tone). No, it isn't, Gonzalo. The sentimental value --

GONZALO. People attach too much importance to sentimental value. One should attach himself to nothing and to nobody. (NITA looks at him, aghast)

NITA (Slowly and softly, as if afraid to contradict him). How can you say that, Gonzalo? Attach oneself to nothing and to nobody. Don't I mean anything to you? And Adrian -- your best friend -- you've always been so attached to him.

(GONZALO stares at her briefly, smiles feebly, and goes to her.)

GONZALO Sorry Nita, Business worries and all that sort of thing. You know how deeply attached I am to you.

NITA And to Adrian.

GONZALO And to Adrian.

NITA The doctor told you time and time again to take good care of your hyperthyroid. You refuse to take Lugol. He also told you to avoid any emotional strain.

GONZALO I know, Nita, I know. All this irritability and my high-- strung condition --

NITA (With a conciliatory tone). You should have taken a good rest in Baguio, instead of rushing about with your business--

GONZALO I did try to rest up there, but something unexpected came up -- I got through with my business sooner than I expected.

NITA Something unexpected? Something serious?

GONZALO No, nothing important really. (Changing his tone.) By the way, has Adrian been around?

NITA Not since you left two weeks ago.

GONZALO Does he know I am back?

NITA How could he? You arrived only a few hours ago.

GONZALO Nita, please bring me some whisky, please.

(NITA picks up her cup and puts it in the tray.)

GONZALO (Laughingly). You know what your cousin Chita once said at a party? She said that Filipinos who have bars in their homes are cheap imitators of Hollywood and the American ways, and -- guess what else she said?

GONZALO; What?

NITA. She said drinking in one's home is a sign of decadence. Can you imagine her insolence?

GONZALO. Perhaps she's right, Nita. Perhaps we're becoming decadent (GONZALO still holds the cup with cyanide in it; NITA puts Out her hand to get the cup, when the telephone Tint'. NITA grows slightly tense. She puts down the tray and is about to answer the telephone, but GONZALO rises abruptly, still holding the cup, and goes to the table.) -- Hello?-- Adrian (NITA becomes apprehensive.) Well-- talk about the devil! Nita and I were just talking about you. (NITA pretends to busy herself with the tray, but she is listening.) Oh, I arrived a few hours ago. Where are you now? In the drugstore across the street? Well, drop over. When? Right now-- No, no, Nita and I are still awake. I'll give you exactly one minute. (He promptly puts down the receiver. GONZALO has left the cup on the table.)

NITA. What did he want?

GONZALO. Nothing. He said he was calling from the drugstore. How did he know I was back?

NITA. He probably heard about it.

GONZALO. (After a brief pause.) Naturally.

NITA. (Taking the tray). I'll get the whisky-- (She goes out. GONZALO sits immobile. His eyes turn to the table where the fatal cup lies. He stands up, picks up the cup, and puts it down again. He goes to the balcony, waves his hand at someone he has seen. NITA comes in with a tray.)

GONZALO. Adrian is here!

(NITA sets the tray on the low table, as ADRIAN comes in. ADRIAN is twenty4ive, with a boyish personality. He wears a pair of brown pants and a light-colored coat. He carries his clothes indifferently. He smokes incessantly. His voice is slightly high-pitched but pleasant. He goes to GONZALO and shakes hands).

ADRIAN. When did you get back?

GONZALO. Didn't you know I was back?

ADRIAN. (flushing). Why-- er-- yes. I missed you, Gonzalo. (Turning to NITA.) Hello, Nita. Stepping. out?

NITA. (Pointing to her dress). Oh, this? No, just trying it on (GONZALO has motioned ADRIAN to sit down.)

GONZALO. Whisky, Adrian?

ADRIAN. You know. I never touch it.

NITA. How about some coffee?

ADRIAN. I don't mind. (NITA goes out.)

GONZALO. Where have you been hiding yourself?

ADRIAN. I've been very busy lately.

GONZALO You and your restless nature. You have passed the bar exams. Why don't you get settled once and for all?

ADRIAN I will Gonzalo, I will.

GONZALO What did you call me up for just now. Adrian?

(ADRIAN hesitates briefly.)

ADRIAN Er -- my cigarette case. The plating. finished?

GONZALO. It was ready before I left for Baguio. I have it here with me. (Takes cigaret case from his pocket.) You'll hardly recognize it. It looks like new.

ADRIAN. This was a present from you-- our college graduation, re-member?

GONZALO Yes, I remember. the saleslady told me it was gold, -- but it turned out to be only gold plated.

ADRIAN Youtre looking fine, Gonzalo.

GONZALO Frankly, I lost a few pounds. (GONZALO goes near the balcony, lights a cigaret.) By the way, Adrian, were you here this afternoon?

ADRIAN. Yes, Gonzalo.

GONZALO. At what time?

ADRIAN. I came at about two, but the maid told me Nita was asleep, so I left. I thought perhaps you had already arrived from Baguio. Didn't the maid tell you?

GONZALO. (Picking up the cup and setting it down). Oh yes she told me. (NITA comes in with the coffee tray, but has forgotten to bring in cups. She puts it down on the coffee ta-ble. ADRIAN feels the pot.)

ADRIAN. Ouch! Boiling!

NITA. Gonzalo likes it that way.

ADRIAN. I'll wait till it cools off a little.

GONZALO. (Filling up his glass with more whisky). As you wish. (NITA sits beside GONZALO.)

NITA. You know what your friend Gonzalo said a while ago?

ADRIAN. Not unless you tell me--

NITA. He said, and I quote: "One should attach himself to nothing and to nobody."

ADRIAN. Did you really, Gonzalo?

GONZALO. I don't remember.

NITA Imagine Gonzalo talking like that, when he talked so much -- about you before we got married. In fact, once or twice we had a quarrel because he insisted on repeating "Adrian said this and Adrian said that and Adrian and I did this-- " (Pause) How. old were you when you became friends?'

ADRIAN.. I was about ten then.

GONZALO. Adrian and I went to grade school together.

NITA. You managed to be classmates all the time?

GONZALO. We managed.

NITA. But aren't you older?

GONZALO. By tad years. Once, in seventh grade, the teacher in-sisted on putting us in separate sections.

ADRIAN. The teacher thought I was smarter and should be in Section A.

GONZALO. But Adrian went to the principal's office and pleaded--

ADRIAN I won. We both stayed in the same section.

NITA. Section A?

ADRIAN. No, Section C. (They laugh.)

GONZALO. Adrian looked so boyish then-- he was considered the best-looking in school-- that I used to tease him by calling him Baby- Face.

NITA. He still retains much of that baby-like expression, doesn't he? (They laugh again. GONZALO grows serious.)

GONZALO. Adrian had a characteristic then.

ADRIAN. Yeah? What was that?

GONZALO. Mind you, I am not saying you still have it-- besides, it wasn't anything usual.

NITA. A characteristic?

GONZALO. Adrian was seldom satisfied with what he had. Once-- in high school--

NITA. I see your memory is still good, Gonzalo.

GONZALO. (Quietly). Yes, strange how oftentimes our memory vividly relives incidents hidden in our past--

ADRIAN. Go ahead. You were saying--

GONZALO. Well, my mother gave me, on my birthday, a linen suit. Adrian liked it so much he insisted on borrowing it every Sunday. He had other suits, but he fell in love with this particular one.

NITA. What happened?

GONZALO. I finally gave it to him.

ADRIAN. (Laughing). I don't recall that incident.

GONZALO. And on another occasion Nita. Guess what I found this afternoon, while looking over some papers? Some pictures of our wedding.

GONZALO. (Suddenly). Not becoming sentimental at so early a stage of our marriage, are you, Nita?

NITA. I. know, but Adrian was best man-- and he looked so funny in one of the pictures. He was staring at me, while you, Gonzalo, were looking somewhere else.

ADRIAN. Let me see it. I haven't seen any of the wedding pictures

NITA. I'll get them. (NITA goes out. GONZALO walks over to the table, picks-up the poisoned cup and places it on the low table in front of the sofa.)

ADRIAN. Gonzalo- I'm glad you're back. (GONZALO looks at ADRIAN for a brief moment. With the usual clairvoyance of old friends being able to read each others expression, GONZALO goes to ADRIAN and puts his arm around him.)

GONZALO. What's wrong?

ADRIAN. I-er-I'm in trouble again.

GONZALO; Financial? (ADRIAN nods sheepishly.) How much is it this time?

ADRIAN. Quite a sum.

GONZALO. One thousand?

ADRIAN. Two and a half. (GONZALO takes out his check book and pen, and sits down.)

GONZALO. Poker?

ADRIAN. Races and Jai-Alai. (GONZALO writes out the amount.)

GONZALO. (Giving him the check). You haven't changed, Adrian. (After a pause.) No woman trouble?

ADRIAN. (Taking the check). Thanks. You know I've never had much use for women.

GONZALO. It's about time you started looking for someone to settle down with.

ADRIAN. If I find the right girl-

GONZALO. And your idea of the right woman?

ADRIAN. You know what my idea of the right girl-

GONZALO. I still remember it. "She must be serious and intelligent-she must be a virgin and-"

ADRIAN. Can you find a woman like that nowadays?

GONZALO. There aren't many, I admit, but if you look hard enough- (NITA comes in.)

NITA. Here it is. (Both men look at the picture, and then burst out laughing).

ADRIAN. Gonzalo looked scared or something.

GONZALO. I was. The last words in the ritual "-till death do us part" were still ringing in my ears-and the doctor had just told me I might live up to seventy. (NITA laughs long and loud.)

NITA. Look who's talking? I hope to live up to eighty myself.

GONZALO. (As he pours himself another drink). You know, Adrian was always an idealist. That's why he hasn't married yet. He's twenty-four

ADRIAN. Twenty-five.

NITA. I like the cold-blooded callousness with which men reveal their age

GONZALO. I remember. during our college days-- Adrian fell in love once. When he found out the girl had a regular boy friend, he gave her up.

NITA. But if the girl was engaged-

GONZALO. She wasn't. And even if she were that doesn't stop most men from going after her.

NITA. Men's tremendous conceit. And you still have those ideals, Adrian?

GONZALO. Adrian will never change.

NITA. Don't rush him. He'll give up those ideals yet.

GONZALO. (Brusquely). Why? (Caught by the suddenness, NITA stops.)

NITA. Well, people-sometimes-alter their ideals as they grow older, don't they?

GONZALO. (Softening his tone). You're right. People shouldn't hold on to their original ideals, too long. (Taking the bottle again.) Want a drink, Adrian?

ADRIAN. But I don't drink.

NITA. Just try once, Adrian.

ADRIAN. All right. (ADRIAN takes the drink. As he puts back the glass on the table, the newspaper falls off the low table.)

GONZALO. (Picking up the newspaper and tossing it on a chair). Have you read this afternoon's paper?

ADRIAN. Haven't had time.

GONZALO. There's an interesting item on the front page.

NITA. What about?

GONZALO. About a murder last night.

NITA. I shudder at the mere sound of the word "murder"

GONZALO. (Laughing briefly). You never can tell, Nita. Some-day you or I might be a witness to one.

NITA. Oh, not me!

GONZALO. Suppose we're walking along the Escolta, and some-body sticks a knife into or shoots somebody? Shall we dose our eyes and pretend we didn't see it?

NITA. That would be different. But I know I'll be careful not to be around when a crime takes place.

ADRIAN. What was last night's case?

GONZALO. (Glancing at the paper). You know Mr. and Mrs. Tito Viterbo?

ADRIAN. The prominent attorney, isn't he?

NITA. Not the Viterbo married to Mila Revilla?

GONZALO. You know her?

NITA. Very well. Mila and I were classmates in the same convent school, the Annunciata.

GONZALO. A very religious woman, according to the paper.- She never missed going to Quiapo church every Friday afternoon-you know, the Nazarene.

NITA. She was the most religious girl in our class.

GONZALO. The papers say she used to meet her lover in Quiapo church.

NITA. Did anything happen to Mila?

GONZALO. It seems Tito Viterbo's best friend was having an af-fair with Tito's wife.

NITA. I can't believe it of Mila.

ADRIAN. Mr. Viterbo killed his friend?

GONZALO. No, he killed his wife;

NITA. Poor Mila.

ADRIAN. Unfortunate husband.

GONZALO: (Laughing). Unfortunate, my eye! Stupid rather!

ADRIAN. But why?

NITA. Gonzalo, how can you be so callous? After all, he had the right to kill her.

GONZALO. Because she was unfaithful to him? Decades ago that might have been justified-but in an enlightened age like-ours, killing a faithless wife or her lover speaks none too highly of the husband's sense of proportion.

ADRIAN. (Shocked). What an idea, Gonzalo!

GONZALO. To kill the wife because she is unfaithful is for the husband to admit that he has lost her-and if you lose some-thing or somebody. don't you think that it's most probably through your own carelessness? The sense of possession is strong in every love.

ADRIAN. Granted. in another generation. when material things were few and expensive, one could understand the fierce desire to possess and hold on to something.

NITA. Gonzalo, you can't confuse love with the material.

GONZALO. I am not confusing them. True love isn't a material thing. It's intangible, spiritual~ capable of touching the stars, reaching the infinite, embracing God!

NITA. Poetry, Gonzalo.

ADRIAN. No, Nita. Truth.

GONZALO (Smiling). But not all marriages are born of love.

ADRIAN. Of what then?

GONZALO. Of passion. And if it is passion in your marriage, to lose the object of your passion need not-should not-necessarily be tragic.

ADRIAN. What would you have had Mr. Viterbo do, then?

GONZALO Forgiven his wife..

ADRIAN. But Mr. Viterbo's wife was guilty of breaking-

GONZALO. The fourth commandment-

NITA. The sixth, Gonzalo.

GONZALO. (Laughing). Right. "Thou shalt not commit adul-tery." Ah, but I know the ninth. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife."

NITA. Splendid. Your memory is improving.

GONZALO. (As he pours himself another drink). There's one word that has disappeared from the vocabulary of the moderns.

NITA. What word?

GONZALO. The word adultery. The moderns have such a revolt-ing dread of such an ugly, repulsive, old-fashioned word that they have substituted for it, "So-and-so is having an affair with-or is in love with somebody else," and similar, charming, harmless phrases. But the word adultery itself they avoid and abhor. To the moderns, adultery doesn't exist any more.

NITA. Your narrow views surprise me, Gonzalo.

ADRIAN. Levity aside, if I had my way I'd have a name for Mr. Viterbo's wife and her lover.

GONZALO. And that is-

ADRIAN. I'd call them a couple of rats.

GONZALO. (Laughing uproariously). That's interesting, Adrian. Why, in heaven's name?

ADRIAN. Adultery is punishable by law, don't you know?

GONZALO. If I may be permitted to stretch the point further, I'd prefer to call the three of them rats.

NITA. Why include the poor husband?

GONZALO. For breaking the fifth commandment-"Thou shalt not kill." (They all break into laughter. GONZALO again takes the bottle.) Another, Adrian?

ADRIAN. If you don't mind, I'd like some coffee.

NITA. Oh, I forgot to bring in new cups.

GONZALO. (Stopping her as she is about to go). Don't bother,

NITA. Here's one.

NITA. But you used that cup before.

ADRIAN. I don't mind.

NITA. (Staring at him-realizing it is the fatal cup). Gonzalo, that cup--

ADRIAN. I don't believe in germs, Nita.

NITA. (Alarmed). It isn't that-

GONZALO. Adrian is right, Nita. One cup is as good- (NITA utters a muffled scream. GONZALO goes to her and holds her arm firmly, cruelly. NITA winces.)

ADRIAN. Is she ill?

GONZALO. If you call expecting a baby-

NITA. No! (But NITA, still feeling the pressure of GONZALO'S hand on her, remains speechless.)

ADRIAN. Well, congratulations!

GONZALO. It's too early to tell.. She'll be all right Women insist on deluding themselves that they can be the equal. of men. When they are pregnant, they wake up from their trance. (NITA, struck with terror, falls in a chair. GONZALO takes the pot, and, making it seem accidental, spills some' coffee on ADRIAN's clothes) How stupid of me!

GONZALO. Go inside and wipe it off. (ADRIAN stands up and walks toward the door. NITA tries to follow.)

NITA. I'll 'get you a clean towel.

GONZALO (Looking at her steadily). Adrian knows his way around. He's like one of the family. There's a clean towel in the bathroom. (ADRIAN goes out. NITA springs up from the chair and runs to GONZALO.)

NITA. What are you trying to do?

GONZALO. What are you talking about?

NITA. The cup, Gonzalo, the cup!, (He looks at her, without saying -a word.) Throw it away, throw it away! (GONZALO pushes her away, roughly.)

GONZALO. Shut up, you bitch!

NITA. Don't do it, don't! (GONZALO lights a cigaret, sits calmly.)

GONZALO. So no one came this afternoon. Adrian admitted he did.

NITA. No!

GONZALO, (Ignoring her interruptions). But he made one slight -mistake: he said he had told the maid he had come. But he doesn't know you dismissed her this morning.

NITA. N~, no!

GONZALO. That's why you dismissed Cora. She knew 'and you were afraid she was going to talk. Adrian has been coming here every afternoon for the last two weeks. I had . my suspi-cions-that's why I went up to Baguio. I could have~ come hack in a day or two-but I wanted to give you and-Adrian the satisfaction of a last romantic, evil fling! (NITA throws herself on his knees.)

NITA. Gonzalo-Gonzalo!

GONZALO. Both of you pretending, deceiving, lying behind my back!- (NITA breaks into sobs.)

NITA. True, true! And I'm so ashamed!

GONZALO. (Contemptuously). Ashamed? (Gently.) You know the meaning of the word?

NITA. I don't know why I did it, I don't know!

GONZALO. Now you know-and it's too late.

NITA (Pleadingly). What are you going to do?

GONZALO. Destroy him

-NITA. Adrian?

GONZALO. You're quite psychic, beloved.

NITA. Let Adrian go!

GONZALO. Because my love for him is deeper-him I must destroy

NITA. But not this way-not this callous way! Give him an even chance!

GONZALO. For a rat like him?

NITA. If you must destroy, destroy me then! Spare Adrian!

GONZALO. (Softly). He means that much to you, my dear?

NITA. No, no-not now-not any more! But there must be some pity left in you!

GONZALO. There is-a tiny bit-but my pity isn't for Adrian. I'm reserving it for you.

NITA. Destroy me then-I'm just as guilty!

GONZALO. No, Nita, I cannot destroy you. I'll let you live-but I'll let you breathe, eat, and sleep~ every second of your cursed life-with that ugly word adulteress in your heart!

NITA. I'd rather die! I'd rather be destroyed!

GONZALO. You must live, my dearest Nita. Dying is so easy. And why die when there's so much ahead of you?

NITA. (Brokenly). There's nothing-nothing-ahead, or me-now.

GONZALO. Your feelings are a matter of indifference' to me. Soon you're going to witness a crime. You're going to see your beloved-and my beloved friend-Adrian-die the death of a rat

NITA. I won't stand it. I won't! I won't! I can't! (GONZALO stands up smiling.)

GONZALO. You're going to stay here and not utter a single word or make the least gesture. (His tone dripping with venom.) Even though you aren't a very intelligent woman I think you understand my words. (Bending over.) Come, my dear, allow me to take you to this chair. You need, a rest. (GONZALO forcibly raises NITA up. She sinks, exhausted and terrified, into a chair. Presently ADRIAN comes in.) Everything all right, Adrian?

ADRIAN. It was nothing. It won't show.

GONZALO. (Pouring). Take your coffee.

ADRIAN. Sorry. I must be getting along.

GONZALO. Take your coffee first.

ADRIAN. (After a brief hesitation). All right. (Seeing NITA) she feeling worse?

GONZALO. Nothing serious.

ADRIAN. She should go in and rest, don't you think?

GONZALO. She will, presently.

ADRIAN. (Taking the cup). This coffee is still hot. (NITA wakes up from her trance and watches GONZALO'S actions. ADRIAN takes some sugar and stirs it.)

GONZALO. Still warm?

ADRIAN. Just right. (As he is about to drink it, NITA stands up.)

NITA. Oh Adrian, I'm sure it's cold now-

ADRIAN. Don't bother, Nita-

GONZALO. (To NITA). Stop being so fussy-

NITA. Are you sure, Adrian?

ADRIAN. Sure. (He gulps down the drink. NITA covers her mouth with her hand. Frightened, she rushes out.)

GONZALO. Poor Nita. Sometimes, Adrian, I think you're better off as a bachelor.

ADRIAN. Well, well! A while ago you were advising me to get married.

GONZALO. You should, Adrian, you should.

ADRIAN. I'm not prepared to settle down yet.

GONZALO. Aren't you afraid to die a bachelor?

ADRIAN. (Laughing). I expect to live a little longer, Gonzalo.

GONZALO. A little longer is right. (ADRIAN'S face slowly begins to get red. He feels a giddiness in his head-- he presses his temples.)

ADRIAN. My head-

GONZALO. What's wrong?

ADRIAN. Don't know-my head-never felt like this-

GONZALO. Sit down. (ADRIAN sits on the sofa.) You'll feel better.

ADRIAN. (Touching his throat). My throat-- can't breathe-

GONZALO. An aspirin will do you good.

ADRIAN. The coffee-- could it be--

GONZALO. (Picking up the cup and smelling it). No, I don't think so. Probably the effect of the whisky eh Adrian?

ADRIAN. (Laughing dryly). Yes-first time, you know.

GONZALO. By the way, will the two thousand and a half be enough? I could lend you more.

ADRIAN. (Taking out the check from his pocket). Thanks, Gon-zalo Always the wonderful friend.

GONZALO. Friendship is unto the grave-

ADRIAN. And beyond it.

GONZALO. Yes-even beyond it.

ADRIAN. I sometimes-wonder-what I would do-or where-I would be-without you. Gonzalo.

GONZALO. (Affectionately). Aw, shut up, Baby Face.

ADRIAN You haven't-called me-Baby Face since Our high school days- (ADRIAN'S eyes start to protrude-they become staring and wide open the pupils dilated and immobile.)

GONZALO. Lie down -- you're just tired. The light must be bother-ing you (GONZALO turns off all the lights, leaving the scene in complete darkness, except for some light streaming through the balcony from the street.)

GONZALO. Just rest, Adrian.

ADRIAN. No, no-I must-tell you-something-GONZALO. Not now. Tomorrow.

ADRIAN. (Terror in his voice). Now!-very important-very-(ADRIAN begins to gasp and moan softly. Then silence.)

GONZALO. I attach myself to nothing and to nobody.

(As ADRIAN continues moaning, GONZALO lights a cigaret. A long silence, Then-ADRIAN falls noisily upsetting the coffee table, breaking the cup and glasses. Simultaneously, we hear a long, shrill, agonizing, terrifying scream outside.)

NITA. (Outside-- unspeakable terror in her voice). Adrian-Adrian! ADRIAN!! (Her words are followed by heartrending sobs which keep on till the final curtain. GONZALO throws his cigaret away, goes to ADRIAN, gets the check, tears it up. Slowly he goes to the telephone and dials.)

GONZALO. (Quietly and deliberately). Hello? Police Department? If you care to come to 60 Banaba St., Forbes Park, you'll find three rats- (pause) yes, yes, that's what I just said-three rats.

(As we hear NITA hysterically sobbing her heart out, the curtain falls)