I'll give you a stupid example.



Imagine if you were capable of an intelligent one.

A GILLETTE EXAMPLE

On distance, disguise, and the woman who audits.

FOR EXAMPLE,

Communication has always relied on a particular formula.

For example.

Two innocent words.

Two words that appear harmless and courteous yet possess one extraordinary advantage: they allow a person to enter someone else's territory without asking permission.

When someone says for example, the objective is rarely the example itself.

The objective is distance.

Because people do not enjoy seeing themselves exposed to a problem. They don't enjoy hearing their own name attached to a weakness, a mistake, or a contradiction.

But they are perfectly willing to observe those same things when they belong to someone else.

And so, communication invented a remarkable shortcut.

Do not say:

"You are doing this."

Say:

"For example, imagine a man who…"

And immediately the defenses fall.

The listener follows the story.

Examines the character.

Judges the situation.

Perhaps even laughs.

Only later does the realization arrive.

The character was never someone else.

The character was the listener.

The example was simply a disguise worn by reality.

The finest communicators have always known this.

Ideas rarely enter through the front door.

They prefer side entrances.

FOR EXAMPLE,

Human relationships have always depended on examples. Especially between men and women.

Men have been using them for centuries.

For example, imagine we lived by the sea.

For example, imagine we met five years earlier.

For example, imagine we moved to New York.

For example, imagine we belonged to each other.

None of these statements describe reality.

They describe architecture.

Temporary structures built with words.

Rooms where possibility is allowed to enter before evidence arrives.

Men love those rooms.

Because imagination costs less than construction.

Inside imagination, every project works.

Every journey succeeds.

Every woman understands.

Every outcome is favorable.

Then, sooner or later, reality arrives.

And reality often arrives in the shape of a woman.

An intelligent woman listens.

A very intelligent woman evaluates.

A superior woman audits.

And the difference is considerable.

An ordinary conversation may survive evaluation.

A project may survive criticism.

An illusion never survives an audit.

That is usually the precise moment when an intelligent man discovers whether he was building a future or merely decorating a fantasy.

The answer arrives quickly.

Women almost always charge by the second.

Never by the hour.

FOR EXAMPLE,

Imagine a man who spent years constructing explanations. Strategies.

Scenarios.

Models.

Architecture.

Entire systems are designed to make reality appear reasonable.

Then one day he encounters a woman whose intelligence exceeds the dimensions of the system he built.

Not dramatically.

Not aggressively.

Only naturally.

She listens.

Observes.

Waits.

Then asks one question.

A simple question.

The sort of question that causes ten years of intellectual construction to collapse in ten seconds.

At that point something unusual happens.

The man stops building.

The plans suddenly lose their appeal.

The blueprints become unnecessary.

The calculations become decorative.

The architecture disappears.

The project goes directly into the wastebasket.

Not because he was defeated.

Not because he was humiliated.

Because he finally understood something.

The example had never been hypothetical.

The example was him.

The exercise was him.

The case study was him.

And the woman standing before him had not entered his imagination.

He had entered hers.

Ferdinando