

ACT I SCENE 1 - THE PAST LAMENTS

Scene: The STAGE is dark.

SPOTLIGHT hits the ghost of PEDRO GUTIERREZ.

PEDRO GUTIERREZ:

(To audience)

Every period in time brings its own successes and its own failures. With each passing generation, we learn, we grow, and, hopefully, we absorb what we have learned to the betterment of our fellow man.

For if we do not let the past be the past and allow the present to open our hearts and minds to a better future, then the past will swallow us whole.

Those of my time were foolish and blind to the misery of those we kept beneath us. A mistake of extreme proportions and a shame on our memory.

BLACKOUT.

END SCENE

ACT I SCENE 2 - THE CONFLICT

Scene: The stage is dark. There is a small table with two arm chairs downstage center. The chairs are facing each other, ignoring the audience.

On the table is a chess board with the chess pieces glued to the board in a way that looks like the game has been in progress.

This Man is an Island - 2.

There is also a chess clock that they can hit to signal the end of their move each time they finish their line.

In one chair is JUAN RUIZ GUTIERREZ. In the other chair is KOFI LUMA. They face each other like two enemies in a deadly debate.

SPOTLIGHT hits the table setting.

This scene is delivered like a verbal chess game. Each pauses and thinks hard before delivering their response.

They each sit there, rigidly, with both hands on the table, waiting for the next move to be made. They never move any chess pieces. Their verbal response is their chess move. They only use their hand to hit the "stop" button on the clock when specified.

JUAN RUIZ:

(Sneering at KOFI LUMA)

You murdered my son!

(Hit Clock!)

Pause. KOFI sneers and thinks about what he will say as his move.

KOFI LUMA:

(Sneering back)

You murdered many others!

(Hit Clock!)

JUAN RUIZ stiffens and responds rather quickly.

JUAN RUIZ:
(In quiet protest)

I murdered no one!

(Hit Clock!)

Pause. KOFI ponders before responding.

KOFI LUMA:
You bear the sins of those who's blood runs through your veins.

(Hit Clock!)

Pause. JUAN RUIZ squirms with frustration.

JUAN RUIZ:
I condemned the actions of my ancestors long ago. I do not hold with that thinking. There is no slavery on this island any longer. It ended long before I was even born.

(Hit Clock!)

Slight pause.

KOFI LUMA:
You still abide by their wishes.

(Hit Clock!)

JUAN RUIZ, annoyed, gives a quick response.

JUAN RUIZ:
Because I maintain ownership? This island was given to Pedro Gutierrez by the Queen of Spain. It was his to "Will" to whom ever he wished, in any way he wished.

(MORE)

JUAN RUIZ: (CONT'D)

The island was named "Herensia" for a reason. It means "Inheritance". My family owns this island.

(Hit Clock!)

Pause. KOFI becomes very haughty.

KOFI LUMA:

My family built this island and, under it's oppression, died for it.

(Hit Clock!)

Pause. JUAN RUIZ stares into KOFI'S eyes, sneers and thinks.

JUAN RUIZ:

I cannot be held responsible for what was done long before I was even born.

(Hit Clock!)

Long pause. KOFI stares at JUAN RUIZ thinking hard about his next move.

KOFI LUMA:

You reject the evil that they did, yet you are more than happy to keep their spoils.

(Hit Clock!)

Pause. JUAN RUIZ chooses his words wisely.

JUAN RUIZ:

Hatred is a misguided emotion.

(Hit Clock!)

Short pause. KOFI responds, quietly annoyed.

KOFI LUMA:

And what about greed?

(Hit Clock!)

Short pause. JUAN RUIZ gives a reflex response.

JUAN RUIZ:

The people of this island love me.

(Hit Clock!)

KOFI gives an immediate response.

KOFI LUMA:

The people of this island obey you!

(Hit Clock!)

Pause. The two men sit there examining each other, deep in thought and then go back to their original statements.

JUAN RUIZ:

(Visibly frustrated)

You murdered my son.

(Hit Clock!)

Short pause.

KOFI LUMA:

And you murdered many others.

(Hit Clock!)

Pause.

BLACKOUT.

END SCENE

ACT I SCENE 3 - A NECESSARY HOMECOMING

Scene: STAGE LIGHTS up. The exterior of the front of the Plantation House. It is mid afternoon. MIGUEL GUTIERREZ is walking up to the front porch carrying his bags. As he arrives, DANTE rushes out from the house to greet him.

DANTE:

(Excited and pleased)

Miguel! You're home. Thank goodness! I'm so relieved you were able to get here so quickly. I hope your journey was not unpleasant.

MIGUEL:

(Sighs)

It was whatever you want to call three planes and a boat, Dante.

But, never mind that, (concerned) how is he?

DANTE:

He is 96 years old... That is how he is.

(Calling out)

Javel!... Javel, where are you?

Enter JAVEL.

JAVEL:

(Please to see Miguel)

Miguel! You're home!... It's so good to see you. Welcome home!

MIGUEL:

Thank you, Javel. It's good to see you too!

DANTE:

(To JAVEL)

Take Senior Gutierrez's bags to his room.

JAVEL:

Yes, Sir.

JAVEL exits, smiling, into the front door of the house with the bags.

MIGUEL:

(To DANTE)

His call sounded urgent, but he wouldn't tell me anything over the phone. I got here as soon as I could. What's wrong? What's happened? What can you tell me?

JUAN RUIZ:

(From inside the front door.)

He can tell you nothing!

MIGUEL and DANTE turn and look toward the door at the unexpected reply. The door opens and out steps JUAN RUIZ GUTIERREZ, MIGUEL'S grandfather. He uses a cane to walk. He enters onto the porch.

Surprised. MIGUEL rushes to embrace his grandfather warmly.

MIGUEL:

Grandfather!... You look well! When you asked me to get here immediately... Well... Frankly I expected you might be ill.

JUAN RUIZ sits down on his favorite rocking chair on the porch. MIGUEL sits down with him.

JUAN RUIZ:

(Smiling)

Ill?... No. Stressed?... Very much so! But, the extreme stress I have been feeling is lessened considerably now that I know you are safely home.

MIGUEL:

Stress?... What stress?... Please! Tell me what's wrong Uno Grande?

JUAN RUIZ:

(Amused)

Ha! You still call me the "Great One!" You started calling me that when you were only four years old. I treasure that, you know!

MIGUEL:

(Smiling lovingly)

You'll always be the "Uno Grande" to me. Surely you know that.

JUAN RUIZ:

Right now, I feel as though I know very little, but that you feel that way is a joy to my heart.

(To DANTE)

Dante, would you please see to dinner? I am quite sure my Miguel is hungry for a good meal after his long trip.

DANTE:

Yes!... Of course, Senior.

(To MIGUEL)

Miguel! Mama Lena has prepared all of your favorites. She was so thrilled to learn that you were coming home.

MIGUEL:

(Playful)

Music to my ears! You tell that wonderful woman that I'll be in shortly to give her a great big hug and plenty of reason to chase me out of her kitchen.

DANTE:

(Playful)

If she doesn't come out here to find you first.

They all chuckle

Exit DANTE

MIGUEL:

OK! We're alone now. Talk to me. Tell me what all this urgency is about.

JUAN RUIZ:

My boy?... The time has come for you to come home. You must begin to fulfill the duties of your inheritance.

MIGUEL:

(Reassuringly)

When I first got your call, I suspected that might be the case so I immediately set things in motion to allow for the possibility that I might have to remain here permanently, but now that I see you, I can't imagine why you need me here.

Look at you! You're still as spry as a...

JUAN RUIZ:

(Sternly interrupting)

This is not about my health, Miguel. This is about invaders, thieves, and murderers encroaching into our world.

It is also about your Father and your Mother.

MIGUEL suddenly stiffens. He becomes very serious and riveted to what JUAN RUIZ is saying.

MIGUEL:

What do you mean?

JUAN RUIZ:

I have just learned that the plane accident that took them from us, so many years ago, was not an accident at all. You were only ten years old at the time and, thankfully, at the last minute they decided to leave you home here with me, or you too would have perished with them.

Evidently, the perpetrators planned to do away with my heirs and end our family lineage right then and there. They were not counting on you being left behind.

Now, after all this time, I have learned that there is a new effort afoot to assassinate you before you are able to marry and produce an heir. The intention is to end our family line and thus our inherited ownership of this island. Evidently there has long been a movement to overtake "Herencia" and, in my stupidity, I simply hid my head in the sand and would not recognize it.

(MORE)

JUAN RUIZ: (CONT'D)

But... No more!

When I learned that there is now this plot against you, I realized we must work together to out these vermin and eradicate them once and for all.

MIGUEL:

(With quiet anger)

Who are these people? Who told you about this?

JUAN RUIZ:

I received an anonymous letter that convinced me that your father and your mother were, in fact, murdered. The letter also spoke of a plot to visit you in the United States some time within the next few weeks, and end your life there. That is why I sent for you. I wanted you to come home immediately, so we could see to your safety.

The letter states that the blame lies with Kofi Luma. If that is true, then you can be sure his good for nothing son, Vega, is also involved.

But, the letter also states that there are others working with them and for them. We must find a way to expose them all, or we will never be rid of this.

MIGUEL:

(In Shock)

Why on Earth would Kofi Luma do such a thing? He always claimed to be father's good and loyal friend.

JUAN RUIZ:

Friend indeed!

It is one thing to be proud, Miguel, but Kofi's pride is arrogant and self-serving. He would always let his misguided pride get in the way of good judgement.

After reading that letter, it all began to make sense to me.

Not long before your father planned to take your mother on holiday, Kofi came to me to ask for permission to purchase the west island cocoa fields. He kept insisting that an exception should be made in the case of his family since they were descended from one of the first slaves to be brought to this island and, as he put it, this island was built on their backs, and with their blood.

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