

# The Mercurian



*A Theatrical Translation Review*  
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Editor: Adam Versényi  
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*The Mercurian* is named for Mercury who, if he had known it, was/is the patron god of theatrical translators, those intrepid souls possessed of eloquence, feats of skill, messengers not between the gods but between cultures, traders in images, nimble and dexterous linguistic thieves. Like the metal mercury, theatrical translators are capable of absorbing other metals, forming amalgams. As in ancient chemistry, the mercurian is one of the five elementary “principles” of which all material substances are compounded, otherwise known as “spirit”. The theatrical translator is sprightly, lively, potentially volatile, sometimes inconstant, witty, an ideal guide or conductor on the road.

*The Mercurian* publishes translations of plays and performance pieces from any language into English. *The Mercurian* also welcomes theoretical pieces about theatrical translation, rants, manifestos, and position papers pertaining to translation for the theatre, as well as production histories of theatrical translations. Submissions should be sent to: Adam Versényi at [anversen@email.unc.edu](mailto:anversen@email.unc.edu) or by snail mail:

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# The Mercurian

*Volume 6, Number 1 (Spring 2015)*

## Table of Contents

Editor's Note	3
<i>The Serpent Lady</i>	5
By Carlo Gozzi	
Translated by Daniel Smith and Valentina Denzel	
<i>iPlay</i>	57
By Bernhard Studlar	
Translated by Henning Bochert	
<i>Quijóteres: The Ingenious Puppets Don Quijote de la Mancha</i>	113
Written, translated and adapted by Jason Yancey	
<i>Policy</i>	148
By Antonio Muñoz de Mesa	
Translated by Phyllis Zatlin	

### Editor's Note

We begin this issue with Daniel Smith and Valentina Denzel's adaptation and translation of the eighteenth century Italian playwright Carlo Gozzi's *The Serpent Lady*. Gozzi's delightful fairy-tale comedy rests dramaturgically upon its improvisatory, commedia dell' arte structure. This structure, since it depends upon theatrical production for its creation, is easy to lose in translation if the translator is thinking only about the text as dramatic literature. Co-translator and director Daniel Smith [whose translation of Marivaux's *Love in Disguise* appeared in *The Mercurian*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 2012)], and co-translator Valentina Denzel, avoid this pitfall by consciously approaching their work thinking in terms of theatrical production from the beginning. Smith's introduction to *The Serpent Lady* elaborates further upon this potential model for the theatrical translation process.

*The Serpent Lady* is followed by Austrian playwright Bernard Studlar's *iPlay*, translated by Henning Bochert [whose translation of Martin Heckmanns' *A Man Walks Into the World* appeared in *The Mercurian*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Fall 2011)]. Studlar's clever and poetically written play is a contemporary meditation upon the hold the past has over us and how that hold prevents us from facing (or even seeing) the future in front of us. Playfully structured, *iPlay* invites us to join in its game and, not unlike a twenty-first century commedia dell' arte, improvise our own apps.

Next comes *Quijóteres: The Ingenious Puppet Don Quijote de la Mancha* based upon the novel *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, and written, translated and adapted by Jason Yancey [whose article "Directing Comedia in the Twenty-first Century: Translating Culture Through Performance" appeared in *The Mercurian*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Spring 2008)]. Yancey's funny puppet show adaptation of Cervantes' masterpiece provides us with yet another model of theatrical translation and adaptation. In this case the author has greatly reduced Cervantes' lengthy, irrepressible novel to a thirty-minute puppet show. Yet, by choosing the form and structure of the puppet show stage, Yancey retains a number of the *Quijote's* most important elements: fantasy, performance, and fun.

The issue concludes with Spanish playwright Antonio Muñoz de Mesa's *Policy* translated by Phyllis Zatlin. Zatlin's translations of contemporary French and Spanish playwrights have peppered *The Mercurian* since its inception [Jean Bouchaud's *Is That How It Was?*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2007); Carlos Semprun-Maura's *Brandy Blues*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring 2009); Francisco Nieva's *It's Not True*, Vol.3, No. 3 (Spring 2011)]. Here she gives us her translation of Muñoz de Mesa's treatment of the sexual abuse scandals that continue to rock the Catholic Church across the world. Shortly before the publication of this issue Cardinal Sean O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston and Pope Francis' designated spokesman on matters of sexual abuse stated that the Catholic Church's failure to punish bishops who protect pedophiles has seriously harmed its credibility. The Church, he continued, must now lead by "humbly making the commitment to accountability, transparency and zero tolerance." In its own way, Muñoz de Mesa's play investigates the difficulties involved in reaching that goal.

Back issues of *The Mercurian* can be found at: <http://drama.unc.edu/related-links/the-mercurian/>. As the theatre is nothing without its audience, *The Mercurian* welcomes your comments, questions, complaints, and critiques. Deadline for submissions for consideration for Volume 5, No. 4 (Fall 2015) will be August 1, 2015.

--Adam Versényi

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## *The Serpent Lady*

By Carlo Gozzi

Translated by Daniel Smith and Valentina Denzel

### INTRODUCTION

Theatre historians tend to know Carlo Gozzi's plays primarily because of his conflict with the playwright Carlo Goldoni in eighteenth-century Venice. While Goldoni favored a more regularized, literary comedy, Gozzi wanted to continue the use of masks and improvisation, telling old stories in old ways. *The Serpent Lady* is a commedia dell'arte fairy tale, like nine other fairy-tale plays (*fiabe teatrali*) created by Gozzi in collaboration with the Sacchi troupe. In many ways the *fiabe* are plays about the magic of theatre. *The Serpent Lady* tells the story of Cherestani, the Fairy Queen, and her mortal husband Farruscad. They must overcome numerous magical obstacles in order to be together. At its core, *The Serpent Lady* is a story about how love can conquer not only death, but immortality. Farruscad and Cherestani must place their faith in each other, despite advisors who try to keep them apart. While love is initially a force that weakens Farruscad, he ultimately approaches love in a new way that leads him to greater maturity.

This collaborative translation was developed for a production of *The Serpent Lady* at Michigan State University in March 2014. When I had proposed to direct one of Gozzi's theatrical fairy tales, I chose *La donna serpente* after reading English translations by John DiGaetani (*The Snake Lady*) and by Albert Bermel and Ted Emery (*The Serpent Woman*), both to be found in anthologies of Gozzi's work.<sup>1</sup> One major reason for deciding to create a new translation for this project was to allow for the possibility of improvisation in the production. The published Italian text notes that many scenes are intended to be performed *all'improvvisatto*, but the existing English translations struggle to convey this improvisational quality.

Working on a new version of the text afforded the opportunity for a fruitful collaboration with Valentina Denzel, a colleague in Romance and Classical Studies. Our process was to translate scene-by-scene, trading off via email as each of us completed a new scene. As a native speaker of Italian and a specialist in the early modern period, Valentina frequently corrected my errors in comprehension. As a theatre artist and native speaker of English, I was able to focus on polishing the text in the target language. We scheduled three workshop readings of the work in progress during the fall semester so that we could hear the translation. These readings were attended by members of the design team, so the scenic, lighting, and costume designer were able to engage with the developing script early in their design process. Valentina also came to several rehearsals to share her linguistic and cultural knowledge of eighteenth-century Venice. Both of us found this to be a productive collaborative model, one that might be preferable to the practice of a linguistic expert handing a "literal translation" to a playwright for adapting.

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<sup>1</sup> John Louis DiGaetani, *Carlo Gozzi: Translations of The Love of Three Oranges, Turandot, and The Snake Lady*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); Carlo Gozzi, *Five Tales for the Theatre*, ed. and trans. Albert Bermel and Ted Emery (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Gozzi's *fiabe* present several unique translation challenges. First, eighteenth-century Italian dialects are complex. While some of Gozzi's characters are fairly comprehensible with knowledge of contemporary Italian, Pantalone in particular speaks a Venetian dialect that poses serious difficulties for the translator. We made productive use of a Venetian-Italian dictionary based on the works of Gozzi's enemy Carlo Goldoni.<sup>2</sup> A second important aspect of Gozzi's published plays is their status as recording performances that were improvised to some degree; some scenes of *La donna serpente* are written in narrative form as scenarios, rather than in dialogue. In our version, most such scenes include the note "written to be improvised." This improvisational quality means that some scenes were devised in rehearsal, and the resulting script contains ad-libs by the actors, especially those who played the masked characters Truffaldino, Brighella, Tartaglia, and Pantalone. Anyone who wishes to stage this version would be welcome to explore a similar improvisational approach to the text. Liberal cutting of the script is also encouraged, particularly in the early going, as much of the exposition is repetitive.

Taking on the dual roles of director and co-translator meant that I was thinking specifically about production choices while preparing the script, and that I was willing to make changes to the text based on what was happening in rehearsal. The most significant directorial intervention in the translation was the addition of a Chorus of Fairies. Textual and practical considerations informed this choice. In the original, the fairy Zemina appears in the first scene and then does not return, though several scenes indicate that Cherestani has multiple fairies or soldiers with her. I wanted to give Zemina more to do, both to make this a more significant role for the actress and to help tie up the loose ends of the narrative. The Italian text also contains vivid and entertaining stage directions; introducing the Fairies as narrators allowed some of those stage directions to be heard by the audience. Because several of these stage directions call for thunder to be seen, lightning to be heard, and an earthquake to be felt, we decided to give the Fairies quasi-Italian names based on those natural phenomena (Tuonara, Fulmina, and Terramota).

Adding these three fairies created additional roles for women in the production, an important consideration given the casting pool in the MSU Department of Theatre. I also decided to cast women in the vast majority of other roles; only the role of Farruscad was played by a male actor. Gender is an inevitable theme in this play. Indeed, Gozzi is often accused of misogyny because of his cruel female characters (and because of the awful things he says about his mother in his *Memoirs*). Casting an ensemble of sixteen women and one man represented an effort to challenge traditional gender roles and to practice resistant reading. For the women who played male masked roles, the exaggerated performance of gender was a significant aspect of the characters they created. After casting a woman as Togrul, Farruscad's chief minister, we decided that this character should be played as a woman. This meant that Togrul and Canzade would be understood as lesbians by other characters and by the audience.

Working with a new translation allowed us to mine the improvisational spirit of the play, and to bring contemporary humor to a piece that inhabits the world of fairy tales. In attempting to translate

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<sup>2</sup> Gianfranco Folena, *Vocabolario del Veneziano di Carlo Goldoni* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1993).

Gozzi's topicality and theatrical parody, we found our own contemporary and historical equivalents. For instance, Truffaldino sometimes awakened Brighella by shouting "Taco Bell now serves breakfast," and their ritual of summoning food referred to other brand-name items such as Cosmic Brownies. As a director, I made the discovery that the beginning of Act II worked well as a parody of Greek tragedy. As co-translator/adaptor, I made the decision to write the Fairies' introductory narration of this scene in a meter reminiscent of classical verse.

Translation for the stage is always a collaborative endeavor, because theatre is inherently collaborative.<sup>3</sup> My experience as co-translator and director of *The Serpent Lady* offers an unusual and exciting model for collaborative process in creating a new translation. Valentina Denzel's expertise in the source language and culture, along with my abilities in the target language and theatre production, allowed us to produce a draft to bring into rehearsals and production meetings. The script presented here also incorporates contributions by the design team and by the ensemble of actors.

- Daniel Smith

**Carlo Gozzi** was born in Venice in 1720. He is best known for his literary quarrel with Carlo Goldoni, and for his ten *fiabe teatrali* (theatrical fairy tales), including *The Love of Three Oranges* (1761), *The King Stag* (1762), *Turandot* (1762), and *The Green Bird* (1765). Gozzi wrote the *fiabe* for the commedia dell'arte troupe of Antonio Sacchi, and the plays are full of topical references and parodies of his rivals Goldoni and Chiari. The *fiabe* later inspired a number of opera adaptations, and have been successfully staged by such contemporary directors as Andrei Serban and Julie Taymor. In addition to the *fiabe*, Gozzi wrote several other plays and a lengthy set of memoirs in which he has nothing nice to say about anyone.

**Daniel Smith** is a dramaturg, translator, and theatre historian with research interests in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French theatre. He is currently Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies at Michigan State University. After studying French Literature at the University of Notre Dame, Dan earned degrees in Theatre from the University of Massachusetts Amherst (MFA) and Northwestern University (PhD). As a dramaturg, he worked at numerous theatres in Chicago, and served as Associate Artistic Director/Resident Dramaturg of Caffeine Theatre from 2010-2012. Dan has done annotated literal translations of Molière for playwright Constance Congdon (*The Imaginary Invalid*) and director Zeljko Djukic (*Don Juan*). His translations of short plays by Grandval were produced by Infamous Commonwealth Theatre, and his English-language versions of musical libretti were published in bilingual French/English children's books by Editions Télémaque. His translation of Marivaux's *Love in Disguise* was published in *The Mercurian*.

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<sup>3</sup> This idea has been discussed previously in *The Mercurian*, notably in Vol. 2, no. 2 and in the discussions from the Theatrical Translation as Creative Process Conference.

**Valentina Denzel** is an Assistant Professor of French Literature (17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century) in the Department of Romance and Classical Studies at Michigan State University. Her fields of interest are: Italian and French Literature (15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century), Queer and Gender Studies, Narratology, Possible World Theory, Relation between fiction and reality, *Querelle des femmes*. She has published several articles in this field of research. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in French literature and language. She is a member of several national and international organizations (RSA, MLA, SIEFAR, EFIGIES, RING, SFLGC).



THE SERPENT LADY  
By Carlo Gozzi  
Adapted and Translated by Daniel Smith and Valentina Denzel  
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*The Serpent Lady* was first presented by Michigan State University Department of Theatre in March 2014. It was directed by Daniel Smith, with a scenic design by Elspeth Williams, costume design by Stephanie Eubank, lighting design by Hernando Claros, dramaturgy and sound design by Jenna Jo Pawlicki, and fight direction by Lydia Hiller. The technical director was Jon Little. The cast was as follows:

The Fairies:

Cherestani, Fairy Queen of Eldorado: Adia Alli  
Farzana, the Fire Fairy: Jalyn Greene  
Zemina, the Wind Fairy: Christi Thibodeau  
Tuonara, the Thunder Fairy: Katherine Schooler  
Fulmina, the Lighting Fairy: Jenna Jo Pawlicki  
Terramota, the Earthquake Fairy: Marley Boone

The Actors:

Farruscad, King of Teflis: Casey James  
Pantalone: Carolyn Conover  
Truffaldino: Lydia Hiller  
Togrul, the Vizier: Lyndsay Manson  
Brighella, Togrul's servant: Kara O'Connor  
Tartaglia, a minister: Paige Conway  
Bedredino, son of Farruscad and Cherestani: Brittany Ann Nicol  
Rezia, daughter of Farruscad and Cherestani: Tara Marier  
Canzade, Farruscad's sister: Kendall Kotcher  
Smeraldina, Canzade's maid: Erika Clauson  
Badur, a traitorous minister: Laura Chall  
Voice of Geonca, the Necromancer: Brittany Ann Nicol

In this production, scenes were announced by the Fairies, who also served as a Greek chorus in Teflis and created all magical effects, including playing the Bull and the Giant.

## CHARACTERS AND SETTING

FARRUSCAD, King of Teflis.

CHERESTANÌ, Fairy, Queen of Eldorado, his wife

CANZADE, Sister of Farruscad, Warrior woman, in love with

TOGRUL, Vizier, Faithful Minister

BADUR, another minister (traitorous)

REZIA and BEDREDINO, Children; Twin son and daughter of Farruscad and Cherestani.

SMERALDINA, Canzade's maid, Warrior Woman

PANTALONE, Tutor of Farruscad

TRUFFALDINO, Hunter at Farruscad's court

TARTAGLIA, low-level minister

BRIGHELLA, servant of the Vizier Togrul

FARZANA,

ZEMINA, Fairies

Voice of GEONCA, Necromancer, friend of Farruscad

A BULL

A GIANT

The action takes place partly in an unknown desert near Eldorado, and partly in and around the city of Teflis.

## List of Scenes<sup>4</sup>

Act I, scene 1: Farzana and Zemina discuss Cherestani's desire to become mortal.<sup>5</sup>  
Act I, scene 2: Truffaldino and Brighella are reunited after eight years apart.  
Act I, scene 3: Farruscad writes a poem to his beloved. Pantalone mocks him.  
Act I, scene 4: Togrul and Tartaglia find Pantalone after a long journey.  
Act I, scene 5: A Woman's Voice speaks to Farruscad. A table of food appears and disappears.  
Act I, scene 6: Farruscad sleeps. Truffaldino and Brighella arrive with food.  
Act I, scene 7: Apparition of Checsaia the Priest.  
Act I, scene 8: Apparition of Atalmuc, Farruscad's father.  
Act I, scene 9: Farruscad soliloquizes.  
Act I, scene 10: Cherestani's palace appears.  
Act I, scene 11: Farzana reminds Cherestani of her political duties.  
Act I, scene 12: Brighella and Truffaldino wake up.  
Act I, scene 13: Pantalone and Tartaglia wake up.  
Act I, scene 14: Farruscad notices that Cherestani's predictions are coming true.  
Act I, scene 15: Rezia and Bedredino arrive, borne by the wind.  
Act I, scene 16: Cherestani tests Farruscad.

## Intermission

Act II, scene 1: Smeraldina returns from battle  
Act II, scene 2: Canzade returns from Battle  
Act II, scene 3: Farruscad and Togrul arrive in Teflis  
Act II, scene 4: Badur returns from his quest for provisions. Farruscad curses his wife.  
Act II, scene 5: Cherestani explains herself  
Act II, scene 6: Cherestani transforms into a serpent  
Act II, scene 7: Farruscad flees from Pantalone  
Act II, scene 8: Tartaglia brings good news  
Act II, scene 9: Farzana convinces Farruscad to go to his demise  
Act II, scene 10: Pantalone and Tartaglia bring amazing news  
Act II, scene 11: Truffaldino tries to sell newspapers  
Act II, scene 12: Pantalone and Tartaglia search for Farruscad  
Act II, scene 13: Farruscad is not found  
Act II, scene 14: Geonca's voice explains where to find Farruscad  
Act II, scene 15: Farzana and Farruscad arrive at the place of his trials  
Act II, scene 16: Farruscad fights a bull  
Act II, scene 17: Farzana charges Farruscad with his second task  
Act II, scene 18: Farruscad fights a giant  
Act II, scene 19: Farzana announces the third task; Farruscad kisses a serpent  
Act II, scene 20: Cherestani embraces Farruscad  
Act II, scene 21: They live happily ever after

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<sup>4</sup> Gozzi's play is in three acts. It made sense to condense it to two in order to have only one intermission. In Gozzi's original, Act I ends after scene 11, so Act II would begin with Brighella and Truffaldino waking up. Our Act II, scene 7 is Gozzi's Act III, scene 1.

<sup>5</sup> These scene titles are not in Gozzi's text, but are an intervention by the translator and adaptors. Some were recited aloud by the Fairy Chorus, as indicated. They could also take on a Brechtian function as projections or placards.

ACT I, SCENE 1

In the woods, near Eldorado.

FARZANA and ZEMINA

ZEMINA (*With a sad voice*)

Tell me Farzana, why aren't you crying?

FARZANA

You tell me, what is there to cry about, Zemina darling?

ZEMINA

Oh, my friend, have you forgotten? When Cherestani, favored Fairy, daughter of Abdelazin, the King of Eldorado, a mortal man, and of the beautiful fairy Zebdon, Cherestani, our dearest companion, beloved of Farruscad, wanted to get married, and instead of remaining immortal, like us, to become mortal, like her husband? And that our King, Demogorgon, angrily told her to cease and desist, but that...

FARZANA

Yes, Zemina, I know that Demogorgon swore that if she could make it through the second day of the Rising of the Dog Star, at the moment of sunset, during the current year, without being cursed by her husband, that she would become mortal, like him, because that is what she wants.

ZEMINA

Oh, God! Tomorrow at the break of dawn the day will start in a fatal way for us. We will lose Cherestani just twenty-five years into the age of her beautiful flower, the most beloved fairy, the most cherished, the most beautiful among us. We will lose, Farzana, the most perfect ornament of our company. You know how agreeable she is. He will never forsake her.

FARZANA

Don't you know how many seemingly awful and unheard-of things Demogorgon will require Cherestani to do to Farruscad tomorrow, unseen and without the luxury of explaining herself? Remember, he has forbidden her to reveal herself for eight years, and during the fatal day tomorrow she may not explain her secrets. Believe me, no, tomorrow will not end without her being cursed by her husband. Cherestani will remain our companion.

ZEMINA

But you know that Farruscad must swear never to curse her, and then break his promise, in order for her to remain a fairy.

FARZANA

Don't worry. He will swear, and break his promise, and will curse her. And she will be ours.

ZEMINA

He won't swear.

FARZANA

Yes, he will.

ZEMINA

If he does swear, he will not break his promise.

FARZANA

No, Zemina. He will forsake her. She will be ours.

ZEMINA

You are heartless! But what about the horrible sentence that will befall her for two hundred years? If her husband curses her tomorrow, beautiful Cherestani will be turned into a hideous, abominable snake.

FARZANA

Well, I know that, but what difference does it make? Her mad request deserves some punishment. The two hundred years will pass, and her darling husband will die, and in just two hundred years we'll have Cherestani back with us.

ZEMINA

But her husband might free her from this condemnation, and then the fairy will be mortal and we will have lost her.

FARZANA

You are dreaming. He will lose his life. The deed has been entrusted to me. I have been given the task of guarding our condemned companion, and tomorrow it is up to me to ensure the death of her husband, who poses the only threat to her immortality.

ZEMINA

But what about Geonca the Necromancer, Farruscad's friend? Aren't you afraid of him?

FARZANA

No. I am not afraid of him. We should go. It is dishonorable to assault the audience with these boring details of things that should remain unspoken. And above all, we must stop talking about our secrets because talking about it too much will weaken the effect of our magic.

ZEMINA

Oh, heavens! Before I bore those who are the most important to us, I would rather see Cherestani die along with Farruscad.

*(Exit Zemina and Farzana)*

## ACT I, SCENE 2

Truffaldino and Brighella are reunited after eight years apart.

*Change of scene, which now represents a horrible desert with many rocks in the background; some rocks serve as seats.*

BRIGHELLA, TRUFFALDINO

*These two characters come together and embrace. This scene is written to be improvised.*

BRIGHELLA

Truffaldino! What are you doing here in this desert? And what news is there of Prince Farruscad?

TRUFFALDINO (*As if telling a fairy tale to children*)

Once upon a time, eight years ago today, as you already know, my dear sir, on the [eighteenth of March],<sup>6</sup> Prince Farruscad; Pantalone, his preceptor; myself; and many hunters left the City of Teflis to go hunting. When the hunters arrived at a forest, far from the city, they found a female deer as white as snow. The deer was completely covered by golden chains, flowers, and jewels placed around her neck, rings on her hoofs, diamonds on her head etc. Oh, my dear sir, it was the most beautiful thing... the most beautiful thing that one can see with two eyes... And so, my dear sir, Prince Farruscad instantly fell in love with her, and followed her. Pantalone ran after the Prince. I, Truffaldino ran after Pantalone, and we ran and ran, and walked and walked, etc. until the deer reached a riverbank. The Prince followed the deer, and they were *this close* to catching the deer by her tail, but then the deer jumped into the river, and was not seen again.

BRIGHELLA

Maybe she drowned.

TRUFFALDINO

No. You must not interrupt. This is a story of the highest importance. "And so, my dear Sir, the Prince, desperate, yearning for the deer whom he was in love with, had his men fish in the river the whole day long, hoping to find her dead or alive. "And they fished and they fished and they fished and they fished, but all in vain. Then... a wonder! A voice is coming out of the river, and you can hear her calling and saying: (*Fairies join:*) "Farruscad, follow me." The Prince, being out of his senses, could not control himself, and threw himself head over heels into the river. Desperate, Pantalone, holding his beard with one hand, jumped after his master: I, Truffaldino wanted to jump after Pantalone, but was too afraid to get wet. And while I, Truffaldino, was looking into the river, I saw a table full of food, and so my loyalty towards my master made me jump into the abyss. Then, oh wonder! In the depths of the river, I did not see the table anymore, but I found that the deer was changed into a princess surrounded by an entourage of young ladies--the most beautiful thing, the most beautiful thing, that you can see with two eyes! The prince was on his knees before the princess. And Pantalone was standing there like an imbecile. And the Prince was saying: "Tell me who you are, exceptional beauty. Have pity on this sad heart, which never before has experienced such a fierce fire."

And the princess replied: "Do not try to find out who I am. The moment will come when you will know everything. I like your yearning for the madness of love, and if your heart is strong enough to endure the most terrible things, I will accept you as my husband, and my right hand will be yours."

The Prince wanted to marry her, even if the world tumbled down. Pantalone was shouting, trying to dissuade him, but they walked into a palace with diamond columns, doors made out of rubies, golden beams, etc. And in spite of Pantalone, the wedding was celebrated and nine months later, the princess gave birth to a boy and a girl, the most beautiful creatures, my friend, the most beautiful creatures that one can see with two eyes. The boy's name was Bedredino, and the girl's Rezia, and they are now seven years old. At the palace, everybody ate, drank and slept well, and happily made love to the young court ladies. Pantalone was always suffering, since he did not know the country nor the princess. The prince continued asking: "Tell me who you are, beautiful lady." And the Princess replied, "Do not try to find out who I am. The moment will come, when you will find out

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<sup>6</sup> TRUFFALDINO says today's date.

everything. May your heart be strong enough to endure the most terrible things. Alas: unfortunately there will come an atrocious moment for me, and for you, my beloved husband.”

Always secrets, always hidden things! Then three days ago, the curious Prince tried to open the Princess’s writing desk, hoping to find one of her letters, and to find out her name revealed by the writing. The Princess caught him in the act, she was furious and, while she was weeping, reproached him for his disobedience, she let out a cry, and stamped with one foot on the floor... and, O wonder! She disappeared with her children, the court ladies, and the palace, and we were left behind in this horrible desert, as you can plainly see.

BRIGHELLA

I don’t believe a word of this fairy tale you just told me.

TRUFFALDINO

It is true, I swear! Look around you at this magical desert. Speaking of which, how did you get into the desert?

BRIGHELLA

I did not get here by myself, but together with the vizier Togrul, and Tartaglia, loyal ministers of Prince Farruscad. The old king, Atalmuk, Farruscad’s father, has died after eight long years of affliction, because he had no news about his son. Morgone, the ugly Saracen king and a giant, intends to marry Canzade, Farruscad’s sister. He longs for the crown, and he has assaulted the kingdom, besieged the city of Teflis. Togrul, the vizier, who is in love with Canzade, went to the cavern of Geonca, the magician, to find the whereabouts of Prince Farruscad in this time full of calamities. Geonca told him to go to Mount Olympus, where he would find a hole, and if he climbed into the hole, he would find the prince. He told Togrul some secrets, for example, he gave her a patch to put on her upper stomach, so that for two months she would not suffer hunger or thirst, since the journey into the hole was a long one and we would not be able to find anything to eat or drink. Togrul, Tartaglia and I, equipped with patches on our upper stomachs, arrived at Mount Olympus, where we found the hole. We climbed down with our burning torches. We climbed down forty million, seven thousand, two hundred and forty steps, and then we arrived here in this desert.

TRUFFALDINO

Forty million, seven thousand, two hundred and forty steps? Unbelievable! And where are Togrul and Tartaglia now?

BRIGHELLA

I left them nearby under a tree to rest. And where are the Prince and Pantalone?

TRUFFALDINO

They wandered off through the desert, because the prince was yearning for the princess. But we have been gathering each night in this clearing to have supper and to rest.

BRIGHELLA

What do you eat, and where do you sleep in this desert? All I can see are rocks and dry twigs.



TRUFFALDINO

Some tents appeared after the beautiful palace had disappeared, so we sleep under those. And we eat very well, plenty of food appears if we just ask. But you cannot see who brings it. I think it's the devil!

BRIGHELLA

I don't believe it! Oh, I am beginning to feel like the patch on my stomach is losing its power. After two months, my virtuous behavior is gone. I am weak, and cannot resist any longer.

TRUFFALDINO

You should follow me. Have no doubt about anything.

BRIGHELLA

We have to save Togrul and Tartaglia too.

TRUFFALDINO

All in good time. You should follow me, my good sir, and I will tell you more awe-inspiring stories. Once upon a time... *(They leave while TRUFFALDINO is telling him some more stories)*

ACT I, SCENE 3

Farruscad writes a poem to his beloved. Pantalone mocks him.

FARRUSCAD *(Entering restlessly)*

Every step I take is in vain. My friend, will I see my dear wife Cherestani nevermore?

PANTALONE

My head aches; my brain is boiled. My dear Highness, if we stay in the sun all day our kidneys will heat up, we could catch an evil disease, like pneumonia. And there are no doctors here, neither generalists nor specialists. We are going to die out here, like beasts! Dear boy, dear boy, you must give up on this love of yours.

FARRUSCAD

How can I forget, my friend, so much love, so much tenderness, so many kindnesses and caresses? Ah, dear Pantalone, all is lost! I shall have no peace.

PANTALONE

Now the love and tenderness and caresses and sighs of whom? Of whom?

FARRUSCAD

Of a great, generous, noble soul; of the most beautiful and dear Princess that the sun has ever seen, or whose light illuminated the earth.

PANTALONE (*Aside*)

Of a wicked witch, whose entire face can change at will, when she wishes to please him. Who must be four or five hundred years old!<sup>7</sup>

FARRUSCAD (*Trance-like, on one side*)

Oh, lovely hair... where are you? I have lost you!

PANTALONE (*Hearing, from the other side; aside*)

Cursed cheating pumpkinhead with four wormy hairs on top, unmask yourself for charity's sake!

FARRUSCAD

Eyes! Shining stars, where have you gone?

PANTALONE (*Aside*)

Sunken eyes, like the eyes of Gonella's horse, full of wildness, show yourselves!

FARRUSCAD

Mouth of glowing rubies and white pearls, no longer do I see you! Who has taken you away?

PANTALONE (*Aside*)

Bleeding gums with four bolts of lightning for teeth, kitchen-sink lips, with the black mouth of a squid. Show yourselves... in hell!

FARRUSCAD

Cheeks of roses and lilies, who has stolen you away?

PANTALONE (*Aside*)

Cheeks of a cod, blown up like a turnip, and cheeks by which this boy will be disgraced, because of his obsession!

FARRUSCAD

Ah, delicious breasts of my beloved, with your curdled milk, where are you hiding?

PANTALONE

(*Aside*) Or bags of dirty leather, hanging butchered meat, reveal yourself to our mind's eye so we can vomit, you nasty witch! Bleah. (*To FARRUSCAD, new tactic*): Your Highness, my dear boy, do you remember the wicked trick played by the witch Dilnovaz on the King of Tibet?

FARRUSCAD (*Confused*)

What trick? The King of Tibet? What are you talking about?

PANTALONE

Well! The witch Dilnovaz, who was three hundred years old, by virtue of an enchanted ring that she wore on her little finger, changed herself into the form of the Queen, the King of Tibet's wife, who

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<sup>7</sup> In the Italian, PANTALONE continues: "O, magic ring of Angelica, where are you? You, who opened the eyes of Ruggiero to show him that the beautiful Alcina was a deformed old woman. We need your magic to expose Cherestani!" This was cut.

was a young thing of about twenty, and then she had the strength to drive the true queen from her bed and take her place there as an imposter queen! How long could she keep up this charade? Since this witch was a criminal of the first rank, one day the King caught her in flagrante delicto with a... how can I say?... a thing of the devil. He could not hold back, and he drew his sword. As fate would have it, he cut off her little finger, where she wore the enchanted ring that caused her to look young and beautiful. And so he saw her in her true form as a toothless hag, with a beard and so many wrinkles she looked like a hundred pieces of beef. These are all true facts, Your Highness, I'm not making up fairy tales for children. The King had the grace to seek his wife, who was begging for alms in the streets, singing the famous lines, "I am the wife of a King, and yet I am not. I am a Princess, and yet I am not." I would wager that Cherestani is also a witch, just like Dilnovaz. If only we could find her enchanted ring!

FARRUSCAD

Say no more. How can this be true of Cherestani, my wife who has borne me two children? My lost children! My soul! My blood! (*Cries.*)

PANTALONE

Of course your children have also touched my own heart. What a boy, that Bedredino! So lively and spirited, sure to make a great fortune one day. And the girl, Rezia! It feels like I can see them scampering around, calling me grandfather. No use thinking about it; it feels like a punch in the guts. (*Crying*) But, Your Highness, we must keep calm and carry on. After all, their mother is a witch. We must rip them out of our hearts.

FARRUSCAD

Ah, Pantalone, I myself was the traitor! I disobeyed my wife. She had forbidden me to try to find out who she was until eight years and one day had passed. I tried to find out before that time. I was disobedient. I curse my curiosity!

PANTALONE

What kind of a misdemeanor is that? Does a man no longer have the right to know who his wife is? To tell you the truth, I was always suspicious of that prohibition. It made it hard for me to stomach your marriage. Go figure! A marriage to a doe. A deer. A female deer. Good heavens! It's a wonder you didn't become a deer. Thank heaven we are free from this witch! Let's be on our way! Any path will do to get us out of hell! Let's go find poor old Atalmuc, your father. Who knows how many tears he has shed for you? Who knows if he is even still alive? Poor wretch! Who knows if he is even still King? And what about your enemy, the wicked king Morgon, who wants to marry Canzade, your sister? But here you are: a king without a kingdom, a beggar, a miserable low-life beggar, husband of a witch, a devil, an ogre, a bolt of lightning that could destroy you.

FARRUSCAD

Quiet, Pantalone. I will die before I abandon this region, I swear it. I have dreamed of seeing my beloved wife. She seems to be just ahead. Humble forgiveness I ask my father if he lives, and if he is dead I ask his pardon. I will wander in these woods forever, calling her name. (*He does:*) Cherestani!

ACT 1, SCENE 4

TOGRUL, TARTAGLIA, and PANTALONE

TARTAGLIA (*Coming out of the background, he sees Pantalone; happily:*)  
Mister Togrul, Togrul, Mister Vizier!

TOGRUL (*Coming on stage*)  
What is happening Tartaglia?

TARTAGLIA  
Pantalone, Pantalone, don't you see him?

TOGRUL  
Can this be true? Oh Heavens, I thank you... I thank you. Tartaglia, we have found Farruscad.

PANTALONE (*He sees them from a far distance*)  
Togrul... Tarta... I am so thirsty... is this a mirage?

TARTAGLIA (*Running*)  
O my dear Pantalone.

TOGRUL (*He embraces him*)  
Oh my dear friend, how relieved I am to have found you again!

PANTALONE  
Sorry... Tartaglia, excuse me... My heart feels so tight... Oh my God... (*He is fainting, TARTAGLIA supports him*)

TARTAGLIA  
Mister Togrul, the old guy is kicking the bucket, and he still has not told us where the Prince is. Pantalone, tell us, where is Prince Farruscad? And then we will let you die in peace.

TOGRUL  
My friend, Pantalone--

PANTALONE (*Coming back to his senses*)  
My Lord Vizier, how did you get into this desert?

TOGRUL  
That is a long story. But first, tell me, where is my king Farruscad? We have no more time to lose.

PANTALONE  
He is here, safe and sound, but lost. He got himself into trouble. Big, big trouble, I will tell you everything. But how did you get to this otherworldly desert?

TOGRUL

I got here with the help of our friend Geonca, the magician, accompanied by Tartaglia, and Brighella, my servant. Geonca told me a lot of secrets in order for me to bring back home my prince from this unknown place. Where is he?

PANTALONE

Geonca may know a few parlor tricks, but he will not know any secret to get the Prince out of this misery. Oh vinegar! What else do you want?

TARTAGLIA

Well now tell me, where is he, where is he, you phlegmatic old man, stop exasperating us.

TOGRUL

Every lost moment, Pantalone, has its most cruel consequences.

PANTALONE

Of course, he is not very far away. He strolls around and then comes back to me, but no pleading, or even tears, will bring him out of here, that much is certain. As I already said, he has these deep secrets...

TOGRUL

Never mind. Let's go, Pantalone, let's go. (*He leaves*)

PANTALONE

And he retires directly at the riverbank... Should I go with him? Tell me, Tartaglia, didn't he say that Brighella is also there? Where is Brighella?

TARTAGLIA

Yes of course, Brighella must be somewhere nearby.

PANTALONE

By the cob without leaves! If the Prince sees him, we are in trouble. What secrets does the Vizier have, dear brother?

TARTAGLIA

Oh, they are quite unbelievable... just listen (*He whispers in his ear*)

PANTALONE

Leapin' lizards! Well that gives us something to hope for! I have a plan: Hide in some place nearby. If you see the Prince, don't let him see you. If you find Brighella, for heaven's sake, stay perfectly still, if you can, so the Prince cannot see you, and don't say a word. Then go directly to the riverbank. Oh, let heaven help us, that the Prince has not seen him and that we can drag him out of his misery. (*he leaves*)

TARTAGLIA

Hey, hey, Pantalone, what about the food? O splendid! They leave me here with the patch on my stomach. It would keep me from being hungry for two months. Now fifty-nine days have passed, and five hours, I will survive a few more hours, but then I will drop dead. Still this patch has great

power! How many poor people could use it? Fathers would come back home to find their starving and crying family, and “boom”—a piece of patch on everybody’s tummy, would be the perfect remedy. Think of how many actors, and how many poets could benefit from this—those starving artist types. Well, I’d love to stay and chat, but now I must hide. *(He hides)*

#### ACT I, SCENE 5

A woman’s voice speaks to Farruscad.

FARRUSCAD *(Entering)*

I seek in vain, I waste my breath in vain, in this desert of pain, because of the cruel disdain of my Cherestani, who is deaf to my pain, which is destroying my brain. I was disobedient; but I humbly beg your pardon. Cherestani, my bride, Cherestani, only for a moment let me see you again. Let me imprint one kiss on my beloved children, then take my life, and I will be content.

TARTAGLIA *(In back)*

That is Prince Farruscad... without a doubt it is he. Oh, what joy! I cannot hold it back. I want to hug him and squeeze him! *(Takes a few joyful steps, then stops)* But, Tartaglia, what are you doing? Burst with love, but do not deviate from the orders you were given! *(Hides again. A small table full of food appears.)*

ZEMINA

A small table of food appears... magically.

FARRUSCAD *(Seeing the table.)*

No, I will not eat this food. I am going to die of starvation and sorrow. What tyranny is this, to want me to remain alive, and make me want to die of anguish every moment, and, not dying, suffer a thousand deaths.

TARTAGLIA *(Behind)*

That table wasn’t there. Who put it there? I’m dying of hunger. If only I could secretly take some food. *(He furtively approaches the table.)*

VOICE *(From inside)*

Farruscad, take food, and nourish yourself.

TARTAGLIA *(Afraid)*

What voice is this? Where the hell have they left me? *(Runs and hides on the other side.)*

FARRUSCAD

Voice, you are not actually my wife. Cruel Voice, I am resolved to die, if my children, if my beloved wife, I cannot see again.

VOICE

No, you will not die. Disobedient one, learn how much it costs if you do not obey your wife.

FULMINA

The small table of food disappears... magically.

*(TARTAGLIA tries again to approach the table to get some food. The table has disappeared. Frightened, Tartaglia flees to hide on the opposite side.)*

FARRUSCAD *(To VOICE)*

Voice, tell me, what can I do to make peace with Cherestani, whom I have offended? I will do anything. *(He pauses to listen to the voice, which does not respond.)* Oh, you have stopped answering me. I am unworthy, abandoned, desperate, lonely, here with no companion. Everyone leaves me. And my ministers enjoy themselves with food and wine. Only Farruscad, restless, angry, with a thousand reasons for anxiety, flagellates himself, weighted down. Ah, but it is unfair of me to condemn those who do not feel passion. I only want to die; I don't want food. *(Sits on a stone and puts his face on one hand, in an attitude of sleep, then falls asleep.)*

TARTAGLIA *(In the back)*

My head is spinning like a wheel of fireworks! I have seen and heard tremendous things! *(Notices FARRUSCAD)* It seems to me the Prince is sleeping!

#### ACT 1, SCENE 6

Truffaldino and Brighella arrive with food.

*TRUFFALDINO and BRIGHELLA with different sorts of food and TARTAGLIA; again, this scene is written to be improvised.*

TRUFFALDINO

But my dear Sir, where are Togrul and Tartaglia?

TARTAGLIA *(Desperately indicates a certain side and tells him to be quiet)*

SHHHHHHHH!

BRIGHELLA *(To TRUFFALDINO)*

Look, there's Tartaglia!

TRUFFALDINO *(Loudly)*

I haven't seen you in eight years!

TARTAGLIA

*(Desperately points at the prince who is asleep. Enchanted, they look at each other, and after a short and funny scene with lazzi and silent acrobatics, monosyllables and surprises, they all walk inside to eat.)*<sup>8</sup>

#### ACT I, SCENE 7

The Fairies Narrate: *Pantalone will enter without his usual mask. He wears the robes of a priest. The whole is designed so that the Priest can transform back into Pantalone. The audience should not recognize Pantalone when he is disguised as the Priest.*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In our production, TARTAGLIA's improvisation usually involved tricking TRUFFALDINO into doing the hokey-pokey, or some equally ridiculous dance.

<sup>9</sup> Gozzi's stage directions suggest that PANTALONE's voice is supplied by someone offstage, but we chose to have PANTALONE disguise his voice.

PANTALONE

Farruscad, wake up!

FARRUSCAD (*Getting up*)

Alas! Whose voice is this?

PANTALONE

It is the voice of Checsaia, the solitary priest, to whom Heaven has granted the light and the grace to see all, and to succor those who are obedient to Heaven and not to Hell.

FARRUSCAD

Ah, Checsaia, the delight of Heaven! I know well, Checsaia, that you have come here to rescue me. Tell me, holy one, you who sees everything. Have pity, and instruct me where to find my children, and whither has gone Cherestani, my wife.

PANTALONE

Silence, wicked one! Name not she who is despised by Heaven! I come to liberate you from this horrible, filthy sorceress. Yes, I have come here to tear you away from the hand of this barbaric, iniquitous, new Circe. Ah, how! Ah, how much you will have to suffer, foolish boy, awakening blind as her prey, to purge the guilt of your contracted union with her.

FARRUSCAD

What? Checsaia, what are you telling me? No, no, what you are telling me cannot be possible.

PANTALONE

Silence, beast. You are no man. Look around you. All the animals you see, all the trees, all the hard rocks in this valley, once were men like you. The greedy, lustful, wicked witch took them as her lovers. Once they had quenched her insatiable desires, one by one she turned them into beasts, into plants, into stones, and confined them here, where no one hears their moans.

FARRUSCAD (*Scared*)

Oh God! What am I hearing now?

PANTALONE (*As before*)

Shake it off! Or from now on this will be your destiny. From human form to frightful dragon you will change, with flames shooting out of your eyes, and disgusting, poisonous drool dripping from your hideous mouth, and a trailing, scaly belly. Deformed and dirty, you will travel through the desert, drying up the grass and the land wherever you pass. With hideous screams you will frighten yourself as you bewail your misfortune.

FARRUSCAD (*More frightened*)

O misery! What should I do?

PANTALONE (*As before*)

Follow me!

FARRUSCAD

Alas, Checsaia! Must I leave my children behind? No, I don't have the heart for that.



PANTALONE

Shame on you. Follow me! You must lose the memory of your children, children of a filthy love, children of the abyss. Take my hand. (*PANTALONE turns upstage and the FAIRIES remove his priestly robe, put on his mask, and hand him his cane.*)

FARRUSCAD

Yes, holy light, I will follow you. (*Holds out his hand to the priest. The priest has turned back into PANTALONE, who, without recognizing that he has been transformed, says the following lines in his own voice.*)

PANTALONE

This is how I like you. Obedient, Farruscad, you show yourself. Wise reflection and a healthy beverage will make you forget Cherestani and your children, abominable fruit that I will not miss.

FARRUSCAD (*After a gesture of surprise about the transformation*)

What? What do I see? (*Moving away; Aside:*) The person I thought was Checsaia is really... Pantalone?<sup>10</sup>

PANTALONE (*Follows, as above*)

What? Fool, do you repent? Have you changed your mind?

FARRUSCAD

Insolence! You dare so much with your Lord?

PANTALONE (*Looking around*)

Alas and alack! What did I say? Even with the best secrets, we can't get him away from this conniving witch.

FARRUSCAD (*Transported*)

Cherestani, you still love me! You still want me to wait for you here. But what do I see now? It's a miracle!

ACT 1, SCENE 8

The Fairies Narrate: *Togrul is transformed into an old king. She appears as Atalmuc, Farruscad's father. The order of the previous scene is to be followed. The audience is not supposed to know that the ghost is actually Togrul.*

TOGRUL

It is a wonder that this abhorred witch has so much power that any good-hearted intention is in vain and even changes priests into suspect ministers. (*FARRUSCAD will be ecstatic and motionless, when he sees the figure of his father.*) Nothing is hidden to me. You should know, my son that the person who appeared to you as Pantalone, is in reality Checsaia, the priest. You should not be led astray by his transformation nor by his flight, because what you saw was the work of your witch.

FARRUSCAD (*Confused*)

Father... My dear father... Here, in this desert... (*He runs to embrace him*)

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<sup>10</sup> FARRUSCAD improvised "Panties" instead of "Pantalone" here.

TOGRUL

I am thy father's spirit. I was your father, now I am his untouchable shadow. (*With a weeping voice*) This is what the sorrow over a lost son has done to me. I cried for eight years, and finally, my tired body has given into the anxieties, now it is lying mute in a small grave, reduced to cold ashes. This is your fault.

FARRUSCAD

Oh, my dear father! It was the most beautiful woman that mortal eyes ever have looked upon, that held me here. She is my wife. She gave me two children. Father, she disappeared three days ago, and...

TOGRUL

Tell me no more. I should detest you. My son, leave this isolated and wicked place, full of ugliness and vice...

FARRUSCAD

My father... I adored you, if I respect your shadow, this is the proof, that I will give you. I will follow my father, wherever you want to, ridden by regrets, suffering, and confusion. Cherestani, you stay here. Oh God! You know, what strength is necessary to Farruscad in order to do this.

TOGRUL

Son, I am proud of you. I will precede you, follow me. (*He starts walking, and changes from Atalmuc to Togrul*)

FARRUSCAD (*Surprised*)

Togrul, Vizier! Here in this place! Under the guise of my father!

TOGRUL (*In his own voice, arrogant*)

Prince, this witch is too powerful, and in vain I am trying to show my loyalty and in vain I suffer.

FARRUSCAD

How decadent and how daring!

TOGRUL (*With grandeur*)

Your unhappy father is dead. The kingdom is attacked and ruined by Morgon. The fields, the houses, the holy temples are plundered. Fire and weapons destroy everything. Rapes, weeping, ruins and blood shed, are the trophies of a blinded Prince, who lives buried in indolence by the wicked manipulations of a hideous witch, hated by the eternal gods, filthy, and detested by Heaven.

FARRUSCAD

Do not tell me anymore, Togrul. That is enough, stop.

TOGRUL (*Bold*)

What should I be afraid of? Of someone who has become useless to himself? A coward who abandons his people? Leaving his most beloved to barbarous massacres? I alone... I alone had the courage to follow Geonca's advice, who promised me, that if Farruscad was to reappear in this kingdom, his kingdom would be miraculously saved! I alone... I alone left my beloved, leading a

handful of astonished people who are in danger, I alone could save my king and preserve his kingdom. Farruscad, I know how to get you out of here. (*Kneels down*)

FARRUSCAD

Togrul, speak no more. Leave me. Go back to the tents over there, and rest. It is night already. I want to be alone for a while. Let me think about my misery. I promise to be with you by dawn, and I will follow you, wherever you want to take me.

TOGRUL

Do not let us lose more time.

FARRUSCAD

Let me be. Go and rest. I promise that shortly I will be with you.

TOGRUL

I obey you, Sir. (*Leaves*)

ACT I, SCENE 9

Farruscad soliloquizes

FARRUSCAD (*Alone*)

Oh, what torment! Oh, what an agitated mind! So I will have to leave behind my children and my wife. Ah, what wife and what children? It is better for me to escape without any further reflection. I am horrified by a thousand suspicions, a thousand anxieties, a thousand passions of love. Here you were, dear Cherestani, and here I disobeyed you. Now you have disappeared with our children and with our home of delight and joy. Ah, what delight? What joy is there now? Diabolical illusions! My father, my kingdom, my subjects I have lost, my sweet sister, beloved Canzade. I will come to your aid, and I will leave this cold, cruel, hard, infernal place.<sup>11</sup> (*In the act of leaving*) But what weakness, and what sudden sleep overwhelms me, and grabs hold of me? I cannot go... I cannot stop... I want to...but I can't! (*Sits on a stone*) This unexpected, prodigious sleep... wants something from me. (*Falls asleep*)

ACT 1, SCENE 10

The Fairies Narrate: *While Farruscad is sleeping, the desert is transformed into a garden. And the rest of the scenery is transformed into a wonderful and shining palace. All this will be accompanied by the sound of a soft symphony that will change into a loud and boisterous music.*<sup>12</sup> *Hearing all this loud music, Farruscad will wake up astonished.*

FARRUSCAD (*Looking around*)

I am astonished! What beautiful sound! (*He sees the palace; he gets up with excitement*) Ah, this is the home of my beloved wife. Oh, sweet dream! If this is a dream, I beg you to never end. (*He runs towards the palace, from where CHERESTANI, richly dressed, will come out, with majesty. She will be followed by her ladies in waiting. FARRUSCAD follows them with urgency*) Cherestani... Cherestani...

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<sup>11</sup> I know the Italian doesn't say "cold," but cold and cruel pair well in English.

<sup>12</sup> In our production, the Fairies performed an a capella version of the opening of "Thus Spake Zarathustra," with TERRAMOTA as a the tympani.

CHERESTANI (*With noble dignified melancholy*)

You cruel man! You wanted to leave and forget about your wife.

FARRUSCAD

Please let me explain... my ministers...

CHERESTANI

Yes, they arrived to drag you away from my love with powerful magic, made useless however by my own powers.

FARRUSCAD

Please let me explain... my father...

CHERESTANI

Yes, he died because of his sorrow over his lost son, Farruscad.

FARRUSCAD

Please let me explain... My kingdom...

CHERESTANI

Is bleeding, tormented by fire and iron. Your sister is in danger. Ah, Farruscad, I love you, you love me. I know how much I love you. I know how deep my sorrows are, that I am the reason for so many massacres. But I have to follow the orders of the stars, of my cruel fate. I am forced to appear as a tyrant because I love you too much. I am condemned to be treated like a witch, a deformed being hiding under false beauty, and this all because of love, the most fervid love that binds me to your person... (*She is crying*)

FARRUSCAD

Please don't cry. If you love me so much, why did you leave me?

CHERESTANI

Because you did not obey my orders. You tried to find out who I am.

FARRUSCAD

You love me so much and do not want to forgive me for wanting to know who you are? Whose daughter are you? Where do you come from? Which country? Tell me.

CHERESTANI

You barbarian! I cannot tell you. How hurtful is your curiosity to me! Your love for me is not blind enough. I know that you are suspicious, that any moment you let yourself be influenced by others against me, because you do not know who I am, where I come from, who my parents are. That is what offends my love. You cruel man! Your curiosity, this tyrant of yours, will unfortunately be satisfied by tomorrow morning, since my verdict, that I myself wanted because of my excessive love for Farruscad, tomorrow will be accomplished. I know, that you are not constant enough to endure what you will witness tomorrow at dawn; and Cherestani, your spouse, will die. The new sun will rise blood red, the air will be gloomy, the earth will tremble, there will be no shelter anymore for Farruscad, He will know, who I am, and then, regretful, he will cry, because of his wife's misery, but he will cry in vain, and I alone will be damned (*She is crying*)

FARRUSCAD

No, my beloved, do not cry... (*To Audience:*) Have you ever seen such beauty in such distress?

CHERESTANI

I cannot tell you more. By my excessive love, I have become your torment, and my anguish. Farruscad, I beg you, endure in peace what you will see in the new morning, a morning that will be terrible for me. Do not try to find out the reason for what you will behold. Never ask. Believe me, everything happens for a reason. But most of all, never curse your wife, because of what you will see. Oh, I know too well that I am asking something impossible of you. (*She is crying*)

FARRUSCAD (*Shaken*)

How many secrets, how much terror you are revealing to me! I do not understand any longer... I am desperate.

CHERESTANI (*Taking him with fervor by one hand*)

Please tell me, tomorrow at dawn, will you be able to face what happens?

FARRUSCAD

I will face everything, even if I risk my life.

CHERESTANI

Ah, you deceive me once again; I know, you will not be able to face it. Please tell me... tell me... Will you, cruel man, curse me, for what you will witness tomorrow?

FARRUSCAD

I would rather kill myself with a sword.

CHERESTANI (*With urgency*)

Swear it... (*In agitation*) Ah no. Don't swear it, Farruscad. You would commit perjury, and your oath is fatal to me.

FARRUSCAD

I swear it by the holiest gods in heaven.

CHERESTANI (*Shaken, moving away from him*)

You barbarian! O God! That oath is fatal, and yet, I had to make those lips swear it... The verdict is fulfilled, that horrible fate. Farruscad, my whole life depends now on your constancy and your courage. But I am already lost, your love is not strong enough to avenge me. (*Takes him by his hand again*) Beloved husband, I must leave you.

FARRUSCAD

No... why, you ungrateful woman?... Please, do not leave me. My children, tell me, where are they?

CHERESTANI

You will see them at the dawn of light. Have no doubt about it. If only you were blind, so you could not see them!

FARRUSCAD

Blind! What!... Oh God!

ACT 1, SCENE 11

FARZANA, followed by maidens, FARRUSCAD, CHERESTANI

FARZANA

Cherestani!...

CHERESTANI

Yes, my father is dead. This is the beginning of my misfortunes. Oh, my poor father! (*Cries*)

FARZANA

Now your name rings out on every shore. The frenzied people cry out, "Cherestani, Cherestani!" They want you for their queen. The Kingdom, the throne, is ready for you. Your troubled subjects are asking for Cherestani. You must delay no longer.

CHERESTANI

Farruscad, I must leave you. You have heard part of who I am, but not all. Unknown to the world is my kingdom; but more than double the size of your kingdom of Teflis. You should rest if you can, until the new day, and then you must have patience, and heart. Ah, your wife's anguish is far greater than your own. (*Enters the palace with Farzana.*)

FARRUSCAD (*Following*)

I am coming... I am coming... I want to die with you! Do not flee from me! (*As he is about to enter the palace there is thunder, lightning, and an earthquake. FULMINA and TUONARA chase him away.*) Alas, ministers, listen to these marvels! Listen! (*Exit*)

ACT 1, SCENE 12

Brighella and Truffaldino wake up.

*The theatre depicts the usual desert. BRIGHELLA and TRUFFALDINO. Written to be improvised.*

TRUFFALDINO

Brighella, I heard a big noise last night, while I was half awake and half asleep. Did you hear anything?

BRIGHELLA

No, the food and my favorite wine made me sleep profoundly; I bless the day I arrived in this place, where there is so much in abundance. You know, even if the food comes from hell, it tastes delicious, so in the end that doesn't bother me.<sup>13</sup>

TRUFFALDINO

I enjoy this solitude and desert air. Shall we have breakfast together?

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<sup>13</sup> The Italian text suggests that they have a lengthy discussion of the habits of people in the city, with lots of references to *commedia dell'arte*.

BRIGHELLA

Yes, the air is perfect and will help with our digestion.

*(They perform a ritual of summoning the food.)*

TRUFFALDINO

Are you there, devil? It's me, Truffaldino. And Brighella. *(To BRIGHELLA:)* What sort of food should we ask the devil to bring us?

BRIGHELLA

I want a nice snack with gravy, etc.

TRUFFALDINO

Well, I want a snack that reminds me of a Venetian courtesan, etc.

*(When they have finished listing food items they want.)*

TRUFFALDINO

Hugs and kisses, Tru and Bri. *(They exit.)*

ACT I, SCENE 13

PANTOLONE and TARTAGLIA enter, scared of the earthquake they heard that night.

*Scene written to be improvised.*

TARTAGLIA

I heard it raining and I stuck my hand outside, and I couldn't see the raindrops, but the rain was ink!

PANTALONE

How strange and frightening!

TARTAGLIA

All night long I heard owls hooting.

PANTALONE

I heard dogs barking!

TARTAGLIA

Take comfort in the fact that I have ascertained from Togrul the Vizier that, at the rising of the sun, the Prince will be ready to leave this diabolical land.

PANTALONE

Look, in the east! The sun is rising blood red! Oh, I am afraid.

TARTAGLIA

I am afraid, too! Dead trees, mountains that move, rivers flowing with purple water, and all kinds of evil omens... I want to leave!

PANTALONE

So do I, but we cannot abandon the Prince!<sup>14</sup>

ACT 1, SCENE 14

Farruscad notices that Cherestani's predictions are coming true.

TOGRUL

Nothing from what you told me so far, my lord, should make you change your mind, on the contrary, it should convince you even more to leave as soon as possible.

FARRUSCAD

Togrul, yes, I am so horribly confused and tormented that I do not have any force. I am bound to imminent misfortunes. I know that I am going to suffer.

"The new sun will rise blood" That is what she said to me, and here is the blood red sun.

"The air will be gloomy, and the earth will tremble." And the earth did tremble, and the air is dark and gloomy.

"This will no longer be home to Farruscad."

I know that this will happen too, I will have to follow you.

But most of all... oh what horrible words, they tear my heart apart! Listen!

"You will know who I am, and then, regretful, you will cry in vain your wife's misery, and I alone will have to suffer and face the consequences."

TOGRUL

This is black magic, cruelty, deceit, and you must flee it at once. You swore that you would leave, remember? This magician prefers Morgon your enemy. Through the most twisted ways she seeks to ruin your kingdom and your person. Wake up!

PANTALONE (*To TARTAGLIA*)

I feel almost compassionate to see this poor boy reduced to being a sort of idiot. Go and help him, since I feel so weak that I cannot do anything else but cry.

TARTAGLIA (*To PANTALONE*)

There are three of us here. Truffaldino and Brighella should be nearby. The five of us could tie him down and take him away.

FARRUSCAD (*Talking to himself*)

"Farruscad, I beg you to suffer what you will behold in the new morning! Do not try to find out the reason of what you will see! Never ask! Believe me, everything happens for a reason. At the new

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<sup>14</sup> The scene ends with "They wanted to leave, but they did not want to abandon the Prince." I split this up so each one expresses part of it.



morning, you will see your children, but oh were you only blind so that you would not see them.”  
(*To the other bystanders*) Friends... Who can tell me what I will have to suffer?

ACT I, SCENE 15

FULMINA: After lightning is seen

TUONARA: And thunder is heard.

FULMINA AND TUONARA: Bedredino and Rezia arrive

ZEMINA: Borne by the wind.

PANTALONE (*Cheerful*)

Suffering succotash!<sup>15</sup> You raise my spirits, oh my darlings! (*Runs to embrace them*) Darlings, darlings, darlings... you won't escape from me again, you little rascals.

FARRUSCAD

Children, my children! Your mother spoke truly when she said I would see you again.  
(*BEDREDINO and REZIA kiss FARRUSCAD's hands*)

TOGRUL (*To TARTAGLIA*)

What beautiful children! This is a good omen. I am beside myself.

TARTAGLIA

Well, turn me to stone! How the hell did these little bed-wetters get here?

FARRUSCAD

Rezia, my daughter, tell me, where is your mother?

REZIA

Father, our mother is... Bedredino, do you know where she was?

BEDREDINO

She was, father, in a palace bright and large, crowned Queen, amidst the sound of a thousand musical instruments, and so many shouts of happy voices that it hurt my head. But I could not tell what city it was.

REZIA

We were, father, Bedredino and I, in a beautiful room with a hundred servants. Oh, if only you could have seen!

FARRUSCAD

How did you get here?

BEDREDINO

Rezia, do you know?

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<sup>15</sup> Lit. "Suffering, what suffering?" but I like the cartoony quality of this.

REZIA

I know just what you know. I believe it was a wind, that led us here in a heartbeat.

PANTALONE (*To TOGRUL and TARTAGLIA*)

Do you hear the stories they make up? A wind, a wind!

FARRUSCAD

What did your mother say to you? What did she say before your departure?

REZIA

Our mother came to visit us in our room. She looked at us carefully, and sighed. She sat down in a chair, and began to cry bitter tears. We ran to her and took her hands and kissed them. She cried even more. One arm she wrapped around Bedredino's neck, and the other around my own. With abandon she kissed our faces. Oh God, there was so much crying we were all bathed in tears. I was the first, and I cried with her, and then Bedredino cried, too, didn't you? We were all crying without knowing why.

FARRUSCAD

Oh, Heavens! What is going to happen? What did she say?

BEDREDINO

It's scary. Go to your father, she said, oh miserable ones! I feel faint. Unhappy children, oh, if only I had not given birth to you! Oh how much you will have to suffer! Oh, how cruel your mother will be toward you! And how cruel she will be toward herself! Go before me! Go to my husband, your father, and I will be there soon. Tell him how much I cried over you. With that said, an unseen force in the air carried us away, and we arrived here full of fright. (*Cries*)

REZIA

Ah, Bedredino. You are crying, and for your sake I will cry myself. I cannot hold back. Ah, dear father, have pity and save us from the misery that is coming from above.

TOGRUL

Farruscad, my lord, why stay here? What are you waiting for? Save your children, and let us get out of this desert.

FARRUSCAD

We wait here for the end of my disgrace. I do not want to disobey my wife.

PANTALONE (*Resolute*)

Tartaglia, lend a hand. You take the boy and I'll take the girl. Come on, you little dickhead, did you fall asleep or what? (*Goes to take REZIA*)

*(There is another earthquake. CHERESTANI appears, crowned Queen, followed by guards and ladies-in-waiting. All are frightened.)*

ACT 1, SCENE 16

CHERESTANI, *guards and ladies-in-waiting and characters from previous scene.*

PANTALONE

Here she is, here she is, for Artemis' sake, this witch! It is too late now! *(He goes back to his place)*

TARTAGLIA

Oh, butterscotch! *(He goes back to his place)*

CHERESTANI

Do not move. You cannot save these children from their mysterious fate, decreed at birth.

TOGRUL *(To himself)*

What beauty! What majesty! Now I finally understand my lord.

CHERESTANI

My dear children, my flesh and blood.

REZIA *(Takes her by the hand, imploring)*

Mother, what torments you?

CHERESTANI *(Still crying)*

My little souls... what I do not want... I want... I have to want it... that, what I should not long for... I cry for you... for me... for your father *(she embraces and kisses them, crying)*

FARRUSCAD

Cherestani, stop keeping your secrets from me. Why are you crying? What is going to happen to my children? Kill me at least with one blow, but do not torment me any longer.

CHERESTANI

Farruscad, remember what you swore. You are not keeping your word any longer. Never ask the reason of what you will behold. Keep always quiet. Please, never forsake me. If you can keep up with this today, if you will be courageous, believe me, you will be happy. What you will behold arises out of my love for you. I cannot tell you more. Keep quiet. Look. And bear it all. Know that I am torturing myself more than I am torturing you. From here on the torment begins *(Crying)* how much I suffer! Oh Children! *(At the end of the theatre appears an abyss where a big flame is coming out, CHERESTANI turns to the Fairies and she continues to speak with majesty)* Fairies, throw my children into these horrible and burning flames, have no pity! *(She covers her face so that she does not have to watch)*

REZIA

Father, help us!

BEDREDINO

Father, Father... Oh God! *(Both children try to escape, the soldiers run after them)*

TOGRUL

What cruelty! This should not happen. *(He draws his sword, but is suddenly bewitched)*

PANTALONE

What you will behold arises out of my love for you! Stop, stop, you shitheads! *(He draws his sword, but all of a sudden he is bewitched)*

TARTAGLIA

Let me do it, Pantalone. *(He is bewitched, like the others. TUONARA and TERRAMOTA re-enter, carrying two puppets that resemble the children. They throw them into the burning abyss. You can hear children shouting and crying from within. The abyss shuts down)*

PANTALONE

Oh that witch, that witch! What sort of mother is that? My poor children! *(Cries)*

TARTAGLIA

Oh archers, archers, you should also roast that mother the witch, fry her, fry her.

TOGRUL

I am beside myself. Please, let us flee.

FARRUSCAD *(To CHERESTANI)*

You cruel...

CHERESTANI

Quiet, remember what you swore. I ask forgiveness for my tyranny. The most cruel pain your wife has to face is approaching. Farruscad, leave this place. This place is not your home anymore. Go back to your kingdom. An unknown force will lift you up, do not be afraid. You will have to face terrible miseries, but know that my misfortunes are even bigger. We will meet again, but maybe... oh you barbarian, because of your fault you might behold your wife a last time in her agreeable appearance. You will not have enough love and faith in me, you perjurer. Because of your extreme cowardice I will be for centuries to myself and to all living beings a miserable, horrible and disgusting object. *(Lightning and thunder, CHERESTANI disappears with her suite. The others stay, afraid and dumbfounded)*

PANTALONE

What more does she want? If we stay here any longer will she burn us too?

TARTAGLIA

If they do not cut my legs, I will certainly not stop running.

TOGRUL

Wake up, my Lord, what are you waiting for?

FARRUSCAD *(Shaking himself)*

Oh infernal place! Oh my lost children! Torment, why don't you kill me? Friends, let us go to the hill. I forsake myself, not my wife. Let us get away from here; help, to the hill, to the hill *(He leaves with TOGRUL who follows him)*

TARTAGLIA

To the hill. Run, Pantalone, there is the witch *(He leaves)*

PANTALONE

She will not touch me, you will see. (*Leaves*)

ACT I, SCENE 16

*Written to be improvised*

TRUFFALDINO and BRIGHELLA come out in horror. They asked for the usual food, but instead they got toads, scorpions, and snakes. They reflect that the country has changed. They do not see their companions. Then the companions are discovered in back. They follow, shouting.<sup>16</sup>

END OF ACT I

ACT II, SCENE 1.

*The theatre changes, and a room in the palace of Teflis is seen. SMERALDINA and CANZADE are armed and dressed as Amazons. The Fairies act as a parody of a Greek Chorus. They frequently echo statements made by Canzade.*

FARZANA

Act II

FAIRIES

Scene 1.

Eight years and half a day have passed  
Since Cherestani married Farruscad.  
Her husband now returns to his sad kingdom  
Teflis, defended by women warriors.  
Now enter Smeraldina with a sword.

SMERALDINA (*With a scimitar in her hand*)

My heart trembles. I would swear those devils are still chasing me. I am certain I killed at least five hundred. But there is still a sea of them.<sup>17</sup> Oh God, I do not see my mistress appearing. My Canzade, adored Princess! Ah, you always want to share in the action. Always proud, always a life full of peril. Imagine, with only a thousand soldiers, to take the field of battle against a hundred thousand Moorish soldiers, who have no mercy! Who knows what tragedy has befallen the poor thing! If Morgone has made her prisoner, then farewell Canzade! He is such a dreadful giant that his head would break a pillar! Just imagine, if only Canzade is still alive!

ACT II, SCENE 2

FAIRIES

Act II, scene 2. Canzade is still alive.

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<sup>16</sup> In our production, they came in with a big plastic cockroach and tossed it back and forth for a while, then into the audience. Then TRUFFALDINO said, "Give that back. It's a prop." They also usually said "Scorpions, snakes, and toads. Oh, my!" One of them would then say "Where are our friends?" PANTALONE and TARTAGLIA would then call to them to come "To the hill," and PANTALONE would announce intermission.

<sup>17</sup> Lit. "They are a sea."

CANZADE (*With a scimitar in her hand*)

Oh Smeraldina, we are lost.

SMERALDINA

Oh my dear child... Thank heavens...! How did you save yourself? What happened on the battlefield? Where did you run off?

CANZADE

Rage, furor, despair were driving me. So hard did I spur my horse that I got to the center of the troops of the enemy. I made my way with my sword, throwing back to earth corpses of horses and knights, dead and wounded. Here, blinded by rage with a disdainful voice, I called the name of the barbaric Morgon, with the sole desire to die or to cut off his horrible head, he who is the source of every evil. I saw the giant, and with disdain I hit him in his flanks and in the front. This ferocious enemy tried in vain to hit me with his cudgel that he was desperately swinging through the air. My horse jumped quickly in the air, and he could not hit me. He was already roaring like a lion, wounded, bloody, enraged. When all of a sudden a torrent of his soldiers arrived, and I was surrounded by so many swords and arrows that I thought I would die. Morgon, who loves me, even though he was wounded and furious, was threatening everyone who wanted to hurt me. He wanted me alive as his prisoner. Then I realized that I had acted madly and without reason, and that everything was in vain. I spurred my horse, and broke through insurmountable circles of enemies. I arrived to the bridge, squeezing my spurs and slashing my sword. Uncountable storms of enemies arrived in chaos at the bridge. I felt my horse, wounded, collapse under me. In despair I lifted my sword against the bridge and with several strokes, I cut through a strong chain and watched my enemies sink into the river.

SMERALDINA

You make me tremble out of fear. I wanted to save my life, and I cried here by myself, as if I was dead. Thank heavens you are still alive.

CANZADE

You will not see me alive for very long. The angry Morgon prepares the battlefield, and wants to take the city by today. There is no hope, we will not be able to defend ourselves. My lover, Togrul, has vanished. My brother is probably already dead. Soon Canzade will be the prey of the barbaric, horrible and ferocious Morgon. But before he can take me, I will kill myself with this scimitar.

SMERALDINA (*Looking*)

My lady... Ah what do I see! Here is your brother. Here is the vizier Togrul. Hurray, hurray.

ACT II, SCENE 3

FARRUSCAD and TOGRUL, along with the characters from the previous scene.

CANZADE

Farruscad, Vizier, what heavenly hand has brought you here? Ah, your arrival is late! (*Cries*)

TOGRUL

Rejoice, Princess.

FARRUSCAD

Sister, do not add to my pain the remorse caused by your tears. Ah, this palace... Everything awakens the memory of my father, who died because of me. Everything and everyone reproaches me. I feel myself dying. (*Cries*)

SMERALDINA

My Lord Togrul: What news of Tartaglia? Of Brighella? Old Pantalone, and Truffaldino, are they dead?

TOGRUL

No, they are alive, in different rooms, telling the ministers about the news of their trips.

SMERALDINA

Oh, I want to hear them, too! Truffaldino lives! What a joyous occasion!

TOGRUL

Farruscad, Princess, we must not waste time on vain lamentations. We have problems to solve.<sup>18</sup>

FARRUSCAD

Tell me, my sister, beloved Canzade, tell me in what state is the city. Tell me the story.

CANZADE

The city is lost. Already the final assault of ferocious Morgon is approaching. There is no more defense. Almost all the soldiers are dead. After the cruel siege, half of the languishing citizens were already dead of starvation and hunger. Lacking food, our horses became food, and our dogs and domestic animals became food. What more? I am horrified. The dead became food to the living and father ate son, and son ate father, and their wives became gluttonous and with unholy jaws of hunger, devoured this abominable meal with pride. Weeping, wailing, and cursing through desolate houses, and through the streets, could be heard to fall on your head. Count down your life, and my life, and a few of your faithful, who will continue to breathe for a little while longer, and then all is lost.

TOGRUL

Farruscad, what did I tell you?

FARRUSCAD

Ah, quiet. Do not add to my anguish. I feel that I will destroy myself. My loyal subjects, my father, ask no other vengeance from Heaven. I am punished. (*Cries*)

CANZADE

Brother, I will not suffer to see you desperate and afflicted. We have one last hope. The minister Badur promised he would rescue the city. By an unknown route of many miles, he went to provide food for the oppressed city. Maybe these provisions will reach the citizens. Then with your strength,

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<sup>18</sup> Al minor mal si pensi.—“Let us think through our problems” might be closer, but I like Togrul sounding more action-oriented.

and with my beloved Togrul, we can repel these Moors. May Badur return soon! By Heaven, I hope he arrives with the provisions he is carrying.

TOGRUL

I am no longer in despair. This is what Geonca the Necromancer promised me: that upon the arrival of Farruscad in the kingdom, the kingdom would be saved in some mysterious way. This is the mysterious way!

FARRUSCAD (*Looking inside*)

Isn't that Badur? I recognize him. Badur, tell us, are we dead or alive?

ACT II, SCENE 4

*BADUR, two soldiers and characters from the previous scene. The two soldiers are carrying bottles of liquor.*<sup>19</sup>

BADUR (*Surprised*)

You my lord, here!

FARRUSCAD

Yes, and do not ask further. Tell me rather if you bring food or if I have to kill myself. Tell me... Tell me...

BADUR

I can only tell you news of death and of unheard stories.

CANZADE

Alas! What will happen to us! Tell me, did you not bring any food to Teflis?

BADUR

I was carrying it, but, O heavens, what did I see! It seems impossible what happened to me.

TOGRUL

Tell us, what are you waiting for?

FARRUSCAD

Come on, tell us! And bring my miserable life to an end.

BADUR

I was bringing to Teflis wagonloads of meat, crops and wine. I was stealthily walking along the river Kura, when I was attacked by a huge troop of soldiers. They were not Morgon's men, but barbaric people that I did not know, they were wearing fancy clothes made of gold and splendid jewels, and at their head was a queen that was more beautiful than any other woman. She was shouting to her men: "My soldiers, destroy all the food and everybody who resists my orders." They attacked us in a heartbeat, and the few men I had could provide little defense. This cruel woman had all the meat, crops, wine, bread, and everything that I had brought to the port with such difficulties, she had everything thrown into the river. Then she stepped in front of me, and with disdain she said: Go to Farruscad, my spouse, and tell him, that this is my work. And all of a sudden she disappeared with

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<sup>19</sup> In our production, FARZANA and TERRAMOTA played the two soldiers.



all her men. I had a hundred soldiers and 98 of them were violently killed. With these two I could barely escape, and out of all the food I had, my Lord, I could only save these liquors (*shows the bottles*) that might give you some courage, all the rest is lost.

TOGRUL

Barbaric sorceress! She took every hope to save our lives and our kingdom. Ah, I told you that this infamous witch was helping king Morgon with her magic and that all these secrets had the goal of taking away your father, your reign, your subjects, any refuge, and in the end your life.

CANZADE

What a wife! ... What barbaric behavior! Ah, we are already dead, my brother.

FARRUSCAD (*In despair*)

Quiet you all. Do not torment me. Only now I begin to see and it is too late; there is no escape left. This heartless woman sent me here, and she wanted me to see with my own eyes my misery and that I should die out of anger and of despair. I am blind with rage. I lost my father... I lost my children... And in what a horrible way! I lost my kingdom, my life, and because of my fault, innocent people are dying. Heavens... How!... How can you tolerate so many crimes? "And suffer, and be quiet, and never forsake me"? What more shall I suffer, you perverse woman? Let the place where I saw you first be forsaken, I forsake you, you infernal and infamous bitch!

ACT II, SCENE 5

*After flashes of lightning, and thunder, and an earthquake, CHERESTANI appears.*

CHERESTANI (*Furious*)

Wicked one! Oh God, what have you done? I am lost! (*Cries*)

CANZADE

What do I see?

TOGRUL (*To CANZADE*)

This is the wicked witch, your brother's bride, the cause of all our miseries.

BADUR

My Lord, this is the one who attacked me.

FARRUSCAD (*Impetuously*)

Give me back my father, give me back my kingdom, give me back my children, you evil witch; make restitution for my slaughtered subjects. Your spells, cruel one, have taken everything away from me.

CHERESTANI

Liar! Ingrate! All you had to do was suffer my betrayal, and then everything would be over and you would be happy. Know, cruel one... Oh, God! Give me your strength, so that I can explain myself. Give me one moment of time to declare the secrets I kept silent, to declare my innocence. Let not this memorable love be taken from me without an explanation. And then, forsaking myself, I yield to my fate. (*Cries*)

FARRUSCAD

Typical mystery; wicked one, what will you say?

CHERESTANI

Know, traitor, that I was born of a mortal man and an immortal fairy. I was born to be immortal for always, to be a Fairy Queen. Eldorado is my happy kingdom, unknown to the world. But I was not comfortable being a Fairy; and the law treated me harshly. We fairies are sometimes changed into animals for a time, never to die, but always subject to the cruel misfortunes of mortals below, until the end of centuries, until infinity. I fell in love with you. Fatal moment! I accepted you as my husband. A desire welled up in me to become mortal, like you, to accept the same fate as you, and to die with you, to be able to follow you even into death. I asked for this blessing from the King, our Monarch. Angry, cursing, he granted my desire, but with a harsh decree: "Go," he said to me, "You are mortal, if for eight years and one day, your husband does not forsake you. But I condemn you to do on that last day such apparently atrocious deeds that Farruscad's curse is put to the test. If he curses you, you will be covered with horrid scales, and your body will become a monstrous serpent. In that state you will be locked for two hundred years..." You barbarian! You traitor! You cursed me. I feel the change coming upon me. We will not meet again.

FARRUSCAD

I have lost my kingdom! I am near death. This is only apparently atrocious?

CHERESTANI

Fear not for your kingdom, or for your life. I had reasons for what I did, and I told you so, but I spoke in vain. (*Pointing out BADUR*) This one is a traitor. The supplies were poisoned. He is in league with your besieging enemy. I destroyed the supplies. Now you know the reason.

BADUR (*Aside*)

Ah, I am lost. (*To CHERESTANI*) Wicked sorceress! (*To FARRUSCAD*) My Lord, no, it isn't true!

CHERESTANI

Shut up, traitor. Drink up some of those leftovers you were bringing, villain. We will see the truth.

BADUR (*Desperate*)

My Lord... Unfortunately, it is true... I am discovered.<sup>20</sup> From that poison... from ignominious death... I know how to kill myself with my own hand!<sup>21</sup> (*Draws a dagger; stabs himself, and falls among the scenery*)

CANZADE

What things I see! Togrul, tell me...<sup>22</sup>

TOGRUL

I am beside myself. Let us wait and see what happens next.

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<sup>20</sup> FAIRIES: You are discovered.

<sup>21</sup> FAIRIES: Kill yourself.

<sup>22</sup> TUONARA (*mocking*): Tell me.

FARRUSCAD (*Enraged*)

Ah, I would not... Togrul, Canzade, I'm trembling... Tell me, Cherestani, was the burning of our children an apparition, or was it true?

CHERESTANI

The children had their birth purged from them in the glowing flames you saw, to make them entirely yours, so that they can share your mortal fate. (*Looks inside.*) Here are your children, made mortal, and your own. Coward! I alone must now miserably abandon you, to take the shape of a horrible serpent, to lose my children, and to no longer be yours. (*Cries bitterly*)

ACT II, SCENE 6

BEDREDINO, REZIA, accompanied by two soldiers, and characters from previous scene

FARRUSCAD (*Very emotional*)

Children... My children... Ah, please do not let the rest of your predictions come true... Cherestani... my wife... Oh what misery awaits me!

CANZADE

Vizier!

TOGRUL

Canzade!

CHERESTANI (*Very agitated*)

Here, I feel... Oh Heavens! Cruel! I feel... Cold ice streaming through my bones... Oh god... I am changing... Oh what disgust! Oh what horror! What punishment... Farruscad, I am leaving you. You could still free me today. Ah, but I do not dare to hope... You would need too much courage. No, do not risk your life for me. Your life is dear to me even though you are far away. Today I can still do some wonders. And these will be for you and your kingdom. Accept the last signs of my love for you. Oh God... Vizier... Canzade... Children... hide... Oh, do not watch your mother's misery... run away. I am ashamed, I do not want you to watch it. (*To FARRUSCAD*) You, cruel one, you should be the only one to watch, you were the only one who wanted his wife to become a serpent... Here she is a serpent... watch and be happy. (*She transforms into a horrible and long serpent from the neck downwards to the rest of her body and falls to the ground*)

BEDREDINO

Mother, oh my mother...

REZIA

Where is my mother?

FARRUSCAD

Stop... Oh God!... Forgive me... oh my wife (*He runs to embrace her*)

CHERESTANI

I am not your wife any longer. Run away, you perjurer.<sup>23</sup> (*CHERESTANI disappears.*)

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<sup>23</sup> In our production, the Fairies said this line as "She is not your wife any longer," to help cover Cherestani's disappearance.

CANZADE

Brother...

TOGRUL

My Lord...

BEDREDINO

My father...

REZIA

Dear father...

FARRUSCAD (*In despair*)

Get away from me. Nobody should come close to a desperate man. Earth, you are hiding my beloved wife, receive Farruscad, the unfaithful perjurer. (*He leaves furious*)

CANZADE (*Takes the children by their hands*)

Vizier, my niece and nephew, let us follow your father. (*They leave*)

## ACT II, SCENE 7

Farruscad flees from Pantalone

FARRUSCAD (*Enters, fleeing those who want to comfort him*)

Get away from me, you traitors, you are the cause of my intolerable pain, and of my errors, since you convinced me with your suspicions and set my heart on fire and made me fall into the excesses that ruined my beloved wife and myself. Go, get out of my sight, hideous, infamous monsters! Come, death! I desire only death.

PANTALONE

Majesty, Heaven knows how much remorse, how many heart palpitations I am feeling. Yes, you were right, you were right. But what is there to do? King Morgon has launched a fierce attack on the city. Togrul and your sister, poor dears, are planning the defense, but sorrowful and dejected because they do not see you. Be courageous, show yourself on the city walls! And then you will see how much courage would swell up in the chests of your servants at your appearance! One will be worth a hundred, and we will hunt down these Moorish shiteheads. And we will give that gentleman such a baroque battle, that he will flee in fright like a flock of seagulls.

## ACT II, SCENE 8

Tartaglia brings good news

TARTAGLIA (*Entering, happy*)

Your majesty, your majesty, a wonder, a wonder has happened! All of a sudden, without knowing how, all the shops, all the restaurants, all the butchers' shops of the city were full of meat, bread, wine, oil, of soups, of delicious food, cheese, fruit, and even...tea and crumpets!<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In our production, TARTAGLIA was played as a foppish British servant. It would be possible to change the list of food to reflect other interpretations of this character.

PANTALONE

Is this true, Tartaglia?

TARTAGLIA

Well, of course! I would not tell our Majesty your sorts of fables and fairy tales.

FARRUSCAD

That just increases my sorrow and my remorse. Here I realize now the effect of her last words that she spoke in her extreme misery. "I still can accomplish a few miracles today. These I will do for your sake and for your kingdom. Accept these last signs of my love. Oh God!" What cruel memory...! Get away... Go. I do not want to see anybody anymore. And most of all I hate myself.

TARTAGLIA (*Whispering to PANTALONE*)

Pantalone, distance will heal every deep wound. He will get over it. Let's not leave the princess and Togrul by themselves. They are both getting ready to defend the city.

PANTALONE

Indeed, it is a sign of cowardice to stay here and scratch one's belly while all the others are getting armed. No, war is a good action for a Venetian. We will send for some servants that will watch over him, because I do not want anything to happen to him, and let us cut off some 50 heads of these clownish Moors. We are not a lot, are we, Tartaglia?

TARTAGLIA

Oh, just ten against ten thousand, but never mind, I feel so strong and superior. It is better to die in battle, than to die of hunger. (*They leave*)

ACT II, SCENE 9.

Farzana convinces Farruscad to go to his demise.

FARRUSCAD (*To himself*)

She also said to me: "You could liberate me even today. Oh, I dare not hope. You lack the courage. No, do not risk your life for me. This life of yours is so dear to me even when you are so far away from me." Speaking gently, she tore up my heart. Cherestani, Cherestani, how can I save you? I care not for this life. And much sweeter is death, than this life. Ah, if you can, if you do not despise me, give me a sign. Show me how to leave this world and come to your rescue, or die. Have mercy on me! (*Cries*)

FARZANA (*To herself*)

Leading him to death means there is no more danger, that he has no more chance to save her. His death will bring her back to us. Now that everyone else is occupied with the battle, and he is alone here, I can lead him unseen to certain death. (*Comes forward*) You, free your wife? You don't have the heart. You're too much of a coward.

FARRUSCAD

Farzana!... I know you as a companion to my wife. Ah, where is she now? Tell me, what must I do to liberate her?

FARZANA

You, liberate her? Inconstant man, soft as a woman. So much beauty, so many blessings lost because of cowardice! You have the heart to release her? More is needed than your arm and your heart to release her.

FARRUSCAD

Do not insult me further. Put me to the test! I run willingly to death. What are we waiting for?

FARZANA

Give me your hand.

FARRUSCAD

Here is my hand. Wherever you want, take me. I shall go with you. (*Gives his right hand to FARZANA, and with a prodigious flash of light they both disappear*)

ACT II, SCENE 10

Pantalone and Tartaglia bring amazing news.

PANTALONE

Majesty... Majesty, a miracle... we won,<sup>25</sup> we are happy... But where is he?

TARTAGLIA

He should be here. Here is where we left him not long ago.

PANTALONE

Ah, didn't I tell you, that we should not leave him by himself? Now that everybody is happy, we will see, Tartaglia, that a big disgrace is about to happen. He was outside of himself, so in love with his serpent wife. I am sure he did such stupid bestiality to kill himself. I am positive.

TARTAGLIA

What bestiality? Me too, I have a serpent wife too, and I am suffering.

PANTALONE

Tartaglia, this is not the time to make stupid jokes.

TARTAGLIA

Let's go and look for him, Pantalone. This palace is more than a mile long. He must be hiding in one of these rooms in the south wing from where the hot and dry winds of Africa blow. (*Leaves*)

PANTALONE

Well, let us walk to where the south wind blows, but I myself am rather afraid that he went with his head downwards out of a window eastwards where the winds from the Orient blow. (*Leaves*)

---

<sup>25</sup> Pantalone does not say "we won" in the original. This was added for clarification.

ACT II, SCENE 11

Truffaldino tries to sell newspapers

*TRUFFALDINO enters wearing a short cloak and a raggedy hat, with a stack of printed newspapers in his hand; followed by BRIGHELLA. Scene written to be partially improvised.*

TRUFFALDINO (*Imitating newspaper vendors*)

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Up-to-the-minute, exclusive, and authentic stories! See the latest news of the bloody combat, today the [18<sup>th</sup> of March] in our beloved city of Teflis. Hear how the great giant Morgon stormed with two million Moors into the city of Teflis! Hear, how bravely and valiantly the city, and the fortress, with only four hundred soldiers, defended itself, and the great slaughter that was made of those barbarian dogs. Hear how the city was in terrible danger, and the fortress as well. Hear, how unexpectedly and prodigiously, with the permission of Heaven, the river flooded, the River Kura, and inundated the camp of the barbarian dogs! Hear about the great slaughter, how it has spared no one, along with a count of the numbers of the dead. Be one of the first to read the true, authentic, and exclusive story for the low, low price of one penny! Extra! Extra!

BRIGHELLA (*Interrupts*)

Will you go scream at the palace?

TRUFFALDINO (*Continuing sales pitch*)

News of the battle and the miraculous victory!

BRIGHELLA

How can you possibly write down and print up an event that just happened, not even an hour ago?

TRUFFALDINO

When it comes to making money, writers and printers are like lightning.<sup>26</sup>

BRIGHELLA

In this city, you will only sell a few copies. People here already know about the success! I recommend you go to Venice and shout your head off at everyone who passes by. That will sell more copies.

TRUFFALDINO

No, to sell a newspaper in Venice I would have to make the report thirty times more exciting than the double of this success.

BRIGHELLA

You are crazy. Do you know where the Prince is?

---

<sup>26</sup> In our productions, TRUFFALDINO pointed to FULMINA and she said "Lightning."

ACT II, SCENE 12

Add Tartaglia and Pantalone.

*TARTAGLIA and PANTALONE enter, desperate.*

PANTALONE

Have you seen the Prince?

TARTAGLIA

We can't find the Prince.

BRIGHELLA

I don't know anything. I was just asking Truffaldino.

TRUFFALDINO

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

*(They make a scene of confusion and clamor.)*<sup>27</sup>

ACT II, SCENE 13

CANZADE, TOGRUL, SMERELDINA and previous characters

CANZADE

Where is my brother?

TARTAGLIA

Dear Princess, a big disgrace has happened! He was in this very room. We went to the battle. And he was gone. We looked for him in the South wing, but he is not there.

PANTALONE

This is how things are. He was desperate, and the desperate ones always...play nasty tricks on people.

CANZADE

What are you telling me? Oh, how unhappy I am!

TOGRUL

What horrible news!

SMERALDINA

Oh God!

---

<sup>27</sup> In our production, the other three characters knocked BRIGHELLA over on their lines. This led to a fight that ended with PANTALONE throwing TRUFFALDINO over his shoulder and carrying him offstage, until they ran into CANZADE on their way out.



ACT II, SCENE 14

GEONCA'S Voice and Previous Characters

VOICE OF GEONCA

You miserable ones, what are you waiting for? Listen to Geonca's voice and obey. Togrul, Canzade, servants, Farruscad is near the mountain. A fairy and bitter enemy dragged him there to kill him. Go there with his children, try to move him, so that he stops being proud and comes back to his senses. Run, run to rescue him. It might already be too late to help him. With the help of my voice I will try to rescue the Prince before you even get there.

CANZADE

Vizier, did you hear that?

TOGRUL

Let us go there right away and do as we were told. (*He leaves with CANZADE*)

SMERALDINA

I run to fetch his children! I am coming, too. (*Leaves*)

PANTALONE

For heaven's sake, let us help this man, whose marriage is a catastrophe! Servants, Tartaglia, come with me! (*Leaves*)

TARTAGLIA

I hope that you are following me, because I cannot stand your foolish faults, you old and snotty man. (*Leaves*)

BRIGHELLA

So, there is no happy end in sight. Let us go and see how this terrible catastrophe comes to an end. (*Leaves*)

TRUFFALDINO

He who leaves the borders of his country, will witness things beyond belief. Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Up-to-the-minute, exclusive, and authentic stories! (*Leaves, continuing his sales pitch.*)

ACT II, SCENE 15

FARRUSCAD and FARZANA

FULMINA Narrates: *The scene changes to an open field. We see a mountain and at the foot of the mountain is a tomb; And next to the tomb, there is a column; and attached to the column is a drum, or similar percussion instrument.*

TUONARA Narrates: *Farruscad prepares to fight.*

FARZANA

This is the spot. Now we will see how much your tongue resembles the feelings in your heart.

FARRUSCAD

To what end do you continue to harass a desperate man? I would like to have a thousand wives, to sacrifice them all for my wife. But what must I do in this field? I see only a solitary tomb. Must I battle with the dead? Ah, tell me how I can die; keep me no longer, Farzana, in hell.

FARZANA (*Aside*)

Let us not delay his destruction. (*To FARRUSCAD*) If you so crave death, take your sword and beat the gong. At its rumble you will be comforted. This life of yours matters little, but if you are victorious, she will be released, mortal, and yours.

FARRUSCAD

All I must do is beat the gong! Well then, what more do I await? It beats, and Death comes. (*He beats the gong with the end of his sword; the rumble of the gong is accompanied by a rumble of thunder and a blaze of lightning. The stage goes dark. FARRUSCAD continues.*) Let the earth tremble! Let the sun go dark! Let lightning bolts from heaven hunt me down! I will not fear!

ACT II, SCENE 16

Farruscad fights a Bull<sup>28</sup>

*Enter a raging bull, which spews fire from its mouth, horns, and tail, and which attacks FARRUSCAD.*

FARRUSCAD

Proud animal, if you think I am frightened of you, you are greatly deceived. (*The scene lights up, and a long battle follows. The flaming bull charges FARRUSCAD*) Ah, the cruel beast is impenetrable!

VOICE OF GEONCA

Fear not, Farruscad, and take heart! You must try to sever the animal's right horn, or the fighting of your sword is in vain.

FARRUSCAD

Friendly voice, I thank you, and I will obey your advice. (*He fights with the animal, severing the right horn; the Bull bellows and falls and disappears.*) Have I won, or is there more to do? Merciful voice, tell me, who are you? And tell me, to free my wife, what else must I do?

VOICE

I am Geonca. There is still more to do to achieve victory. Have courage. Know that, if you lose courage, to inevitable Death you will be subject. Take heart; resist; defend your life.

ACT II, SCENE 17

FARANZA and FARRUSCAD

FARZANA (*Entering the scene*)

What happened? Who is helping him?

FARRUSCAD

Farzana, now tell me, what else is there to do for me, so that I can see my wife Cherestani in her former state and embrace her again?

---

<sup>28</sup> TERRAMOTA narrates this scene title and plays the Bull.

FARZANA

Give up on that vain hope of yours. Nothing have you achieved so far. Beat the drum again and defeat the object that will come out of it. And still little will you have achieved, if you win the battle. You young and petty man, you will not have the courage to bring this challenge to an end. (*Exits*)

FARRUSCAD

If courage is all I need, she will be disappointed. May all the infernal creatures come out. (*He runs to the drum and beats it again. The stage gets dark and there is an earthquake*) Earth, go and tremble. Heaven, continue to thunder. I will not leave this place. (*The stage gets light again*)

ACT II, SCENE 18

Farruscad fights a Giant.<sup>29</sup>

GIANT

You will not escape, No, because you will leave your head on this field, and next to your head will lie your body, it will be a feast for the crows and the wild animals. (*He gets ready to fight*)

FARRUSCAD

It is more likely that this will happen to you, cruel and deformed man, you are a bigger feast for the crows than me. Heaven, help me. (*They fight, after various blows FARRUSCAD cuts off one of the giant's arms, the arm falls to the ground together with his sword. FARRUSCAD continues*) Go on and fight, if you can. Save your life, I want nothing else from you. (*The giant bends down and picks up his arm, he puts it back onto its place, and gets ready to fight again*)

GIANT

You want nothing else? Well, I want to fight against you. (*He violently attacks FARRUSCAD*)

FARRUSCAD

This is absolutely incredible! But I will not lose courage. (*They fight, after various blows he cuts off one of the giant's legs*)

GIANT

Oh miserable me! You won... I am dying.

FARRUSCAD

Go and die, you cruel man, you are bleeding dry. (*The giant picks up his leg and puts it back onto its place*)

GIANT

You poor little fool! You will die! You will die! You are so young and foolish. You will die. (*He gets ready to fight*)

FARRUSCAD

What strange adventure is this! Oh Geonca, how can I save myself and win? Good Lord, he is not answering me. Strength do not leave me, otherwise I am lost. (*The violent battle continues*) This is your end, you horrible and diabolical monster, go into the abyss, where you came from. (*The giant is fumbling for his head and puts it back on his neck*)

---

<sup>29</sup> FULMINA and TUONARA narrate this title and play the GIANT.

GIANT (*Laughing*)

Ha ha ha ha, you fool, you beheaded me at last!

FARRUSCAD

Oh miserable me! What will I do? Geonca... my friend, strength is lacking, and in the end I will lose.  
(*He gets ready for another fight*)

VOICE OF GEONCA

If you can, cut off his head.

FARRUSCAD

I just did!

VOICE OF GEONCA

Cut off his left ear and you will be free.

GIANT (*Attacking FARRUSCAD*)

Die, you buffoon, it is time you die.

FARRUSCAD

Strength and courage, do as Geonca has told you. Resist the beast. (*He throws away his shield and desperately fights with his sword in both hands. He beheads the giant again, and picks up his head. While FARRUSCAD tries to cut off his left ear, the GIANT is fumbling on the ground and looking for it. FARRUSCAD cuts off the ear and the giant's body falls to the ground*)

FARRUSCAD (*Throwing away the head*)

Put it on again, if you can and come back to life. How grateful I am, Geonca, for your help! I certainly would have died if it was not for you.<sup>30</sup>

## ACT II, SCENE 19

FARANZA, FARRUSCAD and the VOICE OF GEONCA

FARZANA (*Aside*)

He is still alive! And the Giant is vanquished? Who can be helping him? Ah, surely Geonca is behind this. Zemina was right when she warned me to fear him. My beloved Cherestani, we will lose you forever. Farruscad will dissolve your immortality, and make you his own. I will try to ward him off.

FARRUSCAD

Now then, Farzana, where is Cherestani? What more must I do?

FARZANA

Worthy champion, how much pity I feel for you! Ah, Farruscad, give up on completing this quest! What you have done so far is almost nothing. Believe in my most sincere words: Leave this place and save yourself.

---

<sup>30</sup> The Italian text includes a note here: "All the scenes of marvels and illusion in this popular third act were excellently performed by the Sacchi comic troupe."

FARRUSCAD

What? Leave this place? My commitment is to let go of my life, or to free my wife from her punishment.

You keep your promise. Either death shall have me, or my wife shall be freed. What is left for me to achieve this?

FARZANA

The remaining task is too great for you. Leave; that is enough. Do not wish to try your hand at something so tremendous.

FARRUSCAD

Farzana, these words scatter to the wind. I want to finish this quest, or die here.

FARZANA

Bold one, on point. Now you will not need your weapons, but we will see if you are able to win and get what you want... Place your hand on this tomb (*Indicates to tomb at the back of the stage*). Solemnly swear that you will kiss with your mouth whatever object appears at the opening of the tomb.

FARRUSCAD (*Runs, and with noble frankness, places his hand on the tomb*)

Here is my hand. I solemnly swear that with my lips I will kiss on the mouth any object that comes out of the tomb.

FARZANA

Fool! Strike the gong once more.

FARRUSCAD

Do you want nothing more? Here I strike the gong. (*Strikes it; the stage goes dark. The lid of the tomb opens. It lights up the stage.*)

FARZANA

Approach the tomb! And with your lips imprint upon the object you see, a kiss on the mouth.

FARRUSCAD

Must I be afraid to liberate my wife by placing my lips to the sucking maw of a cold corpse? It takes more than that to frighten a desperate lover! This task is a weak one. You shall see. (*Runs to the tomb and positions his face to give the promised kiss. From the tomb emerges, at the level of his chest, a snake with an ugly head. The snake opens its mouth, showing fangs, and approaches the face of FARRUSCAD, who jumps back in fright and draws his sword*) Alas! Miserable me! What treachery! (*Makes as if to harm the snake; the snake retreats into the tomb*)

FARZANA

Wicked one, what are you doing? Before you had to conquer with the sword, and you did. But now the battle must be fought with kisses. Do you lack heart? Didn't I tell you that the last task would be the most difficult one? Follow your promise, if it gives you courage. (*Aside*) Fear, take hold of him, so that he will not have the heart.

FARRUSCAD

Yes, I have the heart. Disgust, abandon me! (*Runs again to the tomb with resolution; approaches with his face; the snake comes out of the aperture, opening its horrible mouth. FARRUSCAD recoils; the serpent hides. FARRUSCAD tries to kiss the snake, but increasingly chattering teeth make him recoil*) Oh, God! What frost stops me cold? Ah, what a diabolical adventure! Wait, wasn't my wife turned into a snake? Could this vile, horrible monster be Cherestani? (*Approaches, and stops*) But perhaps this Fairy deceives me, and wants me to expose my head to these horrible jaws, so that it will be crushed, and after so many battles won, I run defenseless into the arms of Death. What new form of battle is this? (*Remains in thought.*)

FARZANA (*Aside*)

Fear, follow and oppress him, so that he will leave this place and fail in this task.

FARRUSCAD (*Resolute*)

Well, let us die after all. Perhaps such a kiss, which I abhor, will break the spell. (*Approaches the tomb. The serpent fiercely approaches his face. FARRUSCAD recedes; the serpent hides.*) Oh, cruel luck, you could not expose me to a more barbaric ordeal! Oh, voice of Geonca, why are you silent? Why will you not help me in this extremity? Ah, this sword at last, which has conquered everything, let it now break even the tomb and kill the snake. (*Moves to hit the tomb*)

VOICE

Stop, careless one, or weep forever. Farzana, now you have no hope of keeping Cherestani. Go to your Congress; tell them that she is mortal, and that Farruscad has rescued her. Son, do not be disgusted; kiss the serpent. The serpent is your wife, kiss her on the mouth. Do not fear its bite; this is the spell. Remember me; the deed is done.

FARZANA (*Desperate*)

Ah, cruel fate! Ah, cursed voice! My companions, Cherestani is lost. (*Runs off crying, along with sounds of women ululating.*)

FARRUSCAD

Close your eyes. Conquer your disgust. Sweet Cherestani, I am no longer afraid. In vain my dear, you try to scare me. (*Approaches the tomb impetuously. The serpent comes out, as before. After some gestures of disgust and resolution, FARRUSCAD kisses the snake. The stage goes dark, followed by the usual lightning, and thunder, and earthquake. The tomb changes into a magnificent triumphal chariot, on which is seen CHERESTANI, dressed richly, as a Queen. Lights up.*)

ACT II, SCENE 20

CHERESTANI and FARRUSCAD

*She embraces FARRUSCAD*

CHERESTANI

Farruscad, my husband, I am so happy! And so grateful!

FARRUSCAD

My darling, now I will never lose you again. I have paid the price for my mistakes.

## FINAL SCENE

CANZADE, REZIA, BEDREDINO, TOGRUL, PANTALONE, TARTAGLIA, BRIGHELLA, TRUFFALDINO, SMERALDINA, and the characters from the previous scene

CANZADE

Here we are, my brother! We come to your defense. But what do I see!

FARRUSCAD

This is my bride. My sister, embrace your sister-in-law. My children... my children... I am so happy! I want you to share my happiness with me today. (*Everybody embraces everybody with delight and astonishment*)

TOGRUL

My lord, tell me...

FARRUSCAD

No, this is not the right moment. I will tell you everything later. Cherestani, I am so happy that I am beside myself. You will decide on our future, and everybody will be happy and live happily ever after.

CHERESTANI

Yes, I will take care of everything. You will come with me, and our children, and the Fairies to the vast kingdom of Eldorado, that is hidden to the rest of the world, and there you will be king. Togrul, you will marry Canzade, and rule Teflis. Tartaglia and Pantalone will come with us. Truffaldino will marry Smeraldina. Brighella will marry someone else and he will receive rich gifts and treasures.

FARZANA (*Entering*)<sup>31</sup>

But who will tell me how you can expose these noble souls to such boring fairy tales for little children?

BADUR

Yeah?

CHERESTANI

Give me your hands, if we be friends, and Cherestani will restore amends.<sup>32</sup>

FAIRIES

And they lived happily ever after.

TERRAMOTA

Even the villains?

---

<sup>31</sup> The arrival of FARZANA, and most of the lines that follow, are not in Gozzi's original. The ending of Gozzi's play is more ambivalent than the unreservedly happy ending presented here.

<sup>32</sup> The Italian is: "And who can pity us and hold out their hands to beg for forgiveness or for a feast?"

Even the villains.

FAIRIES

The end.

ALL

End of Play



*iPlay*

By Bernhard Studlar

Translated by Henning Bochert

## INTRODUCTION

During the now distant eighties of the last century, Peter Greenaway shot a few feature films that impressed me enormously, among them *Drowning by Numbers*, which - like all of these films - was characterized by a pertinacity that was perhaps deeply embedded in that era as a whole. In addition to this intense film, with its driving, trancelike Michael Nyman score, Greenaway published a book entitled FEAR OF DROWNING ~~BY NUMBERS~~ RÈGLES DU JEU, in which he lays out the film's inherent principles:

Throughout the film *Drowning by Numbers*, there runs a number count of one to one hundred, which serves as an incidental and ironic structure against which three women can drown their husbands.

At the start of the film, one of the women and the skipping-rope girl have the following exchange:

I'm counting the stars. - There are more than a hundred. - I know. - Why did you stop? - A hundred is enough. Once you've counted a hundred, all the other hundreds are the same.

Everything is playful. Everything is incredibly fantastical.

Bernhard Studlar's IPLAY reminds me of both Greenaway's film and book. All three are numbered from one to one hundred throughout their respective length, even though the parameters have since changed. Several decades have since come and gone, and pertinacity has vanished; flexibility and mobility are the mottos of today. What has remained, however, is the necessity for structure in artistic works. But structure in fictional literature (including dramatic literature) is always an artificial construction, so why not strip this necessity of pretense completely and make it all transparent?

One hundred 'apps' (like the numbers in Greenaway's film) throughout the play lead from nowhere to nowhere (but not to anyone being drowned), there are no characters doing anything, and no meaning coagulates around any plot. Even the narrator disappears, and all that remains - as the playwright points out in his preface - is text. With a pleasantly light touch, Studlar avoids all elements typical of the nineteenth century ("I have a feeling that it's become obsolete to correspond to the world I live in - and maybe you, too, but who knows, anyway - with a play in three acts with five characters and a linear plot.") to create a poetic perspective on a (certainly urban) world ("fucking nature"), on a folding chair on the pavement maybe, the tagged subway seat, the traffic light where fragmented conversations are snatched from people waiting.

The term 'app' for the extremely exposed text units - often only less than a single sentence - suggests a practical applicability that the lines themselves, of course, refuse. What could such a text be useful for? What specific niche function could such a sentence, a link to a fictitious URL, or to a

slogan have? In the epilog, the playwright remarks: “I have no clue what this is about. (...) I have no clue whether others might get any ideas from this.” Furthermore, this lightly woven piece will comfort the machinery of theater, which takes itself so seriously, by appearing to say: easy now, it’s alright, let go. Its transparency without coherence (at least at first sight) has a liberating and inspirational effect. You want to play around with these handy chunks, which retain the poetic quality of the text without loading or overloading them with any pressure to be meaningful beyond what’s on the page. Reduction may not only increase a given text’s specific poetic weight but also decrease it by creating space to breathe.

The text contains an explicit challenge to creatively participate: “Intervene, create a new mix, add to it”. Studlar quotes the notion of open source from the digital and functional world, which so far I have only encountered with Charles Mee (no doubt there are others): add to and feed into this play’s text cloud as it travels from past to future productions. This shifts the audience’s perspective away from the one specific production, in which they are listening to those lines, toward an awareness of the play’s journey out of the playwright’s head onto (hopefully) different stages, into directors’ and actors’ and finally the audiences’ heads. At one of these stages, we encounter the text, or it encounters us.

As a translator working on this text, I had to preserve its lightness and also ask myself what evokes it. There are, in the very brevity of the texts, so many hints and patterns pointing in different directions, sometimes creating images that don’t seem to connect to the preceding or following lines. Yet the confusion in one line sometimes provokes a yearning for a safe space that may then be projected onto the image in the next line.

Idioms and sayings are demanding challenges for any translator. IPLAY abounds with them, but often taken to another level, e.g. using puns. One example is: “Was der Bauer nicht kennt, denkt er nicht.” The original saying goes “Was der Bauer nicht kennt, isst er nicht” (meaning: A farmer won’t eat anything he doesn’t know). However, the saying is modified to express, “A farmer won’t think anything he doesn’t already know”.

I also liked the commonplace saying “Irgendwas ist immer”, which means there’s always something going on, something in the way, some problem. Its charm is, of course, its simple elliptic wording, which is hard or nearly impossible to convey in translation, the German for once being more concise than the English.

My research also included the notation of chess games and its history in English, as the playwright chose to use one in his play.

In pursuit of a contemporary feel in line with the ‘app’ metaphor, Studlar employs many English phrases in his play. Some of the slogans (e. g. “Help is on the way”) are in English, or both in English and German (“Willkommen daheim :-) Welcome home”), as are some slogan-like lines such as “Applications for life”, or the “occupy” in “everything is so *occupy*” or the recurring “You make me laugh, but it isn’t funny”. All of these seem like half-familiar quotes from forgotten movies. That pseudo-hip layer of the text is most likely lost in the translation. I would therefore encourage any

production of the play to feel free to add some of the German original into the show in hopes of retaining that effect.

**Bernhard Studlar** was born 1972 in Vienna, studied theatre sciences, philosophy, German science and journalism at the Vienna University 1991-1996. He then studied playwriting at the University of Arts Berlin 1998-2002. Studlar writes plays by himself as well as together with Andreas Sauter. He received the Playwright Award of Heidelberg Stückemarkt for his play "Transdanubia Dreaming" in 2001. His first play (written together with Andreas Sauter) "A. ist eine andere" received the renowned Kleist Supporting Award for Young Drama in 2000. "All about Mary Long" received the "Radical Comedy" Award of Staatstheater Kassel. In December 2003, "Mariedl-Kantine" premiered at Burgtheater Wien. "A. ist eine andere" received the "Radio Play of the Year" award in 2004. From 2010-2012, Studlar wrote three plays in a row for the Vienna Theater Rabenhof: "Human Being Parcival," "Don Q," and "Die prima Stadtmusikanten - Rette sich, wer kann!" Bernhard Studlar lives as a freelance playwright in Vienna.

**Henning Bochert** works as playwright, dramaturg, and translator in Berlin. Since 1996, he accomplished numerous translations of theatre plays for various agencies (incl. Wolfram Lotz, Christoph Hein, Ingrid Lausund and Martin Heckmanns into English, and George Brant, Adam Rapp, Neil Simon, Carlos Murillo, and Jason Grote into German). Since 2007, he is a member of [raum4 – netzwerk für künstlerische alltagsbewältigung](#), and since 2009, he is part of [Drama Panorama: Forum for Translation and Theater](#), an international platform for translators of dramatic literature. Bochert produced, realized and participated as dramaturg, producer and translator in productions like *SumSum<sup>2</sup> – eine grenzenlose Liebes- und Sprachverwirrung* (Erlangen, St. Petersburg), *phoenix transatlantic* and *Werkschau Wuppertal* (both in Berlin). He was invited to the *Werkstatttage für Autoren* (playwrights' workshop) at the [Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg](#) in 2002. In the same year, he taught acting at the [University of Arts Berlin](#). In 1994 he received a Bachelor of Arts (Acting) at University of Arts Berlin. He founded the translation agency [Bochert Translations](#) in 1997. He has been a certified translator for English since 2014.

**Bernhard Studlar**

**iPlay**

Drama app for the stage (supermarket and everyday use)

Translated from the German by Henning Bochert

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*Die Quelle ist dort, wo jemand den Mut hat, wider den Zwang zur schnellen  
Wortfindung über diese Welt, einmal von ihrer beschallten Oberfläche zu  
verschwinden, um sich langsam auf den Grund sinken zu lassen, ins Sprachlose.  
Um dort leibhaftig zu erfahren, was mit dieser Welt geschehen ist.*  
(Angela Krauß)

*(The source can be found where someone is – against the compulsion to quickly  
find words about this world – courageous enough to disappear for once from its  
sounding surface, to let himself slowly sink to the bottom, into speechlessness.  
To physically experience there what happened to this world.*  
(Angela Krauß)

## **iPlay — author's foreword**

Thank you for choosing **iPlay**.

The playwright appreciates your interest.

The text below is a suggestion, nothing more and nothing less. A playing field, if you like this term for the boards that allegedly represent the world. A free, wide space, grassroot insights, dandelion sentences, language clover, word-weeds galore, an occasional bloomer and lots of creatures twitter (tirades?), scurrying about and trying to hold their ground. (Watch out, you'll find a heap of crap in that field as well, of course, but then please elegantly avoid it, or properly bag it and dispose of it. Thank you.)

What will eventually be seen on stage is completely subject to the kind of fantasies that happen to surface in the course of the app's realization/application.

First of all, there is text. Nothing else. Everything is a question of language, everything one large, vast space of language. Spanning associations, memories, fragments of stories. In the centre stands one narrating "I". It may remain by itself or multiply in the course of the production of the text. From the individual to the chorus. From the moment of "now" on stage, back into the future and into the past again, and back again, and so on...

That much is for sure and can be read on the following pages. The text in its order follows a certain logic and also contains a certain suspense.

But. (Always that little, mean but!)

It is very possible and all right with the playwright if, in the production of **iPlay**, changes, interlockings, and twistings are applied. Go ahead. Take a shot.

Intervene, create a new mix, add to it. But please, proceed sensibly. If you write any new additions, please be kind enough to make your writing available to **iPlay** and all future users.

Another option is to contact the playwright and order an amendment.

But careful! These amendments might entail extra charges. (Europe min € XXX per App. All other requests are subject to negotiations.)

And one last user hint:

Forget irony!

Forget intellectual over-interpretation!

Forget all that meaningful bullshit!

Just play. Just say the lines. Never stop.

Please click "Accept" now and then turn the page. Pleasant reading!

Bernhard Studlar, Vienna 2012

## Prologue

Who are we  
Who are we anyway  
We decorate ourselves with (his)stories  
Glue false beards to our faces  
And adorn ourselves with borrowed plumes  
We buy ourselves clothes and favours  
We let ourselves be loved  
Fall ill  
Suffer and tremble  
When no one is looking we're great  
Behind the door of our room  
When no one's looking we are naked  
In the dark we lie and listen  
To the signals from out there  
Is that our world calling?  
Is that my name it's calling?

...

A yearning is tapping on our door  
That we must die of (sunken in silence)



## 100 Applications for life (1-7)

1. Survive – I'm here to  
Survive, that is the motto  
Survive: the password. And all good comes from above/comes from the heart/evil is  
watching/lies on the ground  
Looks up to the sky

2. Do you know this feeling when your heart expands until it aches?  
Sadness because it is what it is  
Sadness because the world is what it is  
Like that  
Like that  
Like that  
With such lights, such skies, such waters and creatures and such darkness

A yearning is tapping on our door

Hello?  
Hello?

3. You make me laugh, but it isn't funny

4. I/he, this man fell in love with this one woman because she wore the same perfume  
as my/his mother. The rest, meaning everything else about this woman, was different.  
Completely different. My mother used to smell so good of cake. The smell of food – a  
feeling of safety. That's gone now. Long gone. The mother. (and the safety)

5. I and my withered heart  
I – VAT included  
I and my idea of  
Sex

(6.) I and  
I/he and I/her (No, there is no we)  
But I and  
That's an offer. "I and" is a docking station.  
A space satellite comes flying,  
hurled from its orbit, and crashes into me. Docking manoeuvre  
accomplished. Damaged sustained after all  
in both of them, after such a long search. After such a long  
time of waiting and hard labour. After so many hours.  
At the end of the night, just before it ...  
Tomorrow everything will be different.  
Please not now, don't turn tomorrow now

Please ...  
Because the world is, what it is  
Like that  
Like that  
Like that

7. (Uneasy)

I feel uneasy  
When I think about the future, I feel  
Uneasy  
Why?  
I don't know what tomorrow will bring

(Brittle)

I have a brittle feeling  
When I think about the future, I have a  
brittle feeling  
I don't know  
Something is about to break  
If not tomorrow, then later  
that's for sure

Everything is  
everybody's  
fault

## 100 Applications for life (8-19)

8. Sooner or later. (You want it – You buy it)  
There's always one more to the masses than you think. And this one person suddenly  
stands in front of you. A gun in his hand  
or a knife, a weapon anyway. What does he want from you?  
Why me? Wrong question, painful answer. How  
much you'd like to be rich now. But as it is ...  
Better or farther? (You forget)  
Far better

9. funny but something's missing  
something's missing there, I just can't think of it  
but something's missing there ...  
I?  
funny but something's missing there

10. Loss, dammit, loss!  
Loss of rate, loss of value, loss of heart, loss of lust (loss)  
I say: Who now believes that he or she knows the crisis,  
doesn't know 2012 et seqq.

11. go to [www.crisis.com/orbit](http://www.crisis.com/orbit) – Go there, move it, fucking go there!

12. So I always say: Whatever kind of work, the main thing is that it's done diva-style.  
The main thing is that you keep your pride.

13. Loss, dammit, loss!  
Need to go against that. Against the wall!  
Regardless of the losses. Go!  
Faster, farther, better, more expensive. Wickedder!  
(this is my idea of having fun)

14. Welcome to the world of New Iconomy  
Result matters! / only the result matters!  
Always be – always first!  
Overcome what's in your way!  
Think about the usefulness of the others to you  
Use the others' thinking for yourself  
Copy & Paste  
Copy & Waste

My working area is my home  
My home is my desktop!

15. Chorus n°1

There's snow outside  
Birds drop dead from the sky  
Hail of bombs (black on white)  
(And somewhere – in the far back of the picture – a bonfire)

16. I never grew up, only older  
It is a Saturday in autumn  
And already too cold to stand  
Barefoot in the meadows  
The long stick with the sack of cloth  
Hand-sewn by unknown ancestors  
I used to climb the apple tree  
Effortless up to the  
Crown  
Today I put down roots myself  
Let the apples up there and  
My shoulders droop

17. Please don't tell me now that it was too much work for you

18. I know that the Chinese across the street eat crows. I watched them. Their trick is simple. They leave their kitchen window on the fifth floor open a bit. There's some food on the inside windowsill. The hungry, greedy crows first land on the outside windowsill and watch. They are careful. Yet. But because it is so nice and quiet, they are tempted by the food. It's only a quick hop, and they're inside the kitchen. It's only a small piece of cheap, fat pork. Their last meal. Then the Chinese closes the window. I'd like to know what crow tastes like and what he does with the feathers.

There are 1.8 billion Chinese  
And we still believe  
And we still believe

The Chinese symbol for love looks like a leaf tree.  
Something like this:



My apple tree also belongs to the Chinese now.

19. You make me laugh but it isn't funny

Help is  
on the  
way

## 100 Applications for life (20-28)

20. I bought a bottle stopper. At the second-hand shop. It's a gilded deer that I since put on each wine bottle as soon as it's opened. The golden deer has something majestic about it. I could keep looking at it for hours while drinking wine.

21. go to [www.crisis.com/selfcontrol](http://www.crisis.com/selfcontrol)

22. To beautify the world by drinking is possible within limits. Regarded from afar, everybody is potentially beautiful and very certainly different. I, I, I. He, she, and so on. Regarded from up close: nothing but organs and cells – all but one sauce contained by unclean skin. Enjoy.

23. Uniforms. Uniforms (always never) help get an orientation. White coat – I'm in a hospital. Green uniform – my house is on fire. Blue uniform – I'm in jail. Your black clothes, always your black clothes, the whole closet is full of them!

24. Counselling

Take the nearest book to you.

Go to page 66 and read the first sentence:

...

That's what your future will look like.

Avoid finding yourself another book if you didn't like the sentence.

It won't get any better, and even if so, it won't happen, because only the first book is the Book of Truth.

It is like it always is, the first impulse is true. The second, third, fourth is potentially the right one.

- Yes, yes. The enigma of life in the Elysium of empty streets.
- Shut it!

25. Your past is your past, I'm not interested in what you did yesterday or three years ago.

I'm not interested in how you make a living.

I'm not interested in how old you are.

I'm not interested in when you studied where and whether you are ashamed of looking the way you look.

I'm not interested in who you are and how it is that you are here now.



26. I don't want to know whether you run the risk of looking ridiculous for me.

I want to know whether you run the risk of showing me your inner pain.

I want to know whether you are HIV positive.

27. go to [www.crisis.com/love](http://www.crisis.com/love)

28. I dye my hair

Shave my crotch (the shame off of my posture)

Tattoo a snake

Onto my back

I load the burden

Of love

Leave  
your money  
in your  
account!

## 100 Applications for life (29-35)

29. Property = Burden! Do you know one true communist? – See, they all cleared out to North Korea already. Or to the moon.

30. The poor breathe noisily through their mouths. A demonstration. Skin on skin. Beat on beat. I call that Capitalist Realism.

31. The system today is stronger than its elements. People used to believe that individuals could affect a change within the system. It's not like that anymore. That's become impossible today. The system has become so strong that even criticizing the system will only stabilize it.

(So what to do?)

Today all thinking (consciously or not) is aimed at sustaining the system. E.g. we must not let the Bank of XXX go bankrupt because otherwise (we believe) the system would implode. Promises and, a little later, agreements are made that can then, if necessary, be broken again or terminated.

This creates the impression that no one is in control of the situation anymore....

Political. Everything is so exceedingly political.

I/he political. You. Everyone. Everything is so occupy.

Every roadhouse toilet, every public opinion. Everything occupied – and who owns the property?

32. Whatever the world holds in store for me:

Dear Father Christmas,

I'm powerless and shy, so I put my hope into your hands and onto your wings I lay my debts. But could you please make these wishes come true for next year?

1. Clean air. 2. Good weather. 3. More fairness in distribution. 4. A higher credit line. 5. A different government. 6. A personal rescue fund (cf. 4.) and an adidas track top.

Thanks.

Warmest, your

33. Interrogation/Survey

- Is it true that the XXX Company transferred a monthly amount of €12,000 to your account between June 2010 and December 2011?

- Yes

- What have you received this amount of money for?

- I have no perception about that

- Why do you feel like a fraud while being so successful?

- Objection, leading question
- Would you like to comment on that?
- ...
- Would you like to comment on that?
- No
- Did you provide any kind of services for the payments made?
- I have no perception about that

34. Hello and welcome to a new issue of Irobic, the fitness programme for the New Economy.

Great to have you with us again. We are training for a better world. Are you ready?  
And here we go!

Hands out of your pockets, give them a good shake aaaaand  
Palms up  
everything clean  
Hands up  
we didn't do anything  
Palms out front  
Stay away from us  
And now push!  
Palms out front  
Not one step closer  
Palms out front  
I know my rights  
(You make me laugh but it isn't funny)

35. Backpedalling

# Congratulations

## **100 Applications for life (36-40)**

36. You can't change the thinking of a lifetime.

37. Close your eyes for a moment – very good. Trust me – very good. And now – take a deep breath.

38. Nothing exists outside a/my unique reality, whose name is irrelevant – God, the Infinite, the Absolute, Cyberspace, whatever it's being named.

My reality doesn't have a single feature that could be defined.

Every attempt to describe it/me I'd have to answer: No! I can say what it's not but not what it is.

Everything that seems like existence is nothing but the Absolute under a false conception. The only thing that exists underneath this surge of phantoms of egos is the True Self, the One. That's you! I say to myself and he to himself.

That's why it is already a form of force to regard yourself as others.

39. One can only say, one doesn't know anything specific, but that is enough.

40. Much can be imagined, for example that...

in the future, every human being will be assigned defined daily procedures. An unalterable life plan. From birth to death. No choice. And some day, a friendly lady will hand you an envelope with the date of your death in it.

in the future, every human being will receive a pill on his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to end their lives with at any time.

in the future, our collective memory will be deleted on each New Year's Eve on the stroke of twelve.

in the future, all men will live like nomads. Without property one will move from job to job, from relationship to relationship, from one sketch of life to the next.

Much can be imagined, for example that it will be more beautiful in the future.

Well. No. Or will it?

### **Noise interference**

Well that would need to be discussed now. I mean...

It starts with terminology even. Future?! –

Is that a practical focus on the next day or rather more metaphysically and generally (meaning cowardly) thrown into the discussion? And what's more... hello?

Welcome  
home  
:)

## 100 Applications for life (41-50)

### 41. Chorus n°2

This is it  
This is new  
This is nothing  
This is everything  
This is it

I made this just for you.

42. Many beautiful things. Naked winters without snow. Naked bodies. It's good not to have to worry about where the next meal will come from.

- Here. I made this only for you.

43. Space is not empty but filled with a thin but very hot gas, a plasma of wishes and hopes, and it's interwoven with veins of fears and areas filled with fright. Like inside your body, stormy, weather-like phenomena triggered by the sun are happening within this medium. On one hand, these storms may create marvellous aurorae, but also dangerously jeopardize the human infrastructure. The sky tumbles onto your head.

44. I don't even know whether I'm happy or sad. Tears in my eyes and joy in my heart. It's my birthday today. I'm turning ...

- Here. I made this just for you.

45. I remember my birth – I don't. Who laid the foundation for my existence? I wonder how a man becomes what he is. Why do I dress this way?  
Why do I sleep alone and naked?

46. Woke up and thought my left eye was a mirror. Fell out of bed because of all that dreaming. Turned my eyes to the future and thought: "Viewed from here, everything looks very far away." Stretched daytime.

47. It was a misunderstanding – of course faster is always better. Society is accelerating. Me, you, itself. Society fills me up with desires. But what was inside me at the very beginning?

48. Imagine – no, don't imagine – better not imagine anything and put yourself (that is without an imagination thereof) out on the street ... It's not much that man brings with him into this world.

49. The things that disappeared from my life:

My scooter. The girl I had sex with for the first time. Our dog. The postcards friends



wrote me from their vacations. The boy I had sex with for the first time. My hair.

The things that will disappear in my lifetime:

Newspapers, books, music, my parents, my memory, possession of things in general... my privacy.

- Here. I made this just for you.
- I made this just for you.
- Here.

50. STOP! Intermission. Half-time. Commercials:

No more hangovers!

We all know this. Stress produces free radicals that block our power and continue to impede our organism. But that's history now!

The DRINK, the new function beverage, provides relaxation and relief. Gingko optimizes blood circulation, guarana sharpens the senses and ginseng makes us stress-resistant.

With the 3G feature of The DRINK one sip will bring you back into the safety zone.

The effect. The taste. The feeling. Everything wrapped up in one in:

The DRINK.

(PS: Who will clean up when everything is over?)

## **Interlude/TEXT**

Text?

Texttexttext.

Text. Texttext.

Text.

...

Text!

Text!!

Te-ext!!!

...

Text text.

Text.

Texttext – text.

Text.

Text?

Text.

Text!?

Text. Text.

Uh...

## 100 Applications for life (51-55)

51. Nature can't bear emptiness. There's always something. Something is always suppressing something. Something is always killing something and something else is giving birth to something.

Always. Nature. Never. Peace and quiet.

52. 1. go to [www.crisis.com/backtonature](http://www.crisis.com/backtonature)

52. 2. go to [www.crisis.com/backtotorture](http://www.crisis.com/backtotorture)

53. I got up early. Still dark out. On the street silence, and dew in the meadows. Park in fog. They both slid from the fog like a row boat.

The passed me without a word, and suddenly I didn't know what was next.

This couple so very close and true. Why today of all days? This couple made me... I remember the red glowing that you see when you look into the sun with your eyes closed.

54. Dialogue n°1

What do you want?

Me?

Yeah, you?

Me?

What do you want to be?

I, I want to...

What do you want to be?

I want to be with you...

What?

Tell me what I...

You! What do you want?

You tell me. I'll do what you...

Stop! Stop!!! For once tell me what you want to do. You... you can do so much. Could do/be so much.

Me?

Yeah, you.

I...don't know. You tell me.

55. Chorus n°3

Rain falling outside

My shares, my shares

Go! Create!  
Resistance!

Lose weight!  
Run! Diet!

My body is my  
resistance

## 100 Applications for life (56-58)

56. Dawn (or I don't care what the others say)

I should do it differently  
I should be more honest  
I should respect the other person and

...

I should do it differently  
I should get up  
I should be honest and

...

I should do it differently  
I should get up and take my time to understand  
I should leave some room, so others

...

I should do it differently

57. Things are talking to me. The chair in the kitchen creaks and it sounds like "It's good to have you here."

I lay down on the floor and listened whether there'd be anybody home underneath. I imagined laughter.

58. Dialogue n°2

And is that over now?  
No, but it's gotten less.

## 100 Applications for life (59-63)

59. You can be the latest love guru in town once you know the secrets. – I senseless-ize around. If I had work I wouldn't have to think about sex that much.

60. Memory of a wailing woman coming up to me begging. Her body swaying in her singsong. I don't understand what she sings. She's holding a battered Starbucks cup with a bit of change in one hand, in the other she's holding a Polaroid of a dead, laid-out man. He's lying on his deathbed and underneath, in handwriting, reads: "Pleese help mi. Man dead. 3 kids."

61. Enjoy. I can't enjoy anything anymore. Except maybe a glass of good wine. Or a meal here and there. Sex? Pffft. The people's expectation appears to be fundamentally exaggerated there. Sex. Please. Toiling with a bunch of tepid deficiencies.

*Pause.*

And then your therapist tells you: The sun is shining. It's a nice day. Enjoy that. Go sit in a café and enjoy the nice day.

What is that?

The sun is shining, that's nature. Just like if it were raining. Sure, it's more comfortable when the sun is shining. But that's got nothing, absolutely nothing to do with me. The sun is shining. What's that got to do with my joy? He's acting as if rain were unenjoyable. That idiot.

Fucking therapist. Get sunburned yourself and enjoy that!

62. In all the magazines you browse... the models.

You wonder whether they actually have a pussy. No seriously, did you ever look at what these women in fashion ads look like? You probably did, but not real close. Because otherwise... the privates are a photoshopped spot. Completely indifferent.

No pussy underneath their clothes. Never be too specific. Never risk a lawsuit.

Back then, they put a banana in David Beckham's trousers. Really, they did. Well, that's what I read. In another magazine.

63. You make me laugh but it isn't funny

**FUCK  
IRONY!**

## **Interlude / Continuation**

On  
It goes  
On  
For anything to go on  
For anything to stay  
Temporarily  
Something goes  
It goes on and something else stays behind  
Temporarily  
...  
What's in front stays  
For anything to stay  
What stayed behind  
Will be forgotten  
Look back? – No thanks  
On  
Better on  
It goes  
On  
For anything to stay  
It goes  
On like that



## 100 Applications for life (64-67)

64. How does clarity evolve? What do I believe, what do I think, what do I know? (oh, what do I know!)

65. I looked at the sea until there was nothing left but a coloured surface. I counted the lightning and the distance of the thunderbolts. What an opera-like death, I thought. What a Caspar David Friedrich-like death.

Life on screen. "I" is the enormous solitude of my entire life.

66. Dialogue n°3

You wanna know something?

Leave me alone

You wanna know something

Piss off

Yeah, but I'm gonna tell you something first

And what?

Everything is gonna be alright

Asshole

67. Chorus n°4

The clouds outside

No more money – no money

Sunshine

We saw it come

And go again

Lines of cars – lines of cars

## 100 Applications for life (68-74)

68. Everything is related. To everything. In this house. For example, all beginning lies on the street in front of this house. With the head at the window, eyes closed, able to feel how the bus is passing the house on the street below, how the window vibrates when the bus passes, feel ...  
It's all between my ears

69. What patterns connect us with the world?  
What patterns connect us with the fish on our plate. And the fish with the world? And with other fish, with urchins, the sea and love's waves?  
Where is the sea in me, after I swallowed the fish? How is my stomach connected with...  
How are the frontal sinuses connected with the paranasal sinuses? – All right, I can google that. I can wikipedi-ize that. That will be connectible. But another question: who fucks whom?  
There is an imbalance in the soul.

70. Greed is great – says his shopping bag. His fucking tightly packed shopping bag, the sack of truth.  
How he carries it in front of him, both hands always tightly pressed around the handles. Because that's his life in there. But he doesn't understand what the bag says, the sack, but it suits him well, suits his look well, too, (hounded), because such a tightly packed sack attracts attention. Attracts it and draws it onto itself and with the others' looks their hands come closer, too. That's only very remotely got to do with tenderness.

71. The journey from A to B. The journey from B to... A? Or C? Or stay?  
(iStay in iPlay)  
You mark time until  
The ground disappears from under your feet  
You slip and fall  
On your nose  
Into the arms of your fellow  
Daytime and night-time welcome you  
Sweet dreams  
Escape routes

72. Everything is in motion, everything is guaranteed to be connected with everything. Our thoughts – dancing monkeys. A universal network, alive in waves. The threads of this network spanning over our heads. They come from the past and split up into the future. A constant remembering and forgetting. (And who knows, maybe we're all sitting on the bottom of a terrarium that someone put up in his very extensive laboratory a long time ago, and now is watching what's going on in there.)

73. Dialogue n°4

You're probably not gonna go for a drink either

Yes

Yes what?

Yes, right, are you

By myself

Well

No

Well then

Right

*(Pause.)*

Too bad actually

You're the one who doesn't

And you do

Yeah

But what makes you think that I wouldn't

No clue, self-protection

Alcohol is no threat to me

No, my self-protection from disappointments

I see. Because I

No. Because I, but you were saying

No, you were saying

All right, so would you wanna go for a drink with me

Sorry, I can't, I

See. Shit.

But

Shit, it's always like that. Always always always.

Don't leave  
your money in  
your account  
no matter  
what!

## 100 Applications for life (74-80)

74. The finance minister says, the state bankruptcy of... can't be excluded  
The chancellor feels that the salvation of ... is feasible  
The president puts her fullest confidence in the rescue fund  
The finance minister locates a shift inside the Union regarding the opinion about...  
The president believes that Europe won't abandon...  
The chancellor says that aid payments for... are no longer guaranteed  
Without a compromise by... the central bank won't purchase any more issues,  
The president says.  
The finance minister says  
The chancellor feels  
The president

75. go to [www.crisis.com/lastactioneuro](http://www.crisis.com/lastactioneuro)

76. Whoever isn't burnt out by the pursuit of success at the end of the day is a deadbeat!  
If you, yes you, aren't able to raise your creative potential, to convey your ideas passionately – then forget it!  
If you, yes you, just want to keep your job, then your life is senseless.  
Suffer aches, make an effort, consider yourself a doctor, your idea is a remedy saving the world! Trust your idea, turn it into money! You're happiest when you're creative and sleep is your enemy. It steals away a third of your life, of your working time. An 80-year-old is awake for an average of about 230,000 hours of his life. So when you're 80 and sleep one hour less from now on, you will have an advantage of years over your competition! You hear?

77. There's always someone who is worse off.

78. Inside the doctors' waiting rooms. Where to put all the pain?  
The air is full of it up to the ceiling. The magazines have hardly any colour or shape left. Neon light tires the eyes. The receptionist and her perm rock when she's on the phone. The patients eye each other suspiciously. Never catch anything and never go to the toilet lest you lose your starting position.  
Chance to get well! Dammit! That's my chance to get well! Antibiotics! Give me antibiotics.

79. Blood donation! ..... Blood donation centre!

80. I'm allergic. Fucking antibiotics! First they help you, and then they finish you off. Ruin your stomach, make you susceptible.  
I'm allergic, dammit! Fucking creditotics! First they help me and then they make me relapse. Ruin my car, if I don't pay, make me go crazy. Of course I relapse. Gambling machines are the oracles of our time. I'm pro abolition of all drugs and absolution of all

debts.

Will that be the justice of God then?

## **Commercial intermission**

We.  
Live.  
More.  
Simple.  
She.  
Here.  
I.  
Naturally.  
Good.

You.  
Know.  
Better.  
With.  
Children.  
I.  
Performance.  
Value.  
Insured.

## **Applications for life (81-82)**

### **81. Dialogue n°5**

You can't do that, you can't just tell me that I'm clumsy during sex

You're drunk

That's got nothing to do with it

It does, every time you're drunk, you get horny

I'm absolutely unhorny now

Me too

But you can't just say to a couple of strangers over dinner that

He is your brother and she is your sister-in-law

But everybody at the next table heard that

You're hallucinating

You really think so

Yes

No, I mean, do you really think that I

...

82. In order to get to know the world, one has to lick it. In order to know who the next one will be, one certainly has to lick them. When you know who tastes like what, it doesn't matter what else he or she is blathering on about to present themselves, you know the taste level and it's not lying. You are what you taste like. That being licked may also be pleasant makes reproduction possible. If it all depended on blathering, we'd probably be extinct already.



## **100 Applications for life (83-91)**

83. There are people who take a little daylight with them when they go.

84. Loneliness is a person sitting down next to you. A person without a face. She comes and sits next to you. Even if others are with you. Loneliness may appear at any time. Everyone for himself, only for himself alone.

85. You call this life? – This muck!?

86. Options for departure/Escape routes  
(from Vienna between 10am and 11am)

Zurich, Bagdad, Budapest  
Vilnius, Moscow, Paris  
Skopje, Prague, Verona  
Iași and Linz  
Zagreb, Barcelona  
Warsaw and St. Petersburg  
Erbil, Graz, Sofia  
Bucharest, Larnaca, Oslo  
Dnipropetrovsk  
Washington, D.C.  
Tel Aviv  
Cairo, Athens, Toronto  
Podgorica, Linz, Malta  
Donetsk, Istanbul, Düsseldorf  
New York, New York, New York  
Reus, Odessa, Cluj  
Berlin, Belgrade, Stockholm  
Athens, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf  
Munich

87. Why do passport pictures always turn out so bad? No matter what I do, how big an effort I make. The machine will always give out bad pictures. I believe it's a state issued secret law. With the help of these ID pictures, the state wants to let us know: look at you, we give you such a nice ID card, we grant you an identity, let you participate in elections, endow you with human rights, let you drive a car and so on. But why? As ugly as you are, pale in the face, crazy look, hair greasy and thin. Why does it do that? Because the state wants to tell us, I'm better than you are, you little ID card gnome. Look at you, then you'll know why we rightfully demand taxes from you. But are there any pictures of the state?  
(An uneven fight)

88. What are you looking at? Yeah you, what are you looking at?

89. go to [www.crisis.com/mirrorimage](http://www.crisis.com/mirrorimage)

90. I regret that I can't help you with that. My circumstances don't allow me to fulfil your wishes. Please spare me your request. I'm very angry, but it is absolutely impossible that I...

The moment is unfavourable, maybe another time something can be done, believe me. Believe me that I truly regret it from my heart.

91. Chorus n°5

Storms outside

Electricity Gas Water (Bills)

### **Alternative occupation**

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nc3 e6 5. Bg5 h6 6. Bh4 dxc4 7. e4 g5 8. Bg3 b5 9. Be2 Bb7 10. Qc2 Nbd7 11. Rd1 Nh5  
12. d5 Nxc3 13. hxc3 Qb6 14. dxe6 fxe6 15. Nxc3 Bc5  
16. Bh5+ Ke7 17. Nxe6 Ne5 18. Nxc5 Qxc5 19. Be2 Raf8  
20. 0-0 Rhg8 21. b4 Qxb4 22. Qd2 Qc5 23. Qxh6 Bc8 24. Qh4+ Ke6  
25. Qh6+ Ke7 26. Qh5 Kf6 27. Qh4+ Ke6 28. Nd5 cxd5  
29. Rxd5 Qb6 30. Qh5 db8 31. Rfd1 Rf6 32. Rxe5 Qxe5  
33. Bg4+ Rxg4 34. Qe8 mate.

## **100 Applications for life (92-99)**

92. When you come home, there won't be any home left.

Yes, you are gullible if you think that your life is not in danger. Shots, bombs, grenades, cancer. A wrong-way driver, a fishbone. Murder and homicide, death of love and jealousy. A car for your garage? It's burning long since. Better walk on foot, that's an honest death, maybe it's of some use to the murderer, at least as long as he or she is the next victim.

93. And after life? Will, on the next morning, begin the next life, in which you can do much differently. Move abroad. Or become anorexic. Join a community of faith. Beget children. Look for god. Find god? Anyway, there are enough new kinds of disappointments to be discovered.

But stop blaming someone else at once!

94. I'll start counting now

95. I'll start defending myself now  
and I'm angrier than you can imagine

96. Dialogue n°6

I'm sorry  
No  
I couldn't  
I know  
I know that you  
It's my fault  
No I  
Doesn't matter, we still got time

*(Pause.)*

I felt something inside, here. Inside. It hurts so damn bad.  
We got time  
Help me  
We got time  
Help me, I love you

*(Pause.)*

I'm sorry  
No

97. I'm free. So free, that I lock myself up inside me  
and inside me and  
inside my flat  
Orientation  
Outside is gone  
I'm there. I'm in the right place. I don't have to.  
I'm good.  
I play.  
Am on the lookout  
An area of tension in my face  
I'm better than  
I'm not like that, I'm like that  
...  
I'm already dead. No. I'm no  
Alive  
Outside is gone  
I'm there. I don't have to. I may.  
I'm good. I  
Believe me, I ...

98. I remember the sudden twitching in the moment before falling asleep

99. A lullaby (and then)

**Insert 9**

**3**

**2**

**1**

**...**

**0**



## **100 Applications for life (100)**

100. I stopped counting  
Eyes still closed  
I stopped ~~(living)~~

## **Epilogue**

We sit there and cry. Cry and laugh, laugh and cry and everything happening all around us, in the neighbouring house and on the telly, in the lives of others, is not important to us. We sit and cry, we don't want any sympathy, because it was our decision to sit and to cry, and from time to time we laugh because we know that it's right because we know we need to laugh because we would die otherwise, because we know we need to cry, because otherwise we'd...

Later we go to bed, to sleep. There will be a tomorrow, very certainly indeed, but what it will bring we don't know – so what – we will see. We will see and the ones among us still alive will carry on.

Cry and laugh. Cry and laugh.

**END OF PLAY**

# POP IS DEAD

(You make me... but it isn't)

**iPlay Additions n°1 (no extra fee)**

101. Number 101  
Crow with veggies  
Didn't catch it  
but brought it  
in a cardboard box  
Chopsticks to go with it (tasty)

102. With them – I mean the sticks – you can make a fire  
not me, but it's possible, only the friction needs to be strong enough  
the friction

103. I burnt myself  
pricked my fingers  
on the shrub  
thorns broke off and  
fingernails have black edges  
(like in obituaries)  
in the middle the fireplace  
My hand  
Holding yours

Who are we anyway  
A footnote in history, at best

104. You want anything else?  
Want me to put anything on the barbecue?

105. First there  
where I used to  
waiting for a long time  
the space empty  
inside the head  
abandoned  
by everybody – no, not by good spirits!  
Abandoned by all ideas

Later then  
Still there  
in a room with four walls and a window to nature

but then never back  
the thought stayed on

still hanging in-between the curtains  
unable to drop  
the notion  
...

First and then  
elsewhere  
first elsewhere  
second nowhere  
(third in between?)

and then there  
eventually there  
in a green room  
wall traded for woods

defiantly set down into  
Nature  
I was here first!  
Fucking ants!!!

106. Overcome your fear  
and solve the problem!  
Is what my psychiatrist recommended

No, my counsellor said:  
Go take a walk, bit of fresh air is gonna do you good.

No, my coach says:  
Nowadays, people sit in their offices in front of the computer all week and shy away  
from all risk. Never take a risk, or the job is gone! And then, on the weekend, they tie a  
rubber band around their waist and jump off of an autobahn bridge. In your leisure time,  
there is an obligation to the kick!

My best friend (that encourager) says:  
There used to be more action

107. The secret of all power lies in knowing that others are even greater cowards than  
we are. Can you hold that for a moment?  
Just for a sec.

108. (reprise)  
There used to be more action.

109. I remember that there used to be trees here everywhere.

110. Dialogue n°7

*a mobile phone rings, for a long time*

Listen

What?

Is that you?

What?

Well that thing

What?

That's your mobile, the ring tone ...

Oh that, yes

I thought we weren't gonna take them along?

Yes.

But?

Yes, I ... oh shit ...

You're not gonna take that?

No, yes, yes. Hello?

*(Pause.)*

Strange actually, that you got reception here?

Yeah, right.

Middle of nowhere.

Yeah, as long as you got reception, you're not in nature.

And?

What?

Who was it?

Oh, nothing.

Then toss it.

What?

Toss the bloody thing.

But...

Do it, toss it, throw it into the river, dig it up, crush it, now! Give it to...

What if something happens to us now?

Are we Hansel and Gretel? – See.

Fucking nature.

*(Note: or it might continue like this.)*

And?

What?

Who was it?  
The playwright  
What?  
He was just gonna ring up and ask how things are.  
So, what did you say?  
Good.  
That's all?  
Yep.  
Tuh. Good.  
Yeah, and he said that he bought a small bathing hut on the Danube river. That's built on stilts because of the floods. And they separate the trash. Paper, bio, plastic, cans, and the rest.  
He said that?  
Yeah.  
Loony. Gimme that mobile.  
But you're not gonna call him back now, are you?  
Hey, that was my... you can't just throw my mobile into that pond.  
Fucking nature.  
  
(That's it.)

## **Epilogue / Author's note**

I have no clue what this is about. I wrote it as much as it wrote itself.

Maybe it's about saying: "Hello, here I am. I am here. I'm still here." – Nothing more.

I have no clue whether others might get any ideas from this. (Would be nice. ☺)

But I have a feeling that it's become obsolete to meet the world I live in – and maybe you, too, but who knows, anyway – with a play in 3 acts with 5 characters and a linear plot.

There's nothing more to say about that.

Beyond that, there is unrest. There is enormous unrest.

Bernhard Studlar, Vienna, 2012



*Quijóteres: The Ingenious Puppeted Don Quijote de la Mancha*  
Written, translated and adapted by Jason Yancey

## INTRODUCTION

In the second book of his adventures Don Quijote twice crosses paths with stage performers, and neither encounter ends well for our hero. First, in chapter eleven, he meets a company of traveling actors on the road to their next show, still wearing their allegorical costumes of Devil, Angel, Death and so forth. Finding himself plunged into a bizarre procession of unlikely apparitions, the easily confounded Don Quijote struggles to separate the actual from the artifice. “Por la fe de caballero andante,” he exclaims, “que así como vi este carro imaginé que alguna grande aventura se me ofrecía, y ahora digo que es menester tocar las apariencias con la mano para dar lugar al desengaño” (520). A similar mixing and muddling occurs later in chapter twenty-six when, during Maese Pedro’s puppet show, an enraged Don Quijote lunges into the stage and, as the narrator tells us, “con acelerada y nunca vista furia comenzó a llover cuchilladas sobre la tierra morisma, derribando a unos, descabezando a otros, estropeando a éste, destrozando a aquél,” thereby destroying the entire scene and nearly injuring its astounded puppeteer (620). In both instances Don Quijote demonstrates gravitation toward the theatrical that ultimately proves so hostile that Sancho must step in and separate the two. As the traveling actors reach menacingly for stones to pelt both knight and squire, Sancho pulls his master aside and warns, “[...] tome mi consejo, que es que nunca se tome con farsantes, que es gente favorecida” (522). Actors, in Sancho’s experience, are dangerous and one would do well to avoid them.

In true Cervantine fashion of overlapping and blurred frames, this warning to maintain a safe distance from the theatre appears to have spilled off the page and into real life. Despite the novel’s unquestionable theatricality, Don Quijote on stage rarely lives up to its literary namesake. In fact, Dale Wasserman, author and playwright behind the Broadway musical *Man of la Mancha*, characterized adaptive efforts this way:

I was aware that there had been dozens, perhaps even hundreds of such attempts — plays, operas, ballet, puppet shows, movies— every dramatic form possible. I was also aware that they had one thing in common: they failed. [...] Trying to compress this book into a neat dramatic structure was like trying to force a lake into a bucket —ambitious but impractical. (125-26)

Wasserman’s grim observation will not likely surprise any reader familiar with the *Quijote*. Simply put, the novel is a Gordian Knot put into print, something the narrator describes as a “rastrillado, torcido y aspado hilo” (225), whose great size and complexity help affirm its place among the greatest works in the literary canon while simultaneously resisting untangling by would-be adaptors, no matter how ambitious.

Nevertheless, the unquestionable success of *Man of La Mancha* shows that the knotted narrative can be undone given a suitably Alexandrian approach. Consider, for example, Wasserman’s musings on the novel’s readership:

It was clear that Don Quijote was all things to all people, and that not two of them could ever agree on its meanings. In that, perhaps, lay the power of the book. Each reader seemed to have read something different, something shaped by the attributes which the reader brought as personal baggage. No two people with whom I have ever had a discussion seemed to have read the same book. No two could agree on a precise meaning. One suspects that this may be the most potent reason for the enduring success of the novel—that each may take from it the meaning that he personally chooses. (126)

Wasserman credits this observation, “that each may take from it the meaning that he personally chooses,” with allowing him to see “a single, personally meaningful line from the text which revealed the secret of how a dramatization might be accomplished” (126). In essence, by cutting through the seemingly endless tangle of story threads the novel had to offer, Wasserman was able to extract a thread that told the story he wished to share with his audience, one about multiple identities and social role-playing, and use that thread to weave an adaptation of his choosing.

The play that follows represents one such thread I teased out from my reading of Cervantes’s classic tale. It is not the *Quijote* or anything approaching such. I would not even go as far to say it is my vision of the *Quijote*. At best, this adaptation represents just one of the many tangled, intertwined stories from the novel that appeal to me as a reader, playwright and scholar, one I wished to share with my audience.

As I took up my metaphorical sword to cut and shape this story, I found my Wasserman moment in Maese Pedro’s puppet show. More than just a personal favorite, to me the episode presents a microcosm of Cervantine brilliance; chivalric madness and overlapping narrative frames that burst into comic spectacle. Adapting this thread in the *Quijote* knot for the stage it seemed only natural to show puppets playing puppets.

I also considered the background of two separate groups of people that would be served by this adaptation. First, I imagined an audience of children in an elementary school setting, kids who probably did not understand Spanish and possessed little to no familiarity with the *Quijote*. For this group I hoped to offer an engaging, comical, action-driven introduction to Spanish and to Cervantes’s misguided knight, one that would encourage them to want to learn more. To this I added a second audience of students and faculty at the university who spoke Spanish and had a firm enough understanding of the *Quijote* so as to recognize subtle references to events and characters detailed in the story. For this group I hoped to incorporate the beauty and flavor of the original language, certain nuances of the characters and their relationships, and utilize some of the narrative innovations frequently cited as evidence of the first modern novel.

Though adapting a nearly 1,000-page book into a 30-minute puppet show required a truly Alexandrian amount of cutting, leaving insufficient room for other wonderful threads, such as Don Quijote’s encounters with Marcela, the Dukes or Maritornes, ultimately I hoped to create an adaptation that remained faithful, if not identical, to the core values of the original.

Furthermore, this work benefitted from nearly a year of intense workshop and production by students and faculty at Grand Valley State University, in Allendale, MI. During the summer 2013 I personally designed and built nine “Muppet-style” puppets, as well as a multitude of props and scenery. Later, with a cast of four student puppeteers (Caleb Duckworth, Katie Munoz, Russell Cerda and Lindsey Viviano) we rehearsed the very complex and physically demanding show over a period of two months. On October 19, 2013, the show gave a debut performance to a packed house on the GVSU campus where it was very well received. Over the next several months, members of the company travelled to venues in the Grand Rapids area, Buena Vista University (Storm Lake, Iowa. 2013), Meredith College (Raleigh, North Carolina. 2013), Southern Indiana University (Evansville, Indiana. 2014), and Michigan State University (Lansing, Michigan. 2014), giving live performances, attending film screenings and conducting puppetry workshops. Additionally the project was shared at scholarly symposia for the Association for Hispanic Classical Theatre (El Paso, Texas. 2014), and the International Society of Luso-Hispanic Humor Studies (Honolulu, Hawaii. 2014).

In a way, my involvement with this work became its own “rastrillado, torcido y aspado hilo,” a Gordian Knot within academia. What began as simple scholarship, a collection of scenes translated and adapted from a seventeenth-century text, grew to entangle university students in a high-impact learning experience that later spread into communities, with each participant, like both Don Quijote and his readers, confronting and discovering personal meaning in the journey.

#### Works Cited

- Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*. Ed. by Salvador Fajardo and James Parr. Pegasus: Asheville, NC, 1998.
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**Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra** (1547-1616) was a novelist, playwright and poet hailing from Spain’s fabled “Golden Age” of art and literature. He is best known as the author of *El Ingenioso hidalgo, don Quijote de La Mancha*, a self-described satire of chivalric romances and a cautionary tale for their readers. Originally published in two parts (1605 and 1615), the story follows the diluted knight-errant Don Quijote and his faithful squire Sancho Panza on noble quests that repeatedly end in comic misadventures. The novel enjoyed tremendous popularity in Spain and abroad, bringing fame, if not fortune, to its creator. During the 400 years that have followed, scholars and writers frequently regard *Don Quijote* as not only the first modern novel but also the greatest work of fiction ever written.

**Jason Yancey** is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI. A puppeteer, director and Spanish theater scholar, he received a PhD in Hispanic Literature from the University of Arizona in 2009 and has directed plays in Spanish by Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Calderón de la Barca and María de Zayas. His 2005 production of *El caballero de Olmedo*, produced by Brigham Young University, opened the 2005 Chamizal Siglo de Oro Drama Festival, in El Paso, TX, and his world-first translation/adaptation of Tirso's *Antona García* debuted there in 2012. He serves as a board member of the Association for Hispanic Classical Theater (AHCT), and curates the organization's extensive film archive of Golden Age stage performances. Since arriving at GVSU Professor Yancey has created a one-of-a-kind Spanish puppetry course that teaches students to write, produce and perform original puppet theater for local Spanish immersion elementary schools.

QUIJÓTERES:  
THE INGENIOUS PUPPET  
DON QUIJOTE DE LA MANCHA

BASED ON THE NOVEL  
*El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de La Mancha*  
BY MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA

WRITTEN, TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED  
BY JASON YANCEY

## LIST OF CHARACTERS

Miguel de CERVANTES

DON QUIJOTE

ROCINANTE (non-speaking)

MUJER

LABRADOR

SANCHO PANZA

PASTOR

SANSÓN CARRASCO

MAESE PEDRO

GAIFEROS

REY MARSILIO (non-speaking)

MELISENDRA (non-speaking)

WINDMILL (non-speaking)

Though not explicitly required, the production is designed to be staged with puppets by a minimum of four puppeteers in the following roles:

<b>ACTOR 1</b> Don Quijote	<b>ACTOR 2</b> Sancho Panza Rocinante	<b>ACTOR 3</b> Cervantes Labrador (Sheep) Gaiferos Rey Marsilio Melisendra Windmill	<b>ACTOR 4</b> Mujer Pastor Sansón Carrasco Maese Pedro
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This play was first performed on October 19, 2013,  
at Grand Valley State University, in Allendale, Michigan,

featuring:

ACTOR 1: Caleb Duckworth  
ACTOR 2: Katie Munoz  
ACTOR 3: Russell Cerda  
ACTOR 4: Lindsay Viviano

Directed by Jason Yancey

**SCENE 1**  
**Introduction to Don Quijote**  
*(See chapters 1.1 and 1.21)*

*(Enter CERVANTES with a quill pen and old parchment-looking paper. He speaks as he writes, with great flourish)*

CERVANTES

En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, no ha mucho tiempo que vivía un hidalgo de los de lanza en astillero, adarga antigua, rocín flaco y galgo corredor. The name of this poor fellow was Quijada.

*(DON QUIJOTE appears behind him upstage)*

DON QUIJOTE

Quijote!

CERVANTES

Or maybe it was Quesada.

DON QUIJOTE

Are you kidding me? Quesada sounds like a stinky cheese! My name is Quijote!

CERVANTES

Many historians agree your name was Alonso Quijana.

DON QUIJOTE

Yo sé quien soy and I am not Alonso Quijano! I am the ilustre Don Quijote de la Mancha!

CERVANTES

Fine! Quijote.

*(DON QUIJOTE, satisfied, begins to act out the events described by CERVANTES)*

CERVANTES

The story goes that this curious hidalgo spent all his time reading books about brave and virtuous knights in shining armor who battled dragons and wizards to rescue beautiful maidens. Day after day, night after night he read these tales of adventure, until, after so much reading and so little sleep, his brain dried up altogether and something inside of him snapped!

DON QUIJOTE

La razón de la sinrazón que a mi razón se hace, de tal manera que mi razón enflaquece.

CERVANTES

Madness caused him to see enchanted kingdoms, impossible quests, and terrible villains all around him. Unable to separate the stories in his mind from real life, he believed it necessary to become a knight himself and venture out into the world, where he would achieve fame and eternal glory. First, like any good knight, he needed armor.



*(He notices DON QUIJOTE busily working on something upstage and somewhat obscured from view)*

What are you doing?

DON QUIJOTE

I am building my armor.

*(He continues working for a moment before emerging with a large, ridiculous-looking newspaper hat on his head)*

Behold and tremble at my glory!

CERVANTES

What's that on your head?

DON QUIJOTE

Dost thou not recognize a knight with his helmet?

CERVANTES

A helmet out of newspaper?

DON QUIJOTE

'Tis enchanted armor of the finest craftsmanship forged on the island of Malindrania.

CERVANTES

The headline here says that it was "forged" last week.

DON QUIJOTE

You are mistaken, sir.

CERVANTES

I'm not kidding, a gust of wind or a light rain would defeat it.

DON QUIJOTE

T'would not and I shall prove it now herewith.

*(He hands a sword to CERVANTES)*

CERVANTES

What's this?

DON QUIJOTE

Have at me thou disbelieving wretch! Strike my head if you wish, for none shall prevail against the fabled armadura de Trapisonda!

CERVANTES

I'm not going to hit you.

DON QUIJOTE

Cobarde! Deny me not the fury of thy puny arm!

CERVANTES

Puny? I'll have you know I fought Turkish pirates in the Battle of Lepanto!

DON QUIJOTE

I do not fear thee! Did Amadis de Gaula flee before the giant, Endriago? He did not! Did the great campeador El Cid tremble during the battle of Sagrajas? No, señor! Did the Caballero de la Ardiente Espada—

*(CERVANTES, either taunted into proving his strength or hoping to put an end to DON QUIJOTE's ridiculous tirade, gives the man what he wants and clonks him on the head with the sword, sending him hurtling offstage. DON QUIJOTE returns, somewhat staggering, cradling the tattered remains of his "helmet-hat")*

DON QUIJOTE

It took me a week to build that helmet.

CERVANTES

I tried to warn you.

DON QUIJOTE

'Tis no matter. *(Continues speaking as he exits)* A knight is prepared to defend himself against every stratagem of his opponent. You may have overcome the fabled armadura de Trapisonda but I shall defeat thee at last with the marvelous, the legendary—

*(DON QUIJOTE reappears, this time wearing a large cooking pot, handle and all, on his head)*

—Yelmo de Mambrino!

*(CERVANTES pauses to take in the ridiculous sight and then bursts into laughter)*

DON QUIJOTE

¿De qué te ríes, señor?

CERVANTES

*That's* your helmet? Oh, I get it... you'll need it to protect your *noodle*! *(Still laughing)* It really is a *stirring* sight to behold! I can barely *handle* its greatness!

*(The laughter continues but DON QUIJOTE is clearly not amused)*

DON QUIJOTE

You may recognize this casco, señor, as the very helmet of purest gold made for the Moorish king Mambrino himself and won in combat by Reinaldos de Montalbán.

CERVANTES

It's enormous. He probably used it to feed his entire army!

DON QUIJOTE

Mambrino must have had a very large head.

CERVANTES

(Interrupting his laughter with a brilliant idea) Maybe you should test it again?

*(CERVANTES raises the sword in his hand causing DON QUIJOTE to flinch instinctively)*

DON QUIJOTE

No need, señor. I am wholly satisfied with its superior quality.

*(DON QUIJOTE begins to leave)*

CERVANTES

Where are you going now?

DON QUIJOTE

If I am to journey across Spain battling evil, I shall require a noble steed for my quest.

CERVANTES

*(Shouting after him)* Are you sure you aren't headed for the *kitchen*?

*(DON QUIJOTE pauses to shout offstage)*

DON QUIJOTE

*(With all the majesty of a magician)* Rocinante!

*(ROCINANTE explodes into the scene. He is the skinniest, most pathetic excuse for a horse imaginable. Comically disproportioned and with a vacant expression impressive only for its stupidity, ROCINANTE is the antithesis of a noble anything. But what he lacks in physique he makes up for in unbridled energy. He clumsily darts to and fro with a whiney reminiscent of a dying cat and stumbling so violently that he nearly tramples the two men on the spot)*

DON QUIJOTE

Come hither, capitán ilustre, and greet your master!

*(After some persuasion, and some help from CERVANTES, ROCINANTE approaches DON QUIJOTE who prepares to mount him as grand and ceremoniously as the knights of his imagination. ROCINANTE will have none of this and a brief cat-and-mouse game ensues before he succumbs to his master's intentions.)*

DON QUIJOTE

¡Oh princesa Dulcinea señora deste cautivo corazón!

CERVANTES

Where are you going?

DON QUIJOTE

Step aside, señor, for yonder lays a world rife with sin and villainy.

CERVANTES

Those are just kids watching the puppet show.

DON QUIJOTE

Villains, I say! Giants and witches and fiends!

CERVANTES

Now hold on just a minute—

DON QUIJOTE

I shall defeat them all with glory and honor.

CERVANTES

Are you sure that's a good idea?

DON QUIJOTE

Onward, Rocinante! ¡Para la honra de Dulcinea!

*(No sooner does DON QUIJOTE set his spurs to the charge but the horse wobbles, trips and collapses with a flourish of commotion, tossing his rider into CERVANTES, who is knocked offstage in the chaos. ROCINANTE charges away with DON QUIJOTE following frantically behind him)*

## SCENE 2

### Don Quijote's First Adventure

*(see chapter 1.4)*

*(Two peasants, LABRADOR and MUJER enter, casually walking and arguing with each other. Suddenly ROCINANTE explodes onto the scene, followed by DON QUIJOTE. Oblivious to the pair on foot, both man and horse trample the travelling peasants. ROCINANTE exits, leaving his master behind)*

LABRADOR

Hey! Watch where you're going, pal!

MUJER

You're gonna squish somebody!

*(LABRADOR helps pick MUJER up off the ground and they dust themselves off. Finally noticing, DON QUIJOTE approaches the couple with great fanfare and ceremony)*

DON QUIJOTE

¡Todo el mundo se tenga!

*(LABRADOR and MUJER look around to see whom DON QUIJOTE might be addressing)*

LABRADOR

Who me?

DON QUIJOTE

Indeed, I address thee, good sir knight.

MUJER

Knight? You think he's a knight? Boy, your brain must be scrambled in that pot of yours.

*(She laughs)*

LABRADOR

Hey what's so funny? I could be a knight.

MUJER

Yeah right. It would take a magic spell to turn you into anything but a toad.

DON QUIJOTE

So, madam, you are a sorceress!

*(MUJER reacts with offense at the accusation)*

MUJER

Sorceress? Look, señor, I'm a good cristiana vieja—

LABRADOR

Sorceress! Now who's laughing!

*(LABRADOR starts to laugh)*

MUJER

You think that's funny? Why don't I just magically rearrange your face!

*(She lunges at him and the two start to squabble)*

DON QUIJOTE

Fear not, noble sir, I, Don Quijote de La Mancha, have taken an oath against evil and shall come to your aid against this hideous witchcraft!

*(At the word "hideous" the pair come to their senses)*

MUJER

Hideous?

LABRADOR

Did he just call you ugly?

MUJER

I think he did!

*(Finally in agreement again, they begin to approach DON QUIJOTE menacingly)*

DON QUIJOTE

I warn thee, foul conjurer, by the code of chivalry, by the grace of Dulcinea, thou shalt suffer defeat at mine hand!

LABRADOR

Try suffering this!

*(The pair comically pounce on DON QUIJOTE and leave him battered onstage. ROCINANTE returns briefly, charging across the stage and trampling his master again before exiting)*

DON QUIJOTE

Non fuyáis, gente cobarde, gente cautiva! 'Tis not mine but the fault of my horse that I lay here! Non fuyáis, I say!

### SCENE 3

#### Don Quijote Meets Sancho Panza

*(see chapters 1.5 and 1.7)*

*(The wounded DON QUIJOTE continues to shout insults at the now long-gone LABRADOR, MUJER and ROCINANTE while struggling painfully to get to his feet)*

DON QUIJOTE

¿Dónde estáis, Dulcinea, que no te duele mi mal? O no lo sabes, señora, o eres falsa y desleal?

*(SANCHO PANZA enters, having overheard the previous commotion. He sees the injured DON QUIJOTE and rushes to his aid)*

SANCHO PANZA

Señor Quijana, is that you?

DON QUIJOTE

Quijote!

SANCHO PANZA

Bless you!

DON QUIJOTE

My name, it is Quijote!

SANCHO PANZA

Quesda, that's what it is!

DON QUIJOTE

Not Quesda! I am—

SANCHO PANZA

No, Quesada sounds like a stinky cheese?

DON QUIJOTE

I am the great and noble knight, Don Quijote de La Mancha.

SANCHO PANZA

*(Taking in a whiff of DON QUIJOTE)* Well, you are what you eat.

DON QUIJOTE

Art thou the Marqués de Mantua, come now to aid me in fearsome battle against this villano cruel?

SANCHO PANZA

¿Marqués? Mire, vuestra merced, I'm your neighbor, Sancho Panza.

DON QUIJOTE

My neighbor Sancho, you say? Then you are not from Mantua?

SANCHO PANZA

Mantua? Pecador de mí! I've lived right here my whole life. And so have you. What happened to you?

DON QUIJOTE

'Tis but a scratch, my friend. You needn't worry, for such is the life of a caballero andante along his journey to fame and fortune.

SANCHO PANZA

Did you say fortune?

DON QUIJOTE

I did.

SANCHO PANZA

What kind of fortune?

DON QUIJOTE

The fortune of a knight such as myself is to triumph over those who would do evil, to bring honor to my lady fair, to take up letras y armas, to suffer and to sacrifice for a higher cause, to—

*(SANCHO begins to leave)*

SANCHO PANZA

Bah! Who needs all that stuff? I thought you meant money.

DON QUIJOTE

Oh there is plenty of that to be had, my friend. Gold! Jewels! Extravagant feasts! Medals of honor! Titles of nobility! Why, the great Palmerín de Oliva was crowned as king over the empire of Constantinopla!

*(SANCHO can hardly speak he is so overcome with excitement)*

DON QUIJOTE

Of course, these material possessions matter not to a caballero. He thinks only of the justice of his cause and the virtue of his lady.

SANCHO PANZA

Sure, but what about the people that help the knight?

DON QUIJOTE

You mean the escuderos?

SANCHO PANZA

Yeah, the squires. Do they get some of this fortune?

DON QUIJOTE

Certainly. According to the código de honra, they may partake in whatever spoils of victory they wish.

SANCHO PANZA

Very well, I accept!

DON QUIJOTE

What?

SANCHO PANZA

You need me. Dime con quién andas y te diré quién eres. You can't be a real knight without a squire.

DON QUIJOTE

But it'll be painful—

SANCHO PANZA

No pain, no gain!

DON QUIJOTE

And difficult—



SANCHO PANZA

When the going gets tough, the tough get going!

DON QUIJOTE

We'll get very little sleep—

SANCHO PANZA

The early bird gets the worm!

DON QUIJOTE

We could be gone for years—

SANCHO PANZA

Rome wasn't built in a day!

DON QUIJOTE

You are very insistent.

SANCHO PANZA

Heaven helps those who help themselves.

DON QUIJOTE

But will your actions speak louder than your words?

SANCHO PANZA

Only time will tell.

DON QUIJOTE

*(Mulling the possibility over in his mind)* Well, beggars can't be choosers—

SANCHO PANZA

Speaking of beggars, what does this squire job pay?

DON QUIJOTE

*(Still thinking out loud to himself)* And they say that no man is an island—

SANCHO PANZA

*(Ecstatic)* A whole island? Are you kidding?

DON QUIJOTE

Island? What? No! I meant—

SANCHO PANZA

Wow! My own island! One man's trash really is another man's treasure!

DON QUIJOTE

But—

SANCHO PANZA

Imagine it, su majestad Sancho Panza, with tables of food and governor of toda la ínsula!

DON QUIJOTE

(Relenting) If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. (*With great ceremony*) I hereby bestow upon you, Sancho Panza, the singular honor of accompanying the illustrious knight, Don Quijote de La Mancha, as his squire in arms.

**SCENE 4**

**The Sheep Battle**

(*see chapter 1.18*)

(*The great sound of a large herd of sheep grows louder and louder from offstage*)

DON QUIJOTE

But soft, Sancho! Dost thou hear the approaching sound?

SANCHO PANZA

(*Pausing to listen*) What is it, señor?

(*In the background we begin to see the commotion of sheep on the move. The din of the bleating, stomping herd becomes louder and more distinct, including very clearly audible "baaa" noises that periodically interrupt and accentuate the conversation. Each time DON QUIJOTE speaks we see the soldiers, banners and battles of his imagination, engaged in fierce combat. When SANCHO speaks the cloud of knights reverts back into a simple herd of sheep*)

DON QUIJOTE

The charge of horses. The rattle of steel. The shouts of valor. It is the march of a terrible army surging onto the battlefield!

SANCHO PANZA

An army? Are you sure? It sounds more like... like... sheep.

DON QUIJOTE

Clearly you are a simple man, Sancho, unaccustomed to the adventurous life. 'Tis an army, I say. I am sure of it. Do you not see the great cloud of dust?

SANCHO PANZA

I know seeing is believing but those are just sheep—

DON QUIJOTE

See there the great emperor, Alifanfarón, clashing swords with his mortal enemy, the malevolent Garamantas.

SANCHO PANZA

(*Struggling to see*) Para mis barbas, señor. I don't see Ali-anybody or, or Gara-what's-his-face.

DON QUIJOTE

See now, advancing from the flank, the valiant Micocolembos, el gran duque de Quirocia! And over there! 'Tis Brandababaran de Boliche, señor de las tres Arabias!

SANCHO PANZA

Micro-bra-bra-bra-what? Voto a dios, they all look like sheep to me!

DON QUIJOTE

Your fear, Sancho, surely clouds your senses. By the vows of knighthood I am honor-bound to aid in this great struggle! Step aside!

SANCHO PANZA

What? Please hear me, señor—

DON QUIJOTE

Para la gloria y fama de Dulcinea!

*(SANCHO can only watch dumbfounded as DON QUIJOTE charges into the herd, sword in hand, and begins chopping at the sheep with all his energy. The scene is one of silly chaos as sheep are tossed into the air left and right. After a moment the PASTOR appears and, naturally, is angry to discover the offense to his flock.)*

PASTOR

¡Anda, caballero! Those are my sheep!

*(He charges at DON QUIJOTE)*

SANCHO PANZA

¡Mire, señor Quijote!

*(Despite SANCHO's warning, DON QUIJOTE turns just in time to receive a blow from the PASTOR's staff. The two men square off in a bizarre but intense duel, the sword-wielding man with a pot on his head versus the staff-swinging sheep master. Scaredy-cat SANCHO hides behind the sheep but can't escape a few knocks on the head himself. Finally, DON QUIJOTE proves the more skilled of the two and stands menacingly above the now disarmed and vulnerable PASTOR)*

DON QUIJOTE

Surrender, sir, o si no que le cortaría la cabeza!

*(DON QUIJOTE is about to deliver the mortal blow when suddenly CERVANTES enters and quickly interrupts)*

CERVANTES

¡Esperad! This isn't right. Not right at all.

*(Everyone in the scene is caught unawares by the surprise appearance and, somewhat frozen in their previous positions, they seem at a loss as to how to proceed. CERVANTES wanders amongst the characters like a director talking to his actors)*

CERVANTES

I remember reading about the sheep—

*(The sheep respond with an energetic “baa”)*

And then Sancho said—

SANCHO PANZA

Mire, señor Quijote!

CERVANTES

And then you guys (*indicating to DON QUIJOTE and the PASTOR*) had a big, dramatic duel—

*(The two men begin to replay the duel they just recently presented, leading up to DON QUIJOTE and a raised sword looming over the PASTOR)*

DON QUIJOTE

Surrender, sir, o si no—

CERVANTES

Por cierto! There’s the mistake! Don Quijote isn’t supposed to win this fight—

DON QUIJOTE

I beg your pardon!

CERVANTES

According to another author, Don Quijote lay helpless on the ground while the Pastor beat him with the stick.

*(CERVANTES moves people into their proper positions. Naturally, the PASTOR celebrates and DON QUIJOTE protests this unexpected turn of fortune)*

PASTOR

Surrender, sir, o si no que le cortaría la cabeza!

DON QUIJOTE

This is an outrage!

*(The PASTOR comically and enthusiastically whacks DON QUIJOTE senseless. SANCHO tries to come to his master’s aid but is, himself, swarmed by the sheep. The battle won, the assailants quickly flee the scene, leaving their two aching victims in a mangled heap)*

CERVANTES

See? That was much better!

*(Pleased to see the story “properly” told, he exits laughing)*

**SCENE 5**  
**The Vomiting Potion**  
*(see chapters 1.10 and 1.18)*

SANCHO PANZA

Señor... are you all right?

DON QUIJOTE

I do believe the villain may have knocked out some of my teeth.

SANCHO PANZA

Let's have a look, but don't bite the hand that feeds you.

*(SANCHO moves closer to DON QUIJOTE and has a peek inside his mouth)*

SANCHO PANZA

How many teeth did you have in there when you started this adventure?

DON QUIJOTE

Four.

SANCHO PANZA

Not any more, you don't.

DON QUIJOTE

Fear not, my friend. Fortune smiles on us.

SANCHO PANZA

I hope Fortune has a better-looking smile than you do!

DON QUIJOTE

I just remembered that I keep in my possession the great bálsamo de Fierabrás,

*(He produces a curious-looking bottle. SANCHO takes a whiff)*

SANCHO PANZA

Yuck! It smells awful!

DON QUIJOTE

Tis a potion so powerful that a single drop can rescue a wounded man from the edge of death!

SANCHO PANZA

Where did you get this stuff?

DON QUIJOTE

I made it myself, using an ancient recipe that I memorized for just such an emergency.

SANCHO PANZA

Does it really work?

DON QUIJOTE

It shall make you healthy as an apple.

*(He takes a drink from the bottle then hands it to SANCHO)*

SANCHO PANZA

Well, an apple a day keeps the doctor away. Bottoms up!

*(SANCHO takes a large gulp and his reaction tells us just how nasty the concoction tasted on its way down. There is a pause between them as they anticipate the promised miracle taking effect)*

SANCHO PANZA

I don't think I feel better.

DON QUIJOTE

Patience, Sancho.

SANCHO PANZA

In fact, I feel worse. A *lot* worse.

DON QUIJOTE

I confess that my condition has likewise not improved.

*(A loud gurgling noise rumbles from their stomachs and the two men begin to realize where this is headed)*

SANCHO PANZA

I think you were right about one thing, señor. That potion's going to bring something back, but it won't be my health—

*(SANCHO struggles to hold on but ultimately loses control and erupts with what seems like an endless fire hose of vomit)*

DON QUIJOTE

Deténgase, Sancho!

*(Just when it seems like SANCHO has reached the bottom of his stomach DON QUIJOTE unleashes his own vile fountain. The repulsive, but comically exaggerated exchange continues for a moment, back and forth, back and forth, maybe done, not yet done, under control, out of control, until both men cast themselves onto the stage, breathing deeply and utterly spent but also somewhat relieved to be done. In a way it seems as though they really have cheated death)*

DON QUIJOTE

Art thou healed, Sancho?

SANCHO PANZA

I... I think I'm still alive... if that's what you mean.

DON QUIJOTE

Did I not say this potion would rescue a man from the edge of death?

SANCHO PANZA

Next time I'd rather die!

## SCENE 6

### Sansón Carrasco: Don Quijote's Biggest Fan

*(see chapters 2.3 and 2.59)*

*(SANSÓN, a man with a sizeable nose, passes through unseen to our moaning heroes. At first he does not notice the two men lying battered on the ground but when he does he immediately rushes to help them)*

SANSÓN CARRASCO

¡Por vida de San Jerónimo! Are you guys ok? Let me help you up.

*(He helps DON QUIJOTE and SANCHO get to their feet)*

DON QUIJOTE

You are very kind, fellow traveler, but you needn't worry. It would take more than that to defeat the great Don Quijote de La Mancha.

SANSÓN CARRASCO

¡Por el hábito de San Pedro! Did you say your name was Don Quijote?

DON QUIJOTE

I did.

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Déme vuestra grandeza las manos, señor don Quijote de la Mancha!

SANCHO PANZA

I'd stand back if I were you, just in case there's another resurrection.

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Mala me dé Dios if you aren't *the* Sancho Panza!

DON QUIJOTE

I see that you have already made our acquaintance.

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Acquaintance? I love you guys! I've read all your adventures, I have all your action figures, I have posters of you in my room, I eat Quijote-O's cereal every morning! I even have you on my underwear! Look—

*(He goes to show them his underwear but, thankfully, DON QUIJOTE and SANCHO quickly intercede)*

DON QUIJOTE

'Tis no need, señor. You have quite convinced us. And what might we call you?

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Disculpen. I'm Sansón Carrasco. I'm a huge fan! Hey, can I get your autographs?

DON QUIJOTE

And where did you discover the greatness of our names and deeds, señor Carrasco?

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Duh! I've read your book about a million times!

SANCHO PANZA

What book?

SANSÓN CARRASCO

This one! *(He pulls out a book)* *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de La Mancha*. Everyone's read it.

*(Hearing about the book's fame and popularity, CERVANTES appears as if out of thin air and goes straight to SANSÓN, his new best friend)*

CERVANTES

Did you say everyone's read my book?

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Are you kidding? It was voted the greatest novel in the history of the world. Of course everyone's read it.

SANCHO PANZA

Well, I wouldn't judge a book by its cover.

CERVANTES

The greatest novel? I must be filthy rich!

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Actually, no.

DON QUIJOTE

*(Overjoyed)* Then all the world knows the glory of Don Quijote de La Mancha.

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Oh sure! I loved the part when you wore that goofy paper hat—

CERVANTES

Then I smashed it—



SANSÓN CARRASCO

And he put that crazy pot on his head!

*(SANSÓN and CERVANTES look at the ridiculous figure of DON QUIJOTE and burst out laughing)*

DON QUIJOTE

*(Indignant)* It is the fabled Yelmo de Mamb—

CERVANTES

Oh, and the part where he thought that herd of sheep was a giant army!

DON QUIJOTE

I tell you it was Garamantas the mal—

SANSÓN CARRASCO

So then he charges in to fight them and ends up getting trampled instead!

CERVANTES

Hilarious, right?

SANCHO PANZA

*(Complaining)* Hey, don't forget I got mutton-chopped in that whole disaster!

*(CERVANTES and SANSÓN just about keel over with laughter, while SANCHO and DON QUIJOTE protest being made the butt of their jokes)*

SANSÓN CARRASCO

What about the time when they travel to Zaragoza for the jousting competition—

CERVANTES

Hold on! They haven't gotten to that part yet.

DON QUIJOTE

¡Señores infames! I will no longer endure this shameful affront to my honra. Ven, Sancho. Let us be on our way.

*(He turns and leaves sharply. SANCHO starts to join him but pauses briefly to go and speak in private with CERVANTES and SANSÓN)*

SANCHO PANZA

Psst! Just between us... can I ask you a question? Do I eventually get the ínsula he promised me?

SANSÓN CARARSCO and CERVANTES

Oh yeah. Sure. Absolutely.

SANCHO PANZA

Whew! ¡Señor Quijote, espere!

*(SANCHO runs off after his master. SANSÓN and CERVANTES look at each other and laugh again)*

CERVANTES

Oye, Sansón. I just got a brilliant idea. Que tal si—

*(He whispers something unintelligible)*

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Yeah, yeah! Oh, then I could—

*(He whispers and the two men share a laugh. They continue whispering and plotting as both exit)*

### SCENE 7

#### On the Road to the Inn

*(see chapters 2.25 and 2.26)*

*(DON QUIJOTE and SANCHO emerge and pantomime travelling along their quest, with scenery such as shrubs, cottages and windmills passing by them in the distance. DON QUIJOTE seems more determined than ever to seek the adventure he craves. SANCHO, on the other hand, clumsily struggles to keep up with his master)*

SANCHO PANZA

Así que... ¿señor?... espere... eh... ¿adónde vamos?... ¿señor? Are we headed for Zaragoza, like those guys said?

DON QUIJOTE

Certainly not!

SANCHO PANZA

But they said something about a jousting tournament—

DON QUIJOTE

You were mistaken. No doubt those sorcerers placed an enchantment on your ears.

SANCHO PANZA

Sorcerers? But... but... I don't want to be enchanted! What if they curse us and *make* us go to Zaragoza?

DON QUIJOTE

I give you my word as a knight that I have never in my life been to Zaragoza y jamás iré! If I must travel all the way to Barcelona to defy those wicked wizards, I shall avoid that place.

SANCHO PANZA

Or worse! What if they turn me into something unnatural, like... like a donkey?

*(DON QUIJOTE pauses and turns to his panicking companion)*

DON QUIJOTE

Sancho, trust in the wisdom of my counsel when I tell you that no one shall make an ass out of you.

*(They begin their journey again. There is a beat while SANCCHO, relieved, processes this information)*

SANCCHO PANZA

So... where *are* we going, then?

DON QUIJOTE

Wherever adventure leads us.

### SCENE 8

#### Maese Pedro's Puppet Show

*(see chapters 2.25 and 2.26)*

*(There is a grand fanfare of trumpets that gives way to a drum roll and a booming, offstage voice reminiscent of the announcer at a 3-ring circus. If it were possible for this introduction to include an elaborate laser show and end with enormous explosions of fire and confetti it would. Both DON QUIJOTE and SANCCHO are transfixed by the Las Vegas-like spectacle of it all. During the introduction a proscenium to a small stage appears, eye-catching, brightly-colored, carnival-looking and featuring curtains emblazoned with the image of a monkey)*

VOICE *(offstage)*

Señoras y señores, llegad y oíd, que anda por esta Mancha de Aragón, enseñando las mejores y más bien representadas historias que de muchos años a esta parte en este reino se han visto, el famosísimo titiritero, el *hombre galante*, el *bon compañero*, la vida del mundo, él que habla más que seís y bebe más que doce, y todo a costa de su lengua y de su retablo de maravillas, el riquísimo—¡Maese Pedro!

*(With the revelation of the name "Maese Pedro" the curtains of the miniature theater are drawn to reveal the master puppeteer himself, who emerges with the flamboyant self-awareness of a game-show host. Though he wears a green patch over his left eye he is extravagantly dressed, like a Cervantine Liberace. The crowd goes wild to see him)*

MAESE PEDRO

¡Gracias! ¡Bienvenidos! ¡Gracias!

*(MAESE PEDRO greets his adoring fans)*

DON QUIJOTE

It appears that the lord of this castle now celebrates my arrival.

SANCCHO PANZA

Not you—*him*! ¡Cuerpo de tal! That's Maese Pedro, the world-famous puppeteer!

DON QUIJOTE

Nonsense, Sancho. The wizards must have enchanted your eyes as well as your ears.

MAESE PEDRO

Bienvenidos todos, tirios y troyanos!

*(SANCHO cannot restrain himself and runs up to greet MAESE PEDRO)*

SANCHO PANZA

Sea bien venido vuestra merced, señor Maese Pedro!

MAESE PEDRO

¡Gracias, Sancho! It's great to be here!

*(SANCHO enthusiastically shakes hands with the entertainer but, upon closer inspection of the man, begins to notice something peculiar about him but before he has a chance to inquire further MAESE PEDRO entreats him to take a seat)*

MAESE PEDRO

Ladies and gentlemen, you are too kind! Please be seated.

*(DON QUIJOTE and SANCHO take a seat where we can still see them, yet surrendering the focus of attention to the mini-stage and its pilot)*

MAESE PEDRO

I have a special treat for you today. The absolutely true story you are about to behold comes straight from the crónicas francesas y los romances españoles, a story I discovered by speaking with eye-witnesses to the tragic event, in the kingdom del emperador Carlomagno, in the city of Sansueña--

*(MAESE PEDRO moves into place behind the stage while the monkey-curtain is drawn to reveal a painted backdrop. Throughout the performance he remains partially visible to the audience as a reminder that he is, in fact, the puppeteer busily at work behind the spectacle. The figures themselves are essentially 2-dimensional, stylized puppets that look somewhat designed by children. MAESE PEDRO narrates while the puppets enthusiastically act out the tale with exaggerated enthusiasm)*

MAESE PEDRO

Where lived, the brave, noble, handsome knight, Gaiferos—

DON QUIJOTE

Bravo!

SANCHO PANZA

Shhh!

MAESE PEDRO

But Fate would test the valor of our hero, for one day, his mortal enemy, el rey Marsilio—

*(REY MARSILIO appears)*

DON QUIJOTE

Booo!

SANCHO PANZA

Shhhhhh!

MAESE PEDRO

Sent men and captured Gaiferos's most beautiful lady—

DON QUIJOTE

*Second* most beautiful lady... after Dulcinea, of course.

MAESE PEDRO

Fine—captured Gaiferos's *second* most beautiful lady, his beloved wife, Melisendra.

*(MELISENDRA appears but is quickly kidnapped by MARSILIO)*

GAIFEROS

¡Melisendra! ¡Miradlo!

MAESE PEDRO

His honor wounded, Gaiferos pleaded with the emperador, quien volvió la espalda y lo dejó despechado. Gaiferos became filled with rage. He wept! He shouted! He pounded his sword and shield! He wept and shouted some more—

DON QUIJOTE

Señor, Maese Pedro. Please stick to the story without so much wandering in unnecessary details.

MAESE PEDRO

*(To GAIFEROS)* You heard the man. Get to the point.

GAIFEROS

Caballero, si a Francia ides, ¡por Gaiferos preguntad!

MAESE PEDRO

Abandoned but undaunted, our hero made the perilous journey to the tower of his imprisoned Melisendra and secretly rescued her from captivity.

*(MELISENDRA is happily rescued by her knight in shining armor)*

MAESE PEDRO

But Fortune would again turn on the happy couple, for just as they made their escape they were discovered by Marsilio, who sounded the alarm—

*(A strange noise accompanies MARSILIO's sudden appearance)*

DON QUIJOTE

No, no, no! You are quite mistaken, sir. There are no *bells* in the land of Sansueña. Their customary alarm uses an entirely different instrument, such as an atabal or a dulzaina—

MAESE PEDRO

Dulzai-what?

DON QUIJOTE

A *dulzaina*. 'Tis very much like a chirimía, of course. Please endeavor to tell the story properly.

MAESE PEDRO

*(Emerging from the stage and getting right in DON QUIJOTE's face)* ¡Mire por vuestra merced! I'm the puppeteer here! Your job is to zip it and applaud! Got that?

SANCHO PANZA

Escúchale, señor Quijote. Too many cooks spoil the broth.

DON QUIJOTE

Así es verdad.

MAESE PEDRO

That's better. *(Returning to the stage)* Behold the horrible spectacle, as Gaiferos and Melisendra flee before the armies of Marsilio. Hear now the crash of steel! Witness the stampede of a thousand horses against him! Utterly alone Gaiferos draws his sword to defend his lady against the terrible foe—

*(DON QUIJOTE, completely overcome by the excitement of the story, leaps to his feet with his own sword drawn)*

DON QUIJOTE

¡Deteneos, mal nacida canalla! Fear not, Gaiferos, for I shall lend the sword of Don Quijote de La Mancha!

*(DON QUIJOTE dives into the stage and commences hacking it and all its participants to pieces. Puppet heads go flying! Curtains are rent asunder! MAESE PEDRO and SANCHO alternate between intervening and diving for cover)*

MAESE PEDRO and SANCHO PANZA

Deténgase vuesa merced, señor Quijote!

*(When the carnage is over the heavily breathing DON QUIJOTE begins to realize his error)*

MAESE PEDRO

¡Pecador de mí! You've destroyed my stage, my puppets—everything! How am I supposed to make a living now?

*(He begins to sob uncontrollably and SANCHO rushes over to comfort the man)*

DON QUIJOTE

Forgive me, señor. I... I was bewitched. It all seemed so real. Gaiferos and... and Melisendra... It was the fault of enchanters. I shall of course pay for the damages—

SANCHO PANZA

No llores, Maese Pedro. It just breaks my heart when—wait just a minute! Don't I *know* that *nose*?

MAESE PEDRO

Nose? No... no... I am the great Maese Pedro... I don't nose what nose you're—

*(SANCHO removes the eye patch and disguise to reveal none other than SANSÓN CARRASCO)*

SANCHO PANZA

You're not Maese Pedro at all! You're Sansón Carrasco!

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Now wait a minute, guys. You're imagining this. It's the enchanters, right?

DON QUIJOTE

¡Sosegaos, Maese Carrasco! A knight's virtue shall not endure this shameless deception!

SANCHO PANZA

Were you lying about my island, too?

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Ok, so maybe I am Sansón, and maybe I did play a little trick on you but remember, I'm your biggest fan! I just wanted to join in on your adventures, you know, letras y armas and all that? Cervantes put me up to it!

DON QUIJOTE

Advertid, señor, ¡que me hagas salir de los límites de la caballería!

SANSÓN CARRASCO

Cervantes!

*(SANSÓN immediately flees, pleading for mercy and is closely pursued by the knight and his squire. A brief chase of hide and seek ensues, perhaps even into the audience for a time as SANSÓN desperately explores every avenue of escape. Even ROCINANTE gleefully runs through the chaos of the scene. During this time the ragged remains of the mini stage are removed and the horizon becomes populated, somewhat unnoticed, with windmills of various shapes and sizes. Eventually SANSÓN manages to lose DON QUIJOTE and SANCHO who, returning to the stage, now find themselves alone and lost in La Mancha)*

## SCENE 9

### Battling Windmills

*(see chapter 1.8)*

SANCHO PANZA

Where did he go?

DON QUIJOTE

It would appear, Sancho, that he has, in fact, disappeared. Perhaps he was aided by aquel sabio Frestón.

SANCHO PANZA

I don't know a sabio Frestón, but I could sure go for a sandwich to *feast on*.

*(DON QUIJOTE begins to notice the windmills)*

DON QUIJOTE

I greatly fear we are not alone, Sancho. Adventure guides us into the demon's belly.

SANCHO PANZA

Well let's hope this time adventure guides something into *my* belly!

DON QUIJOTE

See there, approaching in the distance!

SANCHO PANZA

What is it?

DON QUIJOTE

We are surrounded by giants!

SANCHO PANZA

(Scared) Ahh! ¿Gigantes, señor?

*(SANCHO buries his face, trembling with fear and unable to bear the sight)*

DON QUIJOTE

Some thirty giants, intent on taking our lives and our glory in singular battle, no doubt!

*(A large WINDMILL moves onto the stage)*

SANCHO PANZA

Ahhhh!

DON QUIJOTE

It cannot be!

SANCHO PANZA

What is it?

DON QUIJOTE

The army of assailants is led by the famous giant of Sevilla, Giralda!

*(Instantly, the unassuming WINDMILL transforms into a menacing giant, teeth gnashing, its arms writhing and reaching for the DON QUIJOTE as if daring him to attack)*



SANCHO PANZA

Mommy!

DON QUIJOTE

See their long arms able to pluck a man from his horse at casi dos leguas!

*(SANCHO, searching for release, looks up at the supposed monster only to realize the cause of his master's confusion, but just before he does the giant transforms back into a WINDMILL. He approaches the building for a closer look)*

SANCHO PANZA

Mire vuestra merced, that's not a giant. It's a molino de viento. The arms are for catching the wind, not caballeros.

DON QUIJOTE

Well may it seem to thee. Step aside, my friend, and pray if you must while destiny demands that I strike these villains down in fierce battle!

*(The WINDMILL transforms back into a giant as DON QUIJOTE readies himself for the charge. SANCHO, on the other hand, can't bear to watch)*

DON QUIJOTE

¡Non fuyades cobardes y viles criaturas, que un solo caballero es el que os acomete!

*(DON QUIJOTE charges at the giant. The battle is fierce and epic but, as expected, our hero is defeated once again. As he falls to the ground the giant transforms back into a calm and innocuous windmill. This time DON QUIJOTE is slow to arise. Whatever the injury, it appears more serious than those incurred in previous bouts. SANCHO is clearly concerned)*

SANCHO PANZA

¡Señor Quijote! Didn't I tell you? They're just windmills.

DON QUIJOTE

Sancho... have I not told *you* that all things in love and war are subject to sudden reversals of fate?

SANCHO PANZA

Yes but molinos—

*(The WINDMILLS slowly leaves the stage)*

DON QUIJOTE

Clearly one of my enemies has yet again intervened to transform these giants into windmills to rob me of the glory in his defeat. Such is the hatred he feels for me, hatred I shall strike down with my sword in the end!

*(He struggles to get to his feet but stumbles and falls)*

SANCHO PANZA

¡Señor!

DON QUIJOTE

¡Dejadme levantar, os ruego!

*(DON QUIJOTE begins to arise)*

SANCHO PANZA

Rest here a moment, Señor. Good things come to those who wait.

*(DON QUIJOTE shouts one last time but falls again. SANCHO either does not realize or will not accept the his friend is dying)*

DON QUIJOTE

These wizards and windmills... I greatly fear, Sancho, that I am not well.

SANCHO PANZA

Don't say that. Easy come, easy go. There's more adventures to have, right?

DON QUIJOTE

The tale of my adventure ends here.

SANCHO PANZA

What about the bálsamo? You said it'll make you healthy as an apple! I'll get it for you.

DON QUIJOTE

I am empty.

SANCHO PANZA

Well you can't break an omlette without breaking some eggs. Maybe we could try being pastores—

DON QUIJOTE

Farewell, my friend. Oh Dulcinea!

*(DON QUIJOTE gives on final shout before disappearing from the stage. SANCHO silently stares into the void where he last saw his friend, perhaps hoping in vain to see him reappear)*

## SCENE 10

### The Death of Alonso Quijano

*(see chapter 2.74)*

*(CERVANTES enters. During his speech all of the previous characters slowly return to the stage and join SANCHO, gathered around the spot where DON QUIJOTE disappeared, as if it were his tomb)*

CERVANTES

As all things human are temporary and press onward in decline from beginning to end, so it was

with Alonso Quijano el Bueno, who could not escape the arrival of his fate in the moment he least expected, as he surrendered his spirit among the tears of his friends.

SANCHO PANZA

Yace aquí el Hidalgo fuerte que a tanto extremo llegó de valiente.

CERVANTES

Don Quijote was born for me, and I for him. His deeds, my pen. His death, my end.

*(The group bursts into enormous, comical and exaggerated weeping)*

CERVANTES

Wait a minute! It doesn't have to end here.

*(The group stops crying and listens)*

CERVANTES

Tome mi consejo, arise and ride again, for there is more adventure to be had and the vanquished today are the victors tomorrow.

SANCHO PANZA

It's not over till it's over!

CERVANTES

En un lugar de La Mancha—

HOMBRE

De cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme—

SANSÓN CARRASCO

No ha mucho tiempo que vivía un hidalgo—

SANCHO PANZA

De los de lanza en astillero adarga antigua—

MUJER

Rocín flaco y galgo corredor.

CERVANTES

And the name of this poor fellow was—

*(DON QUIJOTE bursts into the scene once again, healthy and full of life)*

ALL

¡Don Quijote de La Mancha!

CURTAIN

## *Policy*

By Antonio Muñoz de Mesa

Translated by Phyllis Zatlin

### INTRODUCTION

I had never heard of Antonio Muñoz de Mesa when I read the newspaper notice in Madrid about the opening in April 2013 of *La visita*, directed by the author and produced by his wife, Olga Margallo. The subject of abuse of children by priests intrigued me and I decided to go. Spectators that night were riveted to their seats, unwilling to miss a word of the fascinating performance by Iván Villanueva and Rosa Mariscal of a play that is marked by delayed revelations and touches of humor.

Rather than the anticipated short run, *La visita* stayed on the boards for over a year at various small theatres in Madrid. It was performed at a theatre festival in Miami in July 2014 and is scheduled for performance at the Thalia in New York City in May 2015. The American translation had its premiere at Rogue Theater in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, for a three-week run in November 2014.

*La visita* is a two-hander: a priest who is responsible for a Catholic school and summer camp and the woman insurance agent who has handled policies for the archdiocese for a dozen years. As is true of many plays for two characters, the action consists of a cat-and-mouse game. Here the priest seems to dominate in early scenes but at the end the woman triumphs.

The priest proclaims in an early scene that he and the agent are engaged in a game where winning is the only thing. That game is a conflict between his greed and her sense of morality. The game metaphor reappears in a later episode when the priest, believing that the agent has complied with all his requests, invites her to accompany him to a soccer game. The priest's position of power is established at the outset linguistically, through his addressing the woman with the familiar "tú" while she uses the polite "Usted" with him and gives him his title of "Padre."

In the opening scene, the priest informs the insurance agent he wants to add two clauses to the archdiocese policy: a confidentiality clause. In the second scene, he reveals that the second clause will define sexual assault of children as a workplace accident. The insurance agent expresses outrage at this immoral suggestion. In the next episode, after consulting her superiors in Barcelona, she seems to accept the proposal.

I chose to translate *La visita* because I anticipated that it would readily find audiences in the United State. I have left the action in Spain, but the subject, no matter the setting of the action, is of universal interest. The play has a small cast and does not require an elaborate set or expensive costumes. I predicted it would travel with ease.

In my translation, I made changes, always in consultation with the author, who has an excellent command of English and entered into an email dialogue with me on matters of concern, most notably the title, the priest's name, and the contrastive use of "tú" and "Usted."

In English, not only is *The Visit* used as the title of a 1956 tragicomedy by Friedrich Dürrenmatt (*Der Besuch der alten Dame*) and the related 1964 movie, but a musical version of the Swiss satire has been circulating in the United States since 2001. To avoid confusion, the American translation of *La visita* is called *Policy*, a word that is deliberately ambiguous, referring to the insurance policy and the Church's initial policy of ignoring sexual abuse.

The priest's name in *La visita* is Lucio. An American spectator, unfamiliar with that male name in Spanish, is likely to hear it as "Lucille." Muñoz de Mesa clarified for me that he hoped audiences in Spain would associate "Lucio" with "Lucifer," thus emphasizing the priest's character as a demon. Ultimately we agreed to change the name in the English version to "Damián," which should give the desired allusion to demon. The name Damián, along with others from the original text, are left in Spanish.

We do not have familiar and polite forms of "you" in English but translators can find ways around that problem. The solution in *Policy* takes advantage of the priest's title of "Father." The priest consistently calls the insurance agent by her first name, "Esther." Esther initially calls him "Father Damián" but drops the title when she ceases to address him with respect. In the original play, Muñoz de Mesa achieves this effect by having her begin to address the priest with the familiar form he has used with her all along.

The author assumed his Spanish audience would have a thorough familiarity with Catholicism. I thought his reference to San Pancracio would bewilder most American spectators, even those who are Catholic themselves as was the case for many in Sturgeon Bay. At Rogue Theater actors and theater co-directors Lola DeVillers and Stuart Champeau agreed and I therefore glossed the reference.

**ANTONIO MUÑOZ DE MESA**, born in Madrid, Spain, in 1972. Playwright and actor. Graduated at RESAD (Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático) in 1994. Antonio has written numerous plays for children and adults. As a playwright he recently premiered "Otro Gran Teatro del Mundo," a musical adaptation of Calderon de la Barca's "The Great Theatre of the World" and "Policy," translated by Phyllis Zatlin. He is now studying musical theatre writing at ANMT in Los Angeles with a scholarship from Fundación SGAE.

**PHYLLIS ZATLIN**, professor emerita at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, has translated numerous plays from Spain and France. Among books she has authored are *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Theatre*, *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation*, and *Writers to Remember: Memoirs of Friendships in Spain and France*. She is a graduate of Rollins College, holds a Ph.D. in Romance Languages from the University of Florida, and is a member of The Dramatists Guild.

# POLICY

*(La visita)*

By

Antonio Muñoz De Mesa

Translated from Spanish

By Phyllis Zatlin

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## CHARACTERS:

DAMIÁN, a priest

ESTHER, an insurance agent

## PROLOGUE

*Stage is dimly lit. DAMLÁN puts in place a dead rubber plant, a box, a chalice, and a figurine of a saint. He exits.*

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP

*ESTHER is waiting in the study.*

SCENE 1

*(ESTHER is standing in the middle of the study. She has a briefcase in one hand, with a coat draped over it. She sees the chalice, picks it up and looks at it for a moment. She lifts it up to her nose and smells it. At that moment DAMIÁN appears in the doorway on the opposite side of the room. He wears a black suit and clerical collar. ESTHER is startled.)*

ESTHER

*(Setting the chalice down.)*

You frightened me! I'm sorry...

DAMIÁN

Sorry for what?

ESTHER

For... Nothing.

*(A strange silence.)*

ESTHER

And Father Valentín?

DAMIÁN

Don Valentín?

ESTHER

Yes. We have an appointment at half past.

DAMIÁN

Don Valentín is no longer here. Didn't they tell you?

ESTHER

Well, no.

DAMIÁN

You're Esther, aren't you? From Ibéritas.

ESTHER

That's right.

DAMIÁN

I'm Father DAMIÁN, the new Father Valentín.

ESTHER

The new Father Valentín?



DAMIÁN

Quite so. His substitute. Sit down, please.

*(ESTHER, somewhat bewildered, looks for a seat but the only vacant chair has a box on it. She starts to remove the box.)*

DAMIÁN

No, no. Don't touch that. Get a chair from the hall.

ESTHER

Very well.

*(ESTHER exits to get a chair. DAMIÁN takes out a bottle of wine and pours some in the chalice. ESTHER enters with a chair and sits across from DAMIÁN, next to the chair with the box.)*

DAMIÁN

Would you care for some?

ESTHER

No thank you. And why is Father Valentín no longer here? I hope nothing's happened to him.

DAMIÁN

No, no. What could happen to him? He's gone to Bolivia, some mission, I believe.

ESTHER

My word. On a mission, like James Bond.

DAMIÁN

Some people have it made.

ESTHER

And besides he went off without telling me.

DAMIÁN

It was one of those "get going and don't let me catch you" departures.

ESTHER

*(Looking at the disorder in the room.)*

That explains this chaos.

DAMIÁN

One of those transfers that you ask for a thousand times and one day, when you least expect it, they give it to you. When you no longer even remember that you asked for it.

ESTHER

Yes, that does happen. A lot.

DAMIÁN

Are you sure you don't want some wine?

ESTHER

No thank you. Really.

*(ESTHER smiles, trying to follow his thoughts.)*

DAMIÁN

If it's alright with you, let's get down to business.

ESTHER

Of course. But we can't sign today. I have to put in your information, instead of Father Valentín's. If you'll fill out a form for me, that will speed things up.

*(ESTHER hands him a piece of paper.)*

DAMIÁN

I'll do it now. It's a shame they didn't alert you. What a disaster.

ESTHER

No problem. You have a digital signature?

DAMIÁN

*(While filling out the form.)*

What's that?

ESTHER

It's a certificate in order to sign the policy on-line.

DAMIÁN

I don't think I have one. A digital signature.

ESTHER

Then you have to ask for it.

DAMIÁN

Maybe I have it without knowing.

ESTHER

That could be. Would you like me to look?

DAMIÁN

Please do.

*(ESTHER crosses to the laptop computer. While lifting the cover, she knocks down the figurine of St. Pancracio that DAMIÁN put there in the prologue.)*

ESTHER

Oh, St. Joseph. Dear God, I'm so clumsy.

DAMIÁN

It's not St. Joseph. It's St. Pancracio—patron saint of money. He hears prayers for immediate financial assistance.

ESTHER

St. Pancracio. I'm sorry.

DAMIÁN

No problem.

*(ESTHER looks in the computer for the digital signature certificate.)*

ESTHER

No, you don't have it. You have to ask the Archdiocese to get one for you.

DAMIÁN

Computers are truly a pain in the ass.

ESTHER

You just have to get used to it. It's basically very easy.

DAMIÁN

Here. Now you have my information.

ESTHER

Good. Thank you. Well, once they install the signature certificate for you, you'll be able to sign online. I won't have to come back, so I won't trouble you further. Here's my card in case you have a problem.

DAMIÁN

You're leaving already?

ESTHER

If you don't need me for anything else.

DAMIÁN

Can we go over the policy?

ESTHER

Well... it's just the annual renewal. No mystery to that.

DAMIÁN

Precisely for that reason. Taking advantage of the renewal, I'd like to go over the insurance coverage. If you don't mind.

ESTHER

No, no. Of course not. It's fine with me... And that way you'll be brought up to date.

DAMIÁN

Right.

ESTHER

If you like, we can begin with the first clause.

DAMIÁN

No.

ESTHER

No?

DAMIÁN

No.

ESTHER

No.

DAMIÁN

No.

ESTHER

Where would you like us to begin?

DAMIÁN

Let's see. For me there are only two clauses in this insurance policy that are of interest. One is the confidentiality clause.

ESTHER

Confidentiality... I don't believe we have a confidentiality clause. This is a standard multi risk policy. It covers the school. For fire, theft, flood, workplace accident, all quite typical. The one big item you insure-

*(DAMIÁN exits while ESTHER is talking.)*

ESTHER

is the El Greco painting. The one in the Sacristy-

*(Realizing that she is talking to herself, ESTHER stops speaking.  
DAMIÁN enters with a watering can.)*

ESTHER

-In fact that's what raises your premium. Truthfully, I don't recall anything about confidentiality.

DAMIÁN

*(Watering the rubber plant.)*

You don't recall it because it isn't there. Take my word for it. Precisely what I want is to add it.

ESTHER

Oh, add it. Well, whatever you say. If you think you need it.

DAMIÁN

Good. It never hurts to have it.

ESTHER

Okay. In fact, lately it's a clause that's used a lot. The only thing is your premium will go up a bit. I'll make a note. Confidentiality. And the other one?

DAMIÁN

What other one?

ESTHER

Didn't you say there were two clauses you wanted to go over?

DAMIÁN

Oh yes. The other one's nothing. Don't worry. If you agree, we'll talk about it when we sign the new policy.

*(ESTHER remains silent.)*

DAMIÁN

Is something wrong?

ESTHER

No. It's just that... Wouldn't it be better to look at both clauses at once? That would save us a visit.

DAMIÁN

I prefer not to. Let's go one step at a time.

ESTHER

By steps?

DAMIÁN

Yes.

ESTHER

Yes?

DAMIÁN

Yes.

ESTHER

Why, if I may ask.

DAMIÁN

Because I can only discuss the other clause with you after you've signed the confidentiality one. Not before.

ESTHER

Oh. I see.

DAMIÁN

So that's alright with you.

ESTHER

Yes, of course. The only thing... If we can't talk about the other clause until we sign the confidentiality one...

DAMIÁN

Yes?

ESTHER

Has something happened?

DAMIÁN

No. *(Pause)* This is just in case something does. That's why there are insurance companies.

ESTHER

That's true enough. That's what we're here for.

DAMIÁN

So that's that. When you have the confidentiality clause, call me and we'll see one another again. That alright with you?

ESTHER

Okay. Don't forget the digital signature.

DAMIÁN

Don't worry. I won't forget.

*(They shake hands.)*

ESTHER

I'm sorry about the saint.

DAMIÁN

Anyone can have an accident.

SCENE 2

*(LIGHTS UP. DAMIÁN is carefully reading the insurance policy on the computer screen. ESTHER enters with a chair and sits down.)*

ESTHER

Let me know if there's anything you don't understand.

*(DAMIÁN continues reading as if he had not heard her. He leans close to the computer screen.)*

ESTHER

It would be better to use the little arrow.

*(DAMIÁN ignores her.)*

ESTHER

If you want bigger print, click on the magnifying glass icon.

*(DAMIÁN briefly looks up with an expression on his face of "Are you going to let me read?" He continues reading in silence. ESTHER remains still a few moments staring at the ceiling.)*

ESTHER

I'm going to the bathroom for a moment.

*(ESTHER starts to leave but DAMIÁN interrupts her.)*

DAMIÁN

How do I sign this?

ESTHER

Look...you click where it says to sign, on each of the pages of the pdf file.

*(DAMIÁN clicks as instructed.)*

DAMIÁN

Okay. And what is this?

ESTHER

That's your signature. You see how it has your information? Accept every time it appears on the screen and that's it.

*(DAMIÁN starts to accept on each page.)*

DAMIÁN

So, accept. Click and accept. Accept. Accept. Accept. Accept and accept.

ESTHER

And to finish, click “send” and the policy will be validated.

DAMIÁN

How modern. So, send.

ESTHER

Now you have your confidentiality clause.

*(DAMIÁN gets up, takes the wine bottle and serves himself a drink in the chalice. He then takes out a cheap plastic glass and pours some for ESTHER, who looks at him with a silly grin.)*

DAMIÁN

Shall we have a toast?

ESTHER

This early in the morning?

DAMIÁN

Why not? Let’s toast.

ESTHER

Well, alright. Let’s toast.

DAMIÁN

What Insurance has brought together, let no man put asunder.

ESTHER

Provided it’s covered in the policy.

DAMIÁN

Well, in that case, what God has brought together, let no insurance put asunder.

ESTHER

Provided God covers it.

DAMIÁN

God covers everything. Care for more wine?

ESTHER

No thank you.

*(DAMIÁN puts the wine bottle away.)*

DAMIÁN

Do you know to whom priests go for confession?



ESTHER

Well, to other priests, I suppose. Or directly to God. Truthfully I don't know.

DAMIÁN

Did you know that the Pope also makes confession?

ESTHER

Even the Pope?

DAMIÁN

Even the Pope. And yes, we always make confession to other priests.

ESTHER

Like masseurs. They go to other masseurs to get massages.

DAMIÁN

I didn't know that.

*(DAMIÁN exits.)*

ESTHER

I know because my sister's husband is a PT...

*(Realizing that she is talking to herself, ESTHER falls silent.)*

DAMIÁN

*(Entering with a couple cushions for the bench where they will sit.)*

Oh. How interesting.

*(DAMIÁN takes off his jacket, revealing his shirt and clerical collar. He rolls up his sleeves.)*

DAMIÁN

Esther, why do you think we signed the confidentiality clause?

ESTHER

I don't know, but I'm dying to find out.

DAMIÁN

Well, we've signed it because from now on I want you to be like a confessor for me.

ESTHER

Me?

DAMIÁN

Symbolically speaking, I mean.

ESTHER

Yes, of course. I understand.

DAMIÁN

I want to be able to tell you everything and rest easy knowing that you aren't going to be talking about it out there and, besides, you're going to take my side.

ESTHER

The customer is the customer, that's the way it is.

DAMIÁN

Exactly. The customer is always right.

ESTHER

So they say.

DAMIÁN

So, shall we talk now about the other clause? Let's go over it together.

ESTHER

Of course.

DAMIÁN

In confidence. You'll recall.

ESTHER

In absolute secrecy, Father.

DAMIÁN

Absolute secrecy. Like in spy movies.

*(As a good businesswoman, ESTHER is going along with him.)*

ESTHER

Like horror films.

DAMIÁN

No, not horror movies. Forget horror. Think mysteries.

ESTHER

Alright. Like mystery movies.

DAMIÁN

What I really love are movies about submarines.

*(ESTHER is taken aback. She did not anticipate that the discussion of movies was going to be so long.)*

DAMIÁN

How about you?

ESTHER

I like them too, yes.

DAMIÁN

The submarine is damaged under water. They can't rise to the surface. They can't communicate with anyone. Nobody knows they're there. How I love those films!

ESTHER

They are a bit oppressive, aren't they?

DAMIÁN

Not for me. Rather than oppressive, I consider them intimate movies.

ESTHER

That's true too.

DAMIÁN

Did Don Valentín make confession to you, Esther?

ESTHER

Quite the contrary. I made confession to him.

DAMIÁN

What did you tell him?

ESTHER

To be truthful, very little. I'm not much into sinning.

DAMIÁN

That's obvious.

*(A long pause.)*

ESTHER

If you like, let's go over the clause we still have pending.

DAMIÁN

Yes, let's.

ESTHER

So tell me.

DAMIÁN

*(Rising, without looking at ESTHER)*

I'll tell you. I'd like sexual abuse of minors to be included in the policy as a workplace accident.

*(ESTHER is stunned speechless. DAMIÁN stares into space.)*

### SCENE 3

*(DAMIÁN is looking for something in file cabinet drawers. He finds a box cutter and carefully cuts the wrapping tape from a box on the chair. He opens it and takes out a little bag of holy communion wafers. Opening the bag, he spreads the wafers on a little tray. At that moment, ESTHER enters. She crosses the stage and disappears. DAMIÁN puts a couple of wafers in his mouth the way one might eat potato chips at a bar. ESTHER enters with a chair. DAMIÁN offers her a wafer.)*

DAMIÁN

Care for one?

ESTHER

*(Taken aback)*

No thank you.

DAMIÁN

*(Munching another wafer)*

You're saying no to the body of Christ, you know.

ESTHER

No. I'm saying no to you.

DAMIÁN

You're not looking well, Esther.

ESTHER

I'm not sick. Just tired. Yesterday I had to rush off to Barcelona. To report your request to the board of directors.

DAMIÁN

Really? And what did they tell you?

ESTHER

What would you expect? They're scandalized.

DAMIÁN

And you? Are you scandalized? The other day you didn't say a word.

ESTHER

I said nothing because you left me speechless.

DAMIÁN

So it seems wrong to you, too.

ESTHER

Yes, it seems wrong.

DAMIÁN

So. And because it seems wrong to you I suppose you did not support me during that meeting of scandalized people in Barcelona.

ESTHER

Nobody can support what you propose. It's indefensible

DAMIÁN

Why is it indefensible?

ESTHER

Because it's immoral. The sexual abuse of minors is a crime.

DAMIÁN

I never said it wasn't.

ESTHER

No. You didn't say it wasn't a crime. What you said is that sexual abuse of minors is a "workplace accident." And as far as I know, accidents are not crimes. So sexual abuse can't be both: accident and crime.

DAMIÁN

You're mistaken, Esther. They are perfectly compatible. A crime can be committed by accident. It happens every day.

ESTHER

The truth is that I find it indecent that a priest should seriously be saying this. That indeed is a sin and nothing else.

DAMIÁN

I thought I was the priest here, not you.

ESTHER

That's what I thought, too.

DAMIÁN

You're being disrespectful, Esther. Get off your pedestal if you don't want me to complain to your bosses in Barcelona. I'm your customer. And I'm always right. Remember that.

ESTHER

*(Biting her tongue)*

I didn't mean to be disrespectful.

DAMIÁN

Well you have been. Don't let it happen again.

ESTHER

Have there been abuses in the school?

DAMIÁN  
*(Long pause)*

No. But just in case.

*(DAMIÁN pours himself wine in the chalice. He drinks a sip and then munches another communion wafer while ESTHER watches in disgust.)*

DAMIÁN

Esther, how did we meet?

ESTHER

What do you mean “how did we meet”?

DAMIÁN

We met at an accident.

ESTHER

What accident?

DAMIÁN

No sooner had we met than you threw the saint on the floor. You didn’t mean to throw it, but you threw it. It was an accident. If you had broken the saint, the Insurance would have had to pay.

ESTHER

That’s some comparison...

DAMIÁN

You think that’s funny. I’ll give you another example. When you take your car out on the highway, you can have an accident and kill someone. Killing someone is a crime. But at the same time, it can be an accident.

ESTHER

You’re splitting hairs.

DAMIÁN

No. Justice on one hand judges the crime, and on the other, Insurance covers the accident.

ESTHER

It’s not the same thing. A priest who abuses a child is not having an accident. What you’re saying makes no sense, Don Damián.

DAMIÁN

I don’t agree, Esther. If a priest commits sexual abuse in the workplace during school hours, it can be considered a workplace accident and Insurance will have to cover it.

ESTHER

That’s nonsense.

DAMIÁN

Why is it nonsense?

ESTHER

Because for abuse to be considered an accident, the priest would have to abuse his victim involuntarily, without meaning to. And abuse is always voluntary, that is, intentional.

DAMIÁN

You're mistaken, my friend. A priest, when he commits abuse, doesn't want to. The same as when you take out your car, you don't mean to kill someone. Abuse occurs because at times the priest loses control of his will, just as the driver, at times, loses control of a vehicle.

ESTHER

What are you telling me?

DAMIÁN

I'm telling you that a priest who abuses a minor is not in command of himself. He's a toy in the hands of an impulse much stronger than he is. He's a sick man.

ESTHER

But how can he be a sick man? He's a criminal. The proof is that priests who abuse minors don't do it just once. They do it many times. You can't have the same accident over and over. It ceases to be an accident and becomes... a habit. How can that be an accident?

DAMIÁN

I'm willing to take you to court to prove it.

ESTHER

Do what you like. There's no precedent that covers sexual abuse of minors. It's impossible for you to win. And that's my opinion—as a lawyer.

DAMIÁN

You're a lawyer?

ESTHER

Yes, I'm a lawyer. I just have to take my bar exam. That's why I'm not practicing law yet.

DAMIÁN

Well, if you're a lawyer, you should be able to answer this question. You just said that there is no precedent for insurance covering sexual abuse of minors.

ESTHER

Yes, that's what I said.

DAMIÁN

And what if there were? What would happen if there were a precedent, maybe not here but in some other European country or in America?

ESTHER

Well... I don't know... if there were, we'd have to examine it. But I don't believe there is. How could there be, Don Damián? It would turn the world upside down.

DAMIÁN

Perhaps we live in an upside down world. Without realizing it.

*(DAMIÁN takes photocopies out of a folder and hands them to ESTHER. He retains a second set of the materials).*

DAMIÁN

This is confidential.

*(ESTHER begins to read the dossier, quite taken aback. DAMIÁN, glancing at his copy, gives her an oral summary.*

As you see, in the year 2004 the Dutch Catholic Church asked their insurance company to include in their policy sexual abuse of minors as a workplace accident. The company refused. The Church sued and the Church won. The story is much longer, but to make it short, the Church only requested 58,000 euros for the abuse of a twelve-year-old girl, but they ended up paying a million euros. That was ten years ago.

*(At the director's discretion, number of years may be adjusted to the time of performance.)*

*(ESTHER is astonished.)*

DAMIÁN

You wanted precedents? Now you have them.



SCENE 4

DAMIÁN

What you put here is the same as nothing...

ESTHER

*(Entering with a chair)*

Please... how can you say that? Putting that in is really something.

*(DAMIÁN and ESTHER are talking at the same time, without listening to each other. Each of them is holding a copy of the modified policy. They pace back and forth constantly.)*

DAMIÁN

Do you think I'm an idiot, Esther? Do you believe that priests only know things about the Bible, angels, and the Holy Spirit?

ESTHER

I neither believe nor disbelieve it.

DAMIÁN

What does "dependent on the particular case" mean? Do you know what "dependent on the particular case" means?

ESTHER

It means that each case will be examined to see if the abuse can be considered an accident or not. A minimal requirement!

DAMIÁN

Do me the favor of not treating me like an asshole. "Dependent on the particular case" means that you will be the ones to decide. And the decision should be made by the Church, the ones who are paying you. And the Church doesn't want this piece of paper to say "dependent on the particular case." The Church wants it to say: "in all cases."

ESTHER

Each case is different.

DAMIÁN

No. Each case is different? No. All cases are the same case. Abuse of minors is a workplace accident. That's what I want the policy to say. Not "dependent on the particular case." And if it doesn't, we'll sue. You'll see, Esther. Your insurance company will see!

ESTHER

Do you really think that all cases of sexual abuse of children are workplace accidents? Are you really telling me that? Because, pardon me, but I don't get it.

DAMIÁN

What I think isn't important. What matters is what has to go in the policy. We're not talking about good and evil. Nor about you and me. Nor what you believe and what I believe. We're talking about money.

ESTHER

I know we're talking about money. Yes, I know that!

DAMIÁN

Besides, what are the criteria for deciding if a particular case of abuse is an accident or not? Because it says nothing about that here. Here it only says, "dependent on the particular case."

ESTHER

It says nothing because the issue is still under study. This is only a draft.

DAMIÁN

In your opinion, what will the criteria be?

ESTHER

You know what I think. For me there is no discussion. Sexual abuse is sexual abuse.

DAMIÁN

So for you all cases are the same.

ESTHER

Yes!

DAMIÁN

But you just said they weren't. That each case is different. That "dependent on the particular case," it might be or it might not be.

ESTHER

Because each case is different, yes, but sexual abuse is sexual abuse. That's it in essence.

DAMIÁN

You're getting confused.

ESTHER

Yes... No, I'm not. A child who has been the victim of abuse once is different from a child who has been abused many times. It's just that the underlying factor is the same: abuse.

DAMIÁN

Is that what you're proposing to your bosses in Barcelona? That abuse is more or less an accident depending on how long it's been going on?

ESTHER

It's logical, Don Damián! It's not the same thing when a boy has been the victim of rape for...!

DAMIÁN

Shut up! Of course it's the same! It's an accident!

ESTHER

It is not an accident!

*(Long pause. DAMIÁN exits. ESTHER sits down at his table and drinks wine.)*

DAMIÁN

*(Entering with the watering can, he waters the plant.)*

We'll go to court and see who wins. I'm sure your bosses are going to be delighted with you.

*(ESTHER remains silent.)*

DAMIÁN

Has the company calculated how much it will cost them to lose us as customers?

ESTHER

Of course we've calculated that. That's why we're still talking. Why else?

DAMIÁN

What will cost more, continuing to have our account or add the clause I want? Shall I tell you which would cost more?

*(ESTHER says nothing.)*

DAMIÁN

Come on, Esther. What number did you come up with?

*(ESTHER remains silent. She drinks some wine and, in disgust, takes some papers out of her briefcase.)*

ESTHER

With twenty cases of abuse a year, supposing that each settlement would cost 100,000 euros, that would already be more than the two million euros that the Archdiocese pays us annually.

DAMIÁN

In other words, with fewer than twenty cases, our account continues being profitable.

ESTHER

Well, profitable... You could say that.

DAMIÁN

Especially because if we agree on this clause, the premium will shoot up, right?

ESTHER

That goes without saying.

DAMIÁN

How much?

ESTHER

Three hundred percent.

*(DAMIÁN takes out a calculator and punches numbers. ESTHER watches him.)*

DAMIÁN

I'd call that high handed.

ESTHER

It is what it is.

DAMIÁN

It's too much. The most we can handle is an increase of 180 percent.

ESTHER

No way.

DAMIÁN

And then we can negotiate having the premium rise with each case of abuse, if there are any.

ESTHER

I doubt they'll accept that. The calculations were done very carefully.

DAMIÁN

Esther, do you really believe that there will be more than twenty cases of abuse a year in the Archdiocese?

ESTHER

I hope not. I don't know. How should I know?

DAMIÁN

How many cases have there been up to now?

ESTHER

As far as I know, none. But that's not what bothers me.

DAMIÁN

What does bother you?

ESTHER

Even if there were only one case, Don Damián. It bothers me to think that I'm part of this agreement. It makes me want to vomit.

DAMIÁN

But what the hell is the matter with you? What vomit—or holy shit? You're an insurance agent, not Mother Teresa! You're going to earn a pile of dough just in the commission you get from my congregation!

ESTHER

Don't be so cynical.

DAMIÁN

And you, don't be so hypocritical! Go back to Barcelona and get me what I want. Period!

ESTHER

They're not going to jump through hoops.

DAMIÁN

We'll see whether or not they'll jump.

ESTHER

With Father Valentín, this subject would never have come up.

DAMIÁN

Oh?

ESTHER

No.

DAMIÁN

You mean Don Valentín is better than I am.

ESTHER

I'm not saying that.

DAMIÁN

Then what are you saying?

ESTHER

I'm saying that for Father Valentín morality and principles are more important than money.

DAMIÁN

Is that so?

ESTHER

Yes,

DAMIÁN

Well, you should know that it's because of Don Valentín that we're discussing this topic.

ESTHER

What do you mean?

DAMIÁN

That Don Valentín is the one who got us into this mess. That he was the one accused of sexual abuse.

ESTHER

Yes... But... You told me that there had been no accusations, that we were doing all this just in case!

DAMIÁN

In case there are more.

ESTHER

How could you lie like that!

DAMIÁN

And how can you be such a crybaby? We have a problem, Esther, A big problem! You and I! Stop moaning like a soul in Purgatory and help me solve it. That's your job!

ESTHER

Who was Don Valentín's victim?

DAMIÁN

What difference does it make?

ESTHER

A boy or a girl?

DAMIÁN

A boy.

ESTHER

When?

DAMIÁN

It doesn't matter when.

ESTHER

When?

DAMIÁN

Last year. What's wrong, Esther? What does that have to do with anything?

ESTHER

What does that have to do with anything? It has to do with my son. He goes to this school. That's what's wrong!

SCENE 5

*(ESTHER enters. She hangs up her coat and gets Damián's bottle of wine. She pours a large amount in the chalice. She puts her hand in the box and takes out a wooden figure of Pinocchio. She also takes out a bag of communion wafers. She opens the bag, takes a handful of wafers and puts them in her mouth while she drinks. DAMIÁN enters.)*

DAMIÁN

You didn't come yesterday.

ESTHER

No. I was in Barcelona.

DAMIÁN

I was worried about you.

ESTHER

That figures.

*(ESTHER finishes the wine in one swallow. She wipes her mouth on DAMIÁN's white handkerchief and puts the box on the floor. She sits in that chair. She opens her briefcase and takes out a folder.)*

DAMIÁN

Did you talk with your son?

ESTHER

Yes.

DAMIÁN

And?

ESTHER

Nothing. According to him.

DAMIÁN

I'm glad.

ESTHER

So am I.

DAMIÁN

I asked the headmaster about him. He's a very bright boy.

ESTHER

That's true.

DAMIÁN

Esther, wouldn't it be better if someone else handled this matter?

ESTHER

Why?

DAMIÁN

I don't know. It seems logical to me that having your son here you'd prefer not to be involved.

ESTHER

Yah, but I can't help being involved. I've been handling policies for the Archdiocese for twelve years. It's my job. Besides my son has not been the victim of sexual abuse, fortunately, and he leaves here after this year, also fortunately. So there's really no problem.

DAMIÁN

If you say so, then there's not a problem.

ESTHER

None.

DAMIÁN

Your son doesn't know more than he should?

ESTHER

No, no need for you to worry.

DAMIÁN

Good. I won't. Now, let's see what they said in Barcelona. Have they jumped through hoops?

ESTHER

*(Handing a photocopy to DAMIÁN)*

Indeed they've jumped through hoops. Sexual abuse of minors is considered a workplace accident provided it occurs during work hours at the work location and during the regular school year, that is, between September and June. The premium will increase 200 percent annually and, if there are more than fifteen cases of abuse in a given year, starting with the sixteenth case, the Archdiocese will pay half of any compensation. If there are twenty or more cases of abuse annually and total compensation is more than two million euros, the insurer is no longer responsible for such fines. The Church will pay one hundred percent of the expenses.

*(DAMIÁN takes out his calculator and enters numbers to ESTHER's indifferent gaze.)*

DAMIÁN

How much will the premium go up for each accusation?



ESTHER

The increase will be fifteen percent for each incident of abuse in the first fifteen cases and seven percent, starting with the sixteenth case, but keeping in mind that the Church will pay half of any settlements.

DAMIÁN

That's assuming 100,000 euros for each compensation.

ESTHER

Precisely. A hundred thousand euros per case of abuse.

DAMIÁN

That means we speak of an increase of 250 thousand euros a year if there were twenty cases.

ESTHER

More or less. Yes. A quarter million.

DAMIÁN

That's a lot.

ESTHER

It's what's fair. You won't find a better offer. Even if you take us to court. I'll cover fifteen cases of abuse annually plus half of an additional five cases. That's one million, seven hundred and fifty thousand euros. It's somewhat more than what other insurance companies in Europe and the United States are offering.

DAMIÁN

I see that you've done your homework.

ESTHER

What choice did I have?

DAMIÁN

There's just one thing that doesn't come out right.

ESTHER

Tell me what it is and we'll discuss it.

DAMIÁN

The policy covers the school year, between September and June.

ESTHER

That's it.

DAMIÁN

I need it to cover the calendar year. From January to December.

ESTHER

Why's that?

DAMIÁN

That's because the school organizes summer camps in July and August. I can't run the risk of having those months uncovered.

ESTHER

Ah yes. My son always goes to those camps.

DAMIÁN

I should think so. They've been very successful.

ESTHER

July and August. Two more months.

DAMIÁN

The whole year. Without having the insurance increase even one euro.

ESTHER

I doubt they would authorize me to do that. I'd have to go to Barcelona again and discuss it with the board of directors.

DAMIÁN

Do what you have to. But let me tell you that without July and August, there's no agreement. And don't forget, that's without raising the premium.

ESTHER

You made that clear. Don't worry.

DAMIÁN

I'm pleased we're finally going to score a goal, Esther.

ESTHER

I'm pleased that you're pleased. One question, before I go. Where is Don Valentín?

DAMIÁN

We sent him to a monastery.

ESTHER

He's not going to prison?

DAMIÁN

Not if we sign this policy.

ESTHER

What do you mean, not if we sign this policy?

DAMIÁN

We've reached a private agreement with the family, that if we sign the policy, they will withdraw their accusation and accept 100,000 euros from the insurance company. They don't want to make the matter public either. That would be stigmatize the family and the child.

ESTHER

And if we don't sign?

DAMIÁN

If after all, we don't reach an agreement and sign, I'll sue the insurance company, and you know we'll win. It's nothing personal. Besides, that's why insurance exists. To make money off other people's misfortunes.

ESTHER

That's true. And this child's "accident"? In what month did it happen?

DAMIÁN

August.

ESTHER

August. Of course. At one of the camps.

DAMIÁN

Unfortunately.

ESTHER

Unfortunately, of course. I'll see you day after tomorrow.

DAMIÁN

Esther, wait. I really don't have anything against you. I like you. Why can't we try to get along better?

ESTHER

What would you have done if you were that child's father?

DAMIÁN

I don't know. I don't have children.

ESTHER

What I don't understand is why Don Valentín didn't go to prison.

DAMIÁN

Neither do I. But that's the way the Church is. It has its good points and its bad points. Like any institution. *(Beat)* Are we friends?

SCENE 6

*(DAMIÁN is working at the laptop. ESTHER enters.)*

DAMIÁN

Esther, can you help me with this?

ESTHER

What are you doing?

DAMIÁN

I'm trying to buy tickets for the Atlético-Juventus soccer match, but the webpage won't let me.

ESTHER

Are you an Atlético fan?

DAMIÁN

No way. I'm for Juve. As the Italians say, "Vincere non é importante, é l'unica cosa che conta." Winning isn't the important thing; it's the only thing.

ESTHER

Nice slogan. It suits you to a T.

DAMIÁN

Terrific!

ESTHER

Let's see. "Schedule." "How to purchase tickets ." "Additional information." And here, "Admission Tickets." Let's see: "Platinum VIP," "Category 1"...

DAMIÁN

"Category 1"! Where are the tickets for "Category 1"?

ESTHER

Here On this menu.

DAMIÁN

Well, go there. What team are you for?

ESTHER

I'm for Atlético.

DAMIÁN

For Atlético? You're in jest?

ESTHER

No, in red and white stripes, like the team.

DAMIÁN

Shall I get you a ticket and we'll go together?

ESTHER

For real?

DAMIÁN

Of course for real. Put in for two tickets.

ESTHER

Thank you!

DAMIÁN

And I thank you.

ESTHER

Do you have your credit card handy?

DAMIÁN

*(Taking out his card)*

Right here.

ESTHER

Are you sure you want to invite me? It's a lot of money.

DAMIÁN

I'm not inviting you. The Church is. As a reward for your patience with me.

*(ESTHER enters his card number and completes the purchase.)*

DAMIÁN

That's that. You take care of the sandwiches and I've taken care of the tickets.

ESTHER

Consider it done.

DAMIÁN

Good. And what did they tell you in Barcelona? Are they including July and August or are we going to court where I'll win?

ESTHER

They're adding July and August for you. No need to go to court. But in exchange they want to add another little paragraph.

DAMIÁN

A little paragraph. Little paragraphs scare me. Let's see what little paragraph they have in mind.

ESTHER

Well, a little paragraph that says whenever a monetary agreement is reached with a family because of sexual abuse, if the priest who committed the particular act of abuse is not reported to the police, like in the case of Don Valentín, the insurance will not cover possible future acts of abuse that he might commit, only past abuses.

DAMIÁN

Only past abuses.

ESTHER

You understand, Don Damián, that Don Valentín should be put in prison. If you make an under the table deal with the family and Don Valentín can wander about freely, we can't be responsible if he abuses some other child. Knowing that he has done it before.

DAMIÁN

But Don Valentín isn't going to abuse anyone again.

ESTHER

We have no way of knowing that.

DAMIÁN

Yes, we can know, Esther. Don Valentín has been removed from teaching. He's been put in a Monastery, away from the world.

ESTHER

Yah. For how long?

DAMIÁN

For how long? I don't know. Until he has reformed. Forever.

ESTHER

Which is it? Until he has reformed or forever?

DAMIÁN

It's the same thing. What difference does it make to you if it's until he has reformed or forever. The result is the same. He's not going to repeat what he's done.

ESTHER

Well, if that's the way it is, what difference does it make to sign the policy with the little paragraph? If you're sure that he'll not touch another child. We'll give you July and August without raising the premium even one euro, and you give us the peace of mind that if any priests are running around loose, we don't have to concern ourselves with them.

DAMIÁN

It's amazing how pigheaded you are, Esther.

ESTHER

No. Not pigheaded.

DAMIÁN

Not pigheaded? Oh, yes you are. And to boot I've just invited you to a soccer game that's costing me a lot of dough.

ESTHER

Not you. The Church.

DAMIÁN

I am the Church, Esther. Don't get funny with me or I'll return your ticket in a flash.

ESTHER

You can do what you want with my ticket, Don Damián. But let's not mix soccer and the Church. That's all we need.

DAMIÁN

Let's not mix business and pleasure, is that it? That's what you're saying.

ESTHER

That's the theory. And that should also be the practice.

DAMIÁN

Otherwise, tell that to Don Valentín, right? If he hadn't mixed what he shouldn't have mixed, we wouldn't be in this mess.

ESTHER

At heart, you and I think alike.

DAMIÁN

Don't you believe it. If we weren't in this mess, we'd be in some other one. We are all sinners, Esther.

ESTHER

Well, we are all sinners, yes, but we should try to sin as little as possible. Or do the least possible harm to others, given that we are all going to sin.

DAMIÁN

Do you know that you would have been a very good priest?

ESTHER

Me?

DAMIÁN

Yes, if you had been born a man. What a shame you're a long-suffering Atlético fan.

*(ESTHER exits and returns with the watering can.)*

The really good priests, like me, are all for Italian teams.

ESTHER

*(Watering the rubber plant)*

I don't go for Italian teams. They're revolting.

DAMIÁN

Say what you will, we've won four World Cups.

ESTHER

Winning isn't everything.

DAMIÁN

Yes, it is, Esther. Do you believe in God?

ESTHER

I do. And until recently I also believed in the Church.

DAMIÁN

I'm not asking you about the Church. I'm asking you about God.

ESTHER

I answered about God. I believe in God.

DAMIÁN

Shall I tell you why you believe in God?

ESTHER

You don't have to tell me. I already know why I believe in God.

DAMIÁN

Why do you believe in God?

ESTHER

I believe in God because... it makes me feel secure.

DAMIÁN

Precisely. You're saying I'm right, Esther. You believe in God because it makes you feel secure. God is like you, an insurance agent. You sign a policy with him when you're baptized. You renew it at your communion. You increase it when you get married and, if there haven't been lots of reports against you during all that time, God gives you the policy when you die. He gives it to you, for free, forever. You believe in God because he assures you how the game will end, Esther. You believe in God because by being on God's team you win. Winning is everything. God is winning.

ESTHER

*(After a moment of silence)*

Sometimes, in order to win, you have to let yourself lose a little.



DAMIÁN

Sometimes, yes. That's why I'm going to let you put that little paragraph in the policy. Render unto God what is God's.

*(DAMIÁN offers his hand to ESTHER and they shake.)*

ESTHER

And to Cesar what is Cesar's.

DAMIÁN

We'll sign when we get ready to go to the game, if that's okay with you.

ESTHER

Okay.

DAMIÁN

You're going to take a shellacking, you know.

ESTHER

We'll see about that.

SCENE 7

*(DAMIÁN enters, putting on a black and white Juventus neck scarf as if it were a priest's stole. He sits down at the computer to read the revised insurance policy and prepares to sign on-line. Enter ESTHER, wearing red and white for Atlético. She is carrying a tray of ham sandwiches.)*

ESTHER

Shall I put oil on the bread?

DAMIÁN

Yes.

ESTHER

And cheese?

DAMIÁN

No cheese. I don't like cheese.

ESTHER

Sliced tomatoes alright?

DAMIÁN

Esther, please be quiet a minute so I can concentrate. Make mine the same as yours but without cheese.

ESTHER

Okay.

DAMIÁN

Pour me a bit of wine in the meantime.

ESTHER

Fine. I'll make that two.

*(ESTHER pours wine in the chalice for DAMIÁN and in a plastic cup for herself. She puts communion wafers and pieces of ham on a golden plate. They both snack in silence while he reads and she finishes making the sandwiches.)*

ESTHER

It will be better to buy the beer there to have it chilled.

DAMIÁN

Perfect.

ESTHER

So it is, right?

DAMIÁN

No. Yes. I mean the policy. It's perfect.

ESTHER

Look it over again, if you like. We have time.

DAMIÁN

That won't be necessary. I've already seen it twice. What do you think?

ESTHER

Well, sign it and we'll go to the game.

DAMIÁN

*(Moving the mouse to sign)*

Right. We'll see how you lose. Who would have thought, a month ago, that we were going to sign this as such good friends?

*(ESTHER remains silent while watching how DAMIÁN signs.)*

ESTHER

Have you talked to the child's family yet about the policy?

DAMIÁN

Yes, of course. By the way, you'll have to get the money ready.

ESTHER

You'll have the check tomorrow. Have there been any other accusations?

*(DAMIÁN stops short. He thinks about it for a moment.)*

DAMIÁN

No. Not that I know of.

ESTHER

That's good.

DAMIÁN

At any rate, if there is some other accusation, you'll be the first to know. You're the one who pays.

ESTHER

I don't. The company does.

DAMIÁN

Well, the company then. It's all the same to me.

ESTHER

The last page of the pdf file is in triplicate and then you have to sign.

DAMIÁN

I have to fill out the information three times?

ESTHER

Three times. Yes.

DAMIÁN

Like the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

ESTHER

The very same.

*(DAMIÁN starts filling out the last three pages but stops a moment before signing.)*

DAMIÁN

And this asterisk?

ESTHER

What asterisk?

DAMIÁN

This asterisk. The one by my name.

ESTHER

*(Looking at the screen)*

Let me see. (Beat.) It's not by your name. It's next to the policyholder.

DAMIÁN

Yes. But I'm the policyholder. The one who's signing.

ESTHER

But it's not an asterisk specifically referring to you. It's a standard asterisk for a contract.

DAMIÁN

Alright. Whatever. But where is the explanation for the asterisk?

ESTHER

It has to be somewhere below. Or in a link. I don't know.

DAMIÁN

Well, find it or I won't sign.

ESTHER

Let's see. I'm going to look over the other pages.

*(ESTHER reviews other pages in the policy.)*

DAMIÁN

You're not trying to deceive me, are you?

ESTHER

God forbid, Father.

DAMIÁN

I'm asking where is the fine print.

ESTHER

The fine print, if you'll pardon my saying so, is what you slid in.

DAMIÁN

Kicking the ball out of bounds won't help. You're going to lose the game anyway.

ESTHER

We'll see about that. Juventus isn't what it used to be. But I'm not finding it.

DAMIÁN

Well if you don't find it, you're not going anywhere. You look for it. But I'm going to the game. You'll see.

ESTHER

Wait. I'll call the office. (*She calls*) Marta? Is Jordi there? Oh, he's gone already. Well, maybe you can answer a question I have. On the last page of our policies, in the pdf on-line version, where it has "policy holder," there's an asterisk. Yes, Where is the fine print for the asterisk? Oh. And what does it say? Okay. Yes, yes. Of course. No, it's just that there's no link or anything, and if you aren't careful, you might not even see it. And that's bad. Tell Jordi, so they can fix it. Right. Well, many thanks my friend. See you tomorrow. (*She hangs up.*) It's in the tab for General Contract Terms.

DAMIÁN

See how you were trying to deceive me?

ESTHER

Anyone can have an accident, Don Damián. (*Pause*) Click here.

DAMIÁN

Let's see what the asterisk says. "The policy holder, who represents himself or the enterprise, organization or institution for which he has power of attorney, accepts the general conditions and privacy statement of the insurer." Very good. And you are pleased about that. What are the general conditions and privacy statement of the enterprise?

ESTHER

Oh, what do I know. You're so suspicious, Father. They must be the standard conditions. To comply with the law for protecting information and all that, and that we've had to follow for many years. You signed it as well when you asked for the confidentiality clause and didn't realize it.

DAMIÁN

Well, I realize it now.

ESTHER

What we don't have to put up with. Let's see what Marta says now.

*(ESTHER calls and lets it ring a long time.)*

ESTHER

She isn't picking up. It's after work hours. Let's check on the webpage to see if it's there.

*(ESTHER sits in front of the computer and begins to navigate the web.  
DAMIÁN looks anxiously at his watch.)*

ESTHER

Let's see. About Us. Products. Blog. Customer Service. Employment Opportunities.

DAMIÁN

Forget it.

ESTHER

What?

DAMIÁN

Come on, forget it. We're going to be late. I'll take it on faith. Only because it's you.

ESTHER

It's no problem for me to look it up, really.

DAMIÁN

Sure. It's no problem for you but you can't find it. You're more inept than I am with these things.

ESTHER

Here's something we can do. Tomorrow I'll bring you a paper copy of the general conditions and we'll sign everything in ballpoint. We'll forget the internet.

DAMIÁN

And the check?

ESTHER

The check will have to be next week.

DAMIÁN

Next week!

ESTHER

That's the bad part about doing it on paper. The insurer has to return a signed copy. The good thing about the internet is that it's instantaneous.

DAMIÁN

*(After thinking a moment)*

Next week is very late. I want the check tomorrow. I can't risk having the child's family change their mind.

ESTHER

I'll do whatever you say, Don Damián.

DAMIÁN

It's the damned internet. Let's see, where do I have to click?

ESTHER

First here, in each one of the three blocks. And then in this tab, under "General Conditions."

DAMIÁN

Let's see if we finally get it.

ESTHER

Then in this tab.

*(DAMIÁN signs under ESTHER's watchful eye.)*

DAMIÁN

That's that. Done. What God has signed, let no man put asunder. Don't forget the check tomorrow. Come on, let's zoom off to the game.

*(ESTHER, grinning from ear to ear, picks up the sandwiches.)*

ESTHER

Just a minute.

*(DAMIÁN exits. ESTHER crosses to the table, picks up the chalice and drops it, indifferently, into the wastebasket.)*

SCENE 8

*(DAMIÁN is searching for something in the study. He seems annoyed. ESTHER enters.)*

DAMIÁN

I can't find the chalice anywhere.

*(ESTHER smiles and says nothing.)*

DAMIÁN

The damned kids. One of those little monsters must have taken it. If it doesn't show up today, I'll mount an offensive in the school that will make them pee in their pants.

*(DAMIÁN, giving up, stops looking. ESTHER listens in silence.)*

DAMIÁN

So, have you recovered from the rout?

ESTHER

Well, we still have the return match.

DAMIÁN

Hope is what losers lose last.

ESTHER

Uhhhhh! That's a new saying.

DAMIÁN

Did you bring me the money?

ESTHER

Yes.

DAMIÁN

Fantastic.

ESTHER

But there's one little thing we have to look at first.

DAMIÁN

A little thing? Beginning with what letter?

ESTHER

It's nothing. It's the matter from the other day. You signed accepting the general conditions. The asterisk, you know.



DAMIÁN

No hitting below the belt, Esther.

ESTHER

There's already been enough of that, don't you think?

DAMIÁN

I do. So show me "the little thing."

*(ESTHER takes out two folders. She hands one to DAMIÁN and keeps the other.)*

ESTHER

This is what you signed yesterday on-line. I'm bringing you a hard copy because I know you prefer paper. Review it carefully.

DAMIÁN

Let's see...

*(DAMIÁN puts on his glasses and begins to read.)*

ESTHER

How is the boy that Don Valentín abused?

*(DAMIÁN looks up from the papers, surprised.)*

DAMIÁN

The child's okay. And he'll be better when we give his family the money.

*(DAMIÁN reads the document, murmuring some of the paragraphs aloud. ESTHER walks around the room. DAMIÁN finishes and takes off his glasses.)*

DAMIÁN

Fine. I don't see anything odd here. Everything is in order.

ESTHER

Did you look on the reverse side? It continues there.

DAMIÁN

*(Pissed off)*

Oh, it continues on the reverse side.

*(DAMIÁN turns the sheet over, puts his glasses back on, and reads.)*

DAMIÁN

What do we have here. "Exclusions of exceptional nature." And they are... "In addition to exclusions described in the policy are those cited in the following sections:

*(DAMIÁN reads in a whisper. Suddenly he stops, in alarm. He reads further in silence. Then, disturbed, he gets up.)*

DAMIÁN

I don't understand section 2.

ESTHER

*(Reading her copy)*

Section 2. Let's see. Well. Basically here it says that the policyholder, that is, you, affirms that he has no criminal record or open cases in the justice system. It's very clear. If there is a violation of this section, the Church will have to pay for abuses, not the insurer. Moreover we would no longer be subject to confidentiality.

*(DAMIÁN is silent a moment, his jaws clenched.)*

ESTHER

Is something wrong?

DAMIÁN

No. What could be wrong?

ESTHER

Then, what's the matter?

DAMIÁN

What matters is that this document has no validity if I don't sign it.

ESTHER

But you signed it.

DAMIÁN

No way. I have not signed this, I'm sure. I'd remember this section.

ESTHER

By accepting the general conditions it's as if you signed it. From a legal point of view, it is the same.

DAMIÁN

*(Exiting)*

The lawyer speaks...

ESTHER

Look, I told you yesterday that we could wait.

DAMIÁN

*(Entering with the watering can, which he does not use)*

Are you making fun of me, Esther?

ESTHER

No, Damián. But what's wrong? If you don't have a criminal record, there's no problem.

DAMIÁN

And if I had one?

ESTHER

Then the policy you signed is not valid.

DAMIÁN

*(Stunned speechless, he sets the watering can down on the bench.)*

Esther, what have you done?

ESTHER

What have I done? I haven't done anything.

DAMIÁN

What have you done!

ESTHER

Let me repeat. I've done nothing.

DAMIÁN

We'll have to sign the policy again, without this section.

ESTHER

That's impossible, Damián.

DAMIÁN

Nothing is impossible, Esther.

ESTHER

I'm sorry, but the General Conditions of policies cannot be changed. That indeed is impossible.

DAMIÁN

Well, I'm going to prove that you deceived me.

ESTHER

How are you going to prove that, Damián? You signed the policy. In triplicate. With your electronic signature. From your computer. With me as a witness.

*(DAMIÁN remains silent, thinking. Then he realizes something.)*

DAMIÁN

Precisely. I can say that you got me entangled with the computer. I can say it was the first time I did this and I didn't know what I was signing.

ESTHER

But that's not true. We have the other policy you signed previously. The confidentiality clause. We have a precedent. As you do with sexual abuse.

DAMIÁN

You think you can win with this bullshit about a digital signature? You have no idea.

ESTHER

I don't know what you're talking about, Father.

DAMIÁN

Besides, I have that girl as a witness. The one you called, Marta. She'll say that we spoke to her because I wasn't sure of what I was signing.

ESTHER

That's true. If I'd called someone. But I didn't call anyone.

DAMIÁN

*(Stunned)*

You're a lying bitch.

ESTHER

What's wrong? You don't have to worry. You're clean. You don't have a criminal record. Or do you?

*(DAMIÁN bangs the table and raises his fist at ESTHER.)*

ESTHER

Are you going to hit me?

DAMIÁN

Go away.

*(ESTHER starts to leave. DAMIÁN stops her.)*

DAMIÁN

*(Defeated)*

How did you find out?

ESTHER

Don Valentín.

DAMIÁN

Don Valentín?

ESTHER

Don Valentín was my friend. It wasn't that hard to find him.

DAMIÁN

I'm not like Don Valentín!

ESTHER

So it wasn't you who abused a seven-year-old boy at a summer camp in the Canary Islands?

DAMIÁN

That was more than fifteen years ago.

ESTHER

The story is much longer, but to make it short, the District Attorney couldn't prove anything without the child's testimony and you were acquitted. Not guilty. Tell me, with your hand over your heart, what happened between you and that little boy was an accident?

DAMIÁN

Be quiet, Esther. Please!

ESTHER

No, I won't be quiet. We've had enough of being quiet!

*(DAMIÁN listens in silence, ashamed.)*

DAMIÁN

I've paid for my sins. God has forgiven me.

ESTHER

He's forgiven you? A pedophile who keeps other pedophiles from going to jail. With money. Not for principle. Not for love, as God says. But with money.

*(ESTHER shows DAMIÁN the check.)*

DAMIÁN

Be quiet.

*(Silence)*

DAMIÁN

I haven't touched a child since the incident in the Canary Islands. I'm not an abuser.

ESTHER

I don't believe that. But it doesn't matter to me. Even if you never abused anyone, what you're doing... is wrong. Wrong! It's bad. And it can't be permitted. We can't permit it!

*(ESTHER beats DAMIÁN on the chest. Then silence)*

ESTHER

Did you know that the child Don Valentín abused is my son's friend?

DAMIÁN

I found out later.

ESTHER

Later. I found out about your “workplace accident” later too. That’s what happens with truth. Sooner or later you find out. By the way, your money.

*(ESTHER takes out the check and tears it up.)*

ESTHER

If the family wants money, you can pay it. I for one wash my hands.

DAMIÁN

I’ll take you to court, Esther.

ESTHER

No you won’t, Damián. You will not take me to court. You know why? Because you’ve lost. And you know it. And you can’t bear it.

DAMIÁN

You’re a dreamer. Okay, maybe, it’s true this year you’ve got your way and you won’t pay for abuses. But what about next year? Next year we’ll renew the policy. And I won’t be here; it will be someone else. And one way or another you’re going to jump through hoops. Because sooner or later you’ll jump.

ESTHER

We’ll see about that.

DAMIÁN

No. We won’t see about that. But others will see. Don’t think that you’re going to keep working for the insurance company. I’ll make sure of that. You’ll be out in the street.

ESTHER

That’s not necessary, Damián. I’m quitting Ibéritas.

*(DAMIÁN is speechless. ESTHER throws the little pieces of the check on the floor.)*

ESTHER

Sometimes you don’t have to jump through the hoop. Hooray for Atlético...

*(ESTHER starts to leave but stops in the doorway She points at the wastebasket.)*

ESTHER

I forgot. The chalice is in the garbage.

*(ESTHER exits. DAMIÁN slowly retrieves the chalice, cleans it off, and pours himself some wine. We hear the school bell and the sound of children going out to recess. DAMIÁN munches a communion wafer while he finishes the wine.)*

THE END