

SCARRED BY THE WIND

(WIND-SCARRED)

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Translated
By
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To my father and to everything I don't know about him.

Characters

David

Juan

The action takes place in different places and moments in time.

SCENE ONE (David's House)

DAVID: I began to know my father the day he died...A little late, don't you think? Or perhaps it was the right time? My father loved to speak in proverbs. He especially liked the one that went, "Better late than never." Well, for once in my life, I have to admit he was right...Dad, it was worthwhile waiting such a long time. Besides his fondness for sayings, he was also very methodical. There was a place for everything and everything had its place. Our family, of course, could not escape this relentless sense of order. I was always the youngest, the one that came right after the second who, in turn, came right after the first. Perfect... I never fully understood the place my mother held. And I'm afraid to say, she never quite got it either...Maybe now that my father is lying next to her, they'll have time to talk it over...The fact is that lack of communication has always been one of our family traits. We never spoke about this subject...or that one...or a whole list of others...We never spoke about anything that wasn't perfectly trivial and superficial. Perfectly civilized... So, when my two brothers gave me the responsibility to settle our father's inheritance, I wasn't displeased with the task. Rather, it filled me with a secret hope...maybe among my father's keepsakes I would find something, some bit of information, a forgotten note, a misplaced clipping, anything that would make me think for just one moment that beneath that cool and composed demeanor there was a human being with doubts, fantasies, fears...and love?

(DAVID answers the phone and lights a cigarette.)

DAVID: *(Speaking to someone.)* Fine, fine...you know...I wish I could say that I was organizing Dad's things but that's impossible...I think it's the other way around and they're organizing me...I have never seen anything as meticulously and boringly organized as this...

(DAVID takes a drag of the cigarette.)

DAVID: No, no I'm not smoking. You know I quit. Hey, did you know that he has the entire collection of stamps from Guinea printed from the year 1967 to 1998? (...) How would I know why he chose Guinea? I suppose because it was once a colony and he always had this imperialistic vein... (...) Yeah, there are lots of photos. Every one of them has a handwritten note specifying the place, date, time and even the degree of humidity at the time ... (...) Manuel, of course he didn't write down the degree of humidity! *(To the audience.)* I forgot to mention that my brother Manuel takes right after my father. Maybe because he was the first... *(Back on the phone.)* Yes, I'm going to get to the mail now...I'll call you later.

(DAVID hangs up the phone and takes one last drag of the cigarette before putting it out.)

DAVID: *(To the audience, referring to the cigarette.)* Don't tell anyone, ok? My father's letters, as to be expected, were scrupulously organized much like the glossy directory of a mega

department store: greeting cards, first floor; social events, ground floor... Nothing out of the ordinary...It was the last thing left to sort through...Or was it?

(We discover a box.)

DAVID: I don't know how I hadn't noticed that box before... It was approximately 12 inches wide, 8 long and 16 deep ... metal... black...with a lock. Why are we so fascinated by objects that are kept under lock and key? I remember one time, I must have been no more than six or seven years old, I saw Dad hide something. That time it wasn't in a metal box, it was in his big sandalwood desk. Dad carefully hid some candy caramels that some long-lost relative from God-knows where had sent us. My childish curiosity and appetite didn't really care about wood, locks or where they came from, and those hard-as-a-rock sweets, ended up in my possession. My father discovered the theft. He organized such a hunt throughout the house to find the lost goods that any African expedition would have paled in comparison. And he found them. You bet he found them.... Not the candy caramels I gulped down one by one in utter terror, tummy ache and all...Instead, he found traces of the wrappers strewn under my bed...My father reacted severely when he found them...He took me to his study and there, where else but right in front of his very expensive sandalwood desk, he spanked me on the backside...One spank for each piece of candy. And one more just because...Bah, I don't remember why...Because he just felt like it I suppose. Violence never needed a reason. And here it was, right in front of me, a new chance to challenge my father, to uncover his secrets. And this time the spanking wouldn't be as effective... Inside the box there were piles of unorganized letters, at least thirty or forty of them, some tattered and torn and then carefully pasted together, as if the recipient of those letters had gone through an emotional roller-coaster ride after having read them...Why hadn't those letters been classified and filed along with the others? Why had my father set them apart and given them this "special" place like those "special" candy caramels that he kept under lock and key?...No return address. But the name of the addressee was always written in the same way: firm, rounded, poised, self-confident...I wondered who this anonymous correspondent could be to unleash such extraordinary emotions in my father. I want to make this perfectly clear: my father was the type of person who only tore things up when he wanted them torn up...Never--you hear me? He never made a mistake... *(HE looks at the once torn envelope now taped back together.)* Or that's what I thought...

(DAVID takes out the letter and starts reading it out loud.)

DAVID: "Dear Raphael...Three weeks have passed without seeing you. All I can say is that there isn't anything or anyone that can take my troubled mind off of you and this all-consuming absence, your haunting memory..." *(HE stops reading.)* I swear for a minute I thought I had someone else's letters. But I didn't..."all-consuming absence?", "haunting memory"? This letter couldn't have been written to the owner of that sandalwood desk that I knew...

(DAVID keeps on reading.)

DAVID: “The days go by flat, endless like a barren plateau in which nothing can bloom unless you walk across it...Within a week I’ll dream of you in my arms and imagine a world where you and I and this love that has taken over me will not be as it is but rather as it should be...I love you so much that it hurts me even to write down the words...” (*To the audience.*) Is it possible to love so much that it hurts? (*HE reads on.*) “I’ll dream of you every night and every day, with my eyes opened or shut, with my secluded heart orphaned without you...Good-bye, my love...”

(DAVID looks up. He seems taken aback and anguished by the discovery of the identity of the person who wrote those words.)

DAVID: Juan...Juan? Shit! Juan???? All those verses of cheap poetry, of love-sick nonsense were written by a man? Juan!! But who was my father? Who? Who were you, Dad? Tell me! I have the right to know! Who?

Blackout.

SCENE 2

JUAN: No, damn it, no...You've done it again but not this time... I'm not going to forgive you. Who do you think I am? Eh? A fool? An old and decrepit fool? You don't say it but you're thinking it. You stare at me with those big blue eyes and laugh...privately, but you laugh. And the things you don't see clearly, you can sense and smell...are the ones that drive me crazy...But not today. Today you have gone over and above the limit of my proverbial patience...I don't love you anymore...Don't come around here all lovey-dovey and cuddly. I don't love you. I wish I could say that I'll never love you again but you know all too well that that's impossible, that my eternal hatred hardly ever lasts longer than one of my headaches...

(To the audience.)

JUAN: Everyone tells me I spoil him...I know it, but...I think that the best thing to do is to forgive him immediately...I wouldn't want him to be traumatized by this...especially because I'm not sure if there are cat psychologists. And anyways, when you think that they have nine lives, the bill would be way over anything that I could afford...José Antonio, get over here! José Antonio! Bah, he never listens...Maybe he doesn't like his name...I don't like mine either but at least I answer when I'm called, "Hey, Juan" and I turn around and say, "Yes?" and I even smile...Well, I have to admit that it depends on who's calling me...I smile more at men than women, more at young people than older ones, more at dark-haired men than blonds, and a lot more at good-looking men than ugly ones...Alright, alright I know it's not fair to ration out my cheeriness based on frivolous physical appearance but...who in the world said that life was fair? Get those funny-looking whiskers out here! Don't be so sneaky. Oh but, not him...He's always had an intimate understanding of life, a style all his own, and so much independence...Of course that's all true until I open his can of cat food. And that's when he comes and lasciviously rubs up against my left leg... I don't know why he has that left preference. So then, whatever happened to your intimate understanding of life, your very own style and your damn independence? You sell out for just a little bit of meat...You seem human...José Antonio! He's named after an ex-boyfriend of mine...Not because he looked like a cat or anything but since he never listened to me either, it seemed only right that he should have the same name...

(The phone rings.)

JUAN: I hope that's not José Antonio...either one of them...Now that I think about it, if my cat called me on the phone, it would be smarter to take him to the circus instead of the psychologist's office...I know what you're thinking, "This is the one who sent those old, yellowish letters..." Well, yes, I'm the one...I could have been shorter, uglier, older...but no, I'm the one, just the way I am...And I know that you know who's calling on the phone...David, Raphael's son, right? It's not that you're so smart, it's that we made it very easy for you, go on, admit it...So, while I think of it, why not just skip over the small talk and get to the point...I always hated the predictable...That's why I don't like

life; I know how it's going to end...Yes, it was David. Don't ask me how he got my phone number, but he did. He wanted to see me. Yes, see me and talk to me about something to do with his father's inheritance...

(DAVID enters.)

JUAN: I already knew Raphael had died. The news didn't make me cry...or laugh...I just sat on an old bench in the park and looked up at the sky...I looked at the sky waiting to feel something...I never did...I suppose when someone cries a great deal in life, you can belong to one of two clubs: the one where you cry about everything, or the one where you don't cry about anything anymore...At that moment I realized that I belonged to the latter one...So I looked up at the sky and took a deep breath...And I realized that the air that filled up my lungs was the only authentic thing left at this stage in my life ...

(JUAN walks around DAVID.)

JUAN: His voice was nothing like his father's. Raphael's voice was dry, unwavering , solid...his son's was sweet, insecure and bubbly...I like insecure people who constantly change their minds and who allow life to change their points of view and their principles...There's nothing closer to death than solid and inflexible beliefs, whatever they might be...*(HE looks at DAVID again.)* I invited him over...I was curious and wanted to meet him...Raphael would have been so nervous seeing the two of us together...

(JUAN moves closer to DAVID, and HE's almost touching him. HE sniffs him and inhales his scent. They finally speak to one another.)

JUAN: How did you find me?

DAVID: I'd rather not say.

JUAN: People usually don't talk about what they're ashamed of ...But it doesn't matter...Are you sure you don't want something to drink?

DAVID: I'm sure.

JUAN: You don't drink during work hours?

DAVID: I'm not working.

JUAN: Well, I'm sure it's no picnic taking care of this inheritance business...

DAVID: They're my father's things. I have to sift through everything.

(JUAN pours himself a glass of cognac.)

JUAN: When my sister died I also had to sort through her belongings. What a heap of papers I found! I didn't have a clue about her bank accounts, stocks, real estate...For fifty years I

had been living with a millionaire and I didn't even know it...absurd...If someone is a millionaire and doesn't show off, what's the point? Am I right? But Carmen didn't think that way...no, no...She was the sensible ant and I was the lecherous grasshopper...She wanted to "save for a rainy day". I guess she never thought about putting my name after the word "rainy day"...She was younger than me and certainly better prepared financially. But as you can see...the ant dropped dead from a heart attack and the grasshopper is drinking French cognac in glasses made of the finest Bohemian crystal... (*HE hands him a glass.*) Are you sure you don't want some?

DAVID: No, thanks... (*HE clears his throat.*)

JUAN: Oh, I see... Are you going to tell me now why you came here? Shouldn't we spend a little more time playing these getting-to-know-you games where we ramble on and on about all things divine and human before we jump into the quicksand of personal gain?

DAVID: I didn't come here for personal gain.

JUAN: No, no, no...liar...Everything we do, we do for personal gain...working, talking, listening...and loving. Especially loving...there's nothing more selfish than love.

DAVID: I see you have quite a pessimistic attitude toward life.

JUAN: What else. When you get to be my age you'll realize that life is nothing more than a cruel joke...

DAVID: Excuse me, but you don't have the slightest idea of how I'll be when I'm your age.

JUAN: That's possible...Anyway, fortunately, I won't be around to see it for myself...But at least you must admit that I have a well-rounded perspective about the subject. I was once young...You, on the other hand...Trust me... But forgive me, I'm so impolite, you were about to tell me something...If you'd like to clear your throat one more time, you can start from where you left off honey...

DAVID: I've come here to talk about my father...

JUAN: What did you say? But, but...I can't believe you!

DAVID: Sorry, but why do I get the feeling that you've been laughing at me since the moment I walked through that door?

JUAN: No, it's not a feeling...**I am** laughing at you. But I'm also laughing at myself...and at everybody...even at José Antonio.

(*JUAN turns away from his guest and begins looking around in the corner.*)

JUAN: José Antonio! (*To David.*) That's my cat...You damned spoiled creature...c'mon and get your tail out here right this minute or don't you dare come back! (*To David.*) Go on, I'm listening.

DAVID: Maybe you'd rather have me come back some other time when you're calmer...or when your pet shows up...

JUAN: No, no, I am listening. I apologize once again. I've denied you three times. All we need now is for the cock to crow. Sure, St. Peter had a good excuse, they could crucify him upside down, and that would be quite uncomfortable, don't you think? But when it comes down to it, I'm just looking for a fickle cat...I'm all yours...

DAVID: I've found some of my father's letters.

(DAVID looks at JUAN expecting him to react but there's no reaction from JUAN.)

DAVID: Written by you...

(The two remain silent.)

DAVID: Don't you, don't you have anything to say?

JUAN: Well, no...Do you have anything to ask?

DAVID: Those letters...are love letters.

JUAN: Love? No, no...not just love, no...in any case, they'd be letters of love, and passion, and fire, and desire...

DAVID: Well, that's just another way of saying it.

JUAN: Boy, the way you say it is everything! Believe me. Life is full of pleasant forms of speech not boring contents. The contents are pure, obvious, simple...forms of speech allow you more nuance, more games...

DAVID: Call them as you wish, but they are letters between two men—you and my father...

JUAN: Is that what you think?

DAVID: I don't think it, I know it. I've read them.

JUAN: Don't believe everything you read, or see, and sometimes not even what you live through.

(DAVID takes out some letters from his pocket.)

DAVID: At times, it's hard not to believe...

(DAVID hands them over to him. JUAN reaches out and takes them. HE looks at them and HE holds them up to his nose to smell them. Above all, HE smells them.)

JUAN: I always thought that he would have destroyed them.

DAVID: I'm sure he would've done so, if he thought he was going to die.

JUAN: We're all going to die. You have to be stupid to think you're immortal...And there are things that should never be left to the last minute... (*HE looks at the letters again.*) It's been so long since...

DAVID: Do you think it was wrong of me to read those letters?

JUAN: No...I think it was wrong that everyone did not read them at the time, but now...No, I'm very happy that they're in your hands...I would've felt terrible if they had fallen into your mother's hands...The suffering wife, how embarrassing.

DAVID: Did you know her?

JUAN: Yes. We saw each other on a few occasions. A good woman...not much personality, that's true...Oh, I'm so sorry for talking about your mother that way, but if you ask me...

DAVID: I only asked if you knew her, not what you thought about her.

JUAN: Maybe I am laughing at you, but aren't you a bit...defensive?

DAVID: How would you feel if I offended your mother?

JUAN: Me? Delighted...To be honest with you, I never could stand her...I'm sorry to shatter all the gay stereotypes of my generation ... no silk scarf around the neck, no adored mother...But let me tell you something: I did not offend your mother. I only said that she was a good woman but lacking personality. Generally, these two traits go together. How many good people do you know with personality?

DAVID: I don't know. But I think lots of times people confuse personality with bad tempers.

JUAN: Look, that's a good theme for a debate, "Personality vs. bad temper in the new millennium." (*HE gulps down his drink.*)Are you sure you don't want me to get you a drink? It's on Carmen...and she always treated her guests very well...

DAVID: No...I want you to talk to me about my father.

JUAN: Well, well...I was going to ask you the same thing. I would assume that you'd know him a little bit at least...twenty-some years living side by side with someone is not exactly "a fly by night".

DAVID: Is that what your "thing" was all about?

JUAN: Not so fast.

DAVID: I'm thirty-one years old.

JUAN: You look younger...you're a lucky guy. On the other hand, I always looked my age...another misfortune to add to the list.

DAVID: I only knew him as a son.

JUAN: And you think that's not much?

DAVID: Yeah, not much...

JUAN: Then you didn't know him at all...I've always been surprised by people's curiosity to know how people live outside of the situation in which they met them. We're all entitled to a bit of mystery.

DAVID: Lies are different from mysteries.

JUAN: Oh...could you explain the difference?

DAVID: Lies hide the truth. Mystery only envelopes it, giving it a magical aura...

(JUAN turns toward the audience.)

JUAN: He was clever, very clever...Definitely cleverer than his father...He wanted to play games, I'm not sure if consciously or subconsciously, it didn't really matter...I played along...

(JUAN starts talking to DAVID again.)

JUAN: Fine, let's talk about your father...but not today. I'm tired, I have a splitting headache and a runaway cat...Come back tomorrow. And bring all the letters with you; I'd like to read them again...

(JUAN pours himself another drink.)

DAVID: *(To the audience.)* He was playing games with me, but I let him...My curiosity was so great that I was willing to pay the price of his mockery. Definitely a very strange guy... miles apart from my father. What could they have had in common? What could have made them pair up? Why that love?

(DAVID takes out a cigarette and lights it. HE then leaves. JUAN rereads some of the letters DAVID brought him.)

JUAN: "Hello Raphael...I'm writing you this letter in desperation, like everything that concerns you, like all of my days since I've met you...I would never have imagined a love like this... *(HE stops reading. To the audience.)* It's not a good idea to imagine, especially when it comes to matters of the heart—they follow the rules of chance more than those of mathematics—but I'm sure you've already been there...at least once in your life you have to shut your eyes and jump off the cliff...You can hit the ground hard but that free fall is unforgettable... *(HE goes back to reading the letter.)* "I would never have dreamt of bitterness so sweet or pain this pleasurable..." *(HE stops reading.)* Raphael, I can finally say it: you destroyed my life...and now your son wants to get to know you better... So tempting, my darling, so tempting...

Blackout.

SCENE THREE

DAVID: So, did you ever find your cat, sir?

JUAN: Please don't be so formal with me...I know that I'm a relic but I'm still a bit of a flirt and not you nor anyone else will ever destroy that.

DAVID: Okay. Did you find your cat?

JUAN: No.

DAVID: And that doesn't worry you?

JUAN: No. There are so many things in my life that I haven't found—one more won't kill me...But to reassure you, I have to tell you something very basic—I don't have a cat.

DAVID: What?

JUAN: I don't have a cat...José Antonio died more than five years ago. It's better that way. Now my house isn't filled with cat hairs ...But I still talk to him, it relaxes me. Don't look at me as if I were a crazy old man. At least have the decency to look at me as if I were just plain crazy.

DAVID: I think that's sad.

JUAN: What's sad?

DAVID: To talk to someone who's not there anymore.

JUAN: I hate to tell you, but that's more or less what you're doing—talking about someone who's not here anymore.

DAVID: But at least I'm talking about that someone with someone who is here-you.

JUAN: Don't get confused. I'm not here either. I'm nothing more than a reflection, a mirage in the middle of the desert that you're crossing...Tell me about yourself.

DAVID: I don't want to talk about myself.

JUAN: But I do. What are you like?

DAVID: I don't know. I'm an ordinary person, I guess.

JUAN: Then get out of here. I don't want any ordinary people in my life. I only want extraordinary human beings. Get lost!

DAVID: My father was an ordinary human being. And you loved him for many years.

JUAN: I suppose so, but I didn't choose to do it. You don't choose love. You can choose a job, a city, friends...But love is a tyrant, it doesn't ask or act democratically. Your father was an ordinary guy but love changed him into someone special for me, even though he wasn't...Do you have a girlfriend?

DAVID: No, I'm not gay.

JUAN: I didn't say you were.

DAVID: But you're thinking it.

JUAN: Can't I think whatever the hell I please?

DAVID: I don't like people thinking things about me that aren't true.

JUAN: Then go to hell, boy! The world is full of untrue thoughts...I'm sure you've had more than one.

DAVID: I don't think so.

JUAN: Just because you don't think so, doesn't make you sure.

DAVID: I'm not homosexual, okay?

JUAN: I wasn't referring to that, but okay...

DAVID: Do you mind if I smoke?

JUAN: Not at all...I don't mind other people's bad habits, just mine. And not that much...What do you do?

(DAVID lights a cigarette.)

DAVID: I'm an architect.

JUAN: Well, well...an artist.

DAVID: It's not that creative to build public housing.

JUAN: Well, it should be. You have the ability in your hands to make the poorest people happy for the rest of their lives. Do them the favor of placing the bathroom close to the bedroom...How many miles does one have to run back and forth in vain throughout a lifetime! And make sure the bedroom is sound proof so that they can make love loudly without having to stifle their moans for fear that their mother-in-law will hear them...

DAVID: I'll do that...And you? What do you do?

JUAN: Nothing now. I already told you that Carmen was a whiz at financing.

DAVID: And before?

JUAN: I was a teacher. Elementary school...No, they didn't fire me for taking anyone's shorts off...I quit the job myself. One day I just didn't want to get out of bed...I stayed home. I never went back...I suppose I just lost interest in teaching anything to anybody. It's an impossible task. You learn things when you want to, not when someone is trying to hammer them into your head. At that age you only want to play and laugh...too bad you can't remain a child forever.

DAVID: How did you meet my father?

JUAN: Well, now the lecture begins...Allow me to stand up. When speaking about important matters I like to hold my stomach in, chest out and deepen my voice.

(JUAN stands up.)

JUAN: I went to your father's office...I needed a good lawyer to get me out of a big mortgage mess and late payments. I've always been a disaster with money issues and Carmen wasn't living with me yet. I saw him there, so tall, so handsome, so serious...so heterosexual...But it wasn't love at first sight...I needed a few more days to really start noticing him...I mean, the man underneath the straight man...Luckily for Cupid, it took more than three weeks to fix the mortgage mess. By the time he handed me the bill, I was crazily in love with him. I thought about inventing some other lawsuit but his fees were astronomical and I couldn't afford him...

DAVID: And?

JUAN: So I gathered up all my courage and I asked him out to dinner. I had the perfect excuse. This was a way of thanking him for getting me out of my mess...

(DAVID stands up.)

DAVID: And you had dinner...

JUAN: No, we did not have dinner...Don't be so impatient...Do you mind if I tell my story at my own pace?

DAVID: Yes, sorry...

JUAN: And sit down already...! The way you like to walk around I'm sure you put those poor families' bathrooms miles away from their bedrooms!

(DAVID sits down.)

DAVID: Happy now?

JUAN: Quite...As to be expected, Raphael declined my invitation. "Thank you, but I didn't do you any favors. It's my job. That's what I'm paid to do."

DAVID: My father was always so technical...You insisted, right?

JUAN: No, no I didn't insist. I might seem quite assertive but when you're in love, you're not the same...You become another person, a stranger, nervous, quivering, hanging on every look of your Prince Charming dressed in his blue coat and shining white armor...By the way, I wonder why Prince Charming is always associated with blue? I've never seen one that color.

DAVID: I guess because he's blue-blooded.

JUAN: Oh, I see...I guess to prove he's a pedigree you have to slash his neck with a sharp knife the minute he gets near you...Too bad I met you so late in life...You really have some fascinating ideas.

(DAVID glances at his watch.)

DAVID: When did you see each other again?

JUAN: We ran into each other at a coffee shop, by chance. Of course, I had been preparing that "chance meeting" for three weeks...I had never met anyone so unwilling to have a cup of coffee...I, the king of nothing, of the "dolce vita", of "don't leave for tomorrow what you can postpone to the day after or never" was frankly overwhelmed.

DAVID: Did you spy on him for three weeks?

JUAN: Yes, in the end, it was a heavenly twist of fate, I guess that made him walk into that coffee shop...on Main St. on the corner of Washington Avenue...It's not there anymore...I think there's a hamburger joint there now...You see, all of my memories end up being about drinks or food...

(DAVID glances at his watch again and JUAN takes note of it.)

JUAN: Are you in a hurry?

DAVID: Eh...no.

JUAN: So then, why are you looking at your watch so often?

DAVID: It's a bad habit.

JUAN: Frankly, it's an obnoxious habit.

DAVID: I thought you didn't mind other people's bad habits.

JUAN: Only when they don't affect me directly...Here you are, jolting my memory, digging up a past better left buried... and then I see you checking the slow moving hands of time on your watch. It isn't a pleasant sight.

DAVID: I'm sorry. Okay. The truth is I have a date.

JUAN: Why are you lying?

DAVID: I didn't want to appear rude.

JUAN: Well, you did. There's nothing like a lie to show the real character of a person.

DAVID: Do I seem rude to you?

JUAN: Yes, you do. Rude and foolish. Why do you want to know all this? Why do you need to get to know your father now? You didn't give a damn about him when he was alive. So don't try putting him on a pedestal or knocking him off of one now. It's not worth it. Go on, go on your date. Go fool around with that ditzy blond you're meeting up with. Be happy. Live your life. Or at least try to.

DAVID: I said I was sorry. Isn't that enough?

JUAN: No. I don't want any apologies or excuses. I want the truth...How far do you want to go?

DAVID: To the very end.

JUAN: That's touching. Well, what if there is no end? Life is a perfect cinnamon bun. Eat it but don't try to understand it or unravel it.

David: You knew my father in a different way. No one, not even my mother, knew him like that. Those letters speak about a passion, an open wound that I never saw in him, that never belonged to him.

JUAN: Maybe they weren't his.

DAVID: But it's all written there!

JUAN: Enough already about the power of the written word! I've never met anyone as stubborn about it as you, with the exception of Moses and his blessed stone tablets.

DAVID: Stop playing games with me! I've had it with you laughing at me!

JUAN: Frankly, I thought you were cleverer than your father. But I was wrong. My sense of smell fooled me. And it usually doesn't do that... Your brain is in the same place as his. Right here...*(HE points to his head.)*

DAVID: And according to you, where should it be?

JUAN: *(HE points to his heart.)* Right here. That's the profound difference that separates the winners from the losers, the victors from the defeated. Leave your brain in your head and don't complicate your life. Go on your date, be a winner...and forget about me.

DAVID: I'm starting to understand why you and my father were together. When it comes down to it, you're both intellectual snobs and you treat people in the same way, as if they were inferior beings. But let me tell you something, Juan. Besides that, you and my father had

something else in common—loneliness. Maybe at some other point in your life you were different, but today, you're nothing more than a bitter old grouch. And alone.

JUAN: This bitter old grouch wants you to leave now so that I can really be alone...No. I don't want to hear any final words of wisdom before you disappear. Just go away in silence. At least have some class. Your father would have liked that.

(DAVID leaves the stage.)

JUAN: And he left...Angry, very angry, but sure, so very sure he had hurt me- that's a bonus that not everyone gets. How subjective is our view of reality! You're out there looking at the sunset wistfully without it ever dawning on you that in some other place in the world that same sun is rising and some other idiot is standing there admiring it in awe...The same sun but different eyes. Different brains. Different hearts...Yes, here I am—alone... with the terrible feeling that I've wasted my life. There's no sister or Raphael not even my cat—no one is here anymore. Just me. My mistake was failing to realize a fundamental truth: love doesn't need two people; it just takes one person to want it. Love is not always a dialogue. It can be a long, solitary and frightening monologue. Take it from me, never fall in love with someone who doesn't give a damn about you. David came here looking for answers, the same ones I searched for all these years. He never knew his father. I never knew Raphael. In his case, doubt is eating away at him from the inside. But for me, it's certainty that's invalidating me. Perhaps after all is said and done, it might have done us some good to have talked a bit more. Maybe we will some day. Who knows...Who knows...

(JUAN slowly takes a deep breath as if he were inhaling the scent of time and space-- smelling his own loneliness.)

SCENE IV (David's House)

(DAVID is listening to music on an old record player. HE's dressed more casually in jeans and a tee-shirt.)

DAVID: My father collected old records. He'd listen to them on his old record player, the same one he had when he was a college student. His favorite songs were *boleros*. "They don't write songs like that anymore..." He'd play them over and over again, especially during the last few years of his illness. He treated them with such exquisite care, wiping them over and over again, worried that a speck of dust or a scratch might muddle the sweet sound coming out of the grooves...My father never showed me any affection.

(DAVID lights up a cigarette.)

DAVID: The last one... Well, maybe what I just told you is not completely true. On one occasion he took me to the movies to see one of the cruelest movies ever made—*Bambi*. I'll never forget the heavy teardrops running down my cheeks after witnessing the death of that poor mother deer. It was almost like seeing my own mother die. When my father saw me so upset he sat me on his knees and tenderly patted my head; he repeated again and again quietly in my ear, "don't cry, don't cry", saying the mother had to leave, but that everything was going to be okay...No. Nothing was okay. I guess my father was fussing over me just to avoid the loud scene I was making. As a matter of fact, that was the first and last time he took me to the movies. Yes, my father did show me affection on one occasion. But I'll never know why he did it...

(The phone rings.)

DAVID: It was Juan. He called several times. He was trying to see me again but I didn't think it was a good idea. So I told him no.

(The phone rings again.)

DAVID: But we all know how persistent some people are when they want something...

(JUAN enters. HE is wearing a suit and tie.)

JUAN: May I?

DAVID: What are you doing here?

JUAN: If the mountain won't come to Mohammed ...

DAVID: I don't want to see you.

JUAN: Too late. The most you can do is try to not listen to me.

DAVID: Or ask you to leave my house.

JUAN: Are you really going to do that? Never threaten to do something that you're not willing to go through with. It's not classy.

DAVID: Who let you in?

JUAN: I couldn't believe it! I almost had a heart attack. It was your father...

DAVID: That's Jorge, the middle son.

JUAN: The oldest son looks like mom and the middle one like dad...

DAVID: Yes.

JUAN: And you?

DAVID: I don't know. I don't think I look like anyone in my family.

JUAN: Ah, didn't anyone tell you you were adopted?

DAVID: What do you want?

JUAN: Aren't you going to offer me a drink or something? Carmen must be turning over in her grave.

DAVID: Actually, I was just about to go out.

JUAN: You don't say...Is it the blond again?

DAVID: No, this one's a brunette.

JUAN: That's typical. Beneath every blond there's a brunette. Nothing is authentic anymore...Why do you change partners so often?

DAVID: I'm young. I want to live life to its fullest.

JUAN: Is promiscuity more of a life?

DAVID: You don't say. I thought that you were the staunchest supporter of the "dolce vita" lifestyle.

JUAN: Of course, but in order to live for the moment you have to be capable of feeling, appreciating...smelling...*(HE once again inhales the air around him with pleasure.)* And that takes time.

DAVID: May I ask you something?

JUAN: You may.

DAVID: Why are you always going around smelling everything?

JUAN: Because it's the most dependable of all the senses, the most direct. It never fails, never lies. You can fool superficial sight, selective hearing, malicious touch, and, of course, disguised taste. But you can't fool the sense of smell. There's no doubt when it comes to smell. It's always been said, "He's got a nose for business" or "This smells fishy" or the classic phrase, "There's something rotten in Denmark"...Smell has always been the only trustworthy sense, authentic, instinctive. It's the king of all the other senses.

(DAVID serves him a drink.)

JUAN: I see that my thesis about smell has moved you...Thank you.

(JUAN looks him up and down.)

DAVID: What are you looking at?

JUAN: You look more handsome like that. It's more your style: casual.

DAVID: On the other hand, you look a bit...

JUAN: Too straight? To be honest with you, right up to the last minute I was debating whether to wear a big red hat with matching shoes and purse or this ill-fitting suit. Obviously, I went for the second option. Please take note that I did it for you.

DAVID: You shouldn't have bothered. A little color wouldn't have been so bad for this neighborhood.

(DAVID hands him a drink. He serves himself a drink as well.)

JUAN: *(When he sees David's drink.)* I appreciate that...I hate to drink alone even though I've gotten used to it. Why do living and drinking seem so much alike? They somehow have the same ring to them: liv-ing...drink-ing...In any case, I've never managed to get away from either one.

DAVID: I don't think that drowning oneself in alcohol is the best way to face life.

JUAN: Alcohol, tobacco, drugs, dependencies...what's the difference? No, you're right. It might not be the best way but one day you find out that it's the only one you have left. Let's drink to that.

(JUAN chugs down his drink and walks around the room.)

DAVID: You're the one who's walking around today.

JUAN: I've always imagined what this house would be like. Give me a minute.

DAVID: Would you mind telling me why you've come here?

JUAN: I think that our last conversation wasn't very...civilized?

DAVID: I tried.

JUAN: But I didn't. That's why I'm here.

DAVID: Why do you always turn everything around? You make me very nervous.

JUAN: I like to see things from the inside. Of course, when you turn something inside out, the outside is then hidden from sight... I'm Prometheus chained to my own curiosity...What are you doing living in this house?

DAVID: What's wrong with this house?

JUAN: Nothing, except that it's not yours. It's your parents' house. You're thirty-one-you-don't-look-it-but-you-are-years old. A job, an independent life. Why didn't you leave a long time ago?

DAVID: It's convenient, I suppose.

JUAN: No, no, no. Liar...Oh, I'm sorry, I won't do that again. I guess that's a trait dating back to my teaching days. (*HE hands him his glass.*) How far does your generosity go?

(*DAVID places the bottle in front of the glass.*)

JUAN: Your generosity knows no limits. (*While he pours himself a drink.*) I think that you haven't left because you're afraid. Afraid of growing up.

DAVID: My brother Jorge lives here too.

JUAN: Right, but he's here for other reasons. It just takes a look at his face so much like Raphael's to realize that he's not afraid of anything. Or at least, he won't allow himself to be afraid. But those eyes...

DAVID: What do you see in them?

JUAN: A need for affection, approval, to feel important.

DAVID: I'm not as sensitive as you make me out to be.

JUAN: No one is what they seem to be. That's why paintings are art and photo IDs aren't.

DAVID: What are you getting at, Juan? Please tell me. I don't want to see you tiptoeing round and round the bush just so you can take me where you want to go.

JUAN: I like that you're getting to know me...And where do you think I want to take you?

DAVID: If you want me to confess my supposed homosexuality, you're wasting your time. I'm not gay, is that clear? Not everybody is gay. That's something you people should know.

JUAN: Take it easy. I'm sure you're not gay, David. It's not as easy to be gay as people think. No, no... You need years of education, preparation, surrender, and, in many cases, pain. You don't satisfy those prerequisites. Life has been very good to you. Okay, okay, I know that you missed getting more affection from your father and maybe you wanted less from your mother, but you never lacked anything.

DAVID: Money doesn't buy everything.

JUAN: I've only heard that phrase uttered by people who've always had everything.

DAVID: I've been lucky that way.

JUAN: Well you should know that not everyone is that lucky.

DAVID: The truth said, I can't imagine you going hungry.

JUAN: You don't need much imagination. All you have to do is go over your history books. There was nothing left in this country after the Civil War. Just shattered homes, hatred and need. Sure, as always, a small group of people had everything. Even two of everything. But for sure, my family wasn't part of that marvelous and exclusive Noah's Ark... Yes, I did go hungry. I wasn't chronically poor, I never was that, but on more than one occasion, I went to bed hungry. I can assure you that my parents were so preoccupied with surviving one day at a time and providing for their family that they didn't waste any energy on spoiling their children.

DAVID: And just because you didn't have any affection you can justify its absence?

JUAN: Of course not! But just like in your parents' case, mine did the best they could. Their world, needs and priorities could only go so far. And that was that. Don't ask for more.

DAVID: You must've loved my father very much to defend him so strongly.

JUAN: Yes, I loved him obsessively which is the worst way to love. I loved him more than you can ever imagine. But I'm not defending him, David. Believe me when I say that I'm not defending him. Do you really want to know why I came here? I've come to tell you who your father was. Who this "lover" was, since your persistence is as exaggerated as is your naiveté.

(JUAN takes out a bundle of letters and hands them over to DAVID.)

JUAN: These are the letters I sent Raphael. I'm giving them back to you; they're yours. Keep them or tear them up once and for all. In any case, I don't want them.

(JUAN takes out another bundle of letters.)

JUAN: And these are the letters your father sent me... *(HE points to the new bundle of letters.)* These and not those... *(HE points to the old bundle)* are the ones that should matter to you, the ones that will tell you how Raphael felt. How he loved. A couple is made up of

two people. You have to be informed before pronouncing the verdict. And even then, it's better to remain silent. No one can ever know what goes on between two people who love each other. No one but them. And love itself.

DAVID: (*HE reaches out for them.*) My father's letters...

JUAN: Not so fast. (*JUAN moves the envelopes aside.*) They're for you, Mr. Impatient, don't fret. They're a going away present. But first let me savor this whiskey...(*HE takes a sip.*) This is really terrible...Listen to me, if you're going to punish your body, at least do it with a better whip.

DAVID: (*Referring to the letters.*) I hadn't even thought about them.

JUAN: You don't need to promise anything. I'll give you the information you want but before that you must give me something...Take it easy, I'm not going to ask you to take your clothes off. Even though those jeans are drawing my attention to an amazing ass, I've been an angel for quite some time now—all fluff in this boa and no sex, if you know what I mean.

DAVID: What do you want?

JUAN: The truth.

DAVID: The truth? About what?

JUAN: About your father...How do you feel about him?

DAVID: You mean, how **did** I feel about him.

JUAN: No. I want to know what you're feeling right now. You can't bury resentments and dependencies in a coffin. They hang around, chasing us throughout our lifetime. The real ghosts that haunt us are our unanswered questions, not the souls of our poor dead ones who, when you think about it, don't have anything left to say...How do you feel about your father?

DAVID: I don't know.

JUAN: Well, it's really important for you to know! That decision doesn't depend on what's written or not in those letters. It depends on you, on your own limits and expectations. Good or bad, he was your father. He's the one you got in this crazy crap game of life...how do you feel about your father?

DAVID: I don't know!

JUAN: You're a coward! That answer is not worthless...I think it's best for me to go back home with my things.

DAVID: You want to know the truth? I love him for everything he gave me!

JUAN: And what else?

DAVID: I hate him for everything he denied me!

JUAN: Well, well...and then they say that I'm the one who says that love is pure selfishness.

DAVID: When you're hardly three feet tall and away from the floor, you need a lot of attention.

JUAN: You wanted more, David.

DAVID: You bet I wanted more! I had a right to more...I didn't ask to be brought into this world! The least he could do was applaud a little when I was forced to go on stage.

JUAN: You're right, David. The world is a stage...but an empty one. No one is willing to watch the entire show. At the most, a few scenes..and that's if you're lucky.

DAVID: If you only think about yourself, you shouldn't have any kids.

JUAN: You can't give what you don't have. Your father didn't feel any love for anyone. And do you know why? Because he didn't love himself.

DAVID: I don't think you got the smallest piece of the pie when he handed out affection.

JUAN: What do you know about anything? Do you think that by erasing me from the story there would've been a larger ration of kisses in this house? Is that what you think?

DAVID: Yes.

JUAN: Well, once again you're mistaken. Kisses can't be counted like letters or records or bottles of whiskey. Whoever has kisses and love to give doesn't spare them, or doesn't ration them out like a shyster who's waiting to negotiate his best deal. He just gives them away.

DAVID: My father might've been a shyster but that's something that never affected you.

JUAN: Perhaps it's time for me to give you those damn letters...But before I do, just tell me one more thing. Are you in love?

DAVID: In love? What does that have to do with anything?

JUAN: Yes, in love. With that blonde or brunette or whoever. Are you? Have you ever been?

(DAVID doesn't answer.)

JUAN: I can see that you haven't. No one who's ever been in love takes such a long time to answer.

DAVID: I don't believe in the couple.

JUAN: Why not?

DAVID: Because I'm not like you, Juan. I believe what I see. I never saw any love between my parents. I don't want to repeat the same story.

JUAN: Well, I hate to tell you that that's what you're doing right now. If there isn't any love in your life then Raphael won. He taught you well.

(JUAN hands him the letters.)

JUAN: Read them...Go on and read the damn letters!

(DAVID opens an envelope and takes out one of the letters.)

DAVID: It's blank.

JUAN: Go on and read another one then.

(DAVID takes out another letter and sees that it's blank, then another...)

DAVID: They're all blank.

JUAN: Those were the love letters your father wrote me. Blank sheets put in an envelope with my name and address. He only wrote me one letter by hand—the first one...

(JUAN takes an envelope out of his pocket. HE hands it over to DAVID to read.)

DAVID: "Dear Mr. Martin: Upon reflecting on your words following our casual meeting at the café last week, I ask you to be so kind as to never contact my office again. I'm sure another lawyer will be able to take over all of your legal matters. Cordially, Raphael Duque..."

JUAN: "Madrid, July twenty-first nineteen sixty seven." This was his only letter. As you might guess by now, I'm not the kind of person who puts out the fire while there's still a spark burning. I swallowed the pride that I never had and I went back to spying on him slyly, like someone who chases something fragile and illusive that can splinter into a thousand pieces if moved too vigorously... Our second meeting was at a park. It was cut and dry. He told me he didn't want to talk about "that" subject any longer. I answered by saying that "that" subject was burning my soul and made everything around me seem empty and unnecessary. He wouldn't budge. "I prefer to think that this conversation never took place." True, he swore that he would never tell anyone about my "deviance"... I thanked him for this gesture, but my desire gave me courage and I went even further. I asked him...I begged him to write me letters. Before his lips could utter another refusal, I said, "No, Raphael, I don't need you to write anything. I only want you to send me blank letters. My love for you will fill in the phrases that will never emerge from your hands, the words that will never be uttered, the caresses that we will never experience." For a moment, he seemed moved, or at least I wanted to believe he was, but...he wasn't willing to do such a thing. To him, it seemed like another perversion. And he walked away...I

stayed there sitting on a bench, the same bench I sat on when I found out that he had died, and I couldn't get up for hours. I wanted your father more than I had ever desired anyone else before. The fact that he didn't allow my love for him, or that he didn't love me, far from making me unhappy, forced me to hang on to a golden glimmer of hope. Will he dare to do it? What if it's more fear than lack of feeling behind this rejection? Forty years ago being gay was not like it is today. Forty years ago you had to be grateful for every day you were allowed to breathe. Yes, I decided to believe that your father felt something in his heart for me. Something that not even he could accept, but something. It's so easy to give wings to hope...I was encouraged by those fantasies to write him again. I waited days for a response. Crestfallen, every morning I checked the empty mailbox that denied me the least bit of consolation...And one day, it arrived. As radiant as a full moon. And just as white as that moon. Raphael had agreed to my wishes. He sent me what I had asked for and he made my dreams come true...Could this be possible? Yes, it was...I was so happy with that white sheet of paper. I wrote him another letter full of hope, letting myself fall into the depths of joyful insanity. And I received another reply. For forty years your father sent me blank letters, further and further apart, but in a constant stream that only ended shortly before his death. ..That was our "marvelous" love story—An illusion, a sinister sleight of hand that I myself invented. Raphael was an accomplice, but I won the game...What was the prize? You guessed it—my immense loneliness. It's not that I didn't have an affair here and there during those years, a body to desperately hold on to as I longingly searched for validation. Of course I did. But no one could take his place. And you know why? Because his love was my own love, the one I had invented. No one could beat that make-believe man that never existed. My fear of truly living and of being loved by a real person and not some impossible illusion, held me captive in a prison of dreams and lies... I always liked to listen to the sound of the wind, so soft in its steady and incessant way...Wind doesn't hurt, it can't harm you, or so I thought... It only sways you from side to side, messes up your hair, your clothes, but not your heart... However, wind was not just the wind I loved, the one that made me feel secure... Wind could also be a hurricane that destroys your life and your feelings if you don't get out of its way... When Raphael accepted my request to send me some innocent blank letters, he put a noose around my neck that lasted forty long years... And the wind became a wound... I never knew the reason why your father corresponded with me in that peculiar way. I will never know... Perhaps deep down in the farthest corner of his heart, there was a small place reserved for my face, name, voice ...A little corner of love that belonged to me... Maybe not, probably not... If you're looking for me to tell you that your father was a human being with doubts, joys, passions—I'm sorry, I can't help you... I don't have the faintest idea... I'm sorry to disappoint you...I can't do it... And you can't either, face it... It's so easy to blame others... and so cowardly...Your father took you to the movies once... It was an animated film, I seem to remember it was "Bambi"... I came out from the other side of the street and watched you ... I saw your small dark eyes full of fear as they watched that terrible story of death and loneliness. Be smart and choose well the film you want to see for the rest of your life, you're still in time...

And now, I have to go... You need to change a lot of things... I need to accept other ones... It's a pity we can't be friends, I'm not willing to suffer again... I had enough with Mr. Duque, I wouldn't be able to handle falling madly in love with his son, because I

would fall in love with you, you can be sure of that... Love is nothing more than the desire to love... And I always had too much of that... It's a shame I never let myself choose the right recipient for my letters... for my life... Take care, my sweet David. You can't do much against a dead and buried Goliath... Forgive your father. It's the only way that you will finally be able to forgive yourself...

(JUAN walks off the stage, certain that he will never set foot in that house again. DAVID walks up to the letters that JUAN left behind.)

DAVID: I began to know my father the day he died...A little late, don't you think? Or perhaps it was the right time? Yes, it was the right time... I don't know who you were, Dad, I'll never know. But I know you're my father...And that's enough for me right now... That should be enough for me right now...

(DAVID tears the letters up. Blackout.)