

- How does the writer use stagecraft to create atmosphere in this extract?

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*Sounds of the sea. After midnight. The Escobar's beach house. A terrace and an ample living/dining room where dinner is laid out on a table with two chairs. On a sideboard is a cassette recorder and a lamp. Window walls between the terrace and the front room, with curtains blowing in the wind. A door from the terrace leading to a bedroom. PAULINA Salas is seated in a chair on the terrace, as if she were drinking in the light of the moon. The sound of a faraway car can be heard. She hurriedly stands up, goes to the other room, and looks out the window. The car brakes, its motor still running, the lights blasting her. She goes to the sideboard, takes out a gun, stops when the motor is turned off, and she hears GERARDO's voice.*

GERARDO     *(voice off)* You sure you don't want to come in? Just one for the road *(Muffled reply)*... Right then, we'll get together before I leave. I've gotta be back by... Monday. How about Sunday? *(Muffled reply)*... My wife makes a margarita that will make your hair stand on end... I really want you to know how much I appreciate... *(Muffled reply.)* See you on Sunday then. *(He laughs.)*

*PAULINA hides the gun away. She stands behind the curtains. The car drives off, the lights sweeping the room again. GERARDO enters.*

GERARDO     Paulie? Paulina?

*He sees Paulina hidden behind the curtains. He switches on a light. She slowly comes out from behind the curtains.*

*Is that...? What're you doing there like that? Sorry that I took this long to... I...*

PAULINA     *(trying not to seem agitated)* And who was that?

GERARDO     It's just that I...

PAULINA     Who was it?

GERARDO     Had an – no, don't worry, it wasn't anything serious. It's just that the car – luckily a man stopped – just a flat tire, Paulina. I can't see a thing without...

*He puts another lamp and sees the table set.*

*Poor little love. It must've got cold, right, the –*

PAULINA     *(Very calm, till the end of the scene).* We can heat it up. As long as we've got something to celebrate, that is.

*Brief pause.*

You do have something to celebrate, Gerardo, don't you?

GERARDO     That depends on you.

*Pause. He takes an enormous nail out of his jacket pocket.*

You know what this is? This is the son of a bitch that gave me a flat. And do you know what any normal man does when he gets a flat? He goes to the trunk and gets out the spare. If the spare isn't flat too, that is. If his wife happened to remember to fix the spare, right?

PAULINA     His wife. Always got to be the wife who has to fix everything. You were supposed to fix the spare.

*From Death and the Maiden by Ariel Dorfman (1991)*

*Gerado, a lawyer, has been appointed to a presidential Commission to investigate human rights' abuses under the previous dictatorship. Meanwhile, Paulina has taken matters into her own hands and kidnapped a man who she suspects of imprisoning and torturing her fifteen years ago. She intends to put him on trial herself. Read the following passage and answer the guiding question:*

- *How does the dialogue between Paulina and Gerardo reveal the complex conflict between them?*
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PAULINA      And that night, Gerardo, when I came to you, when I told you, when I started to tell you, what did you swear you'd do to them when you found them? 'Some day, my love, we're going to put these bastards on trial. Your eyes will be able to rove' – I remember the exact phrase, because it seemed, poetic – 'your eyes will be able to rove over each one of their faces while they listen to your story. We'll do it, you'll see that we will.' So now, darling, tell me who do I go to now?

GERARDO      That was fifteen years ago.

PAULINA      Tell me who's supposed to listen to my accusations against this doctor, who, Gerardo? Your Commission?

GERARDO      My Commission? What Commission? Thanks to you, we may not even be able to investigate all the other crimes that – And I'm going to have to resign.

PAULINA      Always so melodramatic. Your brow gets all furrowed up with wrinkles that make you look ten years older. And then people will see your photograph in the newspaper and won't believe that you're the youngest member of the Commission.

GERARDO      Are you deaf? I just told you I'm going to have to resign.

PAULINA      I don't see why.

GERARDO      You don't see why, but all the rest of the country will see why, especially those who don't want any kind of investigation of the past will see why. A member of the president's Commission, who should be showing exemplary signs of moderation and equanimity –

PAULINA      We're going to suffocate from so much equanimity!

GERARDO      – and objectivity, that this very person has allowed an innocent human being to be bound and tormented in his house – do you know how the newspapers that served

the dictatorship, do you know how they'll use this episode to undermine and perhaps even destroy the Commission?

*Brief Pause*

Do you want those people back in power? You want to scare them so they come back to make sure we don't harm them? You want the times back when these people decided our life and our death? Because if that's what you want, that's what you're going to get. Free the man, Paulina. Apologise for the mistake and free him. I've spoken to him, politically he seems to be a man we can trust or so it –

PAULINA Oh, my little man, you do fall for every trick in the book, don't you? Gerardo, you have my promise, as solemn as it can be, that this private trial will not affect you or the Commission. Do you really think I'd do anything to trouble the Commission, stop you from finding out where the bodies of the missing prisoners are, how many people were executed, where they're buried, But the members of the Commission only deal with the dead, with those who can't speak. And I can speak – it's been years since I murmured even a word, I haven't opened my mouth to even whisper a breath of what I'm thinking, years living in terror of my own... but I'm not dead, I thought I was but I'm not and I can speak, damn it – so for God's sake let me have my say and you go ahead with your Commission and believe me when I tell you that none of this is going to be made public.

GERARDO Even in that case – I have to resign no matter what, and the sooner, the better.

PAULINA You'd have to resign even if no one knew about this?

GERARDO Yes.

PAULINA Because of your mad wife, who was mad because she stayed silent and is now mad because she can speak?

GERARDO Among other reasons, yes, that's so, if the truth still matters to you.

PAULINA The real real truth, huh?

*From Death and the Maiden by Ariel Dorfman (1991)*