

La Casa de las Santas  
(The House of Saints)

A Play in One Act



Setting: A bedroom in Sangre, a poor town in Colombia – 1950 to 1956, and 1975.

A white bed. A window. It always remains open. A grandfather clock. An altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Dozens of lit candles and red roses adorn it.

The walls are covered by a web of family portraits, religious paraphernalia and more clocks.

Characters:

4 Female Characters. 3 Male Characters.

ANA (19) Hispanic, a prostitute born and raised in Sangre. A force to be reckoned with.

EVA (13, 17, 19) Hispanic, a prostitute born and raised in Sangre. A force to be reckoned with. Ana's mother.

CARMELA (20's, 41) Hispanic, a feisty prostitute when she was younger, later became Ana's tutor.

HECTOR (20's, 46) Hispanic, a doctor born in the Capital City. He supports the Conservative Party. He has beautiful green eyes.

OTTO (19) Hispanic, the plumber's son, born and raised in Sangre. Good looking, sexual.

EDGAR (50's) Hispanic, owner of The House of Saints. He supports the Liberal Party. Sickly.

MARÍA (19) Hispanic. Ana's daughter.

## Notes

### On Context:

Despite being a fictitious town, the horrors that unfold in Sangre are a reality in Colombian history. The play leaps back and forth between the 1950's and 1970's. In order to understand the historical references within this work, a brief account of Colombian history is required.

During the 1950's Colombia was in the midst of what is now called by historians "*La Violencia*" (The Violence), a decade-long undeclared civil war that resulted in the deaths of around 170,000 Colombians. The conflict was worse in rural areas, where supporters of the Liberal and Conservative parties armed themselves with machetes and other household tools, in order to intimidate and attack anyone who didn't belong to their respective party.

In 1957, the government made a pact in which power would be alternated between both parties every four years. By the 1970's there were over 200,000 dead and a million displaced country men and women. This decade would consolidate narcoterrorism as the main source of violence in Colombia, starting with leftist and rightist guerrillas that terrorized cities and towns in the years to come.

The impact of this bipartisan conflict was so massive that its effects can still be seen in Colombian society and politics to this day.

### On Scene Breaks and Time:

The lack of scene breaks is purposeful and must be maintained. Transitions between scenes should flow smoothly, before the audience's eyes.

"Clocks tick" (in plural) points at a jump in time, and the beginning of a new scene. All clocks onstage should tick then.

When a singular "Clock" is mentioned, no jump in time or scene change is happening. Only the grandfather clock should tick then.

### On Sound or Music:

Take as many creative liberties with any atmospheric sound and/or Latin music you want to implement.

The Saleswoman's dialogue, children's laughs, etc. can be pre-recorded.

#### On Varying Ages:

The characters of Eva, Carmela and Hector have varying ages throughout the text. It is notated as follows:

When Eva is thirteen, she is labeled "Small Eva"; when seventeen she is "Teen Eva"; and when nineteen she is just "Eva".

Similarly, when Carmela and Hector are labeled "Young" they are both in their twenties. Otherwise, they are forty-one and forty-six respectively.

#### On Casting:

Actors should speak fluent or almost perfect Spanish and should preferably be Hispanic or have Hispanic heritage.

#### On Nudity:

Nudity is preferred, yet not essential. Handle at your own discretion.

#### On Dialogue:

Dialogue in Spanish should only be translated if *strictly* necessary.

Translations have been included in some cases for the reader's consideration.

"/" indicates an interruption.

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*(Setting: Bedroom.  
Darkness. The noise of culture. Salsa music.  
Laughter. Catcalls. Indistinct conversation.  
(At Rise: Enter ANA. She holds a stack of money.  
She counts it.  
A SALESWOMAN's voice.)*

SALESWOMAN

*¡Llegó la fruta! Hay piña para la niña, mora para la señora,  
manzana para la que no sana y melón para el viejo pelón.  
¡Cualquiera disfruta comerse una fruta!*

*(Fruit for all! Pineapple for the girl in the chapel, blackberry  
for the wary lady, apples for the one wearing shackles and melon  
for the wicked felon. Anyone enjoys fruit for all!)*

*(SMALL EVA enters. A diary on the bed. Eva writes  
in it. She doesn't notice Ana.  
Ana hides the cash under some floorboards. She  
looks over Eva's shoulder.)*

ANA

*(reads)*

*Abril 1950. Sangre is hot in the spring. It's always hot. No  
rest here. Sangre means blood. It's only a town, though. I live  
here, but I won't die here. I want to fly in an airplane  
someday. There's a world out there. There must be.*

SMALL EVA

I know it.

*(Exit Ana. Clocks tick.  
Enter EDGAR.)*

SMALL EVA

Right Daddy?

EDGAR

If there is, it doesn't care much about us. Come closer, mi  
amor, sit on daddy's lap. I got another letter today. Your  
brothers send their regards.

SMALL EVA

Did they send some chocolate like last time?

EDGAR

No, mi amor.

SMALL EVA

Why can't we live with the mountains like they do?

EDGAR

That's no place for my pretty Eva. Angels like you must remain protected, at their fathers' side... Your brothers are fighting hard for the party.

SMALL EVA

¡Viva el Partido Liberal!

EDGAR

Long live the Liberal Party. Now, open the window a little more. Let some sunlight in. Daddy isn't feeling very well.

SALESWOMAN

¡Llegó la fruta!

SMALL EVA

I'm hungry daddy.

EDGAR

There's bread in the kitchen

SMALL EVA

It's stale. Can we buy some fruit?

EDGAR

No, Eva.

SALESWOMAN

Hay piña para la niña, mora para la señora...

SMALL EVA

Please, please, please!

SALESWOMAN

Manzana para la que no sana...

EDGAR

Quiet Eva, no.

SALESWOMAN

Y melón para el viejo pelón...

SMALL EVA

I'm hungry! Can we buy some fruit? Please!

EDGAR

It's bread and water for the next week, you hear me!? You'll give me a heart attack someday, Dios mío!

SMALL EVA

Don't be angry.

EDGAR

Niña malcriada.

*(Enter YOUNG CARMELA. She stands outside the open window. She has a black eye.)*

YOUNG CARMELA

A sick heart just needs a loving woman, Don Edgar.

EDGAR

Get off my property.

YOUNG CARMELA

What's with the little one?

SMALL EVA

I'm hungry.

YOUNG CARMELA

Aren't we all?

SMALL EVA

Daddy says I shouldn't talk to women like you.

YOUNG CARMELA

Daddy's scared you'll discover the value of selling love in a country that spills blood like it is water.

EDGAR

Go say your prayers, mi amor.

*(Eva kneels at the altar.  
Edgar crosses to the window.)*

EDGAR

I'm penniless, Carmela.

YOUNG CARMELA

I thought painting houses made good money.

EDGAR

What happened? Did you bite his cock off?

YOUNG CARMELA

You can make the other one match if you give me some shelter tonight.

EDGAR

Fuck off.

YOUNG CARMELA

I can make you money.

EDGAR

I thought you did fine by yourself.

YOUNG CARMELA

I need a room. I can't keep walking around in the dark. It's dangerous out these days.

EDGAR

You're asking charity from a poor man, woman.

YOUNG CARMELA

She wouldn't be hungry again, you could get some medicine. All a man needs right now is permission to love. Make them pay for it and you'll be the richest man in town.

EDGAR

What about you? I can't take care of three with one woman's salary.

YOUNG CARMELA

There's many of us walking around homeless and bruised.

EDGAR

And not enough beds in this house.

YOUNG CARMELA

There's a big one right here, sir, and two women.

EDGAR

Don't you dare bring Eva into this.

YOUNG CARMELA

Men pay well for a virgin. Disgustingly well.



*(Clocks tick. Edgar and Eva exit.  
Carmela shifts into her older self.  
Enter Ana.)*

CARMELA

I bought you some pineapple, niña.

ANA

Don't call me that, Car. I'm not a child.

CARMELA

Compared to this old hag you are.

ANA

Come on in, I have things to tell you.

*(Ana grabs the diary. Carmela enters the  
bedroom.)*

CARMELA

Did you finish yesterday's assignments?

ANA

I couldn't. I've been busy reading something else.

CARMELA

Not another romance. Your father doesn't like those.

ANA

You do... Shakespeare made you blush last time.

CARMELA

Hmm... breeches and tights. A woman's wet dream.

ANA

Old hags can get those?

CARMELA

Hey! Respect your elders.

*(They giggle. Carmela studies Ana for a beat.)*

CARMELA

Got a boyfriend yet?

ANA

What?

CARMELA

Getting busy?

ANA

With all this homework you give me, yes.

CARMELA

You can tell me if you meet someone. Do things the right way, niña Ana.

ANA

Carmela!

CARMELA

What do you want to be called then?

ANA

Just Ana is fine. What'd you call it last time? P-P-Palin-Palin...

CARMELA

Palindrome.

ANA

I like it. My mom chose it. Dad told me so. "Mom" is a palindrome too. If you put it in a circle it could repeat itself forever. Eva - that was hers. Not a palindrome.

CARMELA

No.

ANA

Means bird when spelled backwards. That's about all dad told me. Her name means bird and she's not here.

CARMELA

I think we should begin.

ANA

I found her diary!

CARMELA

¿Qué?

ANA

Lots of pages are missing. I wonder why he hid it from me.

CARMELA

Some things are best left in the past.

ANA

You know something I don't?

CARMELA

I never stepped foot in this household until you turned ten.

ANA

For someone who speaks against the past so much, you were never shy about sharing yours.

CARMELA

I don't want you to repeat my mistakes.

ANA

Prostitutes are rich in Sangre.

CARMELA

Money never made me less miserable.

ANA

They can own whatever they want.

CARMELA

And anyone can own them.

ANA

Why didn't you leave, then? You could've afforded it.

CARMELA

I think we should begin.

ANA

I'd leave in a heartbeat.

CARMELA

You're the doctor's daughter. If there's anyone living comfortably in this town, it is you.

ANA

(reads)

I want to fly in an airplane someday.

CARMELA

Not a child but you sure sound like one sometimes.

ANA

She wrote that. It's like she's speaking to me, we think so alike- Are "thoughts" a palindrome in any language?

CARMELA

Not that I know of.

ANA

What about time?

CARMELA

Time does tend to work in circles.

*(The clock strikes 12:00)*

ANA

I need to find those missing pages.

CARMELA

Your father will be home soon.

ANA

You're not gonna help me, are you?

CARMELA

Niña Ana.

ANA

I'm not a fucking child, don't call me that. A daughter's right is to know more than just what her mother's fucking name spells backwards.

CARMELA

¡Ana!

ANA

Get out. And take your stupid fruit with you, I'm not hungry. I'll talk to my dad. He'll have answers.

*(Small Eva enters. She kneels at the altar.)*

SMALL EVA

Virgencita, madre mía, me ofrezco enteramente a ti y en prueba de mi filial afecto.

*(Holy Mary, gentle mother, I offer myself entirely to you in proof of my filial affection.)*

CARMELA

Make sure you finish your assignments.

*(Exit Carmela.)*

SMALL EVA

Te consagro en este día, mis ojos, mis oídos, mi lengua, mi corazón; en una palabra, todo mi ser.

*(I give you on this day, my eyes, my ears, my tongue, my heart; in a word, my whole being.)*

HECTOR (O.S.)

Ana, come downstairs immediately!

*(Exit Ana. Clocks tick.)*

YOUNG EVA

Ya que soy toda tuya, madre de bondad, guárdame y defiéndeme como a pertenencia y posesión tuya.

*(Since I am all yours, mother of goodness, keep me and defend me as your belonging and possession.)*

*(Enter Young Carmela. She holds a tube of lipstick.)*

YOUNG CARMELA

Ready?

SMALL EVA

Hail Mary, full of grace, the lord is with you; blessed are you amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb

YOUNG CARMELA

I brought you a gift.

SMALL EVA

I just wanted some fruit.

YOUNG CARMELA

You'll soon be able to own whatever you want.

SMALL EVA

Why am I allowed to talk to you now?

YOUNG CARMELA

I'm helping your dad help you.

SMALL EVA

I think you're just trying to help yourself.

YOUNG CARMELA

We all want some food on our tables. Perfect- red suits you, mi niña.

SMALL EVA

Daddy says red lips are for whores... Will he hurt me?

YOUNG CARMELA

Your daddy?

SMALL EVA

The man waiting behind the door.

(beat)

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners

YOUNG CARMELA

I think we should begin.

SMALL EVA

Will I go to hell?

YOUNG CARMELA

You're not rich enough to go to hell.

SMALL EVA

You talk smart, could be a teacher. What about love?

YOUNG CARMELA

What about it?

SMALL EVA

Is that reserved for wealthy people too?

YOUNG CARMELA

Eva, this is not about the heart. This is business.

*(Enter Edgar)*

EDGAR

It is time.

SMALL EVA

Will it hurt?

YOUNG CARMELA

It'll be over sooner than you think.

SMALL EVA

Please don't go.

YOUNG CARMELA

Think of pretty birds.

SMALL EVA

Daddy! I won't be ungrateful!

EDGAR

Eva no/

SMALL EVA

Please! I'm not hungry anymore!

EDGAR

Quiet. There is a stack of money in his hand/

SMALL EVA

Tell him to go away!

EDGAR

ENOUGH! Good men like your brothers are forced to hate for a living. It's only natural that a woman should love for one. Stop wasting his time and do what he asks.

*(Exit Carmela and Edgar. Heavy footsteps approach the door. Eva prays frantically.)*

SMALL EVA

D-d-dios te salve María, llena eres de gracia, el señor está contigo, the l-l-lord is with - el señor está contigo. Bendita eres entre todas las, among women, women, entre todas las mujeres, and blessed is the f-f-fruit- el fruto de tu vientre, J-j-jesús. Jesus. Santa María madre de dios, pray for us sinners, ahora y en la hora de nuestra, now and at the hour of our - ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte

*(Knock. Knock. Knock.)*

SMALL EVA

Amen.

*(Clocks tick. Exit Eva.  
Enter HECTOR and Ana.)*

HECTOR

...thousands of girls your age would kill to have the privileges you're getting.

ANA

It's just homework! I can do it later.

HECTOR

Carmela does us a great favor

ANA

It's not a favor when she's getting paid for it.

HECTOR

She cares. She wants to help you.

ANA

I think she only wants to help herself.

HECTOR

I see young mothers die every day giving birth because there's no clean water in the hospital. Hundreds of kids grow up uncared for. You should be grateful she treats you like one of her own.

ANA

I just don't think I'm as fortunate as everyone keeps telling me.

HECTOR

Carmela is the only tutor in Sangre. You're lucky to be her student.

ANA

So lucky...

HECTOR

When I was your age you couldn't even pick a favorite color without making a political statement. Entire families were murdered for choosing to paint their houses red; children would play soccer with severed heads dipped in blue paint.

ANA

But dad, I/

HECTOR

You're luckier than the hundreds of thousands that came before you. Don't be an / ingrate.

ANA

Fi-FINE! I'll do my assignments, okay? I'm sorry.

HECTOR

Muy bien. Let's pray.

(re: Diary)

What is this?



ANA  
I was meaning to ask you about/ it.

HECTOR  
Where did you find this?

ANA  
Hidden.

HECTOR  
¿Dónde?

ANA  
Under the floorboards. / It was hidden under the floorboards.

HECTOR  
What were you doing lifting the floorboards?

ANA  
...Creaky floors?

HECTOR  
Give that to me.

ANA  
You know what this is?

HECTOR  
Dámelo.

ANA  
No, wait, I have some questions.

HECTOR  
You have no business trying to lift the past from these pages.

ANA  
It's just mom.

HECTOR  
We grow from the past, we don't uncover it

ANA  
Yet you've been delivering newborn babies to dead mothers for years.

HECTOR  
When I was your age/ floorboards remained untouched.

ANA

Can we stop talking about you!? Look. That's her handwriting. She touched these pages. Por favor. This is the closest I've ever been to her and it's literally ripped in half.

HECTOR

I have no idea what happened to those pages.

ANA

But you do.

HECTOR

Your mother left us for another man the second he pulled some dollar bills from his pocket. You know this.

ANA

I don't believe you. Why would you hide this from me if that was the truth? Why did she really leave?

HECTOR

Give that to/ me.

ANA

¡No, papá!

HECTOR

¡Dámelo!

ANA

If you take it away, I'll leave too! I could make more money in the streets than you make in your miserable/ hospital.

HECTOR

Don't you dare.

ANA

WHY DID SHE REALLY LEAVE!

HECTOR

She found a way out of this place, and she took it. That's the problem with this country. We turn our backs on our own in our attempt to protect them.. Children aren't meant to have children.

*(Clocks tick.)*

ANA

Where did she go?

HECTOR

Do what you want with that thing, just know that I won't help you.

ANA

Dad, please.

*(Exit Hector. Ana grabs the cash she hid earlier. She grabs more from under her mattress. She kneels at the altar. She prays and counts.)*

ANA

Cincuenta, cien, ciento cincuenta— Sweet Mother, do not part from me, do not lose from me your sight. Two hundred and fifty, three hundred, trescientos cincuenta— accompany me everywhere and never leave me alone. Four hundred, cuatrosientos— because you protect me like a true Mother— four hundred? I would do better in the streets— Like a true Mother, four hundred, Mother, like a true Mother... Mamá.

*(EVA enters. She's pregnant. Ana prays more.)*

ANA

¿Virgensita? Mary, can you hear me? Is Sangre invisible to heaven? I live here, but I won't die here. I want to fly in an airplane someday. There's a world out there. There must be.

*(A gust of wind blasts through the window. The diary flips open. Ana grabs it.)*

ANA

(reads)

Mi nena...

EVA

My baby...

ANA

Mi Ana... It is time to go.

EVA

La Capital...

ANA

The Capital city...

EVA

Is cold. I'll need some new clothes.

ANA

I am not safe here...

EVA

This is for your own good. It is time to go. It is my time to go.

BOTH

It is time to go.

*(Clocks tick. Exit Eva. Ana crosses to the bed.)*

ANA

¿La Capital...? What did dad do to you mom...?

