

Menotti Lerro

LADY GIOVANNA
Comedy in five acts

ZONA Contemporanea

Who felt the greatest ecstasy? The man or the woman?
Or, aren't these two feelings the same?
V. Woolf, *Orlando*
to Carla Perugini

Between dream and reality

Menotti Lerro, a poet who is always more aware of his expressive means, is now measuring himself with the theatrical genre, inventing an excessive, extreme figure, Lady Giovanna who's a kind of Great Lady of evil and hex that she is able to instill in who has the terrible and sad destiny to meet and hang out with her.

Lerro wanted to concentrate in her all what can be negative in the world, brushing up on an ancient adage, according to which, in the Medieval world, women were considered *instrumenta diaboli* (vehicles of the devil) but, at the same time, he wanted to make her a Great Lady of the intellect which is an end in itself and which excludes from itself any form of humanity and kindness. A monster, we can say, with intelligence and cruelty towards the world, which she believes is governed by absolute and absurd laws, that prevent the fulfillment of the most immediate instincts.

So Eros triumphs in this piece, although the author reveals himself particularly able, *in progress*, to suspend it on the waiting threshold of the pure theatrical vision, letting it be imagined and invented by the viewer, especially in that lesbian relationship which will involve with the protagonist a young married woman, destined to expiate with death, after her husband's one, her instinctive abandon to an unbridled passion.

Lady Giovanna dominates the scene with her power and authority; in this sense she becomes a terrible metaphor of a universe that by now has lost all boundaries between good and evil, or rather, has completely reversed the historical standards of this relation, raising evil over the blessed altar of good.

The consequences are many and they have to do with the main terms of an alternative and extremist consideration: about love which is multiple and contains everything; about God, a gambler in creating men; about the Church, guilty of having cyclically betrayed its mission, imposing a false and hypocrite love code for Lady Giovanna.

Salvation? It seems to listen again to the far thesis of the damned poets: poetry, the only opportunity still granted not to, be careful, save your soul- which for Lady Giovanna doesn't exist- but to give a purpose, a way out of a life marked by boredom and by the habit to a series of masks to wear with no prospect of inner redemption. Then there is nothing left but to narrate poetically, finally giving to our most intimate impulses an intense pleasure that life continuously negates. Only in this way literature can ally itself with life to go forward with its most biological purposes.

The author from Salerno shows himself particularly able to support theatrically his first attempt, especially through strong and intense twists, sometimes calculated, sometimes random, playing also in the not lived love scene between Lady Giovanna and the coward financier of her worldly whims, met at the casino. There's a happy combination and complicity with the viewer, always surprised by the cunning stratagems elaborated by the protagonist, up to the final proof with the appearance of her father in her dreams. Her father, who seems the only person that shakes the presumed sensibility of the woman and although appearing in a significant hermaphroditism, the final proof is anyway

destined too to surrender to that philosophy of the evil which Lady Giovanna has elaborated with strong persistence and which embraces every real or dreamy form of existence.

Therefore between reality and dream this theatrical experiment of Menotti Lerro is performed, evidently marked by some dominant tendencies of contemporary drama, especially in the use of the fascinating and tall tales storytelling mask-face dialectic. Then, the frequent recourse to sleep that makes itself a dream allows to value the ambiguity or better the double sense of a sequence of events that can even leave the viewer perplexed. So the viewer, at the end of the performance is authorized to ask himself: did I dream or did I assist a real story on the scene? The double game that the theatre gives us, remains the bet and the challenge to a life, which theatrically lived, not always satisfies and for this reason it imposes and invokes new and disturbing questions.

Francesco D'Episcopo

Lady Giovanna

Characters

(in order of entrance)

CONCETTINA, waitress of Lady Giovanna

DARIO, servant of Lady Giovanna

LADY GIOVANNA

DON RUGGERO, Lady Giovanna's husband

CAROLINA, hairdresser

ALICE, hairdresser

BRUNELLA, Lady Giovanna's friend

ARTURO, Brunella's husband

GB, wealthy man

GHOST

The sequence of events is set in Campania

ACT I

SCENE I

Concettina, Dario, Lady Giovanna

(Don Ruggero and Donna Giovanna's living room)

CONCETTINA- *(with a cell phone in her hand)* Men? All of them are crooks. They trick you. They write you heart breaking and gratifying words of love. And why? Always for the same purpose! They don't think of anything else, these scoundrels. Only to pass a dagger through your heart. *(watching the phone screen)* Write to me...write! Damn me! I know you are there. You have just put a *like* on that little bitch's picture. Ah, how angry I am! Don't you know she goes to bed with any Tom, Dick, or Harry? You are just degenerate! Ugly syphilitic! May a flash of lightning hit you!

DARIO-*(entering the living room)* Are you angry with me?

CONCETTINA-What?

DARIO- I thought you were saying degenerate to me.

CONCETTINA- No, what do you have to do with this? I was talking about this other pig. A being who passes his days seducing women and girls, sending messages to every one of them. May the plague touch him, this son of a bitch!

DARIO- This guy must have disturbed you a lot if he makes you talk this way. Although lately it seems to me that I've already heard you saying this kind of stuff pretty often...

CONCETTINA-But what can I do if the world is full of men? It's easy for them to make our head spin. They use words sweet like honey, to convince us of a presumed and never verified sincerity, they use hidden tools you can never imagine, my dear.

DARIO- With all these stupidities, not only my head is spinning...

CONCETTINA-I'll spin your neck, that is how nervous I am this evening! Is it possible he doesn't find a moment to think about me, this cuckold!

DARIO- You know what I tell you? You should ask help to Lady Giovanna. She knows how to be respected! She's not even forty years old yet and already has tried wine from every cellar *(in a low ironic voice)* And once she tried also mine...

CONCETTINA-And if it was so? Us women know what we want! And how to obtain it!

DARIO- She has come back this morning. It seems the trip was all staged. Anything but London! She must have been in Naples, in a tavern of a small hotel with someone met a few days before.

CONCETTINA- Lucky her that she has had some good wine! White volcanic wine!

DARIO-But let's say the truth. To betray this way that holy man of Don Ruggero. (*allusive*) He who gave everything to her...who shared with her also his noble title. Fortunately there are still people like him, gentlemen in manners and in language. He repudiated his ex wife to make her happy. Because she was crying, crying... poor her! She loved him so much, she used to say. And now what is she doing? She's taking advantage of his absence to do what she wants?

CONCETTINA- (*a little doubtful*) Yes, indeed, to be a man Don Ruggero has always behaved well! And he's not even ugly! Actually, if he had offered to me his land...

DARIO-Oh, look, Lady Giovanna is coming. She's all yours! I'm going there to arrange some things (*going out*).

LADY GIOVANNA- (*entering immediately from an other door*) Concettina, have you arranged those curtains? Let's hurry, so we can hang them for spring.

CONCETTINA- Yes, I made them new.

LADY GIOVANNA- Very well!

CONCETTINA- I wish it was easy to mend a heart as it is with curtains, Miss! (*sighing deeply*)

LADY GIOVANNA- What's the matter, Concettina, are you suffering for love?

CONCETTINA- Oh, beautiful lady! I feel like a crushed flower, a rag doll.

LADY GIOVANNA- You are making me feel worried talking this way. Please, tell me what's bothering you!

CONCETTINA- Men! They always hurt me.

LADY GIOVANNA- Ah, I understand you, Concettina. Also my heart suffers a lot... But don't worry, you can go, leave me by myself. Actually no, stay, honey, I want to take a bath. A very hot bath, full of perfumed oils and all kinds of soap bubbles. Plant essences and fat of cinta senese. You cannot

imagine how your skin becomes velvety! Ah, skin should never wrinkle and lose shininess! Can you please fill the tub, Concettina? I'll finish telling you the story in the relieving hot water.

CONCETTINA- Yes, also I have to tell you how my soul has become sick. And how that nice person has fooled this naive heart, a heart of a yesteryear's girl. I'll tell you how I'm not being able to bear this anymore... Ah! (*putting a hand on her mouth*), it's better if I keep my mouth shut!

Scene II

LADY GIOVANNA, CONCETTINA

(Lady Giovanna's bathroom)

LADY GIOVANNA- *(immersed in the bath tub)* How wonderful being immersed in this water. I have to go back to the arabic baths of Seville as soon as possible. If Alpheus would appear I wouldn't certainly run away. Especially if he transforms himself in a handsome horse... *(chuckling)*

CONCETTINA- Ah ah, what are you talking about, Miss?

LADY GIOVANNA- Nothing. An old story that Ruggero always tells.

CONCETTINA- *(forcing herself to speak correctly)* Anyway, dear Lady Giovanna, the truth is that men are a bunch of opportunists. And woe betide to fall in their spider web. They make your bile burst!

LADY GIOVANNA- *(to herself)* If you want to understand how a woman loves you just have to listen to her words backwards. If you want to understand how a man loves, when he talks about love you must close your ears. *(watching Concettina)* You are right, anyway. Men are like wine. You taste them, they seem good, they arouse your senses...But after? You suddenly find yourself with your head spinning. And if you are not careful, if you don't chose only those high quality ones, you will end up feeling also nauseated. Maybe it's better to switch roles *(pleasantly laughing)*

CONCETTINA- What do you mean, my Miss?

LADY GIOVANNA- Nothing, I was just joking. Remember that the sun doesn't belong more to a man than to you. Never let yourself to be put in the shadow. *(suddenly changing tone)*. Listen, Concettina, can you tell me in a few words what do you like about a man? Without thinking about it too much.

CONCETTINA- Ah, Miss, it's better I don't tell you. *(malicious smile)*

LADY GIOVANNA- I understand everything! Who doesn't like it? For us women some things are really a damned drug. They make us collapse in the night dreams and they keep us alert during the day. But the man has to be provoked well, if you want to conquer him. Otherwise for them you will be only a one hour person to mess around with.

CONCETTINA- How? To tell you the truth, I've never been good in making men fall at my feet. Maybe because I'm too shy. For me it's enough to watch

them in the eyes and it seems they already have understood everything about me. So I run away shamefully. Eyes say what the tongue wants to hold.

LADY GIOVANNA- Yes, they grasp your shyness immediately... (*smiling ironically*) Alright, I see you need some deepened lessons. This morning we start. Sit down here, on the side of the tub. Listen to me carefully and, especially, relax. Let yourself be led, from now on, by my words and by my hands.

CONCETTINA- Ok! Here I am!

LADY GIOVANNA- I'll teach you how to seduce a man. And I'll show you how to make him yours forever, how to make him a slave of love, 'cause it will be enough for you to desire him and he'll appear in front of you. You will be his drug, his everything, his worst disease.

CONCETTINA- I'm all on fire!

LADY GIOVANNA- First of all you must always look at him in the eyes when you are near him; like you watch yourself in the mirror when you want to fool yourself. And this even if you believe that those eyes are looking inside you, even if you believe you're already lost. Remember that, actually, he is always more scared than you. Consider, though, that men are very sensitive to woman's eyes. It is as if, being closed, everything is more beautiful, and you know why? Because he was born blind! So, observing you like this, he'll soon be thinking to kiss you and to pass his tongue in the grooves of your face. He looks at you into your eyes for an instant and it is as if he sees you without clothes, naked like a peach from which the skin has been gently removed and that is waiting only to be taken bites out of so to squirt all its juice in his mouth.

CONCETTINA- Really? (*with a dreamy and malicious look*)

LADY GIOVANNA- Yes, but before saying anything else turn off the light and turn on the candles. Dim light is important in certain situations. It is as if it brings us in an other period. The outlines of the body and face appear more interesting when they're in light and dark. Time loses its relentless role and seems not to be so important in each other's life.

CONCETTINA- How wonderful light and dark! (*she lights a candle talking with a dreamy voice*)

LADY GIOVANNA- So, I was saying, you look at him and after...maybe pulling him towards you (*pulling her*) you whisper something in his ear, for example: "Don't you know you have beautiful ears?". You must touch lightly

his earlobes with your lips, like this. Make him feel the fire of passion that's burning from the tip of your tongue. Ah, the tongue... What is the tongue if not a flame turned on in the fireplace of the mouth...or a very gentle strip of silk that wraps you up and leads you out of the world, in a muffled, soft silence.

CONCETTINA- (*dazed*) Really? (*with a turned on voice*)

LADY GIOVANNA- Yes, and also your neck is very sensual. (*she kisses her neck*) Can you feel it? Can you feel the pleasure that descends to the lower abdomen? (*touching with a hand her private parts*)

CONCETTINA- Miss, I feel myself...I can't explain.

LADY GIOVANNA- Let yourself go, dear, let me show you what beautiful things you should know. (*undressing Concettina and making her go in the bath tub*)

CONCETTINA- Miss. You know well how to conquer a man.

LADY GIOVANNA- You have to make them surrender. That is, surrender yourself. Let me caress your breasts. How wonderful. Your nipples are forest strawberries just picked that release love fragrance.

CONCETTINA- I want to...can I... Can I touch you too, Lady Giovanna?

LADY GIOVANNA- You want to touch these spheres? Go ahead, caress them. You can read the future with them.

Scene III

Lady Giovanna, Dario, Don Ruggero

(in a room of Lady Giovanna and Don Ruggero's palace)

DARIO – Has she gone away?

LADY GIOVANNA – Finally! I couldn't stand anymore those pantomimes. I knew from the first day that she was only waiting to get in my bed. So I made her happy. But it was too easy. I would've preferred to forcibly get her! Ah ah!

DARIO – Miss, you know how to read well people's vices.

LADY GIOVANNA – People are only slaves of social conventions. But it's enough to give them an opportunity and they lay bare themselves.

DARIO – You would once again bare this cornerstone of mine!

LADY GIOVANNA – Don't start, Dario. Or else I'll get an other one to keep my house and garden in order.

DARIO – Oh please, you hate me!

LADY GIOVANNA – I've got an idea! Or better, it's been in my mind since quite a bit. I believe now is the moment to take action on my intention. We must have a party, a magnificent, luxurious party, with Ruggero's money I can afford it. *(laughing)* And we must invite nice people. Especially we must invite Brunella and her insignificant husband.

DARIO – An other party? What do you have in mind this time?

LADY GIOVANNA – Have you seen Brunella's legs? What are between those legs? I want to know! I dream of kissing them since I've seen her cross them once, at the restaurant. I still have in my mind those muscle movements.

DARIO – But they are both recently married. I don't believe it will be easy to realize your intention. Just... Leave those two happy. Don't interfere in their life. There are many other people.

LADY GIOVANNA – We'll see, dear Dario. In the meantime go spread out that Saturday there will be a party at Lady Giovanna's villa. Tell everyone to share the message among the usual people we invite, in this way many will come. This time I want to overact!

DARIO – Alright, Miss, but maybe you should keep your head straight. Choose one person and that's it. Or keep what you already have: your

husband, who is such a good man. Don't you seem to exaggerate in front of God's eyes?

LADY GIOVANNA – Leave God in peace! This false moralism of yours disgusts me. Do you maybe see my husband around? Do you maybe see happy people? Couples who actually live for one another? Here we have become slaves of the flesh. Because the truth is flesh, and only flesh! Nothing else! And it's not a sin to indulge the body's desires. By now, people spend their days in watching asses, tits and pectorals on internet. Everybody craves for everybody. How can you calm down fiery spirits in a society so mutated? So, let's take action. May everyone search the pleasure that devours and annihilates him or her. By now we are all slaves. Let's stop this hypocrisy! I want to follow the instinct, the passion of my desire, once inconfessable. The moments of love serve to remind us that our condition tends to happiness! If I can't enjoy anything else, in this period, that I should at least enjoy the freedom of my impulses! We are born boys are girls, but we don't know what we will become, to which gender we will belong to at death. I'll enjoy everything I like. The woman of my life will always be the one I'll encounter tomorrow. And may Jehovah of the armies be my witness, I'll never repent! I'll let myself be carried away by every hot breath, by the vortex of passion that enchants me everytime I run across the grace of forms, the velvety voices that talk about everything to avoid talking about love. Ah those voices...! I would possess them all. It's like if my heart nurtures itself with the essence of other hearts to continue to beat. Dario, I'm a vampire!

DARIO – But you would never like to suck my blood...

LADY GIOVANNA – Again with this story? You are torturing my soul with your obsession. I'm not interested in you! Keep it in mind! I want to throw this body in gentle hands, not in your calluses disfigured by the thorns of roses. Have you noticed how ridiculous a person who tries to court without attracting the desired person seems?

DARIO – Once, though, you didn't think so. You were happy of my callous hands. What changed you so much, Lady Giovanna? Sometimes you seem another person!

LADY GIOVANNA – Happy, you think? Happiness is the illusion of being happy, unhappiness is the fear of being it. A little bit of fear helps you to live in the light, too much strangles you in the dark. Another person? Yes, I am another person! You think that one remains always the same? Everyday,

every hour, every minute, human beings change. Every experience, every thought, every sound, every dream is there ready to change you. We deceive ourselves to be the same for our whole life, instead we are other every moment. This is why we change idea so quickly: because the desires of what we were are not the ones of what we are anymore. If I were the same as old times, when everything seemed perfumed to me, also a puddle... C'mon, now, don't bother me anymore! Go do what I told you to!

DARIO – *(resentfully mumbling and stopping at the doorway)* Ah, bitch!

We were born like a white page and we die like a black one!

LADY GIOVANNA – What are you muttering, silly and dull servant?

(pause) C'mon, don't get angry, come back so I'll tell you about my vigorous flame Brunella. Don't mumble resentfully; in such circumstances, when someone gives you orders that you can't accept willingly, remember that you can be stopped to talk, never to think. You'll see, your moment will come, be calm. Not now, though, that I want you as a friend. C'mon, put down that tray and come here!

DARIO – *(reentering the room)* Alright, Lady Giovanna. Tell me everything. How did Brunella disturb you so much?

LADY GIOVANNA – *(joyfully)* Oh, she's a wonderful girl! I like her when she plays like a little saint, which she is a little actually...so...naive and inexperienced, I would say, with that noble like appearance in her eyes. But under that... she's a fire! I would recognize a fire burning that way even from hell. And she'll be mine! I want her for myself. I'll make her forget that stupid husband she has chosen.

DARIO – But he's a good man! You shouldn't forget this.

LADY GIOVANNA – He's a man without passion, and so he's futile, like everyone who uses philosophy and poetry for lazy considerations, instead of using them to seduce others and themselves. With his contrived ways he captured Brunella, not her fire. I'll see to put things at their place. Brunella will become an incandescent tongue that wants to burn everything except the wax of that husband's candelabra. She'll want to spend all the time that remains partying!

DARIO – Holy Mary! I'm going... *(exiting the room. Lady Giovanna remains alone. She smiles and turns on a cigarette)*

DARIO – *(coming back in the room a moment after)* Miss, your husband has arrived!

LADY GIOVANNA – Yes, he always appears when candelabras are mentioned...

DARIO – I'll go open.

LADY GIOVANNA – Bravo, unroll the carpet!

DON RUGGERO – (*outside the door*) Is it possible you always put the key behind?

DARIO – (*opening*) In this period it's better to double lock our things, Mister Ruggero.

DON RUGGERO – Indeed these are tough times. Better to be prudent. Bravo! Where's my wife?

DARIO – Where do you think she is? She's there waiting you, Mister.

DON RUGGERO – What a wonderful woman I married, right?

DARIO – Yes, she's a rose without thorns.

DON RUGGERO – That could never wither, I would add, my friend. (*Lady Giovanna entering*) Here, look how beautiful she is! She looks like a star!

LADY GIOVANNA – (*after watching him with a malicious smile*) You are right love, I'm a rose that doesn't wither. Come give me a kiss immediately or else the spell won't break.

DON RUGGERO – (*kissing and hugging her*) I missed you too much! I've done nothing but to think about you all the time. Oh love, oh passion, oh my life!

LADY GIOVANNA – I thought about you too, dear love! You can't imagine how much.

DON RUGGERO – What have I done to deserve a woman like you?

LADY GIOVANNA – Some sins you must have committed anyway, I would say.

DON RUGGERO – Doesn't seem so, because of my happiness.

LADY GIOVANNA – Our happiness, little sweet husband, heart of mine.

DON RUGGERO – Yes, ours! Dario, bring us a bottle of red wine, you choose. Full-bodied and zingy, please. It's the taste of love.

LADY GIOVANNA – What wonderful ideas you've got! I'm so happy you're here, it seems like a dream. Are you staying long?

DON RUGGERO – Unfortunately no. Already tomorrow I'm leaving again. I'm going to America to seduce new buyers.

LADY GIOVANNA – I hope they aren't female buyers! (*frowning*)

DON RUGGERO – No no, they're all men, honey!

LADY GIOVANNA – So you have changed taste? You seduce men now?
Ah ah!

DON RUGGERO – It's just to say, my love. You know I have eyes only for one woman, for my Venus.

LADY GIOVANNA – Thank God, Thank God! You better not become gay.

DON RUGGERO – Let's leave this stuff to others. And especially let's leave gay people alone, they already have lot's of shi... (*covering his mouth*) going on in their life.

DONNA GIOVANNA – Good, I love your irony.

DON RUGGERO – Honey... (*touching one leg in a provoking way*)

LADY GIOVANNA – I've got bad news, my chocolate sweetheart. You cannot imagine how sorry I am for this.

DON RUGGERO – Tell me, dear, what's the matter?

LADY GIOVANNA – Nothing to worry about. It has to do with this night of ours. You've been so lovely to bring that wine...and those blankets are there to surround us and to refresh us... But since yesterday I've got my period. You know I can't, in these circumstances, otherwise after I'll feel bad.

DON RUGGERO – Honey, don't mind, I understand perfectly, don't worry! You scared me. It doesn't matter. We will make love next time.

LADY GIOVANNA – I can't wait, dear.

DON RUGGERO – If only you knew how I feel the same, my life, my joy. Coming here, I couldn't stop thinking about us. About how much I would've loved you tonight. About how I would've had you. Again and again. I felt like driving crazy rethinking about your body. And now... It's better that you change the record otherwise it will burst!

LADY GIOVANNA – It would be a small blow... (*laughing*)

DON RUGGERO – Dear, you are offending me. You know that, deep down, there are very few passionate guys like me in this world...

LADY GIOVANNA – (*pretending to believe him*) Yes, dear, I know. I was joking. You are my vital nourishment. You are the most passionate man that I could ever desire.

DON RUGGERO – Sweetheart, I love you so much!

LADY GIOVANNA – Me too, honey! But now, c'mon, let's go to sleep, I'm so tired.

DON RUGGERO – Yes, my love, let's sleep! Tomorrow, before departing again, I'll tell you about all the people I've met in the middle east, about how

many things happened and how I got by. You'll see, you'll be proud of me. I'll tell you everything I'll do in America, and it will be all for us, for you!

LADY GIOVANNA – (*languidly stretching out on the sofa and saying, ironically*) The only thought arouses me.

ACT II

Scene I

Carolina, Alice, Lady Giovanna
(in a beauty shop)

CAROLINA – Do you know who's coming to get their hair done this morning, nay in fifteen minutes?

ALICE – No, who?

CAROLINA – Lady Giovanna!

ALICE – Ah, very well! What a character she is!

CAROLINA – Yes, a real enchantress! They say she dupes all of them.

ALICE – Look, never mind! She also caught sight of my husband. But I'll keep that fool close. And if I catch him playing the love-sick Romeo I'll send him to the devil immediately. Once, just once is enough I see him talking with Lady Giovanna and I'll dump him. I've already warned him. What beast men are!

CAROLINA – You've done very well. That's the right way!

ALICE – Yep! We are not all stupid, right?

CAROLINA – You're right! Ah, here, here she's coming. Don't turn! Pretend nothing's happening!

LADY GIOVANNA – *(entering)* There are people who make their life a gossip, other who make gossip their life. *(laughing)* There's always a good perfume in this shop, my friends.

CAROLINA – You are always kind, Lady Giovanna.

LADY GIOVANNA – I just say what I think. And only God knows if I love lying.

ALICE – Eh, God knows everything!

LADY GIOVANNA – Good thing only he knows. *(laughing maliciously)*

ALICE – *(trying to seem calm)* What do you mean? Do you have an unmentionable secret?

LADY GIOVANNA – Who doesn't! But anyway, in this case I was just saying.

ALICE – Ah!

LADY GIOVANNA – So, are you ready? We have much to do. I've planned a masquerade and I want my hair to be wonderful.

CAROLINA – You'll see what curls I'll prepare for you, Lady Giovanna. I've also prepared a bright color for you.

LADY GIOVANNA – Let's start then!

CAROLINA – Your hair is so soft. But what hair conditioner do you use, the saints one?

DONNA GIOVANNA – Oh, my husband brought it to me from a trip in the middle east. If you want I'll let you try. Or, let's do this. You'll pass by my house next week, if you can, so we'll take advantage also for a nice full body massage. What do you think?

CAROLINA – Alright, Lady Giovanna. After we'll schedule the appointment.

LADY GIOVANNA – Perfect! I can't wait to feel your hands on my back, my muscles are so contracted lately...

CAROLINA – I'll make you relax like never before.

LADY GIOVANNA – I hope, Carolina. I really damn need it.

ALICE – *(softly)* I would massage you, with a nice thingy...

LADY GIOVANNA – What, Alice?

ALICE – Ah nothing. I was saying that I can come to massage you too, if Carolina doesn't have time.

LADY GIOVANNA – Superb! You know it's a really good idea? You come, c'mon! Nay, I care! I'm really curious to test you.

ALICE – *(embarrassed and surprised)* But are you sure? I was just saying. Carolina is much better and more expert than me.

LADY GIOVANNA – Alice, it's done. You'll come, if you don't mind, obviously. Let's do Thursday at evening time, what do you think?

ALICE – Alright, Lady Giovanna. I'll come at about seven. But...

LADY GIOVANNA – No but! It's perfect. I'll make you find what's necessary and we'll make it well done.

ALICE – Perfect, then, see you Thursday!

LADY GIOVANNA – It makes me happy! But now let's think about my hair. Carolina, I want to change my hair color. What did you say before, about a dye you've prepared just for me? How is it, clear or dark? Which one looks better on me?

CAROLINA – *(laughing)* Well, to be honest, and I'll tell you also against my own interest, sometimes we should go back to our natural color. Your basic chestnut hair is so beautiful that it always seems a shame to cover it with other colors, although for you we use the best and everything looks good on you...

LADY GIOVANNA – Maybe I should! You're right, but don't you find it so hard to show the world your real hair color?

CAROLINA – Also this is true. Also because soon weed shows up, unfortunately...

LADY GIOVANNA – I see we understand each other very well, honey.
(making a provocative look)

CAROLINA – We wouldn't be women, otherwise.

LADY GIOVANNA – And are we ? *(guffawing)*

CAROLINA – Why? What are we?

LADY GIOVANNA – I think sometimes there's such confusion between genders...

ALICE – *(who got distracted for eavesdropping)* Here we go, I knew it, my hair straightener has burnt... Not one thing goes well!

LADY GIOVANNA – *(ironically)* Yep, in this we are certainly women.

Scene II

Lady Giovanna, Dario

(in Don Ruggero and Donna Giovanna's living room)

LADY GIOVANNA – She fell for it like a stewed pair. I can't wait to bare her body. She doesn't even imagine what's waiting for her. Alice thinks I'm interested in that pathetic guy she's dragging...and instead... He's the one who should be worried...

DARIO – My Miss, I really don't think that that Alice is interested in such profusions. She's obsessed with her husband and this might actually mean something.

LADY GIOVANNA – Yes, it means that whatever she's jealous for her husband doing, she really wants to do it.

DARIO – Cheating, you mean?

LADY GIOVANNA – No, making love with women only like men know how to! Using the thingy.

DARIO – Are you saying she's lesbian?

LADY GIOVANNA – She's one of those who wants to be a him. *Un hombre sin nombre!* *(laughing)* Sex is something different from gender: you can be a man inside and a woman outside, or vice versa.

DARIO – Holy Mary, you are scaring me. A woman cannot be different from what she appears to be.

LADY GIOVANNA – Only because you don't even imagine how many boyish girls like her exist. Same way, there are around many boys that would like to be a her...

DARIO – That's it, Miss, I don't wanna know anything else! The images you are able to turn on in my mind when you say these things make me feel terrified. But why do you think about all of this? The world you are talking about hardly exists, it's much more only in your fantasy. I would recommend you to let it go. I don't want you to torment your soul this way.

LADY GIOVANNA – Yeah, Dario, whatever. Now, be very patient and go warn Brunella that Saturday there will be a party. We should never waste time, but strike while the iron is hot. And I feel like a volcano, inside me I feel that hell is gradually burning my pale flesh.

DARIO – I'll immediately warn Brunella. *(going out)*

LADY GIOVANNA – *(talking to herself)* Yes, warn her. Tell her that the devil soon will visit her. That it will take her body and soul. Anyhow, soon or later the time will come when we'll realize to be nothing, actually. What is the man in front of the universe, the infinity of time? What's the need of what we all do, if it remains confined in this world which is a dot of dust? We are less than dust, and even so we dupe ourselves that our life serves something important, that it has an aim, a purpose. No, the only purpose is the end, that follows an hour of agony on a desolated earth, falling prey to the most awful doubts, never really content of what we have. Ready to do anything just for a moment of pleasure. Afraid that, after what we call life, our remains won't exist anymore, that there won't be any thoughts in our skull to torment us. Yes, warn her! Warn her that I've decided to put an end to her existence. Life is nothing but a river destined to dry itself, a source kept luxuriant for a few years by the rain that falls from our own eyes.

Scene III

Brunella, Dario

(while Dario is going to Brunella's house to invite her to the dance party, they meet each other on the way)

DARIO – I'm happy to see you, Miss Brunella. I was just coming to invite you to a party at Lady Giovanna's house.

BRUNELLA – A party? What party? A lot of time really passed by since my last carefree day. I don't mind the idea!

DARIO – It will be a masquerade. Lady Giovanna personally asked me to invite you.

BRUNELLA – Oh yes, really? And when?

DARIO – Next Saturday. You should come disguised without the phone. It's the evening rule. A return to the old days. You know how Lady Giovanna is, she likes these odd things. I don't think it will be very successful.

BRUNELLA – I hope it will be instead! I'll come anyway with pleasure. Tell Lady Giovanna that I won't miss it. Can I also bring my husband?

DARIO – Do what you prefer. There's no prohibition for that.

BRUNELLA – He doesn't really like these frivolous meetings, to say the truth. Maybe it's better I come alone. Anyway, I'll ask him. Or maybe not. We'll see.

DARIO – Thanks, then. See you Saturday, with or without your husband. But if you want some advise, bring also the candelabra.

BRUNELLA – Pardon, what are you saying?

DARIO – Ehm ehm, I wanted to say, that handsom husband of yours.

BRUNELLA – Ah, I understand yes, I believe he'll come. *(smiling)* See you soon then.

DARIO – Bye bye! Ah, Miss Brunella, there's an other thing I wanted to tell you, I can't be quiet, but you must promise me to not tell anyone about this. Promise?

BRUNELLA – *(becoming curious)* Yeah, sure... Tell me, I promise, and I wouldn't imagine. What happened?

DARIO – It's about Lady Giovanna. I must tell you to... *(hesitating a moment)* to be very careful with that woman.

BRUNELLA – Why?

DARIO – She's the devil! She makes herself pass off as an angel, but she always has other aims. Her heart is dark and gloomy like that one of a sardanapalus, and she destroys everything she touches. She doesn't care about anyone in the world, maybe not even about herself. She seems to want to annihilate everything, and never regrets. Believe me, Brunella, Lady Giovanna is... the Antichrist!

BRUNELLA – What are you talking about? I think you are really exaggerating, dear Dario. How can you talk this way about the one who has been giving you food for so many years, and moreover at her house? You're a real hypocrite! Or are you rather blinded by a sort of envy, jealousy?...

DARIO – I know, she's not well. But it's the truth! And maybe you should not judge much the hypocrite, how much you judge who keeps quiet about hypocrisy! I would go, if I could only move away from all this. It's not the money that keeps me here, it's not love. It's a force I can't explain, sweet and scary at the same time. She's a woman from which it's not easy to get rid of, although she's not the one to esteem and follow. By now inside her there's only the will to satisfy her own instincts. And to do it she's ready for everything. Her victims are already dozens, men and women, there's no difference, if not the one connected to her uncontrolled whims. Don't be surprised what I'm talking about, Brunella, instead believe me (*with a heartfelt tone*). This is only one thousandth of the truth. If I told you about her wrongdoings, you would run away horrified with your legs in the air! If I were a painter I would paint her real face, the one only I can see. Remember the story of that libertine who was eternally young, while his portrait became older, and became monstrous like his soul? Well, a similar thing happens with her.

BRUNELLA – (*listening with a grave expression but without appearing particularly shaken*) I understand. I'll be careful. But especially for this I'm coming to the party. I'm too curious to find out what's hidden under Lady Giovanna's clothes. One thing is certain, Dario: in this world you are never appreciated. If you are stupid they'll humiliate you, if you're wise they'll hate you, if you're beautiful they'll kill you, and nor the virtues nor the weaknesses of a woman are ever forgiven. Men are blind of rage for being born as monsters, for not being capable to be loved and to love themselves. You say that this is the truth. I'm afraid instead that the truth is only a big lie!

DARIO – Whatever. I'm afraid for you, because I know that in a pure heart a wicked person does more damage than a hailstorm in a vineyard. Anyway, do what you want but don't say to me after that I didn't warn you.

BRUNELLA – I won't say it!

Scene IV

Lady Giovanna, Alice, Dario
(knocking on the door)

DARIO – I'll open, it should be Alice.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(thinking on her own)* An other prey in my trap. I'll keep this afternoon's most beautiful scenes in the room of memories, as supplies for scarce days.

ALICE – *(entering)* May I come in? Good evening. Is Lady Giovanna here?

DARIO – She's waiting for you.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(entering the entrance hall)* Here you are, dear. How are you?

ALICE – Never been better, Lady Giovanna. I'm ready to massage you.

LADY GIOVANNA – I'm not asking anything but this.

DARIO – *(a little jealous)* If you want help, for anything, don't hesitate to call. *(exiting)*

LADY GIOVANNA – I don't believe we'll need you, Dario, but we'll keep it in mind.

ALICE – So what do we do, wanna start?

DONNA GIOVANNA – How impatient you are, Alice. *(pointing out with a vague gesture a tray and some cups ready on a table)* First let me offer you some cookies and a revitalizing infusion with the taste of wild pine leaves, it will give you energy.

ALICE – Thanks. I accept it with pleasure. *(taking a cookie. They both sit near the small table)*

LADY GIOVANNA – So what kind of oil you've brought for me? Can you soothe the heat of my skin, that is inflamed even by the caresses of spring wind? Or will you turn on the coldness of my heart, that only the most able hands make beat with the emotion of yore?

ALICE – *(a little bewitched by Lady Giovanna's words)* I've brought you an oil that can't be compared to others. It's called Sospiro, it releases a neverending warmth and it has a perfume of wild flowers that stuns the senses.

LADY GIOVANNA – How wonderful! What do you think of these cookies? They come from Olanda and it seems they have extraordinary characteristics...

ALICE – So that's the feeling of this slight relaxation...

LADY GIOVANNA – Maybe, they more or less have these side effects.

ALICE – *(after a moment of silence in which she seems as absorbed)*

Strange images are passing by in my head. They don't frighten me, rather, they are images that seem to have always been there, but only now they decided to show up. What a strange situation. Thanks for offering me these prodigious cookies. I've never tried anything so exciting in my life.

LADY GIOVANNA – Sometimes we don't want our desires to show up, to see them. But you've said well. They are there waiting. They are only waiting for us to lower for a moment our guard to show themselves off, to model in front of us, to chase themselves in our blood like joyful children. Desires are the most beautiful and dangerous things we have.

ALICE – Do you mind if I take an other cookie?

LADY GIOVANNA – Go on, serve yourself, Alice. In the meantime I'll go lie down on the bed in my room. I'll wait for you there. Bring everything needed.

ALICE – Get comfortable, Miss. I'll be there immediately.

Scene V

Dario, Lady Giovanna

DARIO – How did it go?

LADY GIOVANNA – How do you think it went? I finished putting accidentally a hand between her legs and she immediately got undressed...

DARIO – A hell of a woman!

LADY GIOVANNA – Women don't think with the heart, dear Dario, but with emotions.

DARIO – We think instead with the...

LADY GIOVANNA – Don't be gross.

DARIO – I wanted to say that we men use it instead, the heart I mean...

LADY GIOVANNA – Yeah, you follow its beat to deceive yourself to not waste time.

DARIO – But was it really so easy?

LADY GIOVANNA – She thought I offered her some doped cookies and she immediately let herself go. When she left she told me those cookies were a piece of mischief. Instead she only ate some simple cookies with honey. But to have something or someone to blame is always comfortable, when a disturbing change bursts into our life. She expressed herself, for once. But she'll never get what she really wants. Alice is too bounded to the conventions of her small world, or who knows: maybe this experience opened her a new path. Maybe she'll thank me one day. For now I only know that she'll think about me night and day, that I'll be inside her like no man has been. I could call her in a few days and she would come back with her perfumed essences to massage me well, although now she believes to hate me because I overturned her smallest certainties. I told you she had these kind of desires. What do you think, is Lady Giovanna ever wrong?

DARIO – Miss, but you ruin people like this! That poor woman has a husband. Don't you think you harmed her? At least up to today she had her certainties, even if minimal.

LADY GIOVANNA – Her illusions, you mean. Certainties based on the most deepest lies, that create frustration and agitation in her, have accumulated lies inside herself since adolescence. Do you think a person can be happy, this way? Happiness, Dario, has to be pursued, built, nobody can be happy without fighting. You can find it in the end of a path of growth, and

everyone can make it, independently from which point you start. A farmer, a worker, a prince, the son of a rich merchant, everyone has to fulfill that journey, if they hope to be happy one day, at least considering how much this distorted and crazy world let's us be. Here the only thing that counts is to be coherent to our own incoherence. My challenge is towards poetry, philosophy, history, God. I know I can never win, but also that I can never lose.

DARIO – I only know that sometimes, for some people, it's better to remain in their own illusion instead of understanding what you call as truth: some discoveries, about ourselves or about the world, can distance ourselves from everybody and everything.

LADY GIOVANNA – Who knows, maybe you are right, moronic butler.

DARIO – Always kind, my lady.

LADY GIOVANNA – You know I like joking.

DARIO – I only know that sometimes I just can't understand you.

LADY GIOVANNA – And does this surprise you? We don't understand ourselves, how do you think you can understand others?

DARIO – I'll go prepare dinner, it's better.

LADY GIOVANNA – Great, beat a few eggs with Marsala for me.

ACT III

Scene I

Lady Giovanna, Concettina, Dario, Arturo, Brunella
(Lady Giovanna's house, masquerade)

ARTURO – What remarkable paintings. Do you think they're original?

BRUNELLA – I think so, lovely husband. These are wealthy people.

ARTURO – And yet you just can't understand from where all this money comes from. I think Lady Giovanna's husband is involved in a shady deal of which nobody knows about. He's always around to travel, and we never knew what his job really is.

BRUNELLA – People are coming, let's put on our masks. That one seems certainly Ignazio Riva, for how he moves. So, you think things are this way? I've never thought about it.

ARTURO – Yes, but now be quiet, the lady is entering.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(going near Arturo and Brunella with a fan in her hands)* Here you go. I've recognized you, half masks! I'm happy to see you. You are an adorable couple. Close and respectable couples like these are so rare, these days.

ARTURO – Thank you very much, Lady Giovanna. You are very kind.

BRUNELLA – Yes, really kind!

LADY GIOVANNA – Come sit down at your table, please.

BRUNELLA – With pleasure.

LADY GIOVANNA – Sit down here, one in front of the other. *(pointing out the available seats at a round table. Pouring to the three of them some wine and sitting down afterwards)*

ARTURO – I was watching your paintings, Lady Giovanna. I was asking myself, if you don't mind my asking, if they're authentic.

LADY GIOVANNA – Oh no, they are false like love, illusory like passion!

BRUNELLA – What a refined definition! *(laughing and feeling amused)*

ARTURO – I don't believe that love is ever a falsity. Love is the most important feeling, for us humans.

LADY GIOVANNA – Love, dear Arturo, is not only one feeling, it's multiple feelings. It's the sea of feelings, it contains all of them!

BRUNELLA – *(saying to herself)* What a spiritual depth in these words.

ARTURO – Anyway, there is nothing false in love, this is for sure! At least not in a genuine love like ours. *(looking at Brunella smiling)*

LADY GIOVANNA – Don't get angry, dear Arturo. Deep down, everyone sees love as they want. For example I see it as an agitated stream that beats on a rock trying to penetrate it, and it doesn't stop until it has smoothed it, opened it, went through it. *(gently putting her hand on Brunella's leg)*

BRUNELLA – *(caught by a feeling of unexpected arousal)*

Yes, love has different shades and maybe it shouldn't be defined.

ARTURO – I agree, honey!

LADY GIOVANNA – *(bringing her hand towards Brunella's groin)* Yes, it's better not to define. But if we want to, we can say that love is the point of connection between hell and paradise. *(touching her private parts)*

BRUNELLA – *(bringing towards her trembling lips a piece of cake)* I like this way of yours of talking about love.

ARTURO – *(standing up visibly annoyed, although not noticing the attention of Lady Giovanna towards his wife)* You women, always ready to form a coalition with your talks. It's one of the few things I find really irritating.

BRUNELLA – Dear, are you crazy?

ARTURO – Yes, I'm crazy! You know what I tell you? I'm going back home. You can stay, if you want. I'm tired and wouldn't risk to say further nonsense. My apologies, Lady Giovanna.

LADY GIOVANNA – Don't worry, Arturo. I understand very well. Sometimes we women are accomplices a little too much.

BRUNELLA – Dear, don't go, stay, please!

ARTURO – No, no really! I'm leaving. You stay. I'm going to relax, it has been a tiring week.

BRUNELLA – Maybe I should also go...

LADY GIOVANNA – Do what you prefer, dear Brunella.

BRUNELLA – Arturo, are you sure you don't mind if I stay a little longer?

ARTURO – Not at all, my dear. See you tomorrow morning. I'll already be in Morpheus arms in twenty minutes.

BRUNELLA – Alright, dear. See you later, then.

ARTURO – Bye bye, Lady Giovanna. And sorry for the impatience. I never drink wine and I believe that that half cup made my head spin.

LADY GIOVANNA – No problem! Don't feel uncomfortable, Arturo, nothing happened.

ARTURO – Good night!

BRUNELLA – Good night honey!

LADY GIOVANNA – Good night!

BRUNELLA – *(watching her husband going out)* He's gone. My husband has such a very little sociable personality...

LADY GIOVANNA – Some more wine?

BRUNELLA – I don't think I should... I feel a little embarrassed.

LADY GIOVANNA – Taste this, and try only to relax yourself. *(offering her again the cup and putting one hand between her legs, Brunella doesn't seem embarrassed)*

BRUNELLA – And... if we go to your bed?

LADY GIOVANNA – I'll give you a relaxing massage...

BRUNELLA – Yes, I really need it!

Scene II

Dario, Lady Giovanna
(*Lady Giovanna's house*)

DARIO – My lady, have you gone crazy? Brunella went away at dawn. And what if the husband suspects anything? This way you are risking to put yourself in trouble.

LADY GIOVANNA – (*enthusiastic*) What a woman! It has been the most passionate night of these last years. I'm still so turned on that I could also think about you...

DARIO – (*ironically*) But why are you tormenting me?

LADY GIOVANNA – (*laughing*) You really make me laugh, dear little Dario.

DARIO – I only feel like crying. Anyhow, if you are happy...

LADY GIOVANNA – I'll go relax in my room. If Concettina comes tell her to bring the carpets to the laundromat.

DARIO – Alright, Miss, sleep well.

LADY GIOVANNA – Thanks, see you later.

DARIO – See you later.

Scene III

Brunella, Arturo

(Arturo and Brunella's house)

BRUNELLA – *(with a long face)* Hello.

ARTURO – Welcome back. What's the matter? You look dull.

BRUNELLA – It's nothing. I'm a little tired.

ARTURO – I see, it's seven o'clock in the morning. Is it possible you've danced until now?

BRUNELLA – Actually, I got sleepy and went to lie down a little.

ARTURO – I understand. Well done.

BRUNELLA – Arturo, do you love me?

ARTURO – Certainly I love you. Why are you asking me?

BRUNELLA – Just wanted to ask.

ARTURO – Relax, c'mon, you'll see you'll feel better. You still must be a little drunk.

BRUNELLA – Indeed yes, I feel dizzy.

ARTURO – How much have you drunken?

BRUNELLA – I don't know, I don't know, *(running her fingers through her hair)*

ARTURO – Damn me when I accepted to go to that party.

BRUNELLA – You are right, dear. It would've been better not to go.

ARTURO – That woman seems so ambiguous. I can't decode her. Not for what she says but for how she says it. She could enchant also the devil.

BRUNELLA – I'm going to sleep, honey. See you later. Close the curtains, please. I want to stay in the dark.

ARTURO – I understand, sweetheart. You'll recover your strength.

Scene IV

Lady Giovanna, Arturo, Dario
(Don Ruggero and Lady Giovanna's house)

ARTURO – Good evening, Lady Giovanna. I have to talk to you.

LADY GIOVANNA – Tell me, Arturo, what's the matter?

ARTURO – It's three days that Brunella is not the same anymore and I can't understand what happened to her. Since she's come here she's not herself anymore. She's blown out like a candle under the rain.

LADY GIOVANNA – I'm sorry, but I believe that in reality the problem has other roots, that are more distant.

ARTURO – What do you mean?

LADY GIOVANNA – I mean that Brunella doesn't love you, dear Arturo. Not because she loves someone else, but because she wants to be alone. The other evening she opened herself to me and confessed everything, and I believe it was the first time she's ever talked about it to someone. After, maybe, she felt guilty. She suddenly got angry and asked me if she could lie down on my bed.

ARTURO – *(looking shocked)* What are you talking about?

LADY GIOVANNA – Unfortunately it's true. Remember that we were talking about what love was? After you went away, Brunella started to talk about herself, about you, because, as she says, she believes I'm a person able to understand. She told me that the love for you has only been a farse. That she has realized, already since a while, to not love you at all. She wants to divorce, but she's very sorry for you.

ARTURO – Sorry for me? Well, if it's that what she wants, then she may do as she pleases. Certainly I'm not gonna be the one to stop her. May she go to hell! And may her soul be doomed worse than mine! Sorry, Lady Giovanna, I'm leaving, good bye.

LADY GIOVANNA – Good bye. Ah... Arturo! *(calling him. Exiting from the door, Arturo turns around towards Lady Giovanna, stumbling on a carpet and falling down the stairs)*

LADY GIOVANNA – He's stumbled! Dario, Dario, run here!

DARIO – *(scared)* Holy Mary, what was it?

LADY GIOVANNA – Arturo fell down the stairs, run to see what happened to him!

DARIO – *(exiting from the door, noise of steps next to the stairs and from there his voice)* Oh Christ, Lady Giovanna, Mr Arturo died! Mr Arturo died!

LADY GIOVANNA – *(saying to herself)* Well, soon or later he had to die anyway.

Scene V

Dario, Lady Giovanna

(on the street, coming back from Arturo's funeral)

DARIO – This funeral has been a torture.

LADY GIOVANNA – Be patient, Dario, only a fool could die like this. And so, now may he go to hell. He didn't know how to take care neither of his wife nor his life. Just like an atrocious goat. A useless being, like all men.

DARIO – Miss, what are you talking about?

LADY GIOVANNA – I mean that he could've payed more attention to everything he was doing, instead... only impetus and fury.

DARIO – Leave him in peace, have mercy at least on dead people!

LADY GIOVANNA – Oh no, now you want to make me feel sad with pity. Instead, you know what I tell you? Go to the cemetery, since they haven't yet buried your Arturo, you'll find him in the mortuary: tell him that I'll be waiting for him tomorrow evening for dinner, I want him at my house, I've got to tell him in his face that he's an idiot! Go ahead, run!

DARIO – What are you talking about Lady Giovanna? Are you alright?

LADY GIOVANNA – If you don't wanna go to the cemetery, repeat now, here, loudly what I've told you. I'm not joking. Repeat what I've said. Here you go, pretend that statue is Arturo's corpse...

DARIO – Do you really mean it?

LADY GIOVANNA – Say it now or I'll fire you on the spot!

DARIO – *(directing himself towards the statue with a daunted smile)*

Illustrious Don Arturo, please, would you like to come for dinner on Sunday at our place? *(to these words, you can hear Arturo's voice-over saying: "I'll come! Certainly I'll come!")*

DARIO – Have you heard?

LADY GIOVANNA – What?

DARIO – What do you mean, what? That voice! *(making the sign of the cross)*

LADY GIOVANNA – But what voice? You are starting to freak out.

DARIO – Only God knows if it was suggestion.

LADY GIOVANNA – Man without balls. Let's end this, Dario. I'm in the mood for new and fun things, we cannot cry forever. I want to get drunk with

red wine and eat roasted sausages, read poems and lugubrious stories.
(*assailed by a sudden quiver of joy*) C'mon, let's go home. Life is a wonderful thing!

DARIO – (*talking to himself*) Christ give me the force, keeping up with her is impossible. This hell of a woman would also drive a saint crazy.

LADY GIOVANNA – Wait wait, though, first I want to take a trip to the casino. (*kicking a plastic skull left on the street*) It can be an opportunity to know interesting people, like a man, immeasurably rich in spirit and in rubles, that with words would make me go crazy and would make me forget the ugly things of life. I would like a different world, Dario, a world full of intriguing and engaging people. The worst thing for me is boredom, in which I'm drowning day by day, like a black hole in which I could fatally fall. Feeling alive shakes me more than the awareness of having to die. Nobody will ever understand the desire to live I have inside. But c'mon, take out that cash. Let's have a go at the roulette.

DARIO – But I haven't got a penny, my lady, I'm not sure I'll make it to the end of the month.

LADY GIOVANNA – Take out what you got in your pocket, c'mon!

DARIO – (*feeling timorous*) But... are you sure?

LADY GIOVANNA – Very sure, jackass!

DARIO – Alright. May God help us!

LADY GIOVANNA – Are you still mentioning God? Leave him alone, 'cause anyway here if we don't help ourselves nobody will. Can't you understand that there's no God? Once we've lost this pelt, only the memory of us will remain. And when all those who remember us will disappear, there will be the void. If there was a God above you would see him! Although, I understand that, thinking that God does exist, in some situations, can make us feel better.

DARIO – No, Lady Giovanna, you know what I think about this, I've got my firm beliefs. God does exist, but I have to say that to have created men, he must've been necessarily an awful gambler.

LADY GIOVANNA – Finally you're saying something reasonable. See, being close to me is good for you? Syphilitic goat.

DARIO – I hope!

LADY GIOVANNA – Dario, if you blaspheme your God now I'll give you twice of what you borrowed me.

DARIO – Lady Giovanna, can't you see what you're saying? You would give me money just for the sake of hearing me blaspheme?

LADY GIOVANNA – What a better use on money if not satisfying some whims?

DARIO – You are crazy or shocked, may God have mercy on you!

LADY GIOVANNA – He would certainly have mercy on you, your merciful God! If I were you I would spit on your miserable pleas.

Scene VI

Dario, Lady Giovanna, GB

(in Don Ruggero and Lady Giovanna's living room)

LADY GIOVANNA – Dear GB, what a fortune to have met you. You are very kind to support me, when I've lost the few coins I had with me.

GB – Don't mind, Miss, it's the least I can do. Thanks to you for having allowed me to help you, and especially thanks for inviting me to drink something at your house.

LADY GIOVANNA – Vi verso del Porto. It's a wine so mild and deceptive *(pouring the wine in a glass and secretly dropping a sleeping pill)*

GB – The Porto is a delicious wine, it's so refined.

LADY GIOVANNA – Dario, you go to sleep too! See you tomorrow morning at eight!

DARIO – *(feeling jealous)* Miss, but I still have many things to do here.

LADY GIOVANNA – Don't worry! Enjoy your sleep. And remember that the time you seem to waste is always gained time. Take this *(giving back the money)* and sleep well. You could dream your love, the greatest love is the one that appears at night in your dreams. It's a sin that it's useless to follow it, but a pleasant dream makes life longer.

DARIO – Alright, Miss, see you tomorrow. Indeed I want to surrender myself to a beautiful dream, a dream that's never scary. Because we should never be afraid of our dreams, but only of who doesn't want to make us dream. Good night, Lady Giovanna. Good night, Sir.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(ironically)* Are you reading a play?

DARIO – No, I'm writing one!

LADY GIOVANNA – *(surprised)* Are you serious?

DARIO – No! *(smiling)* Good night!

LADY GIOVANNA – Good night! *(left alone with GB)* This man sometimes surprises me in a good way. Is he going nuts? I hope! *(smiling)* And now let's think about ourselves... Finally alone! *(watching the guest with a bewitched look)*

GB – I couldn't wait!

LADY GIOVANNA – Dear GB, I confess you that you are not at all indifferent to me. But I must restate that I'm a married woman. Unfortunately

only after marriage I understood that if you want to be happy with who you love you must only marry him with the heart. Even with our own shadow we celebrate a sad and unfortunately permanent wedding. Sexual impulses must be indulged, but love and sex are two different things and only sometimes they are hand in hand.

GB – Also you aren't at all indifferent to me. My soul vibrated since the moment I've seen you enter the casino. You are right. The only chains that are able to annihilate us are those of the heart. *(barely restraining a yawn)*

LADY GIOVANNA – *(thoughtful. Saying to herself)* The soul? Who knows anything about it? We don't have but the body. The soul is only an invention, dust of cross! *(turning after to GB)* I'm very confused, lately. My husband is always traveling and I'm afraid he's betraying me. When he returns he always finds an unlikely excuse to not stay with me... You understand? Betraying who you love is like betraying yourself! *(pretending to cry)* But it's since when I was young that he's like this. He says that all the time he spends away from me, he uses it to build something for us. So what's the use of youth and strength, if we lose them to build consolations of an old age that, if it will be granted to us, will only be a well of regrets, of lost opportunities?

We should stop crying for what we haven't done and try to rejoice for what we are about to do, here and now.

GB – If you were mine, I wouldn't move from home not even a moment.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(ironically)* Oh, what happiness! Though it's also true, dear GB, that the perfect couple is the one which the more one is faraway from the other, the more closer they feel.

GB – *(going suddenly close to the lady)* Lady Giovanna, you make my chest burn.

LADY GIOVANNA – Please, don't do this. Although my husband seems not to deserve my devotion, I respect bonds. Staying close to you is not easy.

Between a man and a woman there can be friendship only if they don't feel mutual attraction, and this doesn't seem the case. I must remind myself that I'm married, this evening. Do you think that... *(bursting desperately in tears)*

GB – *(becoming serious)* What's bothering you? Tell me, please. *(not being able to stop yawning)*

LADY GIOVANNA – No, no, it doesn't matter.

GB – Dear, at least let me be informed of what's making you suffer.

LADY GIOVANNA – It's something too sleazy.

GB – Please, you can count on my discretion, and on my support, if you want.

LADY GIOVANNA – A few days ago he informed me he that he lost the house and the lands by gambling. That's why I've come to the casino, this evening, and I've lost everything. But destiny has sent me to you...

GB – *(like a pimp)* Yes, a sixth sense was telling me that I was going to meet a treasure.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(ironically)* me too... *(bursting in tears again)*

GB – Come here. *(hugging her)*

LADY GIOVANNA – To reclaim this house I'll need... *(whispering something in his ear)*

GB – It's an important amount, indeed.

LADY GIOVANNA – I know, it's true. But I must find it. I can't lose my house, and especially my dignity.

GB – *(after thinking a while)* Dear, I've decided. I'll offer you a loan. I can afford it, and I would earn the pleasure to see you lifted from this stress.

LADY GIOVANNA – Would you really do this for me? *(drying her eyes a bit, then crying again covering her face with her hands)* But... I feel...

GB – How do you feel? *(still yawning)*

LADY GIOVANNA – I feel like a bad woman to think that you'll give me money. You barely know me...

GB – My dear, the real bad woman is the one who, and not in the sexual field, screws his neighbour for the pure pleasure to hurt him! You are an angel. *(hugging her tightly. After, between one yawn and an other, he signs a check and hands it to her)*

LADY GIOVANNA – *(taking the check)* You are a man really exceptional, GB. You know very well the womens heart, our weakness, and you are generous like a gentleman of old times. How will I resist your charm, at this point? I don't know...

GB – *(lighting up his face)* Then come in these arms. It will be a night you won't forget. *(an other enormous yawn)*

LADY GIOVANNA – Oh yes, GB, *(hugging him tightly)* it will be our secret, only ours. Come, *(taking his hand, while he continues to yawn)* let's go there.

Scene VII

Lady Giovanna, GB
(Lady Giovanna's bedroom)

GB – *(waking up wrapped up in blankets, half-naked, close to Lady Giovanna)* Ah, what a good night's sleep!

LADY GIOVANNA – Good morning, dear. I slept well too. I was in paradise, last night. And you were right: I won't forget. It's true that we must never regret our choices, rather than how we live the consequences. It's daytime, in the morning dream starts, reality disperses itself. Shadows reappear punctual at sunrise.

GB – *(flattered, but a little perplexed. He doesn't remember, since making love to Lady Giovanna didn't happen)* We got on well, right?

LADY GIOVANNA – Marvellously! I believe I have given you the best side of me. The vices, virtues, truth, falseness, love, hate... Everything is inside us. It's up to us to choose what to put out.

GB – *(feeling pleased)* Oh yes, what a night! A woman like you would make the devil forget it has horns.

LADY GIOVANNA – I'm sorry, dear, but you must go away. Soon that gossip of Dario will start working, and you can understand that a woman in my position cannot be found with a friend at home at this time.

GB – Certainly, my dear! You are right! I'll go away immediately. One last kiss. *(trying to kiss her on the lips, but she lowers her head and is kissed on her hair)*

LADY GIOVANNA – Don't forget me, GB.

GB – Never! I swear, on the night and day, on the moon and the sea, on...

LADY GIOVANNA – *(interrupting him)* Yes yes, I swear too! But now go!

GB – Farewell! *(leaving with his clothes still in his hands)*

LADY GIOVANNA – *(out loud, with a passionate tone)* Farewell, generous lover... *(after saying to herself)* Farewell complete syphilitic idiot, and thanks for the money. Sucker! How can men be so idiot? How can they believe everything? They think they can possess us and instead they are only some clumsy puppets in our hands. They're able to commit suicide to make us smile. Instinct is their problem. They would like to save us and dominate us at the same time. And instead they aren't able to do neither one nor the

other, betrayed by their own muscles. They have created a society that suits them and that has revolted against them. And, today, what do they do? They spend their day writing pathetic messages on their computers and phones to girls and women that are a little too cunning, that choose the best to sleep with and dupe all the others, maybe after squeezing them a little.

The world they wanted got out of hand, women are different and this creates in them such a dazzling frustration to push them to the most extreme reactions. Sex burns the body and spirit more than poetry, and it's in our hands. The world is in our hands. For you, dear morons, only illusions are left, but if necessary we'll know how to take away also them from you.

ACT I V

Scene I

Brunella

(in her bedroom)

BRUNELLA – *(laying down on her bed)* When you believe that the moment to put your life, oppressed by pain, to an end has arrived, do you think it's possible to rise again even before dying. Can it be true? My husband is not there anymore. Has he ever been mine? My life is not mine anymore. Has it ever been? What is truly ours? Are these walls that never talk to us or smile to us really ours? and that could never follow us if we decide to move? Are the objects that inhabit them, that we've bought or stolen and amassed with greed, to illude ourselves to possess something ours? Objects that never argue nor rejoice with us when we feel happy, and that don't dry our eyes when they're full of tears. Does the air that we breathe probably belong to us? that in an instant escapes from our lungs, ready to be breathed by an other, who knows who, without conserving any odor of us, any inner secret, any trace. Are the bodies that for a day or for an hour, have merged with us and the world ours? Or the flesh, that we take care of day after day and that we miserably see dry out and wither, without being able to oppose the slightest resistance? Rich and poor, both will lose their carcass, and the soul will remain naked and cold, alone, with the hope of a warm shelter for eternity. This is why ghosts occupy houses, because they're cold. They're afraid of the wind, that would wipe them out who knows where, it would make them go mad. They need a covered, safe, place where to recreate a minimum of consistency, a poor sense of reality. Only dreams, confused images of the night, voices that we don't distinguish anymore belong to us. What has remained of all the past populations? Of the grand Rome and of the egyptian art? Where are Nero and Cleopatra, Dante and Virgilio, Caius and Sempronius? Where will the soul of Arturo be in this deranged moment of anguish and fear? The soul, yes, the soul must be somewhere. It must necessarily exist. Maybe it's here, in front of me, and is watching me, and is blaming me for betraying it. *(she gets up from the bed and addresses herself to an imaginary interlocutor)* Oh, my Arturo, forgive me! I don't know how

all this has happened. The absence of who we love is not solitude, it's ablation! Passion, sex, there's something unavoidable in all this, something that attracts you fatally towards the light (*going towards the balcony*) and you can't do anything about it. Yes, you would like to convince yourself that there are many important things to live for: virtues, the pure sentiment, the salvation of the world, a flowered lawn, or being a mother, but nothing wins that burning flame that consumes you until death, or real life. (*she lets herself fall down from the balcony*)

Scene II

Dario, Lady Giovanna
(*Lady Giovanna's house*)

DARIO – (*entering breathless*) Miss, my miss! Brunella, poor Miss Brunella, is dead, she threw herself from the balcony.

LADY GIOVANNA – (*ironically*) An other crash? And what a torture! One dies in a really banal way... nowadays.

DARIO – (*horrified*) What a terrible thing. But how is it possible? What's happening? The wife that dies two days after the husband...

LADY GIOVANNA – (*with indifference*) The circle is closed, and evil will close if evil was opened.

DARIO – Lady Giovanna, why can't you feel mercy for anybody?

LADY GIOVANNA – How can we have mercy for a person's death if we don't care about ours?

DARIO – How can the events deteriorate this way, suddenly? It seems yesterday that I've invited her to the party, and now? She's not there anymore, neither her nor her husband. I feel like falling in a curse, my lady. Death is dancing too close to us, disaster will also beat down on us, I feel it, I'm sure about it!

LADY GIOVANNA – Don't say nonsense. The fool that can be quiet has some intellect! Each man, deep down, suffers what he deserves. If Brunella wanted to be happy she would not have married a man she didn't love. She would have followed her own instincts, that were quite bringing her in an other direction. And now, do we want to cry for her? May she go to hell with her dear Arturo, they didn't know how to create any other bond on earth if not that false and hypocrite one, blessed by a priest likewise false and hypocrite. Yes, they are good – priests, mournful crows, always ready to preach to others at sunlight to then commit all the possible obscenities behind the sacristies. If God entrusted his word to priests, it's easy to explain why the world refuses to listen to it. The church, Dario, the church has massacred us all. It has negated us the impulses and love, it imposed the gag of celibacy to not follow our heart's freedom. It has taught us to hate one another and to ask forgiveness on our knees, because we can always be absolved from any sin. Do you think there's any other religion more comfortable than this one? They

do what they want, and they believe that for their God it's alright this way. They don't practise any of the commandments. They don't read the scriptures. They don't follow the teachings and the admonitions of this alleged Father of heaven. How much incoherence there is in these believers!

DARIO – Lady Giovanna, you are crazy!

LADY GIOVANNA – Yes, I'm crazy. And you're an idiot! And I'm more afraid of an idiot than of a crazy person! You should know that there's more wisdom in the irrationality of thousands of mad people than in a talk of a dull person. And, then, remember, an intelligent person sometimes can talk nonsense, but a fool will never say anything intelligent.

DARIO – If you say so! I believe that not even the best man, in this world, is exempt from sin, just like the worst one isn't totally exempt from virtue.

LADY GIOVANNA – (*saying to herself*) Madness... Who's normal? What is the concept of normality? In the world, the only ones to not fear death are crazy people and children. This is true wisdom, that unfortunately is lost by growing up, or healing.

Scene III

Lady Giovanna, Ghost, Dario
(Don Ruggero and Lady Giovanna's house)

LADY GIOVANNA – I'm so hungry, Dario, have you cooked anything good?

DARIO – *(drying his hands with a rag)* Salted codfish casserole and lentil soup.

LADY GIOVANNA – I want to fill my stomach until I explode.

DARIO – You are served, Miss! Everything is already ready *(while Lady Giovanna takes a seat at the table, the bell rings)*

DARIO – Sombodv rang. I'll go see who is it.

LADY GIOVANNA – Whoever it is, I won't receive anyone. I'm hungry and don't want company.

DARIO – *(opening the door)* Good evening.

GHOST – *(with Arturo's voice)* Good evening. I'm the guest of honour.

DARIO – *(speechless, looking at the ghost and making the rag fall)*

GHOST – Go tell Lady Giovanna that I'm here for dinner, as agreed.

DARIO – *(mumbling)* I'll g-go.

LADY GIOVANNA – May I know who is it ? Skinned goat!

DARIO – He has come for dinner.

LADY GIOVANNA – Who?

DARIO – *(visibly afraid)* It seems like Mr. Arturo with Brunella's clothes, and he's also wearing lipstick.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(after falling silent a few seconds)* Make him come in, then. Dinner is ready, right?

DARIO – Co...come in!

GHOST – *(entering)* Here I am. *(after a moment's pause)* I've accepted your invitation.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(smiling)* But the masquerade finished that evening, though.

GHOST – There is little time left for you. I've come to ask you if you are ready to leave this world and especially to repent yourself, before it's too late.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(frowning)* And do you believe this can scare me?

GHOST – It's already decided. You will burn in the flames of Genna if you won't repent yourself for your wrongdoings.

LADY GIOVANNA – I can't wait to stay where there's warmth! In paradise I would find all those who I hated. I don't care that time is due, rather I care that I lived a little of it my way.

GHOST – Repent yourself!

LADY GIOVANNA – For what? I've never been afraid to die. Death in my dreams is a walk, compared to what we call life. If I have to fall, I want to do it my way, without anybody supporting me or pushing me. *(sarcastically laughing)* Never divine help! I never asked for it and I don't want it. To repent oneself? But why, my dear ghost? *(ironically)* This is not certainly the world I created. And anyway, wasn't free will granted to us? There are people who don't know what to do with it, but it's not my case. There are people who are satisfied to be an android, or a dog, a fish of the depths, an antelope hunted by lions, a jackal, or even a lizard, but...thinking to be happy or, if not exactly happy, at least unaware. *(laughing)* Very few know how to squeeze light from darkness. And you? You put yourself out to come tell me that I made a mistake? That I didn't respect anybody? Who?

DARIO – *(shivering in an angle)* Lady Giovanna, for the love of God, you challenge everything, the devil and the holy water...

LADY GIOVANNA – Stop it, fearful nag! *(then addressing herself towards the ghost)* I won't repent myself for no reason! May who's wrong about us be mistaken deep down. Victims, victims, I see only victims when the last day comes. Souls abandoned to despair. Men in the grip of solitude, with no guide, vulnerable to the infinite seeds of abandonment. To die? Better to feel useless and empty! Come get me, damned ghost, c'mon! Burn me now! I'm ready! *(with a loud voice)* I wonder who will convict God for his sins.

GHOST – And so be it! I'll bring you in a place of no return. First though I have to tell you that in me two souls coexist and that of a third one I'm bringing a message; this one wants to be hosted in me. I am the soul that was Arturo and also his spouse, destroyed by pain. But now here the one that you most loved and hated in your life will materialize himself: *(Arturo's voice changes in an old and tipsy masculine voice)* your father, who went crazy, and who now asks you to repent yourself for the sins you've committed. Also against himself.

LADY GIOVANNA – Dad!?

GHOST – My child. I miss you so much! May these arms know how to comfort you.

LADY GIOVANNA – Dad! *(pause)* What are you accusing me of?

GHOST – I didn't know how to be a good father. But you didn't know how to love me, nor understand me. This is your sin, and it's not me who has chosen to make you serve it.

LADY GIOVANNA – Dad!

GHOST – *(with great anxiety and with a voice that turns into a typical transsexual one)* Here I am daughter. I've come to take you to eternally cradle you. Daddy came back.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(inscrutable)* I would recognize your eyes under a thousand masks. I'm ready, but I've got nothing to repent myself for *(ironically)* And if I have to die, make it not be a lonely cradle. Entrust me to good company!

GHOST – *(again with the old man's voice)* Scum, depraved angels of afterlife will cradle you if you won't repent yourself..

LADY GIOVANNA – Men were born to die! Life has only one purpose: to understand the sense of your own misery. To repent myself? I'm still asking you, what's the real accusation? What should I account for?

GHOST – I don't know! Patricide? matricide? Murder of the grown up son?

LADY GIOVANNA – Patricide, matricide? Are you saying that it was me who took your life away?

GHOST – You didn't even try to save us!

LADY GIOVANNA – *(sarcastic)* I wouldn't know how to save myself!...

GHOST – You wouldn't have been anything without the insanity of who could also procreate! Blessed are the crazy people because they've already paid in life for their hell. Remember that it was this soul who gave birth to you!

LADY GIOVANNA – *(ironically)* How can I forget?

GHOST – Repent yourself scum!

LADY GIOVANNA – My Father... *(watching him intensely)*

GHOST – There's no more time. This is salvation. For all of us. Say a prayer, my daughter. It doesn't matter if you don't believe, say it anyway!

LADY GIOVANNA – *(extending her hand and feeling immediately a growing burning at her chest)* We need to pray a lot and believe a little. Or not pray at all, just because we believe. I'm sorry, Dad, but who was born free

cannot forget the perfume of freedom. Was I already alive before living or dead before dying? A chill is burning my chest. *(falling down on the ground without life, watching the ghost in his eyes till the end)*

GHOST – *(inhuman crying, with a typical tone of a child and of an old crazy man, he takes her in his arms bringing her beyond the door)*

DARIO – *(drawn by the ghost's shouts, he sees him going out with Lady Giovanna in his arms)* Oh Jesus, Joseph, saint Anna and Mary, may heaven protect them! *(collapsing on the ground and covering his head with his arms)*

ACT V

Scene I

Lady Giovanna
(on a cloud)

LADY GIOVANNA – *(waking up, yawning)* Well... did I sleep a century!? *(looking around)* And what would this be, my bed? *(touching, it moves)* It doesn't seem so to me... And what's all this fog? I must be dreaming. I think I've seen my father and the devil, that are the same person afterall... *(laughing)* What a strange feeling... *(pinching her belly, then pinching herself stronger again in the same point)* Ahi! All this is so realistic. I feel alive and awake, but what am I doing here? *(saying loudly)* Is anyone there? Can anyone hear me? *(saying to herself)* No, nobody's there. Is this the realm of dead people? *(laughing)* If it was like this, it would be really true that you are born and you die without noticing it! *(laughing)* Let's see what's here... *(trying to dig with her hands, licking the cloud)* Nothing! air! So I'll have to stay here for eternity? *(saying out loud)* Will I have to stay here for eternity? *(in a lower and amused tone)* And where are the flames, the devil men and women? At least we would have some fun. *(laughing, calling out loud)* Devil! Devils! Satan, evil spirits, where are you? Fucking hell! *(remaining in silence to listen)* Nothing, they don't react not even if you insult them. And so? You can't see angels, neither devils, is this limbo maybe the purgatory? Bah, waiting for something new, I'll dedicate myself to all those things to which I've never dedicated myself on earth, for laziness. I'll write poems! Yes. It seems a good way to start killing time. And afterall nobody will judge them, I'll be free from all those boors that pretend to be poets or sharp critics but in reality they don't know how to distinguish a cat from a rabbit. *(laughing)* Nobody will laugh about my verses: they will be all love verses. And what if the devil laughs about them? When a devil, but also a saint, laughs about your poetry, you laugh about his ignorance! *(laughing)* There you go, yes, I'll tell him: what the hell are you laughing about? *(laughing)* Writing will save me from boredom, which is my eternal cross. Also in this case, there's still solitude, you can't escape, whoever has a heart and a brain is destined to be alone. Since I was a child I was afraid to be left alone in a

room, now solitude is a kind of consolation, *(laughing)* because I know that it brings idiots to insanity and wise man to serenity. It makes you grow fast and it makes you die slowly. Being alone makes you feel bound by an invisible chain. And humankind isn't free anymore. Hypertrophy of the I has brought us to a never-ending solitude. But I'm not afraid! I'll face also this. The poetry I'll write will be the music of my days. Because poetry is self-sufficient. *(caught by a sudden quiver of joy)* I'll be a writer! *(running a few metres, then stopping pensive)* Eh... *(sighing)* but where will I find a pen? I'll have to learn my verses by heart. Writing them in the room of the mind and keeping them there, like they used to do originally. It can be an exciting challenge. Yes, it will help me kill time. But... *(hesitating)* does it make sense to kill time if time doesn't have an end? And if the wisest remedy to boredom, the perfect remedy, would be not to be interested in time and perpetually enjoy your own condition only here and now? I like it... but I must get used to the idea. Every situation is different, and not necessarily worse than the previous one. Nostalgia is one of the deadly human sins, the idealization of what doesn't come back, at least never in the same form. And I must go beyond. Well, but I'll think about it after. Maybe now I should relax, sleep. *(laying down)* So, I'll create an autobiography in verses to not forget what I was. I don't wanna deny my past. And if one day here...they'll move me to an other ward, *(laughing for having associated that place to a hospital)* I'll surely find an erotic soul to sing my story. I want to compose just for the sake of it, and to cheer myself, a purely aesthetic fact. Only art lets us create without needing anything if not our intelligence. And I'll be a soul made of poetry! *(laughing exhilarated)* In this, poetry is really related to God, or to nature, or to whoever in one way or an other carries out the action of creating. To narrate oneself, yes, I like it. I'll start from the origins, from the first crying, that I cherish through the rambling stories of my father, since the day of my birth that was full of lightning.. *(saying out loud)* So, is anybody here? Devils! Angels! He-men and Cleopatras! Drop dead, all of you! Maybe, these fellows seeing me arriving, legged it out. *(laughing, and putting herself to sleep)* If there's nothing else in this solitary place I can masturbate myself eternally! *(laughing)*

Scene II

Lady Giovanna, Dario
(Lady Giovanna's bedroom)

(Lady Giovanna is sleeping in her bed. You can hear three knocks on the door of her room)

LADY GIOVANNA – *(waking up, she gets up)* Who is it?

DARIO – It's me, Dario, good morning Miss. I wanted to tell you that Alice has arrived for the massage.

LADY GIOVANNA – *(after remaining silent a few seconds, she kneels down on the bed)* Ah yes, Alice... Tell her to prepare the essential oils and the devices, in two minutes I'm ready for these buttocks to be massaged. I'll make her happy! *(she looks at her belly and sees the livids she's done pinching herself. She remains a moment to think. After she looks into the void smiling, with exhilarated eyes, full of mischievousness and enthusiasm).*

THE END

Almost an extortion

It's not that the author really extorted it, but he insisted with such conviction to write a page for this first play of his, that I thought it wasn't possible to turn him down. I must tell you immediately: this isn't an nth rewriting of the Burlador's figure. A myth of modernity deeply-rooted in our culture, that risks sometimes to be suffocated exactly by the proliferative, often pleasantly bizarre, revisions. Like many times Menotti assured me, you won't find in this text feminist, neither postmodern ways, nor even counter-reformist echos. Here, Lerro, who decided to start his journey in the dramaturgical world, played with an irreducible shadow – because myths, more than rewritten, I believe, they should be revered, without ever really fearing them – and he did it trying to create an adaptable text both to the theatrical scene and to the intimate reading, a “hypertext” that can be read and interpreted from innumerable points of view, through a deep excavating that considers time, and I'm not talking about the aristotelian time, but about the past, the present and the future of the western secular-christian society.

Lady Giovanna embodies all the vices, the virtues, the frustration, the realisations and the desires of our time, traced by a half-serious and cutting writing, between philosophy and braggartism, sensitivity and arrogance, that act in a death in life and life in afterlife cosmos, all sacrificed on the altar of slyness, of joke and of the flesh, but also of poetry. Written in five acts, the drama talks about the story of a woman with bourgeois origins that has reached the noble status through marriage, but who has already lost interest in her husband – always away for business travels –, and who feels a gushing and unavoidable attraction towards her own gender. A person tired of social conventions, of the ecclesiastical impositions, of the theological reminiscences, who follows stubbornly, daringly and proudly the blooming of her impulses, whatever the cost may be. Lady Giovanna is born from the feminine soul of the legendary icon invented by Tirso, varied in the essence by Molière and raised by Mozart, to then transform herself into a character that imposes her aspect and her unique and, in her numerous shades, univocal identity. An ironic, deep, cruel, full of true knowledge star performer, that raises as a symbol of the world's complexity, especially the feminine one. A modern figure, fully aware of her actions, scornful of morality and profound expert of the human soul, longing to deceive her neighbor just for the sake of

it; aware that her feelings can see what others don't want to or don't have the courage to accept, because they are slaves of a net that traps them. A suffocating modern cage to which this anti-heroine will oppose herself with coherence and tenacity, never worrying what's waiting for her, without fear nor trepidation.

Augusto Orrel

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