



The Conversation

THE CONVERSATION

A Radio Drama

BY ROSE SCOLLARD

The Conversation was commissioned by CBC in the 1990s to launch a radio drama competition. It was broadcast live from CBC's Homestretch and was directed by Martin Fishman.

Characters:

Wendell an Ex-Prison Guard

Rupert an Ex-Convict

SCENE ONE

SOUND: A FOGHORN WAILS, AN INEXPRESSIBLY LONELY AND DESOLATE SOUND. RUNNING FOOTSTEPS AND PANTING.

WENDELL: What do you think you're doing? Get down off that railing!

SOUND: SCUFLING AND GRUNTING

RUPERT: No! Stop it! Leave me alone! My mind is made up!

SOUND: MORE SCUFLING AND GRUNTING

WENDELL: Uh-uh. No sirree *Bob*. Not if I have anything to say about it.

Report: It's my life! I can do what I want with it.

WENDELL: So, do what you want with it. Just don't do it here.

RUPERT: Huh?

WENDELL: This is my spot. Go find your own bridge.

RUPERT: I was here first. Besides, what difference does it make?

WENDELL: What difference does it make! You can't have two people offing themselves in the same place at the same moment!

RUPERT: It happens. Look at Romeo and Juliet.

WENDELL: That's what you want them to think? Romeo and Juliet?

RUPERT: (SIGHS) Just my luck. I finally get up the moxie to jump and someone else is using the bridge.

WENDELL: How come you're ending it all, anyway?

RUPERT: Because there is no point in going on, eh? The creative life is closed to guys like me.

WENDELL: You're an artist?

RUPERT: An artist without an audience. Galleries just won't touch my work.

WENDELL: Why not?

RUPERT: I'm an ex-con.

WENDELL: That's no reason.

RUPERT: What do you know?

WENDELL: Plenty. I worked in a Federal prison for 20 years.

RUPERT: You worked in a prison? Hey, you are not... Turn around here... Let me look at you... You are! Wendy! It's *Wendy*. How are ya, guy?

WENDELL: Wendell. The name's Wendell... Hey! How did you know who I am?

RUPERT: So, what happened, Wendy? You can't be retired already.

WENDELL: They fired me. I was on duty one night and a couple of prisoners escaped. Well, these guys they were real clever. They put a couple of dummies in their beds, and I failed to notice them.

RUPERT: They really fired you for that. That wasn't fair, eh?

WENDELL: You got it. I had no training in detecting dummies, right?

RUPERT: Did you tell them that?

WENDELL: Well yeah! I said, "Show me. Show me where dummy detection is on the curriculum!"

RUPERT: That's the way, though. They always stiff it to the little guy.

WENDELL: *Right.*

RUPERT: So, what have you been doing with yourself. Since you got canned.

WENDELL: I've been looking for that guy.

RUPERT: What guy?

WENDELL: The guy that made those dummies of course. Rupert Riley. I have a few plans in mind for him, let me tell you. Hey! Where're ya goin'?

RUPERT: Going to find another bridge, eh. Let go of me!

SOUND SCUFFLING AND STRUGGLING

WENDELL: Wait a minute! Get under this light! Let me ... Well, well, well! Rupert Riley! The dummy master! Do you know how long I've been looking for you?

RUPERT: Go ahead. Finish me off.

WENDELL: You don't understand.

RUPERT: I was going to do it myself, anyway. You're just saving me the trouble. Just don't... Well... My pain threshold is kinda low?

WENDELL: Oh, for Pete's sake!

RUPERT: I'm no good. I admit it.

WENDELL: Look, I... you wanna come back to my place?

RUPERT: Your place?

WENDELL: Yeah, I got something to show you.

RUPERT: Really? Well... Okay.

SOUND FOOTSTEPS AS THEY WALK AWAY, FOGHORN
FADING OUT

SCENE TWO

SOUND RUSTLING PAPERS, CUPS CHINKING

WENDELL: More coffee?

RUPERT: Unbelievable! This is unbelievable, Wendy! You got it all worked out, don't you!

WENDELL: Well, I had time to think about it. About you. What's it been, five years? At first, I just wanted to remove your face. Then I got to thinking. "The guy's got talent," I said to myself. "He's sitting on a gold mine and he probably doesn't even know it."

RUPERT: I wouldn't have thought of it in a million years. I like the name, eh? "Security Dummies."

WENDELL: We can't lose, Rupe. Women who drive alone at night? They'd kill to have a dummy in the car. And what about Home Security – people using our dummies to make it look like someone is home?

RUPERT: We could break into people's houses, Wendy, and leave a flier. You know to show the need.

WENDELL: Well, I don't know about that, Rupe. Breaking in...

RUPERT: Yeah. I guess not. What a dumb idea!

WENDELL: But the flyers are *good*.

RUPERT: You think so?

WENDELL: Yeah. I do. Anyways, selling is my job. You are the artist. All you have to worry about is making them.

RUPERT: No problem! "Security Dummies"! What a swell idea!

WENDELL: They'll go like hotcakes. Single women, homeowners, politicians.

RUPERT: Politicians?

WENDELL: Yeah! They could just pop them in their seats in the government.

RUPERT:

Great idea!

WENDELL:

No one would ever know the difference, right? Possibly even...

SOUND

THEY CHATTER ON, MAKING PLANS, THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE FORGOTTEN. SOMEWHERE A FOGHORN WAILS. BUT NOTHING CAN BREAK THE SHEER ENERGY AND NEW-OWNER OPTIMISM OF THESE GUYS