

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## **STORY OF A SCOUNDREL / Historia de un Canalla (1964)**

Julio Bracho

Mexico – Spanish

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### OVERVIEW

*Auteur:* Julio Bracho, by 1964 already well known for his films that critiqued the dominant class and exposed political and moral corruption, tackled the hypocrisy of the ruling elite and the vulnerability of women shamed into the underclass and obliged to support themselves and often their children in any way they could, which included prostitution and marrying for money. He was recognized for being open and frank, while his film fell into the genre of melodrama or crime drama, it was actually much more than that, given that he explored not only gender stereotypes, but also narrative structures.

*Film:* *Historia de un canalla* (Story of a Scoundrel) is accessible and easy to watch; a fact that seduces the viewer to accept the surface appearance of things and to fall into the same “long con” (complex con game) that is being perpetrated against the protagonist. The film’s first act includes a jail cell and a courtroom, where the protagonist is on trial for capital murder. With flashbacks, and then, in a two-episode mock telenovela / soap opera, the viewer watches the story of a life as it unfolds or at least appears to unfold, as told by a series of unreliable witnesses. The final scene exposes the false witnesses and the false narrative, even as it underscores the utter vulnerability of women, particularly those who have been hard-working and enterprising as they combat a deeper sense of inadequacy and even existential shame.

*Background:* In the 1940s and 50s, Mexican cinema experienced a surge of films exploring techniques pioneered in Germany which came to be known as German Expressionism. Beginning in the 1930s, Mexican Expressionism took hold, rooted in the experimental films of Bustillo Oro and Buñuel. Many filmmakers embraced Expressionism, including Julio Bracho, who adapted the techniques and underlying philosophy to forge a path into film noir. By the late 1950s, however, many filmmakers were tiring of film noir, and they were developing a style of film that was highly realistic and which took an unflinching view of the lives of people down on their luck and society’s often shunned underclass. The realism was reminiscent of the novelistic work of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French writers, Emile Zola and Gustave Flaubert, as well as the English writer, George Gissing. Writers and filmmakers who embraced realism in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century were often associated with liberal or even radical political ideologies, primarily due to the fact that they showed deep sympathy for the travails of a group marked by deep suffering. Bracho’s ability to create a film narrative that allowed the audience to see reality through the eyes of a person trapped in an often impossible situation was truly remarkable. In *Story of a Scoundrel*, his ability to translate deception into a film representation that deceived the viewers was an even deeper way for him to create a profound experience for the audience.

## SYNOPSIS

Julio Bracho was a wonderful director, but his films are not uniformly accessible. You'd think that the best of his work would be available on YouTube, but that's not the case. Two of his most celebrated films, "Historia de Un Canalla" (Story of a Scoundrel) (actually Story of a Scammer)... and Rostros Olvidados (Forgotten Faces), are not available via YouTube, FaceBook, or other places. They are only available through a Russian platform. So, I availed myself of the platform and was able to watch the two films.

The Story of a Scoundrel starts out with a middle-aged woman, attractive, but definitely in her 40s, sitting in a Mexican jail cell. Her attorney comes in – he's been hired by her friends to defend her and he said he took the case, even though he knew she herself was not going to be a help with it. She was in jail for murdering her fiancé. But, of course, there is a lot more to it. The movie is the story of a long con, and also the psychology of a woman who, due to her life circumstances and the choices she made to survive, leaves her with existential shame and a belief that she will be shunned if anyone knows who or what she is. Such shame made her an easy mark. It turns out that Lina was born in a small village in Mexico. She lived there happily until she was seduced by a man who then abandoned her, making it impossible for her to continue living in the town. So, she went to Mexico City to make her way in the world. She got there, but was unable to obtain work. Hungry and desperate, she ended up in a brothel where she seemed to have a pretty happy life (weirdly enough – it is not the life of the sex worker as depicted by Emilio Fernandez, that's for sure).

Somewhere along the way, one of her regular clients fell in love with her and proposed to take her and keep her. They did not marry, but the older man took care of her, and Lina was very happy. Nothing so beautiful could last (as she says), and she gets the news that he has died. She is devastated. She does nothing for a time, but then decides to follow her passion and her talent, and she opens Lina's Haute Couture and before long, she has a highly coveted store, which people patronize when they want the best. One day, by chance, she meets a fabric salesman. She finds him attractive. He asks her out, and they start seeing each other.

The next series of occurrences are presented in a way that the audience takes them at face value. Later, we learn that nothing is as it appears. We also see how easily Lina is vulnerable because she is afraid that people will learn about her past. After a series of lies and betrayals, Lina murders Julio.

Lina is arrested and charged with Julio's murder. While Lina insists she is guilty, her attorney, Lic. Aguirre, manages to put all the pieces together and shows just how and when Lina was made the victim of an intricate scheme to bilk her out of her money. Lina collapses in tears. Licenciado Aguirre tells the jury that while she did kill Julio, she is not guilty of murder. He provoked her; but more than that – she did the city a favor by ridding it of vermin. Instead of making her an untouchable due to her past, he rehumanized her, and restored her human dignity. The jury acquitted Lina, and she was released from prison. In an ironic twist, Lina is not the only woman that Lic. Aguirre will defend. On the same evening of Lina's acquittal, a traumatized woman appears at the Aguirre home, smoking gun in her hand: "I just killed my boyfriend."

Final thought: This film must have been quite satisfying for audiences to watch – one feels sympathy for the underdog while also recognizing the scoundrel / con artist for what he is, and then, simultaneously, being reminded of the ways and times we have been grifted or conned or scammed. It might have been small and subtle, but nevertheless, it happens.

## CHARACTERS

*Lina Torres* -- Former sex worker who starts a successful haute couture design house

*Lic. Antonio Aguirre* – attorney representing Lina

*La Baronesa* – The kind-hearted madam of a brothel who protects Lina

*Julio Benavent* – con artist and scoundrel

*Marta Ruiz de la Mora* – duplicitous employee at the haute couture shop

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### **Lina Torres:**

Lina Torres was born in a small pueblo in rural Mexico. In her teens, she fell in love just to be taken advantage of, and forced to leave her home in ignominy. Once in Mexico City, she ended up in a brothel after having failed to obtain employment, and needing to do whatever she could to eat and have a place to live.

*Hardworking:* Lina is a very sympathetic character who represents the dreams and aspirations of an “every woman,” at least in the sense that she was able to be an entrepreneur and open a dress shop. The profession she chose before that time was due to limited options, and while it did, on paper, provide a living, the price paid in harboring a secret and a stigma was very high.

*Sentimental:* Part of what made Lina vulnerable was her sentimentality, which manifested as a need for love. She did not live with Agustin because of monetary gain, but because she craved the love and approbation of a worthy man. When he died, she had no interest in men, but wanted to dedicate herself to the pursuit of building something that would be durable and dignified. Sadly, the woman she most trusted betrayed her and set her up, also because her own need for love (she thought that if she had enough money to pay Julio, he would divorce his wife and marry her). This ironic situation puts a focus on the powerlessness of women and the realities of male privilege in a patriarchal society.

*Lonely / Needy:* Lina’s life was one of profound loneliness which was a consequence of her need to keep her early life a secret. Secrets make people self-isolate, and as much as she was personable and professional with her clients at Lina Haute Couture, she could never run the risk of having close friendships because they might deduce her early years and profession. The mise en scene of the film effectively translated the concept into film representation by showing her alone in her apartment, awaiting phone calls, lying in bed – always at her most emotional point in a situation of absolute existential isolation.

*Self-Loathing:* The origins of Lina’s self-loathing had early, deep roots. When she was discarded by her boyfriend who would not marry her, she was compelled to leave her small pueblito in rural Mexico. Sadly, there was never another mention of her family or her small town; apparently they disowned her completely, and even if they had not when she left, they certainly would not have accepted her if they caught wind of the fact that she became a worker in a brother. Lina’s lack of family support meant that her only safety net was her employer, La Baronessa, and possibly her fellow workers. When she fell in love with Julio, her biggest fear would be that he would somehow get wind of her former profession. Sadly, that was Julio’s entrée – he knew of this soft underbelly vulnerability, and so was able to construct the scheme wherein his friend would pose as a priest and promise absolution to Lina if she married Julio.

### **Licenciado Aguirre**

An enlightened attorney with a compassionate and supportive wife, Lic. Aguirre was a champion of the underdog; specifically women who had been exploited, pushed, humiliated, used, and abused to the point of defending themselves, with fatal consequences. Intelligent and uniquely gifted in the ability to ferret out con men and “long con” teams of heartless / ruthless opportunists, Lic. Aguirre let the prosecution proceed with their case, and then, he followed with each of the prosecution’s witnesses and slowly and deliberately exposed each one as a false witness and part of a grand scheme to defraud Lina of all her life’s savings and her business.

*Compassionate:* When La Baronessa approached him to defend one of her former “girls,” Lic. Aguirre did not recoil in moral disapprobation, but instead, he accepted Lina as a client and he did everything he could to learn about the situation and in doing so, he exposed the fact that she had been the victim of Julio, but also of all of the confederates.

*Patient:* While Lina expressed her own hopelessness and despair, and said she was simply willing to take her punishment, Lic. Aguirre listened patiently and did not give up on her. He expressed in his confidence in her and he encouraged her to tell her story to the fullest extent possible. His patience resulted in gaining her trust, which ultimately saved her because in that way the truth of the “long con” was revealed.

*Persuasive:* Lic. Aguirre was remarkably persuasive. After the prosecuting attorney completed his final arguments, the case looked “open and shut,” and Lina’s guilt seemed incontrovertible and indisputable. However, he showed the jury and the judge that literally every encounter that resulted in Julio meeting and marrying Lina had been orchestrated, starting with the “accidental” car trouble in Los Bosques road, where Julio could happen upon her and offer help. After that, a “fabric wholesale house” owner told Lina about an “up and coming fabric business” and then Julio’s faux “mother” came to the store, convincing her that he had a wealthy mother. The fake “I’ll sign for the bill rather than ever accepting a penny from you!” drama with the waiter was another episode in the drama designed to convince Lina that Julio was a young, virile, businessman who was on the verge of a huge breakthrough – one that he could effect with a soulmate business partner (and her cash). Once Lic. Aguirre revealed the extent to which Julio and his confederates had cruelly exploited an aging and vulnerable woman who had a great deal of success, but who lacked self-regard and any sort of bulwarking cohort of friends, the jury felt great sympathy for the fragile and cruelly broken Lina.

THEMES:

**Reality is a Construct:** The innovative structure of the film emphasizes a constructivist notion of reality, which is to say that the entire world that Lina was experiencing after meeting Julio was one of duplicity, feigned behaviors, false appearances, and a kind of “soap opera” orchestration played out in a theatre that Lina was not aware of – her own dress store / boutique. This elaborate con game begs a bigger question: What does it mean to try to be successful as a woman in Mexico of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Did the fact that women had no intrinsic power mean that they had to orchestrate a kind of theatrics in order to seduce power (aka men); otherwise they had no ability at all? Further reinforcing the notion of that women had only proxy power was the fact that the entire Julio “long con” was set up by his mistress (and employee of Lina’s shop) who thought that if she could deliver enough cash to Julio, he would leave his wife and marry her.

**Appearances Deceive:** Obviously, the entire false narrative headed by the duplicitous con man, Julio, was deceptive. However, there is another, perhaps even more tragic, level of deception. In this film, the deceptions start when Lina enters the brothel. First, there is the “Baroness,” who dons finery and situates herself in an ornate set of rooms to lend credence to the notion that she could possibly be a member of the European aristocracy, when in reality, she is the owner of a house of prostitution. Second, there are the prostitutes themselves, who are shown in their dressing room and in the salons, festooned with finery fitting queens and any other elites, and thus they attract a “high-toned” clientele, nominally the rich and powerful. While this does seem to be a practical approach to business – give the elite access to a ribald simulacrum, a rich, powerful woman who is okay with being defiled in the most humiliating of ways – it’s an ugly farce which simply demonstrates that women on every level are commodified and consumed. The wives who married for money epitomize the apotheosis of the commodification of gender and class, and the brothels contain their infernal “Other.” Both bear the same message: a woman is a commodity. Appearances deceive as the “girls” of the brothel wear the same outfits as their elite counterparts.

**Social Inequality:** This entire film would not make any sense at all if there were not rigid social hierarchies in Mexico. The remarkable thing is that in the film, all the characters, both low and high class or caste, are European in appearance; officially designated as “white” on their birth certificates. So, even amongst the “whites” are social hierarchies; instead of being structured around race (mestizo, mulatto, etc.), these are structured around patriarchal determinations of “decency.” In other words, men who marry women legitimize them and give them status. Men who fall in love (or lust) with women, but for some reason or another decide they are not worth marrying (usually due to their family’s status or financial wherewithal), instantly marginalize the objects of their affection by resigning them to “fallen woman” status. What will happen to these women? The Baronesa shows us one option: become the

“madam” and perpetuate the ghastly apings of aristocracy, but with “girls” who can’t say “no” to the rage that the men consigned to such loveless unions they’ve been obligated to engage in. Only heaven knows how to heal such wounded women, sacrificed for cash flow for “la Baronesa.”

**The Past:** Lina is haunted by her past. Not only does she wish to erase the memories of her small town and the jilting that occurred there, she wants to move far beyond the brothel and establish a life of respectability and social stability. Yet, her past comes back to potentially sabotage all the hard work in establishing her elegant dress shop and making it prosper by having female clients of the highest reputation and social standing. If her female clientele knew of her time as a sex worker, they would immediately shun her, and she would lose her business. To make things worse, when Lina is wooed by the significantly younger Julio, and he proposes marriage, she is terrified that he will find out about her past and drop her. Such a thing came perilously close to happening as she and Julio dined in an elegant restaurant, and as Julio was called away for a phone call, a former one of her clients recognized her and assumed she was still engaged in sex work, and immediately tried to procure her services. Transfixed in horror, Lina froze, and then bolted from the restaurant, fearful of the way her past could follow her.

**“Fallen Women” / Sex Workers:** Lina was a young and inexperienced girl when she fell in love and was deceived by her womanizing boyfriend back in her small village in Mexico. Once he abandoned her, she was considered a “fallen woman” by her community and she had little choice but to leave for the big city and to forge a life for herself. Once in Mexico City, she was unable to find work, despite all of her attempts. The problem was that she was young and had no experience or particular skills. Being in that situation made her desperate for any type of work, and it just so happened that her youth and her beauty made her a desired commodity in a brothel, where she would become a sex worker. Thus, Lina and her fellow “girls” or “sisters” were not sex workers out of choice, but because they had to earn a living and felt they had no other options. When one of the clients approached the Baronesa (the madam) to take Lina out of the brothel so she could be his exclusive mistress, Lina was head over heels in love with him, even though she still lived in the shadows and not in the “respectable” world as a wife. Once Lina was able to become a successful entrepreneur with her dress shop, she was, by all appearances, a “decent” woman. However, deep down, Lina knew she had spent many years of her life as a sex worker, and her past could come back and ruin her. So, no matter how much success she had, there was still a bit of fear, regret, and self-recrimination.

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of world does *Historia de un Canalla* take place in? Are there rigidly defined social hierarchies? What are the main gender expectations?
2. In this film, how do patriarchy and machismo shape institutions such as marriage? For example, when the “priest” talks to Lina to encourage her to marry Julio, he tells her that marriage will transform her and essentially eliminate the stigma she carried because of her 15 years as a prostitute. What his “promise” reflects is fact that in a machistic / patriarchal society, women are delegitimized as human beings if they do not have a direct legal connection (such as marriage) to a high-status male. Yet, wives do not lead blissful lives. Explore some of the paradoxes illustrated in the film.
3. What makes Lina Torres such a tragic figure? What happens to her in her early years? Where does she live and work when she comes to Mexico City?
4. Explain how Lina’s role as a sex worker and supposed purveyor of “love” and “affection” would actually give rise to an internal vacuum and huge hole when it comes to true love. How might a rigorous daily schedule of **faking** love give rise to a pathologically love-starved sex worker, who becomes self-destructive in the pursuit of the possibility of **real** love?
5. Imagine that you are Julio and somehow you’ve evaded incarceration, but you’re in need of “lana” – ready cash. You were impressed by how well you were able to orchestrate a “long con” on Lina, thanks to her employee’s crush on you and foolish notion that she could give you money and you’d divorce your wife. Who will be the next “mark”? How will you find her? What will the ideal attributes be? What will her

core vulnerabilities be, and how will they align with the dominant culture's ideas of men/women relationships?

## SCENES

Released in 1964, *Historia de un Canalla* (*Story of a Scoundrel*), represented a continuation of director Julio Bracho's exploration of realism, which explored the lives of people who were often scorned or ignored by the social elites.



**Lina in Jail** The film opens with the protagonist, Lina, who is sitting in a jail cell in Mexico City. Gradually, the audience comes to learn that she has been accused of shooting the person she thought was her husband to death. She is fatalistic and states that she is guilty and does not deserve to go free.



**The attorney** Lic. Aguirre, has been hired by Lina's friends to represent her, even though in her desperately depressed state, she initially does not want to accept his help. This medium close-up point of view shot gives the audience a sense of being able to be an unseen onlooker and privy to secrets.



**Witness** In the courtroom, the first witness, the owner of a fabric wholesale shop, leaves the witness stand. The prosecuting attorney stands and calls the next witness. This is a jury trial, and the jurors sit against the wall.



**Another Witness** The prosecuting attorney asks Lina's employee and key model at her haute couture shop about Lina's shop, her business, and her behavior. Fashionably dressed, with a stylish hat and couture suit, she tells of Lina's decision to go into business with the man she eventually killed.



**Lina's surprise** Lina, wearing a sober yet stylish outfit, looks with surprise as a woman she had considered a friend and confidante betrays her. This close-up shows the expressions in Lina's face, and provides a glimpse into her inner turmoil.



**Lina** Lina takes the witness stand and gives an account of her early life. In doing so, she begins at the beginning when she lived in a small town in rural Mexico, and then how she ended up in Mexico City in a profession that shocks many of the people in the courtroom. When the prosecutor asks what she did, she says, with dignity, "I was engaged in the practice of prostitution." The onlookers gasp and titter. Lina maintains her dignity.



**Lina in Brothel** The film then goes into an extended flashback to Lina's early days in an expensive brothel, where the beautiful and elegantly dressed and coiffed sex workers command a high price, and are viewed as companions to the clientele. This low-angle point of view show gives a "slice of life" view of the brothel.



The owner of the brothel, its "madam," is eponymous "Baronesa," who is shown to be truly concerned for the welfare of her "girls," and engages in conversations with the clientele to assure that they are treated well.





**Agustin** One day, one of Lina's regular clients visits the Baronesa to tell her that he has fallen in love with Lina and that he wants her to leave the brothel and be his exclusive mistress, whom he will support with funds and a place to live. The Baronesa is dubious, but she hears him out.



**Happy Days** Lina and Agustín de Alba, her lover, are deliriously happy. Each night when he comes home to the apartment they share, they share intimate conversations and live a joyous and fulfilling life. This close-up lets the audience share the feelings, and suggests that the passion is genuine and sustainable.



**Agustin dies** One day, however, Agustín disappears. Lina learns the reason why he no longer comes to the apartment they share. He has died. The Baronesa offers her a place to return to at the brothel, but Lina does not want to return. She wants to take time off and to learn about herself. She finds that Agustín has left her money, which makes it possible for her to stay in her apartment.



**Business woman** With the money that Agustin left her, Lina decides to open an elegant dress shop for ladies, featuring haute couture designs for the wealthy women of the city. It is a resounding success.



**Lina's Talent** Lina's special talent is to work with her women clientele and to transform them with flattering outfits that make them look slimmer and taller. This point of view long-shot shows Lina's interactions in her shop.



**Lina meets julio** Lina meets Julio Benavent, who stops at the edge of the road as Lina's car has broken down. As Lina waits, a dashing man stops to help her. The car is repaired, but in the meantime, he asks where she works and she tells him about her shop.



**Julio courts Lina** Julio drops by the shop, and presents her with flowers and an invitation to accompany him to dinner. Julio takes her to an elegant restaurant where he treats her to fine dining and then tells her about his business. He owns a successful fabric business, he claims, and his clients are spread throughout Mexico. Julio calls Lina and they speak on the phone. Their relationship deepens as he pays attention to her, and she is flattered and attracted.



**Courtship continues** Julio takes her to dinner again, and Lina's affection for Julio deepens. They are greeted and prepare to go to their reserved table.



**The past catches up** Julio is called away for a phone call. To Lina's horror, a former client from when she was working in the brothel comes to her table, sits down and proposes that she leave with him for the kind of service she gave him in the past. His tone is lascivious. She is horrified – and despite his grip on her arm, she arises and flees the restaurant.



**Lina's shame** At home, Lina is filled with shame and horror. Her dreadful secret – the fact she worked as a sex worker for 15 years – and she is terrified that Julio will learn about it. Incapable of accepting herself, or her past, and worse, of forgiving herself, she is filled with existential shame.



**Julio can not pay the restaurant bill** Julio searches for her at her shop and asks why she left. She cannot explain and he asks her out to dinner. Once at dinner, after several glasses of champagne and dinner, Julio fumbles with his coat pocket and states that he has forgotten his wallet. He asks the waiter if he can sign for it. Lina assures him that she has money and can pay for it, but he says he will never accept money from a woman. He is too honorable. The waiter finally relents and allows him to sign for it.



**Proposal** Julio proposes to Lina. He also discusses his dream to expand his business and have more stores throughout Mexico – expanding existing business that is clamoring for it. Lina hesitates and says she cannot marry him.



**The Priest** A friend of Julio comes by Lina’s haute couture boutique to speak with her. He is a priest and he encourages Lina to marry him – Julio loves her and wants to marry. Lina confesses to the priest that she can’t marry – the stigma of her past is just too pronounced. The priest tells her that in reality, marriage will be the only way to remove the stigma, and it will make her an honest, respectable woman on every level.



**Marriage** Lina accepts the marriage proposal but only on the condition that he accept all her money and that they are full partners in his new business venture. They marry, and this first episode of the “soap opera” story within a story ends. She wants to marry him, and also, she will only do so if he accepts all her money so that they can be in business together. By offering her all her money, she is somehow absolving herself of her sordid past, she thinks. However, it’s just that need for cleansing that makes her vulnerable to the long con. She gives him all her money – roughly a half a million pesos.



**Julio gets lost** As soon as they are married and he accepts a check for all her money, Julio leaves for an extended “business trip.” He does not call, telephone, mail or have any contact with her whatsoever for several months. Lina waits by the phone to no avail.



**Lina is poor again** Lina falls hopelessly behind on her rent, as she has literally no money of her own now. The landlord tells her he will give her more time, but she moves out, uncertain where she will go.



**Pawn Shop** Her first stop is a pawn shop where she pawns her furs, jewels, and elegant clothing for all the money she can get. The point of view shot frames her situation in a way that elicits sympathy from the audience. The shadows give a noir feeling, and the bars echo the bars she will eventually be behind.



**Lina meets Julio again** One evening, Lina happens upon Julio. Pretending not to be surprised to see her, he claims he has been looking everywhere for her, but could not find her, since she had left her apartment. He claims he was not able to be in touch with her because he fell deathly ill in a small town in Mexico and was not able to call or send her a message. She asks about the money and Julio explains that it was all lost because he had to spend so much time in the hospital.



**Lina shoots Julio** Lina becomes aware that she was hoodwinked. Further, the woman who claimed to be his girlfriend is still around, and she and Julio are laughing and uproariously feting their good luck and riches (stolen from Lina). Lina, who is now penniless, overhears Julio and his girlfriend mocking and laughing, and she can't abide such an outrage. She pulls out a gun and shoots Julio dead. After shooting Julio in the head, Lina leans to him, weeping, Julio's wife leans down to him, in shock and beginning to enter into hysterics. This three-shot shows how the two women are united by the same man, a singular scoundrel.



**Prosecuter** Fast-forwarding to the trial, the prosecuting attorney demands that the jury and the judge convict Lina of cold-blooded murder. Lina herself breaks down and does not deny that she is guilty.



**Baronese** Then, the attorney for the defense appears and he calls the Baronesa to the stand, to the amusement of the attendees, since she greets the judge in a familiar way, and also greets a few men of the jury, who smile, but look abashed at the same time. Clearly, they are clients who have visited her brothel.



**Collaborators** The defense attorney, Lic. Aguirre, begins to recall all the witnesses who were witnesses for the prosecution. One by one, he exposes each of them as a fraud, and a part of an elaborate scheme to collude and to steal all of Lina's assets. The first, who claimed to be a wholesale dealer of fabric, and who told Lina that Julio was doing a high volume of business, is exposed as an imposter.





**Defense Attorney** Lic. Aguirre addresses the jury and asks them to consider the fact that nothing is as it seems, and that a group of people conspired to put on an elaborate hoax; one that resulted gaining the confidence of Lina – to the point that she would sign a check with all her resources to participate in a “business partnership” with her “husband.”



**The Waiter** The waiter at the restaurant is shown to have been in collusion – he and Julio put on an act so that it simply appeared that Julio was out of money. Julio actually did not need to sign – he paid the waiter in cash and gave him a big tip.



**The Priest** Next is the “priest” who is not a priest at all, but simply one of the con artists in Julio’s group. He took advantage of Lina’s shame and self-loathing to tell her that she could have love and be loved unconditionally if she trusted Julio and accepted his proposal of marriage.



**Then past Employee** To Lina’s dismay, her main employee and model, was the one who came up with the idea in the first place. She was in a relationship with Julio and thought that she could get him to leave his wife if she could help him get enough money for a divorce – and that could be possible if Julio had access to Lina’s money. The judge asked Lina’s employee why she thought she could trust such a cad, particularly when he was proposing something that only a thorough scoundrel and prevaricating con artist would do. The judge’s remarks cause the attendees of the trial to burst into laughter, which belies the core tragedy at the heart of the story; how a woman who, despite 15 years working in a brothel, was able to use her entrepreneurial skills over the next ten years and build a thriving business. The judge calms the crowd, and asks for order in the court.



**Final Arguments** In a very quiet court, the defense attorney makes his final arguments. He explains that yes, Lina did shoot the man who had lied, cheated, abandoned, mocked, and stolen every cent she had. However, in doing so, she actually did the city a favor and rid it of vermin. She deserved appreciation, not a jail sentence.



**Not Guilty verdict** The jury returned with a “not guilty” verdict. They explained that given the circumstances, the homicide was justified. Upon hearing the verdict, Lina bursts into tears, the close-up letting the audience see and feel her great relief, but also the shock and trauma she has endured.



**Lina leaves the jail** Opening the doors of the jail, the military police let Lina pass through them and to freedom. With her back to the jail, and figuratively to the past, she can move ahead with a new life, and a new start.



**Another woman** At the home of Lic. Aguirre and his wife, their maid announces the arrival of a guest. Lic and Mrs. Aguirre are planning a long weekend in Veracruz to relax. He does not really want to have a visitor. However, the unexpected visitor turns out to be a woman holding a gun in her hand, tremblingly entreating Lic. Aguirre to help her. She has just shot a man and implores Lic Aguirre, "Please, you're the only one who can help me!"



**The lawyer's wife** Aguirre looks at his wife. She looks at the visitor, then turns to her husband and wordlessly nods, "Yes." Aguirre's beautiful and supportive wife shows how moved she is at the plight of the woman who has just engaged in a crime of passion. There is great compassion for women who have been trapped in a society where women have few opportunities for employment and fewer for justice after they are taken advantage of.



**The new client** Lic. Aguirre offers his arm to the visitor, and leads her into the study where he and Mrs. Aguirre will hear her story, leading, it is assumed, to him taking her case.

