CHARACTERS

Old Woman
Mute
1st Beggar
2nd Beggar
3rd Beggar
Dwarf

SCENE: Interior of the Old Woman's hovel.
Seated in an ancient arm-chair in front of a mirror, the Old Woman is preening herself. Two piles of clothes, once fine and elegant, lie one on each side of the arm-chair.

OLD WOMAN: How should I know where you hid it! You always hide it in the most out-of-the-way places and accuse me of having stolen it! It's always the same! The Lord above knows I don't steal your money! God knows where you put it, you miser! (Pause. She goes back to her preening. Her son, the Mute, grunts furiously, hunting everywhere, turns to the audience and accuses his mother of having stolen his earnings as a shoe-shine boy.) Besides, if I do make use of a few centavos, that's not stealing. I've got a right to them: I conceived him and bore him and brought him up and supported him. I'm his mother. (The Mute goes over to her and demands his money again.) You know what your trouble is? You're jealous. Jealous! Jealousy... Jealousy, you're possessed by jealousy. When was it? Oh, that's enough about the money! Listen to me! How can he listen? He's as deaf as a door knob! God punished me with this burden! When was it? - thirty years ago... forty ... forty-five...? Forty-seven maybe. You were exactly the same then, you were born like this. (The Mute shows on his fingers that she stole thirty-five pesos.) Thirty-five pesos! You liar! I took twenty lousy pesos for the end-of-the-month orgy. Twenty lousy pesos, the liar! Next you'll say you're the one that supports me! If it wasn't for their generosity - yes, the people you hate, the ones who make you jealous, I would die here alone in this dungeon. (Pause. She goes back to her preening. The Mute grunts with impotent rage, and makes a gesture as if to strangle her.) You'd do it, too! You'd do it. (Pause. She continues with her preening, ostentatiously combing her gray hair.) When was it? Fifty years ago maybe? Fifty already? I didn't steal thirty-five, I took twenty-for the end-of-the-month orgy. Well, it's the orgy today. And you'd better not say anything. You talk too much. (Pause.) How's he going to talk? He's as dumb as a stone. (Pause.) He never heard a single word in his whole rotten life. Now your father, look at him up there ... (The Mute smiles beatifically. He worships his father. As he looks at his father's portrait, his rage vanishes.) He was the world's greatest talker. His moustache used to move up and down... It still seems to move (The Mute grunts.) What, you're even jealous of him? When
was it? Let's call it a round forty. Forty years ago. *(She does a strip-tease as she speaks, changing into some old clothes which are about to fall apart.)* The heir apparent kissed my hand in the train, in Argentina. Come on, help me out. Do it for your father! He used to love this story! *(She caresses him, placates him, wins him over.)* Come along, you're there. We're on the train. *(The Mute smiles. He likes the train. He imitates it.)*

Through the window you can see the pampa. The whole pampa! The heir apparent is on his first trip to South America. He comes to my compartment. Stand up straight. The heir apparent looked as if he'd swallowed an umbrella. Heels together! The Prince looked as if he had a stick up his arse. *(She withdraws the hand that the Mute is gauchely trying to kiss. The Mute clings desperately to her hand and struggles to kiss it.)* Leave go, leave go, you idiot! Now you're trying to get in good with me! Mister! *(The Mute gets furious. He grabs a pot which is on the table upstage.)* The food! That's the food for the orgy, put it down! I bought it with my money! With my own money! Oh God, God! Why have you punished me with this? He's the payment for my sins, Lord; Mea culpa! Mea Culpa! Mea fucking culpa! *(The Mute puts the pot down and goes to her. He kneels down in front of her. Slowly the blessing is given between soft grunts. He buries his head in her lap and pushes as if he were trying to return to her womb. She smiles and strokes him.)* You'd like to go back in there wouldn't you? You'd like to curl up again inside. *(She pats her stomach.)* And when you were in there you used to kick to get out! That's men for you! They spend nine months struggling to get out and the rest of their lives struggling to get in! *(She laughs and laughs until tears roll down her cheeks.)*

Okay, okay, steady. You'll wake the devil in me. Instead of showing so much love you should be more generous. Actions speak louder than words. Come on! Get up! Stop grumbling. You've got to go now, you must fetch Jacobo. Pedro, and... stop growling and grunting! No jealousy, now! There's no-one now for me, my dear. The devil in me has gone. My old devil is very old and fast asleep. All I can hear these days is the rattle in his throat. And their devils are asleep too. Pedro... Juan... Jacobo... Antonio... and the dead, may rest in peace. You used to watch through the cracks didn't you: it's all over and done with now. Ah, you rogue! You liked looking at your mother. You liked to see it, didn't you? All right I know you hate them, but you must go and get their money. I have to beg their help since you're so cheap. I'm a beggar, too. Like my beggars! The ones you hate. Like my beggars who come to the end-of-the-month orgy. *(The Mute gestures that she wastes her money on those good-for-nothings. He spits on them, spitting towards the audience.)* It's my money. I earned it. I earned it when I was me -- and I go on earning it now, for old time's sake. *(He gestures that it's not true, that she stole it all from him. He turns his pockets inside out to show her.)* You're a miser, a damned miser. Yes, I spend my money on the beggars! I enjoy myself with the beggars! I've a right to enjoy myself. Get out, go and get some money! Go and polish all the shoes in the world. You're a disgrace to your mother! Get out! *(She threatens him with the broom. The Mute runs off, laughing and teasing her. The Old Woman sits down wearily in her old arm-chair. Pause.)*

Is that you, Jacobo? Do you know, long ago, round about the time of the first war, the heir apparent to the throne of England made his first trip to South America... and his last. How can you expect him to come to the horrible place South America is today? We were on the same train.
I had a sleeper, all to myself. Through the window you could see the pampa... And the train went... little money weighs a little, little money weighs a little, little money weighs a little, little money weighs a little... little money weighs a little... little money weighs a little... (She accelerates to the point of convulsion.) But it cost... (She begins quickly and slows down until finally she flops back.) many dollars, many pounds, many dollars, many pounds, many dollars, ma-ny pounds, ma-ny dollars, ma-ny ---pounds, shshshshsh! (As if the engine was letting off steam.)

1ST BEGGAR: Praise be to God.
OLD WOMAN: You're late. Where have you been, you mangy old man?
1ST BEGGAR: I've been sick... It's my chest... I can hardly breathe. (He coughs and spits into a blood-stained rag.)
OLD WOMAN: Quit putting on airs! You've no right to catch such delicate illnesses. In my day consumption was a distinguished ailment. There's far too much equality these days.
1ST BEGGAR: At least if you let me eat at these end-of-the-month orgies I wouldn't be so bad. It's only once a month!
OLD WOMAN: This is a spiritual vigil. A memorial ceremony. I shan't allow it to be soiled by the materialism of our age.
1ST BEGGAR: I'm charging one peso thirty today.
OLD WOMAN: Whatever for?
1ST BEGGAR: Well, I live further away. I have to take the bus... I have ...
OLD WOMAN: Jacobo used to come in a horse and carriage.
1ST BEGGAR: A who?
OLD WOMAN: Get dressed up. (The skinny Beggar gets undressed, shivers, selects from one of the piles of clothes a very old frilly shirt-front and puts it on. He coughs.) Don't you dirty Jacobo's clothes. (The Beggar puts on the moth-eaten tail-coat and trousers. It's all too big for him. He puts on the top-hat, but he can't get the gloves on. His fingers are bent from arthritis.) Jacobo, you've shrunk! Ah, my dear, arrange my chair. Pull this curtain back, I can't see properly. Hand me the opera glasses... For Christ's sake, you mangy old thing, stop fooling with your gloves, you'll make me giddy. Hand me the opera glasses.
1ST BEGGAR: I can't get them on.
OLD WOMAN: Then get rid of them: stuff them up your arse.
1ST BEGGAR: (Furious) I can't get them on!
OLD WOMAN: Shut up!
1ST BEGGAR: Don't shout at me! (He throws the gloves on the ground.)
OLD WOMAN: Listen: (Shouts.) Do you want to have no orgy? Do you want to lose your earnings?
1ST BEGGAR: (Very humbly) No, no, ma'am. Please no.
OLD WOMAN: Pick up your gloves! (The Beggar picks up the gloves. He has an attack of coughing.) Don't cough! (The Beggar holds back his cough as best he can.)
1ST BEGGAR: I... (His cough comes back. He stifles it.) I've got a cough!
OLD WOMAN: Stifle it.
1ST BEGGAR: (Squeezing out his words.) I've got tu-ber-cu-losis.
OLD WOMAN: I don't want to hear about it. (Short pause.) Come along. Let's begin. I'm getting impatient. (Pause.) While we're waiting for the others.
1ST BEGGAR: How shall I begin?
OLD WOMAN: Just begin!
1ST BEGGAR: (Bows ceremoniously.) How beautiful you are, Maria Cristina. (He is...
overcome by laughter and laughs behind his hand.)
OLD WOMAN: You're not to cough.
1ST BEGGAR: Listen to my chest. (His chest makes a noise.)
OLD WOMAN: Dear Jacobo, pull up my chair. Pull this curtain back, I can't see a thing. Hand me the opera-glasses. (She looks at the audience with some ancient binoculars that the Beggar gives her.) Look, there they are. Each one with his little private life behind locked doors. .. After they've locked them they throw the keys into the sea . . . They've come to not see. They don't want to see. That's why they come. If they saw they'd be terrified. Perhaps they're dead? No. There's one that's moving. He's so-and-so, he's kept by Miss so- and-so, who's mistress of someone or other. Look at her. (She whispers at length in the Beggar's ear. They both laugh.) Look at her over there. (She hands him the binoculars. The Beggar looks. He hands back the binoculars and says a number of things in her ear; so many, that he chokes and coughs.) You filthy old fart, cough on the other side! (She looks through the binoculars.) And him, him... oh, him. (She whispers in the Beggar's ear. They both begin to laugh. They laugh louder and louder. The Beggar points at someone in the audience and they both laugh heartily. Suddenly the Old Woman stops laughing and lowers the Beggar's arm.) Don't point! They'll catch on! (She beckons to the Beggar to listen to a secret. He leans over, listens to the secret, nods, looks through the binoculars and whispers in her ear. The game gets faster: they pass each other the binoculars at great speed and say hurried things to each other. The 2nd Beggar enters.)
2ND BEGGAR: Praise be to God. Sorry I'm late. I was just...
OLD WOMAN: Don't interrupt. We're in the theatre. (The 2nd Beggar pretends to take interest. He looks at the audience.)
2ND BEGGAR: Bravo! What are they performing?
OLD WOMAN: Their life.
2ND BEGGAR: What's it like?
OLD WOMAN: Boring. Get dressed up. You're Pedro today.
2ND BEGGAR: From today on I'm charging one fifty for the end-of-the-month orgies.
OLD WOMAN: What an entertaining show!
1ST BEGGAR: He's asking a lot, ma'am.
OLD WOMAN: It's the most entertaining show in the world! Watch. (They start the game again only more slowly.) Oh, Jacobo, gossip excites me so much. (The 1st Beggar whispers a long bit of gossip in her ear, while the 2nd Beggar undresses. Beneath his rags he's wearing an old striped prisoner's tunic. On top of it he puts a large overcoat with velvet lapels, and on his head a battered top-hat. The 1st Beggar goes on with his gossip.) Him? (She points. The Beggar moves her hand.) Ah, him! (He moves her hand. The Old Woman gets up.) Ah, ah, him, him. (He moves her hand. They both move forward to front of stage.) Ah, her? (He moves her hand. They go further forward.) Her, then? (He moves her hand. They reach the edge of the stage.) Her. (The Old Woman withdraws her hand as if she had burned her finger.) We're pointing. Do you think they've realized? No . . . (She looks tenderly at the audience.) They haven't realized . . . They're so innocent.
2ND BEGGAR: I said from now on I'm charging one fifty for the end-of-the-month orgy.
OLD WOMAN: (To 1st Beggar) Wash your mouth out you disgusting old man. It's a sewer. (To 2nd Beggar.) The others haven't arrived.
2ND BEGGAR: If you won't pay one fifty, I'll take these things off. (He threatens to take the clothes off.)
1ST BEGGAR: He's asking a lot, ma'am.
2ND BEGGAR: Suckhole.
OLD WOMAN: Pack of spongers. Bunch of filthy tramps. I always have to wait for you.
2ND BEGGAR: All right, then I'll take these things off. (*He takes off the coat.*)
2ND BEGGAR: I live a long way away, I get here out of breath... and then...
OLD WOMAN: And then what?
2ND BEGGAR: And then I get less to eat at each orgy...
OLD WOMAN: Eating! Can't you think about anything but eating? Is that all you care about? Don't the things of the spirit mean anything to you? That's why we are as we are in this country, Jacobo. Because people only think about eating.
1ST BEGGAR: That's right ma'am. (*To the 2nd Beggar.*) You don't think about anything else.
2ND BEGGAR: (*Laughing*) I have stomach trouble.
1ST BEGGAR: He's a materialist, ma'am. (*To the 2nd Beggar.*) I'm asking for one thirty and I have to take the bus.
2ND BEGGAR: (*Going up to him.*) You rat, do you want me to tell her a few things about you?
1ST BEGGAR: Ma'am, we're in the box.
2ND BEGGAR: Jesuit.
1ST BEGGAR: (*He looks at the audience through the binoculars.*) And who is that?
OLD WOMAN: Okay, let's settle this. I'll go from one peso to one twenty for the end-of-the-month orgies. But not a centavo more.
1ST BEGGAR: The bus costs thirty and it's going up to forty.
OLD WOMAN: One twenty.
2ND BEGGAR: That's what I call exploitation.
1ST BEGGAR: (*To 2nd*) You've ruined everything. I already had my one thirty.
OLD WOMAN: If you don't like it I'll change beggars. They're like that. (*She opens and closes the tips of the fingers of her right hand.*) The place is swarming with them.
2ND BEGGAR: Pure exploitation.
OLD WOMAN: And the others haven't even arrived.
2ND BEGGAR: If we'd made an agreement beforehand.
OLD WOMAN: They all know it's on the thirtieth of the month. Every month's got thirty days.
1ST BEGGAR: We should have fixed it before.
OLD WOMAN: The only one that hasn't got thirty is August. That's got thirty-one.
2ND BEGGAR: And each time we get less to eat. What does she do with the leftovers? Why doesn't she hand out all the food?
OLD WOMAN: No-one could possibly overlook the thirtieth.
1ST BEGGAR: She gets crazier every month.
1ST BEGGAR: Today's the twenty-ninth. There's only twenty-nine days in this month.
OLD WOMAN: Ah, and what have they done with the thirtieth? (*The Beggars shrug their shoulders.*) In other countries I've been to, including Argentina, all the months have thirty days, but as this country is a country of thieves, some months they walk off with the thirtieth.
2ND BEGGAR: They stole the thirtieth today.
1ST BEGGAR: And so it's the twenty-ninth.
OLD WOMAN: They won't all come.
2ND BEGGAR: Good. We'll get more to eat.
1ST BEGGAR: Let's sort of start opening the pot.
OLD WOMAN: Jacobo. Remember, you don't have much appetite.
1ST BEGGAR: Who?
OLD WOMAN: You.
1ST BEGGAR: Me?
OLD WOMAN: Yes.
1ST BEGGAR: That's news to me.
OLD WOMAN: Today you're Jacobo and Jacobo didn't eat much. He was a gentleman.
1ST BEGGAR: A gentleman who didn't have much appetite... What a waste.
OLD WOMAN: Set the table. *(The Beggars rush to get the pot.)* I said the table, not the pot.
Put the pot back.
1ST BEGGAR: But ma'am...
2ND BEGGAR: I haven't had a bite to eat since yesterday.
OLD WOMAN: I said the table.
1ST BEGGAR: Show a bit of kindness.
2ND BEGGAR: Come down to earth just for a moment, damn you.
1ST BEGGAR: *(Takes the lid off the pot.)* Just a scrap for a poor devil.
OLD WOMAN: Put the lid back on the pot. *(The 2nd Beggar puts in his hand and takes something out. He shoves it quickly into his mouth.)* Insolent pig.
2ND BEGGAR: *(With his mouth full.)* Mmm... mmm... mmm. *(He gestures that he is hungry.)*
OLD WOMAN: Thief! Thief! *(She chases him with a stick.)* Colonels always puts his hand into the pot and crams his mouth full. The Old Woman throws the stick aside, goes to the table, takes a knife and stands next to the pot.) If anyone comes near here, I'll cut his soul from his body.
1ST BEGGAR: My soul is very thin, ma'am.
2ND BEGGAR: I ate mine some time ago.
1ST BEGGAR: It's not such a crime, ma'am... Remember, I'm Jacobo. *(He straightens his clothes.)*
2ND BEGGAR: And I'm Pedro. *(He does the same.)* What was Pedro like when it came to chewing, ma'am?
OLD WOMAN: *(Continuing the joke.)* He was toothless.
2ND BEGGAR: Like me. But I've got gums like millstones.
OLD WOMAN: *(Putting the knife in her belt.)* Arrange the flowers. *(They bring a flower pot containing some very old paper flowers. The Old Woman goes back to the game.)* Colonel Pardo had them sent to me this morning. Aren't they lovely? Smell them.
1ST BEGGAR: Heavenly.
OLD WOMAN: At least they don't stink like your mouth does. *(To 2nd Beggar.)* Smell them, sir.
2ND BEGGAR: Roses.
OLD WOMAN: They're fuchsias.
2ND BEGGAR: Of course, fuchsias.
OLD WOMAN: *(Reminiscing as if in a trance)* Colonel Pardo always sends me fuchsias. *(3rd Beggar enters.)*
OLD WOMAN: Ah, Colonel... *(She extends her hand and he hesitates for a moment.)* The other two Beggars shake with laughter. The 3rd Beggar kisses her hand. The Old Woman
moves away in disgust.) Why are you so late? You one-legged turd. Get dressed up. You're doing Colonel Pardo today. Full dress uniform. (The 3rd Beggar starts to dig about in the pile of clothes.) Let's have some order. Order and discipline, Colonel, impose some order and discipline around here. (To 1st and 2nd Beggar.) If I don't have order and discipline you'll lose your money and your end-of-the-month orgies.

1ST BEGGAR: We get less to eat every month.
2ND BEGGAR: Last month there was lots left over.
OLD WOMAN: There's always got to be some left over.
1ST BEGGAR: Why?
OLD WOMAN: Because there's too much to begin with.
2ND BEGGAR: And what do you do with the left-overs?
OLD WOMAN: I throw them away, I chuck them out ... like that.
1ST BEGGAR: Where do you chuck them?
OLD WOMAN: Jacobo...
1ST BEGGAR: Shit on Jacobo. I want the left-overs.
OLD WOMAN: Shut your mouth old man. If you start that over you won't set foot in this house again. Colonel, I'm fed up with these fellows.
3RD BEGGAR: You should kick him out, ma'am. He's common.
2ND BEGGAR: You shouldn't allow him to come to the end-of-the-month orgies. People who come to the orgies should be hand-picked.
1ST BEGGAR: Bastards. (He throws down his gloves.)
OLD WOMAN: Silence. Pick your gloves up, Jacobo. Are you ready, Colonel?
3RD BEGGAR: Yes, ma'am, but I'd just like to mention ... 
OLD WOMAN: No, no, no, you're not going to tell us about that again.
3RD BEGGAR: ... that orgies...
OLD WOMAN: You're not going to tell us again.
3RD BEGGAR: ...don't cost very much, ma'am, what I mean is...
OLD WOMAN: No, no, and no.
3RD BEGGAR: What I mean is, ma'am, one peso is not very much for an orgy... I was thinking...
OLD WOMAN: We don't want to know how you lost your leg in the thousand days war... There are so many versions. You've told the story ten thousand times, Colonel... How did it happen?
3RD BEGGAR: I don't want to boast or anything, but I've got something that's very good for orgies, ma'am. I've only got one leg. That's something not everyone's got.
OLD WOMAN: Your leg, your precious leg, offered up on the altar of the Motherland. I can see it all now, all crushed up. (Short pause.) All putrid, foul smelling, and full of maggots. It's enough to make you puke.
3RD BEGGAR: (Shouting) No, ma'am. It's a distinction. It's something unique. If you don't pay me two pesos per orgy my leg won't work.
1ST BEGGAR: She went up to one twenty. Not a centavo more.
2ND BEGGAR: Either you go up for all of us or you go up for none.
3RD BEGGAR: You've got two legs.
OLD WOMAN: That's enough. You can all go... This orgy is for the sake of art and remembrance, not commerce. Please yourselves. I can get other beggars. I get a lot of requests. They're like that. (She repeats the gesture with her fingers.) The place is swarming with them.
(The Beggars talk amongst themselves. Pause.)
3RD BEGGAR: (Coming to attention) Ma'am! I'm ready!
OLD WOMAN: Your leg, your poor tired leg. Tell me how it came to walk alone.
3RD BEGGAR: I was at the head of the Liberals. I was carrying the red flag. It was waving...
waving...
OLD WOMAN: Fluttering. We've always said fluttering.
3RD BEGGAR: Fluttering...
OLD WOMAN: Mind the flowers, you sent them to me yourself this morning.
3RD BEGGAR: I did?
OLD WOMAN: Yes.
3RD BEGGAR: There, ahead of us. were the slinking Conservatives . . .
2ND BEGGAR: You're not going to run down the Conservatives, don't let him ma'am. He always takes advantage of the end-of-the-month orgies for political propaganda.
3RD BEGGAR: The stinking Conservatives.
2ND BEGGAR: I won't stand for it, ma'am. I won't stand for it. Do you want to lose the other leg? (The 1st Beggar laughs helplessly.) Do you want to lose the other leg? (He pulls out a knife and flicks it open. The 3rd Beggar pulls out a stiletto from his crutch.)
OLD WOMAN: I adore political struggles. (To 1st Beggar.) Jacobo, whose side are you on?
1ST BEGGAR: I'm a Christian.

(The female Dwarf enters.)
DWARF: Wheeeee! Long live me! (Pause. Silence. The Dwarf surveys the scene.) Has the orgy started? (The Two Beggars slowly put away their knives, the Dwarf turns to the Old Woman.) The reason I didn't come is because today's not the thirtieth. It's the twenty-ninth. But this morning when I was in Church I asked and they said it was the end of the month. But it's not the thirtieth, I said. It's a leap year, they said. So, I came.
OLD WOMAN: And now my story.
2ND BEGGAR: My balls ache from hearing it.
OLD WOMAN: And now begin.
DWARF: Shall I get dressed up?
OLD WOMAN: Yes.
DWARF: What in?
OLD WOMAN: Anything. Be a bishop.
DWARF: That's it! A bishop! (She starts to dress up.)
1ST BEGGAR: You were traveling in a train.
OLD WOMAN: (As if in a trance.) Yes.
2ND BEGGAR: Through the window you could see the pampa.
OLD WOMAN: Yes. (Pause.) Yes, you can.
1ST BEGGAR: There, in the pampa. (He points to the audience.) It's not yet dawn. It's still dark.
3RD BEGGAR: The heir apparent to the throne of England . . .
1ST BEGGAR: Who was making his first and last visit to South America...
2ND BEGGAR: Was on the same train...
OLD WOMAN: Little money weighs a little, little money weighs a little...
3RD BEGGAR: You had a sleeper all to yourself.
OLD WOMAN: (Accelerating) Little money weighs a little, little money weighs a little, little money weighs a little...
1ST BEGGAR. (Raising his voice) And then the heir apparent...
OLD WOMAN: (Like background music) Little money weighs a little, little money weighs a little, little money weighs a little...
2ND BEGGAR: Came to your sleeper and...
3RD BEGGAR: Kissed your hand! (He kisses her hand.)
OLD WOMAN: Ohhh! (This shout is the sign for the orgy to begin. The 1st Beggar seizes an out-of-tune guitar and starts to play. Everyone dances. The Old Woman passes round a bottle and they all drink. The Dwarf puts the pot on the table and they all rush over to eat.)
OLD WOMAN: Not yet. Just pass out the bottle and have another dance. (They pass round the bottle, take long swigs, and dance. The Dwarf and the Old Woman pick up their skirts. The Beggars fondle them. The women feign prudery. The Old Woman slaps the 2nd Beggar who puts his hand inside her blouse.)
2ND BEGGAR: That's enough. Food!
1ST BEGGAR: Food.
3RD BEGGAR: It's time local.
DWARF: I'll serve. (She blesses the pot.) In nomine Patris, et filii...
OLD WOMAN: Stop. One more round of the bottle. Pass the bottle, you dirty dwarf. Liquor in abundance, tasteful food in moderation. This is a decent orgy.
1ST BEGGAR: It gets more and more difficult to eat anything at these lousy orgies!
OLD WOMAN: Come here, Jacobo. You're the governor. And you here, Mr. Mayor. Tell me how things are with the government... (The 1st Beggar gives her a complicated silent explanation of how things are with the government.) I don't understand a thing and I think it's funny. (She laughs very theatrically.)
DWARF: I'm on the government's side. (Sitting beside 3rd Beggar.) Dominus, Dominus...
OLD WOMAN: Jacobo, give us your speech.
DWARF: Dominus, Dominus, Dominus. (She continues to say this like background music.)
OLD WOMAN: Begin, Mr. Governor, we're waiting.
1ST BEGGAR: (He stands on the chair and speaks very solemnly, with the soulful voice and gestures of a political leader.) I should keenly like something to eat.
OLD WOMAN: Always the demagogue! (The other Beggars applaud.)
2ND BEGGAR: Bravo.
1ST BEGGAR: We should be able to eat our fill at these damned end-of-the-month orgies. Why can we not eat, gentlemen, I ask? If the food is here, why are we hungry? What, ladies and gentlemen, is the meaning of this enigma? Who shall solve it? My stomach is clinging to my backbone, we are as hungry as dogs, food is in reach and yet we cannot stretch out our hands! I demand that we be given food to eat and these end-of-the-month orgies! (He affects a cough.)
OLD WOMAN: One of the best speeches by one of the best governors at one of the best orgies.
2ND BEGGAR: There shouldn't be any left-overs.
3RD BEGGAR & DWARF: No! It's not right?
OLD WOMAN: Even the masses have been aroused!
DWARF: Christ divided the loaves and the fish and the beans and the griddle-cakes.
1ST BEGGAR: We want the left-overs.
2ND BEGGAR: We want the left-overs.
3RD BEGGAR: We want the left-overs.
DWARF: We want the left-overs.
ALL THE BEGGARS: We want the left-overs! We want everything.
1ST BEGGAR: *(Taking the lid off the pot)* Everything!
OLD WOMAN: Stop! I'll give it out when I bloody well feel like it! *(She grabs the pot.)*
2ND BEGGAR: Let go the pot!
3RD BEGGAR: You mean old bitch!
OLD WOMAN: *(Struggling)* Pigs! drunkards! You're scum! Get back! *(For a moment the Beggars move back. The Dwarf remains behind her and tries to reach the pot with her stick. The Old Woman picks up a knife. The Dwarf retreats.)* You're scum! You're shit. You're not my gentlemen, you just take advantage of a helpless old woman who's only got a mute for a son.
2ND BEGGAR: *(Advancing)* We want that food.
3RD BEGGAR: You're a mad old hag!
OLD WOMAN: *(Thrusting out with the knife)* Get back, you pack of stinking pigs.
1ST BEGGAR: You old murderer. You've wounded me. You've wounded me.
2ND BEGGAR: Murderer!
DWARF: Murderer! Wheeeee! Long live the orgy. *(She lands a blow with her stick on the Old Woman's head. The Old Woman falls backwards onto the table. The Beggars fall on her, punching and stabbing her. She is left lying, knifed through, on the table. Her head hangs down, her grey hair reaching down to the ground. In silence, the Beggars devour the food. The 1st Beggar moves to go out.)*
2ND BEGGAR: Where arc you going?
1ST BEGGAR: Have a piss.
2ND BEGGAR: No you're not.
3RD BEGGAR: You're going to look for the Mute's money.
DWARF: *(To the Old Woman's body)* Ego te absolve in nomine Patris, et Fili, et Spiritus Sancti...
2ND BEGGAR: Let's take off these clothes and then look for it together. *(They take off their clothes and put on their rags again.)*
3RD BEGGAR: Let's take these clothes off.
1ST BEGGAR: She was off her head. It's all her fault.
2ND BEGGAR: They say the Mute's got a lot of money hidden away. He's been hoarding it for years.
3RD BEGGAR: It's not true, she stole it all.
1ST BEGGAR: One of you keep watch while we look. The Dwarf can do it.
*(The Beggars run off followed by the Dwarf. The Mute enters, counting money. He sees the Old Woman, runs over to her, lifts her head, then moves to the edge of the stage and asks the audience why all that happened... why.)*

DARKNESS