

## **Dilemma in “ Just Lather, That’s All”**

In the story “Just Lather, That’s All” by Hernando Tellez, the protagonist the barber has a dilemma, whether to kill Torres his enemy on behalf of a rebel, or shave him on behalf of a good barber. If the barber kills Torres as a rebel, there will be several negative outcomes. First of all, the barber will see himself as a murderer of Torres, as he struggled in his mind in the story, “ ... Damn him for coming, because I’m a revolutionary and not a murderer..... But I am trembling like a real murderer”. Second, the barber’s secret identity of a rebel will be exposed. He mentioned in the story, “ They would follow me until they found me, Captain Torres’ murderer.” As a result, the barber will be found as a rebel as soon as he kills Torres and can’t collect information for the revolutionary any more. Third, the barber will put his good reputation of a good barber at risk. He kills people at the barbershop where he should do the job as a barber. In the story, the barber thought “... You came to me for a shave and I perform my work honorably. I don’t want blood on my hands.” That’s true, who wants to get a shave by a murder? Besides, it’s hard to deal with Torres’ body after killing him as the barber questioned himself in the story “What would I do with the body? Where would I hide it?” On the other hand, if the barber chooses to just shave Torres, he still has to face some negative consequences. Torres will be still alive and continue to kill more people. In the story, Torres told the barber “ ... we’ve got some others still alive. But pretty soon they’ll be dead.” Other than that, the barber will be considered as a coward by other rebels and they will be displeased at him. Other rebels can’t tolerate that the barber treats his enemy as his customer. The barber was aware of that in the story as well “ 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.” Under such a dilemma, it is quite difficult to make a decision due to the existence of negative consequences on both sides. The barber finally decided to just lather and shave Torres because he didn’t want to be a murderer and didn’t “want blood on [his] hands”. In the barbershop, Torres is a customer

who comes to ask for a shave instead of an enemy. Therefore, the barber only needs to “perform [his] work honorably”. That’s all. The barber believes that “You are an executioner and I am only a barber. Each person has his own place in the scheme of things.”