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 II, Scene 2**

*Lunch. Gerardo and Roberto sit at a table. Roberto still tied, but this time with his hands in front. Gerardo has finished serving plates of soup. Paulina watches from the terrace. She can see but not hear them. Roberto and Gerardo remain for several silent instants looking at the food.*

GERARDO: You’re not hungry, Doctor Miranda?

ROBERTO: Roberto. My name is Roberto. Please treat me with the same familiarity that you—please.

GERARDO: I’d rather speak to you as if you were a client, Doctor Miranda. That will help me out. I think you should eat something.

ROBERTO: I’m not hungry.

GERARDO: Let me…*He fills a spoon with soup and feeds Roberto as if he were a baby. During the conversation that follows, he is continually feeding Roberto and feeding himself.*

ROBERTO: She’s mad. You’ll have to excuse me for saying this, Gerardo, but your wife…

GERARDO: Bread?

ROBERTO: No thanks. (*Pause*.) She should be receiving some sort of psychiatric treatment for—

GERARDO: To put it brutally, you are her therapy, Doctor. *He cleans Roberto’s mouth with a napkin.*

ROBERTO: She’s going to kill me. GERARDO: Unless you confess, she’ll kill you.

ROBERTO: But what can I confess? What can I confess if I…?

GERARDO: You may be aware, Doctor, that the secret police used some doctors as— consultants in torture sessions…

ROBERTO: The medical association gradually learned of these situations, and looked into them wherever possible.

GERARDO: She is convinced that you are the doctor who… And unless you have a way of denying it…

ROBERTO: How could I deny it? I’d have to change my voice to prove that this is not my voice—if it’s only my voice which damns me, there’s no other evidence, nothing that—

GERARDO: And your skin. She mentioned your skin.

ROBERTO: My skin?

GERARDO: And your smell.

ROBERTO: Fantasies of a diseased mind. She could have latched onto any man who came through that door…

GERARDO: Unfortunately, you came through that door.

ROBERTO: Look, Gerardo, I’m a quiet man. Anyone can see that I’m incapable of violence—violence of any sort sickens me. I come to my beach house, I wander on the beach, I watch the waves, I hunt for pebbles, I listen to my music…

GERARDO: Schubert?

ROBERTO: Schubert, there’s no reason to feel ashamed. I also like Vivaldi and Mozart and Telemann. And I had the stupid idea of bringing Schubert to the beach yesterday.

But it was much more stupid to stop for you—Gerardo I’m in this mess only because I felt sorry for some lunatic waving his arms next to his broken down car—Look, it’s up to you to get me out of here.

GERARDO: I know.

ROBERTO: My ankles hurt, my hands, my back. Couldn’t you untie me a little so—

GERARDO: Roberto, I want to be honest with you. There is only one way to save your live… I think we have to indulge her.

ROBERTO: Indulge her?

GERARDO: Humor her, placate her, so she feels that we—that you, are willing to cooperate…

ROBERTO: I don’t see how I can cooperate, given my rather peculiar position…

GERARDO: Indulge her, make her believe that you…

ROBERTO: Make her believe that I…

GERARDO: She promised me that if you—confessed she would be ready to— ROBERTO: I haven’t got anything to confess!

GERARDO: I think you’re going to have to invent something then, because the only way she’ll pardon you is if—

ROBERTO: She’s got nothing to pardon me for. I did nothing and there’s nothing to confess. Do you understand? (*Upon hearing Roberto’s voice, Paulina gets up from her seat on the terrace and starts to move toward them.)* Instead of proposing dishonorable solutions to me, you should be out there convincing the madwoman of yours to cease this criminal behavior before she ruins your career and ends up in jail or in an insane asylum. Tell her that. Or can’t you impose a little order in your own house?

GERARDO: Roberto, I— *Paulina enters from the terrace*.

PAULINA: Any trouble, darling?

GERARDO: No trouble.

PAULINA: I just saw you a bit… agitated. Well, I see you’ve both finished your soup. No one can say I’m not a good cook, can they? Not an ideal housewife? Maybe this ideal housewife should serve you a teensy-weensy cup of coffee, Doctor? Though I believe the doctor here does not drink coffee. Doctor, I am speaking to you. Didn’t your mother ever teach you that when—

ROBERTO: Leave my mother out of this. I forbid you to mention my mother.

PAULINA: I’m sorry to have to agree with you. You’re absolutely right. Your mother is not responsible for what you do. I don’t know why men always insist on attacking mothers instead of—Why do they always say son of a bitch, why the bitch instead of the father who taught them in the first place to—

GERARDO: Paulina, would you please do me the favor of leaving so we can continue our conversation? Would you please do me that favor?

PAULINA: That favor and many more. I’ll leave you men to fix the world. (*She leaves and turns*.) Oh, and if he wants to piss, just snap your fingers and I’ll come running. *She returns to the same spot on the terrace, waiting.*

ROBERTO: She’s absolutely insane.

GERARDO: When crazy people have power, you’ve got to indulge them. In her case, a confession—

ROBERTO: But what could a confession—?

GERARDO: Maybe it liberates her from her phantoms, how can I know what foes on in people’s heads after they’ve been—but I think I understand the need of hers because it coincides with what we were talking about last night, the whole country’s need to put into words what happened to us.

ROBERTO: And you?

GERARDO: What about me?

ROBERTO: You. What are you going to do afterward? GERARDO: After what?

ROBERTO: You believe her, don’t you?

GERARDO: If I thought you were guilty, would I be trying so desperately to save your—

ROBERTO: From the beginning you’ve been conspiring with her. She plays the bad guy and you play the good guy and—

GERARDO: What do you mean by good—

ROBERTO: Playing roles, she’s bad, you’re good, to see if you can get me to confess that way. And once I’ve confessed, you’re the one, not her, you’re the one who’s going to kill me, its what any man would do, any real man, if they’d raped his wife, its what I would do if someone had raped my wife. Cut your balls off. So tell me: You think I’m that fucking doctor, don’t you? (*Gerardo stands up*.) Where are you going?

GERARDO: I’m going to get the guns and blow your fucking brains out. But first you son-of-a-bitch I’m going to follow your advice and cut off your balls, you fascist. That’s what a real man does, doesn’t he. Real macho men blow people’s brains out and fuck women when they’re tied up on cots. Not like me. I’m a stupid, yellow, soft faggot because I defend the son of a bitch who screwed my wife and destroyed her life. How many times did you screw her? How many times, you bastard?

ROBERTO: Gerardo, I—

GERARDO: Gerardo is gone. I’m here. Me. An eye for an eye is here, a tooth for a tooth, right, isn’t that our philosophy?

ROBERTO: I was only joking, it was a—

GERARDO: But on second thought, why should I dirty my hands with scum like you—

ROBERTO: …only a joke

GERARDO: …When there’s somebody who’ll take much more pleasure in your pain and your death? Why take that one pleasure away from her? I’ll call her right away so she can blow your fucking brains out herself.

ROBERTO: Don’t go. Don’t call her.

GERARDO: I’m tired of being in the middle, in between the two of you. You reach an understanding with her, you convince her.

ROBERTO: Gerardo, I’m scared.

GERARDO: So am I.

ROBERTO: Don’t let her kill me. What are you going to say to her?

GERARDO: The truth. That you don’t want to cooperate.

ROBERTO: I need to know what it is I did, you’ve got to understand that I don’t know what I have to confess. If I were that man, I’d know every detail, but I don’t know anything, right, so… if I make a mistake, she’ll think I’m—I’ll need your help, you’d have to tell me so I can—invent, invent, based on what you tell me.

GERARDO: You’re asking me to deceive my wife?

ROBERTO: I’m asking you to save the life of an innocent man, Escobar. You do believe that I am innocent, don’t you?

GERARDO: You care that much what I believe?

ROBERTO: Of course I do. She isn’t the voice of civilization, you are. She isn’t a member of the president’s Commission, you are.

GERARDO: No, she isn’t… Who gives a fuck what she thinks. She’s just… *He turns to leave.*

ROBERTO: Wait, where are you going? What are you going to say to her?

GERARDO: I’m going to tell her that you need to piss.

*Lights go down.*

# Scene ii

1. Gerardo “feeds Roberto as if he were a baby.” (p. 43) How does this action mesh with the central conflict of the play?
2. How does Gerardo persuade Roberto to tape his confession? What will their strategy be?
3. What change of attitude is evident in Gerardo, beginning in the middle of page 47, and what prompts this change?