Death and the Maiden

By Ariel Dorfman

ANNOTATIONS:

1. Make 5 **connections** to the story. Put these in the margins or at the bottom. Label them with a C
2. Ask 5 **questions**. Put these in the margin or at the bottom and label them with a ?
3. Highlight 3 sentences that reveal **characterization**. Label these with a ☺ and tell what they show.

**Act I, Scene 2**

*One hour later. Nobody on stage. Only the moonlight, weaker than before, coming in through the windows. Dinner has been cleared away. Sound of the sea beyond. The sound of a car approaching Then the headlights light up the living room, are switched off, a car door is opened and closed. Someone knocks n the door, first timidly, then more strongly. A lamp is switched on from offstage and is immediately switched off. The knocking on the door gets more insistent. Gerardo comes into the living room in his pajamas from the bedroom.*

GERARDO (*to Paulina, who is offstage*): I’m telling you—nothing is going to—all right, all right, love, I’ll be careful. (*Gerardo switches on the lamp*.) I’m coming, I’m coming. (*He goes to the door and opens it. Roberto Miranda is outside.*) Oh, it’s you. God, you scared the shit out of me.

ROBERTO: I’m really so sorry for this—intrusion. I thought you’d still be up celebrating.

GERARDO: You must excuse my… do come in. (*Roberto enters the house*.) It’s just that we still haven’t got used to it.

ROBERTO: Used to it?

GERARDO: To democracy. That someone knocks on your door at midnight and it’s a friend and not…

Paulina edges out onto the terrace from where she will be able to hear the men but not see of be seen by them.

ROBERTO: And not one of those bastards?

GERARDO: And my wife has… She’s been a bit nervous and… So you’ll understand that—you’ll have to forgive her if she doesn’t… And if we lower our voices a little.

ROBERTO: Of course, of course, it’s my fault. I just thought…

GERARDO: Please sit down, please do…

ROBERTO: …that I’d stop by for a short visit to… Okay, but just a minute, no more than—but you must be asking yourself why this sudden visit… Well, I was driving back to my beach house.

GERARDO: Excuse me, would you like a drink? Sunday you can have one of wife’s famous margaritas, but I do possess a cognac from one of the duty free that I— *Paulina edges nearer and listens*.

ROBERTO: No, thanks, I… Well, a teensy-weensy bit. So I’m listening to the radio in my car and… all of a sudden, it hit me. I heard your name on the news, the list of names the president’s chosen for his Investigating Commission, and they say Gerardo Escobar, and I said to myself that sounds familiar, but where, who, and it kept going around in my head, and when I reached our house I realized who it was. And I also remembered we’d put your spare tire in the trunk of my car and that tomorrow you’d need it patched up and also… the real real truth is, you wanna know the truth?

GERARDO: I can’t wait.

ROBERTO: I thought to myself—this man is doing something really essential for the honor of the nation—so the country can shut the door on the divisions and hatreds of the past and I thought here’s the last weekend that he’s going to be free of worries for—for who knows how many months, right, because you’re going to have to go up and down this country of ours listening to thousands of people… Don’t tell me that—

GERARDO: That’s certainly true, but I wouldn’t go so far as to—

ROBERTO: So I thought the least I can do is drive over and leave him his spare so he would have to go out to phone for a taxi or tow truck—I mean, who was a phone out here.

GERARDO: You’re making me feel as if I were—

ROBERTO: No, I am telling you, and this is said straight from the heart, this Commission is going to help us close an exceptionally painful chapter in our history, and here I am, alone this weekend, we’ve all got to help out—it may be a teensy-weensy gesture but—

GERARDO: Tomorrow would have been fine.

ROBERTO: Tomorrow? You manage to get your car—no spare. Then you have to set out and find me. No, my friend—and then I thought I might as well offer to go fix it with you tomorrow with my jack—which reminds me—what happened to your jack, did you find out what—

GERARDO: My wife loaned it to her mother.

ROBERTO: To her mother?

GERARDO: You know women…

ROBERTO (laughing): All too well. The last mystery. We are going to explore all the frontiers, my friend, and we still have that unpredictable female soul. You know what Nietzsche once wrote—at least I think it was Nietzsche? That we can never entirely possess that female soul. Or maybe it wasn’t him. Though you can be sure that old Nietzsche would have if he’d found himself on a weekend road without a jack.

GERARDO: And without a spare.

ROBERTO: And without a spare. Which clinches it—I really must go with you and we’ll clean up the whole operation in one morning…

GERARDO: I feel that I am imposing.

ROBERTO: I won’t hear another word. I happen to like to help people—I’m a doctor, I told you, didn’t I? But don’t get it in your head that I only help important people.

GERARDO: If you had known what you were getting into you’d have stomped the accelerator to the floor, huh?

ROBERTO (*laughing*): Through the floor. No, seriously, it’s no trouble at all. In fact, it’s an honor. In fact, if you want to know the real real truth, look, that’s why I came here tonight, to congratulate you, to tell you that… You are exactly what this country needs, to be able to find out the truth once and for all…

GERARDO: What the country needs is justice, but if we can determine at least part of the truth…

ROBERTO: Just what I was about to say. Even if we can’t put these people on trial, even if they’re covered by this ***amnesty*** they gave themselves—at least their names can be published.

GERARDO: Those names are to be kept secret. The Commission is not supposed to identify the authors of crimes or—

ROBERTO: In this country, everything finally comes out into the open. Their children, their grandchildren, is it true that you did this, you did what they’re accusing you of, and they’ll have to lie. They’ll say its ***slander***, it’s a communist conspiracy, some such nonsense, but the truth will be written all over them, and their children, their very own children, will feel sorrow for them, disgust and sorrow. It’s not like putting them in jail, but…

GERARDO: Maybe some day…

ROBERTO: Maybe if the citizens of this country get angry enough we may even be able to revoke the amnesty.

GERARDO: You know that’s not possible.

ROBERTO: I’m for killing the whole bunch of them, but I can see that…

GERARDO: I hate to disagree, Roberto, but in my opinion, the death penalty has never solved any of the—

ROBERTO: Then we’re going to have to disagree, Gerardo. There are people who simply don’t deserve to be alive, but what I was really getting at was that you’re going to have quite a problem…

GERARDO: More than one. For starters, the Army is going to fight the Commission all the way. They’ve told the president this investigation was an insult, and dangerous, yes, dangerous, for the new government to be opening old wounds. But the president went ahead anyway, thank God, for a moment I thought he’d get cold feet, but we all know these people are ready to jump on us at the slightest mistake we make…

ROBERTO: Well, that was exactly my point, when you said that the names wouldn’t be known, published, when you—maybe you’re right, maybe we’ll finally never know who these people really were, they form a sort of…

GERARDO: Mafia.

ROBERTO: Mafia, yes, a secret brotherhood, nobody gives out names and they cover each others’ backs. The Armed Forces aren’t going to allow their men to give testimony to your Commission and if you people call them in they’ll just ignore your summons, just say fuck you. Maybe you’re right and this thing about the children and the grandchildren is nothing but a fantasy. It may not be as easy as I thought, that’s what I was really getting at.

GERARDO: Not that difficult either. The president told me—and this stays between us, of course—

ROBERTO: Of course.

GERARDO: The President told me that there are people who are ready to make statements, just as long as their confidentiality is guaranteed. And once people start talking, once the confessions begin, the names will pour out like water. Like you said: in this country we end up knowing everything.

ROBERTO: I wish I could share your ***optimism***. I’m afraid there are things we’ll never know.

GERARDO: We’re limited, but not that limited. At the very least we can expect some sort of moral ***sanction***, that’s the least… As we can’t expect justice from the courts…

ROBERTO: I hope to God you’re right. But it’s getting late. Lord, it’s two o’clock. Look, I’ll be back to pick you up tomorrow, let’s say at—how about nine?

GERARDO: Why don’t you stay over unless you’ve got someone waiting for you back at your…

ROBERTO: Not a soul. GERARDO: Well, if you’re alone.

ROBERTO: Not alone. My wife and kids have gone off to her mother’s of all places and as I hate to fly, and I’ve got some patients that—

GERARDO: Not at your beach house you don’t. So why don’t you—

ROBERTO: It’s very kind of you but I like being by myself, watching the waves,

listening to music. Look, I came to help, not be a bother. I’ll be back tomorrow, say at—

GERARDO: I won’t hear of it. You’re staying. You’re what? You’re half an hour away?

ROBERTO: It’s around forty minutes by the coast road, but if I—

GERARDO: Not another word. Paulina will be delighted. You’ll see the breakfast she’ll make for us.

ROBERTO: Now that convinced me. Breakfast! I don’t think we even have milk at our beach house. And the real real truth is that I am incredibly tired.

Paulina quickly returns, through the terrace, to her bedroom.

GERARDO: I wonder if there’s anything else you might…? A toothbrush is the only thing I think I can’t offer you…

ROBERTO: Of the two things you never share, my friend, one is your toothbrush.

GERARDO: Right!

ROBERTO: Good night. *Both Gerardo and Roberto exit in different directions to their respective bedrooms. A brief pause: silence and moonlight.*

GERARDO (Voice off): Paulina, love… That doctor who helped me out on the road,

he’s staying the night. Love? He’s staying because tomorrow he’s going to help me pick up the car. Darling, are you listening?

PAULINA: (*Off, as in half-asleep*): Yes, my love.

GERARDO (*Voice off*): He’s a friend. So don’t be scared. Tomorrow you can make us a nice breakfast…

*Only the sound of the sea in the semidarkness.*