

THE INTERVIEW AT REVLON

Gillette Trailer 31 — Nando the Scribe

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I had read that Ronald Perelman had tried more than once to force a takeover of Gillette, but Uncle Warren had always blocked him, and Perelman, angrier than ever, made noise about it but kept doing what he always did — busting everyone else's chops.

I got a call from Revlon Italia's general management — their sales director wanted to meet me in Catania. I told my father, and he said: “Absolutely, you have to go. It's a chance to find out whether the market is validating you, and what they're proposing and offering — but don't make the mistake of deciding out of emotion. Take it home, think it over, and only then give an answer.”

I arrived right on time that Friday morning, 10:30, Hotel Jolly, Catania. And walking into the lobby — who do I run into? My Gillette Area Manager, who, seeing me, looks stunned and says: “What the hell are you doing here — shouldn't you be out on your territory?”

“I took a day off. You'll see it in the monthly report I sent you four weeks ago, this exact day marked.”

“So what are you doing here, then?”

“Well, I'm just here to meet someone. He wants to get to know me — I'm hoping it's a woman, at least, to keep the joke going” — and, without meaning to, my instinct turned out to be right, because at the meeting I found a man, but a very feminine one, overly so.

The interview lasted seven minutes. The moment he stood up to come sit beside me, I sensed the intentions weren't commercial — but I had never given an enemy space, professional or personal.

I went home and took my father out for gelato, on the finest kilometer in Italy — at least that's what they say about our seafront in Reggio Calabria. He asked how it had gone, and I said the offer wasn't worth any attention, and that after thanking them, I had declined and left.

I never told the details or the particulars — that's something my mother taught me, Gillette. And she was never wrong.

Ferdinando

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