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RAINFOREST[©]

A play by DOC COMPARATO

**Some place in the future.
Blackout.
Curtains open.
Sounds of a rainforest.**

SCENE 1 RED SAP

Veranda of Conrad's house – Day 1

**Light only on the veranda.
Silence.
Conrad comes in and one of his hands is bleeding.
Calmly, he gets a handkerchief that is on the table and dresses his wounded hand.
The handkerchief is stained red.
With his other hand he touches a metallic (or crystal) surface that is also on the table.
A small beam of blue light is directed to this surface area.
The intensity of the light is enough to capture everyone's attention.
Conrad starts recording his words but he doesn't use a microphone or any other type of equipment.
The metallic (or crystal) surface and the different colored beams of light will become a specific code throughout the play between the audience and the characters. In other words, the blue light will indicate that Conrad is recording, red will indicate someone's arrival, etc...
In short, all the technology and actions are signalized and concentrated on the metal/crystal plaque.**

CONRAD

Recording. Attention. Day twenty-nine, Wednesday. The rainforest is calm, it's a compact dark green block. In one tone.

Silence.

CONRAD

The clouds are like stretch marks on a washed celestial blue, as if the sky had been swept by a broom. Looking at the sky I couldn't capture any particular forms, couldn't make associations. Wasn't able to imagine lions or eagles. Not even elephants. (PAUSE) It's amazing how I was hypnotized by a bunch of yellow butterflies that flew close to the rocks. They were hysteric. Is it correct to call a group of butterflies a bunch?

CONRAD

The sky has fascinated many painters. Even inspired the mediocre. The sky and the sea. (PAUSE) What about the rainforest? (PAUSE) I should select word by word so that the recording expresses exactly what I feel and what I intend to say. It's weird for someone who has dealt with numbers his whole life to be dealing with words. (PAUSE) Pursuing the butterflies I fell on the rocks. I have a deep cut in my hand, which now bleeds. Extravagant as any hemorrhage.

**Conrad observes the handkerchief stained with blood.
The blood trickles down his arm and drips off his elbow.**

CONRAD

Staring at the sky I asked myself for the thousandth time if I had done right to isolate myself. To leave everything behind and come to this place. I shouldn't have come. Maybe it was too sudden. I don't know. It took some time for me to understand that joy and happiness are two distinct things.

Silence.

CONRAD

In spite of all that has happened I have a feeling that I won the game of life. I am alive and surrounded by nature, by the forest. It is fascinating to live by the Rainforest. (PAUSE) These recordings could become a book. A book of thoughts

and phrases of mine. A book of aphorisms. "Conrad's world of Aphorisms".

Conrad observes the wounded hand dressed with the bloody handkerchief.

CONRAD

My blood. My meaty red sap.

**Pause.
Blackout.**

SCENE 2 YELLOW BUTTERFLY

Rainforest - DAY 1

Music starts.

The rainforest lightens up in compact green.

The image should be revealing and of great impact.

In one of the corners of the rainforest we see twinkling yellow dots.

They are the yellow butterflies.

The butterflies disappear.

The green rainforest surrounds the veranda

SCENE 3 MARILLA'S HIPS

Rainforest and Conrad's veranda - DAY 1

The veranda lights up surrounded by the dazzling rainforest.

Music fades.

We see Conrad dressing his wounded hand.

Pause.

He also speaks into a mobile phone, which consists of a simple cable hanging down from his ear. It is a modern set made of transparent material.

CONRAD (on the phone)

Smith. Smith. Listen. The answer is: I am great. Never been better. What? No. No. It can be lonely. It is lonely. Yeah. (PAUSE) No. I'm not interested in that kind of thing any more.

As a matter of fact I take this opportunity to announce that my arithmetic is dead. I have unlearned how to add and ended up divided. (PAUSE) There's something else. I have many other terrible and enlightened sentences. Actually, Smith, our communication is not in danger of getting any better. (PAUSE) Because I can't stand talking to you anymore. What? Ursula. No news. I don't want to know about Ursula. (PAUSE) It's a pity, Smith. (PAUSE) Ursula again. You can't control yourself and always end up talking about her. Ursula. She was my wife and you are the one always reminding me of it. It must be your favorite sport: talking about her. (PAUSE) Yeah. That's right.

A red dot, or small beam of light, is lit on the crystal surface.

CONRAD (on the phone)

A moment, Smith, someone is arriving.

The red light generates another colored spot on the veranda.

Marilla comes in. She is elegant, modest yet with a reserved sensuality.

CONRAD (on the phone)

Yeah. Smith.

The red light will always light up when someone comes in the house and arrives at the veranda.

CONRAD (on the phone)

My door is always open. A red light always switches on when someone comes in. Don't worry, I'm never caught unaware. (PAUSE) Don't complicate things. No insults. (PAUSE) You were only a work colleague. Was. (PAUSE) The friendship hierarchy is complicated. Aggressive. (PAUSE) Colleague. Colleague. (PAUSE) Friends don't have this kind of conversation. (PAUSE) Hello, hello, Hung-up. Hung-up.

Conrad takes off his earphone and places it on the table.

Silence.

Marilla and Conrad stare at each other.

CONRAD

That was a colleague of mine. Smith.

MARILLA

The door.

CONRAD

I know. It was open. I always leave it like that.

MARILLA

My name is Marilla and I am here to work on your manuscripts.

CONRAD

Pleasure. Conrad. (PAUSE) Are you aware of the working conditions?

MARILLA

It was all arranged with the employment agency. Did you get my curriculum?

CONRAD

Yes. It's great.

MARILLA

So what is the job? Technical? Artistic?

CONRAD

I write. It's not text, nor poetry. Sentences. Thoughts. "Aphorisms," it's what it's called.

Conrad walks towards the table, picks up a sheet of paper and reads.

CONRAD

“Why can’t an evil person stop being evil? Because if he stops, he will cry. Cry a lot.” (PAUSE) I found this note in the middle of a lot of writings. I need someone to give form and coherence to my notes.

MARILLA

Aphorisms.

CONRAD

An aphorism is a sentence, which explains in a few words, a rule or a moral principle. It’s a short text, almost fragmented, which can be really revealing. Or destructive.

MARILLA

I understand. It’s like a one-person proverb.

CONRAD

Exactly. Perfect definition. Congratulations.

MARILLA

Thank you, but this is my job: to read and correct other people’s text. I knew the definition of an aphorism. (PAUSE) It’s usually an autobiography. Writings of one person. (PAUSE) Where is your manuscript?

CONRAD

Sometimes I write, other times I record my voice. (PAUSE). You remind me of someone. Your face. It’s...

MARILLA

I’ve lived here for a long time. You might have seen me around.

CONRAD

No. That’s not it.

MARILLA

I also know this house. This veranda. Is the computer still in the same place? Inside? (PAUSE) I worked here for a biologist. Eight months ago.

Conrad slowly reacts with surprise.

CONRAD

Marilla. This name.

Silence.

MARILLA

Can I start with the sheets of papers on the table?

Pause.

MARILLA

Did you remember?

CONRAD

I think so. Such a long time ago. About twenty five years.

MARILLA

We were neighbors.

CONRAD

Marilla. But of course. We dated. I just remembered it all. We were teenagers.

MARILLA

Something like that.

CONRAD

What a coincidence. After so many years. It's incredible.

MARILLA

It's an old story.

Silence.

CONRAD

You've become a serious woman. Or is it bitterness?

MARILLA

No. It's just reality. (PAUSE) I think I should get started. I'll get the papers and go inside to work.

She walks towards the table and picks up the sheets of paper.

CONRAD

Sure.

Marilla leaves with the sheets of paper.

CONRAD

Your hips. Your hips haven't changed.

Marilla stops for a second, and then continues walking.

Blackout.

Sound of cicadas.

Pause.

SCENE 4 THE CALL OF THE CICADAS

Rainforest - Dusk - DAY 2

The Rainforest is slowly lit by a golden yellow light, and gains intensity as Conrad speaks off-stage.

It is dusk.

The blue light in the veranda, which indicates recording, lights up.

The sound of cicadas ceases.

Pause.

CONRAD (Off-stage)

Recording. The sun sets behind the trees. It's magnificent. Everything is golden. All of a sudden everything turns golden. The green turns gold. Shadows in form of filigrees cut the roots of the trees. (PAUSE) A yellow Rainforest. Strange. Marilla. Marilla. It was like a fibrillation that remains in your body after a strong bomb explosion. (PAUSE) Such complicity. Only both of us know. (PAUSE) I was seventeen.

Or eighteen. It doesn't matter. She is still tasty. That skin. Interesting. She is a female, and I could see the seduction imprisoned in this woman, a prisoner of her own bitterness. (PAUSE) Women and bitterness. Quite a normal combination, since all men are mathematicians specialized in this equation. (PAUSE) But what harm could I have done to Marilla when I was eighteen? Even if I had done something bad, time would have forgiven. A mysterious woman, she is. Who excites me. Lust. (PAUSE) What excitement. It seems like the buzzing of a cicada. Intermittent. Slowly increasing in volume. Eager. Alive. (PAUSE) There is nothing like the call of the cicadas. It is unique like an egg. And no one can improve on an egg. (PAUSE) I'm going to record the call of the cicada. (PAUSE) And eat a boiled egg.

Sound of cicadas.

The yellow light reaches its maximum intensity.

The blue light is turned off.

SCENE 5 BLUE THREADS

Veranda and Rainforest - DUSK - DAY 2

Music starts.

Veranda lights up.

Marilla and Conrad are standing still.

Conrad is wearing sunglasses with yellow lenses.

Marilla is holding the printed papers.

Marilla and Conrad have changed their clothes.

Music fades.

CONRAD

I love wearing these glasses at dusk. The Rainforest's color and humor changes. Yellow is a disconcerting color. Turns everything into gold without any criteria. (PAUSE) Did you find any interesting sentences in my writings?

Conrad takes his glasses off.

The Rainforest light changes from yellow to green.

MARILLA

I've selected a few. Example: "He is intellectually slow, morally swift and politically contradictory."

Conrad laughs.

CONRAD

It's Smith. I got inspiration from Smith's personality, the colleague. Intellectually slow, morally swift and politically contradictory. So dull. He is a slow man in every aspect.

Marilla shows no reaction.

MARILLA

Well, Conrad. I found another aphorism between two sentences that caught my attention.

CONRAD

Don't say a word. I'm finding this all a bit weird, strange. (PAUSE) Aren't you curious to know what happened in my life? (PAUSE) We were quite intimate when we were young. Isn't there anything left? (PAUSE) You don't want to know how I see our attraction. Now. Today. After so many years. (PAUSE) I want to know how you see this encounter of ours. Well. We did a lot of unforgettable things together. We made love, a lot of sex. Actually, you were the first woman I had in my life. And I the first man of your life. And we know that. Are you going to tell me you forgot about it? (PAUSE) All right, we are older now. Twenty years have passed. Great: what has happened since then? (PAUSE) You're a silent woman. Efficient and silent. More methodical than the biological cycles of the Rainforest. Reserved. You look like a sphinx.

MARILLA

Conrad.

CONRAD

This tone of voice. At least you've memorized my name. (PAUSE) Are you not a bit excited about this coincidence? To meet each other after so many years. The first love. Thinking about it, you were my first love.

MARILLA

Are you done?

Silence.

CONRAD

And which was the second sentence of my work you thought was worth selecting?

MARILLA

It wasn't a coincidence.

CONRAD

What?

MARILLA

It was premeditated. As soon as I saw your name at the employment agency I knew who you were. (PAUSE) I didn't come here out of curiosity. Well, actually, it was sort of a curiosity mixed with other feelings, which makes me confused and leaves me paralyzed, almost apathetic. (PAUSE) To say I didn't want to see you is a lie. (PAUSE) If anyone asked me how I felt when I saw you, I would say: nothing good or bad. On the contrary: I felt nothing. Simply because I am a different person now. You, as I could notice, are the same. Which would be comical, if it weren't pathetic. (PAUSE) Sorry.

Pause.

CONRAD

Which was the other sentence that caught your attention?

Silence.

She looks at the papers and reads.

She also gets a small pill tin from her pocket without Conrad noticing it.

MARILLA

“There is no strength able to control a temperament” (PAUSE)
I finished my task for today. I’ve done the proofreading.

Marilla turns around to place the papers on the table.

And discreetly opens the small tin and takes two pills.

Conrad doesn’t see. Only the audience witnesses this.

CONRAD

Marilla, there is something on your back.

MARILLA

What?

Conrad comes closer and touches her back.

CONRAD

It’s a thread.

MARILLA

Where?

CONRAD

It’s a plant burr.

Conrad touches her back. He almost caresses her.

MARILLA

Did you get it off?

CONRAD

A plant burr. This blue dress is pretty. It’s common, but I like it.

She turns around and moves away.

MARILLA

Conrad. (PAUSE) Shakespeare once declared: "Words, words, words." Let's just say that for now you need only a verb: grow up.

**The red light on the crystal surface lights up.
The red light captures everyone's attention.
In comes William, he is about 40 years old, well dressed.**

WILLIAM

Sorry. Did I interrupt anything?

CONRAD

Who are you? What are you doing here?

MARILLA

He is my husband.

Pause.

WILLIAM

The door was open. Couldn't find a bell. (PAUSE) My name is William, nice to meet you.

CONRAD

Conrad, pleasure. (PAUSE) I didn't think Marilla was married.

WILLIAM

But she is. That's why I'm here. I came to pick up my wife.

Marilla steps back.

MARILLA

I'm done. I'm going to get my purse.

Marilla leaves.

CONRAD

Please have a seat.

WILLIAM

There is no need, she won't be long.

CONRAD

What a hurry. (PAUSE) William: it's a nice name. Around here, by the Rainforest we only find Wilson, Walter, Wagner, all with a W. Or with a mute letter in the middle, like Edmilson, Edner. I met an Edner, he was a failed theatre critic. They are all names from Brazilian origin. Some indigenous. African. (PAUSE) But have a seat, do you want anything to drink?

Marilda returns.

MARILLA

Let's go? (PAUSE) See you tomorrow.

WILLIAM

Good night. Nice to meet you.

CONRAD

Do you have children?

Marilla and William look at each other for a second.

WILLIAM

No. We have no children.

**Light fades.
Music starts.**