

'I've made a fool of death a lot. And that stalks me deliriously with every step I take.

I should drink to you: to meeting each other alive, perhaps?"

- Bolívar to Sáenz

Sampler of Quemar Press' *Meeting Each Other Alive: From Letters between Manuela Sáenz and Simón Bolívar, and from their Letters about each other:*

Preface

From *Letters by Bolívar about Sáenz:*

Excerpt from letter by Bolívar to his sister Antonia

Letter from Bolívar to General Santander

From *Dated letters between Sáenz and Bolívar:*

Excerpt from Commentary

Early letter from Bolivar to Saenz

Early letter from Saenz to Bolivar

From *Sáenz's letter to General O'Leary in response to his request for her account of what happened on the night she saved Bolívar's life in September, 1828:*

Excerpt about her rescue of Bolivar from assassins



Preface

Manuela Sáenz and Simón Bolívar were, at once, distinguished leaders of the nineteenth-century South American Revolution, and devoted to each other with that same intensity in thought and action. They are subjects of legends and inventions. In reality, Manuela Sáenz was born in Quito in 1797. She would join the covert political operations against Peru's Viceroy, becoming acquainted with Bolívar as he officially took over Peru's liberation. He eventually became President of the South American states of Grand Colombia.

Sáenz and Bolívar met often as the revolutionary campaigns travelled South America. They would also correspond, exchange love letters, practical military advice, and advice about practical survival. In 1823, in his role as General, he wished her to be part of his military staff. She agreed and became his archivist and Captain of Hussars, journeying with him and the armies.

This selection extends over the love letters they exchanged and letters they wrote for others about their attachment.

Quemar's creative Modern English translations attempt to represent and reflect their writing's flow, intricacy and vividness. Her voice and his echo back and forth to each other their hope to reunite. The goal of this work is to offer a new authentic access to their voices.

These translations minimise standardised punctuation, capitalisation and set equivalence, to try to mirror the original context and fluidity. For instance, *querida/o* is translated as 'beloved' when it refers to Bolívar's sister, and as 'dear' in reference to one of his more distant Generals.

The title, Meeting Each Other Alive, springs from a line in a letter Bolívar wrote to Sáenz: 'Qué debo brindarte: ¿un encuentro vivo acaso?' Because 'brindar' signifies 'to offer' and 'to toast', these words are open to levels of interpretation: 'What should I offer to you: the ability to meet each other alive?', 'What is it that I must give to you: maybe, a meeting where we continue living?', 'What should I bring to you: a vibrant encounter, perhaps?' or finally: 'I should drink to you: to meeting each other alive, perhaps?'

Throughout their letters, whether in spontaneous affection, finding solutions to slander and untruths, or defining facets of revolution, their voices never sound disillusioned. Neither of them died in disillusionment. Making plans to travel with Sáenz, Bolívar died in 1830, perhaps from tuberculosis or from a concentration of arsenic, from poisoning, medication or the naturally high arsenic level in the Andes.

After his death, Sáenz survived exile and went to the North of Peru, where she decided to live in Paita, on the coast. She lived with two women who were freed slaves from her stepmother's house, and with



whom she had a close friendship from childhood. She interacted with other revolutionary figures, such as Garibaldi, and Simón Rodríguez (Bolívar's tutor and mentor), and supported herself financially by working as a translator, amanuensis, tobacco merchant, confectioner and embroiderer. She died in an infectious fever outbreak in 1856. She had given her correspondence with Bolívar to one of his generals, O'Leary, who was writing a biography.

With her long career as his archivist, Captain of Hussars and Colonel, she knew the importance of word and action. As a revolutionary, she knew the importance of incorruptible voices in history.

Katharine Margot Toohey
Quemar Press

To his sister, Antonia

Pasto General's Quarters, 9th January, 1823

My beloved Antonia:
(Confidential)

...

Accepting her into my destiny seems to be the unavoidable answer because she, in her efforts to serve, shows herself to be a noble friend, with a very superior soul: cultured, lacking all intention of ambition, and with a manly temperament, in addition to feminine.

She left her home to help us with the cause, and to you, beloved sister, all that her genius has is in the interest of the common good. Forceful when necessary, she unfolds herself in childish tenderness when her noble heart asks it; proud, because it is in her blood; I have accepted her because of the insight between us and her skilful audacity at impressing her love on me. You will say that I have exceeded myself with this portrait; but, in honour to the truth, appreciating is the only thing possible.



To ease your worry, I will tell you that this lady does not cloud my virtues; so, far from all pretensions, my Generals respect her as if she were my wife, and in social circles her presence makes it so that they are her dominion and give us the respect we deserve. The miserable hearsay that has reached you as news has hurt me deeply because of the kindness and fineness of your spirit, and because I know the intensity with which you love your brother and wish me well.

I could say that never before have I felt as sure of myself as now, that confidentially I make this declaration. Simón finds himself in love!

...

Your most affectionate brother,
Bolívar

Cuartel General Pasto, a enero 9 de 1823
Mi querida Antonia:

...

Aceptarla en mi destino parece ser la respuesta ineludible; pues ella en su afán de servicio, se muestra como una noble amiga de alma muy superior: culta, desprovista de toda intención de ambición, de un temperamento viril, además de femenina.

Ella abandonó su hogar para brindarnos a la causa, y a ti, querida hermana, todo lo que su genio tiene en aras del bien común. Enérgica cuando se lo requiere, se desdobra en infantil ternura cuando su noble corazón se lo pide; orgullosa, porque le viene de sangre, yo la he aceptado por la comprensión nuestra y su hábil descaro de imponerme su amor. Tú dirás que me he excedido en este retrato; pero, en honor a la verdad, no cabe más que apreciar.

Para calmar tu preocupación te diré que esta señora no empaña mis virtudes; pues lejos de toda pretensión mis Generales la respetan como si fuera mi esposa, y en los círculos sociales su presencia hace son su señorío el respeto que merecemos.

Las miserables habladurías que te han llegado como noticia, me han lastimado profundamente por la delicadeza y finura de tu espíritu, y porque sé de tu celo con que quieres a tu hermano y deseas mi bien.

Yo diría que nunca antes me he sentido tan seguro de mí mismo como ahora, que confidencialmente hago esta declaración. ¡Simón se encuentra enamorado!

...

Tu afectísimo hermano,
Bolívar



To General Santander

General's Quarters, Lima, 17th February, 1825

The Señor General

Francisco de Paula Santander

Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia

My dear General:

Certainly I know about you the attachment to the laws of military discipline, that you yourself helped me to perfect. I will tell you that these are rigorously executed and established for all the officials; that and more, the army does not doubt a moment in fulfilling them.

From wherever you have taken it that my influence is the reason why Manuela is now a Colonel of the Colombian Army, it is nothing more than a vile defamation and contemptible, as absent of all reality.

You know her (Manuela) very well, including knowing her behaviour when something does not make sense. You know, as well as I do her valour like her fearlessness before danger. What do you want me to do? Sucre asks me for her officially, the battalion of Hussars proclaimed her; the officers convened to nominate her, and I, gluttoned by the triumph and her audacity, give her the promotion, only with the purpose of doing justice.

I ask you, do you believe you are more just than I am? Come, then and let us go out together to the battlefield, and give the dissenters the gauntlet of triumph in the cause of the South.

Know that this lady has not interfered in laws or acts 'that are not part of her fervour for the complete Liberty of the people from oppression and villains'. Demoting her? Do you believe me to be stupid? An army is made with heroes (in this case heroines), and these are the symbol of the energy with which the warriors sweep through their battle paths, bringing the flag of their valour.

You are right that I am tolerant of women at the rearguard; but I tell you, Your Excellency, that this is a source of tranquility for



the troops, a fair price to the conqueror, that his prizes travel with him [this reference is to camp followers, earlier and new supporters, or spouses, and not to prisoners]. Or perhaps you forgot your time? I am not, however, weak, nor do I fear someone who does not speak the truth.

Bolívar

Cuartel General de Lima, a febrero 17 de 1825

Al señor General

Francisco de Paula Santander

Vicepresidente de la república de Colombia

Mi querido general:

Ciertamente conozco de usted el apego a las leyes de disciplina militar, que usted mismo me ayudó a perfeccionar. Yo le diré a usted que estas son rigurosamente ejecutadas y establecidas por todos los oficiales; esto y más, ¡la tropa no duda un momento en cumplirlas! De donde quiera que usted haya sacado que mi influencia es el motivo de que Manuela sea ahora Coronel del Ejército Colombiano, no es más que una difamación vil y despreciable como ausente de toda realidad.

Usted la conoce (a Manuela) muy bien, incluso sabe de su comportamiento cuando algo no le encaja. Usted conoce, tan bien como yo, de su valor, como de su arrojo ante el peligro. ¿Qué quiere usted que yo haga? Sucre me lo pide por oficio, el batallón de Húzares la proclama; la oficialidad se reunió para proponerla, y yo, empalagado por el triunfo y su audacia le doy ascenso, sólo con el propósito de hacer justicia.

Yo le pregunto a usted, ¿Se cree usted más justo que yo? Venga entonces y salgamos juntos al campo de batalla, y démosle a los inconformes con el guante del triunfo en la causa del Sur.

Sepa usted que esta señora no se ha metido nunca en leyes ni en actos que «no sean su fervor por la completa Libertad de los pueblos de la opresión y la canalla». ¿Que la degrade? ¿Me cree usted tonto? Un ejército se hace con héroes (en este caso heroínas), y estos son el símbolo del ímpetu, con que los guerreros arrasan a su paso en las contiendas, llevando el estandarte de su valor. Usted tiene razón de que yo sea tolerante de las mujeres a la retaguardia; pero yo le digo a usted S.E. que esto es una tranquilidad para la tropa, un precio justo al conquistador el que su botín marche con él. ¿O acaso usted olvidó su tiempo? Yo no soy, sin embargo, débil ni temo a alguno que no diga la verdad.

Bolívar

From dated letters between Sáenz and Bolívar

The first letter here by Simón Bolívar to Manuela Sáenz was written on 3rd July, 1822, when he was in Guaranda in the Andes after the Battles of Bombona and Pichincha, after which he had entered Quito on 16th June. Soon, on the 26th and 27th July, as Manuela is writing to him from 'El Garzal' Estate, he will hold the Guayaquil Conference with the Argentine General José de San Martín, who had partially liberated Peru from the



Spanish. Bolívar then took on Peru's liberation. In 1822, Sáenz had left her husband and travelled to Quito, where she first met Bolívar. They exchanged letters and she visited him. Manuela was also a revolutionary, rescuing and protecting Bolívar, subduing violence, gathering information, distributing publicity, and insisting on women's rights. She received the Order of the Sun for her role in the revolution.

In these first two letters, there is an interesting contrast in tone. He is direct, judicious but passionate. Her response is more stylized: flirtatiously formal but more sensual and evocative. His letter speaks often of time. He feels they have reached the right moment in time for him to tell her about an earlier relationship, and that he knows that he and Manuela have time to 'love each other mutually'. These references to finite and infinite time, could imply that he feels that their relationship existed in the past, exists in the present and will exist in a future. In light of their intimacy, he addresses her with the affectionate second person pronoun (tú).

In contrast, she uses the formal second person pronoun (usted) to address him, in respect but also perhaps in jest or flirtation. She refers to him as 'Your Excellency' as she uses linguistic tools to create a description of her surroundings at 'El Garzal' estate, tools such as metaphor and adjectives with lyrical connotations. Although the Estate and its features are technically real, she explains near the end of her letter that this description is her invention. Within this letter itself, she seems to only address him as 'Your Excellency' as part of her invented description: 'this earth should have Your Excellency's footprints.' She creates a depiction which she classifies as unreal or created, and then a space at the letter's end where she brings the discourse to clear reality, and where she moves herself and Bolívar away from invention and his persona...

General's Quarters in Guaranda, 3rd July, 1822

To the distinguished lady, Señora Manuela Sáenz

Esteemed Manuelita:

I want, loveliest Manuela, to answer your requirements of love, which are very sound. But I have to be honest for someone - like you, she gave me everything. Before, there was no illusion, Manuela - it's not that I won't love you, it's just that it's time you know about how I loved someone else before - with an unusual passion in my youth - someone I never name out of respect.

I'm not avoiding your appeals, that are dear to my desires and my passion. I'm just thinking and giving you some time to yourself.



Because your words make me return to you. Because I know I have this time to love you, for us to love each other mutually.

I only want time to become used to this, since military life isn't easy, nor retreat. I've made a fool of death a lot. And that stalks me deliriously with every step I take.

I should drink to you: to meeting each other alive, perhaps? Let me be sure of myself, sure of you, beloved friend - you'll see who the Bolívar you admire really is. He couldn't lie to you.

I never lie! My passion is mad for you, as you know.

Give me time.

Bolívar

Cuartel General en Guaranda a 3 de julio de 1822

A la distinguida dama, Sra. Manuela Sáenz

Apreciada Manuelita:

Quiero contestarte, bellísima Manuela, a tus requerimientos de amor que son muy justos. Pero he de ser sincero para quien, como tú, todo me lo ha dado. Antes no hubo ilusión, no porque no te amara Manuela y es tiempo de que sepas que antes amé a otra con singular pasión de juventud, que por respeto nunca nombro.

No esquivo tus llamados, que me son caros a mis deseos y a mi pasión. Sólo reflexiono y te doy un tiempo a ti, pues tus palabras me obligan a regresar a ti; porque sé que esta es mi época de amarte y de amarnos mutuamente.

Sólo quiero tiempo para acostumbrarme, pues la vida militar no es fácil ni fácil retirarse. Me he burlado de la muerte muchas veces, y esta me acecha delirante a cada paso.

Qué debo brindarte: ¿un encuentro vivo acaso? Permíteme estar seguro de mí, de ti y verás querida amiga quién es Bolívar al que tú admiras. No podría mentirte.

¡Nunca miento! Que es loca mi pasión por ti, lo sabes.

Dame tiempo.

Bolívar

El Garzal ['El Garzal' estate owned by the Ecuadorian Garaycoa family],

27th July, 1822

To His Excellency, General Simón Bolívar

My dear Sir,

There is such vibrancy here - everything is a spell cast by beautiful nature. Everything invites you to sing, frisk - and finally live here.

This atmosphere, with its warm, delicious air brings the vivid emotion that follows the smell of fresh sugar cane juice as it comes off the press - it makes me experience sugar's thousand



sensations. I say to myself: this earth should have Your Excellency's footprints. The woods and the poplar grove at El Garzal's entrance - sodden by night-dew - would accompany you when you arrive, giving you nostalgia for your beloved Caracas.

The meadows, the orchard and the garden - which is everywhere - would serve to give you your love's shimmering inspiration, being Your Excellency - dedicated almost exclusively to the war.

The slopes and the pastures are sprouting flowers and wild grasses, a gift to the eyes and an enchantment to the soul. The great house invites rest, meditation and reading in the stillness of its structure. The dining room, saturated with light by its large windows, welcomes everyone with pleasure; the bedrooms rever rest, as if they ask to be inundated with love...

The shallows of El Garzal's riverbank start to converse about undressing our bodies and moistening them - submerged in a venusian bath, accompanied by the close bamboo forest's whisper, parakeets' songs and parrots, scared at their own nervousness. I say that I long for your presence here. This entire painting is my invention. I ask you to forgive my delirium, which is from anxiety for you, to see you present, enjoying all that is beautiful.

Yours in heart and in soul,
Manuela Sáenz

El Garzal, a 27 de julio de 1822

A Su Excelencia General Simón Bolívar

Muy señor mío:

Aquí hay de vivaz todo un hechizo de la hermosa naturaleza. Todo invita a cantar, a retozar; en fin, a vivir, aquí. Este ambiente, con su aire cálido y delicioso, trae la emoción vibrante del olor del guarapo que llega fresco del trapiche, y me hace experimentar mil sensaciones almibaradas. Yo me digo: este suelo merece recibir las pisadas de S.E. El bosque y la alameda de entrada al Garzal, mojados por el rocío nocturno, acompañarían su llegada de usted, evocando la nostalgia de su amada Caracas. Los prados, la huerta y el jardín que está por todas partes, serviránle de inspiración fulgurante a su amor de usted, por estar S.E. dedicado casi exclusivamente a la guerra.

Las laderas y campos brotando flores y gramíneas silvestres, que son un regalo a la vista y encantamiento del alma. La casa grande invita al reposo, la meditación y la lectura, por lo estático de su estancia. El comedor, que se inunda de luz a través de los



ventanales, acoge a todos con alegría; y los dormitorios reverentes al descanso, como que ruegan por saturarse de amor...

Los bajíos a las riberas del Garzal hacen un coloquio para desnudar los cuerpos y mojarlos sumergidos en un baño venusiano; acompañado del susurro de los guadales próximos y del canto de pericos y loros espantados por su propio nerviosismo. Le digo yo, que ansío de la presencia de usted aquí. Toda esta pintura es de mi invención; así que ruego a usted que perdone mis desvaríos por mi ansiedad de usted y de verlo presente, disfrutando de todo esto que estan hermoso.

Suya de corazón y de alma,
Manuela Sáenz

From her description in her 1850 letter to General O'Leary of the night in 1828 on which she saved Bolívar's life from assassins:

...One night I was in the house of the Bogotan Government, a maidservant of mine called to me, telling me that with utmost precision a lady was calling for me at the gateway to the street; I went out, leaving the Liberator in bed, with some type of cold. This lady who still exists (1850), and was calling me, told me that she had to make certain specific revelations to me, born of affection for the Liberator, but in return she asked that her name might not be repeated. I bid her enter, left her in the dining room and indicated this to the General. He told me that, being sick, he could not go out to receive her, nor could he bid her enter his room, and that, anyway, this was not what she wanted. I gave these apologies to the lady; the lady told me then that there was a conspiracy, nothing less than against the life of the Liberator, that there were many attempts and that they were only postponing until they could get an accurate shot; that the conspirators would meet in different places, one of them the Mint; that the leader of this plot was the General Santander, although he did not attend the meetings and only knew the state of things through his agents, but that he was the head of the operation; that the General Córdoba knew something, but not everything, just pieces, since his friends were going to restrict him to that. Finally, the lady told me so much that I don't remember it all.



The Liberator, as soon he heard the General Córdoba named, agitated himself, called the aide-de-camp in service and said to him 'Fergusson, go and listen to that lady.' This man returned, telling him what I have told, and with more precision than me. The General said: 'Tell that woman that she may go and that it is an infamy to include the name of a valiant general like the General Córdoba.'

The Señor Fergusson was not so brusque in his response, but the thing stayed in that state. Then Don Pepe París came and the General told him everything. This gentleman answered: 'Those good people decide so much as far as you are concerned that everything seems to be a conspiracy to them.' 'But you speak with her tomorrow', the General said to him. I knew nothing more of this, but, a few days later, the event that I will recount took place. On the 25th at six o'clock the Liberator asked me to call. I answered that my face was sore. He repeated another message, saying that my illness was less serious than his, and that I was to see him. As the streets were wet, I put over-shoes over my shoes (these served him when he was fleeing, because the boots had been taken for cleaning). When I entered, he was in a warm bath. He told me that there was going to be a revolution. I said to him: 'There could be, on a good hour, even ten, since you give a very good reception to the warnings!' He bid me read to him during the bath. Once he had gone to bed, he fell deeply asleep, without more precaution than his sword and his pistols, without more guard than the usual, without forewarning either the Officer of the Watch or anyone, content with what the Chief of General Staff or I do not know what it was, had said to him: he should not be careful - that was what he answered. (This was the Colonel Guerra, the same that they say gave for that night the watchword and password, and, what is more, the next day he would go around inciting everyone until I do not know who denounced him).

It might have been twelve o'clock at night when the Liberator's two dogs barked a lot, and also a strange sound was heard that



must have been a clash with the guards, but without firearms, to avoid any noise.

I woke up the Liberator, and the first thing he did was to take his sword and a pistol and try to open the door. I restrained him and I made him get dressed, something which he affirmed with much serenity and promptness. He said to me: 'Good, go on, since I am dressed now; and now what do we do? To make ourselves strong?' He went back to wanting to open the door and I stopped him. Then I was struck by what I had heard the same general say once: 'Didn't you say to Pepe Paris that this window was very good for launching from these rooms?' 'You say right', he said to me, and went to the window. I prevented him from throwing himself over, because people were walking past; but he checked when there was no one, and because they were forcing the door now.

I went to meet with them to give him time to leave; but I had no time to see him jump, or close the window. When they saw me, they took hold of me and asked: 'Where is Bolívar?' I told them that he was at the Council, which was the first thing that occurred to me; they searched the first room tenaciously; passed to the second, and seeing the window open, they exclaimed: 'He escaped; he saved himself!' I said to them: 'No, gentlemen, he has not escaped; he is at the Council.' 'And why is that window open?' 'I just opened it, because I wanted to know what the noise was.' Some believed me, others not. They passed to the other room, touched the warm bed, and they were more distressed. I told them I was lying in it, waiting for those at the Council to leave so that I could run him a bath; they took me to show them the Council (because you know that, being a new house, they did not know how it was set out, and one who stayed to show them was afraid, according to what was known afterwards). I told them that I knew there was that meeting, that the Council called it, and that the Liberator went there in the nights, but I did not know the place. At that they became very angry and took me with them, until I met Ibarra injured; and when he saw me he said to me: 'So they have killed the Liberator?'

'No, Ibarra; the Liberator is alive.'



I know that both of us lacked caution; I started bandaging him with a scarf from my face. With Zuláivar by the hand to ask me new questions, nothing was moving forward; they led me to the rooms from where they had removed me and I brought myself to the injured and placed him on the General's bed. They left guards at the doors and windows and they went with the sound of iron-soled boots; I came up to the window and I saw Colonel Fergusson, who came by route of a house where he was treating a sore throat [perhaps a vernacular reference to his drinking habits]; he saw me lit by the moon, which was immense; he asked me about the Liberator and I told him that I didn't know of him, nor could I tell any more because of the guards; but I warned him not to enter, because they could kill him; he answered me that he would die fulfilling his duty. Close by, I heard a shot: this was the gunshot that Carujo fired [killing Fergusson], and there was also a sword wound in the front and the skull. Close by, some voices were heard in the street and the guards left, and I behind them to go to Doctor Moore for Andresito [Ibarra]. The Doctor left his room and they were going to shoot him, but his assistant said to them: 'Do not kill the Doctor'; and they said: 'We don't have to kill priests.' I called at the room of Don Fernando Bolívar, who was sick. I took him and brought him to bring in Fergusson's body, since I believed him to be alive; In José's room I placed him, gravely ill, if not dying; because he might have put himself in danger.

I went up to see those remaining, when Generals Urdaneta, Herrán and others arrived to ask about the General; I told them what had happened; and the funniest thing of all was that they said to me: 'And where did he go?' when not even the Liberator himself knew where he was going. To not see Ibarra being treated, I reached the city square, and there I met the Liberator on a horse, with Santander and Padilla, amongst many troops who were encouraging the Liberator. When he returned to the house, he said to me: 'You are the Liberator of the Liberator.'...



...Una noche estando yo en la casa de gobierno de Bogotá, me llamó una criada mía diciéndome que una señora con suma precisión me llamaba en la puerta de la calle; salí, dejando al Libertador en cama algo resfriado. Esta señora que aún existe (1850), y me llamaba, me dijo que tenía que hacerme ciertas revelaciones nacidas del afecto al Libertador, pero que en recompensa exigía que no sonara su nombre. Yo la hice entrar, la dejé en el comedor y lo indiqué al general. Él me dijo que estando enfermo no podía salir a recibirla, ni podía hacerle entrar en su cuarto, y que además no era lo que ella pretendía. Le di a la señora estas disculpas; la señora me dijo entonces que había una conspiración nada menos que contra la vida del Libertador, que había muchas tentativas y que sólo la dilataban hasta encontrar un tiro certero; que los conjurados se reunían en varias partes, una de ellas en la casa de la moneda; que el jefe de esta maquinación era el general Santander, aunque no asistía a las reuniones y sólo sabía el estado de las cosas por sus agentes, pero que era el jefe de obra; que el general Córdoba sabía algo, pero no el todo, pues sus amigos lo iban reduciendo poco a poco. En fin, la señora me dijo tanto, que ni recuerdo.

El Libertador, apenas oyó nombrar al general Córdoba se exaltó, llamó al edecán de servicio y le dijo «Ferguson, vaya usted a oír a esa señora». Este volvió diciéndole lo que yo le había dicho y con más precisión que yo. El general dijo: «Dígale usted a esa mujer que se vaya y que es una infamia tomar el nombre de un general valiente como el general Córdoba». El señor Ferguson no fue tan brusco en su respuesta; pero la cosa quedó en ese estado. Vino entonces don Pepe París y le dijo el general todo. Este señor contestó: «Esas buenas gentes tienen por usted una decisión que todo les parece una conspiración». «Pero usted hable con ella mañana», le dijo el general. No supe más de esto, pero en muy pocos días más, fue el acontecimiento que voy a contar.

El 25 a las seis me mandó a llamar El Libertador; contesté que estaba con dolor a la cara. Repitió otro recado, diciendo que mi enfermedad era menos grave que la suya, y que fuese a verlo. Como las calles estaban mojadas, me puse sobre mis zapatos, zapatos dobles. (Estos le sirvieron en la huida, porque las botas las habían sacado para limpiar)... Cuando entré, estaba en baño tibio. Me dijo que iba a haber una revolución. Le dije: puede haber, en hora buena, hasta diez, pues usted da muy buena acogida a los avisos! Me hizo que le leyera durante el baño. Desde que se acostó se durmió profundamente, sin más precaución que su espada y pistolas, sin más guardia que la de costumbre, sin prevenir ni al oficial de guardia ni a nadie, contento con lo que el Jefe de Estado Mayor o no sé lo que era, le había dicho: que no tuviese cuidado, que él respondía. (Este era el coronel Guerra, el mismo que dicen que dio para esa noche; santo y seña y contraseña y, a más, al otro día andaba prendiendo a todos hasta que no sé quién lo denunció).

Serían las doce de la noche, cuando latieron mucho dos perros del Libertador, y a más se oyó un ruido extraño que debe haber sido al chocar con los centinelas pero sin armas de fuego por evitar ruido.

Desperté al Libertador, y lo primero que hizo fue tomar su espada y una pistola y tratar de abrir la puerta. Le contuve y le hice vestir, lo que verificó con mucha serenidad y prontitud. Me dijo: Bravo, vaya, pues, ya estoy vestido; ¿y ahora qué hacemos? ¿Hacernos fuertes? Volvió a querer abrir la puerta y lo detuve. Entonces se me ocurrió lo que le había oído al mismo general un día: «¿Usted no dijo a Pepe París que esta ventana era muy buena para un lance de éstos?... » «Dices bien», me dijo, y fue a la ventana. Yo impedí el que se botase, porque pasaban gentes; pero lo verificó cuando no hubo gente, y porque ya estaban forzando la puerta. Yo fui a encontrarme con ellos para darle tiempo a que se fuese; pero no tuve tiempo para verle saltar, ni cerrar la ventana. Desde que me vieron me agarraron y me preguntaron: «¿Dónde está



Bolívar?». Les dije que en el Consejo, que fue lo primero que se me ocurrió; registraron la primera pieza con tenacidad, pasaron a la segunda y viendo la ventana abierta exclamaron: «huyó; se ha salvado!» Yo les decía: «no, señores, no ha huido; está en el Consejo». «¿Y por qué está abierta esa ventana?» «Yo la acabo de abrir, porque deseaba saber qué ruido había». Unos me creían y otros no. Pasaron al otro cuarto, tocaron la cama caliente, y más se desconsolaron, por más que yo les decía que yo estuve acostada en ella esperando que saliesen del Consejo para darle un baño; me llevaban a que les enseñase el Consejo (pues usted sabe que siendo esa casa nueve, no conocían cómo estaba repartida, y el que quedó a entrar a enseñarles se acobardó, según se supo después). Yo les dije que sabía que había esa reunión, que la llamaban Consejo, a la que iba en las noches El Libertador; pero yo no conocía el lugar, con esto se enfadaron mucho y me llevaron con ellos, hasta que encontré a Ibarra herido; y él desde que me vio me dijo: «¿Conque han muerto al Libertador?» «No, Ibarra; El Libertador vive».

Conozco que ambos estuvimos imprudentes; me puse a vendarlo con un pañuelo de mi cara. Entonces Zuláivar, por la mano, a hacerme nuevas preguntas, no adelantando nada; me condujeron a las piezas de donde me habían sacado y yo me llevé al herido y lo puse en la cama del general. Dejaron centinela en las puertas y ventanas y se fueron al oír pasos de botas herradas; me asomé a la ventana y vi pasar al coronel Fergusson, que venía a la carrera de la casa donde estaba curándose de la garganta; me vio con la luna, que era mucha; me preguntó por el Libertador y yo le dije que no sabía de él ni podía decirle más por los centinelas; pero le previne que no entrara, porque lo matarían; me contestó que moriría llenando su deber. A poco oí un tiro: este fue el pistoletazo que le tiró Carujo, y además un sablazo en la frente y el cráneo. A poco se oyeron unas voces en la calle y los centinelas se fueron, y yo tras ellos a ver al doctor Moore para Andresito. El doctor salía de su cuarto y le iban a tirar, pero su asistente les dijo: «No maten al doctor»; y ellos dijeron: «No hay que matar sacerdotes». Fui a llamar al cuarto de don Fernando Bolívar que estaba enfermo, lo saqué y lo llevé a meter el cuerpo de Fergusson, pues yo lo creía vivo; lo puse en el cuarto de José que estaba de gravedad enfermo; si no, muere; porque él se habría puesto al peligro.

Subí a ver a los demás, cuando llegaron los generales Urdaneta, Herrán y otros a preguntar por el general; entonces les dije lo que había ocurrido; y lo más gracioso de todo era que me decían: «y a dónde se fue?» cosa que ni el mismo Libertador sabía a dónde iba.

Por no ver curar a Ibarra me fui hasta la plaza, y allí encontré al Libertador a caballo, con Santander y Padilla, entre mucha tropa que avivaba al Libertador. Cuando regresó a la casa me dijo: «Tú eres la Libertadora del Libertador!»...

'This is not a reckless agreement, but one of valour and the love of independence'

- Sáenz to Bolívar

