

THE PAMPHLET

By Edward Morgan

SETTING

The Dominican Republic, 1960. Trujillo was still firmly in control, but throughout Latin America dictators were being overthrown. In Santiago, in January, dozens of young men were arrested by the secret police for distributing a revolutionary pamphlet. This play begins shortly after those arrests. The context is historical; the characters and story are fictional.

SYNOPSIS

In a poetic prologue, a young woman tells a strange, beautiful dream. Her name is Solis.

The scene moves to the home of Solis' uncle, Gilberto, a writer and scholar. His housekeeper, Josefina, is preparing his birthday dinner. She provides some comic relief, but there's a shadow over the evening as news of recent events arrives with the guests. Solis' fiancé has been arrested. Meanwhile, soldiers and police roam the streets, still searching for more of the young men who made the pamphlets.

After dinner, Gilberto and his guests argue over tyranny and liberty, protest and survival. Solis speaks with the passionate conviction of a revolutionary. Gilberto is optimistic and defends the virtue of literature and learning. His best friend, Juan Carlos, counters with dark humor and cynical realism. And the tension rises.

Act Two begins with flashbacks: Gilberto finishes a clever - though perhaps dangerous - lecture in the capital. Solis meets her fiancé after a secret meeting of his revolutionary group. We then return to the present and the drama builds to a climax as the crisis comes to Gilberto's door. Relief comes, for the moment, in an almost miraculous way.

The Pamphlet is a fiction grounded in truth, a story inspired by our history. At the same time it raises questions about power and courage that resonate today, near and far.

CHARACTERS

SOLIS is 25, and has grown up in a middle class family. She is passionate, articulate, and somewhat introverted. She has the vulnerability of a person who has come through a loss.

GILBERTO, age 40, is a widower with no children. He grew up in a prosperous Santiago family and has traveled and studied abroad. He's worked as a journalist, a professor, and is now an independent writer and scholar. He's well-respected, a generous, good-natured, intellectual man; though at times a bit self-important. Solis and Luis and his niece and nephew.

JUAN CARLOS is 38 and runs a garage. He's earthy, direct, friendly and often jovial, yet his outlook on life is somewhere between the realist and the cynic. He and Gilberto are childhood friends.

NOTE: In the excerpt, given the country and era, SOLIS would address her uncle Gilberto and Juan Carlos with formal pronouns as opposed to familiar ones. They would address her and each other with familiar pronouns.

EXCERPT

SOLIS

Why talk about knowledge and values if you're not willing to fight for them?

GILBERTO

When the time is right, I am.

SOLIS

When the time is right. You think a revolution waits until it's convenient?

GILBERTO

It has to wait until it's possible.

JUAN CARLOS

If it's possible.

SOLIS

What if they'd said that in Cuba?

JUAN CARLOS

Cuba's a different story, Solis. A totally different country. Even there, it took ten years and twenty-five thousand lives.

SOLIS

So that's what it took. The country's free. You think they'd be free if they'd waited until it was convenient?

JUAN CARLOS

Batista wasn't entrenched for thirty years, stockpiling weapons. You know how much artillery Trujillo's army has?

SOLIS

I know the few hold the many in chains. Are you content with that?

JUAN CARLOS

Content? No, I'm not content. No one's content.

SOLIS

Then why aren't you willing to act?

JUAN CARLOS

Because I have children. Because if I go out tomorrow and try to “ignite the revolution” they’ll silence me in one day, then they’ll come after my sons or my parents or my brother. My neighbor’s cousin fled to Puerto Rico because he worked for a man Trujillo didn’t like. Because he worked for him!

SOLIS

Everyone has an excuse, don’t they? You can’t stand up and fight because you’re protecting someone else.

JUAN CARLOS

I’m sorry, but you’re too young to know what it’s like to be responsible for other people.

GILBERTO

Solis, I know how hard this must be for you.

SOLIS (*sharply*)

No you don’t.

GILBERTO

Forgive me. Perhaps I don’t.

SOLIS

How could you?

GILBERTO

You’re right. When I was your age, I was afraid to speak out, because I didn’t believe things could change. It’s different now. There’s hope. Not for armed revolution. Juan Carlos is right, we can’t overthrow the government. Not by ourselves. But all around us things are changing. Look at all the dictators who’ve fallen: Batista in Cuba, Perón in Argentina, Perez-Jimenez in Venezuela, Rojas in Columbia. Now everyone’s looking this way. In the United States they’re criticizing Trujillo in speeches and newspapers. Some are actually saying Eisenhower wants him gone. That’s why he’s so dangerous now. He’s isolated. He’s a cornered beast. But the writing’s on the wall. One way or another things are going to change. We just have to wait it out. A year. Three years. Five years at most.

LUIS

Five years?

GILBERTO

At most.

JUAN CARLOS

Eloquent as ever, Berto. You've got it all figured it out. Too bad you're wrong.

GILBERTO

I'm not.

JUAN CARLOS

I wish you weren't. The truth is, he's only 68 and he's as strong as he's ever been.

GILBERTO

I don't think so.

JUAN CARLOS

You're wrong. I'm sorry but you're an optimist. You always have been. And if you're not careful, it'll get you in trouble.

SOLIS

Tio, if you had said these things to me a week ago I'd have believed you. I'd have been hopeful too. I used to see you how everyone does. How they all look up to you. I thought you were so wise and so capable and you understood the world. I was so proud to be your niece.

GILBERTO

You're not anymore?