

A MEETING

Sequence 1 INT/NIGHT POLA'S BEDROOM

1

A bedroom, one night.
The soothing silence of a summer night.
Pola, 40, a woman of mature years with the face of an angel, is deeply sleeping.
She's quiet and smiles slightly.
Her long hair with beautiful, shiny and red curls is massively covering the pillow.
The wind lifts the curtain from the window.
A man is sleeping next to her.

POLA (*off commentaries*)

Gently

As you see me now, I still feel quiet... (*Some time*)

But I just needed one thing, one sentence, and one name for being lost...

Just that and your little world collapses.

Your sweet cat, your chocolate bar you've chosen with so much care at the supermarket, your soft and bristled nails you're carefully varnishing; those children at the swimming pool who are jumping on you from the diving board; the latest home cinema you bought on credit ; your computer that always crashed at the wrong moment; your preference for natural yoghurts...

Suddenly, everything seems futile, vain, and even contemptible. All that has made your life until now vanishes, dissolves, flies away when you're told "that something"... (*Some time*)

At that moment, I didn't know. Few hours left...

And in a week...(some time)

I wouldn't have imagined I could be able to do that...

Sequence 2 INT/DAY MEDICAL CENTER

2

Writings superimposed on the image: Monday 9h43

A doctor's consulting room. Bare and whitish walls.
Pola is smart but natural, she wears a low necked, white linen shirt, she is staring, full face.
The calmly voice of a man.

DOCTOR (*off*)

We have found a malignant tumour in your right breast

It has to be cured. Rapidly.

Considering the location of the tumour, we think it would be better to start chemotherapy session.

Pola's face falls
She puts her hands on her thorax, as if she was suffocating.

POLA

In a breath

Am I going to loose my hair?

DOCTOR (*off*)

Yes. After one or two months of treatment.

Pola's lost look sweeps across the room and sometimes it stays on the doctor's.

POLA (*off commentaries*)

It came to me like a blow with a club. You fall, you get bogged and you cling to anything you can. We would like the film to start again. You rewind. You delete everything and start again. That's not the reality, it's a bad joke. My breast is very beautiful, look, it's okay. I'm not going to lose my hair, my long hair... But the doctor is there, in front of you and he is not laughing. At that precise moment, he's more than present. So you know.... And you're facing the problem.

After few seconds, she catches back her breath, sits up, facing the doctor.

POLA

When do I start?

DOCTOR (off)

When you think you're ready.

Sequence 3 EXT/DAY BEACH, NORMANDY

3

Writings superimposed on the image : Tuesday 15h34

A large beach, high tide, in Normandy.

A wave comes whipping the sea wall.

Pola is facing the sea.

Her loose hair are flying away, hiding and revealing her face.

She's somewhere else.

POLA (off commentaries)

The day after is strange. You think that everything will be upside down but nothing change. You don't realise yet. You're still astounded. The people around you, husband, mother, children, friends have already understood everything and you still hope it's a lie, a bad dream. You're continually oscillating between the furious envy to fight and to abandon. It's a day in stand-by.

Someone suddenly bumps into her, she looks down, with surprise on a child

It's Leo, her 7 years old son, his red hair's a mess, mischievous, who runs toward the water after his ball.

Marc, 45, beginnings of baldness, gentle and expressive looks, bolts, and spiritedly hugs Pola and makes her fall down. They laugh.

Their laughter stops and is replaced by tenderness. Marc caresses her cheek, her hair, and her mouth. His look has changed. It's sadder.

POLA

Gentle

Don't look at me like that, Marc. I don't like it. Everything will be okay.

Over there, Leo calls his father to go on playing.

POLA

Leo is calling you, go on.

MARC

I'm going. I want you to be okay, that's all. I love you.

Pola smiles to him, loving. With her head, she points at Leo. Marc gets up. Pola looks at him as he goes away.

Sequence 4 INT/NIGHT BATHROOM

4

Writings superimposed on the image : Wednesday 3h05

The bathroom door is half-open.

A warm and yellow light comes out from it.

It is a small and confined bathroom.

Pola is there, fragile, she's wearing a long tee shirt.
She looks at her in the mirror, her hands on her cheeks.
She's nervous, insomniac, disrupted.
She sits on the toilets, silent.

POLA (*off commentaries*)

Three nights I haven't slept. O sleep was a loss of time and I was still looking for a solution that would never come. I was not in the mood for anything. It couldn't happen to me, not now, not already! Every question pierces you, harasses you. Incomprehension makes you suffocate.

Pola gets up and lies on the carpet of the bathroom, her eyes open.

Sequence 5 INT/DAY RESTAURANT

5

Writings superimposed on the image : Thursday 12h56

A crowded restaurant. Sounds of crockery and discussions.
Everywhere, everyone gets busy.
Pola is lunching with her mum near the plate glass window.
Annie, a lively, elegant artist of 65, with long and red hair, is meticulously savouring her lobster.

POLA (*off commentaries*)

My mother and me, it's a long story. She has not left me alone since I told her. It's incredible how people around you can make the situation worse. And they even don't know about it. It's my mother's trickling pity that irritates me more than anything else. She makes effort but you can tell from her eyes what she thinks. Seconds after seconds, her eyes are graver and more expressive: "My poor child... what will happen to you". It's not that she wants to bury you, no, but it's the way she's looking at you, as if I was Jesus on his cross, I can't stand it anymore. That very day, I understood who I didn't want to be.

Annie suddenly lifts up her head.

ANNIE

Sorry darling! I mustn't eat like that on such a day. I've lost my appetite since Monday you know! But a lobster, it's been ages...

POLA

Eat mum, it pleases me to see you eat! Don't worry about me. And you know I hate that, people pitying me like that. I can't stand pity. Nothing has changed. It's like other Wednesdays.

Annie puts back down her knife, fork and lobster with contempt.

ANNIE.

Oh...I feel bad now. You're ill and I'm eating. I've lost my appetite again.

POLA

Stop it mum, please. Stop all this fuss and eat or I will get mad at you.

Annie takes a claw back and as if she was to do something wrong, she starts to eat again.

Pola smiles. She drinks some of her wine.

She looks back to her mother.

Annie acts as if everything was all right but tears are coming into her eyes. She wipes her eyes with the napkin.

Pola moves forward, takes her hand.

POLA

Stop that mum, please. You're going to make me sad. You know there are hundreds of women like me! It's perfectly cured nowadays. It's not like Aunt Isa, it's not the same thing.

Annie calms down a bit.

POLA

I want to see happiness! Do you understand? This illness is enough for one person. And I'll find a way to get away of it, to forget it, you know how I am. I need strength, not tears. I have to be powerful like this reddish lobster. Have you seen how it looks like me?

Annie can't help smiling.

ANNIE

Do you sleep well?

Pola sighs

POLA

No...

ANNIE

Do you want a dessert?

POLA

Yes, a chocolate mousses.

Sequence 6 INT/DAY POLA'S OFFICE

6

Writings superimposed on the image : Friday 17h12.

A long orange corridor with plenty of yellow doors.

There are posters of design objects on the wall.

People are bustling about here and there.

A good atmosphere to work.

Pola arrives from the corridor.

Loud discussions turn into whispers.

People stares at her when she passes in front of them and then, as they get embarrassed, they look away.

Pola is resolute and goes on her way.

POLA (*off commentaries*)

Around me, everyone was collapsing. News are quickly spreading you know. Florence had told everything. What a bitch! Everyone was looking at me with pity, was caressing my shoulder, and was unctuously offering me a coffee. And I was boiling inside. The feeling of shouting, breaking everything, stopping time was getting me right there was churning my stomach. What would I do? And how will it end? I would arrive in the morning without hair, all skin and bone and looking wild. And nobody will ever see me as the strong woman that I am. This wandering ghost image will stick to me.

It's hard to imagine how people can be cruel when they're judging other people. When you expect decency or discretion, you face carnivores that would cut your head to pick up a little extra on the side or get promotion. You have to be very strong to resist.

Pola arrives in a modern cafeteria that dominates the city.

At the back, there's a 30 years old, long and slender brunette with a tight bun, Florence, who drinks her coffee. She waves at Pola.

Pola goes ahead and sits next to her.

They start to talk there.

POLA (*off commentaries*)

It's Florence, This damn bitch who started the whole thing. I was like a bomb with a timing device since Monday. I was only waiting for one thing – to explode. Just one sentence started everything.

Florence looks at Pola from the corner of her eye and says:

FLORENCE

Your hair is so beautiful...I wouldn't be able to work with a bare head. People focus on that and then they think you're going to be ill all of your life

Pola looks at her, thoughtful, silent. She stands up.

Florence stands still there.

Pola leaves the room.

Sequence 7 INT/DAY BATHROOM

7

Writings superimposed on the image: Saturday 11h28

A soft cool and quiet atmosphere in the bathroom.

Warm colours on the wall, on the carpet.

The warm water steam from a bath that is running.

Pola pushes the door and appears in a white, flared, light, muslin dress and her long red hair covers her shoulder.

She goes to the mirror and unlaces her stripes.

The dress falls at her feet.

She goes into the bath.

Settled, she carefully begins to brush her hair, from the root to the end.

She takes a glass bottle and pours some shampoo on her hair, rinses it and delicately smooths it down with some oil.

She lingers on it, implicated, passionate, careful.

POLA (*off commentaries*)

It took me a week. A week of doubts, of questions. To find in me what I was expecting. Rebellion.

Nothing else than that. Against myself. Or rather against cancer.

Pola takes scissors and cuts a first tuft of hair, and a second one.

The shiny and red tufts are falling down one after the other in the foamy water of the bath.

Little by little, the rich hair loses its volume.

Pola is determined and forces her to do it.

Now the hair on her head is shorter.

She takes Marc's shaving cream, puts it on her head and takes the razor.

She shaves all the rest of her hair from her head.

When she has finished, she lays this bare head on the bath.

We can't see her naked body anymore.

Hundreds of curly red locks are covering it.

She shuts her eyes and smiles.

END

JULIA LOWY