

**THE TOTAL IMMERSION OF MADELEINE FAVORINI**

**A Play**

**by**

**Frank Gagliano**

**A full-evening's production that  
has a playing time of about 80 minutes.  
Played *without* an intermission break.**

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## **CHARACTERS**

### **One actress plays**

**Madeleine Favorini**

### **One actor plays**

**Dr. Rathjib  
Nonno Pazzotesto  
Jonathan  
Palsied Papa  
Captain Marvel  
El Bandido Grandido**

### **One actress plays**

**Nurse Ida Wendling  
Niece Cassandra  
Yiddish, Irish, Southern Mamas  
Mother  
La Bandida  
The Dwarf Prometheus  
Giant Koala Bear**

**Note: The Voice of Amalia, mentioned throughout, is the voice of the late Portuguese Fado singer, Amalia Rodrigues.**

**Scene: A black  
space.**

**In center hot-white  
light, a  
gynecological**

**examining table.  
MADELEINE  
FAVORINI  
on it. In  
the stirrups. She  
wears  
a slip.**

**Madeleine discovers  
the  
audience when the  
audience  
discovers  
Madeleine.**

**MADELEINE**

O !!

(Trying to pull down her slip  
and close her knees; all the while keeping her  
feet in the stirrups. TO THE AUDIENCE)

Well. . . I'm very dutiful. See? . . . You don't see. . . Well. I've been waiting here  
—as I was told to do? —For Doctor Rathjib? . . . I've been waiting for Doctor  
Rathjib, in this slip, in these stirrups . . . FOR TWO WEEKS! . . . —O! You may  
think that's funny! But throughout—these last two weeks—late at night? —  
young interns would come in—with flashlights! —say they'd lost something —  
drop below my knees—and the rays of the flashlight would sway up—then  
OUT OF SIGHT! —OmyGod! Like shooting stars! COMETS! And shooting stars  
and COMETS remind me of SPACE and space reminds me of INFINITY and  
infinity terrifies me and makes me want to THROW UP!

(Pause)

God, I'm hungry. . . Cold, too. And stiff. . . Whole body's fallen asleep.  
Especially—

. . . Yes, feels like I'm sitting bare-bunned on raw rice. . . .

(She has a body spasm)

O my! My body. . . wants to. . .

(Slowly, torturously, Madeleine begins  
to get out of the stirrups)

get out of. . . these stirrups and. . . O God! I am dutiful. . . but my body keeps  
trying to. . . to—

**WOMAN'S VOICE**

(Over. Voice Amplified. Coming from everywhere)

Don't you dare get out of those stirrups, Madeleine Favorini!

(Madeleine jams her feet back  
into the stirrups)

**WOMAN'S VOICE**

(Continued)

With what you've probably got, Madeleine Favorini, getting out of those  
stirrups will kill you.

**MADELEINE**

"Probably got?" What do you mean — "PROBABLY GOT?!"

(Dr. Rathjib materializes)

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Kindly; always kindly)

Questions?

(To Loudspeaker Voice)

Are we allowing questions from patients, Nurse Wendling? Since when?

**NURSE WENDLING**

(Voice over)

Not "allowing," Doctor Rathjib. She just—

**MADELEINE**

--Doctor Rathjib! —Himself?! —Finally! Have you come to tell me what I've —"probably got?"

**NURSE WENDLING**

(Voice over)

She started to destirrup, Doctor Rathjib!

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Kindly. Making sure Madeleine's feet  
are secure in the stirrups)

Patient Favorini! We don't destirrup in this hospital. Not until told.

**MADELEINE**

But, perhaps in this case, you could—

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Kindly)

Now, I must do as I'm told or I get into serious trouble. I'm sure you don't want that.

**MADELEINE**

Of course not. I just want—

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Kindly)

And Nurse Wendling must do as *she's* told. Namely, to see that you stay stirrupped—or *she* gets into serious trouble.

**WENDLING**

(Voice over)

And I'm sure you don't want that, Madeleine Favorini.

**MADELEINE**

No no! The last thing in the world I want is to get anyone into trouble. And I want to follow all your rules, I do, but . . . —two weeks! You must admit—

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Kindly)

—I admit nothing to patients, Patient Favorini.

**MADELEINE**

And if there's some terrible thing I've probably got, don't you think—?

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Kindly)

Thinking is frowned upon in this institution, Patient Favorini.

**MADELEINE**

But couldn't you make an exception and—?

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Kindly)

Now it's all right. I noted on your chart —and the charts never lie— I noted that you are a 46-year-old depressed and discarded Wop-American lady and I know you'll live up to that profile and do the dutiful thing. Now please excuse me. . . .Nurse Wendling, see to your duty.

(He quickly dematerializes)

**MADELEINE**

(Her feet dutifully in the stirrups)

Doctor Rathjib! Wait!

(Nurse Wendling quickly materializes.  
Checks out Madeleine's feet)

**NURSE WENDLING**

Did you catch that threat, Madeleine Favorini? Against me?

**MADELEINE**

O, I'm sure he didn't mean anything dras—You! You're Nurse Wendling!

**NURSE WENDLING**

Yes, I am and yes — it was a threat! And I can't afford to lose this job. Since working for doctor Rathjib I've lost all of my nursing skills. Now, one of my duties is to turn on "The Music To Numb The Brain." So please behave yourself and stay stirruped, while I plug "The Music To Numb The Brain" into the environment. There's a good girl.

(Nurse Wendling dematerializes)

**MADELEINE**

(Her feet dutifully in the stirrups)

No! Wait! I came here for help and my body really does ache and—

(She turns to the audience)

Look. Two weeks ago I got a mailgram. After all these years my mother was seen. In Greece. On one of the Islands. So! I was mulling that over, over my usual lunch of beef bourguignon and yogurt mixed with pure bran, when I suddenly got this feeling that—something wasn't quite right. Internally. That something was missing. Inside. Down below. . . .It frightened me. . . .So, two weeks ago—after lunch, after bourguignon and bran—on my way back to work? I stopped by *this* Emergency Room. I thought that what I felt was missing in me had to do with my mother — her being found. But that didn't make sense. I mean, she's been out of my life for too many years. Anyway, the people who spotted her said she looked all right so—

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Head materializes. Kindly)

Wrong, Patient Favorini. Your mother's dead. We got a mailgram.

(Rathjib's head dematerializes)

**MADELEINE**

(Her feet dutifully in the stirrups)

Dead.

(Pause)

Why can't I dutifully cry.

(Pause)

Well, I can't. So there's the proof. That feeling. Something missing? inside? Down below? Nothing to do with my mother. She doesn't affect me. Something else. Physiological. . . ."probably got". . . I was right to come here for two weeks and I don't know if I'm fired from my job or what—

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Head materializes. Kindly)

—No "what" about it. You have been fired. We got a mailgram.

(Doctor Rathjib's head dematerializes)

**MADELEINE**

(Her feet dutifully in the stirrups)

Fired?

(Holding back tears)

That's terrible. I work. . .worked at The Museum of Natural Wonders.

**MADELEINE**

(Continued. She cries)

Telephone Reference. Perfect job for me. I didn't have to deal, face to face, with people, you see. And, to boot, I was surrounded by the Gods! —O! I mean, *dioramas* of stuffed mythological Gods. Always loved them, those tales. Especially there. Because there, in The Museum of Natural Wonders, a lot of the pain of those tales was . . .—finessed. . . .I can't stand pain. . . .But there, even the Prometheus legend—with his liver being plucked out and eaten? —Even that was shown *without* pain—a kind of Walt Disney cast of mannequins —so that even the pain was cute—and "cute" pain I can take. . . .Fired.

(Music: The Voice of Amalia is heard.  
It is very Muzak sounding)

O! That must be the "Music To Numb The Brain" and—  
(She has a body spasm)

O my God! It's happening again! My body. . .acting up. . .wants to get out of . . .these—

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

(Materializing)

Goodheavens!

( Grabs Madeleine's feet; tries  
to keep them in the stirrups)

Nurse Wendling! Mayday! MAYDAY! The wop-lady is deSTIRRapping!

**WENDLING**

(Head materializing)

Can't leave! The "Music To Numb The Brain" is going all funny!

(The "Music To Numb The Brain" goes all funny)

**MADELEINE**

Doctor Rathjib!—A five minute stretch! Please!

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

Nurse Wendling! One foot is out!

**WENDLING**

I'm coming!

**DOCTOR RATHJIB**

Quick! I'M DEALING WITH AN ELEMENTAL FORCE!

(Wendling joins Rathjib and they wrestle with

Madeleine's anarchic feet)

MADELEINE

O! O! That voice—all FUNny! —And what. . .what exCRUCiating conflict! — My MIND wants to. . .to be DUTiful. . .BUT my legs. . .keep WANTing to JERK—jerk FREE!!!

(She kicks Doctor Rathjib and Nurse Wendling into the shadows.  
"Music To Numb The Brain"—out!  
"Journey Music"—in and under)

And suddenly I'm on the move! . . . to god-knows-where. . .because the table's not a table anymore. . .it looks like. . .like one of those. . . —Yes! —Disney World wagons! That's right. Those little carts that scoot you through the robot worlds? . . .And moves and moves AND PICKS UP SPEED and more speed. . .and even more speed and LOOKASIFWEWILLHITAWALL! — But don't! . . . Instead. We barely squeeze through a thin, thankgod, fissure slit into an O! O! Black cave. And lose sight of the up-front carts in the wall's folds. Real walls. Not like the dioramas in the Museum of Natural Wonders. Real walls. Walls that sweat. That smell like. . .cucumber skins. . .and move and jerk past . . . omy! — grotesque exhibitions in the apses of the walls. Like. . .cartoon stations of the cross. Of. . .Bozo The Clown? —Yes! Bozo, the Clown. Mostly. Being crucified. . .But instead of a spear in *his* side — they're honking his red horn nose!

PAZZOTESTO

(Off)

Honk! Honk!

(Journey Music—OUT!)

MADELEINE

OGOD! LOOK! That Bozo—that Bozo is getting down from the cross and— See!—Picks up a tattered valise and . . . —and a bouquet, I think, and WHY—why that's not Bozo, the clown. That's. . . —othankgod that's NONNO! Nonno Pazzotesto!

PAZZOTESTO

(Very stereotypical Italian))

Maddalena! Cara! Is that'a you! Good'a.

(Shift to perfect English)

Do you know how to get out of this goddamned maze?

MADELEINE

No. In fact, I hoped—Nonno! You're speaking English!

**PAZZOTESTO**

Of course.

**MADELEINE**

But I didn't know you could. And without an accent.

**PAZZOTESTO**

(Still looking)

You really don't know how to get out of here.

**MADELEINE**

But you only spoke Sicilian. Whenever I'd visit you and grandma—Nonna—may she rest in peace—and whenever I'd ask you, through a family interpreter, to describe your childhood in Sicily, you'd chant it. Like an aria from an Italian opera. In Sicilian. Only in Sicilian. Always in Sicilian.

**PAZZOTESTO**

(Still looking)

Of course. I'd play Sicilian dingbat. That way they left me alone. To watch TV movies all day.

**MADELEINE**

O Nonno. . . .What memories you bring back! Those Sunday visits. The crispy Italian bread with warm olive oil sprinkled with salt and pepper and grated Parmesan cheese.

**PAZZOTESTO**

(Stops looking)

You remember, huh? As a matter of fact, Maddalena, I have all that stuff—bread, oil, salt, pepper and “formaggio di parmigiano.” But I can't give you any. They're munchies for my trip.

**MADELEINE**

Munchies? Trip?

**PAZZOTESTO**

(Sniffing the bouquet)

I can spare some leaves from this basil bouquet though. Here. Take some. Sniff. If you have any Sicilian blood in you—and you have, Maddalena—this will give you a primal high.

**MADELEINE**

Nonno, please! What trip? I've got to know!

**PAZZOTESTO**

To Sicily! Home. To die.

**MADELEINE**

Sicily? To die? But why?

**PAZZOTESTO**

Because this country's over. Run out of energy. And so have I. And do you know how I know all this? Because John Wayne, the great movie star known as "The Duke," is dead. That's why. And I just heard about it! Imagine! Must have happened when I was in the hospital for that prostate probe. Still, I should have heard. Something. Well, that's what I get for never watching the news. Hate the news! Only watched The Duke's two hundred flicks—AND HE WASN'T DEAD ON THOSE!

**MADELEINE**

Yes, Nonno. I, too, am sorry about Duke Wayne. He was a great hero, but—

**PAZZOTESTO**

Maddalena! I can see you are still a wide-eyed twit! The Duke wasn't a real hero, like a lot of people say he was. No! The Duke was great because he *pretended* to be those heroes.

(Moved)

And I pretended with him. —No! No pretense! I “immersed” myself in him. Was some part of him. Sometimes, his fists. Very often, his rolling hips.

(Reflective)

Never his pecker, though.

(Discovery)

Somehow, pecker-immersion was never the point in a Duke Wayne flick.

(Lyrical)

At the least, however, I was his shadow. Yes, unreal shadow was the Duke. Colossal shadow was the Duke. Always able to survive whatever blanks they could shoot at him, was the Duke!

(Acceptance)

Well, that counterfeit giant of a shadow has left the American landscape, as they say. So it's time for me to leave. I just wish I could think of a gift to leave in memory of The Duke before I depart for the old country. First things first: Got to get out of here!

**MADELEINE**

No! Please! Nonno! What will I do without your Sicilian arias?

**PAZZOTESTO**

What difference do they make? You never understood a word of them. Could never immerse yourself in the language.

**MADELEINE**

But no one ever taught me Sicilian.

**PAZZOTESTO**

Pish! What does that have to do with it?

**MADELEINE**

You teach me, Nonno!

**PAZZOTESTO**

But that's not the point, Maddalena. Learning the language is merely pish. But *becoming* the language—Ah, becoming the language! —is *posh*! Immersion, Immersion is the point. I'll show you.

(Gets on the examining table  
and makes it into a stagecoach.  
Stands, whips the horses and, as  
John Wayne, says:)

"Move 'em out!"

(Himself again. Gets down  
from examining table)

Do you see, Maddalena? —Of course you don't. And I don't have the time to *pish-posh* with you anymore. There's little time left and Sicily and the Duke—

**MADELEINE**

Nonno! Take me with you!

**PAZZOTESTO**

Maddalena, with what you have, we'd never get through Sicilian customs.

**MADELEINE**

Is it that bad? What I have?

**PAZZOTESTO**

Ah. I knew I had a flashlight in this tattered valise. Click! Ah. Maybe down that tunnel. . .

(He dematerializes)

**MADELEINE**

No! Don't leave me alone! Nonno! Nonno! Light the way for meeeeeeeee!

(She gets back onto the examining table)

Go! Go! Follow Nonno Pazzotesto! Follow him to —. . .YES! Sicily. Sicily! There! There! —This table is moving me there. To the end of this magical tunnel! And there!. . .there it is. I see it. Sicily! My land of roots and ruts and riverdercis! Singing couples, singing in Piazzas on the holy days. Pinning multi, multi Euro to statues of the blue Madonna, bobbing on the young men's

## MADELEINE

(Continued)

shoulders, through the crowded square. . . .My family's there! See! See!! In and on a painted cart pulled by our family donkey! . . .And everyone protects me. And everyone is proud of me. Because on this feast day, I play. . . —the Holy Ghost. A tongue? A dove? . . .A presence. . . .—And I need my family. They're the only ones who care for me? . . .No one else would give a roast for the Holy Ghost. After all, what's he do? After all, what's she do? . . .But my family, they knew and cheer me on. So. I choose to play the tongue. Lick my way over every head that's bowed before the bobbing blue Madonna. And so I *do*. . . .But am not seen. . . .And maybe that's the best way? —No! It is not! Not being seen is death! Is rot! So all I've got is my family, who do see and dote on me. —And Papa gets angry and takes his whip! "See my daughter!" he screams. "Grab onto each holy rung and climb and mount that holy tongue! — See my daughter! —Or this lash will burn your lower cheeks to ash!" . . .And that's how Papa does for me. . . .IN SICILY!

(Laughter is heard off)

That laughter! Around the bend! Whose is it? . . .It's—o God, it's *his* laughter. It's—

(Jonathan and Cassandra materialize)

## JONATHAN

Madeleine, it's me. Your husband. Jonathan. I hope you've made a nice big pot of beef bourguignon. Because I've brought home my niece, Cassandra, to stay with us a bit. You've never met Cassandra, I know. But that's all right. Cassandra just got off the train from Chicago and so is freezing. Say "Hi" to wife Madeleine, niece Cassandra.

## CASSANDRA

(Shivering)

Hi-hi-hi, A-A-Aunt Ma-Madeleine.

## JONATHAN

You see how niece Cassandra shivers. That's why I thought a nice steaming pot of beef bourguignon would do her good. I also thought, this time, I'd thaw her out before dinner. So you will get off the table. Right? . . .Madeleine? . . .Now none of that "Our-Lady-of-the-Sorrows" look.

(Pause. Deadly.)

Get. Off. The. Table.

(Madeleine does so.)

**JONATHAN****(Continued. Bright)**

Now, I'm going to keep niece Cassandra warm under that sheet. Because it's the least an Uncle can do. And you can stand around and stir your pot of beef bourguignon while niece Cassandra thaws. With what you've probably got, Madeleine, it's best to just stir.

**(Jonathan and Cassandra get under the sheet)**

**MADELEINE**

What is it I've probably got, Jonathan?

. . .But of course Jonathan doesn't reply.

So I dutifully stir. But stir my way to. . .

**(discovery)**

Something new? A new place I'm at? . . .So. I do something I have never done before: I delicately tap on Jonathan through the sheet there, making lumpy waves with niece Cassandra, and I tap and delicately say: "O Jonathan, I know. I know she's really not your niece. None of them are. I'm ready to talk about it."

**JONATHAN**

**(Rises from under the sheet)**

"Talk?" Madeleine Favorini, my nieces are all "action." Not "talk."

**(Jonathan moves to get back under the sheet. Madeleine grabs his arm)**

**MADELEINE**

**(Pleading)**

And I'm ready to deal with that, too, Jonathan. I'll. . .I'll see a porno film. And I'll find out what that kind of action really means. And you'll see: Then I, too, will be a niece to you. Perhaps the only niece you need.

**(Pause)**

**JONATHAN**

**(He slowly removes her hand.**

**Pause)**

I'm afraid not, Madeleine. My nieces are wild flowers. You. Look at you. As perfect as a lily. An Easter Lily. . . .Oh, I knew that when I married you, of course. It was what I wanted. . . .among other things. I thought. Needed. Among other things. I thought. . . .I see you, my perfect Wop Easter Lily, in my house, and my wild-flower nieces always there, anywhere, to be thawed out. Properly. . . .I can't help it, Madeleine. . . .I need my nieces, lots of nieces, that's the way I am.

**JONATHAN**

(Continued. Shift)

And don't look so distorted! Down deep you must have known that. Even before we were married.

(Gets back under the sheet)

**MADELEINE**

(Young girl now;  
talking out over the audience)

Mama! Mama! Jonathan wants to marry me. And I *am* pleased and flattered and—a bit awed! But confused, too. I mean, I see Jonathan as a kind of God. —O! I don't mean a God like a Hercules, say. No. I mean, a God in the modern sense: *Seemingly self assured, uncultured, dispassionate, his hair blow dried. And with the very definite ability to provide for me. He is, I know — and as he's often told me— "A WASP entrepreneur of some clout and mercantile acumen"—I do know that but. . .well—I don't love Jonathan, Mama. I've never been able to ask your advice before, but I need it now. . . .Mama?*

(She addresses the Woman under the sheet)

Mama. Don't shun me that way. Talk to me. Talk to your only daughter! Show your babushked head and speak to your only child in your peasanty Italian way!

**MAMA**

(Pops up from under the sheet.  
With heavy Yiddish accent)

Oy, Madeleine, you going to burit your palsied Papa if your don't marrit mit dat ugly WASP entrepreneur, unt put us all on the easy street. Is that not so, Palsied Papa?

**PAPA**

(Pops up from under the sheet. Shakes)

Burru! Burru!

**MADELEINE**

No! Mama! Even though you have a Yiddish accent which surprises me because you never had it before but which I dutifully accept—No! And no, Palsied Papa. I won't "bury" either of you. Never. Look, let's go out for a drive on this examining table and talk this out.

(Madeleine grabs onto the table's stirrups,  
horse-like, and pulls in place)

**MAMA**

(Heavy Irish brogue now)

Sure, sure it tis, me girl! Drive us down the grand cities of this grand land and shame us grandly as we pass the grand likes of Cartier and Neiman Marcus and know that not one grand gaudy necessity can be ours for the penuriousness of our station. Grand thanks to me girl-o.

**PAPA**

(Shaking)

Burrrup! Burrrup!

**MADELEINE**

(Still pulling)

No! No, suddenly, Irish Mama! Don't say these things! They hurt me.

**MAMA**

(Very Southern Redneck)

Now you lissin' up, hear? All you decent sons and daughters linin' the streets, I say unto you all, take up any stones, bricks or petrified dog-do an hurl yer pellets o'chastisement at this ingrate of a daughter!

**PAPA**

Burrrup! Burrrup!

**MAMA**

--who will throw away a life'a loot an' lush livin' an' in the process see the palsied remains of her dear, darlin', diddless daddy, drop dead!

**MADELEINE**

No, born-again Mama! No, diddless daddy! I will! I will dutifully marry Jonathan.

(Stops pulling)

And I do. But palsied slash diddless daddy dies anyway.

**PAPA**

Burrrup. . .burrrup. . .brp.

(Papa flops over, his head falling onto Mama's lap. Mama gently lays Papa's head down on the examining table, covers him with a sheet and kneels over him at the table.

Pause)

**MADELEINE**

Mama. Jonathan is a fraud. The business was always, apparently, on shaky ground. We're bankrupt.

**MAMA**

(No accent now)

I know.

**MADELEINE**

And he cheats.

**MAMA**

I know.

**MADELEINE**

I mean, besides in business.

**MAMA**

I know.

**MADELEINE**

And he beats me.

**MAMA**

With what you have, is it any wonder.

**MADELEINE**

What do I have, Mama?

**MAMA**

Listen, Madeleine. Your mother is exhausted. Your vegetable father exhausted me. The roles I have had to play. The rages I have had to sit on. Not having money—having to "make do"—exhausted me. And trying to mother you, make sense out of what you are or could be, really exhausted me. From the time you were born, you wore me out. An almost impossible delivery. You nearly killed me. And not long after, the hysterectomy. Oh, they said there was no connection, but I don't know: A Sicilian lady with just one child—a girl child at that. "Vergogna." Shame. "Vergogna." That's the only Sicilian word I've not been able to forget. "Vergogna," your grandmother would spit at me —"Vergogna," for a Sicilian lady to have just one girl child. All right. Then I'll not be a Sicilian lady. I'll be an American lady. And, like every American lady, I'll work to be totally free. So that no one could ever "vergogna" me again. Well, now I *am* free. Of your poor father. There's some money trickling in. I am totally assimilated—with not one trace of Sicilian peasant in me any longer,

MAMA

(Continued)

thank God—and I want to be free of you. Unencumbered. To be unencumbered. What you have can drag me down again. And now I want "up." Up. UP!

MADELEINE

But what is it? At least tell me what it is I have before you leave me, Mama.

PAPA

(Sitting up)

Listen, Maddie.

MADELEINE

Papa?

PAPA

You've got to know I've hated every minute of my life — except that last minute —a minute ago?—When I died. For *when* I died, I unencumbered your mother. By God I did that.

(Mama gives him a kiss on the cheek  
and moves into the shadows, dimly seen)

And you can, too. I'm afraid we're alike, you and I, Maddie. But if that means, like me, you're tired, frightened. . .quietly desperate. . .it also means you are cursed with knowing right from wrong. And the right curse now is to give in to your mother's wishes. Do you realize that woman has never had a proper teenage. Now, with the insurance I leave her, she can travel and date and flirt and dress up. She worked hard for it. And for de-wopping us all—

(discovery)

. . .Not every minute! I mean, what I said before, about hating every minute of my life, is not, strictly speaking, true. There were minutes I liked being a barber. The minutes I got not one hair down a man's back! And remember the minute you and I sneaked out to the opera and discovered "Cavalleria Rusticana?" The minute there was during the playing of the Intermezzo. I didn't look at you because that's one thing we never do in our family, I know—look directly at each other—but I felt you cry, Maddie. When I cried. The same minute. It was the melody, of course.

(Hums a bit of the melody)

Simple and beautiful.

(Hums again—)

Yes! Perhaps there might be other such minutes for you. Yes. That simple Sicilian gift of song may still be alive in you. In that sense we may not be alike. . . .For the melody left me long ago. For good. . . .—So it's in your own self interest, Maddie. Break the bonds. Unencumber your mother. And perhaps you'll unencumber yourself. There's a good girl.

**MADELEINE**

And daddy dies again.

(Mama and Papa dematerialize,  
each in a different direction)

**MADELEINE**

(Continued)

And the good girl begins to panic because I've just seen a whole batch of  
Mamas and Papas I never knew I knew and

(does a stomach contraction)

O! Cramps! . . .Pain! . . .Stomach pain and—!

(The *Voice of Amalia* is heard.  
Off. In The distance.  
Still bent over)

Listen. That voice. . .familiar. Where—?. . .O yes. "The Music To Numb The  
Brain." But this time. . .soothing. . .beautiful. . .terrifying. Why? Where is it  
coming from? Why was it triggered with the triggering of the cramps? And  
why—?

(*Voice of Amalia* out)

O! The cramps and voice are gone and—

**PAZZOTESTO**

(Off)

Honk honk.

**MADELEINE**

O look! It's grandpa again! Nonno Pazzotesto! And just in the nick! You've  
come back for me!

**PAZZOTESTO**

(Materializing)

Circles! I've been going round in circles! Goddamnit!

**MADELEINE**

Nonno, your Maddalena has just been through something terrible! There was  
Mama and Papa and Jonathan and—

**PAZZOTESTO**

Maddalena, please don't bother me anymore! I'm a loner. And I've got to get to  
Sicily to die! I can't get out of this goddamned maze! I still don't know what gift  
to leave in memory of Duke Wayne, and my bouquet of basil is starting to wilt  
in my hand and—Hey! Your examining table! Maybe that will take me!

(Gets on it)

## MADELEINE

NO NONNO! DON'T GO! NOT WITHOUT ME! I'M A 46-YEAR-OLD DISCARDED WOMAN AND SOMETHING IS SLIPPING AWAY! PLEASE NONNO! . . .Deodorants make me nauseous and don't work on me anymore—though I dutifully use them. Mindlessness scares me—always has—but here I am in a mindless age and I don't know how to act—except to shiver. I shiver a lot now, Nonno. And I'm afraid to jog for fear my breasts will fall off. Since Jonathan ran out on me I've wanted desperately to have my ears pierced like every Sicilian child has, but every time I pierce them, the skin grows back. I went to college and I feel so dumb. I majored in Literature and so was good for nothing. And laughed at, of course. But at least I could thrill to the audacity and awesome language of the Masters. Could quote them from memory, in fact. But now—those great words frighten me—make me dizzy, sick. And every time I need to use the “facility” —*No! No more euphemisms! I mean, the toilet* —I have this fear that I won't be able to go, because all of my orifices will have been sewn up. I look at babies and old people and I imagine infinity — which scares me and makes me want to throw up!— The only foods that have any taste for me are fast foods. But fast foods nauseate me—though I dutifully eat them and hold them down. The really awful thing, though, is that I can't look people in the shoulder anymore. Only in the back. And so I always walk behind. Even when I'm in front—

## PAZZOTESTO

Cara, Cara, Cara! Listen! Sicily won't help you solve those problems.

## MADELEINE

O yes! It's a magical place, is Sicily!

## PAZZOTESTO

Today? Who knows? It may be a dump, Sicily!

## MADELEINE

Then why are *you* going?!

## PAZZOTESTO

Because it's *my* dump! Not yours!

## MADELEINE

But *you* will be there!

## PAZZOTESTO

Not for long!

## MADELEINE

(Monumental despair)

FOR HOWEVER LONG! YOU'RE THE ONLY FAMILY I HAVE LEFT!

## PAZZOTESTO

And *this* family —questa famiglia —needs to find the perfect gift to present in *memory* of The Duke! I've been running around like a crazy head — pish-poshing with you and with this wilting basil bouquet and —Wait!—Yes! Ma Sì! I've had the Duke's gift in my hand all along! And before it wilts — when the Duke's wings and my wings tangle on the great basil cloud in the sky—YES!— *Then!* I will personally present — *miraculously dewilted* — *this basil bouquet to The Duke!* And he'll understand! Sì! Certo! With that basil bouquet, I will make a green pesto sauce, and The Duke and I will become basil comrades, and cover the basil range of eternity forever! Goodbye, Maddalena! The Duke WAAAAAITS!

(He dematerializes)

## MADELEINE

Nonno! No! Take me with you! Nonno Nonno please don't abandon me I cannot see O I CANNOT SEE! I'm blind. . . .I'm-fee-ling-the-air-in-spasms-be-cause-I-am-blind. . . .I'm feeling around the ground on my hands and knees . . .because I've been stricken blind. But why, why? I NEVER MASTURBATED! —Well once maybe, but only boys went blind, I thought and I can see again / CAN SEE AGAIN! I'm not blind anymore. I'm . . .alone.

(Takes in her new surroundings.

Slow discovery as the images drop in)

On a Mediterranean Cruise. Abandoned. Single lady once again, using up her savings, to cruise her bruised self back together again. Long days and nights, with silk scarf headkerchief breezing about her face, she leans on a rail and looks at the sea omylook. O my, look. A silver school of silver fish moving past. Like an oil slick omy. O My! They're whatchamacallits! Rubbers! Condoms! A school of condoms in the Mediterranean? No! I don't want to see that! I want to see—. . .him. HIM! Captain Marvel! There. In the ballroom. Through the porthole. See? Captain Marvel. That's his name. Really. The Captain of this Cruise. There. Dancing the tango with his white even teeth, and even more even crease in his pressed uniform. And Lady Buxom in his six-foot-two-arms, pressed against the two thousand ribbons on his chest, because tradition demands he service the top-deck ladies first—until he works his way to below-deck me.

(coily)

He kissed my hand, you know, when I came aboard.

—Well, it is true he kissed all the ladies' hands. But mine he lingered over. And I could see he wanted to lick my knuckles. I pulled my hand away. I didn't want him to get into trouble. But, it's clear, throughout the cruise, his darting tongue's been making thrusts at me. Even now

(She tangos)

MADELEINE

(Continued)

As—he—tangos  
 [he knows I'm out here]  
 and—he—sees—me  
 [his eyes keep darting]  
 out—the—port—hole  
 [I know he wants me]  
 in—his—arms—too  
 [his chest is massive]  
 and—I'm—fainting  
 [especially when we DIP]

(She dips)

(Captain Marvel materializes,  
 keeping a distance)

CAPTAIN MARVEL

Lovely.

(Madeleine falls)

Do you need help?

MADELEINE

No. No.

(She rises, leans against the table)

CAPTAIN MARVEL

(Keeping a distance)

Are you all right, then?

MADELEINE

Yesyes. fine.

CAPTAIN MARVEL

I'm Captain Marvel.

MADELEINE

I know.

CAPTAIN MARVEL

And I'm sorry I startled you.

**MADELEINE**

I'm sorry I made such a fool of myself.

**CAPTAIN MARVEL**

Fool? I don't understand.

**MADELEINE**

My dancing. Out here. By myself.

**CAPTAIN MARVEL**

(Always keeping a distance between them)

Is that what you were doing? Nothing wrong with that. I sing in the shower.

**MADELEINE**

And you thought it was lovely? My dancing?

**CAPTAIN MARVEL**

Oh. "Lovely." When I said "lovely" before. That had nothing to do with you. I didn't see you until you fell. I said "lovely" because of the fog. The fog is lovely. I needed to escape from in there to out here. And when I hit the fog, I was happy to see it—be in it. And I said "lovely." Because of the fog, you see.

**MADELEINE**

Yes. Yes. I, too, like the fog. It's. . .it's—

**CAPTAIN MARVEL**

Don't say "romantic." Too damp for "romantic." But fog's a dandy cover. Now, excuse me while I disappear deeper into it.

**MADELEINE**

May I— . . . ?

**CAPTAIN MARVEL**

Yes?

**MADELEINE**

I— . . . This is difficult for me. Because I've never been able to— . . .

**CAPTAIN MARVEL**

Yes?

**MADELEINE**

May I join you. . . in the deeper fog?

**CAPTAIN MARVEL**

. . .—No. The time of the cruise has come when I must be alone, away from everyone. The time of the cruise has come when one gets depressed, distracted, disturbed, distempered. When one gets convinced the cruise will go on forever. If you were to come with me now I might strangle you and throw you overboard. In the fog with me, you see, you'd represent everything outside of the fog. Everything I've come to loathe by this time of this— . . .endless—cruise. No. I want to—I must—move over there — away from you — and allow the fog to be over me, in front of me, in back of me and under me. I must float in the fog all night. So that I'll be able to resume my role in the morning. As Captain. And all that that means. Good evening.

(He partially dematerializes;  
stays dimly seen throughout the following)

**MADELEINE**

He doesn't know. He doesn't know I'd even welcome being strangled now; just to feel his knuckles on my throat. But maybe—yes! Immersion. Perhaps I can immerse myself in the Captain and then—

(Presses her temples and tries  
to reach him in a trance-like whisper)

Listen, mon Capitaine: You do, you do want me all to yourself. And when you have me all to yourself, you'll make love to me in the highlands overlooking the Bay of Sicily. O yes, my Sicily. My land of roots and ruts and riverdercis. Yes! When we get to Sicily—

**WOMAN**

(Voice off. As if over a distant megaphone)

Siiiiiiiiciiiiiiillyyy. Siiiiiiiiciiiiiiillyyy. Siiiiiiiiciiiiiiillyyy.

**MADELEINE**

What? Who said that?

**WOMAN**

(Off. As if over a distant megaphone )

Look down. The lifeboat.

**MADELEINE**

O my! A woman! In a lifeboat.

(Woman moves in, dimly seen,  
in the shadows)

**WOMAN**

(As if over a distant megaphone)

Are you Madeleine Favorini?

**MADELEINE**

(Through cupped hands, calling off)

Yes. But how did *you* know?

**WOMAN**

We got a mailgram. Are you sure *you* are Madeleine Favorini?

**MADELEINE**

(Through cupped hands)

Yes. Of course.

**WOMAN**

Then you will come *WITH ME!*

(The Woman quickly moves to Madeleine, covers Madeleine's mouth and drags her back to the table)

And this knife I hold at your throat will tell you that I mean business. Does this knife tell you that I mean business?

**MADELEINE**

Yes. This knife tells me that you mean business!

**WOMAN**

Good. Then I will row to *his* island. The knife at my side.

(She releases Madeleine and, facing Madeleine, rows)

And you will not cry out.

**MADELEINE**

And I do not cry out. Because I am too frightened. . . .And then we are lost in the sea's mist.

(The Voice of Amalia is heard)

And the woman rowing, becomes a heaving specter. And we glide into something. . .what. . . Out of time. And the only sounds are that heartbreaking song and the soft splash against the boat and the blood pounding behind my eyes until I think I see—mygod, out there. . .the Sea God's son, oyes — Poseidon's son, the mighty Triton — the Sea God with a fishtail instead of legs. . . .And he's riding on the back of a sea monster, on wave-tips of foam — trumpeting on a humongus conch shell his joy to all the heavens and to all the world! and—look! —behind him—the fifty Nereids, goddesses of the sea and see? They're calming the waves for Zeus—yes, see? See? —Zeus! There! A white bull now, carrying the frightened, beautiful Europa to Crete and. . . — mygod! — she looks like me?

**(The Voice of Amalia--OUT)**

**WOMAN**

**We have arrived.**

**MADELEINE**

**Yes. Land. Is this Sicily?**

**WOMAN**

**No. It is an island off the coast of Sicily.**

**(The Woman gets down from the table;  
takes stirrups and pulls table in place)**

**MADELEINE**

**And I'm carried up. . .along narrow paths. . .into the rocks and in front  
of . . .caves. —And along the way we are met by. . .bandits! Bandits who join  
us and we climb up and into the rocks and stop on a plateau before . . .an  
impressive man! He wears a mask.**

**LA BANDIDA**

**The impressive man, wearing a mask is . . . El Bandido Grandido — *Chief  
Rebel*: He of the legendary schlong! . . .I am La Bandida, the First Woman of El  
Bandido Grandido. He does not share his bedroll with me any longer. But,  
graciously, he keeps me on to cut his toenails, scratch his back, pluck the gray  
hairs from his chest.**

**(gently touches his face and  
outlines his mask)**

**Wipe away the tears from his mask.**

**EL BANDIDO**

**Do we have the right woman?**

**LA BANDIDA**

**As we approached the island, the voice of Amalia was heard.**

**EL BANDIDO**

**Then you are MF?**

**MADELEINE**

**My name is Madeleine Favorini.**

(He leans against the table)

LA BANDIDA

El Bandido! Is there pain?

EL BANDIDO

No. No. Dizziness. Light headed. Because she is here and I am saved.

MADELEINE

Saved? Because of me?

LA BANDIDA

Only a female with the initials "MF" can allow El Bandido Grandido his "full out rest."

MADELEINE

"Full out rest?"

LA BANDIDA

Look at me. I am trembling. I have spent my life waiting, hoping for this moment, but now that it is here, I am shaken. It is best that I, La Bandida, crouch by La Campfire and La Kettle, and fix us a hearty meal of La Beef Bourguignon. While I continue to tremble and think on this.

(She moves away to tremble and think on this)

EL BANDIDO

And you, MF, will sit on the wagon which is now at the side of my tent overlooking a bridge—a bridge that bridges this island with the island of Sicily—yes, the island I know you need to get to. While I, I lean my lower back against the cart. Like so. And rest on my two elbows. Like so. And cock my head a bit to one side to affect a romantic air. Like so. And you and I, MF, will talk as we look out toward the island of Sicily. And you, La Bandida, when I give you the signal, you will stop trembling and you will immerse yourself in my story.

. . .Once, at a tavern in Portugal, a woman sang.

(The *Voice of Amalia* is heard)

I was passing through from some rebellion I had instigated and which, in the long run, would not change anything . . . when I heard the voice. I was outside, not even in the tavern, but the voice stopped me. For suddenly, in the midst of all my pain, suddenly, in that voice, I heard — *real* pain. Something from the marrow. Beyond hunger. Beyond betrayal. Beyond injustice. Beyond loneliness. Not the person screaming the pain—but the pain itself. They called

## EL BANDIDO

(Continued)

the woman "Amalia." And when she sang, all rebellions stopped. Everything stopped. But the tears. Look. Look through the tavern window with me, MF, and cry to the pain of Amalia.

(They listen awhile,  
then El Bandido signals La Bandida)

## LA BANDIDA

Then rough hands are laid on him!

(The Voice of Amalia = *OUT*.)

He is dragged from the window his nose marrow is stuck to, and thrown into a dungeon. And then a dwarfish figure comes to him. And its face looks like dripping candle wax. And from its fingers, darts of flame are shot at him as it speaks:

(She now becomes the dwarfish figure;  
shoots fire darts as it speaks.  
El Bandido reacts to each dart  
that hits him)

## LA BANDIDA

"Psht! I am the God Prometheus—psht! —What Prometheus has become: Messenger of pain and revelation! But I don't care anymore. As long as they leave my liver alone. — Psht! Psht! — Listen. Your mother was a goddess. Her husband, a mighty God. Your mother diddled with another God and you were born. —Psht! — In revenge, the mighty God turned your mother into *a giant Koala bear* — psht! psht! Then cursed the baby God-bastard — YOU! — to roam the earth as a rebellious spirit. But when the voice of Amalia is heard — psht!psht! — Amalia, the Muse of Painful Song — when your Koala/mother finds you again — and when you meet a woman with the initials "MF" — you may find a way to your full-out rest. — Psht!Psht! — But before that can happen, this must happen—"

(As La Bandida again)

## LA BANDIDA

(Continued)

And in that dungeon, the Dwarf-Prometheus pulls from the red hot coals beneath a kettle of steaming beef bourguignon, a branding iron with the red hot initials "MF," and brands those initials right through the mask into the face of El Bandido Grandido.

(As the Dwarf-Prometheus.  
she brands El Bandido)

**LA BANDIDA**

**(Continued)**

**"Hisssssssssssssssssssssssss!"**

**(El Bandido and Madeleine scream.  
He writhes on the floor, clutching at his face.**

**As herself)**

**LA BANDIDA**

**(Continued)**

**And in the instant, his face and mask are one! Soldered together!  
Homogenized! Congealed! Laminated! Fused! And, for good measure, the  
Dwarf Prometheus brands that mask again: "Hisssssssssssssssssssssss!"**

**(Madeleine runs to El Bandido. Kneels to him)**

**MADELEINE**

**O God! What! What must I do to help you rest?**

**LA BANDIDA**

**No!**

**(La Bandida pushes Madeleine aside;  
cradles the exhausted El Bandido)**

**LA BANDIDA**

**(Continued)**

**Listen, my darling El Bandido: I have immersed myself in the role of the Wax  
Prometheus many times. And I have always accepted the implications. But,  
this woman's being  
here now deeply troubles me. Consider: We have shared and cared, you and I.  
Felt and dwelt, you and I. Smoked and stroked, you and I. Sighed and cried  
together, you and I. And there was the pain—your pain! And I was pained  
because I could not trigger your rest. Though your pain triggered my pain and  
my desire to help you rest. And I thought that—yes—the finding of "MF" was  
an overriding need, so that your spirit could rest. And now she's here. And  
now I face the reality of what may be—and *what* may be is your going from me.  
No! No! I must tell you that I now loathe this intruding bitch! And want you to  
kick her ass out of here! Right over to Sicily!**

**EL BANDIDO**

**I can't. I must rest. She'll help me rest.**

**MADELEINE**

**LOOK! THOSE MEN! WITH GUNS!**

**EL BANDIDO**

**It's Baron Rathjib! The dictator and archenemy of all rebels!**

**LA BANDIDA**

**He's discovered our camp!**

**EL BANDIDO**

**Defend yourselves!**

**(They mime shooting rifles, pistols,  
machine guns, etc., while making shooting and  
explosion sounds with their mouths)**

**MADELEINE**

**OmyGod it's real! Real fighting. And real bullets. And—and OGod that rebel!  
Just shot!. . .dead at my feet.**

**(Sounds out.  
El Bandido and La Bandida freeze)**

**What must it be like to be dead? And why do I concern myself with that?  
There's no way I can feel what a dead man feels. And why am I picking up the  
dead man's gun? And what must it be like to *be* a gun? And why do I concern  
myself with *that*?**

**(Shooting sounds up again)**

**OGod!—Look—Enemy with eye patch—About to—About to shoot El Bandido  
Grandido! No! NO!**

**(Makes hand of gun, aims, makes  
shooting sounds with her mouth.**

**Silence)**

**EL BANDIDO**

**Good Christ! You shot Baron Rathjib himself!**

**LA BANDIDA**

**Beginner's luck. *Shit!***

**EL BANDIDO**

**Now they will really swarm all over us. Quick! Into the caves! "MF," La  
Bandida: Onto the cart!**

**(They get onto the table)**

**Now I will pull. . .**

(Madeleine and La Bandida vocally react to the journey; heavy breathing, grunts, shivers, ooh's, ah's, clicking on of flashlights, etc. El Bandido grabs onto the stirrups. Pulls in place)

**EL BANDIDO**

(Continued)

Up this incline and. . .through the lock-jaw of the cave. . .There. Now stop!

**LA BANDIDA**

Click!

**EL BANDIDO**

No, La Bandida! Do not switch on La Flashlight yet!

**LA BANDIDA**

Un-click!

**EL BANDIDO**

Now. Adjust to the dark. Both of you. Wait until those pin-points of light fade. . .There. Adjust to the damp. Let clamminess envelop you. Seep into your bones. Get used to your marrow shivering. . .Is your marrow shivering?

(Madeleine and La Bandida vocally shiver)

Good. Adjust to the hollow sound of my voice—and to the smell. Like odorless flowers that *do* have an odor, but no sweet. . .All right. Now we can move. Down this incline. . .around this turn. . .up this incline. Stop! This is as far as I know. But I sense we must go deeper to be safe this time. . .Now, La Bandida, switch on La Flashlight!

**LA BANDIDA**

Click!

**MADELEINE/LA BANDADA**

O! O! oooooOOO!

**EL BANDIDO**

All right. Now up this narrow bend. . .carefully. . .Listen! That bubbling. Hundreds of feet down. . .AH! OF COURSE! "*The Ravine Of Boiling Ooze!*" God, the stories as a boy! Giant snakes. Jaws of Tyrannosaurus Rex. Sabers for teeth. Two assholes for eyes. Belching smog and—NO! La Bandida! Don't shine La Flashlight down!

**MADELEINE**

Help! I'm fall—

**EL BANDIDO**

**"MF!"**

**MADELEINE**

**Help me! Just by my—two hands. Holding on—Body—legs. . .dangling. . .**

**EL BANDIDO**

**I can't get to you! Too narrow. La Bandida, you—**

**MADELEINE**

**Ahhh! She's stepping—on—my hands! Don't! La Bandida!**

**LA BANDIDA**

**Yes! Yes! Down down—into the Ravine of Boiling Ooze!**

**MADELEINE**

**No! Help!**

**EL BANDIDO**

**La Bandida! Do this and I'll never ever again allow you to wipe away the tears from my mask!**

**LA BANDIDA**

**—I'll help her!**

**MADELEINE**

**O! O. o. good. yes.**

**EL BANDIDO**

**"MF," are you back on the cart?**

**MADELEINE**

**I'm on the cart.**

**LA BANDIDA**

**She's on the cart. But the cart. . .it's. . .**

**MADELEINE**

**O!!! It's moving. Starting to roll. . .down. . .**

**LA BANDIDA**

**Ei Bandido Grandido! Jump on! Jump on!**

**EL BANDIDO**

**I'm. . .almost. . .on. . .**

I've got you. . .one hand. . .	LA BANDIDA
And. . .I've got. . .the other.	MADELEINE
I'm. . .ON!	EL BANDIDO
I'm OFF! Sllllllllllllllllllllll—ping. . .	LA BANDIDA
La Bandida!	EL BANDIDO
O my God! Down!	MADELEINE
Down!	EL BANDIDO
DooooooooooooooooowwwwwwwwwN!	LA BANDIDA
MADELEINE and EL BANDIDO	
Into the Ravine of Boiling Ooze!	
And we're still rolling.	MADELEINE
Turning!	EL BANDIDO
Through a cavern!	MADELEINE
Down an alley!	EL BANDIDO
Over a MyGodPRECIPICE!	MADELEINE
A runway!	EL BANDIDO

**MADELEINE**

**Blackness! Blackness again! But we're on flat land!**

**EL BANDIDO**

**And we're rolling to . . .a . . .**

**MADELEINE and EL BANDIDO**

**Stop! . . .AND LIGHT!**

**MADELEINE**

**I'm blinded! I'm blind!**

**EL BANDIDO**

**The dazzle! "*The Dungeon of Dazzle!*" Bury your face in my shoulder, MF, until you can take the light. . . .There now. There. There. Now, slowly, turn and open your eyes.**

**. . .Can you see?**

**MADELEINE**

**. . .yes. . .Yes myGod yes.**

**EL BANDIDO**

**A rotunda. Look up. A natural dome.**

**MADELEINE**

**. . .So high.**

**EL BANDIDO**

**And the stones.**

**MADELEINE**

**. . .Diamonds?**

**EL BANDIDO**

**Rubies?**

**MADELEINE**

**Garnets?**

**EL BANDIDO**

**. . .Like stars.**

**MADELEINE**

**. . .and the walls. . .**

The jagged walls. . .	EL BANDIDO
Chunks of—Emeralds?	MADELEINE
. . .Sapphires?	EL BANDIDO
. . .Diamonds?	MADELEINE
Like bricks of stained glass. Shattered.	EL BANDIDO
Jaggèd.	MADELEINE
And sucking to the wall.	EL BANDIDO
And—look—up. The Stalactites. Gold.	MADELEINE
Listen. Water. Rushing.	EL BANDIDO
Soothing.	MADELEINE
Escape route?	EL BANDIDO
Calming.	MADELEINE
Horrible reminder!	EL BANDIDO
Of what?	MADELEINE
Of La Bandida. Falling into The Ravine of Boiling Ooze.	EL BANDIDO

**MADELEINE**

O, don't cry. Please don't cry, my Deedo.

(Radiant discovery; great delight)

There. "Deedo." I've found my own name for you. Deedo.

**DEEDO**

La Bandida—gone. So horribly. Mother. Mistress. Friend. Gone.

**MADELEINE**

My Deedo. I was your protector when I shot Baron Rathjib. I'll be your mother. I'll be your friend. I'll be your new La Bandida. And I, too, will wipe away the tears from your mask.

**DEEDO**

For always?

**MADELEINE**

For always.

**EL BANDIDO**

Or only until you get the chance to get to Sicily?

**MADELEINE**

No, no, not without you. We'll go there together.

**DEEDO**

O "MF." Keep whatever Sicily means to you a dream, a distant longing. Keep the Sicilian lemon blossoms in the nostrils of your imagination. Not in the teeth of Sicily's real jaw. Because that jaw will chomp on you.

**MADELEINE**

No. It is my place of roots and ruts and riverdicis, is Sicily.

**DEEDO**

It is a place that requires rebels and therefore is corrupt. As all places require rebels and as all places are corrupt. I have been there. To Sicily. Have triggered a rebellion there. But many more rebellions are required.

**MADELEINE**

If rebellion is what my Sicily needs, let me help you rebel there. As I have helped you fight and kill Baron Rathjib. As I have helped you stop your tears. Here, in my comfort. In this wonderful "Dungeon of Dazzle."

**DEEDO**

Comfort, yes. But only a respite. Never full-out rest. And full-out rest is what I must have and what only you can give me. Only you can help me to die.

**MADELEINE**

“Die!?” Is that what you’re talking about? Dying?

**DEEDO**

Of course! Dying! "Full-out rest" is just a bullshit phrase to cut the edge. Dying. Dying! . . .Gods I'm so tired.

**MADELEINE**

But I thought. . .I don't know. I didn't think, I guess.

**DEEDO**

That's probably because of what you've probably got. It gets in the way of your thinking.

**MADELEINE**

No, it's because I love you.

(Pause)

There. Like I've given you a name, my Deedo, I've now given us a phrase. A phrase I've never used before. Because it had no meaning. And it comes, this phrase, out of your wanting to die and my not wanting to face it. . . .That must be what love is. Marrow-deep love, anyway. Not wanting to face your loved-one dying.

**DEEDO**

(Gently)

Then love must also be its opposite. The need to face that death. For, finally, one of the two will die. And one of the two will remain to look on. So facing the unfaceable is also love.

**MADELEINE**

But you! You can live forever!

**DEEDO**

But I can't bear to anymore! Help me, "MF!"

**MADELEINE**

No! No! Anyway—I don't know how to give you what you want!

**DEEDO**

Listen!

(Growling heard off)

MADELEINE  
What is it?

(Enter a giant Koala bear)

DEEDO  
It's a giant Koala bear!

KOALA  
Snoon! Snoon!

MADELEINE  
Watch out! It's coming this way!

DEEDO  
Can it. . .can it be?!

MADELEINE  
What, Deedo? What?

KOALA  
Snoon! Snoon!

DEEDO  
. . .madre mia. Meine Mutter. MUM! . . .It's mother.

MADELEINE  
Mother?

DEEDO  
Don't you remember, "MF?" What the Dwarf Prometheus said? A God changed my mother into a giant Koala bear. Then put the curse on me. *She* was there. Don't you see? That means she knows how to un-curse me.

KOALA/MOTHER  
Yaooooooon! Yaooooooon!

DEEDO  
Look how she holds out her arms. She wants me to come to her. To embrace me—or! . . .maybe to. . .CRUSH me.  
—Yes! That may be the answer—an embracing crush from my mother!

KOALA/MOTHER  
Niaaneen! Niaaneen!

**MADELEINE**

(Distantly)

. . .she won't crush you. . .it's all right, Deedo. She only wants to embrace you.

**KOALA/MOTHER**

Yaooooooooon! Yaooooooooon!

**MADELEINE**

I understand her. It *is* your mother. Forced to live here all these years. Praying for her son to come along. And now he's here and she only wants to hold him.

**KOALA/MOTHER**

Yaooooooooon! Yaooooooooon!

**DEEDO**

But I need more than an embrace! I need—

**MADELEINE**

Forget what you think you need! Just go to her, Deedo! Take the moment! If a mother offers you her arms, you must never refuse! No matter how hairy she is!

(Deedo goes to his crouching Koala/Mother.  
She cradles her son in a Pietà)

**MADELEINE**

(Continued)

My God, I'm inside both of them. Both! Good Christ. What is going on in them will break my head! The churning!--Bubbling!--Yanking!--Deep sighing gulp of. . .what. . .Longing. —o!—O! She's telling me--the Koala/Mother's telling me how to make her son die! NO! I DON'T WANT TO KNOW! I— . . .too late. I know my God I know.

**MOTHER**

And I can become myself again. Before I die.

(She slowly stands erect)

**DEEDO**

Look! Mother *is* changing back to her former self. . . .She's beautiful.

## MOTHER

"Deedo." That's a fine name "MF" gave to you. Deedo. I have found you. I have caressed you. You have looked on your mother as she used to be. Now I can die. Before you. As I should. And, Deedo. I have told "MF" *how* you can die. Now *she* must tell you.

(She begins to dematerialize)

Then you'll follow me. . . .We're the last, my son. . . .All the other Gods are dead.

(She's gone. Pause)

DEEDO

"MF?" You really know?

MADELEINE

Yes. I was inside both of you.

DEEDO

Tell me.

MADELEINE

No. I want you here immersed in me.

DEEDO

ooooooooooooooooOOOOOOOO

MADELEINE

--Listen, Deedo. Before—a journey ago — I felt all sewn up. But becoming all those others has — . . .yes! — it has cut the thread. Opened me up! Totally. Has made me feel one long tunnel. Now—*if I want* — I can mount . . . telephone poles. Skyscrapers. Giant Sequoias. Capitol domes. The entire Italian Alps! YES! I recline and my openness is as powerful as a million Hoovers. And a humongous procession can be sucked in. Truck fleets. Giant discarded D.C. 10s. A thousand teenage boys on skateboards. The Boston Marathon. Hundreds of illegal aliens streaming into me—the juice of me. And I suck it all in, yes . . .yes. . . .Yes! YES! I, Madeleine Favorini, am now the Vacuum Vagina of the World! I suck in all the world's debris, redundancies, fads and pain. And when I've anointed them all with my life's fluid, and my belly skin is stretched to transparent—*THEN* I push them all out in one great Lamaze effort. Flush them out of me in one cleansing tidal wave! . . .And because they've all been part of me, I can be part of them. —But you. . .*you* I'll keep forever—warm behind some secret fold in me until. . .until I die. But you won't. Because my death contraction will push you out for you to journey on and on and on and on and—

**DEEDO**

(In Sicilian)

—Maddalena! Dimmi comu possu muriri, e ti odiu pi sempre!

(Pause)

**MADELEINE**

I understand! . . . I understand your Sicilian! . . ."Tell me how I can die," you said. . . "or I will hate you forever."

(She answers in perfect Sicilian)

Deedo, no vuoi diri chissu.

**DEEDO**

Yes, Madeleine, I do mean that.

(Continued. In Sicilian)

Tu criri ca ju possu amari a fimmina ca tieni'u puturi di libirarimi do duluri, ma invece decidi di lassarimi no' duluri? Egoista. Egoista Maddalena.

**MADELEINE**

o my god. You said—you said, "Do you think I could love the woman who can free me from pain but who chooses, instead, to keep me *in* pain? And then you called me. . . ."Selfish."

(In Sicilian)

Ma Deedo, Deedo. Chi possu fari?

**DEEDO**

I will tell you what you can do. If you want the memory of my love and gratitude to stay with you—until *you* die—then you *must* tell *me* how to die.

**MADELEINE**

(In Sicilian)

O povera, povera Maddalena.

**DEEDO**

Not poor! Rich! Rich Madeleine! When you can make someone so happy.

(In Sicilian)

Maddalena, dimmi. Dimmi.

(Pause)

**MADELEINE**

E semplici, Deedo. Troppu semplici. Basta ca Maddalena Favorini tira 'ssa mascara da faccia tua.

**DEEDO**

Yes, that *is* simple. Elegantly simple. All Madeleine Favorini has to do is rip the mask from Deedo's face.

(Pause)

Then do it.

(Pause)

**MADELEINE**

Listen.

(The *Voice of Amalia* is heard)

**DEEDO**

The voice of Amalia.

**MADELEINE**

Why now? What does that mean?

**DEEDO**

That means there will be pain. Lots of pain.

**MADELEINE**

No!

**DEEDO**

That's what it is. Life is. Pain. And how will I know I've left it—*life*—unless I leave it in pain? Come. Here. I, myself, will place your hands on my mask.

**MADELEINE**

No!

**EL BANDIDO**

There. Now —Tira 'ssa mascara! Rip.

**MADELEINE**

I'll kiss it instead!

**DEEDO**

—Rip it off

**MADELEINE**

(Kissing him)

—There! There!

**DEEDO**

Useless! Useless! I can't feel your lips through the mask!

**MADELEINE**

Yes. Yes! I want to kiss your face!

(Madeleine rips the mask from Deedo's face!  
Deedo screams, falls back onto the table.  
Voice of Amalia mixes with Deedo's loud  
reverberating scream.

Silence)

**MADELEINE**

Sponge of blood. Once a face. I did that.

(She kisses Deedo's face)

You were right, Deedo: Now that the mask is off, my lips can feel your face.

(Madeleine kisses Deedo again.  
Then she moves the table  
—with Deedo on it—  
offstage.

Pause.)

**MADELEINE**

(Continued)

Alone. . . .But can I be alone? When I can immerse myself in—anyone?—  
anyplace?

. . .Anything.

(The two actors who played all the other  
characters are now dimly seen and whisper)

What's that?! . . .Why, it's bits and pieces of all the words from all the people  
I've immersed myself in, on my journey! . . .Listen! Now it becomes a chant, a  
kind of song. And listen to how it rises. Seems to want to lift off, rise into  
another place! And I, I seem to want to rise with them—the words! Be one with  
the words. Fly with the

## MADELEINE

(Continued)

words through the fluorocarbons and ozone hole and *not* though up in eternity! . . . Yes! Up! Up!

(Madeleine appears to ascend.  
The dimly-seen actors dematerialize.  
But their words, now  
amplified, continue as a soft wind behind)

## MADELEINE

(Continued)

And now I'm up and I'm moving along. Part of a jet stream of words. Millions of words. Used words. Spent words—but still with the power to move. —Of course! Words don't die. Once they're said they start to move out, and I'm told they move out forever! . . . Oh, Deedo, Deedo, somewhere in this stream are the words we spoke when I gave you your name. Maybe I'll catch up with them! Speak them again as we move toward--  
. . . where?

—Oh! There! There!

The black edge of time!

No! No! I still can't face that!

Deedo, Deedo, I've got to stop!

I'll become. . . I'll become. . .

—a new constellation! Yes! Constellation "Mouth!"

No! Constellation "Dragon Mouth!" Yes.

And I station my mouth, my dragon's mouth, at the rim of it all where nothing but blackness spreads out.

Stick out in the void my dragon's tongue—made up of the stuff of a billion stars—and I light up the dark for Madeleine Favorini. . . and for all of those moving words!

(The whispering wind of words  
crescendos; then suddenly cuts out)

## MADELEINE

(Continued)

The words move out. And I remain.

(Pause)

Silent.

(Pause)

## MADELEINE

(Continued)

Too silent?

(Pause)

And is this what infinity looks like? Feels like?  
Endless. Bottomless. Topless.

(Pause)

Silent.

(Pause)

Frightening?

(Pause)

...Listen.

(We hear the Voice of Amalia)

The voice of Amalia.

(She listens for a long while.)

**MADELEINE**

(Continued)

That means there's pain.

(Slowly, she smiles)

It's all right then.

...Yes.

(She keeps smiling  
as the *Voice of Amalia*  
continues through the  
Universe)

***CURTAIN***