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Cardenio

by STEVEN GREENBLATT
and CHARLES L. MEE

inspired by a lost play of Shakespeare's

When the lights come up,
we are on the stone terrace in front of a stone farmhouse
in Umbria.
Olive trees
flowers
vines.
Comfortable outdoor chairs scattered on the terrace.

Sound of festive celebration
coming from behind double doors.
Music, laughter.
Will and Anselmo enter,
glasses of champagne in their hands.
They wear tuxedos,
ties loosened, collars opened.

WILL
What a perfect wedding, Anselmo!
Absolutely perfect!
You know
you're the luckiest person I know
to have married the woman you have married
beautiful

sweet
so sweet
and smart
and full of life

[silence]

ANSELMO
Right.

WILL [laughs]
You don't think so?

ANSELMO
Sometimes
you know
I try to block the logical voice that talks
so relentlessly inside my head
but then I think
when it comes to something this important
I ought to pay attention.

WILL
To...?

ANSELMO
To the thought that nags
and nags and nags at me.

WILL
What's that?

ANSELMO
I think she's not going to be faithful to me.

[silence;
then Will laughs]

WILL

But that's insane.

ANSELMO

Yes.

WILL

I mean, that's completely insane, Anselmo.

She loves you.

I've never known anyone to love anyone
as much as she loves you.

No one is as lucky as you are.

ANSELMO

Will,

if you really were my best friend...

WILL

I am...

ANSELMO

you would help me.

WILL

I will.

ANSELMO

No matter what.

WILL

No matter what.

ANSELMO

Then do this for me

see if you can seduce my wife

so that I will know if I can trust her.

[silence]

WILL [laughing]

Anselmo, please, really.

ANSELMO

You said you were my friend.

WILL

I am your friend.

ANSELMO

And so?

WILL

And so

as your friend,

I am telling you to drop this

so that you don't mess up

what seems to me

the best love in the entire world.

ANSELMO

That's what I think, too,

Or what I desperately want to think.

But day and night I hear

A simple little syllogism

Echoing and reechoing in my head:

Camila is a woman with a remarkably open heart;

Open hearts are vulnerable to seduction;

Therefore Camila will be seduced.

WILL

Stop it!

ANSELMO

I can't stop it.

Not without the reassurance
that you alone can safely give me.

Camila is all the things I am not:

She is intuitive,
and trusting,
and eager to embrace any new experience.

WILL

not any

ANSELMO

Look, Will
she's a YOUNG person.

WILL

Right. Well.

And so are you.

ANSELMO

I think you know what I mean,
and I think she might well feel
getting married just now
before she's had a chance to do all those other things
she might have wanted to do
I mean not that she can't still do the things she wants to do
except, she could come to feel, possibly....

WILL

You mean love affairs?

ANSELMO

Well, maybe—
that is to say, I wouldn't want to be completely reductionist about it

WILL

but you mean love affairs.

ANSELMO

And other just life experiences

WILL

You might be just ever so slightly overly anxious, Anselmo.

This is your wedding party,
maybe you're just a little panicky.

What I think is
you need to trust what you know,
and just know that she loves you
and then, really,
ease up.

ANSELMO

I'll ease up when you've done this for me, Will.
that's when I will
ease up.

WILL

Anselmo: really.

[Camila enters.]

CAMILA [sweetly]

Anselmo! Sweet heart.
Will you come in for the champagne
or shall we come out?

WILL

Oh, I'm sorry, Camila.
I've kept him here.

[Edmund comes out, bottle and two glasses in hand.]

EDMUND

Is it nicer out here for the champagne?

ANSELMO

No, we're just coming in.

[and, as the others come back out:]

CAMILA

Oh, yes, Anselmo, please!

Champagne outdoors!

ANSELMO [happily, indulgently]

Of course. If you'd like that.

CAMILA [calling out]

Come out, everyone! Come out!

We are having champagne on the terrace
underneath the sky!

EDMUND

Here. Anselmo. Let me pour a glass for you.

Is that a glass for Will?

And I will have the first toast.

CAMILA

I think the first toast goes to Will as best man.

EDMUND

Fair enough. Fair enough.

I will have the second toast

as the what?

as the husband of the maid of honor.

SALLY

Matron of honor.

EDMUND

Oh, my goodness, Sally.

I don't think of you as a matron.

Are you a matron already?

I'm married to a matron!

DORIS

My God, how charming is this?

Champagne on the terrace overlooking the olive trees

and the vineyards of Umbria

the little stone fortress on the hilltop in the distance

and then in a little while

we'll have a wedding feast

under the Umbrian sun

with the olio extra virgine

and the free range chickens

A person could just scream

scream for joy.

I mean: you two.

[now, we all see, she is going on too long]

your true wedding from the heart

just the way you wanted it

joined together forever in matrimony by your dear friend Will

saying what you wanted to say

none of that stupid stuff priests and justices of the peace say

but just saying all your own sort of stupid stuff

about letting one another's trees be free to grow

and about how neither of you will ever again feel the rain

along the winding road....

SALLY

Doris....

[Camila leaves.]

DORIS

Did I say something wrong?

[silence]

WILL

I'll get her.

[Will leaves.]

ANSELMO

Doris

wherever did you get the idea
that you're an amusing person at a party?

[Anselmo leaves.]

DORIS

Did I get it wrong about the trees growing?
Did they not say that?
And I didn't even get around to mentioning how special it is that
Anselmo was so,
let's face it, frankly
obsessed with being married here
in his mother's farm house

DORIS

Why his mother's farm house?
I mean it's lovely and SO historic
I mean
Who cares if it's small and if the toilet leaks and the fuses keep blowing?
But
how is it then that his mother wasn't even invited to come?

I mean,
what is that
to have his mother's house
and not to have his mother
to have a mother
and not to have her.
To have everything both ways.
To have and have not.

[Camila returns.]

CAMILA

I think you should leave, Doris.

DORIS

Oh, Camila, dear....

CAMILA

No.

A sister is supposed to be even better than a friend
but you turn out, as always, to be worse than anyone.

DORIS

Oh, Camila,

I'm so sorry,

You know I didn't mean anything by it all.

I'm just a superficial person with a sharp tongue.

WILL

Camila, you know,

no one takes Doris seriously.

DORIS

I'm just a conversationalist.

EDMUND

Everyone always

at times like these

feels a little tension.

[silence]

CAMILA

You're right. You're right.

DORIS

I'm sorry, Camila.

CAMILA

I don't know what got into me.
I might be just on edge because
you know

[she bursts into tears]

this is my life!

EDMUND
Exactly! Exactly!
Come along everyone.
Let's have our toasts now.
There's more champagne inside.
And you, Doris,
just to show how sweet you are at heart,
I am going to let you give the second toast.

[everyone leaves
except Will and Camila]

WILL
You can't let your sister upset you.

CAMILA
No.
I know. Of course.

WILL
It's been a beautiful wedding, Camila.
And your husband loves you.
And your friends are happy for you.

CAMILA
Thank you, Will.
You're my best friend.

WILL
Oh!
Well!
Thanks!

CAMILA
Shall we celebrate with champagne?

WILL
Yes! Yes!

CAMILA
Come with me. Come on!

[She runs into the house.
Anselmo enters from the opposite direction.]

ANSELMO
So?

WILL
Oh, Anselmo, she's crazy about you.

ANSELMO
You tried to...

WILL
I tried.
I tried to flirt
she turned me away every time
she pretended she didn't even notice what I was doing

ANSELMO
Obviously, you didn't really try at all.
What do you think?
That I don't have reason to feel some anxiety?
I tell you it's poisoning my life.
Without some reassurance —
Without proof that I can give Camila

My absolute trust –
I cannot let go.
Even in bed
I imagine someone else
With her, and I cannot breathe.
Now I want you to try again
and this time
to take it seriously!

WILL
This is completely demented!

[Edmund enters.]

EDMUND
Anselmo!
Really!
This wedding is still going on!
You're not officially married
until we've all toasted you!

ANSELMO
Yes. Yes, we're coming.

[to Will]

Don't let me down!

[they go into the house

Edmund,
feeling very proud of himself
does a little dance with his glass held high above his head.]

EDMUND
Here's to the bride
and here's to the groom
Here's to the bride and groom together

Here's to love
and here's to marriage
here's to me

[And, as he dances, he gets more and more into it
until he is doing a mad solo dance.

Not just a fleeting moment:
a full-fledged dance.]

[Simonetta enters.]

SIMONETTA
Oh, I'm sorry.

EDMUND
Oh, excuse me.
I was just
letting out my:
enthusiasm.

SIMONETTA
I see.

EDMUND
And you are?

SIMONETTA
I am Simonetta.

EDMUND
Simonetta.

SIMONETTA
Yes.

EDMUND
Like Simonetta Vespucci.

SIMONETTA

I don't know.

EDMUND

You know the Simonetta Vespucci
who was the lover of Giuliano de Medici
and she is the woman Botticelli painted over and over again
as Venus on the half-shell
naked
naked and lovely rising from the sea

[he's struck by her in spite of himself]

SIMONETTA

I didn't know.

And you are the bride's brother?

EDMUND

No, no, no.

I am the husband of her maid of honor, Sally.

Her matron of honor.

You know who Sally is?

SIMONETTA

I think so.

EDMUND

She is the nice person

with the pink dress.

There is the horrible person

Doris

she's the bride's sister,

and then the nice person

is the bride's best friend

and she's my wife.

SIMONETTA

I see.

EDMUND

And you

I think of you as a person

in these paintings that everyone has seen all over the world

in reproductions

[he didn't intend to say this: it just comes out]

naked and

gorgeous.

SIMONETTA

Well, no, I'm not—

this is not who I am.

I am the housekeeper

with my husband Melchiore.

EDMUND

The cook.

SIMONETTA

Yes.

EDMUND

And yet

for sure

you are gorgeous.

[they stand silently for a moment;

she hasn't rejected his

inappropriate flirtation

all the wedding guests return to the terrace

with bottles of champagne and glasses]

DORIS

Edmund, what happened to you?

Weren't you going to officiate at the toasts?

EDMUND
Sorry! Yes! Yes!

WILL
So we will have them here!
Does everyone have champagne?
Do you have a glass, Sally?
Yes.

EDMUND
So, Will, you are first!

WILL [raising his glass]
To Camila and Anselmo,
my dear friends,
may you have happiness forever.

DORIS
That's it?

EDMUND
That's your entire toast?

WILL
Well, what more could you wish for?

EDMUND
Oh, no. No.
That's pathetic.

DORIS
Let's offer a toast to the institution of marriage itself
which is such a basic institution.
Because women, as we know,
because women have menstrual periods
subject to chronic shortages of iron in their systems
and so they require constant infusions of meat
but because they were not hunters

they were never hunters
they had to find a way to manipulate men
with sexual favors
into bringing home blood-soaked dinners every night
and if the men were good at it
then to marry them
in order to have a steady supply of meat.

EDMUND

Jesus Christ, Doris,
what is that?

Now, it's my turn.

My turn to give a toast.

To Camila and Anselmo,
may you be happy forever
and ever and ever.

May you be as happy as Sally and I have been.

May you be even happier.

Not that we have been unhappy.

We have been so happy.

Even one might say

when you are as happy as Sally and I are,
you don't even worry whether the other person is happy
even if that person might from time to time
think, oh,

what have I done

marrying this hopeless guy

this stupid jerk

when I see all these other men walk by

and I could run off with one of them

and no one would ever know

of course I might come home

and he would confront me and say

have you had an affair?

no. no, I would say.

of course you would say no. I mean a flirtation.

no.

a one night stand.

no.

what then? what do you call it?
i don't call it anything.
i wouldn't know what to call something i haven't had
but you think i have.
don't you see, Sally, if you will tell me,
maybe we can talk it through,
but if you don't even start with the truth of things,
how can we talk about anything?
and i think, after the time we've been together,
at least you owe me that.
how is it you think you can turn the tables on me like this?
when all along it's you who have had an affair
do you think I don't know what kind of guy you are
flirting flirting all the time
with any woman who comes along
and you are the one who is always denying it denying it
probably you think you need to protect
the person you've been having an affair with,
maybe she is married, too,
and so you feel you can't betray her,
or is she your co-worker?
is that it?
and what? you think I will somehow make an issue of it
so that it will become a scandal for you
and of course then it bcomes a matter for the whole office
to somehow deal with
and you think I would do that to you?
but you make me feel crazy denying it and denying it
so that, what?
your sense of loyalty to me is to make me so uncertain
of the ground I stand on
that I can't believe anything
or know how to begin to feel sane again.
what can I tell you that would be true?
the truth. that's what you say!
that's what i mean,
do you see how even now you don't say no, no, no
i haven't had an affair of any kind,
nothing, not a flirtation, not a one night stand,

not anything of any kind at all,
you say nothing to reassure me,
you just stand there silently.
because, Sally, no matter what i say,
you won't believe me.
flirt? no one flirts with me.
no one
the truth is I feel like an isolated person
alone, always alone
the truth is I would rather live in a homeless person's shelter,
there would be more warmth and companionship
than there is living with you
I would rather live in the streets
with a shopping cart full of my possessions
that would feel like a happier life to me!

[silence
then the pop of a champagne cork]

WILL
I'm going to open more champagne.

EDMUND
We'll have a champagne cork popping contest!
Who can pop the cork the farthest?

SALLY
Edmund....

EDMUND
Or how many corks can you pop at the same time?

SALLY
Edmund, please....

EDMUND
Or I will sing a song.

MELCHIORE

Simonetta has a song.

[Melchiore plays.

Simonetta sings Donizetti's *Il Barcaiolo*.

(Simonetta, like Melchiore, is an opera singer.)

It may be that Edmund is too interested in her singing.]

Voga, voga, il vento tace,
pura è l'onda, il ciel sereno,
solo un alito di pace
par che allegrie e cielo e mar:
voga, voga, o marinar:
voga, voga, marinar.

Or che tutto a noi sorride,
in si tenero momento,
all'ebrezza del contento
voglio l'alma abbandonar.
Voga, voga, o marinar!, o marinar!

Maybe Melchiore joins her for a duet
for the last two stanzas:

Voga, voga, il vento tace,
pura è l'onda, il ciel sereno,
ed un alito di pace
par che allegrie e cielo e mar.

Chè se infiera la tempesta,
ambedue ne tragge a morte,
sara lieta la mia sorte
al tuo fianco vuo spirar,
si al tuo fianco io vuo spirar.

Voga, voga, o marinar,
sarà lieta la mia sorte
al tuo fianco vuo spirar.
Voga, voga, o marinar.

[And, as they finish singing,
Anselmo's parents, Luisa and Alfred, step through the door
and onto the terrace,
and join the others in the applause and remarks of praise.]

LUISA
Bravo! Brava!

ALFRED
Exquisite!

LUISA
What a perfect welcome!

ALFRED
You couldn't have done better!

ANSELMO
Mother!
Dad!

LUISA
Surprise!

ANSELMO
Well!
Yes!
Yes, it certainly is!

SALLY
We weren't expecting you.

ALFRED

No, of course not.
It wasn't easy for me
I'll tell you
to keep my mouth shut.
But your mother insisted it be a complete surprise!

ANSELMO

Mother, honestly,
I don't understand.
This is our party with our friends.

LUISA

Yes, we know, dear,
but we had a very special present for you
that we wanted to bring to you here
to be a surprise for you....

ANSELMO

Yes, but
that's why we had the courthouse wedding in New York
so that you could be there for that
along with Aunt Madge and Uncle Dee
and Mo Mo
and everyone else
so we could come here just with our friends
to just have our own sort of wedding....

LUISA

Oh, Anselmo, I'm sorry, dear,
we just wanted so to do something special for you.

ANSELMO

Oh....

DORIS

I don't know, Anselmo,
if you wanted to escape your mother
you probably shouldn't have come to your mother's house.

CAMILA

How wonderful to see you, Luisa, Alfred.
This is so nice, Anselmo, that your parents are here!

LUISA

And we did bring something for you
that we think you will absolutely love!

ALFRED

Your mother's idea entirely!
I take no credit
or blame, either!

LUISA

You know, Anselmo,
how your father and I have always tried
not just to take any job that came along
this movie, that movie, this play, that play
but always to wait and to look
for something very special.
And at last
we have found the most special thing of all:
a lost play
by Shakespeare!

EDMUND

Really?

LUISA

Yes!

DORIS

I didn't know Shakespeare had lost any of his plays.

ALFRED

Well, not quite lost.

More mislaid.

Performed, it seems, in his lifetime,
but never printed....

LUISA

And so it disappeared....

ALFRED

And then surfaced again in the 18th century....

LUISA

When it was discovered by a scholar...

ALFRED

Well, a sort of scholar....

LUISA

A sort of a charlatan some people thought....

ALFRED

Not a trustworthy person really

LUISA

This is part of the controversy

ALFRED

Whether it really is a play by Shakespeare
or he just wrote the first bit of it
the core of it as it were
and then someone else wrote another bit

LUISA

and then even the charlatan rewrote it
and the old manuscript he said he had found
disappeared
when the old Covent Garden went up in flames in 1804

so no one can verify how much Shakespeare is in it!
But at least the charlatan's version survived.

ALFRED

And your mother and I are going to perform it
in a little theatre in Maine.

DORIS

In Maine.

ALFRED

In Portland.

LUISA

But, before we do,
we wanted to have its premiere here
just for you!

ANSELMO

Oh, mother!

LUISA

No, no, that's alright!
We were so happy to do it.
We've brought the script with us.
And, as an extra surprise,
we've brought an old friend—
an old friend of yours I should say,
you know, Anselmo,
someone who was with you and Will and Sally in college
when you all did plays together
and she, of all of you,
she has gone into the professional theatre
can you guess?
can you?
yes!
Susana!

ANSELMO

Susana?

LUISA

You remember Susana.

She was married to that rich young man from
where was it?

Philadelphia?

and now she's divorced.

ANSELMO

Divorced?

When was she divorced?

LUISA

So, we've brought her with us from New York
to play the lead in the play!

And we thought you, Will, would play the lead opposite Susana.

WILL

Oh, Luisa,

I don't think I want to be acting in a play.

ALFRED

Now, now, Will....

WILL

I mean, it's a lovely invitation

thank you

and very considerate

thank you so much

but let me just enjoy being part of the audience and watching it.

Anselmo can play the part.

ANSELMO

Oh, no, no.

I don't think I'M going to be acting in a play.

LUISA

The truth is, Will,
we thought it might be an opportunity
for you to get to know Susana better.

ALFRED

Not that we want to try to be matchmakers at all!

LUISA

Still, here are two lovely young people,
both single....

ALFRED

Wedding bells in the air and all.

ANSELMO

You know, this isn't....

LUISA

What is it, dear?

ANSELMO

This just isn't...

I mean, what?

Everyone is here to have a party and spend some time together
and now, suddenly,
we should interrupt everything
to put on some old play?

LUISA

Anselmo! A lost play by Shakespeare....

ANSELMO

Well, is it really? I mean do you really know?
And anyway, we thought we would eat and drink,
and maybe people want to take advantage of being here
and have a little day trip to Assisi or Gubbio
or a picnic in the country

I don't know
but I don't think anyone thought they were going to have to be
putting on a play.

CAMILA

Oh, Anselmo, really....
Luisa, this was so thoughtful of you....
Alfred this was such a....

WILL

Such a wonderful gift.

EDMUND

And a lost play by Shakespeare!
How often do we have a chance to see something like that?

CAMILA

It's just very sweet of you
and we all appreciate it very much.

EDMUND

Very much.
To think this is something you are going to be doing yourselves
in the theatre!

ANSELMO

But you know, none of us acts any more.
I mean yes, we did that in college,
but it's just not something any of us
does any more.

EDMUND

I'd be happy to take a role myself.

ALFRED

You see?

CAMILA

And so would I.

SALLY

And where have you left Susana?
Did she come with you?

LUISA

Oh, goodness!

[turning back to the door to the house]

Susana! Susana, dear!
We forgot all about her!

[Susana emerges from the house,
happy and uncertain, and flustered
and ill at ease and hesitant and flushed with happiness.]

SALLY

Susana!

SUSANA

Hello, Sally.

WILL

Hello, Susana.

SUSANA

Hello, Will.

ANSELMO

Hello, Susana.

SUSANA

Hello, Anselmo. Congratulations.
I'm sorry.
I didn't mean to just
invade your wedding
but your mother and father just....

ANSELMO

Oh, no, you're not invading at all.
We're all happy to see you.

CAMILA

Welcome. I'm Camila.

SUSANA

Camila! Hello!
I'm happy to meet you.
I wish you every happiness.

ALFRED

So.
Is this a surprise?

ANSELMO

Yes. Yes, Dad, it is.

LUISA

Now, then, children,
here's the play we will do.
The play is called:
Cardenio.
What happens is
Cardenio, a young gentleman,
is in love with the lovely and virtuous Luscinda.
But then it turns out that his best friend
Don Fernando has Cardenio called away on some business
so that Don Fernando himself
can seduce Luscinda.

DORIS

So, it's a love story.

LUISA

A love story.
Well, a story of betrayal and duplicity and

and sneakiness.
Because then Don Fernando....

ANSELMO
Mother, why don't...
why don't...
why don't we just remain in suspense,
and see how it turns out
when you actually put on the play.

LUISA
Oh, yes, alright. Good. Remain in suspense.
So, we can have a few rehearsals,
and then we can put it on here on the terrace
under the stars.

ANSELMO
All right. Good. Fine.

WILL
Excellent.

EDMUND
Wonderful!

CAMILA
Lovely.

LUISA
Now, here is the cast list:
You will see, as we get into rehearsals,
there will be some other roles to be given out
and some doubling.
Everyone will have a chance
at something they can get their teeth into.
But, for now:
Will is to play the lover, Cardenio.

WILL

Oh, well, okay. Thanks.

LUISA

Edmund will play Don Fernando, the duplicitous friend.

EDMUND

Oh, well, thank you.

I think!

LUISA

Alfred will play Don Fernando's father, the duke.

ALFRED

It's the role I will be doing in Portland.

LUISA

And Susana will play the lovely and virtuous Luscinda, the female lead.

ANSELMO

Oh, I think Camila should play the lead.

LUISA

Camila?....

ALFRED

And yet: that's why we brought Susana.

LUISA

We thought,

since she's a professional actress now

it would be such fun for everyone to see her

play the lead.

And, you know: opposite Will.

ANSELMO

If this is meant to be, in part, a wedding present for me,

then Camila ought to play the lead.
You know, she is the leading lady for me now.

LUISA
Oh, well, that's....

ALFRED
I don't think we can bring Susana all this way
just to throw her back onto the unemployment rolls.

SUSANA
No. That's exactly as it should be!
I'm relieved to tell you the truth.
And now I will have a chance
to take a vacation from rehearsals
and see something of Italy.

ANSELMO
I'll take you for a little drive through the countryside
to make up for it.

SUSANA
You needn't....

ANSELMO
No, of course,
you came all this way
I know you're happy to see old friends
but, absolutely,
I'll take you for a special visit to Assisi.

SUSANA
Thank you, Anselmo.

LUISA
And yet, Anselmo, if Camila is to play the female lead,
then really you ought to play opposite her.

ANSELMO

No, no, mother,
It's not real life, you know.

ALFRED

No, thank goodness no.

LUISA

Good. All right. That's settled then.
So. Good.
Let's get our suitcases in our rooms
and Alfred will be calling you for our first rehearsal

WILL

May I help you get settled?
How did you get here from the airport?

ALFRED

We have a rental car.

WILL

I'll bring your bags in from the car.

EDMUND

Let me give you a hand.

[everyone springs into action,
going off in separate directions]

[everyone is gone
except Luisa]

LUISA

Oh, Umbria!
Umbria!
The olive trees.
Bruschette,
with fresh tomatoes and basil

gnocchi
light semolina gnocchi
and veal with garlic and potatoes
fried sage
little little green beans
still crisp
still warm
with fennel and olives
barlotti
braciolo
Camosci, Caprioli, Cervi, Daini, Stambecchi
Oh!
Mia Umbria!
the sun setting just over the hills
sweet hills!
olive groves and cypresses
zucchini blossoms
white peaches
glorious figs
a glass of wine
Brunello di Montalcino
Vino Nobile di Montepulciano
Sagrantino di Montifalco
Oh, to lift a glass of wine with you
my love
your warm voice
your dark hair
your hands
your touch
my heaven
my love.

[and then,
when she is finished,
she turns and walks, transported,
into the house
Camila and Will enter together
in the midst of conversation.]

CAMILA

Still,

This is our wedding day.

We haven't even had our wedding dinner

and he's gone off with Susana to Assisi for the afternoon?

What does it mean?

WILL

I don't think it means anything.

He just, you know,

he was so surprised

for his parents to show up suddenly

and Susana

and I think he felt somehow

as the host

he ought to entertain her.

CAMILA

He could have asked you to take her for a drive.

[silence]

WILL

Yes. He could have.

CAMILA

Did he know her in college?

WILL

Know her?

CAMILA

Did he date her?

WILL

Oh, no, no.

You mean: did he know her?

No. Of course, I mean, he knew her,

but he didn't know her.
I mean he knew her as a friend
or not even a really very good friend
just someone else who was doing plays in college
in fact, if anything,
I think there was some tension between them
I don't think
I'm pretty sure they were never even in a play together.

CAMILA
Oh.

[silence]

WILL
I'm sorry.

CAMILA
Of course, it's not your fault.

WILL
I feel
as Anselmo's best friend
there were things probably I could have done....

CAMILA
Oh, Will, you know,
I don't blame you for anything.

WILL
If only you would tell me
what you think I could do.

CAMILA
You could stay
someone I can count on

WILL
Yes. I will.

CAMILA

The truth is, sometimes I wish he had some of your qualities.

WILL

Oh, I don't....

CAMILA

Just your warmth and your dependability.

WILL

Oh, I....

CAMILA

You know, not exciting qualities.

[has he just been inadvertently insulted?]

WILL

Right.

CAMILA

I mean, not that you don't have exciting qualities

I'm sure you do

but what I mean is

Anselmo is all sort of fire and darting

"oh, Camila, look here," he will say out of nowhere

"you see the way in Luca della Robbia's renderings of the virgin

she is a young girl

a very young girl

no more than ten!

because he was perhaps the only Renaissance artist

who really understood

she wasn't a virgin at all

the point is—"

he will say, because he's gotten so excited—

"the point is in Aramaic the word is 'almah'

which was mistranslated in the Greek bible as virgin

whereas she was just a very young girl

that's all it's saying in the Aramaic
this is what was shocking
omigod, a ten year old girl
and pregnant
how can this be?
it must be a miracle...."
instead of just sitting with me in a café
not saying much
looking at the passersby
holding my hand
maybe saying something nice to me about my hair
I mean, not that I think my hair is so interesting
or that I am so interested in my hair
but just to sit quietly with me
just be with me
as you are now.

CAMILA

Just to sit in a café in the afternoon
and you think
everywhere you look it's beautiful
everything you touch feels good

WILL

you think: it's the air

CAMILA

or: it's the way there are flowers everywhere

WILL

or, even, you think:
it's the way they hang laundry everywhere in Italy
so that, everywhere you look
it feels relaxed, and so much at home

CAMILA

and you think:
the Italians know how to take pleasure in the every day
in a piece of bread with olive oil

WILL
so that every moment you are alive
is a pleasure

CAMILA
you relish every moment

WILL
Yes.
Right.

[She slumps in a chair.

He looks around, uncertain what to do,
whether or not to sit.

At last, he, too, sits in a chair.

They are silent.
He looks at her, while she is not looking at him.

She looks at him, while he is not looking at her.
He gets up,

looks around,
sits back down
looks at the floor.]

CAMILA
How's your Latin?

WILL
My Latin?

CAMILA
You're still teaching Latin, aren't you?

WILL

Oh, yes! Of course!

CAMILA

I love that.

WILL

That I teach Latin?

CAMILA

Yes. I love that.

WILL

You know,
when I meet people—
like at cocktail parties or dinner parties
everyone always wants to know what you do
they always define you by what you do—
and they will say to me, what do you do,
and I will say I teach Latin in high school
and they will say oh!
and then they turn away from me
and start to talk to someone else.

[silence]

Camila, I have to tell you....

CAMILA

Yes?

WILL

This will sound strange to you,
in a way
I need to confess
but also I think
if you think about it,
and I think it will be reassuring to you.

CAMILA

Yes?

WILL

You see, Anselmo asked me to flirt with you
and see if I could seduce you
so that Anselmo would be sure
that you are faithful to him.

CAMILA

What?

WILL

I guess because I don't know
but he has been feeling insecure
maybe he feels he's not a lovable person
and so
he wanted me to test you
to see if you would remain faithful to him.

CAMILA

To test me?

Is that what you've been doing?

WILL

No. No, absolutely not.
I'm not going to do that.
I don't want to do that
that's what I told him,
and I'm not going to do that.
Never.

CAMILA

This is completely insane!
You're supposed to test me?
On my wedding day?

And he thinks this is who I am
that I would take up with someone else on my wedding day?
That I would what?
Suddenly fall in love with another man?

WILL
Right.

CAMILA
Is he crazy?
Does he think I'm crazy?
That I would just: what?
Hang out with a guy
spend some time with a guy
and find him so
what?
compatible?
so sensitive?
so like-minded in some way?
so simpatico
or caring towards me
that against my will
I would find myself just falling in love with him
maybe without even knowing it?
just sinking deeper and deeper into a sort of what?
comfort level?
and finally just deep deep communion?

WILL
Well, he can be a little hare-brained from time to time.

CAMILA
A little hare-brained!
Nobody ever heard of such a crazy thing.
Now I think
do you know what I think?
my god!
I think: Who is this person I just married?

[She gets up,
while he sits looking at the floor.

He gets up,
as though to go to her,
moves, stops,
goes to a different chair,
sits.
Gets up,
returns to his original chair.
Stands there.
Sits.

Doris enters.]

DORIS
Will, Alfred's blown all the fuses in the house.
Everything has gone off.
Can you help him?

WILL
Help him?

DORIS
You know, help him find the fuses
and put a new fuse in the
what do you call it?
fuse box?

WILL
Oh, sure. Sure.
I'll be back.

[he leaves]

DORIS

So Anselmo's left you already.
It seems so thoughtful of him
not to leave you in suspense for years and years
but just to ditch you right away
and get it over with.

CAMILA

What?

DORIS

Frankly
if it were my husband who ditched me like that
I'd sleep with someone else right away
put him on notice
and why not anyway?
everyone is unfaithful these days eventually
you might as well get to it
not be naive
because this is how your life will be from now on
as everyone knows
this is how it is to be married
what are the percentages?
50% of men have love affairs?
80%?
And women, too.
I always wonder
why should newlyweds have some brief period
of self-deception
rather than begin at once to live like adults?

CAMILA

What?

What are you saying to me, Doris?
What did you say?
Are you completely out of your mind?
This is the advice
you give me on my wedding day?

DORIS

You wish I would be nice
you want me to lie to you
but what's the use of that?
It's better you know now,
Right away,
And not learn the way I did,
Taken by surprise, unprepared.
More than anything, I resent
Being the last to know,
The sucker who actually believes
All the polite lies.
To be honest, I've never understood
Why I shouldn't tell the truth?
I mean the assumption that this is beneficial to the world
to be nice, to be pleasant,
is just unproven

[is she suddenly close to tears?]

difficult people are always the ones who advance civilization

[she turns and storms out
just as Sally enters]

SALLY

Camila?

CAMILA

Oh, Sally, god

I just

you know what Doris is telling me?

if Anselmo is just going to go off somewhere on our wedding day
with Susana

why don't I just have a love affair?

SALLY

Oh.

A love affair.

I don't know why anyone would want to have a love affair.

Because I think Edmund has been sleeping with someone
and he thinks I have

and I still love him

and I wish everything would feel good again

and I only slept with that guy

to get back at Edmund

so I wouldn't just be angry at him all the time

I would feel we were even

and then I could feel OK

but it didn't work that way

and now I'm not even sure he did have an affair

CAMILA

Edmund.

SALLY

You'd think

if you go to law school

you'd learn to think clearly

and think things through

you'd see your starting points

and you'd be able to reason your way

through to the end.

And then it turns out

you can't.

And what you should have known from the beginning

you only discover in the end

that infidelity

is a terrible terrible thing.

And now I think

I can't imagine ever beginning to want to have an affair with anyone,

I'd rather be left alone in peace.

I don't see how it's worth it.

I can masturbate.

I can get a vibrator.

They have the most wonderful vibrators these days,
like saddles, you can sit on them like a horse
and ride and ride all you want to;
it doesn't buck, it doesn't whinny,
it doesn't talk,
you turn it on whenever you want,
and when you're tired of it,
you just push its button and it stops.
If you like you can get a little one
that fits right in your undies,
and you make it go with a little remote control
you can carry in your purse
so that while you're out to lunch
or at a wedding party
you can be masturbating
while you're in the middle of a conversation,
and when the conversation's over
no one has any hard feelings.

[she turns and runs into the house;
Camila runs after her]

CAMILA
Sally! Sally!

[both Will and Doris rush on
from opposite sides of the stage]

WILL
Doris!

DORIS
Oh, Will!
I was looking for Camila.

WILL
Doris, the fuses weren't blown.

DORIS
They weren't?

WILL
The lights were all working.

DORIS
Oh. Good.

WILL
I thought you said the fuses were blown.

DORIS
I thought they were.

WILL
Were you trying to get rid of me?

DORIS
Oh, Will, how can you say such a thing?
I was looking for Camila.

WILL
So was I.

DORIS
She's so upset.

WILL
I know.

DORIS
Anselmo is such a jerk.
I know he's your friend.

WILL
He's...
he's I guess feeling a little
I don't know.

DORIS

Exactly.

And this is hardly the time for that.

WILL

No.

DORIS

This is a moment she needs a friend.

WILL

Yes.

DORIS

And I don't think she needs me.

And I don't think Sally is a help.

WILL

Why do you say that?

DORIS

It's just a feeling that I have.

I'm glad she has you for a friend now, Will.

Because I know you can help her

and

at the same time

I'm sure it's really helpful to Anselmo

to have a friend who can help Camila at a time like this

for you to be really close to her.

WILL

Close to her?

DORIS

I think it would be consoling.

[Doris leaves.

Rudi, an Albanian carpenter, enters.]

RUDI

Where shall I put it?

WILL

Put it?

RUDI

Look.

Look at me.

Where shall I put it?

WILL

Oh. I don't know.

What is it?

RUDI

This is the lumber for the stage.

WILL

What stage?

RUDI

I am not the planner

I am not the boss

I am not the person with the answer.

I am the carpenter.

I am coming to build the stage.

I am told: build the stage on the terrace.

This is the terrace?

WILL

Yes. This is the terrace.

RUDI

So.

I'll put it here, then.

WILL

Oh, no. I don't think you can do that.

This is where the wedding banquet will be.

RUDI

And so?

WILL

And so, this is where there will be a table
and a large party of people.

RUDI

When is this?

WILL

Very soon.

RUDI

OK, then.

I don't build the stage until tomorrow.

I just bring the lumber today.

I put it here.

WILL

Yes. No. Put it over there

Here. Let me help you.

[they stack the lumber]

RUDI

It's a lot of lumber.

I have more.

I can bring it tomorrow.

Because with these things
you need solid structure.

If people will stand on it

has to be solid.

You know?

WILL

Yes.

RUDI

Some people don't understand
you need—

I'm not bullshitting you

this is not philosophy—

but you need an honest structure

simple, if you can

basic

I don't say all the world's a stage

I say it SHOULD be a stage

strong, simple,

you don't want a structure

that trips you up

you fall through it to the bottom

it makes you stand crooked all the time

and you get a crick in your neck

no

you want a structure

that lets you breathe

that lets you be a free man

and have children

and have food

and have love

because if you are always falling over to the side

how can you have love

How can a woman think

oh, this is a strong man

I can count on him

no

you can't

or a strong woman

I can count on her

no

you can't

because she is always falling over.
I'm not saying, what I do,
it's like God
but almost.

[Luisa enters.]

LUISA
Rudi! You've brought the stage.

RUDI
OK. Contessa!

LUISA
We have just a few things we want, Rudi.

[turning back to the house, calling out]

Alfred! Rudi is here!

[Alfred enters.]

ALFRED
Rudi. Rudi. Good to see you.
So
the players have returned!
Another season is about to open!

RUDI
A season?

ALFRED
Well, no, not a whole season this year.
Just a special event.
Limited run.
One night only!
A lost play of Shakespeare's!

RUDI
Shakespeare?

ALFRED
Well, not lost exactly.
But lost and found, and lost and found.
Not performed, as far as anyone knows,
for centuries!
And this will be its Italian premiere!

RUDI
Excellent! Yes. Good. Excellent!

ALFRED
Will, you've met Rudi?

WILL
Yes.

ALFRED
Rudi is an Albanian refugee!

WILL
Really?

ALFRED
Now, Rudi,
we want something that suggests the outdoors
you know,
for Shakespeare.
This is not Ibsen. This is not O'Neill.
This is not an indoor play.
Shakespeare, as you know,
takes place in the world
in the universe
not cramped up in a drawing room somewhere.

LUISA

Although we do want a boudoir.

ALFFED

Although we do want a boudoir.

So what we want is a design
that is indoors and outdoors at the same time!

RUDI

I can do that.

ALFRED

It should be beautiful
but simple

RUDI

And strong.

ALFRED

And strong.

LUISA

Shall we call the rest of the cast on stage?

ALFRED

Yes. Good. I'll call them.

Is the baby monitor still working?

WILL

The baby monitor?

LUISA

We had baby monitors installed all through the house
when Anselmo was little
so we would always know that he was okay.

WILL

Oh.

ALFRED [talking into a baby monitor attached to the wall]
All the cast members on stage please?
All cast members on stage!

RUDI
A structure is a beautiful thing
by itself
already without the play on top of it

ALFRED
Absolutely.
Absolutely right.

[Alfred is moving terrace furniture around,
to get it out of the way of the performers when they arrive.
Will, without a word, helps him.
And then Luisa makes small adjustments.
They are all engaged in this
while Rudi goes on and on
and they only politely, inattentively listen to him.]

RUDI
Because a structure
has proportions
it has harmonious relationships
it has the qualities
that you would like to see in all human relationships
balance
sensitivity one element for the other
accommodation
at times it seems
almost compassion

[the “actors” have begun to arrive on stage]

ALFRED [who hasn't been listening to Rudi at all]
Extraordinary. Extraordinary.
Absolutely.
I know exactly what you mean.

[now everyone has assembled,
Alfred, Luisa, Will, Rudi,
Doris, Sally, Edmund, Camila
Simonetta and Melchiore
and Alfred, moving in right over Rudi's talk,
takes hold of the event again]

ALFRED
Now, then, people,
what are we doing here?
What has brought us together?
Why are we here today?
We are making art.
A place to live
where we have never had the occasion to live before
and with people whose acquaintance we have not previously made.
And why?
So we can see
what it is to be a human being.
That's all.
Nothing more.
But, certainly, nothing less.

LUISA
And so, as actors,
we won't want you to be just
wallowing in your own private worlds
your own childhoods and first loves
and experiences of daily life today
thinking that it is not your job to become the character you portray
but rather to make that character become who you are
to have your manners
your turns of phrase and gesture

your feelings about life and love
no, no, no
you are not film actors
this is not about you
Cardenio is not you
Luscinda is not you
Don Fernando is not you
rather you will become Cardenio, Luscinda, Don Fernando
and we
in the audience
will be the witness to a miracle.
Now then
speak the speeches simply
as the playwright wrote them

ALFRED [very grandly]
trippingly on the tongue:
but if you mouth it, as many of your players do,
I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines.
Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus,
but use all gently;
for in the very torrent, tempest,
and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion,
you must acquire and beget a temperance
that may give it smoothness.
Oooooooooooooooooooooo,
it offends me to the soul....

[Luisa “shushes” him with a hand gesture, and goes on.]

LUISA
speak the speeches
so that you can be heard in the last row of the audience
that’s all
never mind the posturing
the getting ready to begin to consider thinking about the possibility of starting
almost
to feel something
no

Speak the speech
the feeling will follow.
Questions?

SALLY
Will we need to memorize all the lines?

EDMUND
I don't think I can memorize all the lines.

DORIS
Is there a rehearsal schedule?

LUISA
The schedule will be posted in the kitchen.
We have time only for three rehearsals.
You won't need to memorize the lines.
Anything else?

ALFRED
Good.
Let's just run through one of the scenes to get the hang of it.

LUISA
Camila,
perhaps you and Will
would give us a little of
Act 1 Scene 4.
Where the lovers are parting from one another.
Do you see where I mean?
At line 324.
Yes. Good.

ALFRED
Good.

LUISA
Just give it a try
to put us all in the mood.

[silence for a moment
as Camila and Will focus]

CAMILA AS LUSCINDA

O Cardenio, let me whisper
What, but for Parting, I should blush to tell thee:
My heart beats thick with Fears, les the gay Scene,
The Splendors of a Court, should from thy Breast
Banish my Image.

WILL AS CARDENIO

O let Assurance, strong as Words can bind,
Tell thy pleased Soul, I will be wond'rous faithful;
And when I swerve, let Wretchedness o'ertake me,
Great as e'er Falshood met, or Change can merit.

LUSCINDA

Enough; I'm satisfied: and will remain
Yours, with a firm and untir'd Constancy.
Make not your Absence long.

CARDENIO

Fear not, but I with swiftest Wing of time
Will labour my Return. And in my Absence,
My noble Friend, and now our honor'd Guest,
The Lord Fernando, will in my behalf
Hang at your Father's Ear, and with kind Hints,
Pour'd from a friendly Tongue, secure my Claim;
And play the Lover for thy absent Cardenio.

LUSCINDA

Is there no Instance of a Friend turn'd false?
Take Heed of That: no Love by Proxy, Cardenio.

CARDENIO

Fernando is the man I most do trust;
He is my other self, my inmost friend.

LUSCINDA

I liked not how his eyes did fondle me,
For it is thee alone, Cardenio,
Whom I desire.

[Silence.

Everyone is quiet.

Luisa's breath has been taken away.

She is almost shocked by what she has seen.]

LUISA

Oh, yes,

well.

Good.

ALFRED

Good.

LUISA

It seems you have almost
some chemistry.

ALFRED

Chemistry.

Yes.

SALLY

That was wonderful.

I thought that was wonderful.

[Camila and Will seem almost shy with one another.]

LUISA

Well, I think that's enough rehearsal for today.

[Anselmo and Susana are just offstage.]

ANSELMO
Mother! Hello!

LUISA
Anselmo?

[Anselmo and Susana burst on stage.]

ANSELMO
Oh, hello!
Have you had a rehearsal?

LUISA
We just did.

ALFRED
Did you have a good drive?

ANSELMO
Oh, wonderful! We had the best time!

SUSANA
The countryside is so beautiful
the little villages and the farm houses
and the tiny little castles on the hilltops!
And we saw the most beautiful Luca della Robbia
it was so amazing
and Anselmo said:
“you see the way in Luca della Robbia’s renderings of the virgin
she is a young girl
a very young girl
no more than ten!
because he was perhaps the only Renaissance artist
who really understood
she wasn’t a virgin at all
the point is
the point is in Aramaic the word is ‘almah’
which was mistranslated in the Greek bible as virgin

whereas she was just a very young girl
that's all it's saying in the Aramaic
I mean who would have ever thought of such a thing!
He's an amazing person, your son,
he's so

DORIS
Bright.

SUSANA
Bright, yes. Brilliant.
I'd forgotten, you know.
We haven't seen each other since college.

LUISA
Not since college, no.

SUSANA
And then he took me to see the Piero della Francesca's
in this tiny little museum
where was it Anselmo?

ANSELMO
Monterchi.

SUSANA
Monterchi.
The pregnant virgin
and Anselmo said it used to be in a little chapel
out in the middle of a field
and now it was here
all blue
the sweetest blue dress
and two angels
one on either side of her
holding back a drape
as though presenting her pregnant belly

and the story is
if you visit this painting
then you will get pregnant, too.

[a moment's silence]

ALFRED
Extraordinary.

SUSANA
Yes, it was.
We had the best time.

MELCHIORE
Now, I don't want to interrupt anything
but
if this is a good time for you
everything is ready for your wedding feast
we can bring it from the kitchen.

ALFRED
Ah, perfect!

LUISA
We will all help you bring things out.

WILL
And Edmund, if you will give me a hand with the table....

EDMUND
Certainly.

RUDI
I can help.

ALFRED
Shall we bring more chairs from inside?

SUSANA

I'll bring some chairs.

[so everyone is scattering to set up the table and chairs
spread a tablecloth
and put dishes and dishes and dishes of things on the table
as they talk and fuss]

ALFRED

Now, then,

as for the seating arrangements,

I think everyone can sit wherever they please,

but the bride and groom must sit at the center of the table

bride on the right,

groom on the left.

LUISA

No, I think bride on the left,

groom on the right.

ALFRED

Are you sure, Luisa?

LUISA

Bride on the left,

groom on the right.

ALFRED

Do you mean stage left

or audience left?

LUISA

Stage left. Stage left.

ALFRED

Ah, yes, of course. Good.

Bride on the left, groom on the right.

Now everyone else

just take any seat, whatever you like.
If you are having an Italian wedding feast
everything is already perfect.

ALFRED

Now, Luisa,
where are you, Luisa?
We should be together at the table.
You should come and sit with me.
Because we are the model of married bliss.
Married thirty five years
and as happy as we were on our honeymoon.
Just to prove
it can be done.
Come, Luisa, sit here with me.

MELCHIORE [bringing in plates of pasta]

Here you are.
This would be your festive
Pasticcio di Tortellini all'Emiliana
classic pasta
following the Renaissance tradition
of a little sweet—in the crust—
and a little salty—in the filling
three hours and forty minutes
it has the
lean pork loin
the turkey breast
the mortadella di bologna
prosciutto
Parmigiano of course
and so forth
and for the sauce
the pancetta
the onion
carrot, celery
the beef
the veal
just a bit of dry red wine

and so forth
very simple
very fresh
I hope you will like it.

ALFRED

Oh, this is extraordinary!
Imagine that!

SIMONETTA [setting another plate of pasta on the table]
And this is Melchione's famous Cannelloni all'Etrusca

MELCHIORE

Another wonderful pasta!
Parmigiano
Pecorino
Prosciutto
very simple
very simple
but all very fresh ingredients
the Pecorino of course I make myself
so you can say months in the making
or
if you count the lifetime of the sheep who made the cheese
years in the making
this is what you need
very simple
very fresh

[as another dish is brought in]

ALFRED

And what is this?

MELCHIORE

This is another pasta
very civilized
if you are the sort of person who will have this pasta
then you are the sort of person who will never

make love with your socks on
here you have the
uncut fresh black squid ink pasta dough
FRESH porcini mushroom
the egg yolk
the ricotta cheese
the fresh chopped parsley of course
and this is to be served
with a mild four cheese sauce
(minimal gorgonzola)
and freshly grated
romano cheese
very simple
delicious
for the person who eats his food
with his tongue
not his teeth

SALLY

And I have brought....
What have I brought?

MELCHIORE

Ah!
This is another pasta.

ALFRED

So: pasta.
Extraordinary.
We have pasta.

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MELCHIORE

Ravioli di Nonna Ersilia.
Very interesting.
Very unexpected.
Laced with cinnamon.
Here you have the ricotta
the marjoram

a little bit of lemon
and, of course, the cinnamon
simple
simple
simple
very simple

MELCHIORE

This is Fazzoletti
it means little handkerchiefs
this is a pasta
very simple
you can make it larger or smaller if you like
but it must have
FRESH chopped basil
FRESH grated Parmigiano
FRESH tomato sauce
The basil I picked wild by the side of the road this afternoon.
The tomatoes, of course,
I grow myself.
Very simple.

RUDI

Simplicity.
This is what I always say:
simplicity.

MELCHIORE

And fresh!
And then everything is like heaven.

RUDI

And simple.

MELCHIORE

Very simple.

[they conclude their simplicity talk
as the guests settle down at the table]

ALFRED

Thank you, Melchiore,
thank you for our wedding feast.

ANSELMO

I would like to propose a toast to Camila,
my bride,
because
in truth
she is a wonderful person
an amazing person
I have to admit
I thought at first she was a whimsical person
and then, I learned, as time went on
no, this was not whimsy
this was a person
unafraid of who she was
what she loved
I have always been such an overly complicated person
looking at things from this angle and that angle
not just thinking but always re-thinking
for a person like myself
I always thought
it's not possible for me
to just abandon myself to my instincts
and yet that's exactly where Camila took me
I have discovered with her
what deep pleasure there is
in just committing yourself to the truth of your heart
what deep pleasure there is
in that fearlessness
and I thank you for that, Camila, forever
for showing me the way to happiness.

[cheers and applause and lifted glasses]

RUDI

I, too, would like to make a toast.

We have, in Albania,
an old wedding custom
a toast we give to newlyweds all the time
that brings good luck
good fortune
long happiness.

And I will give it to you here:

Ja për ty, mik i vjetër,
rroftë një mijë vjet,
Vetëm për të gëzuar gjërat
në këtë luginë lotësh njerëzor.

[as the toast goes on,
people start looking at one another,
rolling their eyes,
unable to believe their ears]

Dhe le të jetoj edhe unë një mijë
një mijë
më pak në ditë,
Sepse nuk do të më interesonte
të isha në tokë dhe të dëgjoja se ti kishe vdekur.
Pikërisht rreth tryezës miqtë
e kuptojnë më së miri ngrohtësinë
e të qenit bashkë.

[Melchiorë,
to top Rudi,
or to rescue him from his (unknowing) embarrassment,
or simply to carry on after him,
stands and begins to sing and dance.

Hands held high in the air,
he dances and sings,
and others rise to join him,
both in the singing and the dancing,

until everyone is on their feet,
and a wild bacchanalian event has coalesced around him.
He might be singing
Rossini's La Danza:

Già la luna è in mezzo al mare,
mamma mia si salterà,
l'ora è bella per danzare
chi è in amor non mancherà.

Presto in danza a tondo,
donne mie venite quà,
un garzon bello e giocondo
a ciascuna toccherà,
finchè in ciel brilla una stella
e la luna splenderà.
Il più bel con la più bella
tutta notte danzerà.

(Mamma mia, mamma mia,
già la luna è in mezzo al mare,
mamma mia, mamma mia,
mamma mia si salterà.
Frinche frinche frinche frinche
mamma mia, si salterà,
La la ra la ra...)

Salta, salta, gira, gira,
ogni coppia a cerchio va,
già s'avvanza si ritira
e all' assalto tornerà.

Serra, serra colla bionda
collabruna va quà e là,
colla rossa v'è a seconda
colla smorta fermo sta!
Viva il ballo a tondo a tondo
sono un Rè, sono un Bascià,

è il più bel piacer del mondo
la più cara voluttà.

(Mamma mia, mamma mia,
già la luna è in mezzo al mare,
mamma mia, mamma mia,
mamma mia si salterà.
Frinche frinche frinche frinche
mamma mia, si salterà,
La la ra la ra...)

Or not.

He might be singing something else.
And, just as Melchiorre and Simonetta
have been cast for their great voices,
maybe Edmund and Sally, or Rudi and Sally,
should be extraordinary dancers,
so they can dominate the dancing now
with amazing choreography,
both duets and solos.

In any case, the party is in full swing
and full voice,
when, above the voices of everyone

we hear the clear, pure, beautiful, soaring, soprano
of Susana

and, gradually, everyone stops,
and turns
and listens to her.
She, too, has the voice of an opera singer.

She sings and sings,
as all the guests are silenced,
and, one by one, awestruck, take their seats again

except one:

Anselmo.

He remains on his feet,
transfixed and transported by Susana.

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

[A stage has been built on the stage,
a simple trestle stage.

Led by Alfred and Luisa, everyone enters helter skelter
and chatting with one another.]

LUISA

Alright, everyone!

Everyone!

We'll have our dress rehearsal.

Is everyone in costume?

RUDI

I don't have a costume!

LUISA

Oh, you ought to have a costume, Rudi!

RUDI

Evidently there has been some mistake.

I have been given a dress.

LUISA

Yes.

RUDI

A dress.

LUISA

Yes, exactly.

You remember you have been rehearsing Dorotea?

RUDI

And?

LUISA

And?

RUDI

And do you say

Dorotea is a woman?

RUDI

I am to play a woman?

[Luisa, in desperation, turns to Alfred.]

ALFRED

It's a big part, Rudi.

LUISA

There are not many big parts.

ALFRED

And we thought you should have a big part.

RUDI

It's a big part.

LUISA

Yes.

RUDI

I see.

Yes. Well. Of course. A big part.

But you didn't say I should be a woman!
Of course, it is true,
I have the range for it.

ALFRED
Just as we thought.

RUDI
I will do it with such delicacy and restraint
such tenderness
that you will weep for me.

ALFRED
Excellent. Excellent.

RUDI
Also
I could play Fernando, too.

LUISA
Ah, but we have Edmund to play Fernando.

RUDI
Yes, I know.
I am only saying
perhaps he could play some other role
because I think I can do both parts.

LUISA
And yet, then, we don't have enough parts to go around
for Edmund to have a role.
You wouldn't want to take all the roles.

RUDI
Of course not. Of course not.
Of course I could!
I could!
The one man show!

But, no, I understand, of course,
you want everyone to have some part
even if...

I don't know what sort of experience Edmund has had on the stage
it could be he would feel more comfortable
in some smaller role
and I could help to take the burden
relieve the pressure from him
as well as offer him some coaching in the role he undertakes
but no, no
this is an opportunity for him
I understand.

And yet, as we go along
if you feel it would be better for the play
for me to step in
I can do it.

ALFRED

Thank you, Rudi. Thank you.

[Rudi suddenly turns to storm out.]

RUDI

Forget about it then!
If this is how I am to be treated!
It seems I am not loved!

LUISA

Rudi!

[Everyone rushes after Rudi.]

EVERYONE

Rudi! Rudi! Wait!
Come back.
Don't go, Rudi!
Rudi!

[He has been turned around
at just the moment he has gotten offstage.
Both Luisa and Alfred have their arms around his shoulders,
leading him back onto the stage.]

LUISA

We gave you this part because we thought
no one else can do it!

ALFRED

No one!
This is the most challenging role in the play, Rudi.
What do you think?
We weren't thinking when we cast it?

RUDI

Well, then.

LUISA

We have been counting on you, Rudi.
We can't do the play without you.

RUDI

There, there. It's OK.
If you insist.
If you insist,
I will do it!

ALFRED

Thank God.
Thank you, Rudi.

RUDI

No, no, it's nothing.
I am happy to do it.

LUISA

Good. Good.

Let's plunge right in, then, everyone!

Are you ready?

Is everyone ready?

[Silence: the random chatter comes to a halt.]

Now then:

You've all read the play, have you?

[Silence.]

but at least you know what the play is about, yes?

[silence;

Luisa groans]

LUISA

Ah!

Alfred, can you tell them what the play is about?

ALFRED

Of course, to be sure.

Although, in truth, I think it would be better for you to do it.

LUISA

Right.

This is a play

about love.

ALFRED

Exactly.

And about jealousy and betrayal
and heartbreak and lying.

LUISA

Love.

ALFRED

Exactly.

LUISA

It begins with a young couple in love, Cardenio and Luscinda.
They want to marry.

But before they can get their fathers' consent,
Cardenio is called away to the court of a powerful nobleman.
And while he is at court,
he becomes good friends with the powerful nobleman's son,
Don Fernando.

ALFRED

So here you have mixed in with the story of love,
the story of friendship.

LUISA.

Ah yes, and, as we will see, false friendship.
Because Cardenio brings Don Fernando home with him,
and no sooner does he introduce his new friend to his beloved Luscinda
than Don Fernando falls in love with her.

ALFRED

These things happen.

LUISA

when Cardenio has to be away from town,
Don Fernando asks Luscinda's parents for their daughter's hand,
and,
despite her protests,
her parents agree.
Luscinda desperately writes to Cardenio
who hurries home,
arriving only in time to witness the marriage ceremony,
or what he thinks is the marriage ceremony,
from behind a curtain.

Cardenio rushes away in despair
and wanders
raving like a lunatic in the mountains —

ALFRED

Like Lear on the heath....

LUISA

Where he encounters a woman, Dorotea,
who is also wandering in despair.

RUDI

This would be where I enter.

LUISA

Right.

And you tell Cardenio that Luscinda hasn't really married Fernando,
and that Luscinda, too, has fled to the wilderness,
and also Fernando,
and that all four of you are now wandering around in these same mountains.

RUDI

I have the speech right here.

ALFRED

Not now, Rudi.

Not now.

SALLY

And this is the end of the play?

LUISA

Almost, almost.

Cardenio and Dorotea go to an inn
where someone finds an old story and decides to read it out loud.

DORIS [aside]

This is absurd.

LUISA

The story is about a friend who seduces his best friend's wife.
And the story ends for everyone in despair and death.

SALLY

And this is the end of the play?
I thought it was a comedy.

LUISA

Not quite the end! Not quite!
There is a sudden reversal!
By a fantastic coincidence
Fernando and Luscinda also wind up at the same inn.
Dorotea reproaches Fernando for seducing and abandoning her....

RUDI.

It's a great speech; I have it right here.

ALFRED

Not now, Rudi.
Not yet.

LUISA

And when Dorotea reproaches him,
Fernando is ashamed and agrees to marry her.
And so
that allows Cardenio at last to have Luscinda.
And so, of course:
there is general rejoicing.

SALLY

And that's the end of the play?

LUISA

Yes!

ALFRED

It's a great love story.

DORIS

Exactly.

About jealousy and betrayal
and heartbreak and lying.

LUISA.

All right now, people.

Can we begin to rehearse?

Let's start here, near the beginning,
a little bit before the scene we already ran through before.

Will, that is to say: Cardenio—

you come in from stage left, looking upset.

You have been hesitating to approach your father,

To get his consent for your marriage.

You are afraid that Luscinda's feelings toward you are cooling,

And now you have to tell her that you have been called away to court.

Is there music?

MELCHIORE

Oh, yes. Sorry.

[he plays]

LUISA

And enter Cardenio, alone.

WILL AS CARDENIO

I do not see that Fervour in the Maid,

Which Youth and Love should kindle. She consents,

As 'twere to feed without an Appetite;

Tells me, She is content; This Affection

Is such a faint One, as will break untouch'd;

while mine,

Like to a Clime beneath Hyperion's Eye,

Burns with one constant heat....

LUISA

Enter Luscinda.

WILL AS CARDENIO

See how her Beauty doth enrich the Place!
O, add the Musick of thy charming Tongue
Sweet as the Lark that wakens up the Morn,
And make me think it Paradise indeed.
I was about to seek thee, Luscinda,
And chide thy Coldness, Love.

CAMILA AS LUSCINDA

What says your Father?

CARDENIO

I have not mov'd him yet.

LUSCINDA

Then do not, Cardenio.

CARDENIO

Not move him? Was it not your own Command,
That his Consent should ratify our Loves?

DORIS

[Groan]

LUISA

You know, Doris, this is not helpful at all.

DORIS

I thought Shakespeare invented the human.
This doesn't speak very well for humans.

SALLY

The truth is
I have to admit:
I never did like Shakespeare.

ALFRED

People!

Really!

Suddenly everyone's a critic!

And a Shakespeare scholar, too, it seems!

A little modesty, I think,

would be in order.

in some things

like the law of gravity

there is a true and there is a false

but in other things

there are tastes

and there are unknowables

there are mysteries

there are ineffables

there are simply what one person loves

and what another person loves

and when it comes to love

as my father always used to say

de gustibus non disputandum est.

LUISA

Thank you, Alfred.

ALFRED

You're quite welcome.

LUISA

Now, Will,

if you will resume from where you left off.

[after a moment's pause to collect himself,

Will continues]

CARDENIO

Not move him? Was it not your own Command,

That his Consent should ratify our Loves?

LUSCINDA

Perhaps, it was; but now I've chang'd my Mind.
You purchase at too dear a Rate, that puts you
To woo me and your Father too; Besides,
As he, perchance, may say, you shall not have me;
You, who are so obedient, must discharge me
Out of your Fancy:

CARDENIO

O heavens! From what a Spirit comes this?
I now perceive too plain, you care not for me.
Duke, I obey thy Summons, be its Tenour
Whate'er it will:
Since Luscinda has pronounced my Doom.

LUSCINDA

What do you mean? Why talk you of the Duke?

CARDENIO

How the Duke took note of me I know not.
But he doth write for me, requiring
My instant Service, and Repair to Court.

LUSCINDA

When go you?

DORIS

Honest to god this is tedious.

EDMUND

I do find my mind is wandering a little bit.

DORIS

My mind wanders to jumping off a cliff.
You begin to think
how can I get out of here?

Can I just get up and walk out in the middle?
Is this too rude?
Can I climb over people?

LUISA
Let's skip to the end.

LUISA
Cardenio and Luscinda.
At last, after all your trials –
Luscina's desperate flight from Don Fernando,
Cardenio's mad jealousy —
You have been reunited.
This is the moment of ecstasy.
Come now.
No more rhubarb rhubarb.
Let's see if you can all be a model audience just for a moment
and give the players the respect that they deserve.

Enter Cardenio.
Enter Luscinda.

[They embrace.]

WILL AS CARDENIO
What bright star, taking beauties for me upon her,
In all the happy lustre of heavens glory,
Has drop'd downe from the Skye to comfort me?

[as the scene goes on,
everyone gets quieter and quieter,
more and more attentive,

so that the entire scene is played without any interruption at all]

CAMILA AS LUSCINDA
My gracious Lord, no deity dwells here.
The servant to your will affects no flattery.

WILL AS CARDENIO

Can it be flattery to sweare those eyes
Are loves eternall lamps he fires all hearts with?
That tongue the smart string to his bow? those sighes
The deadly shafts he sends into our soules?
Oh let me press these balmy Lips all day,
And bathe my Love-scorch'd Soul in thy moist Kisses.
Now by my Joys thou art all sweet and soft,
And thou shalt be the Altar of my Love,
Upon thy Beauties hourly will I offer,
And pour out Pleasure and blest Sacrifice,

CAMILA AS LUSCINDA

Stay, stay and hide,
The blushes of the bride;
Stay gentle night, and with thy darkness cover
The kisses of my lover

[they kiss and kiss
and, finally,
they kiss,
a long, lingering kiss
that is astonishing]

DORIS

Well! The play might not be any good
but the lovers certainly are!

ALFRED

Absolutely!
Bravo. Brava.

LUISA

Very good. Very good.

DORIS

Obviously
when the leading actors are in love with one another

they can play a love scene well
even if the scene isn't very well written!

CAMILA
What?

WILL
What are you saying?

DORIS
The proof is in the kiss.
As it always is.

WILL
I'm sorry?

ANSELMO
I don't understand.

DORIS
Well, you see how they behaved with one another.

ANSELMO
Yes.
Yes, I did.

DORIS
I don't think you can hide any longer,
you two.
Clearly you're—
entangled with one another.

CAMILA
Entangled?

DORIS
Sleeping with one another.

CAMILA

Sleeping with one another?

ALFRED

This is a play!

WILL

What's happening?

DORIS

Exactly! What is happening?

ANSELMO

I think it must be true.

CAMILA

What's true?

ANSELMO

You two:

you're in love after all!

LUISA

Anselmo!

ANSELMO

Did you see them kiss?

ALFRED

Here, here.

This is a mistake people often make—
thinking what they see on stage is real.

ANSELMO

I asked you, Will, for a favor.

I didn't ask you to sleep with my wife!

WILL

And I didn't!

ANSELMO

I think you did!

DORIS

Obviously you did.

WILL

Anselmo,

I say this as your friend:
you are completely crazy.

DORIS

Marriage!

Everyone thinks they can just get married
and all their worries will be over
but they never are.

They say I love you, I love you,
how did I ever find you
what luck at last to have found you
I've waited all my life for you
what kind of miracle is this
they say this and they say this
five minutes before they go out
and grab hold of some other woman
and take her with them to bed.

Because men will cheat on you every chance they get
time and time and time and time and time and time again
and the sooner everyone knows this
and admits it

the better off they will be!

Do you think I'm glad about this?

No! No, I'm not! No!

[Doris storms out.]

LUISA

Now, now, Doris,
oftentimes it seems a person has been unfaithful
whereas, in truth, they haven't been at all!

[but Doris is already gone,
and, from here on,
many of the lines are spoken on top of one another
or all at once]

SALLY

That's so true.

LUISA

Now, children....

SALLY

People always make something out of nothing!

EDMUND

Are you speaking to me
is this how you manage to speak to me
in some roundabout fashion?

SALLY

What?

EDMUND

Was that remark meant for me?

SALLY

What remark?

EDMUND

What you just said!

SALLY

I don't remember what I just said.

CAMILA

I'm not going to just stand here and let you
accuse me of being unfaithful
when you are the one who went off to Assisi
on our wedding day with Susana.

SUSANA

Excuse me!

CAMILA

And then you come back and tell me
I have somehow betrayed you???

WILL

Camila....

LUISA

I don't think Anselmo....

ANSELMO

I went on a drive in the country
but it seems, while I was gone,
and you were in rehearsals of a love scene
you went ahead and fell in love!

LUISA [to Alfred]

People can't tell the difference any more
between the real world....

CAMILA

I was here doing what you asked me to do
and it seems you were off on a drive through the country
flirting with another woman
or falling in love yourself
and then you come back and accuse me of doing something wrong?

SUSANA

I don't think I'm part of this.
If you will excuse me.

[she leaves]

ANSELMO

Susana!

[he turns back to Camila]

I'm not going to be accused of something I didn't do!
I'm not going to just stand here and take it!

[he leaves]

CAMILA [calling after him]
Something YOU didn't do!

LUISA

Children!

[she goes after Anselmo]

Anselmo!

ALFRED

Luisa!

Let's not all fly off the handle!

[he leaves]

SALLY

If you want to accuse someone of something
then why don't you just accuse yourself!

[she leaves]

EDMUND

Sally!

[he goes off after her]

Sally!

[Edmund is gone

silence

Melchiore and Simonetta stand there,
looking awkward]

MELCHIORE

If you will excuse us

perhaps we will just

leave you alone....

[they leave

so that Will and Camila are left alone on stage]

WILL

I'm sorry, Camila.

CAMILA

Oh, no, it's not your fault.

WILL

And yet

I think it is.

And I apologize for that.

Because I never wanted in any way

to cause you pain

or really even any discomfort at all.

CAMILA

I know.

WILL

The truth is,
this time—
these rehearsals we've had for the play—
these conversations we've had
just having time to be together a little bit
as we never have before—
I've just
begun to feel such sympathy for you
such regard
such admiration and
such warmth really
to be honest
it seems
even
tenderness.
I think
it could even be
when I think back on it now
when Anselmo first began dating you
and we first met
I thought at the time
oh
oh
what a wonderful person
and, of course,
because Anselmo was my best friend
is my best friend
it never occurred to me
that is
I guess I just
filed my feelings away
as feeling good that my friend
had found someone
that I liked, too,
as a friend
and so I didn't notice
how I felt about you myself.

And I'm sorry
because the last thing I ever meant to do
was complicate things for Anselmo
or for you.
But the truth is
I love you.

[silence]

CAMILA
I love you, too.

WILL
What?

CAMILA
I find I just feel comfortable with you
and I remember at first I thought, too,
oh, good,
I'm glad I feel really friendly towards Anselmo's friend
so we can be friends, too,
and now of course it's turned out
I feel uncomfortable with Anselmo
it just makes me anxious whenever he comes into the room
whereas, whenever you come into the room,
I feel relaxed
I feel good
I feel I can be myself
and who I am is acceptable
And I've come to think
this time we've had together here
just being with you
it seems to me:
you're wonderful.

WILL
Oh.

CAMILA

And really warm.

And it would feel good
just to be inside your arms.

And to be in your arms for a long time.

And to be in your arms while we were lying in bed.

WILL

Oh.

CAMILA

I'd like to be with you all the time
and go places together
come home together
make love
I wish we could
have children together.

WILL

Oh.

CAMILA

And then I ask myself:
where did that come from?
And I don't know.
But I think:
well, that decides it.

WILL

Right.

CAMILA

Would you like to have children with me?

WILL

Oh, yes, yes, I would.

Didn't I

didn't I just say that?

That's just what I was thinking.
I love you and love you, Camila.
I just love the way you are.
I love the way you move
I love the way you think
I love the way you just say what you mean
and I think
if we could spend all our time together
I'd just like to talk and talk and talk with you
because you know
I love your sentences
and I love your clauses

CAMILA
My clauses?

WILL
and your verbs!
and I think
I don't know
is this because I love Latin?
or now I think:
do I love Latin because that's how you are
and I somehow always knew, when I found you
you would be just like Latin?
because a language is a complicated thing
and a beautiful thing
just the way you are
you are the person I've looked for all my life
and I was fairly certain I'd never find you
and I know it's a miracle I did.

CAMILA
But, Will,
I don't think I can do it.
I don't think we can just be together
all of a sudden like this.

WILL

No. No. You don't. Of course not.

This isn't the sort of person you are
otherwise I wouldn't have fallen in love with you.

You've just gotten married.

I'm sorry, Camila.

I don't know what I was thinking.

I apologize all over again.

I didn't mean to presume
or intrude

or whatever it is I've done.

I'm just awfully embarrassed.

the thing is

the best thing is

probably

I should leave.

CAMILA

Yes.

I think you should.

[silence]

WILL

I mean not just the terrace
but Italy altogether
maybe you would tell the others
I've suddenly become ill
or I had a call.

CAMILA

I don't know.

WILL

No, of course not.

That's ridiculous.

That's completely stupid.

I'll go inside and I'll say

I'll say
I don't know
yes, well, of course,
I'll say this whole thing was a terrible misunderstanding
and I think the best thing would be for me to leave
leave you and Anselmo here
to straighten things out

CAMILA
Yes. Right.
Thank you, Will.
I think this is best.

WILL
Right.

[silence]

So, I'll say goodbye.

CAMILA
Goodbye, Will.

[he leaves
and returns]

WILL
Still,
what does this mean?
That I am really leaving?
Is that what I'm doing?
Do you think this is the best?
Is this what I have to do.
Because I have to tell you:
I treasure you, Camila.
I'm sorry.
I'm sorry to have said so.
I'm sorry to feel it, to tell the truth.
I'm sorry about everything really.

CAMILA

I....

I just think I shouldn't speak.

I'm just afraid I will say all sorts of things that I shouldn't say
as a woman who is married to someone else.

WILL

I understand.

And, you know,

I wish you all the happiness a person could possibly have in life
because

I love you.

I mean

because I have felt such closeness to you
and all I wish is for your happiness.

CAMILA

And I wish for your happiness, too, Will,
with all my heart.

WILL

So

I'll say goodbye.

CAMILA

Goodbye.

WILL

Goodbye.

[she turns and walks out;

he stands, disconsolate, for a moment,

and then he turns and walks out in a different direction;

Susana comes in from yet another direction,

followed by Anselmo]

ANSELMO

I'm sorry, Susana.

SUSANA

It's alright.

It was just a little embarrassing.

ANSELMO

But, I'm so sorry,

for sure you didn't need to be embarrassed in that way.

There's nothing you've done to deserve it.

SUSANA

Really.

You owe me no apology, Anselmo.

[silence]

ANSELMO

And yet

I think I do.

It's embarrassing

and what's worse, I'm afraid

just horrible for Camila.

And then I think

even worse than that

I should have known.

And then, of course, I think: I did.

I always thought

oddly enough

from the beginning

that Will was a better match for Camila than I was.

SUSANA

And yet

you married her!

ANSELMO

Yes!

I was drawn to her

she seemed to make my life make sense

and she awoke in me a feeling
that I guess, as it turns out, I mistook for love.

SUSANA
Mistook for love?

ANSELMO
And then, now
this is so strange
because I think
Camila showed me how it was for people to trust their instincts
and I must have known I needed to know how to do that
in order to be any kind of human being at all
because obviously
I've been fleeing from my instincts all these years
I think this is what has made me such a confused person
Since
Well
Ever since we were together in college.

SUSANA
Together in college?
We were never together in college.
You didn't know me in college.
You didn't know me the littlest bit in college.
You hardly even spoke to me in college.

ANSELMO
Well, you were dating that guy whatshisname.

SUSANA
Richard.

ANSELMO
Right.
Richard.
And then
this is the extraordinary thing
I heard you sing

and suddenly I felt my head go completely clear
and there I was: no longer thinking about anything at all
this is what Camila meant all that time
just going where your heart took you
trusting your feelings above all
and I just lost myself inside your voice
I thought: suddenly here is the whole world
inside your voice
this is where I want to live.
The truth is,
Susana,
I love you.

SUSANA
You what?

ANSELMO
I love you.

SUSANA
You love me?
You love me?
Oh, Anselmo,
this is
this is horrible.

ANSELMO
That's what I've been saying.

SUSANA
Oh, oh, well, you know
this just won't do at all.
I mean it turns out
you are a completely dangerous person!
I mean we don't know each other at all.
We don't know each other.
You hardly spoke to me in college.

ANSELMO

Because you were with....

SUSANA

Richard, yes, Richard!

And now I'm a person who's just recently been divorced

and I'm feeling a little fragile to tell you the truth

a little cautious about

love

or

men

or

well,

life really.

ANSELMO

You need a little time off.

SUSANA

Yes. Yes, I do.

ANSELMO

Of course. Of course.

I beg your pardon.

I didn't mean to just jump on you.

It's just that, when I heard you sing, I thought:

I love you.

SUSANA

Anselmo, really!

I mean

I really enjoyed our drive in the country

and when we sat in that café in

that sweet little town

what was that town?

ANSELMO

Spedalicchio.

SUSANA

Spedalicchio.

Right.

But, Anselmo,
probably you've forgotten
but you've just been married.

ANSELMO

Right. Right. No,
I haven't forgotten.

SUSANA

And I've just been in a car wreck of a marriage.
I'm all crushed and dented and smoking.
Give me a break.
I haven't even been towed into the garage yet.

ANSELMO

Right. I beg your pardon.
I'm so sorry, Susana.

SUSANA

You know, Anselmo,
people have impulses all the time.
But they don't need to act on them!

ANSELMO

Unless, otherwise, their lives will turn out to be a tragedy!

SUSANA

Even then! Even then!
What are you saying?
Sometimes life IS a tragedy.
There's nothing to be done about it.
Even the happiest lives end up in graves.

ANSELMO

And doesn't that make you think
OK, then,
if my life is going to end up in a grave
at least let it be happy till then?

SUSANA

No.

ANSELMO

It doesn't?

SUSANA

No!

ANSELMO

That's what it makes me think.
I'll miss it enough when it's over
I don't want to miss it now.
I'm asking you to marry me, Susana.

SUSANA

You're asking me to marry you??????
You ARE married, Anselmo!
You can't ask a person to marry you
when you just got married!

ANSELMO

In the whole of your life
have you ever had such perfect ride in the country?

SUSANA

What?
What the fuck are you talking about?
A perfect ride in the country????

ANSELMO

Susana, now that I've found you at last
after all these years
I'm not going to walk away from you.

SUSANA

Anselmo.
I'm going to walk away from you.

ANSELMO

What?

SUSANA

I'm going to walk away from you!
I am going to walk away from you, you crazy fucker!!!!

[she throws up her hands
and storms out]

ANSELMO

How can you do that?
Susana! Susana!!!

[he stands for a moment, undone,
then turns and leaves in the other direction.
Simonetta enters,
pursued by Edmund.]

EDMUND

The point is, Simonetta:
I look at you
and I am thrilled.

SIMONETTA

Oh, but.
I'm married.
You're married.

EDMUND

Yes.

It fills me with such conflicting feelings.

SIMONETTA

Being married.

EDMUND

And then seeing you.

I see you and

I think I could change everything.

My life, your life.

SIMONETTA

You want to sleep with me

and then you'll leave

and that's enough for you.

EDMUND

No.

SIMONETTA

That's what you mean.

I think that's what you mean.

Because I am the servant woman,

that's how you'll be with me?

EDMUND

Oh, no. No, not at all.

That's not what I meant at all.

No, just the opposite in a way.

SIMONETTA

That's how some men are.

But that's not how I am.

When I think, what do I want today?

my day lasts for forty years.

EDMUND

Right. Right.

Forty years.

Extraordinary.

What a thought.

What a wonderful thought really.

I think of having a day of forty years myself.

and then I think

it may be I've already caused enough damage in my life

I've caused a lot of pain

but I haven't caused much happiness.

I think

maybe I'm not such a good person

I think of you having a happy life with your husband.

And

I'd rather not be a careless person.

And yet, I see you,

I think, oh, this could be my chance

for something quite amazing

SIMONETTA

Because in nature things happen so suddenly sometimes

suddenly there's a flood

your neighbor has a baby

her husband falls from a tree

You wonder

why do we try so hard to control our lives;

when we think back

so much has been because of chance.

And, if you try to avoid chance

you're avoiding life itself.

EDMUND

So that you think

you shouldn't just try to avoid something

you can't control

or you will never live.

SIMONETTA

Yes.

That's what I think is true.

EDMUND

Although

maybe I shouldn't encourage someone else
to make the mistakes I've made in my life
because she hasn't caused as much damage as I have
she doesn't know
and so maybe she would take the chance this time.

And then, a year from now, or two

she will hate me

for having taken her away from a life

that could have brought her happiness

for another forty years, fifty years, forever.

Right.

I wish you

every happiness.

[silence]

SIMONETTA

Thank you.

[she leaves.

He looks around,

Pats his pockets,

Looks around.

Goes out.

Camila enters,

looks around,

leaves.

Will enters,

looks around,
leaves.

Camila enters
pursued by Will]

Camila enters,
pursued by Will]

WILL
You know
this just makes no sense to me, Camila.
I don't think I can leave.

[turning to him]

CAMILA
You can't?

WILL
No.

CAMILA
No.
No.
Thank god.

WILL
Because I love you, Camila.

CAMILA
I love you, Will.

WILL
I could pretend to leave.
Does that seem like a good idea?
I could say I am leaving
but not leave at all.
Or I could leave actually.

And then, when we get back to New York,
you could tell Anselmo that you need some time alone to think.
And you could take some time.
And then we could get together.
Although, this leaves all the burden on you, I'm afraid.

CAMILA

That's okay.
I think this is a good idea.
Although, really, this is really just incredibly dishonest
to pretend I'm taking time to think about things
when I'm not going to think about things at all.

WILL

Right.
I think it is a little bit dishonest.

CAMILA

I mean that would be really contemptible.

WILL

Right. No.
You couldn't do that.

CAMILA

We have to think about other peoples' feelings,
Not just our own.

WILL

Right.
All the same, I love you
And I will never love anyone else.

[silence]

CAMILA

I don't think I can just go back with Anselmo
and live with him
and you and I would be lovers.

WILL

No.

No.

Well, I mean, you don't, do you?

CAMILA

No.

WILL

Because if that's what you really would like to say....

CAMILA

No.

No, I couldn't do that.

WILL

No, thank god.

Neither could I.

It seems to me

if I were the sort of man I've never wanted to be

I'd know just what to do now

I'd just take you and leave with you

and to hell with everyone

CAMILA

Right.

Or you could kill Anselmo.

WILL

What?

CAMILA

You know,

you could kill him.

You could take him hunting

and there could be an accident.

WILL

A hunting accident.

CAMILA

Has he ever gone hunting?

WILL

No. I don't think so.

CAMILA

All the more reason for an accident to occur.

WILL

He could fall into a ravine.

CAMILA

Or you could just go out hunting for mushrooms
and you would bring back a poison mushroom for his pasta.

WILL

or there could be a dreadful automobile accident
on the way back from hunting.

I would have had to stop off someplace.

Or I could take my bike to ride back,
and his steering wheel could be disconnected
and he would go right off a mountain road
and plunge into the river.

CAMILA

The point is:

whatever happens, it could be worse.

WILL

Right.

Whatever happens he'll still be alive
with lots of chances to make a life for himself
a happier life than one
married to a woman who loves someone else.

CAMILA

This is true.

WILL

Right.

Probably what we should do

is what Anselmo asked me to do:

I should flirt with you

But I should flirt with you

in such a way that everyone can see me do it

and everyone can see you turn me down.

So that will be established

that you are faithful to Anselmo.

And then everyone can leave.

And then

when we get back to New York

you can speak privately to Anselmo

and we can be together then

and even though everyone will look back

and realize that we were lying

in a way that's as thoughtful as we can be

of everyone else's lives.

I think it's the most considerate thing to do.

CAMILA

We can do it in the kitchen

when everyone is out on the terrace

and we can turn on the baby monitor

so that everyone will hear us on the terrace

and you can flirt with me

and I can turn you down

and then I can run out on the terrace

and be surprised to find everyone standing there.

CAMILA

Amazed.

WILL

Amazed

and dumbfounded

and convinced that what they've heard is the truth.

[silence

and then, after a moment,

they kiss;

after a moment,

she turns and runs into the house,

and Will,

disoriented by the discovery of his love,

finally goes out in a different direction.

After a moment, Rudi enters, alone.]

RUDI

I build them a good stage

Solid, strong, honest, simple.

What happens?

Everyone goes crazy.

And why?

Because

The play:

It is not all in one coherent psyche.

But, if you have the one man show

Everything is perfect.

One actor.

To put on THE WHOLE SHOW

First it may be he plays Luscinda.

RUDI AS LUSCINDA

Is there no Instance of a Friend turn'd false?

Take Heed of That: no Love by Proxy, Cardenio.

Then he plays Cardenio.

Do not fear, Luscinda,

Thou mayst give Fernando, as I have done,

Thy absolute trust. He is my other self.
I must, alas, obey the duke's command.
And hie to court. Adieu, my love, adieu.
Then he plays Luscinda.

RUDI AS LUSCINDA.

I do not know why thou dost leave me so,
Alone, unfriended, on the day you promised
To ask my father for my hand.

[weeps]

RUDI AS RUDI

Then you have coherence.
And then everyone cries at the same time with my weeping.
Luisa, she can put tissues on every seat.
And then:
Fernando, that weasel, comes in —

[enter Rudi as Fernando]

RUDI AS FERNANDO

Why weepst thou, Luscinda dear? Hark now,
I have brave news I hope will cheer thy heart.

RUDI AS LUSCINDA

What news, Fernando?

RUDI AS FERNANDO

Thy gracious father has given his consent.
Thou art to marry, and at once.

RUDI AS LUSCINDA

At once? But Cardenio has ridden hence.

RUDI AS FERNANDO

Well then, our wedding he will have to miss.

RUDI AS LUSCINDA

Our wedding? Whose wedding?

RUDI AS FERNANDO

Why, thine and mine, my dearest, dainty duck.

Tis I thy father grants will be thy husband.

RUDI AS LUSCINDA

Nay.

RUDI AS FERNANDO

Yea.

RUDI AS LUSCINDA

Nay, I say.

RUDI AS FERNANDO

I say yea. We are to wed this very night.

What! Think you that the paltry Cardenio,

That whining, pigeon-livered, tim'rous boy,

Deserves the fair Luscinda? Why did he leave,

Abandoning his prize, did he not want

A stronger man to seize her? Thou art mine.

RUDI AS LUSCINDA

[faints]

[RUDI falls heavily to the floor; then, realizing his mistake, sits up.]

RUDI AS RUDI

No. No.

Not like that.

Get up. Get up.

A lady does not faint like that.

A lady must fall like a flower petal,

Not like a sack of iron.

Never mind that women, just like men,

Are made of clay

And in truth may fall to the earth like a man.
On stage it must be different.
Like this:

[He faints again with exaggerated gentleness. Then quickly jumps up.]

And then?
What next?
Fernando carries off Luscinda.
How does he do this?

[Tries to carry himself off stage.]

No. No.
Because:
It's not funny.
It's a dramatic moment.

[he tries again]

No. Rudi. Concentrate. Focus.
A tragic moment.

[he carries himself off]

[he reenters in Cardenio's hat and cloak]

Now they are gone.
And now
the moment the audience has been waiting for – Cardenio's mad scene.
Just like, as it happens, when Anselmo almost went mad
When he saw Will kiss Camila.
"I asked you, Will, for a favor.
I didn't ask you to sleep with my wife!"
A coincidence:
A play!
That is just like real life!
As though one held up a mirror....

[he is distracted a moment as he looks into the mirror of his hand]

So

Cardenio speaks:

[astonishingly, Rudi grows into the role as he goes,
finally delivering a great Shakespearean performance—
which only collapses at the very end back into Rudi himself]

RUDI AS CARDENIO

I asked you, Fernando, for a favor.
I didn't ask you to steal my wife!
How could it be? How could it be? My friend!
The man I called my other self — and now
Foresworn, a snake, my mortal enemy.
I had once seen the Bird of Paradise,
Alone I knew her haunts, and where she built
Her spicy nest: 'till like a credulous fool,
I shewed the treasure to a friend in trust,
And he hath robbed me of her. — Trust no friend:
Keep thy heart's counsels close. — Hast thou a mistress?
Give her not out in words; nor let thy pride
Be wanton to display her charms to view;
Love is contagious, and a breath of praise,
Or a slight glance, has kindled up its flame,
And turned a friend a traitor. — 'Tis in proof;
And it has hurt my brain. But hold, 'tis I,
I am the traitor. Fernando, my friend,
Was but my agent; he did my bidding.
I am the one who must be punished.
Take that, you dolt! Take that! And that!

[Hitting himself violently,
in a paroxysm of self-loathing,
Rudi makes an increasingly loud racket,
perhaps knocking over furniture—
Luisa and Alfred and Susana all rush out on stage.]

[suddenly we hear broadcast over the baby monitor:

WILL'S VOICE

Still, Camila,
I love you
as Anselmo doesn't and as he never will.
I will treasure you
and treasure you forever.

CAMILA'S VOICE

No....

WILL'S VOICE

Yes.
You can count on me
as you would count on the earth itself.

CAMILA'S VOICE

But, Will,
you know I will always be as faithful to Anselmo
as he has been to me.
I would only ever be as honest
as true
as steadfast as he has been to me.

WILL'S VOICE

And yet I love you
as no one has ever loved you before.

CAMILA'S VOICE

Will, try to understand:
There is one vow I intend to keep in my life
and that is
I will be absolutely faithful to my one true love.

WILL'S VOICE

But, Camila,
come away with me now.

CAMILA'S VOICE

No, Will.

No!

Let go of me, Will!

Let go!

[we hear the sounds of scuffling]

WILL'S VOICE

Camila!

Camila!

[Camila bursts out onto the terrace,
looking flushed and a little disheveled.]

DORIS

So, it is true!

Just like the play!

CAMILA

What is true?

DORIS

You and Will:

behind everybody's backs!

CAMILA

No!

ALFRED

Certainly not Camila!

You heard her saying no, no!

[Will rushes in,
seemingly surprised to find everyone on the terrace.]

DORIS

Will, you liar!

WILL
What?

DORIS
All this time,
pretending to be so thoughtful
so sensitive
so considerate
thinking of nothing but Camila's feelings for Anselmo
and your dear friend Anselmo's best interests
while all the time
you're trying to take her away from him!

ANSELMO
It's OK.
It's OK, Will.
I can explain everything.
We heard you and Camila on the baby monitor.

WILL
No!

ANSELMO
Yes.
And I heard you were completely faithful to me, Camila.

CAMILA
Of course I was, Anselmo.

ANSELMO
And the truth is:
I put Will up to it.

LUISA
What?

ANSELMO

When Camila and I were married,
I was afraid she wouldn't be faithful to me,
that's all,
it's as simple as that,
and then I did something just absolutely deranged.
I asked Will, as my friend,
to try to seduce her
to see if she would be faithful to me.

ALFRED

What?

LUISA

Oh, Anselmo, on your wedding day!

DORIS

This is completely disgusting.

ANSELMO

Yes. Yes, it is.
But, meanwhile,
as if this weren't bad enough,
I've been a worse person even than this.
Because,
while I was doubting whether Camila would be faithful to me,
I've been unfaithful to her.

CAMILA

You what?

WILL

What's this?

LUISA

Anselmo!

ANSELMO

I can't go on
without being completely truthful with all of you,
my good friends,
or you have been until this moment,
and perhaps now
you never will be again.
But I have fallen in love with Susana.

CAMILA

Susana?

LUISA

Susana!

ALFRED

Oh my god.
See what we've done, Luisa?

LUISA

How could this have happened?

ALFRED

Anselmo....

ANSELMO

I'm sorry, Dad.
I apologize to everyone, really,
but especially to you, Camila.
But, since this has happened,
as terrible as it is,
I thought it would at least be best
for me to be honest with you now.
To say,
as dreadful a thing as it is to say,
I can't go ahead with our marriage.

CAMILA

No.

LUISA

No!

ANSELMO

I apologize and apologize to you, Camila.
and I have been nothing but dishonest
and confused
and so manipulative
and cruel
and thoughtless
while all this time you have been so
generous and forgiving
all a person would hope to find in another person
I am so sorry, Camila.
I'm not asking for your forgiveness
some things in life just should never be forgiven
that's just the way it is

LUISA

And, what?

What does Susana say
after Alfred and I brought you here?
Are you in love with Anselmo?

SUSANA

I told Anselmo
I've just come from a ruined marriage myself.
I can't think of just suddenly falling in love
just throwing myself into someone else's arms
as though I were a teenager.

CAMILA

No. Of course not.

But do you love him?

[silence]

SUSANA

Yes.

I've always loved him.

SALLY

And will you marry him?

SUSANA

Yes. I will.

LUISA

Will you marry Susana, Anselmo?

ANSELMO

Yes. Yes, I will.

DORIS

Well, there's a mature decision!

What are the odds here, Anselmo,
that your second marriage will last as long as your first?

LUISA

Doris!

CAMILA

Doris, I wish you had left
before you ever came.

As badly as everyone has behaved
I think you've been the worst
because, of everyone, you are the only one
who just wants everything to turn out badly
because that will prove
that you have always been right about everything
all the time.

DORIS
Camila....

CAMILA
You should leave now, Doris.
Before you ruin something else.
I'm sorry this is how you are,
but you are a kind of curse.

DORIS
Camila....

CAMILA
I mean it.

WILL
I think it would be best for you to leave, Doris,
really: for everyone.

ALFRED
The truth is, you haven't been a very positive presence.

SALLY
You've been a bitch on wheels
if you want to know the truth.

EDMUND
No one likes you, Doris.
If you want to know the truth
what people say behind your back
is that they can't stand you
and they never could.

LUISA
I'm sorry, Doris.
But I think you need to go.

DORIS

OK.

Good. Fine.

I see, in any case,
that none of you needs a malicious person
to throw your lives into turmoil
when you do such perfect job all by yourselves.

But don't think

just because I make things convenient for you now
I'm not going to come back into your lives.

You can't get rid of me.

I am your sister, Camila.

You haven't seen the last of me,
any of you.

[she turns and leaves]

LUISA

Well.

ALFRED

So.

ANSELMO

Perhaps, really,
it's time for all of us to leave.

It may be we could all use
a little time by ourselves
to put things back together.

In any case,

I think probably it would be best
for me to leave with Susana
and leave the rest of you in peace.

CAMILA

Anselmo,

I don't want you to slink away in shame.

A person should never be ashamed of love

however it may have come to them
whatever promises they've had to break
whatever things they've done that they wish they hadn't
when a person finds the love
they believe will be their lifelong love
I know
the choice is no longer theirs.
But, even if it's the biggest gamble you have ever taken
and no one knows if it can last
a person has to take it.
Because if you're not going to gamble on love,
what should you gamble on?
And so
I wish you every happiness.

ANSELMO

Thank you, Camila.

SUSANA

Thank you.

EDMUND

Well, we ought to be on our way, too,
don't you think, Sally?
It's been a, well,
one thing for sure I've never been to a wedding like this.
I mean I, of course,
I had a wonderful time.
Weddings!
The things they make a person think about!
For me, I think,
the experience we've had
it makes me feel more than ever

[turning to Sally]

how much I love you, Sally,
how I treasure you
how happy I am we'll be together forever.

And I thought, perhaps,
maybe we could go to Siena.

SALLY
Siena?

EDMUND
Find a little hotel there
And have some time together
just the two of us.

SALLY.
Are you crazy, Edmund?
You think you can flirt and flirt and flirt
with every woman who crosses your path
and you think no one notices?
no one pays any attention?
Because everyone's what?
Drunk on Umbria?
Intoxicated with the local perfume?
You think that universal love juice has been sprinkled on everyone's eyes,
and all the rules are suspended?
And you can just behave like a hamster
because this is nature
and you can just sniff all the women, like a dog,
and there is no moral responsibility in life
no accountability?
No one is ever going to say to you:
no, Edmund, no,
no you can't do this
no you can't just go from woman to woman to woman
and everyone will think oh
how natural!
how spontaneous!
how romantic!
how adorable!
what a happy ending!

No. No.
No, Edmund.
That's not how it is!

[she turns and runs out at full speed]

EDMUND
Sally!
Sally!
I love you, Sally!

[she is no sooner out the door
than she is back in again
weeping
and she runs to Edmund
and puts her arms around him
sobbing on his shoulder]

SALLY
I love you, Edmund!
Oh, god I love you.

[sobbing]

I just love you and love you and love you
I can't be without you

[sobbing and sobbing]

and yes I want to go to Siena with you
I want to

[sobbing and sobbing and sobbing]
Let's go to Siena, Edmund.
Please let's go to Siena
and we'll be together forever.

EDMUND

Forever.

Forever and ever, Sally.

[silence]

LUISA

Well, Alfred and I were planning on leaving, too,
weren't we, Alfred?

ALFRED

Oh, yes! Yes, indeed we were.

LUISA

If rehearsals are to begin next week in Maine
we are going to need to be getting on our way.

ALFRED

Yes. Yes, it's true.

We're travelling players, that's all.

Travelling players, all of us, in a sense.

LUISA

Still.

I can't leave without saying:

I feel Alfred and I ought to apologize to all you young people.

It seems to me

it's all our fault.

I see now

if only we hadn't brought the play

none of this would have happened.

It may be we should have known

our own lives have been so transformed by the theatre

ALFRED

Oftentimes we forget

what an impact it can have.

We think, Luisa and I,

it's just a play
just an evening in the theatre
just a piece of light entertainment
and then it turns out
so often
it finds its way into someone's soul.

LUISA

The power of the theatre.

ALFRED

The power of the art of the theatre.

Disruptive.

Transformative.

Apocalyptic.

So.

We will pack our bags, and we will be off.

LUISA

Camila, dear,

I know this has been a terrible ordeal for you.

Probably all you'd like is just to get back home,

but you should know

if you would like

just to stay on a while here

let things settle a little bit

before you go on with things

you would be so welcome to stay.

Melchior and Simonetta will be here

and they can care for you,

and Alfred and I would be so happy to know

that someone is here enjoying the house

for just as long as you would like.

ANSELMO

And I know, Will,

this has hardly been a pleasant vacation

for you, but

if you don't have anything else you need to get to

if you happen to be free to stay on as well
to keep Camila company
so that she doesn't feel alone

WILL

Thank you.

CAMILA

Thank you.

WILL

Well. Perhaps we will then.
Would you like that?

CAMILA

Oh, yes.

I think I would.

I think that I would love it.

LUISA

All right then, children.

Here we go.

Everyone has their rental cars.

Do you have the tickets, Alfred?

ALFRED

I've left them in my jacket pocket.

LUISA

All right, then.

Goodbye, Edmund. Nice to see you.

EDMUND

Goodbye.

LUISA

Sally, dear....

SALLY

Luisa....

[everyone saying their goodbyes....]

Ciao, Simonetta!

Ciao, Melchiore.

MELCHIORE

Ciao, contessa!

OTHERS

Ciao! Ciao! Ciao!

Buon viaggio! Arrivederci!

Buona fortuna.

Ciao!

Ciao!

Ciao, bella!

[Everyone is gone
except for Camila and Will
and Simonetta and Melchiore.
Melchiore picks up his guitar
and plays and sings,
and maybe Simonetta joins him at some point
for a duet.

And while they sing,
Camila and Will dance.

MELCHIORE SINGING

this or something else:

Fair angel of England, thy beauty most bright
Is all my heart's treasure, my joy and delight;
Then grant me, sweet lady, thy true love to be,
that I may say, welcome, good fortune, to me.
The turtle, so true and so chaste in her love,
By gentle persuasions her fancy will move;
Then be not entreated, sweet lady, in vain,

For nature requirest what I would obtain.
The Phoenix so famous, that liveth alone,
Is vowed to chastity, being but one;
But be not, my darling, so chaste in desire,
Lest thou, like the Phoenix, do penance in fire.

The End.