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The muse

by
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translated by
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(Excerpt in English)

**Excerpt taken from the middle of the play.*

SAUL

Laura, come in please.

LAURA steps inside. SHE stops. SAUL sits at his armchair and leans back in his seat.

SAUL

Come. Sit here. You'll be more comfortable.

LAURA approaches the chair. SHE sits down. SHE looks at him from the corner of her eye.

SAUL

Do you know how long I've been in charge of this department? In any case ... I haven't counted the days. Not exactly. I could tell you ... approximately. Numbers are not my strong point. I'm not a numbers guy. *(Pause. HE sits in front of her.)* You have to choose. That's the dilemma. The snag. Over and over again, day after day ... we choose. And if you don't choose yourself, someone else will do it for you. It is unacceptable for someone else to make your decisions for you. I'm sure you'd agree. Unacceptable. It happens constantly. I see it every day. Therefore ... you will understand how hard this position is. There are situations when one must choose sides—either one side or the other. You cannot choose both sides. Many try to do it. In fact, they do do it. But it has consequences. Some dire consequences. Here, there's more than one person who, like dogs, shakes his tail and then barks. On the one hand, he barks, and on the other he wags his tail. *(Pause. A few moments of silence. HE looks directly at LAURA.)* Is everything alright...?

LAURA

What did you say?

SAUL

You're a bit nervous. You seem jittery to me. Give me your hand.

LAURA

My hand?

SAUL

That's right. Your hand.

LAURA

What do you want my hand for?

SAUL

Give it to me.

LAURA extends her arm shyly. SAUL takes her hand and starts to apply light pressure to it. HE speaks to her in a clear and soothing voice. Modulating his voice slowly without difficulty.

SAUL

You see? There it is. Your arm is getting stiffer. This light pressure will let you feel the stiffness. Can you feel it?

LAURA

It hurts. You're hurting me.

SAUL

Hold on. Your arm has started to weigh down. It has become lead. Your arm is so heavy that you can't hold it up. *(HE lets go of her hand and her arm falls down.)* Did you feel that?

LAURA

What?

SAUL

Your arm feels as light as a feather now. It went from lead to a feather. Sit back.

LAURA

What?

SAUL

Sit back in the chair. You'll be more comfortable. You seem very stiff to me.

LAURA

I'm not stiff.

SAUL

What do you mean you're not?

LAURA

In any case...

SAUL

Sit back in the chair.

LAURA sits back in the chair. SAUL moves the chair over and places it right by his side.

SAUL

Would you like something to drink, Laura?

LAURA

Thanks, but I just had a light lunch.

SAUL

So, you've just had a light lunch...

LAURA

Yes.

SAUL

You've just had a light lunch. Great! What did you have, Laura? Wait...wait...A piece of chocolate...two, three...four ounces of chocolate. That's it. Four ounces of chocolate and...a doughnut.

LAURA

How do you know that?

SAUL

Four ounces of chocolate and a doughnut.

LAURA

Excuse me, but how did you know that?

SAUL

Did I guess correctly?

LAURA

How did you know...?

Pause.

LAURA

Why did you call me here to your office?

SAUL

Why did I call you here?

LAURA

Yes. Why?

SAUL

Laura, listen to me carefully, Laura. Look at me. Look at me straight in the eyes. We're giving you an opportunity. You have a big opportunity in this company. You know how things are out there on the streets. You know, eh? I've read your reports. I have a lot of confidence in you. Do you know how our benefits have expanded in recent years? I realize that you're handling paperwork right now. Paperwork can be tiresome. How do you think I started? Everything needs time and space to grow. Time and space. That's the key. Others have strength. Do you know what I have? Time. (*Pause.*) Look at me straight in the eyes. Why won't you let me see what's inside there? Don't look down at the floor. Look at me.

LAURA

You're making me nervous.

SAUL

You want to know why I called you here to my office? Is that what you want to know? I'm worried, Laura. There's a lot at stake here. This department is on the verge of taking off. I've been preparing this take-off for years. The moment has arrived. This is my department. Do you want to remain here?

LAURA

Remain?

SAUL

Continue with us. On my team. Advance.

LAURA

I want to.

SAUL

Then...?

LAURA

What...?

SAUL

Why do I notice...?

LAURA sits up and slides toward the edge of the chair.

LAURA

I need...I'm very interested in this job.

SAUL

So, what's going on with you, Laura?

LAURA

Going on...What are you referring to?

SAUL

The downcast expression. The tension in your arms and abdomen. An aura of tension that encircles you. I chose your candidacy myself. I made that difficult decision myself. The strength of your eyes. The strength of your movements. All that ... so complicated to find ... However, for a while now ...

LAURA

I'll get better.

SAUL

Don't look down on the floor, Laura. What is it that makes you...?

LAURA

What?

SAUL

...be so interested in this job?

LAURA

I need it.

SAUL

You need it?

LAURA

Precisely.

SAUL

Anything else?

LAURA

Something else?

SAUL

You can understand me... *(Pause. HE moves closer to her.)* Sit back. Relax your body and feel it light as a feather. Like a pleasant dream that envelops you.

LAURA hesitates for a few seconds. SHE sits back.

SAUL

Now, tell me... What's happening, Laura?

LAURA

What do you mean?

SAUL

Come on, Laura. Speak openly and stop beating around the bush. What is it, Laura? I've been watching you for days. You have a downcast look. Your steps are shuffling on the ground. You don't tread firmly. Is it Olivia?

LAURA

Olivia...

SAUL

She's your supervisor. You're together all day in the same office... Is everything going okay with Olivia?

LAURA

I don't think Olivia... From a distance, I notice her looking at me and I feel that... I remind her of herself. I'm like that side of her that she doesn't want to remember. *(Pause.)* But she's not what's weighing me down.

SAUL

There's something weighing you down then...?

LAURA

I've had some pretty bad days. Even today. It's been a terrible day. As a matter of fact, when Olivia told me you were calling me in... I thought... I believed that... Anyway, I've had a very bad day. *(Pause.)* At times, I think I don't have much experience. I've never worked before. I had an internship for a month... I don't suppose that counts. I don't have experience, and all this is overwhelming. Perhaps it's simply the situation that's overwhelming. But... there are things that... I can't avoid.

SAUL

What can't you avoid, Laura?

LAURA

I can't avoid feeling. I have feelings. And no matter how much I try to rationalize them away... they're still there. I can't get rid of these feelings.

SAUL stands up and takes a few steps. HE sits on the desk in front of LAURA.

SAUL

Please, Laura, tell me clearly what those feelings are.

LAURA

I'd like to but...

SAUL

Laura, tell me clearly what those feelings are... *(Pause.)* Laura...

Pause.

LAURA

I feel like ... someone is watching me. An unknown entity. It's as if it weren't a person but ... I couldn't say what exactly... but it watches me. It controls me. It controls all my movements. My words. It's as if all of a sudden everyone repeats my words. Phrases of mine ... only mine. Very personal expressions ... I begin to hear them everywhere. People insinuate knowing things about me ... they know things that only I know. Very intimate aspects of my private life. They insinuate with their words to know ...

SAUL

What are you referring to, Laura?

LAURA

I don't know.

SAUL

That people are repeating your words? Who's repeating your phrases?

LAURA

Here...right here...Everyone...out of the blue...say my phrases.

Pause.

SAUL

Laura ... it's normal. Totally normal. Sorry. I didn't want to raise my voice ... but it's logical when a group of people spend so many hours in the same space. We rub off one another. We influence each other. Surely, you are also picking up other people's traits. You're repeating their phrases, their expressions ...

LAURA

Facts about my life slip out. Facts that I haven't told anyone. Aspects of my life that I've never spoken to anyone about. They know about them.

SAUL

What do they know?

LAURA

Lots of things.

SAUL

For example?

LAURA

What I did this weekend...phone conversations...even phrases I wrote on emails. They know them.

SAUL gets out of his position by the desk. HE walks around the room uncomfortably. HE looks at LAURA and smiles at her.

SAUL

For goodness sake, Laura. I understand. Too many influences. Too much time spent together between these four walls. Human beings are mysterious. We tend to transmit lots of information across something...mysterious. Inexplicable. It happens. It really happens...Sara...you have to understand. It's normal.

LAURA

Sara?

Pause. SAUL sits down.

SAUL
Sara?

LAURA
You called me Sara.

SAUL
I called you Sara?

LAURA
Yes.

SAUL
Oh, really?

Pause.

LAURA
Who is Sara?

SAUL
Sara?

LAURA
Yes, who is she?

SAUL
Seriously, did I call you Sara?

LAURA
Seriously.

SAUL
Are you sure?

Pause.

LAURA
I hear that name very often.

SAUL
You hear it? Where do you hear it?

LAURA
Here. That name is repeated time and time again.

SAUL

It's repeated... Who repeats it?

LAURA

Here...I hear Sara's name...I always hear it. Everyone comments on aspects of Sara's personality. Her hobbies. They speak about her with a lot of ... familiarity...But I've never seen her.

LEON enters. HE stops when HE sees LAURA. HE takes a few steps back. HE remains standing at the doorway.

LEON

Sorry, I didn't know...

HE looks at LAURA, then at SAUL. HE's about to leave.

SAUL

Wait.

LEON

Yes.

SAUL

Don't leave. I want to speak with you.

THEY both look at LAURA. SAUL addresses her.

SAUL

We'll continue this discussion at another time, Laura. Remember what... Think about it. Time...you know what I explained to you about time. Time and space.