

ct

Coldwater

de
Mar Gómez Glez

(fragmento)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PAUL, Los Angeles taxi driver

ANNE, Ob/Gyn for Doctors Without Borders

DAMON, Green Beret

ORIGINAL CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

PAUL, Alex Greer

ANNE, Noelle Kenney

DAMON, Damon Dunay

DIRECTOR, Mar Gómez Glez

LIGHTING, Álvaro Martin Blanco

MUSIC, Amparo Edo Biol & Tomás Peire Serrate

SET DESIGNER, Nina Causa & Aubree Lynn

A Blue Cube & Son of Semele Production

For the Company Cretaion Festival at Son of Semele Ensemble,
Los Angeles, 2014

Scene

Los Angeles. Cold Water Canyon, Tree People Park.

Time

The present.

1. PAUL

Coldwater Canyon Park. Midnight.

(PAUL walks towards the parking lot. He has blood all over his shirt.)

EMILY DICKINSON'S VOICE (From PAUL's head)

*The brain is wider than the sky,
For, put them side by side,
The one the other will include
With ease, and you beside.*

PAUL

The brain is wider than the sky...

(PAUL opens the trunk of his car. It is full of books. He looks among them and picks up one. He reads.)

PAUL VALÈRY'S VOICE (From PAUL's head)

«L'univers est construit sur un plan dont la symétrie profonde est, en quelque sorte, présente dans l'intime structure de l'esprit.»

PAUL

Bullshit! Wait... (He looks for another book. He searches for the quote he is looking for and reads.)
«How small the cosmos (a kangaroo's pouch would hold it), how paltry and puny in comparison to human consciousness, to a single individual recollection.»

(BLACKOUT)

2. THE FARES

2a. ANNE

Silver Lake. The same night three hours earlier.

PAUL waits in front of a restaurant to pick up a client. He is wearing the same shirt, now it is clean.

ANNE gets in the car.

PAUL

Hi, how are you doing?

ANNE

Good, thank you. How are you?

PAUL

Not bad, thanks.... So, Coldwater Canyon Park?

ANNE

Yep.

PAUL

Any specific place?

ANNE

No, the Tree People parking lot is fine.

PAUL

Tree People. Great.

(They move in silence. In one street they pass two emergency vehicles. It can be an ambulance and/or a fire truck.)

PAUL

Every time I see the lights of these guys without sound, I get very anxious.

ANNE

Really? They always make me feel like I'm in a movie.

PAUL

No...

ANNE
Yeah...

PAUL
That's your way to cover up the tragedy.

ANNE
It might be.

PAUL
Is this Hollywood or Sunset?

ANNE
I don't know. You're the driver.

PAUL
I am not very good at multitasking. Sorry if I start speaking in sections.

ANNE
Don't you have a GPS or something like that?

PAUL
I don't need it. I know the city well. I was born not far from here. I just get distracted when I drive and talk. There are theories that explain why men are not good at multitasking.

ANNE
Oh, yeah?

PAUL
Yes. Not that I am such a fan of these kinds of statements. It usually seems to me they're too single minded. Like if there was only one culture from we all come from...

ANNE
I get it, go on explain your theory.

PAUL
I wouldn't say it is my theory. It's just something that I read.

ANNE
Please...

PAUL
Ok. Apparently it's something that comes from the old days when men had to go hunting. For days, they had to focus on this single activity that was crucial for their survival. While women, back in the hut, or the cave, or wherever they lived, had the babies. They had to take care of them and recollect fruits and clean the meat and a bunch of other stuff, so they were always doing three things at the same time.

ANNE

I see.

PAUL

That's also why women talk much more than men. They were always surrounded by the other members of the community.

ANNE

You haven't stopped talking!

PAUL

Oh, I am sorry. That's because you're in my car and I feel I have to entertain you. (Pause). Ok, let's do this again. Tell me about you.

ANNE

Oh, no, no, no, please, keep on talking you're a much better conversationalist than I am.

PAUL

I'm sure. I'm not.

ANNE

Seriously, you are doing a great job, please, keep on going.

PAUL

Ok, but blame it on the car and not on me.

ANNE

Why do you say that?

PAUL

I think it's the car what makes me talk so much. I'm usually intimidated by strangers.

ANNE

Do I intimidate you?

PAUL

I feel good with you.

ANNE

You just met me.

PAUL

Yeah, but you are in my car. It's familiar to me. After all I'm in control here.

ANNE

Are you saying that because I'm in your cab you think you have some kind of power over me? Do you only feel better when you have power over someone?

PAUL

Well, yes, that sounded really bad. Let me try to explain it better. More than having the power, it's having a task. The rest of our interaction is pretty much free. Even if we don't talk anymore, I am still driving. I still have something that I know how to do, I know how to read traffic lights and stop signs... I know how to deal with the occasional confrontation with an asshole driver and all that. Plus, I've this little mirror and I don't have to look at you directly. I'm gonna drive you to this place, I'll leave you there, and I won't see you ever again. It's perfect.

ANNE

Don't you want to see me again?

PAUL

I didn't mean that...

ANNE

So what did you mean?

PAUL

I guess I meant that driving someone around is a very concrete situation. We are two strangers sharing this space that's usually pretty private for me.

ANNE

You are right. This is kind of weird. I should have asked for an old school taxi with a little plastic wall in between, you know? It'd feel more like this is my space.

PAUL

But that's your space, that back seat is totally your space.

ANNE

Oh, so then I guess this \$50 bill is totally mine.

PAUL

Oh, yeah, I guess that was probably meant for me.

(She hands him the bill.)

ANNE

You see? This wouldn't have happened if there was something in between us.

PAUL

There are millions and millions of particles between us.

ANNE

Are they separating us or joining us?

PAUL

You are a real optimist.

ANNE

Its just physics.

PAUL

Are you a physicist?

ANNE

No, I am a doctor.

PAUL

Which kind of doctor?

ANNE

OB/Gyn.

PAUL

Bringing children to this fantastic and exciting world.

ANNE

Day by day.

PAUL

Master of life.

ANNE

Mums do most of the job. I take care of them.

PAUL

It must be an amazing job.

ANNE

Fascinating. What were we talking about before?

PAUL

Before what?

ANNE

Before the babies.

PAUL

Particles, the particles that are between us.

ANNE

Yeah, the thousands of millions of atoms and electrons that allow me to enjoy my private space...

PAUL

... and force your nose to dissolve under analysis.

ANNE
What?

PAUL
Force your nose to dissolve under analysis... Your nose is in permanent contact with the air. If you look at your nose carefully there is a moment in which you cannot distinguish it from the air, and you couldn't tell where the particles of your nose end and the air particles start because we are all one single unit.

ANNE
Is that why you are constantly touching your nose? Are you checking if it's still there?

(Laughs.)

PAUL
I didn't even realize I was touching my nose. Weird! I think I touch it to comfort my self.

ANNE
Are you getting off with your nose?

PAUL
Yeah, that's it.

ANNE
You're funny. Most of the taxi drivers are creepy, but you're funny.

PAUL
Do you have bad experiences with taxis?

ANNE
Let me think... Once, in New York City, a taxi driver was singing to me the entire ride.

PAUL
Was he that bad?

ANNE
No, it was fantastic. I mean if a taxi driver sings to you the whole way, you don't care how he sings you just enjoy it. I do know a creepy story. It didn't happen to me, but to a friend of mine. It was years ago, over Christmas. I couldn't pick her up from the airport and she took a taxi home. When they were on the freeway, the taxi driver starts telling her that in his home country he was a doctor. And he goes on and on about it and then he tells her: 'I could make you a pap smear right now if you want. We could do it there, in the back sit. I have the speculum and the spatula in the trunk. Do you want me to give you a pap smear?'

PAUL
Wait. What is exactly a papsmear?

ANNE

It's a test for women. The speculum is this metallic tube that you insert in the vagina to keep the walls apart and then you introduce the spatula to take a sample of your cells. You scrape a little.

PAUL

That's really creepy. In the backseat he said? That's awful.

ANNE

When you are in someone's car, it almost feels like you're held hostage.

PAUL

Did something happen?

ANNE

No, but it was scary.

PAUL

Is that how you decided to become an Ob/Gyn? For the back sit pap smears?

(They laugh.)

ANNE

Can I smoke?

2b. FEAR

International arrivals at LAX Airport. Same day earlier, five hours earlier.

(PAUL is listening to some music while he waits his turn to pick up the passengers.)

(DAMON sneaks in the back sit.)

DAMON

I'm behind you. Don't scream, don't do anything strange. Look at your left side. Do you see that blade? I will open you in half before you blink. So just get out of the line and let's leave the airport quietly. No one has to get hurt.

(PAUL obeys.)

DAMON

Good choice. Take the first right onto Sepulveda Avenue. You want to take the I-405 North. Don't look at me, use the other mirror and concentrate on the road and let me see your hands on the wheel.

(They get into the freeway.)

DAMON

Is that your cell phone?

PAUL

Yes.

(DAMON takes the cell phone.)

DAMON

I'll keep it for now, you can have it back later. You should also turn the meter on. I want to pay you at the end of the fare. I'm not a criminal.

PAUL

Are you a terrorist?

DAMON

No, man, I'm not a terrorist, don't worry. You would probably have known by now if I were.
(Pause) Sorry, I scared you, I just need to get to some place, and I need to be sure you get me there, ok? Do you understand? (PAUL doesn't answer) Are we understanding each other?

PAUL

Absolutely.

Pause.

PAUL

Where are we going?

DAMON

Just keep on driving. I'll tell you when we get off.

Pause.

DAMON

What do people say here about the war?

PAUL

The war? Which war?

DAMON

What do you mean which war? This country has been in war for 12 years.

PAUL

Yes, of course, sorry I don't know what I was thinking. I'm a little nervous. People don't talk much about the war in LA. Maybe the entertainment business has something to do with it and people are not really aware of what's going on. I thought it was about to end. Isn't it? I mean after Osama Bin Laden. Weren't we supposed to leave? I'm probably not a good person to ask, I'm just a little bit in my head and sometimes I lose track of what's happening in the world.

DAMON

It's ok.

PAUL

What I mean is that with all that's happening here. It's hard to focus. I moved here six months ago, and I'm still finding my way around the city. I mean I know my way around the city, but metaphorically speaking. I had to get my taxi license, learn the best routes all this things...

DAMON

You answered just fine.

PAUL

I guess there have been a big polemic about the drones and the selective killing. I don't know, I'm not sure of where I stand I don't really know...

DAMON

I say it's enough.

PAUL

I'm sorry I don't know what I'm saying, I'm just mumbling...

DAMON

Will you shut up!

(Pause.)

(DAMON finds PAUL's books and reads their covers.)

DAMON

"The complete works of Emily Dickinson", "Wisdom and compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet", "French aphorisms"... Are these yours?

PAUL

Yes.

DAMON

What were you reading at the airport?

PAUL

This book by Vladimir Nabokov. His autobiography, "Speak Memory"

DAMON

Nabokov... the "Lolita" guy, isn't it?

PAUL

Yes.

DAMON

Do you like him?

PAUL

Yeah, he's a genius.

DAMON

Can I have a look?

PAUL

Sure.

DAMON picks the book and reads:

DAMON

"How small the cosmos (a kangaroo's pouch would hold it), how paltry and puny in comparison to human consciousness, to a single individual recollection." A genius... This is all marked. How many times have you read it?

PAUL

A few. I used it in my dissertation and I used to teach a class on autobiography.

DAMON

Are you a teacher?

PAUL

Professor... I am, I was I guess, I used to teach at Vassar College. In New York.

DAMON

No shit.

PAUL

Yes.

DAMON

And what happened? How did you end up behind the wheel?

PAUL

I took a sabbatical to prepare my book but I couldn't finished it. I moved here, I run out of money and I started driving a cab. It makes me feel good.

DAMON

More than teaching?

PAUL

Yes, this is more real.

Pause.

DAMON

Do you mind turning the radio up? I'd like to listen to the music, if that's ok.

PAUL

Sure.

(They listen in silence.)

2a. ANNE

On the road. Some place between Silver Lake and Coldwater Canyon.

ANNE

It's only vapor.

PAUL

Yes, of course you can smoke that. It's not that bad.

ANNE

I've been trying to quit for such a long time.

PAUL

It's a tough habit.

ANNE

It's not a habit. It's an addiction.

PAUL

We are all gonna die of something.

ANNE

Yes, but cancer is a slow death.

PAUL

Do you prefer it fast?

ANNE

Much faster, please.

Pause.

PAUL

Do you ever think, and right now I am realizing that it might be awkward to say this while I'm driving you around, but there it goes anyway. Do you ever think that there is nothing that separates us from the cars coming the other way? I mean, nothing stops us from crossing this yellow line, and we still don't do it. We follow the rules.

ANNE

Maybe you don't want to kill someone else.

PAUL

Oh, I didn't even think in the other car. I feel like a sociopath.

ANNE

You are touching your nose again.

(Laughs.)

ANNE

A sociopath with nose issues. *(Pause)* I am glad you picked me up.

PAUL

I still can show you my spatula. Don't you feel scared?

ANNE

I don't.

PAUL

I don't believe you.

ANNE

It's not that easy to be scared. Normally we're just anxious, don't you think?

PAUL

What's the difference?

ANNE

Anxiety is the anticipation of fear, but not fear itself. When you are scared, scared for your life, you get hooked. Even if you haven't ever experience real fear, every human being looks for it. We want to have a rush. That's why people eat chili or ride rollercoasters. It's in our system, like rage or happiness. We are born with inherent fears that evolution has codified into our brains, like the fear of fire or the fear of falling off the cliff. Of course, you can live your life without any dangers. We try to prevent situations of fear, and we almost prevent people from feeling alive. Buy a car, a house, go to work, go back home, and avoid any encounter with real emotions. *(Pause)*. Have you ever feared for your life?

PAUL

Have you?

ANNE

I was with Doctors Without Borders in Afghanistan. In the middle of war there are no rules or anxiety. It's just us with our fears. Didn't you miss the turn?

PAUL

Oh, shit, I did, I'm sorry I was just fascinated with our conversation and... I' m...

ANNE

Hunter gathering.

PAUL
I guess.

ANNE
It's ok, I'm not in a huge hurry, but I need to get there tonight.

PAUL
Yes, of course. It won't happen again. How was it?

ANNE
What?

PAUL
Afghanistan.

ANNE
How was it? It's a very different country than this one. Most of the world is. You're smart and educated and of course you know this, but I didn't know the extent of the unfairness of the world till I spent some time on the other side. It gets to you and it's so infuriating. For many women in the world a pregnancy is a death sentence. That's even worse in a war zone, and especially in a country like Afghanistan. I couldn't treat a single patient without the consent of the husband. Everybody talks about the hijab, the veil, the burka... well that's bullshit, cosmetics. Who gives a shit! They can wear whatever they want and let me tell you, it's not only the Taliban. It's the whole region. (Pause) We had a mobile unit. We only went to really safe areas. The most developed towns, the richest, and still every time you saw a patient there were two questions to be asked: how many children do you have and how many of them are still alive. I went to assist a birth. The woman, Huma, suffered a uterine rupture in labor. A uterine rupture is when the uterus explodes. Her baby was just too big for her. The husband asked us to bring her to the hospital. You could see that he cared. When we got there, the baby had already died. That woman had a dead baby in her abdomen outside of her womb. I took the baby out and I clearly saw that I couldn't reconstruct that uterus. I needed to take the uterus out and sew her to stop the bleeding, but I couldn't make that decision by myself. I had to ask her husband, and he said no. 'We have only two children alive and I need her to give me more'. So I went back to that bleeding woman, to that stupidity and she died in my hands. I could have saved her. She carried five pregnancies, and she had only two children alive.

(Long silence.)

ANNE
I lived in the hospital with most of the other MSF doctors, midwives, volunteers, and the local workers of the organization. The hospital was supposed to be the safest place of all of Khots, my town. However, just hours after Huma and her child died there was an explosion. When I lost Huma I was sad, when I looked at her husband I was enraged, but I wasn't scared until that moment. It was only one bomb, but we couldn't know. There was lots of confusion, we weren't sure of the dimension of the attacks, and we were bringing people to the basement. The morgue was in the basement too. I went ahead and started making space for the alive among the dead. I tried to order the corpses in a way that we could have our living patients in that room, if need be. I was moving some pallets when I hear it, crystal clear. It was a baby crying, I turned around and I saw Huma's

three dead babies. They walked towards me. They walked through me and they jumped on their mother's corpse and disappeared. I was petrified when I heard them laughing. They were waiting for her and when she died they left the sorrow and joined her in another universe, a happier one. This reality is cursed.

(They've arrived at the park while she was talking.)

2b. FEAR

(PAUL's phone rings through the car.)

DAMON

Do you have another phone?

PAUL

No, it's the car. It's connected to the office.

DAMON

What happens if you don't pick up?

PAUL

They'll call again. I'm on duty until midnight.

DAMON

Take it.

PAUL

What should I say?

DAMON

What would you say if I wasn't here?

PAUL

I would pick up and talk to Cory about what's going on and I would probably take the fare, if she offers something I can do.

DAMON

Good. Do you feel something in your neck?

PAUL

Yes.

DAMON

Pick up and don't make me angry.

PAUL

Hello?

CORY (Voice over)

Hi Paul, can you pick up a lady tonight in Silver Lake to take her to the west?

PAUL

At what time?

CORY (Voice over)

At ten.

PAUL

Yes, sure.

CORY (Voice over)

Ok, I'll send you the info in a text.

PAUL

Perfect.

CORY (Voice over)

Everything all right?

PAUL

Yeah, I'm with a client.

CORY (Voice over)

Ok, come over to see me soon.

PAUL

I will.

CORY (Voice over)

Ok. Ciao ciao.

PAUL

Ciao.

DAMON

Good. (Pause) Exit to the right and stay in in this street until I tell you.

(Pause.)

DAMON

How do I look?

PAUL

I don't know.

DAMON

Where did you pick me up?

PAUL
I don't' know.

DAMON
Where did you take me?

PAUL
I don't know.

DAMON
What do you know?

PAUL
Nothing.

(When they stop in a red light. DAMON sneaks out of the taxi.)

PAUL
Which way should I take? (Pause) Sir?

(Finally PAUL pulls out realizing that DAMON disappeared.)

(BLACKOUT.)

2a. ANNE

(PAUL turns off the engine.)

ANNE

I never got your name.

PAUL

I'm Paul, you?

ANNE

Anne.

PAUL

Nice to meet you, Anne.

ANNE

How much do I owe you?

PAUL

Don't worry about that.

ANNE

Oh, c'mon you are breaking the rules.

PAUL

No please.

ANNE

I insist.

PAUL

My meter is broken, anyway.

ANNE

Here, take this.

PAUL

No.

(She gets out of the car.)

ANNE

It was very nice to meet you.

PAUL

Don't you want me to wait? It seems kind of lonely here.

ANNE

I'll be fine. Don't worry. My friend is around.

PAUL

That thing about it being weird to see each other again... I wasn't serious...

ANNE

I know.

PAUL

I would love to see you again.

ANNE

Well, who knows?

PAUL

Are you sure you're fine here?

ANNE

Yes, don't worry I know how to take care of myself. (*Leaving*) Bye, Paul, and stop touching your nose! I promise you, it's still there.

PAUL

Bye...