

# Sunlight on her Face

A Radio Drama  
by  
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Estimated running time: 15 minutes

THE CLANG OF A PRISON DOOR AND SCRAPE OF CARLOS'S  
CHAIR AS HE STANDS UP.

**GURARD**

You have ten minutes, that's  
it.

DOOR BANGS SHUT.

**CARLOS**

(aggressively)  
Did you bring  
them? The  
cigarettes?

**PEDRO**

Here you are!

NOISE OF CIGARETTES HITTING THE TABLE AND SLIDING  
ACROSS.

Smoke yourself to death.

**CARLOS**

(COUGHING)

Now, that's not very nice.  
Especially to someone who is  
willing to help you.

**PEDRO**

(ANGRILY)

Help! That's what you call it.  
In my book it's called truth.  
Heard of that? Ever?

CARLOS STANDS SUDDENLY, HIS CHAIR FALLING BACK ON  
TO THE CONCRETE FLOOR.

**CARLOS**

Guard, guard...we're  
finished...

**PEDRO**

(QUIETLY BUT  
FIRMLY)

Sit down. Look, let's both  
sit. Please.

THE CLATTER OF CHAIRS AND THEN THE SOUND OF PEDRO  
WIPING DOWN THE CHAIRS.

**CARLOS**

(SNORTED  
LAUGHTER)

Senor, do you really hope to  
clean that chair with your  
fancy rag? You're frightened  
of a little bacteria on a  
table. Pah! Pathetic. So,  
you're it, the great freedom  
fighter...

**PEDRO**

Shut Up!

(DEEP SIGH)

Now to the truth...

**CARLOS**

Are you sure, Senor? The truth is not for everyone. I've found it's like those microbes you're trying to wipe away, they infest you slowly and start to eat you up, from the inside out. That's truth.

(UNZIP OF BAG AS  
PEDRO TAKES OUT A  
PHOTO AND PLACES  
IT ON THE TABLE.)

**PEDRO**

Look. Look at the photo. Do you recognise her?

**CARLOS**

It's blurred and grainy - terrible quality.

**PEDRO**

Of course it is; it's over 30 years old. Have you seen her? It's my sister. Juanita. On her 18th birthday.

**CARLOS**

Sweet girl. Very pretty. Who's the hag next to her?

**PEDRO**

That woman is, was, our grandmother. Now to Juanita...

**CARLOS**

She was so beautiful, to the

end, unlike all the others.  
I'll never forget her eyes,  
shining bright.

CUT TO JUANITA'S 18TH BIRTHDAY PARTY IN FULL  
SWING WITH THE SOUND OF MUSIC, CHATTER AND  
LAUGHTER.

**JUANITA**

Mamma, there you are! Finally  
out of the kitchen.

**MAMA**

Ah...but who else is going to  
cook for my special girl. Ha!  
No longer a girl, rather a  
grown woman.

**JUANITA**

I know, a woman, but don't  
give me that look. I'm  
finishing my nursing course.  
Then working. I've told you,  
I'm not interested in  
marriage, babies, all  
that...not yet anyway. I have  
my whole life ahead of me.

**MAMA**

Ha! I didn't say a word, but  
now you mention it...

**JUANITA**

Mama, please not tonight. It's  
too beautiful. Here, I picked  
this from the Bougainvillea,  
the fragrance is heavenly.  
There...perfect in your hair.

**MAMA**

Gracias. Now stop worrying  
about me. Go...mingle.

**JUANITA**

Oh no, you know I'm no good at that. 'Shy Juanita', that's me, what everyone calls me in class. As well as other names.

**MAMA**

You aren't happy there? I never knew.

**JUANITA**

It's not that...It's, just I feel I'm different. With so many it's all about clothes, latest hair styles and of course boys. Or there are some into causing trouble for us, fighting a revolution so they say, just like Pedro.

THE SOUND OF RUNNING STEPS COMING TO A SKIDDING HALT.

**PEDRO**

(PANTING)

Did I hear my name mentioned? Happy birthday dearest Sis. Sorry for being late, Mother.

**MAMA**

Oh, that is no trouble, your studies come first after all.

**JUANITA**

(ANGRILY, NEARLY  
SPITTING OUT THE  
LAST WORDS)

It's not okay. It wasn't your studies, keeping you away, was it? It was those "friends" of yours. The communists.

**PEDRO**

They are my friends. They're friends to us all. We're at least willing to do something whilst the rest of you cower up here in your houses.

**JUANITA**

Cower! How dare you? We're living, looking after each other.

**PEDRO**

Whilst doing nothing. You're so weak and scared, just watching our country being destroyed.

**JUANITA**

You are out of order, Pedro. You're so wrong. Yes, we are scared, scared sick something is going to happen to you. I think one day this is going to kill Mama.

**PEDRO**

Don't be silly, I'm fine.

**JUANITA**

You just don't think, do you? We're so frightened one day you'll be captured and we'll never see you again. Then you brush our fears away with a "I'm fine".

**PEDRO**

I can't change.

**JUANITA**

Yes, you could, if you wanted to.

**PEDRO**

This is important.

THE MUSIC STOPS. THE CHATTER CEASES.

**JUANITA**

(SHOUTING)

You're so selfish and self-centered.

**PEDRO**

And you're such a weak, frightened little girl.

**MAMA**

Shh...Children! Shh, you two. My babes, stop your squabbling. This is no time for fighting. There are already far too many battles in our country. This is family time. Pedro, you have a surprise for your sister, no?

**PEDRO**

(STILL BITTER)

Yes, selfishly, I risked arrest bringing these here. Fireworks to celebrate your special day Sis. Here, give me a hug first.

**JUANITA**

Now, let's celebrate!

SOUND OF FIREWORKS AND SCREAMS OF EXCITEMENT.

CUT TO CHURCH BELLS RINGING IN MIDNIGHT.

**PEDRO**

(IN HUSHED TONES)

Goodnight Juanita. Eighteen  
and a day. I can't believe it  
- you're an adult already.  
Take care, little Sis.

**JUANITA**

(HAPPILY)

Less of the little now, Pedro.  
You be careful too.

**PEDRO**

I will. I am sorry for  
upsetting you.

**JUANITA**

(CONTRITE)

I'm sorry too, Bro, I'll try  
not to worry and to start  
being brave.

**PEDRO**

Okay. It's just you seem to  
have no idea what's going on -  
it's so easy for you.

**JUANITA**

That's not true. I see a lot,  
it's just I don't want anyone  
to get hurt whilst you are out  
running around playing the  
little communist.

**PEDRO**

(FURIOUS, RAISED  
VOICE)

So that's how you see me?  
Playing? My work is vital...

**JUANITA**

(SARCASTICALLY)

Really?! Delivering your revolutionary leaflets. Day after day. Makes a huge difference I'm sure.

**PEDRO**

It's telling the truth. For all our sakes.

**JUANITA**

Tell that to Mama and Grandmother next time. You don't even see how they suffer. How their health is worsening.

**PEDRO**

I'm sorry if they're upset. I don't want to hurt them, you know that. But this is for us all. For the party.

**JUANITA**

(EXHAUSTED)

Let's just leave it. Bye Pedro, take care and thanks. Thank you for the fireworks. I'll never forget this night.

CUT TO PRISON WHERE THE DOOR CLANGS OPEN AND STEPS ARE HEARD AS THE GUARD ENTERS.

**GUARD**

Your ten minutes are over.

**PEDRO**

No! I need more time. Please another ten minutes. Go and ask the governor. Also some drink. And snacks.

**GUARD**

(MUTTERING)

I'm a bleeding waiter now. No doubt they're expecting a silver tray.

**CARLOS**

(COUGHING WHILST  
LAUGHING)

Oh yes, that's great. Think you're in a palace, do you? Take a look around. The walls are a bit grubby, don't you think? Like the stains on concrete floor, do you?

PEDRO TAPPING ON THE TABLE.

**PEDRO**

To the photo. You've obviously seen her. When?

**CARLOS**

I'm sorry...

**PEDRO**

(STANDING UP,  
STOMPING AWAY)

Sorry? You have the to gall to say sorry. You murderer. All of you. Thirty thousand people are still lost, so-called "disappeared", and you say sorry. You have to possess a heart to feel remorse.

**CARLOS**

But you are wrong. I don't  
feel remorse. I have no need.  
I was a soldier. In the army.  
Following orders. I was young.  
That's what you did then.  
Follow orders.

**PEDRO**

As if that justifies your  
actions.

**CARLOS**

You misunderstand, I don't  
need justification. It was all  
just orders. The courts  
agreed. I'm innocent. I'm in  
prison today for other crimes  
since. Otherwise my hands are  
clean of blood.

**PEDRO**

(SPLUTTERING IN  
ANGER)

You make me sick? You killed  
my sister. Her death is your  
fault. Your responsibility.

**CARLOS**

Really, Senor? So you are in  
no way to blame then? That's  
not the reason you look like a  
ghost from the dead, your face  
whiter than the walls here, a  
skeleton frame that barely  
holds up your suit. No, that  
is not innocence. That is  
guilt, Senor. Poisoning your  
soul. A life-long death  
sentence.

PEDRO BANGS AND KICKS AT THE DOOR REPEATEDLY.

**PEDRO**

Let me out! Let me out!

CUT TO BUSY STREET WITH CARS DRIVING PAST, HORNS  
BLARING, RADIO ON IN THE BACKGROUND.

**JUANITA**

Pedro, Pedro! Stop. What are  
you doing here?

**PEDRO**

Me? I'm working. What about  
you?

**JUANITA**

I'm just visiting some  
friends. Are you okay? You  
seem down. Sad even. What's up  
brother?

**PEDRO**

As if you care.

**JUANITA**

I do, honestly. I regret what  
happened at my party. I never  
wanted to make you unhappy.

**PEDRO**

Well, you did, but it got me  
thinking, frightened even. I'd  
never really thought about the  
risks before. All for the sake  
of lugging these about.

**JUANITA**

Oh no, not more leaflets,  
Pedro. When will you...

**PEDRO**

(DESPERATELY,  
QUIETLY)

Juanita, run, RUN!

**JUANITA**

What? What's the matter?

**PEDRO**

(SCREAMING AT THE  
TOP OF HIS VOICE)

RUUUN!

THE SOUND OF SIRENS BLARING, BECOMING LOUDER AS  
TWO ARMY TRUCKS SLAM TO A HALT AND SOLDIERS RUN  
AFTER PEOPLE IN THE CROWD. LOTS OF SCREAMS.

**SOLDIER**

STOP! Stand still!

**JUANITA**

No! Let go! Get off me!

**PEDRO**

(HYSTERICAL  
CRIES)

Let her go. She's innocent.  
I'm the one you want. Take me.  
Juanita. Juanita.

PEDRO'S SCREAMS FADE AS THE SOUND OF THE TWO  
TRUCKS PULLING AWAY DISAPPEAR.

CUT TO PRISON CELL. THE DOOR OPENS AND THE GUARD  
APPEARS CARRYING THE DRINKS AND BISCUITS.

**GUARD**

Here are some drinks? You have another ten minutes but it seems you are leaving already. Is there a problem? So indecisive all of a sudden. What's going on?

**CARLOS**

Nothing Guard. The Senor just got a bit claustrophobic, did you not? Senor! A drink will help. Sit.

SOUND OF FIZZY DRINKS BEING OPENED AND SCRAPE OF PEDRO'S CHAIR AS HE SITS RESIGNEDLY. THE RUSTLE OF A BISCUIT PACKETS AND THEN BOTH MEN MUNCH AWAY FOR A MOMENT.

**PEDRO**

You are right. I am forever plagued with guilt about what happened to Juanita. If it wasn't for me she would still be here.

**CARLOS**

And yet, it is you who is free, Senor.

**PEDRO**

(BITTERLY)

I know. Believe me, a day doesn't pass when I'm not tortured by this. I was freed because of a typing mistake - my freedom and life down to an administrative error.

**CARLOS**

Better than dead.

**PEDRO**

But Juanita should never have been caught. She was so young and innocent.

**CARLOS**

(GUFFAWING)

Young, yes. Innocent, not for long.

**PEDRO**

What are you saying?

**CARLOS**

After the first months, Juanita was, shall we say, due to be dispatched. On the fateful day she saved herself for another nine months - until the baby was born.

**PEDRO**

A baby?! She had a baby in the camp? How?

**CARLOS**

(IRONICALLY)

How? Ha, you need a lesson about that Senor; I think not. The soldiers, lots of women. It was not unusual.

**PEDRO**

The baby? Did it survive?

**CARLOS**

Yes, it was a boy if I remember right.

**PEDRO**

(WISTFULLY)

A boy. I have a nephew. Mother has a grandson. As she demonstrates every week along with the other mothers on Plaza de Mayo, she never imagined she was a grandmother. Where is he?

**CARLOS**

Who? The baby? He's now an adult, don't forget. Thirty years have passed. He could be anywhere.

**PEDRO**

You must know, I'll find out through the records...

**CARLOS**

(SOFTLY)

Records which no longer exist. The babies were given to childless couples high up in the military. He could be anywhere. You be walking past him everyday on the street. Anywhere. You wouldn't know it. All the records were burnt. Sorry.

**PEDRO**

Sorry. That word again. My sister. Now my nephew gone.

(DETERMINEDLY)

I have to know the truth of what happened to my sister.

**CARLOS**

Are you sure? Sometimes I've found the truth is too much for the weak.

**PEDRO**

I need the truth. I'm not weak.

**CARLOS**

I don't know about you, Senor, but your sister most certainly wasn't'. She was one of the bravest, strongest spirits I've ever seen.

**PEDRO**

(SURPRISED)

Juanita? Brave? Strong? Really?

**CARLOS**

Yes, her inner strength and fire set her apart.

Another biscuit?

**PEDRO**

No.

Tell me about my sister

**CARLOS**

Like I said, it's her spirit I recall first. From the moment she arrived at camp her fighting nature was evident. She became a friend and nurse to the others. Always helping them, cleaning their wounds, as best as she could.

**PEDRO**

Well, she was training to be a nurse...

**CARLOS**

It was much more than that. She lifted their spirits and hope with her words and songs, oh she could sing, her voice...

**PEDRO**

I know, a voice from God. Continue.

**CARLOS**

As conditions deteriorated she insisted on sharing everything with the others. Sometimes not even sharing, rather she gave them all her rations. Whereas others fought over scraps, she gave away. Don't worry, I once threw her a packet of biscuits.

**PEDRO**

(SHOCKED)

THREW? Biscuits?

**CARLOS**

And do you know what? She didn't eat them. Not a single one.

**PEDRO**

No!

**CARLOS**

Yet again, with reverence she gave them to a group of young women. Stupid girl.

**PEDRO**

Don't you dare call my sister stupid.

**CARLOS**

Giving them to those women was stupid. They were all killed the next day. But you're right, your beautiful Juanita with the haunting eyes was just naive. The guards and the other women all thought so. She never did realise she was doomed.

**PEDRO**

(AS FROM AFAR)

Doomed?

**PEDRO**

Yes. Doomed. The orders came that weekend.

DOOR CLANGS OPEN AND GUARD'S FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.

**GUARD**

You are enjoying our fine establishment? Any more refreshments? Ha! As if! Here, for you "Chimney". I know you want these. You owe me now. Five minutes, that's all.

CIGARETTES DROPPED ON TABLE.

**PEDRO**

(DESPERATE)

What happened at the weekend? Carlos! What happened?

**CARLOS**

The same as so many other weekends. The plane - a small de Havilland - landed early in the morning. Just at sunrise. The landing shaky as usual I remember.

**PEDRO**

A plane? But you were in the rainforest.

**CARLOS**

Yes, it was tricky. The poor pilot. The women had cleared a strip of land, but it was barely enough. Then...

**PEDRO**

Then? What?

**CARLOS**

The women cheered. They thought this was their ticket to freedom. Well, I suppose it was their way out of the camp.

**PEDRO**

But...

**CARLOS**

We took a small group. Only eight. Juanita was the last one to be chosen. Then to stop any aggravation on the plane we gave them a sedative. It was against sickness we claimed. They all believed us, except for Juanita. She just looked at me, for what felt

forever. With such sadness.  
Finally she knew her fate.

**PEDRO**

And...then...

**CARLOS**

I don't know what happened to me that day. But I never did another of those flights. I couldn't. It was Juanita and her look.

**PEDRO**

Where did the plane go?  
Carlos. Where?

**CARLOS**

The usual route. East towards the rising sun, flying so low at times we were skimming the tree tops. We had to remain undetected by the radar.

**PEDRO**

And then?

**CARLOS**

Then out across the ocean. The glorious Atlantic beneath our wings, the waters white with waves. I opened the door and helped the other soldier to lug the inert bodies to the opening and then pushed them out. One by one.

**PEDRO**

Juanita?

**CARLOS**

(VOICE DEEP WITH  
EMOTION)

She was the last. By now my heart was heavy. Juanita though, she was light, light like a feather and gently we tipped her out. She tumbled, spinning faster and faster and for a second the sun lit up her face. I swear she was angel. For that moment. So serene and pure.

(PAUSE)

I helped kill an angel.

SOUND OF SCRAPING OF CHAIR AS PEDRO STANDS UP AND WALKS AWAY WITH HEAVY STEPS.

That is why I'll never forget her, your Juanita. It seems I've always known her.

**PEDRO**

Yes, MY Juanita and you NEVER knew her. Never.

**CARLOS**

(SOBBING)

I'm sorry. Sorry!

KNOCKING ON THE DOOR AS PEDRO SEEKS TO LEAVE.  
DOOR SLOWLY OPENING.

**PEDRO**

(QUIET FURY)

We will never forgive you.  
Never. We know Juanita is in  
heaven and we will see her  
again soon. As for you,  
darkness is all that awaits  
you - may you be damned in  
hell.

SLAM OF PRISON DOOR.

THE END

