

Legend

Plot Points: Red
Foreshadowing: Pink
Conflict: Green
Vocabulary: Blue
Setting: Purple
Character Profiles: Yellow
Character Types: Orange
Irony: Brown
Literary Devices: Dark Blue

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Just Lather, That's All

HERNANDO TÉLLEZ

He said nothing when he entered. I was passing the best of my razors back and forth on a **strop**.

When I recognized him I started to tremble.
client

But he didn't notice. Hoping to conceal my emotion, I continued sharpening the razor. I tested it on the meat of my thumb, and then held it up to the light. At that moment he took off the bullet-studded belt that his gun holster dangled from. He hung it up on a wall hook and placed his military cap over it. Then he turned to me, loosening the knot of his tie, and said, "It's hot as hell. Give me a shave." He sat in the chair.

I estimated he had a four-day beard. The four days taken up by the latest expedition in search of our troops. His face seemed reddened, burned by the sun. Carefully, I began to prepare the soap. I cut off a few slices, dropped them into the cup, mixed in a bit of warm water, and began to stir with the brush. Immediately the foam began to rise. "The other boys in the group should have this much beard, too." I continued stirring the lather.

"But we did all right, you know. We got the main ones. We brought back some dead, and we've got some others still alive. But pretty soon they'll all be dead."

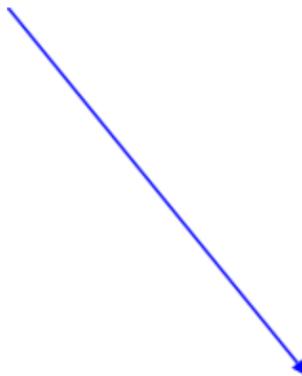
"How many did you catch?" I asked.

"Fourteen. We had to go pretty deep into the woods to find them. But we'll get even. Not one of them comes out of this alive, not one."

He leaned back on the chair when he saw me with the lather-covered brush in my hand. I still had to put

Exposition: Torres, an enemy captain to the barber, enters the Barber Shop and asks him for a shave.

Foreshadowing: The barber was going to have a problem with this client
because as soon as he saw him he got nervous



The barber uses the strop to sharpen the razor that could possibly be used to murder Torres and throw gas on the flames of a revolution

Character Type:

The barber is the protagonist in this story, he is a round and dynamic Character as the reader is made aware of the intricacies in his thought process that drive the story. His opinions on Torres and whether or not he should kill him shift throughout the story.

the sheet on him. No doubt about it, I was upset. I took a sheet out of a drawer and knotted it around my customer's neck. He wouldn't stop talking. He probably thought I was in sympathy with his party.

"The town must have learned a lesson from what we did the other day," he said.

"Yes," I replied, securing the knot at the base of his dark, sweaty neck.

"That was a fine show, eh?"

"Very good," I answered, turning back for the brush. The man closed his eyes with a gesture of fatigue and sat waiting for the cool caress of the soap. I had never had him so close to me. The day he ordered the whole town to file into the patio of the school to see the four rebels hanging there, I came face to face with him for an instant. But the sight of the [mutilated](#) bodies kept me from noticing the face of the man who had directed it all, the face I was now about to take into my hands. It was not an unpleasant face, certainly.

And the beard, which made him seem a bit older than he was, didn't suit him badly at all. His name was Torres.

Captain Torres. A man of imagination, [because who else would have thought of hanging the naked rebels and then holding target practice on certain parts of their bodies?](#) I began to apply the first layer of soap.

With his eyes closed, he continued.

"Without any effort I could go straight to sleep," he said, "but there's plenty to do this afternoon."

[I stopped the lathering and asked with a feigned lack of interest:](#)

"A firing squad?"

"Something like that, but a little slower."

I got on with the job of lathering his beard.

My hands started trembling again.

The man could not possibly realize it, and this was in my favor.

But I would have preferred that he hadn't come.

It was likely that many of our faction had seen him enter.

And an enemy under one's roof imposes certain conditions.

I would be obliged to shave that beard like any other one, carefully, gently, like that of any customer, taking pains to see that no single pore emitted a drop of blood.

Being careful to see that the little tufts of hair

did not lead the blade astray. Seeing that his skin ended up clean, soft, and healthy, so that passing the back of my hand

over it I couldn't feel a hair. Yes, I was secretly a rebel, but I was also a [conscientious](#) barber,

[and proud of the preciseness of my profession.](#)

[And this four-days' growth of beard was a fitting challenge.](#)

I took the razor, opened up the two protective arms, exposed the blade and began the job, from one of the sideburns downward. **The razor responded beautifully.**

His beard was inflexible and hard, not too long, but thick.

Bit by bit the skin emerged. The razor rasped along, making its customary sound as fluffs of lather mixed with bits of hair gathered along the blade.

[I paused a moment to clean it, then took up the strop again to sharpen the razor,](#)

[because I'm a barber who does things properly.](#)

The man, who had kept his eyes closed, opened them now, removed one of his hands from under the sheet,

felt the spot on his face where the soap had been cleared off,

Character Type:

Captain Torres could very easily be considered the antagonist of "Just Lather That's All." There are multiple conflicts in the story, and he is on the antagonizing end in 'person vs. person'. Torres is dynamic in the way the reader understands and perceives him, as he talks about violence throughout the story and then opens up about killing being difficult. Torres is revealed to be an understanding person in the end.

Seeing Torres reminds the barber of the mangled bodies hanging outside a school. Knowing that Torres directed it only adds to the hatred he feels towards Torres, making the decision to kill him even harder.

Indirect: The recollection of Torres' actions tells the reader that he doesn't shy away from violence. This also characterizes the barber as someone who does not approve of these actions, through the context in which the barber tells this to the reader.

Direct: He uses his occupation to gain useful information for the revolution.

Situational Irony: The barber is trying not to spill any of Torres' blood while shaving him, meanwhile Torres has spilled the blood of his enemies countless times in the past and was talking about spilling even more blood come nightfall.

The greatest factor stopping the barber from murdering Torres is his empathy and passion for his job. He wants to do what is right and has an urge to do his job of shaving the man properly, but is confronted with the idea that killing Torres could aid the rebels. There would be one less evil person on the planet if Torres was dead.

Rising Action #1: The Barber begins shaving Torres and while doing so, he is facing a dilemma on whether or not he should kill him.

Indirect: The Barber is proud of his work, and enjoys a challenge. This is shown to outweigh his rebel allegiance.

Indirect: He is strictly a professional who cares about his work. He makes sure he does things as he always does as a good barber.

and said, "Come to the school today at six o'clock."

"The same thing as the other day?"

I asked horrified.

"It could be better," he replied.

"What do you plan to do?"

"I don't know yet. But we'll amuse ourselves."

Once more he leaned back and closed his eyes.

I approached him with the razor poised.

"Do you plan to punish them all?"

I ventured timidly. "All." The soap was drying on his face.

I had to hurry.

about the

In the mirror I looked toward the street. It was the same as ever: the grocery store with two or three customers in it.

Then I glanced at the clock: two-twenty in the afternoon.

The razor continued on its downward stroke.

Now from the other side burn down.

A thick, blue beard.

He should have let it grow like some poets or priests do.

would suit him well. A lot of people wouldn't recognize him.

Much to his benefit, I thought,

as I attempted to cover the neck area smoothly.

as

There, for sure, the razor had to be handled masterfully,

since the hair, although softer, grew into little swirls.

A curly beard. One of the tiny pores could be opened up and issue forth its pearl of blood.

A good barber such as I prides himself on never allowing this to happen to a client. And this was a first-class client.

How many of us had he ordered shot?

How many of us had he ordered mutilated?

It was better not to think about it.

Torres did not know that I was his enemy.

He did not know it nor did the rest.

It was a secret shared by very few, precisely so that I could inform the **revolutionaries** of what Torres was doing in the town and of what he was planning each time he undertook a rebel-hunting excursion.

So it was going to be very difficult to explain that I had him right in my hands and let him go peacefully -alive and shaved.

The beard was now almost completely gone.

He seemed younger, less burdened by years than when he had arrived.

I suppose this always happens with men who visit barber shops.

Under the stroke of my razor

Torres was being **rejuvenated** because

I am a **good barber**,

the best in the town, if I may say so.

A little more lather here, under his chin,

on his Adam's apple, on this big vein.

How hot it is getting! **Torres must be sweating as much as I.**

But he is not afraid. He is a calm man,

who is not even thinking about what he is going to do with the prisoners this afternoon.

On the other hand I, with this razor in my hands,

stroking and re-stroking his skin,

trying to keep blood from oozing from his pores,

can't even think clearly. Damn him for coming,

because I'm a **revolutionary and not a murderer**

Personification: The barber described how the razor responded The beautifully because when he made his first cut in the shave, it was viewed as perfect by the barber. This also gave the barber the idea that if the razor made good cuts with the shave, it can also be used in killing Torres almost effortlessly.

Indirect: The barber is nervous around this unknowing enemy of his, but he still makes an attempt to use his position to gain intelligence

enemy's plans. This shows that he is dedicated to his cause to a small degree, yet he has a nervousness to him that is likely a factor later in his reluctance to sacrifice himself for the revolution.

Simile: The barber is saying to himself that Torres should grow out his It beard and is comparing its length to priests and poets as a point of reference to how long it should be. The barber thought this because he felt that if Torres grew his beard, no one would recognize him. This would act

a sort of camouflage for Torres so he could stay safe wherever he went out on his own.

Indirect: The barber's opinion of Torres demonstrates how notorious Captain Torres is for being ruthless.

If the barber decides to go through with the murder he is directly helping the revolutionaries. He was not actively part of the revolution before but if he kills Torres he becomes a target. The barber must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of killing Torres and becoming a rebel.

Torres comes in with a four day old beard from his rebel hunting trip. Him getting clean shaven rejuvenates him, and brings Torres back to his former appearance, a younger version of himself.

Takes place in a small town barbershop in Columbia during a civil war. Seems to be set in the early 1900's possibly as late as the 1940's because of the old technology being used like the strop. Straight razors were much more common in the 1900's which is also an indication of a past setting.



Foreshadowing: the fact that torres is nervous/uneasy foreshadows the fact he felt unsafe in the barber's shop

Verbal Irony: The barber is saying to himself that he is a revolutionary and not a murderer. The irony in this statement is that the words revolutionary and murder were almost synonymous during this time. The revolutionaries have killed people also, which makes them murderers as well.

Conflict #1 Person vs self, From the moment Torres came in the barber he knew he

And how easy it would be to kill him.

No one deserves to have someone sacrifice of becoming a murderer.

And he deserves it. Does he? No! What the devil!

What do you gain by it? Nothing.

Others come along and still others, and the first ones kill the second ones and they the next ones and it goes on like this until everything is a sea of blood.

I could cut his throat just so, **zip! zip!**

I wouldn't give him time to complain and since

he has his eyes closed he wouldn't see the

glistening knife blade or my glistening eyes.

But I'm **trembling** like a real murderer.

Out of his neck a gush of blood would spout onto the sheet, on the chair, on my hands, on the floor.

I would have to close the door.

And the blood would keep inching along the floor,

warm, ineradicable, uncontrollable, until it reached the street,

like a little scarlet stream. I'm sure that one solid stroke,

one deep incision, would prevent any pain. He wouldn't suffer

But what would I do with the body? Where would I hide it?

I would have to flee, leaving all I have behind,

and take **refuge** far away, far, far away.

But they would follow until they found me.

"Captain Torres' murderer. He slit his throat while he was shaving him -a coward."

And then on the other side.

"The avenger of us all. A name to remember.

(And here they would mention my name.) He was the town barber.

No one knew he was defending our cause."

And what of all this? **Murderer or hero?**

My destiny depends on the edge of this blade.

I can turn my hand a bit more, press a little harder on the razor, and sink it in. **The skin would give way like silk,**

like rubber, like the stop.

There is nothing more tender than human skin and the blood is always there, ready to pour forth.

A blade like this doesn't fail. It is my best.

But I don't want to be a murderer, no sir.

You came to me for a shave.

And I perform my work honorably. . . .

I don't want blood on my hands.

Just lather, that's all. You are an executioner and I am only a barber.

Each person has his own place in the scheme of things.

That's right. His own place.

Now his chin had been stroked clean and smooth.

The man sat up and looked into the mirror.

He rubbed his hands over his skin and felt it fresh, like new.

"Thanks," he said. He went to the hanger for his belt,

pistol and cap. I must have been very pale;

my shirt felt soaked. Torres finished adjusting the buckle,

straightened his pistol in the holster and after automatically smoothing down his hair, he put on the cap.

From his pants pocket he took out

several coins to pay me for my services.

And he began to head toward the door.

It In the doorway he paused for a moment,

and turning to me he said:

was going to have a problem with him, it was the

moment when Torres relaxes and closes his eye and almost taunts the barber

Telling him how many he'd kill. While the barber had a sharp blade at his throat

Rising Action #2: The barber finally decides not to kill Torres and he decides to put his career over his political standpoint in the war.

Onomatopoeia: "Zip! Zip!" is the sound that the barber made to resemble the sound his razor would make while slitting Torres' throat.

The barber is extremely nervous. He is forced to make a life altering decision in a short period of time. He cannot control his anxiety about the situation. Should he kill Torres or let him walk away clean shaven?

Conflict#2

In the time span it would take to cut a beard, he had to make

The decision to kill Torres or not. He had lots to think about before doing anything,

The safety of others, the safety of himself, and his career he loved dearly

If the barber kills Torres he would need to seek refuge far away to be safe. Killing Torres would make him a prime target. He would not even have enough time to gather his belongings. The barber having to flee is another consequence of the murder which only makes it more difficult for Torres to decide.

Epithet: "The avenger to us all" is the potential title that the barber would have possibly received from the revolutionaries if he went through in killing Torres. The name shows that the barber would have been seen as a hero for killing Torres.

The emotional setting is very tense and suspenseful. The entire story hinges upon whether the barber is going to actually go through with the murder or let Torres walk. The anticipation of the barber's decision creates the suspense. From the moment the barber spots Torres he is put into panic mode. He wonders if Torres knows that he is in on the revolution bringing him even more anxiety.

Simile: The barber is describing how easy it would be to slit Torres' throat because of the lightness of his skin.

Foreshadowing: All that is going to be on his hands is lather, not blood. He is a professional barber, not a murderer.

Verbal Irony: Torres tells the barber that "killing isn't easy" at the end of the story. The irony in this is that throughout almost the entire story, Torres was going on and on to the barber about all of the rebels he has had killed and the ones he was planning to kill that night. This made completely unexpected for Torres to say that is difficult to kill, for he has done it countless times in the past.

"They told me that you'd kill me. I came to find out.
But killing isn't easy. You can take my word for it."
killing And he headed on down the street.

Climax/Denouement: Torres tells the barber that he knew exactly who he was and that he only went to him for a shave to see if he would actually go through in him.

conflict: person vs person : This reveals that the whole time he was in the barbers shop he knew at any moment he could have been killed, this is an example of person vs person conflict because Torres's life was in the barber's hands.

Thematic Statements

1. One's anger towards another can lead one's judgement being clouded.

The barber had a strong hatred towards Torres because of Torres' major role in the war, fighting against the rebels. By getting a shave from the barber, Torres had then left himself to be completely helpless. This is what gave the barber the idea of slicing Torres' throat, for he knew it would be an easy task to do, but, at the same time, he was not considering what the consequences of his actions would be, not until later on in the story. At that moment, his judgement was being clouded by his hatred towards Torres.

2. There are nuances in deciding what is 'right' or 'moral'.

During the story, the barber has multiple opportunities to take advantage of Torres and help his fellow revolutionaries. He battles with whether or not it would be a good idea, and ultimately learns that it was a test. The barber made his decision, but still understood the other option.

3. One's future should be considered when making life altering decisions.

In the story the main reason the barber didn't kill Torres is because he knew he would have to flee and leave the thing he loved most behind, his business, he loves what he does and is a professional at it. The thought of him losing it ended in him making the decision to not kill Torres.

4. Taking risks can often lead to the increase of one's knowledge. (i.e., Torres')

In order to gain knowledge sometimes you have to take a risk, for example in the story when Torres goes in to get his beard cut he could have went to anyone else but he went there to find out if the barber would kill him. Just like if you were to answer a question better to take the risk and be wrong and learn the answer then to not say anything at all and learn nothing.