

# Viva Miss Browne

Written by Alexander Mackendrick

## Sequence 1

A band of three dozen Insurgentes fighters (“not a very impressive group”), led by Mateo Peralta, attacks a train defended by Federalist government troops under the control of General Mendoza, Major Sanchez, Lieutenant Flores and Captain Felipe. Inside the Pullman sleeping car are governess Wilma Browne, a Mexican nanny, and the five children of the Tate family whom Wilma is escorting: Rose (14), Tommy (13), twins Olivia and Helena (6) and Rufus (4). Also aboard, in the “grotesquely overcrowded” first class carriage, is journalist Richard (the film’s narrator), who carries a typewriter.

Mateo and his confederates – including his brothers Martin, Fernando and Antonio – blow the train from the tracks, separating the Pullman from the rest of the carriages. Passengers flee as the fighters, concealed behind rocks, begin shooting. Richard joins Wilma and the Tate children in the Pullman. Government troops fire back. Felipe orders Flores to help move a large trunk from the Pullman. Sanchez orders two soldiers to assist them, but the trunk is too heavy. Richard, Wilma and the children crawl to safety with the assistance of Felipe, who is shot dead. Meanwhile, Mendoza and Sanchez are arguing with each other, and in the heat of the moment Mendoza kills Sanchez. The forward section of the train moves off with Mendoza and Flores on board, leaving the Pullman – and Richard, Wilma and the Tates – behind.

Mateo and his fighting men approach. Richard attempts to communicate with the Insurgentes until Tommy steps in to translate. Richard explains to Wilma that Mendoza cannot be relied upon to send help, and that the children are in danger of being kidnapped. Mateo threatens to kill the children unless their father, a friend of President Huerta, pays a ransom. Richard tells Mateo what the Federalist government really wants: “a genuine, authentic atrocity to pin on you. Innocent children slaughtered by the bloodthirsty bandits.”

Mateo tells Richard he will be taken to nearby San Andres where he will demand money from Federalist forces, specifically Colonel Ybarra. Wilma will take care of the children. They will sleep in the Pullman carriage overnight.

## Sequence 2

That evening the guerrillas bury the dead Federalist troops as Wilma gets into a fight with Lupe, a female member of the Insurgentes. At the last minute Mateo, just arrived from San Andres, breaks it up and protects Wilma from the drunken men outside the Pullman. He tells Wilma he doesn’t believe Richard will succeed in getting any money from the Federalists, but that he will let Wilma and the children go free anyway. Wilma is impressed with Mateo.

### Sequence 3

Dawn, the following day. Richard is waiting at the train station at San Andres for a message to arrive from Mr. Tate. When none arrives he goes to see Ybarra, concerned that the Colonel is not going to wait for Tate's money before attacking the Insurgentes forces. Richard offers him "a personal I.O.U. for two thousand dollars, hard cash, American money... Give me the five hundred now. When Tate gets here you'll make three hundred percent profit." Ybarra insists he cannot hand over cash that is not his, and that he must await orders. "While there are children out there waiting to get their throats cut?" asks Richard, who decides to head back to Wilma and the Tates without any money. Colonel Ybarra prevents him from leaving, insisting that the children will be safe and that the Insurgentes guerrillas will not get away. "Before we attack we will send patrols out which will cut off their retreat," he explains. Richard is angry, suggesting that what Ybarra really wants is for the children to be killed, which will "get American public opinion so inflamed that maybe they'll lift the embargo on armament supplies and send you more guns and money to keep your war going." Ybarra reveals that the trunk on the train "contains papers, documents of national importance which should not fall into enemy hands."

### Sequence 4

Back in the Pullman, the Insurgentes, growing in number, are stripping the train. Antonio "chops at the big trunk with a machete." It opens to reveal "a mass of papers. Spanish papers, newspapers, old yellowing files." Tommy sees that the trunk has a false bottom. Mateo notices the gold.

Federalist forces, meanwhile, including Mendoza, Ybarra and Richard, are massing in the cliffs above the train tracks. Richard tells Ybarra that he can guess what's in the trunk: "It's bullion. The train was on its way to Veracruz to buy armaments." Richard asks for more time to negotiate, but Mendoza's troops fire on the Insurgentes, who are pinned down.

Mateo and his brothers have loaded up with the gold and are riding away, but once the shooting begins they take cover in the Pullman. Inside the Pullman, Wilma tries to take charge, doing the best she can to protect everyone – not just the children. Mateo tells Tommy that perhaps the only way to escape with the gold is to ride out with the children on the horses as cover. "You think they shoot you – kill Americans?" Mateo asks Tommy. Reluctantly, Wilma agrees to the plan.

Richard kicks one of the Federalist Gatling guns down the cliff, shouting at Ybarra, "If you kill them you'll have to kill me too because I'm the witness. And how are you going to explain that?"

Ybarra orders his troops to fire not at the children on the animals but at the Insurgentes, who scramble back towards the Pullman. As Mendoza's troop train approaches, Fernando is hit and Antonio drags him to safety. Antonio, "using his pistol against the barrage of rifle and machine gun fire, continues a token resistance to provide time for Mateo's escape." Mateo, Wilma and the children are safe.

Mendoza and his troops give chase and capture the Insurgentes' animals. Mendoza is angry to discover that the gold is no longer in the saddlebags. In the hills, Mateo – with Tommy's help – buries the gold. Wilma asks if they are now free to go. "You can hardly say you're still holding us for ransom. You've got enough there to buy yourself a battleship. Haven't we done enough? Are we free to go?" "No," replies Mateo, who says they must hide out in the mountains. He gives Wilma a pistol: "Six bullets. One for you, one for each child."

#### Sequence 5

Richard, meanwhile, has again been to San Andres and back where finally he has made contact with Mr. Tate, who is now on his way. Mendoza and his troops are setting up camp in an abandoned convent near the train tracks. They hold more than a couple of dozen Insurgentes prisoners. Richard questions why the Federalists are staying put and not giving chase. Ybarra suggests that the Insurgentes would not have carried the bullion with them. "It is hidden very near. We are sure of that. Within a mile," he says. In exchange for the hiding place of the gold, Ybarra will offer to hand over the prisoners. He asks Richard to convey details of this proposed deal to Mateo.

#### Sequence 6

Richard heads into the mountains to meet with Mateo at the Insurgentes encampment, where Wilma and the children are being looked after. Mateo tells Richard that Wilma and the children must remain until the Federalists have gone. Wilma suggests that Mr. Tate can persuade Ybarra and his forces to withdraw. "And leave our friend here to walk off with four hundred and fifty thousand dollars of solid gold belonging to the Mexican Government?" asks Richard, who adds to Mateo that Ybarra is going to start killing the Insurgentes prisoners tomorrow morning. Richard leaves. Mateo tells Wilma that she and the children must travel to safety on the other side of the mountain.

### Sequence 7

The following morning, Richard is awoken by the entrance of Wilma and the children – and some of the Insurgentes – into the Federalist camp. Wilma explains that they are giving themselves and the gold up in exchange for the prisoners. She says that Mateo left to find the Insurgentes on the other side of the mountain and that she led everyone down to the Federalist camp while Mateo was gone. “Then he doesn’t know about this?” asks Richard. “No,” says Wilma, who adds that it was the Insurgentes women who persuaded her to come down from the mountains and try to prevent any executions.

Federalist troops march out of the convent under Mendoza’s command. “Still aware of the possibility of ambush, the Federalists are planning to take the bulk of their men out with Mendoza, leaving Ybarra with only a token force with the machine gunners who will guard the convent and the prisoners.” Almost immediately there is shooting, as a sentry spots “figures moving in the undergrowth outside the convent.” Wilma, alongside the Tate children, sabotage the Federalist troops as they attempt to defend the convent against Mateo and the Insurgentes. Richard seems reluctant but changes his mind, firing a Gatling gun at the Federalists. Mendoza’s horsemen turn back. There is a fierce gun battle. Wilma is captured by Mendoza’s troops.

San Andres, three or four hours later. Mr. and Mrs. Tate are awaiting the arrival of their children. They discover General Mendoza drunk. A train is heard approaching, along with “a murmur of distant shouting, the clatter of horses and then a more ominous noise – the crackle of pistol shots.” The train appears, full of Insurgentes. It is dragging the Pullman, which contains Ybarra and Flores, who are being held prisoner, and Richard and the children. Tommy rides alongside, brandishing a pistol. Moving to take control of a Gatling gun, he accidentally fires at his father, slightly wounding him. Wilma is released from a cell in which she has been imprisoned. Richard asks her if she is going to stay with Mateo. “He’s in love with you, isn’t he?” he asks, adding that “He’s got a big future now. He’s going to be a great revolutionary leader.” Mr. and Mrs. Tate are reunited with their children. In the midst of everything, Rufus shoots Mendoza dead.