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# All roads

Lead to Rome

de  
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traducción de  
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*(fragmento en inglés)*

ALL ROADS  
EPISTOLARY TRAGEDY

CAST:

SHE, thirties something.

HE, fifties something.

*The action takes place in Rome. Early 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*The action is broken into two kinds of scenes: “now” and “before”*

*The “now” scenes take place in the present. The setting is the house of HE, an empty space with two chairs.*

*The “earlier” scenes take place over a number of years, days, and minutes immediately before. The settings are diverse: some undefined, others around the Coliseum or inside the Roman Forum.*

*These can be established by simple word projections or projections of visuals representing the locations.*

*Every man must have an audience: our ancestors felt that the Gods were watching them; our fathers lived to be admired of men; for Caesar there are no Gods and he is indifferent to the opinion of his fellow men. He lives for the opinion of aftertime; you biographers, Cornelius, are his audience. You are the mainspring of his life. Caesar is trying to live a great book; he has not even enough of the artist in him to see that living and literary composition cannot furnish analogies to one another.*

Thornton Wilder. *The Ides of March*

One. Now.

*(A man and a woman, seated, facing each other. It is cold but their coats are hanging on the chairs. Silence. They look at each other.)*

SHE

I want to die too.

*(Silence.)*

HE

I suggest we play a game. Only one person can win and no possibility of a draw. Before the sun comes up one of us will have died. And the one left standing will dedicate the rest of his or her life telling the world about the other one.

*(SHE smiles.)*

*(Blackout.)*

## Two. Before.

*(SHE, facing the audience. SHE carries a folder in her hand and is conducting a tour to a group of tourists made visible only by her gestures, except for HE, who appears to be more interested in her than in the ruins. SHE appears cool and very sure of what she is saying, at least enough to move a bit beyond just the routine.)*

SHE

Here we have the very little that remains of the once Temple of the Divine Julius, constructed by order of Octavius Augustus. The first time in the history of Rome that a man is deified. In other words, the first time that the god a temple is dedicated to is not a hidden presence in the heavens; not some supernatural entity which takes its form in thunder, or a planet, or some constellation, but in a human being. A human being whom most of the Romans of that generation had seen walking on earth. The same earth we are walking on today. That man was Julius Caesar, and this altar, of which so little is preserved, reminds us that here was the very funeral pyre on which his body was burned after his assassination. The chronicles relate how the authorities of Rome carried Caesar's body here to the middle of the forum. And while they discussed what would be the most worthy place for the cremation of the corpse, two unidentified persons approached the body and set it on fire. Immediately the entire populace came to this place with wood, furniture, clothing, and anything else they could burn in his honor. And some of them lit torches from the fire and headed off with them to the houses of the assassins. Many others stood guard at the funeral pyre for several nights to come. The fire burned out, but even today, as you can see, someone continues leaving flowers in his memory. Please keep the line moving. The space is very narrow, and only two at a time can fit through. Any questions?

*(HE raises his hand. SHE sees him but ignores him.)*

Any questions?

*(HE keeps his hand up, but SHE waits, letting some silence pass.)*

Any questions? No?

*(HE persists until SHE acknowledges him with a glance just barely hiding her vexation.)*

I'm sorry. I didn't notice you. What's your question?

HE

Who leaves the flowers?

SHE

I don't know.

HE  
Who killed Julius Caesar?

SHE  
It's a long story.

HE  
Who killed Julius Caesar?

SHE  
It's a long story that everyone knows.

HE  
Who killed him?

*(Silence.)*

Please.

SHE  
It was a conspiracy which had as its ringleader, among others, Brutus, who, according to some, was Caesar's own son. Brutus's motives are still a matter of debate among historians. According to some Caesar was a champion of the people who threatened the privileged aristocracy. According to others, he was a tyrant with no scruples who put the survival of the republic in danger. But I won't bore you with the disquisitions of specialists.

HE  
How could someone so powerful fall into a trap like that?

SHE  
Nobody's safe.

HE  
But how could they kill Caesar?

SHE  
It's a long story.

HE  
How did they pull it off?

SHE  
It's a complicated business . . .

HE  
How can you kill a god?

SHE

*(Sighing with an expression somewhere between defeat and condescension. HE slowly moves his lips as if repeating to himself words he already knows and which coincide exactly with what SHE says.)* Some chroniclers of that era suggest that Julius Caesar lived the last part of his life full of fear and anxiety, besieged by ambushes constantly being laid for him. It may be that could no longer embrace anyone without fear of being knifed in the back. It may be that he could no even close his eyes with any certainty of ever opening them again. And those chroniclers think that this is what decided him to discharge his bodyguard of Spanish soldiers, so as to make it easier for anyone of his many enemies to finish him off. Because Caesar was quite sure about one thing: whoever dared assassinate him would die and be burned into utter oblivion by the same fire that would make Caesar eternal.

*(HE applauds.)*

HE

A very pretty story.

SHE

It's only a theory. It's colorful but doesn't make much sense. Now, will you all follow me. We ought to move on with our tour.

*(Blackout.)*

## Three. Before.

*(HE appears. With the skill that only years of practice can give he quickly changes into a Roman emperor's costume, somewhat worn and not entirely convincing: white tunic overlaid with a reddish mantle embroidered with Greek fretting. A pair of anachronistic socks with holes in them can be seen through his sandal straps. He moves in an affected manner while, at the same time, adopting the dignity of the toga as he solicits the attention of passers-by.)*

HE

*(In fake Italian-English, sing-song voice.)* Halo, photo here. Halo, photo here . . . *(HE stops. Someone is watching him. HE gestures for them to approach.)*

You lika photo?

*(Effect of several photo flashes as HE does various poses: the imperial salute, the thumbs down of the arena, , etc. The flashes stop. HE changes gestures. Now HE offers his hand palms up. Serious. Without accent.)*

Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's.

*(A simple slight of hand trick makes a coin appear in his hand. He tosses it in the air. It is small, too small. He throws it back at the invisible person who "gave" it.)*

Let me just say one thing. No, no, no. I'm not going to do anything. Just listen and I'll let you go.

I'm doing a re-enactment of the past. You understand? History. I'm doing historical revival.

Because Caesar was right here. You understand? So you take a picture of me because you want to feel like you've been in ancient Rome. Rome when it was great. I mean, you want to get a picture with Julius Caesar, right? Am I wrong? Huh? Am I wrong?

*(Increasingly more aggressive.)*

Just answer my question. Am I wrong? Huh?

*(Throws the money to the ground.)*

You can keep this piece of shit. Take it. I don't want it. I don't need it. Caesar doesn't need it. Rome doesn't need it. Hey? You understand me? No. No. Don't you walk away! No!

*(The tourist has gone off. HE makes no effort to pursue him. He goes back into his routine until he notices the money still on the ground. HE very surreptitiously scoops it up and pockets it.)*

HE

Halo . . . Photo here . . . Getta you photo . . .

*(Blackout.)*



## Four. Before.

*(SHE on stage. Looking off into the wings to make sure now one is watching. Raising her hand in a tight fist which then opens little by little letting us see some pills. The silences represent what might be the words of the absent person being spoken to.)*

SHE

Can I trust you?

( . . . )

This is very different. Not like the other times. Of course not.

( . . . )

It would be better if you didn't try to fool me.

( . . . )

It's none of your business. I don't like people telling me what to do. You should know that better than anybody. If a customer asks you for these pills, that's all it is. Because he doesn't want to have to explain it. Or more likely because he's reached that point where explanations don't help.

( . . . )

Don't say anything stupid. I'm not doing this to get attention. I'm not a child.

( . . . )

I guess I should say I'm sorry.

( . . . )

Yes, I'm sorry. Because, whether these work or not, you'll be losing a customer.

*(Blackout.)*