

MADWOMAN

By
Oded Gross
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Based on
The Madwoman of Chaillet
By
Jean Giraudoux

Oded Gross
2 Madison Ave.
Montclair, NJ 07042
818-726-1799
Odedgross@sbcglobal.net
www.odedgross.com

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CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Countess Auriela: 50s, Female, any race - The charming yet eccentric proprietor of Cafe Chaillot. Also known as The Madwoman of Chaillot.

Ragpicker: 30s - 50s, Male, person of color - A struggling, yet cheerful and world-wise artist making ends meet selling rags and trying not to get shot.

Iris: 20s, Female, any race - A well-educated and environmentally mindful waitress who falls in love with Bogdan.

Jesús: 20s, Male, Latino - An illegal immigrant with a conscience who has read a lot of books in particular books on wolves and has been kept in a cage for the last 10 years of his life. He is in love with Iris.

Chairman: 40s, Male - A greedy and nefarious corporate bigwig who'd rather make money than spend it, and who has cultivated a plan to make millions.

Deputy Mayor: 50s, Male - An irritable, condescending, also nefarious and power hungry Deputy Mayor, who seems to get his buttons easily pushed, in particular by the Prospector.

Prospector: 30s, Male - The nicest, smartest yet lowest ranking member of the nefarious men plotting nefarious things. He is keenly interested in being famous.

Officer Stevens: 40s, Male, Any race - A police officer on his day off begrudgingly getting roped into saving lives and doing his duty and stuff like that.

Sewer Man: 40s, Male, Any race - He works in the sewers and may or may not be the King of the Sewer People, a group of people that may or may not exist.

Celia: 20s -50s, Female, any race - A struggling artist, like the Ragpicker, only her art form is magic. She is not so bright, but a delight to be around. She looks nothing like Dominique, though they're twins.

Dominique: 20s - 50s, Female, any race - A struggling artist also. A contortionist, to be specific. Smarter than Finley, though less delightful to be around. She looks nothing like Finley, though they're twins.

Mme Gabrielle: 50s, Female, any race - A friend of Auriela's, equally charming, also eccentric, that is if you think traveling with an invisible dog is atypical. Otherwise, she's quite normal.

Mme Constance: 50s, Female, any race - Another friend of Auriela's, also charming, also eccentric in that she has a number of imaginary friends roaming around inside her head.

Mime: 21 - 100, any gender, any race - She is a mime. Not a very good one.

Vice President: 21 - 100, any gender, any race - A rich and evil Vice President.

Senior Vice President: 21 - 100, any gender, any race - A rich and evil Senior Vice President.

Executive Vice President: 21 - 100, any gender, any race - A rich and evil Executive Vice President.

Senior Executive Vice President: 21 - 100, any gender, any race - A rich and evil Senior Executive Vice President.

Despot: 21 - 100, any gender, any race - a ruler with absolute power, and who exercises it in an oppressive way.

Dictator: 21 - 100, any gender, any race - a ruler with total power, which he obtained by force.

Lobbyist: 21 - 100, any gender, any race - a person who takes part in an organized attempt to influence legislators.

In addition to the above, there is also in this play thousands of the world's most rich and evil people. Double casting is permitted.

In fact, the play is designed to be played by 10 actors.

SYNOPSIS:

A mighty syndicate of nefarious business men, politicians and opportunists wish to exploit the untouched deposits of oil under the streets of a small pristine town, at the expense of the humanity, beauty, and truth that reside above. The free souls of the town, led by Countess Auriela, the Madwoman of Chaillot, a cafe at the center of the village, oppose the evil men and eventually triumph by literally removing the syndicate from the world.

There is one song and a reprise of that song in this play, demos of which can be heard at:
<https://soundcloud.com/oded-gross/sets/madwoman-1>

Original workshop production of *Madwoman* was commissioned and presented at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, NY in March of 2020. This production was under the direction of Matt Chiorini, with sets designed by Karel Blakeley, and costumes designed by Lindsey Voorhees.

Translated by Orlando Ocampo

ACT 1

We are in the center of a small town. We see the outdoor seating of a quaint cafe. *

The CHAIRMAN, DEPUTY MAYOR and PROSPECTOR enter and wait to be seated.

CHAIRMAN

Today is the day, my friends. Soon, Deputy Mayor, the promotion will be yours, and all the power that comes with it.

DEPUTY MAYOR

And you, Mr. Chairman, will have more money than you can spend in 12 lifetimes.

PROSPECTOR

And I will be famous. Everyone will know this discovery is mine and that my name is -

CHAIRMAN

(Suddenly discreet)

Shh! ...No names! *

PROSPECTOR

...What?

CHAIRMAN

No names, Mr. Prospector. This is a public place, after all. Best to keep things on the down low, lest the townspeople here get wind of what we're up to.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Re: the townspeople inside the cafe)

I don't think we need to worry about these imbeciles. They don't look too bright.

CHAIRMAN

These are the people you hope to represent.

DEPUTY MAYOR

And if they were smart, they would have voted for me in the first place.

PROSPECTOR

(Playfully)

Now you have to take part in our nefarious scheme in order to gain the position of power you so desperately hunger for.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I don't hunger for anything.

IRIS, the waitress, enters and comes over to seat them. *

IRIS

Table for three?

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Irritably)

Please! I'm starving!

IRIS

(Re: The seating)

Inside I presume? Because of the heat.

CHAIRMAN

No, no. Outside. It's more private. And the view I'm told is to die for.

IRIS

As you wish.

Iris seats them at a table in the corner.

IRIS

It's odd it's so hot and yet the sky is so grey. Tomorrow I hear it will be unseasonably cold.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Snaps)

What are you, the weatherman?

IRIS

(Unfazed, correcting him)

Weatherperson.

(Then, handing them some menus)

I'll be back in a moment to take your order.

CHAIRMAN

Thank you.

Iris exits.

CHAIRMAN

(To the Prospector)

I don't like to think of our scheme as nefarious.

PROSPECTOR

I beg your pardon?

CHAIRMAN

You said earlier he has to take part in our "nefarious" scheme in order to gain the position of power he so desperately wants.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Correcting)

Desperately deserves.

CHAIRMAN

I don't like to think of our scheme as nefarious.

PROSPECTOR

We are still planning to murder someone?

CHAIRMAN

We are, and that part is slightly sinful. But it is for the greater good.

DEPUTY MAYOR

So that I can become mayor.

CHAIRMAN

Yes. And as mayor, you can give me the permits I need to drill in the center of town.

PROSPECTOR

And collect the millions of gallons of oil that I discovered lies beneath.

CHAIRMAN

Right.

The Chairman rubs his hands together with a greedy smirk on his face.

CHAIRMAN

Millions of gallons of oil that will make us millions of gallons of money.

PROSPECTOR

A gallon actually measures liquid not money.

CHAIRMAN

(Correcting himself)

That will make us millions of liters of money.

PROSPECTOR

That's like a third less money.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Either way, soon we will be richer than our wildest dreams.

CHAIRMAN

I'm already richer than my wildest dreams. I want to be richer than that! I want to have ounces of money!

DEPUTY MAYOR

And you will have it, provided you eliminate the Mayor as promised, and the oil is actually down there as the Prospector says.

PROSPECTOR

Oh, it's down there all right. Or my name isn't-

CHAIRMAN

Shh!

*

PROSPECTOR

Right. Sorry. No names. Forgot. Though I don't really see the problem.

CHAIRMAN

Don't see the problem? Are you mad? Wanting to say your name out loud so the whole town can hear you? Absolutely not! Discretion is our friend.

PROSPECTOR

I could whisper my name. That would be discreet.

CHAIRMAN

(Loudly)

It's too risky. Think of the consequences if the people here found out we were planning to murder someone.

PROSPECTOR

Why is it OK to say that out loud, but I can't even whisper my name?

CHAIRMAN

Because murder happens all the time. But that doesn't mean these people know who did it.

PROSPECTOR

I think they would assume we did it. You did just say we were planning to murder someone.

CHAIRMAN

I promise you, Mr. Prospector, you will get the fame you crave, but for now, it is our anonymity that keeps us safe. Trust me.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I think what keeps us safe is the fact that these people are imbeciles.

*

*

CHAIRMAN

I don't deny that, Deputy Mayor. But that's what makes them dangerous. They don't know they're imbeciles. They think they know what it means for something to be for the greater good. But I assure you their definition is much different than ours.

PROSPECTOR

What's their definition?

CHAIRMAN

(With a roll of the eyes)

The good which benefits the greater community.

PROSPECTOR

And what's our definition?

DEPUTY MAYOR

The good which benefits us!

The Prospector nods.

CHAIRMAN

More specifically, the good that benefits the greater individual.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Which is us! We are the greater therefore we deserve the greater good.

(Then)

And why are we the greater and they the lesser? Because they say no to life. They say no to the opportunities that come their way all the time. If only they would see them and reach out and take them, they could be greater, too. But they don't do that. We do that. We say yes to everything.

A ukulele-toting RAGPICKER approaches.

RAGPICKER

(Cheerfully)

You folks want to see a little show?

DEPUTY MAYOR

Absolutely not! Are you insane?

CHAIRMAN

(Admonishingly)

Deputy Mayor.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Defensively, to the Chairman)

We are in the middle of a conversation.

The Ragpicker, who remains cheerful, raises his hands as if under arrest. *

RAGPICKER

My apologies. I had no idea. No need to call the police or anything. We'll come back.

He refers to the two other performers that accompany him, CELIA and DOMINIQUE. *

CHAIRMAN

Perhaps a little later.

RAGPICKER

Absolutely. You won't want to miss this show. The twins here are quite fantastic.

CHAIRMAN

Twins? They look nothing alike.

RAGPICKER

You can be twins and not be identical.

PROSPECTOR

They're probably fraternal.

DEPUTY MAYOR

They're obviously not fraternal, they're girls. *

PROSPECTOR

Fraternal meaning developed from two separately fertilized ova.

DEPUTY MAYOR

You can't define words with other words that have no meaning.

RAGPICKER

...Either way, these two are just outstanding.

(To Celia and Dominique) *

Go ahead, tell them what you do.

Celia magically makes a bouquet of flowers appear. *

CELIA *

I do magic.

DEPUTY MAYOR *

We're not interested in anything that either of you can do.

DOMINIQUE

I'm a contortionist.

Dominique raises her leg above her head.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Tell me more.

RAGPICKER

Both of them are quite wonderful. Pure entertainment.

DEPUTY MAYOR

What are you? Their manager?

RAGPICKER

Me? No. I'm a ragpicker.

PROSPECTOR

A ragpicker? What does that entail?

RAGPICKER

I pick rags.

DEPUTY MAYOR

That doesn't sound very entertaining.

*

*

RAGPICKER

It's not I'm afraid. But when I'm not picking rags you can find me performing on the stage. "To be or not to be? That is the question!"

PROSPECTOR

You do Shakespeare?

RAGPICKER

No. Mostly musicals; I can sing like an angel. But my dream is to do something dramatic. You know, play a role that really reflects what's going on in the world around us. Something complex and dark and truthful.

(Then)

Or a cyborg. That would be fun, too.

Suddenly, COUNTESS AURIELA enters in an impressive manner. She is dressed in a grand fashion, at least it was 25 years ago or more. Topping off her ensemble is a large, frilly, well-worn hat of a time long gone. Certainly not in the style of the present.

AURIELA

Hello everyone and welcome to Cafe Chaillot! It is I, the Countess.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Wonderful! Another crazy vagrant.

*

*

Celia and Dominique head over to talk with Auriela. *

AURIELA

(To Dominique)

Celia, your witchcraft always amazes me. Let's see some magic. *

DOMINIQUE

I'm not Celia. I'm Dominique. *

AURIELA

Outstanding! How did you do it?

(Then)

Never mind! A magician never reveals her secrets.

On the other side of the courtyard:

DEPUTY MAYOR

Good grief!

(To the Ragpicker)

Isn't there security here that keeps all of you hobos off the street?

RAGPICKER

We're not hobos. We're starving artists.

DEPUTY MAYOR

There's a difference?

RAGPICKER

(Re: The Countess)

And she, sir, is neither. She is the Countess.

CHAIRMAN

Countess? Countess of what?

RAGPICKER

This cafe, I think. Countess Auriela. The Madwoman of Chaillot.

DEPUTY MAYOR

So she is mad? *

RAGPICKER

No.

DEPUTY MAYOR

You just said she was mad.

RAGPICKER

Did I?

DEPUTY MAYOR

You called her the Madwoman of Chaillot. Is she not mad?

RAGPICKER

No more than the rest of us.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Then why is she called the Madwoman of Chaillot? You are not called the Mad Ragpicker of Chaillot.

RAGPICKER

Why would I be? I don't just pick rags. I also act.

AURIELA

(Then, seeing the Ragpicker)

Morgan!

RAGPICKER

Countess.

AURIELA

My word, what are you wearing?

RAGPICKER

Oh this old thing. It's just something I threw on.

The Ragpicker is dressed in a very tattered jacket.

AURIELA

I absolutely love it! I may have to borrow it some day.

RAGPICKER

I'm not sure it will go with your hat.

(Then)

Excuse me, Countess. I think I spy a potential audience inside.

(To the Chairman, Deputy Mayor and
Prospector)

Gentlemen.

*
*
*

DEPUTY MAYOR

Good riddance.

*
*

The Ragpicker crosses to Celia and Dominique and the three enter the cafe. Without missing a beat, Auriela turns her attention to the Chairman, Deputy Mayor and Prospector.

*

AURIELA

Sadly, nothing goes with this hat save for the feather boa that came with it. Unfortunately, that was stolen. But I do hope to get it back... one day... reunite the set. It was gifted to me by my love, Adolphe Adelson... He... died... many years ago. Stung by a bee.

PROSPECTOR

Was he allergic to bees?

AURIELA

No. But the bee stung him in his good ear. He couldn't hear out of the other. And after the bee stung him in the good one, he couldn't hear out of either temporarily.

PROSPECTOR

...So how did he die?

AURIELA

He was hit by a train. I miss him terribly. So, though I no longer have the boa, I still wear the hat. I cherish all of his gifts. He had such good taste.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Irritably)

Madam, we don't care. We're trying to have a conversation.

AURIELA

Oh. I know how difficult that can be. Shall I give you some prompts?

CHAIRMAN

That won't be necessary.

AURIELA

If you were a farm animal, which would you be and why?

CHAIRMAN

I wouldn't be a farm animal.

DEPUTY MAYOR

This is ridiculous!

PROSPECTOR

I'd be a billy goat.

AURIELA

Fascinating. Why, pray tell?

PROSPECTOR

Well, I've always liked goats.

(To the Chairman)

I was raised on goat's milk.

CHAIRMAN

You can get milk from a goat?

PROSPECTOR

You can get milk from lot's of things. Cows, goats, almonds.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I didn't even know almonds had nipples.

AURIELA

And just like that you're having a conversation.

CHAIRMAN

We appreciate your help, but now we need to resume our business discussion.

AURIELA

Trying to come up with that one million-dollar idea, are you?

CHAIRMAN

Something like that.

AURIELA

I tried for years to come up with my one million-dollar idea. Eventually I figured it would be easier to come up with a million one-dollar ideas instead.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Patronizingly)

I presume this diner is one of those ideas.

AURIELA

Yes. Thank you for patronizing my cafe.

OFFICER STEVENS enters heading towards the cafe entrance.

AURIELA

Officer Stevens. I'm so glad you're here.

OFFICER STEVENS

I'm afraid I am not staying, Countess, it's my day off. I have big plans. I just came for a cup of coffee.

AURIELA

I understand. I won't take much of your time. But tell me, how's it going with my case?

He rolls his eyes ever so slightly and shakes his head in a mildly exasperated way.

OFFICER STEVENS

The feather boa case. Yes. I'm afraid we still have no leads on who might have taken it.

AURIELA

But you haven't given up?

OFFICER STEVENS

(Subtly facetious)

No, of course not. It's only been 25 years, why would we give up?

AURIELA

It was such a unique looking scarf. I can't imagine it would be that hard to track down.

OFFICER STEVENS

And yet the thief has remained surprisingly elusive.

(Then)

Have you considered getting another scarf?

AURIELA

I doubt I could find one to go with this hat. Besides, I could never replace it, it was a gift from my love. Have I told you about him. Adolphe Adelson?

OFFICER STEVENS

Let me think.

AURIELA

(Cooing)

He was sooo handsome. He had dark hair and brown eyes and a smile that would just melt your heart. And he wasn't just good looking with clothes on, if you know what I mean.

OFFICER STEVENS

(Parroting precisely)

He was sooo handsome. He had dark hair and brown eyes and a smile that would just melt your heart. And he wasn't just good looking with clothes on, if you know what I mean.

Then:

OFFICER STEVENS

Oh that Adolphe Adelson. Yes, I believe you've mentioned him.

The two walk into the cafe.

DEPUTY MAYOR

My God! What hideous people! All of them. It's like a three ring circus in here with that crazy woman as the ringleader. And the performers? Good grief. Artists are the worst. Busking for scraps. Always willing to settle for the bare minimum. That's why they are among the lessers.

CHAIRMAN

(Agreeing)

They are very different from us. Different priorities. Different values. Different definition of the greater good.

PROSPECTOR

Why don't we teach them the correct definition?

CHAIRMAN

They are resistant to learning it. Should we try to convince them of our correct point of view, they would lash out against us.

PROSPECTOR

Would they?

CHAIRMAN

Absolutely!

DEPUTY MAYOR

They hate us! Hate us simply because we are the greater and they are the lesser. They're jealous! Jealous and unhappy.

*

PROSPECTOR

They don't seem unhappy.

DEPUTY MAYOR

They are, they just don't know it. The lesser people know nothing. We know everything.

Iris returns.

IRIS

You fellas know what you're having?

Beat. The Deputy Mayor slowly picks up the menu.

DEPUTY MAYOR

...No...

CHAIRMAN

Why don't you start by telling us the specials.

IRIS

Of course. Today we have a Boeuf bourguignon, a Cassoulet, a Quiche Lorraine.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Irritably)

Do you have any sandwiches?

IRIS

Croque monsieur.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Did you just threaten me?

IRIS

Croque monsieur? It's a ham and cheese sandwich.

CHAIRMAN

That sounds rich.

IRIS

We also have a special wine today. A Chateau Lafite. \$600.

CHAIRMAN

That sounds very rich. Why is it so expensive?

IRIS

It's a Rothschild.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Rothschild? A Jewish wine?

(Then, to the Chairman)

The Jews are known for their wine.

*

IRIS

The Rothschild family is Jewish. Descending from Germany, I believe.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Germany loves the Jews. That's a historical fact.

IRIS

Most of our regulars obviously couldn't dream of affording the Chateau Lafite, but you folks look like you have a sophisticated palette.

*

CHAIRMAN

Don't think you can flatter us into buying a \$600 bottle of wine. We are far more pragmatic than that.

IRIS

Perhaps then our Cabernet Sauvignon. That's only \$450.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Perfect. We'll take two. And bring me a sandwich.

IRIS

Wonderful. 70% of the proceeds from the sale of the Cabernet gets donated to charity. So it's for the greater good.

They all stare at Iris in disbelief.

DEPUTY MAYOR

The greater good? You know from the greater good?

IRIS

I... believe I do.

DEPUTY MAYOR

And what do you think it means, this greater good?

IRIS

I believe it means the good which benefits the greater community.

PROSPECTOR

(Amazed and amused, to the Chairman)

Oh my God, Chairman, you were right!

CHAIRMAN

I told you.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Half laughing)

These lesser people know nothing.

IRIS

It's not the good which benefits the greater community?

DEPUTY MAYOR

Wrong.

IRIS

I'm pretty sure I'm right.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I'm pretty sure I'm the Deputy Mayor... so... you're wrong.

The Chairman stands and approaches her.

CHAIRMAN

What's your name, miss?

IRIS

Iris.

PROSPECTOR

She's allowed to say her name?

The Chairman waves the Prospector off.

CHAIRMAN

(Re: the Prospector)

In the interest of proving a point to my colleague here, let me ask you a hypothetical question. Suppose we discovered there's oil beneath the town and we wanted to drill for it.

IRIS

Oh, the Mayor would never allow that. He is a huge environmentalist.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Scoffs)

Ugh! Environmentalist. They are so stupid.

CHAIRMAN

Suppose the Mayor were to be killed accidentally in an accident.

IRIS

What kind of accident?

CHAIRMAN

The accidental kind.

DEPUTY MAYOR

A bomb.

IRIS

A bomb? That doesn't sound like an accident.

CHAIRMAN

This is hypothetical. A bomb is accidentally placed hypothetically in a museum that the Mayor will supposedly be in at precisely 12 noon. Then, at precisely 12 noon when the mayor is in said museum, the bomb accidentally goes off. Hypothetically.

DEPUTY MAYOR

And the Mayor is sadly, accidentally, hypothetically killed.

IRIS

That's a lot adverbs.

CHAIRMAN

Suppose that happened and the environmentalist Mayor is replaced with a Deputy Mayor who is somewhat less of an environmentalist.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Environmentalists are stupid!

IRIS

Him?

CHAIRMAN

No, no. This is hypothetical.

(Then)

In any case, this new mayor would allow us to drill for the oil right here in the center of town.

IRIS

OK. And your question is?

CHAIRMAN

Would you not see the drilling of that oil as something that is for the greater good?

IRIS

If you drill for oil here in the center of town you would ruin the town. You'd displace all of the artisans and local shopkeepers who need to be here to make a living. All of the beautiful architecture would no doubt be demolished to make room for the oil derricks: our court house, our library, our museum-

PROSPECTOR

Not the museum. That would already be destroyed when we kill the mayor. Hypothetically.

IRIS

Plus as you pump the oil there is the danger of oil spills, which would contaminate the water, which would kill all the plants and animals and people that live in this town. So, I am not sure I'd see it as something for the greater good.

*
*
*

CHAIRMAN

You understand oil comes from the remains of plants and animals and people.

*
*

IRIS

I am not ignorant of where oil comes from, I just don't see how killing plants and animals and people is something good.

*
*
*

CHAIRMAN

By drilling for the oil today and killing off the plants and animals and people, we are creating more oil for tomorrow. Surely that logic is simple to understand.

*
*
*

IRIS

No, I don't understand that.

*
*

CHAIRMAN

Perhaps you are more ignorant than you realize.

*
*

IRIS

And I certainly don't think it would be for "tomorrow." It takes millions of years for oil to form from the bacterial decomposition of plants and animals. Most of the oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus and sulfur must be removed from the matter, leaving behind a sludge made up mainly of carbon and hydrogen. A sludge which then gets covered by layers upon layers of sand and silt reaching a depth of 10,000 feet or more, resulting in pressure and heat changing those remaining compounds into the hydrocarbons that form into crude oil.

*

CHAIRMAN

...So ignorant.

IRIS

In the millions of years it will take for new oil to be created, if the human race even still exists-

CHAIRMAN

Wow, ignorant and pessimistic.

IRIS

I'd like to think we will have moved beyond fossil fuels and will have found energy sources that are cleaner, more efficient and better for the environment.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Again with the environment? She's a one note nelly, isn't she?

(To Iris)

You know, there is more to life than just protecting the air we breathe and the water we drink and the food we eat.

IRIS

(Anger rising)

I don't know that. And I am inclined to lash out at you for thinking otherwise.

CHAIRMAN

Hold your lashing, Iris. It won't be necessary. Everything we have said here was merely hypothetical to prove a point.

IRIS

Have you proven your point?

CHAIRMAN

I believe we have.

IRIS

(Coldly)

Then I shall get your wine and sandwich and leave you to your day.

Iris exits in a huff.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Feisty young woman.

PROSPECTOR

You had her number right from the start.

CHAIRMAN

Lessers are quite predictable. They always fail to see the big picture.

DEPUTY MAYOR

That's because they are so small minded. Always thinking only of themselves. How will "I" live... if "MY" planet... becomes "IN"habitable? Me. Me. Me.

CHAIRMAN

You're right. If they had their way there'd be no more drilling for oil. No more deforestation, no more animal production. No more fracking.

DEPUTY MAYOR

No more fracking? Surely the lessers enjoy a good fracking. Especially with a politician. Power is an incredible aphrodisiac.

CHAIRMAN

And you're not even mayor yet. Think how much more fracking you'll do after we find that oil.

DEPUTY MAYOR

If we find that oil.

PROSPECTOR

We'll find it! It's there! I can smell it.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I don't smell anything.

PROSPECTOR

I have a heightened sense of smell. I always have.

CHAIRMAN

I have always envied people with heightened senses.

The Ragpicker who has entered calls over from a few tables away.

RAGPICKER

I have a heightened sense of hearing.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Oh criminy! This one again.

The Ragpicker walks over.

RAGPICKER

*

(Cheery)

*

Gentlemen. How was your food?

*

DEPUTY MAYOR

*

We haven't received our food yet.

*

	RAGPICKER	*
	(Optimistically)	*
So far so good then.		*
	PROSPECTOR	*
Do you really have a heightened sense of hearing?		*
	RAGPICKER	*
I have perfect pitch. What's that if not a heightened sense of hearing.		*
	PROSPECTOR	*
What is perfect pitch?		*
	He hands the Prospector his Ukulele.	*
	RAGPICKER	*
Play any note on this ukulele and I can identify it just by hearing it.		*
	The Ragpicker covers his eyes. Prospector plays a note.	*
	RAGPICKER	*
E.		*
	PROSPECTOR	*
	(Impressed)	*
Wow!		*
	(Then)	*
I don't actually know what I played, but I'm assuming it's an E.		*
	RAGPICKER	*
So how about a song? Or even better, a monologue. Something dramatic. Shakespeare, perhaps?		*
	DEPUTY MAYOR	*
We don't want a monologue or a song! We just want to be left alone!		*
	RAGPICKER	*
	(Still cheery, but raising his arms)	*
All right. No need to call the authorities.		*
	Just then Officer Stevens, holding his coffee, and Countess Auriela enter from inside the cafe.	*

	OFFICER STEVENS	*
	(Calling inside the cafe)	*
Yes, Countess, not to worry. We will continue the hunt.		*
	AURIELA	*
I appreciate your diligence, Officer Stevens.		*
	She turns and sees the Ragpicker.	*
	AURIELA	*
Morgan.		*
	RAGPICKER	*
Countess. Officer.		*
	OFFICER STEVENS	*
Why are your hands up in the air?		*
	RAGPICKER	*
Just a safety precaution.		*
	OFFICER STEVENS	*
Right.	(With a bit of a sigh)	*
		*
Countess, farewell.	(Then)	*
		*
	Officer Stevens exits.	*
	AURIELA	*
Find my feather boa.	(Calling after him)	*
		*
Gentlemen, did you order?	(Then, to the Chairman, Deputy Mayor and Prospector)	*
		*
We have.	CHAIRMAN	*
		*
There is an additional special I've just added to the menu.	AURIELA	*
		*

CHAIRMAN	*
We've already ordered.	*
AURIELA	*
A dessert. A sweet cream sorbet mixed with undercooked pieces of chicken. I call it Salvanilla. I'll bring you out some. On the house.	*
DEPUTY MAYOR	*
You can leave it IN the house. We're not interested.	*
AURIELA	*
Morgan, are you going to perform a show?	*
RAGPICKER	*
I... won't be doing a show at the moment. I don't really have a captive audience.	*
AURIELA	*
Nonsense. There are so many other creatures out here just aching to see a show. The Dodo birds and the Woolly Mammoth.	*
RAGPICKER	*
The Dodo birds and Woolly Mammoth are extinct.	*
AURIELA	*
The Black Rhino.	*
RAGPICKER	*
Also extinct.	*
AURIELA	*
The trees. They love a good show.	*
RAGPICKER	*
Really? Because they never tip.	*
Music begins. Slowly the ensemble comes out.	*
RAGPICKER	*
Quite frankly, I'm in disbelief that anyone is interested in seeing a good show anymore.	*
Music begins to play.	*
AURIELA	*
Oh, Morgan. You have to suspend your disbelief.	*
Auriela begins to sing.	*

AURIELA

DO YOU LIKE SUSPENDING YOUR DISBELIEF
 I FIND TAKING IN SOMETHING SURREAL A RELIEF
 FOR ME, IT'S LIKE LIVING A DREAM
 I SIMPLY EMBRACE THE FAIRY TALE AND I'M FREE
 FREE FROM THE WORRIES AWAITING OUT THERE
 A LITTLE IMAGINATION
 AND SUDDENLY I FIND I HAVEN'T A CARE

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

AURIELA AND RAGPICKER

IS IT WRONG
 SUSPENDING YOUR DISBELIEF

*
*
*
*

AURIELA

CAUSE I GOTTA TELL YOU THERE ISN'T A DOWNSIDE I'VE YET TO SEE

*
*

AURIELA AND RAGPICKER

SO, SO LONG - FAREWELL TO THE WORLD OUTSIDE

*
*

AURIELA

HERE IN THE FANTASY I FOUND A WORLD WHERE WE ALL CAN HIDE

*
*

RAGPICKER

CAUSE OUT THERE THE TRUTH CAN BE CRUEL

*
*

AURIELA

SO I DON'T LET THE TRUTH

*
*

RAGPICKER AND AURIELA

GET IN THE WAY OF A REALLY GOOD STORY

*
*

AURIELA AND ENSEMBLE

CAUSE YOU NEVER KNOW
 JUST WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER
 WHEN YOU LET GO OF WHAT'S REAL
 A LITTLE FAITH IN THE FACT
 THAT FICTION IS FUNNER
 I'M SURE YOU'LL SEE THE APPEAL
 BUT HERE'S THE DEAL
 YOU GOT TO BELIEVE
 YOU GOT TO BELIEVE

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

AURIELA

SO WHO'S... WILLING TO COME WITH ME

*
*

CELIA AND DOMINIQUE

ALL THAT'S REQUIRED IS CUTTING ALL CRITICAL FACULTIES

*
*

AURIELA	*
PLEASE... DON'T WORRY YOU'LL BE OK	*
CELIA AND DOMINIQUE	*
YOU'LL BE BACK IN NO TIME UNLESS YOU DECIDE YOU WANT TO STAY	*
RAGPICKER	*
I'LL TURN THE LIGHTS DOWN REAL LOW	*
CELIA, DOMINIQUE AND RAGPICKER	*
CAUSE HERE IN THE DARK	*
IT'S NOT AS HARD TO BLOCK OUT REALITY	*
AURIELA AND ENSEMBLE	*
YOU NEVER KNOW	*
JUST WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER	*
WHEN YOU LET GO OF WHAT'S REAL	*
A LITTLE FAITH IN THE FACT	*
THAT FICTION IS FUNNER	*
I'M SURE YOU'LL SEE THE APPEAL	*
BUT HERE'S THE DEAL	*
Auriela points to the Ragpicker.	*
RAGPICKER	*
YOU GOT TO BELIEVE	*
Auriela points to Celia.	*
CELIA	*
YOU GOT TO BELIEVE	*
Auriela points to a Mime walking across the stage.	*
MIME	*
...	*
She does a little mime.	*
AURIELA	*
YOU GOT TO BELIEVE	*
WHEN I SAY	*
IT'S BETTER THIS WAY	*
I PROMISE IT WON'T BE IN VAIN.	*

AURIELA AND RAGPICKER

CAUSE WHEN YOU BELIEVE IN THE DREAM
 AS MAD AS IT SEEMS
 IT HELPS YOU CONTROL ALL YOUR PAIN

*
 *
 *
 *

AURIELA AND ENSEMBLE

YOU NEVER KNOW
 JUST WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER
 YOU MIGHT EVEN FIND SOMETHING REAL
 BUT THE FACT STILL REMAINS
 TRUTH IS A BUMMER

*
 *
 *
 *
 *

AURIELA

THAT'S WHY I'VE TAKEN THE DEAL
 I GOT TO BELIEVE
 I GOT TO BELIEVE
 I GOT TO BELIEVE
 I GOT TO BELIEVE

*
 *
 *
 *
 *

The song ends. The ensemble all exit, leaving just
 Auriela, the Ragpicker, the Chairman, Prospector and
 Deputy Mayor behind.

*
 *
 *

AURIELA

*

(To the Ragpicker)

Don't give up the dream, Morgan. You'll be a star one day.

*
 *

(To the Chairman, Deputy Mayor and
 Prospector)

I'll get your Salvanilla!

*
 *
 *

Auriela exits back inside.

*

The Prospector holds up the ukulele.

*

PROSPECTOR

Ragpicker, your ukulele.

*
 *

RAGPICKER

Right. Thank you.

*
 *

The Prospector plays one more note then hands the
 instrument back.

*
 *

RAGPICKER

C sharp.

*
 *

PROSPECTOR *
 Amazing! How do you do it? *

He shrugs. *

RAGPICKER *

(Re: The Chairman's blue shirt) *
 You know how you look at his shirt and just know it's blue. I hear that note and I know *
 it's a c sharp. *

(Then) *
 Let me know if you change your mind about a monologue. *

He exits back into the cafe. *

DEPUTY MAYOR
 That Ragpicker is insufferable.

PROSPECTOR
 (Excited)
 Perfect pitch, though. What do you think about that?

CHAIRMAN
 (With slight concern)
 I think I'm color blind.

(Then)
 My shirt is blue?

DEPUTY MAYOR
 All I care about is that the Mayor is killed and that oil is down there.

CHAIRMAN
 (Rallying)
 No matter. Even though I can't see some colors, I can still see the color of money.

PROSPECTOR
 (To the Deputy Mayor)
 The oil is down there.

CHAIRMAN

It's grey, right?

PROSPECTOR

(To the Deputy Mayor)

I would stake my reputation on it.

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Scoffs)

Your reputation. No one knows who you are.

PROSPECTOR

(Re: The Chairman)

They would if he'd let me say my name.

DEPUTY MAYOR

You can't say your name!

CHAIRMAN

He's right, Mr. Prospector. Did not our encounter with Iris the waitress show you just how careful we have to be with what we say?

PROSPECTOR

It did not. You were quite transparent with her.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Under the guise of hypotheticality.

PROSPECTOR

Hypo - That's not a word. And besides, you saw how vexed she was when she left.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Oh, like "vexed" is a word.

CHAIRMAN

(To the Prospector)

What are you saying? Are you concerned Iris saw through our ruse and knows we're actually plotting to kill the Mayor?

PROSPECTOR

I don't know. I do know we made her very upset. I fear she thinks the worst of us.

The Chairman considers this.

CHAIRMAN

She did leave in a huff. You may be right. I'm afraid we may have aroused her suspicion.

DEPUTY MAYOR

What? We can't have that. There can be no loose ends.

CHAIRMAN

No. There can't.

PROSPECTOR

When she comes back perhaps let's be extra kind and make every effort to gain her trust back.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I have a better idea.

Iris returns with their wine and sandwich.

IRIS

(Coldly)

Here are your bottles of wine. And your sandwich.

DEPUTY MAYOR

And here for you, young woman, is a pair of tickets to the museum, free of charge. I understand they are unveiling a wonderful exhibition today precisely at noon that's sure to be quite explosive.

(Then, under his breath giggling to the
Chairman and Prospector)

Get it. Explosive. Because of the bomb.

IRIS

A pair of tickets to the museum?

CHAIRMAN

Consider it a tip for being such a good waitress.

IRIS

I'd rather have a cash tip. I'm quite broke.

CHAIRMAN

A cash tip? You weren't that good a waitress.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Besides, the exhibition I hear is going to make quite an... impression.

(Then, under his breath giggling to the
Chairman and Prospector)

After the bomb explodes it will make an impression in the ground, you understand.

IRIS

I do love their exhibitions.

DEPUTY MAYOR

So why not go? We're your only table and we're done ordering, so what else have you to do?

IRIS

I need to get your bill.

CHAIRMAN

We're not going anywhere. Give it to us when you return.

(Then, under his breath giggling to the
Deputy Mayor and Prospector)

She'll be dead, so... you know... we won't have to pay.

IRIS

Go to the museum? In the middle of my shift? Heck with it! Why not? I deserve a break, after all. Though I don't need two tickets. I don't have anyone to share it with.

She hands one of the tickets back.

DEPUTY MAYOR

What? With your knowledge of how oil is formed, I'd think you'd have the fellas just lining up.

IRIS

Sadly, no.

(Then, re: the remaining ticket)

Thank you so much for this, though. I must admit, I previously thought you gentlemen were terribly rude. Now it's clear I misjudged you. May I ask your names?

CHAIRMAN

No.

Awkward beat.

DEPUTY MAYOR

...Enjoy the museum, though. I think you'll find it just dynamite.

They all burst out laughing. Iris looks at them somewhat confused, but then...

IRIS

...Ok. I'll be back soon. Thank you.

She exits.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Problem solved.

CHAIRMAN

Yes. Wonderful idea. And I love the word play, too. "Explosive!" "Dynamite!" I was going to chime in with an assassination pun, but... those are few and far between.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Speaking of which, did you have any trouble finding someone to assassinate the mayor.

CHAIRMAN

No trouble at all.

DEPUTY MAYOR

You hired a professional, I assume.

CHAIRMAN

A professional assassin? No. They're far too expensive. I found someone else.

DEPUTY MAYOR

An amateur assassin?

CHAIRMAN

He will be after today. I mean, I'm not paying him.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I don't understand. You found someone to detonate the bomb and kill the mayor for free?

CHAIRMAN

It's not as hard as you think.

Who is the fellow?
DEPUTY MAYOR

His name is Jesús.
CHAIRMAN

Hay SOOS?
DEPUTY MAYOR

So we're allowed to say the assassin's name out loud?
PROSPECTOR

CHAIRMAN
(To the Deputy Mayor)
He's not from around here. He's an immigrant.

DEPUTY MAYOR
An immigrant? As the assassin? I don't like that. I don't trust immigrants. They're all a bunch of murderers.

PROSPECTOR
That's usually something you look for in an assassin.

DEPUTY MAYOR
And what if this immigrant decides not to do it?

CHAIRMAN
If he values his life, he won't decide not to do it!

A church bell starts to toll.

PROSPECTOR
We'll find out soon enough. Listen. The church clock is about to strike noon.

CHAIRMAN
Excellent!

PROSPECTOR
Should we move from this spot?

CHAIRMAN
No! I want a front row seat.

DEPUTY MAYOR
How many tolls was that?

*

*

*

*

*

CHAIRMAN

8. Four more!

PROSPECTOR

3, 2, 1, brace!

They all three clench up, close their eyes and hold their ears. Nothing happens.

Slowly the Chairman, Deputy Mayor and Prospector unclench and open their eyes.

DEPUTY MAYOR

The building still stands. What happened to the bomb? Why didn't it go off?

CHAIRMAN

Maybe it's... not yet twelve.

DEPUTY MAYOR

The church bell tolled.

CHAIRMAN

The church clock must be wrong.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Churches are never wrong about anything!

The Prospector looks at his watch.

PROSPECTOR

The church is wrong!

They both look to the Prospector.

CHAIRMAN

I knew it! How much time before the clock strikes 12?

PROSPECTOR

Eleven hours and fifty three minutes.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Why the hell did we get here so early?

PROSPECTOR

I mean to say it's 12:07. The assassin should have detonated the bomb 7 minutes ago.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I knew we couldn't count on that immigrant.

CHAIRMAN

No, we had a deal he and I. He wouldn't welch on a deal.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Apparently he would. Look, there's that waitress, Iris. The one who is supposed to be dead.

PROSPECTOR

She is with the policeman. He is carrying someone. Someone unconscious. Who is he carrying?

CHAIRMAN

Oh my God, that's Jesús. The assassin. *

Iris enters. She is followed by Officer Stevens carrying an unconscious Jesús. *

OFFICER STEVENS

Ugh! Why am I doing all the carrying? This is my day off.

IRIS

Countess Auriela! Come quick!

OFFICER STEVENS

I mean you'd think this man would be very light, looking as malnourished as he does, but he is deceptively heavy!

IRIS

Countess Auriela!

OFFICER STEVENS

I suspect he has fat bones.

IRIS

We should take him to a hospital.

OFFICER STEVENS

I can't carry him all the way to the hospital. That's like a half a mile away! Can't we cure him here?

IRIS

I don't see what you're complaining about. Isn't this what you're trained for?

OFFICER STEVENS

To carry people? That's firemen.

IRIS

Countess Auriela!

OFFICER STEVENS

Ow! My hand! My hand. I have to put him down. I think I pulled a muscle in my hand.

IRIS

Careful!

He starts to drop the unconscious Jesús to the ground. Iris immediately goes to help lower him gently. *

On the other side of the stage, the three men discreetly confer.

CHAIRMAN

We have to eliminate Jesús before he wakes up and starts talking. *

PROSPECTOR

What do we do?

DEPUTY MAYOR

Whatever we have to do! Once he wakes up it will be too late.

Meanwhile:

IRIS

Countess Auriela!

Countess Auriela enters.

AURIELA

I'm here. I'm here. I didn't realize you were calling for me. I was out back feeding the strays some of the leftovers. The dogs of the neighborhood always look so grateful after eating my Boeuf bourguignon. They look at me with their puppy dog eyes and they say, "Ruff, ruff. Ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff. Ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff. Ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff-

Countess-
IRIS

She holds up a finger as she continues her rant.

IRIS
Ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff-”

IRIS
Countess! I don't mean to interrupt-

AURIELA
It's just as well. The dogs have a tendency to yammer on.

IRIS
I assure you what I have to tell you is more important.

AURIELA
You don't even know what they were saying.

(Then)
Or do you?

IRIS
This gentleman here! He needs help.

AURIELA

(To the Officer Stevens)
Oh. You poor man. Are you all right?

OFFICER STEVENS
I think I pulled a muscle in my hand.

AURIELA
I'll get you some ice-

IRIS
Not him! This man here.

AURIELA
Oh. What happened to him?

IRIS
He tried to take his life!

AURIELA

Where did he try to take it?

IRIS

To the middle of the river. He wanted to jump off the bridge.

AURIELA

Jump off the bridge? A person can kill himself that way.

IRIS

I saw him and managed to stop him before he could do it. But then he fainted. Good thing Officer Stevens was nearby.

OFFICER STEVENS

I disagree.

The Ragpicker enters.

RAGPICKER

Countess Auriela, the dogs, they're barking for you.

AURIELA

I can't see to them right now. This is far more important.

IRIS

We have an injured man here, Morgan!

(Then, to the Countess)

What do you think we should do?

OFFICER STEVENS

I think we should get me some ice!

IRIS

I'm not asking you.

(Again, to the Countess)

What do you think we should do?

RAGPICKER

I'm for doing whatever the policeman says before someone gets shot.

IRIS

I'm not asking you, either.

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

RAGPICKER *
You're not the someone that's going to get shot. *

IRIS *
No one's going to get shot, Morgan. Don't be absurd. *

OFFICER STEVENS *
Deadly force may not be used unless the suspect poses a significant threat. *

IRIS *
See? *

OFFICER STEVENS *

(Re: His injured hand) *
Also, I hurt my gun shooting hand. *

RAGPICKER *

(Raising his arms) *
My arms are raised, I pose no significant threat. *

IRIS *
Put your hands down. That's not necessary. *

OFFICER STEVENS *
She's right. I'm off duty today. *

IRIS *
Policemen are bound by the law and must adhere to a strict set of rules. *

RAGPICKER *

(To the policeman) *
If you're off duty why are you in your uniform? *

OFFICER STEVENS *
The chicks dig it. *

RAGPICKER *
I'm going to keep my hands up. *

AURIELA *
I don't think we need to take this man to a hospital. He looks like he's just sleeping. *

OFFICER STEVENS

If not a hospital then a jail. Attempted suicide is still a crime.

IRIS

You're going to take him to prison?

OFFICER STEVENS

Me? No. I'm off duty. But someone should.

AURIELA

I don't think he should go to jail. He doesn't look like a bad person to me.

IRIS

I agree.

AURIELA

He reminds me of my love, Adolphe.

RAGPICKER

No one named Adolph can be bad.

AURIELA

Adolphe Adelson.

*

OFFICER STEVENS

You don't have to be a bad person to go to jail, Countess.

RAGPICKER

True that.

OFFICER STEVENS

You just need to commit a crime.

RAGPICKER

Sometimes not even that much.

AURIELA

I'm sure he didn't intend to commit a crime.

OFFICER STEVENS

He was standing on the edge of the bridge preparing to jump.

AURIELA

No doubt to save some creature he saw drowning in the river below. He's not a criminal. He's a hero.

OFFICER STEVENS

What creature drowning in the river below?

AURIELA

Perhaps a turtle.

OFFICER STEVENS

Turtles can swim.

AURIELA

Or a camel.

OFFICER STEVENS

What would a camel be doing in our river?

AURIELA

I don't know, but you should probably find it before it drowns.

The policeman has trouble arguing with that logic. *

OFFICER STEVENS *

I need another cup of coffee. *

Officer Stevens heads back into the cafe. *

The Chairman, Deputy Mayor and Prospector come over.

CHAIRMAN

Perhaps we can be of some service. We understand someone needs to be taken to a hospital.

DEPUTY MAYOR

We have a vehicle parked just over there.

RAGPICKER

Is there room in it for a drowning camel?

DEPUTY MAYOR

What?

CHAIRMAN

(Re: Jesús)

This man is unconscious. He needs medical attention urgently!

*

AURIELA

And how do you know that? Are you a doctor?

CHAIRMAN

Well...

(Pointing to the Prospector)

He is a doctor. Isn't that right, Mr. Prospector?

PROSPECTOR

...Doctor Prospector, if you please.

AURIELA

Dr. Prospector? What kind of name is *Prospector*?

PROSPECTOR

It's... African.

RAGPICKER

Prospector doesn't sound African.

PROSPECTOR

Well, no, not the way you're pronouncing it.

AURIELA

Well, this is Iris, our waitress. Morgan, our ragpicker.

RAGPICKER

Hello.

*

*

Celia and Dominique enter.

*

AURIELA

Over there are the twins, Celia and Dominique.

*

*

CELIA

*

(To the Deputy Mayor)

*

I perform magic.

*

I don't care.	DEPUTY MAYOR	*
		*
I'm a contortionist.	DOMINIQUE	*
		*
Tell me more.	DEPUTY MAYOR	*
		*
	Auriela points out to the audience.	*
	AURIELA	*
Seated over there in the park is David. He is a fireman.		*
	RAGPICKER	*
He is also trained to carry people.		*
	The Handyman and Fish Monger enter from the cafe.	*
	AURIELA	
Next to him is Debra. She's our fish monger.		*
	IRIS	*
She <u>was</u> our fish monger before the lake dried up. Now she may have to start selling meat.		*
		*
	RAGPICKER	*
What's that called?		*
	DEPUTY MAYOR	*
Flesh Monger.		*
	AURIELA	*
Oh, and look! There's Dr. Strauss, our mad scientist...		
	She waves to someone on the other side of the audience.	*
	AURIELA	
And next to him is Melvin, his hideous sapient creation.		*
	Auriela waves to "Melvin."	*
	AURIELA	
And of course I am the Countess of this cafe. My name is Auriela.		

PROSPECTOR

You all get to share your names. How wonderful.

AURIELA

Everyone, this is Dr. Prospector. We won't soon forget your name.

DEPUTY MAYOR

We are wasting time! This man is unconscious. He needs immediate attention. We need to take him to a hospital.

IRIS

What can be more immediate than having Dr. Prospector examine him right here?

DEPUTY MAYOR

Right here? Right now? No, that won't do at all.

PROSPECTOR

I don't have my medical bag.

DEPUTY MAYOR

He doesn't have his medical bag obviously.

PROSPECTOR

It has my stethoscope.

DEPUTY MAYOR

It has his stethoscope.

PROSPECTOR

And my Scalpel.

DEPUTY MAYOR

And his scalpel.

PROSPECTOR

And my Speculum.

DEPUTY MAYOR

And his... what?

CHAIRMAN

Listen! This man's life hangs in the balance. We must move quickly. We are going to the hospital. And we are not leaving here without him! I don't care what you say!

Jesús starts to stir.

*

AURIELA

Look, he's starting to come to.

CHAIRMAN

(To the Deputy Mayor and Prospector)

We should go.

The three men head back to the table. The Deputy Mayor collects his wine and sandwich.

AURIELA

Iris, go to the kitchen and get a glass of ice water and also some food. A piece of the quiche. Morgan, why don't you help her.

RAGPICKER

Yes, Countess.

The Ragpicker exits to the kitchen. Iris follows. The rest of the townspeople also disperse.

CHAIRMAN

Looks like you have everything here under control. We'll leave you to it.

AURIELA

Very good. Thank you.

The Deputy Mayor and Prospector exit, the Chairman follows behind. But before he can leave:

AURIELA

Just leave your money on the table.

He stops.

CHAIRMAN

What?

AURIELA

The money. For your bill. The sandwich?

CHAIRMAN

(Relieved)

Oh the sandwich. Right. How much was it again? Two dollars?

AURIELA

12.

CHAIRMAN

12. Of course. Very reasonable. I will leave that on the table.

AURIELA

Thank you.

(Then)

Plus the 900 for the two bottles of wine. Iris mentioned you ordered that. Very generous. It is for the greater good, you know.

CHAIRMAN

...900

AURIELA

And 12 dollars. Plus a 6.25 percent tax rate.

She does a quick calculation.

AURIELA

That's... \$969.

(Then)

Plus tip. *

CHAIRMAN *

(Starting to object) *

This is outrageous- *

Suddenly Officer Stevens comes back out of the cafe with another cup of coffee. *

OFFICER STEVENS *

Everything OK out here? *

	AURIELA	*
I think so.		*
	(To the Chairman)	*
Is everything OK?		*
	Beat.	*
	CHAIRMAN	*
	(Venomously)	*
Everything is just fine.		*
	The Chairman leaves a wad of cash on the table.	*
	AURIELA	*
Good day.		*
	The Chairman leaves a wad of cash on the table then leaves in a huff.	*
	AURIELA	
	(Re: Jesús)	*
Thank you for your help, Officer Stevens, bringing this man here. As he is clearly reviving though, I don't think you need to stay.		*
	OFFICER STEVENS	
He tried to take his life, Countess.		
	AURIELA	
I doubt it. Why would anyone want to do that?		
	OFFICER STEVENS	
You should ask him.		
	(Then)	
Farewell.		
	He exits.	
	AURIELA	
	(Calling after him)	
Enjoy your day off.		

Auriela turns her attention to Jesús. *

AURIELA
Young man, are you OK?

Jesús sits up and looks confused. *

AURIELA
Can you tell me your name?

JESÚS
Jesús. *

AURIELA
Jesús. Excellent. And how are you feeling, Jesús? *

JESÚS
I'm... fine. What happened? Where am I? *

AURIELA
You fainted. You are at my cafe.

JESÚS *

(Upset)
I fainted? I'm not dead? I wasn't swept away in the river to plummet down the waterfall, pounded by the jagged rocks, and drowned in the fast moving swirl?

AURIELA
No, none of that happened. We actually don't have a waterfall here. It's more of a cascade.

JESÚS
I should have been eaten by some scavenger of the deep. Perhaps a shark. *

AURIELA
There are no sharks here.

JESÚS
Or a whale. *

AURIELA
Whales don't eat people.

JESÚS
Or a Kraken. *

AURIELA

Krakens... sleep during the day, I think.

JESÚS

If that's so, then I should wake it up and hurl myself into it's mouth.

*

AURIELA

You think it'd want to eat you? With no meat on your bones, you poor thing. I have some food coming for you tout suite! Just rest.

JESÚS

I don't deserve food. I deserve to be eaten by a Kraken.

*

AURIELA

Heaven forbid.

JESÚS

*

(Getting upset)

Heaven would not forbid it. Heaven would only forbid me. God knows what I've done. God knows the crime I've committed.

AURIELA

Don't be silly. God doesn't know everything.

JESÚS

Blasphemous.

*

AURIELA

Not at all. You were created in God's image, were you not?

JESÚS

Yes.

*

AURIELA

Do you know everything?

JESÚS

No.

*

AURIELA

There you have it. I mean, who can know it all? Who has the time? Certainly not me. I do know, however, you need to eat. I also have a hard time believing you've committed any crime with a sweet face like yours. How could you possibly?

JESÚS *
I've committed a crime. A horrible crime.

AURIELA
A victimless crime, more likely. Like using ketchup as a pasta sauce.

JESÚS *
Try murder.

Auriela's smile fades.

AURIELA
...What?

JESÚS *
Murder. I was hired to kill someone.

AURIELA
No.

Jesús nods shamefully as he starts to cry. *

JESÚS *

(In tears)
But then I couldn't do it!

(Then, with great shame)
Does that sound like a victimless crime?!?

AURIELA
...yes.

JESÚS *
I should have stayed in my cage. But I was lured by the promise of freedom.

AURIELA
You were in a cage?

JESÚS *
Things weren't so bad there, save for the stench because of the lack of soap.

AURIELA
Who put you in a soapless cage?

JESÚS *

And lack of toothpaste.

AURIELA
They didn't give you toothpaste.

JESÚS *

And lack of toilet paper.

AURIELA
They don't even provide toilet paper? What are you supposed to do after you go to the toilet?

JESÚS *

Toilet? What fancy cage have you been staying in?

AURIELA
Why were you in a cage?

JESÚS *

I tried to sneak into your country with my ailing mother. We came for a new life. More work, better opportunities, free... refills. But we were stopped at the border. Separated. She was taken away. I was put in a cage.

AURIELA
Where is your mother now?

JESÚS *

Dead, I'm sure. She was already sick then. That was 10 years ago.

AURIELA
You've been in a cage for 10 years?

JESÚS *

(Emotional)
And where I should have stayed. But the man promised me freedom. Who knew the price of freedom would be so high.

AURIELA
What man?

JESÚS

*

(Emotional)

He called himself the Chairman. I can only guess... he made chairs. He gave me a bomb. He told me to place it in your museum. He told me that your mayor would be in the museum at precisely noon, at which time I should detonate the bomb.

AURIELA

How terrible! Who ever heard of such a thing?

JESÚS

*

(Emotional)

Stuff like that happens all the time where I'm from. Drug lords doing battle with other drug lords. Fighting over power and money and fame. I thought I was escaping all of that murder and corruption. But the people here are just as bad. The only difference is they don't make drugs. They make chairs.

He breaks down and cries.

AURIELA

(Skeptically)

A man who makes chairs hiring you to commit murder. I think you must have hit your head when you fainted. We don't have bad people like that here. Sure, we have some folks that try to take advantage, but what you're describing? People that would destroy a whole museum? A museum filled with mothers and their children, no less? That would be pure evil. The kind of which that doesn't really exist, certainly not in our little paradise. You read about it, sure, but it never actually happens. It's fiction. You must be imagining this.

JESÚS

*

(Emotional)

I'm not imagining it! The man wanted me to blow up your museum. He didn't care about the mothers or their children. ...And I suppose I didn't either. All I cared about was my freedom.

AURIELA

(Still doubtful)

And yet the museum still stands. What a convenient turn of events. Why didn't you blow it up? Assuming this story is true. What could have possibly stopped you?

Iris returns holding some food and a glass of water. The Ragpicker follows her in.

IRIS

Countess, here is some quiche and a glass of water for our patient.

JESÚS

*

(Smitten)

You!

IRIS

(Equally smitten)

...Hello. Glad to see you're all right.

The attraction between Iris and Jesús is clear.

*

AURIELA

His name is Jesús. And I don't think he's all right. He hit his head, I suspect. He's coming up with the most fantastical stories.

*

RAGPICKER

Stories! I love a good story.

AURIELA

You wouldn't like this one.

RAGPICKER

I'm not very particular. Is there a ragpicker in it?

AURIELA

No. Not so far.

RAGPICKER

Still could be good.

AURIELA

It's a story about him. Supposedly, before Iris saved him from jumping into the river, he was locked in a cage for ten years with no soap, toothpaste or toilet paper.

RAGPICKER

No toilet paper? For 10 years?

(To Iris)

You probably should have waited till after he jumped into the river.

AURIELA

He was freed only recently when some villain hired him to blow up our museum.

IRIS

(Recalling her conversation with the
Chairman)

What?

AURIELA

Thankfully, in the end, he decided not to do it.

RAGPICKER

That's the end? You're right. It's not a good story. Can we flesh it out a little more?

IRIS

Who hired you to blow up the museum?

*

RAGPICKER

Yes, let's get into the detail. Because as it stands now your story is lacking. I don't know who the protagonist is. I don't know what he or she wants. I'm just not engaged.

*

*

*

JESÚS

I was hired by the Chairman. He wanted me to blow up the museum because he wanted me to...

*

IRIS

Kill the Mayor?

JESÚS

...That's right.

*

AURIELA

How did you know that, Iris?

IRIS

They were telling me about it earlier. The Chairman and his two compatriots.

AURIELA

What Chairman? What compatriots?

RAGPICKER

All right, this story is getting a little better.

IRIS

You met them. They were the ones that came here to take Jesús to a hospital.

*

AURIELA

You mean, Dr. Prospector?

IRIS

I don't think he's a real doctor.

JESÚS

If he was here, it wasn't to take me to a hospital. It was to kill me for not doing the job I was hired to do!

*

AURIELA

But that goes against his Hippocratic Oath.

IRIS

He's not a doctor. I don't think any of them were.

AURIELA

Why would they want him to kill the mayor?

IRIS

For oil.

AURIELA

Oil? That's absurd. You can get oil at the market. Vegetable oil. Canola oil. Lately, I've preferred cooking with Avocado oil because it's high in monounsaturated fat and has a smoke point of about 520 degrees.

IRIS

They don't want Avocado oil. They want crude.

AURIELA

Well, that doesn't sound very appetizing at all.

IRIS

It's not. But it's worth a lot of money. And supposedly it's buried beneath our town. They want to put a new mayor in place, someone who will give them permission to dig up the oil and destroy our town in the process.

AURIELA

This makes no sense, Iris. People don't really do that.

IRIS

Apparently they do.

RAGPICKER

They did it in the twins' town.

(Then, calling inside the cafe)

Dominique. Celia? Do you have a moment?

*

JESÚS

*

(To Iris)

Twins?

IRIS

Two of our local performers. Celia does magic and Dominique is a contortionist.

*

JESÚS

*

What's a contortionist?

IRIS

Someone who is very flexible.

Dominique and Celia enter from inside the cafe.

*

RAGPICKER

(To Dominique)

Dominique, can you tell us what happened to your town after the men came looking for the oil?

DOMINIQUE

No. I won't talk of that horrible time ever again.

JESÚS

*

(To Iris)

She doesn't sound very flexible.

CELIA

*

(Happily)

I'll tell you. They built wells and mines and gave them all such pretty names: Daffodil well, Red Bird mine, Dancing Bull borehole.

JESÚS

*

That one's not so pretty.

DOMINIQUE

(Aggressively to Jesús)

Those wells and mines poisoned our village and destroyed our way of life!

*

JESÚS

*

(Nervously)

I thought you didn't want to talk about that time.

DOMINIQUE

(To all)

They turned our rivers red from the acid leaking from abandoned shafts. Our air smelled acrid sharp like bleach. They ruined our crops. Murdered our animals. In the end, all that was left of our home was a sludge of toxic chemicals and undrinkable water.

AURIELA

(To Dominique and Celia)

I had no idea. Why did no one tell me you endured so much?

*

(To everyone)

I thought everyone here was... happy.

DOMINIQUE

I haven't smiled in years, Countess.

The Mime enters. He sees Dominique and starts to perform for her.

DOMINIQUE

Look. Here's Jo the Mime. He performs for me every day in the hopes of making me laugh. And every day I am unamused.

The Mime looks defeated.

DOMINIQUE

Why do you suppose that is?

RAGPICKER

Well, it could be Jo the Mime.

Jo glares at the Ragpicker, then exits.

RAGPICKER

The truth is, Countess, we want to be happy. We try to be. But we see the world as it is. And sometimes we don't like what we see.

AURIELA

I don't see the world as it is? How is that I see the world so differently from you?

RAGPICKER

You've chosen to be blissfully ignorant of the world around you and spend your days living in this bubble. A dream world, if you will, for I don't think the real world ever resembled that which you think it is. Though in the last few years, the chasm between fantasy and reality has grown far too wide to ignore. The real world, I'm afraid is filled with people who are... not good.

AURIELA

Surely filled is an overstatement. By my count only three.

RAGPICKER

If only there were only three. The fact is, there are plenty more. The bad people are everywhere. Infiltrating every decent thing.

AURIELA

Aren't there such people whose jobs it is to prevent the bad people from taking over?

RAGPICKER

The bad people are the ones in those jobs. They are both the regulators, and the violators. Irony and hypocrisy personified. They are a quagmire put in place to drain the swamp. The wolves hired to guard the hen house.

AURIELA

I don't want to live in a place where the wolves are in charge.

RAGPICKER

I'm afraid there is no place where the wolves aren't in charge. Where would you go?

AURIELA

I don't plan on going anywhere. I plan on getting rid of the wolves.

IRIS

How do you get rid of wolves? They have no natural predators. They are at the top of their respective food chains.

AURIELA

I will lay a trap for them. All I need is the right bait.

IRIS

That's usually some kind of large hoofed animal.

RAGPICKER

You understand we're not really talking about wolves.

IRIS

They tend to feed on the rump or organs first.

RAGPICKER

We're still not talking about wolves.

JESÚS

He's right. If we want to talk about wolves we need to talk about how they hunt.

*

RAGPICKER

We don't want to talk about wolves.

IRIS

They hunt in packs.

JESÚS

Yes, they're social creatures who cooperate on their prey.

*

IRIS

You know about wolves?

JESÚS

In the cage where I spent my last ten years, they provided us with books. All sorts. Including books on wolves.

*

RAGPICKER

They didn't give you toilet paper but they gave you books on wolves?

JESÚS

The books on wolves were the toilet paper.

*

RAGPICKER

I feel like we've gotten off track here. Don't you realize how dire things have gotten? Don't you see how cold and grey it is out there?

CELIA

I find it hot. A little too hot for my tastes.

*

RAGPICKER

Too hot today. Too cold tomorrow. It's never just right anymore. We live in an age of extremes where it's either too hot or too cold. People are too rich or too poor. Too naive or too ruthless. Too ignorant or too indifferent to give a damn.

DOMINIQUE

We give a damn. But what can be done? It's hopeless.

AURIELA

You needn't despair, Celia.

*

DOMINIQUE

I'm Dominique.

AURIELA

I can never tell you two apart.

RAGPICKER

And she should despair, Countess. The planet is run by those that are ruining everything that is beautiful. Draining the world of all its joy and happiness. And it bothers these people not at all. All they seem to care about is money. Money and power. They wish to acquire it all. They take and take and take what doesn't belong to them and then they lease back a little bit to us for an arm and a leg.

CELIA

Just the other day I was threatened by a mugger. He said to me, "If you want to live, it'll cost you twenty dollars." I said, "I don't have twenty dollars you're just going to have to kill me." He said, "Ok, but that'll cost you ten."

*

RAGPICKER

You see! Nothing is for free any more. Not our lives. Not our liberty. Not our pursuit of happiness. It all comes at a price. Despair is the only thing we get for free.

AURIELA

So you've given up, have you? You should have told me about this earlier, Morgan, because I don't give up. All of you should have spoken up. Made me understand.

Beat.

AURIELA

I'm sorry I've been living in my bubble, leaving the rest of the world to its own devices. I assumed everything was running perfectly. But nothing is perfect. I see that now. Including me, by the way. I am not perfect.

I am flawed like the rest of you, walking around with my eyes closed. But my eyes are opened now. I am engaged. And I have no intention of living in a world without beauty.

RAGPICKER

How do you plan on making things right? These people are a force to be reckoned with. They are bound together by their greed, linked arm an arm, each one enabling the other, together forming an impenetrable wall.

AURIELA

Walls have been brought down before, even the impenetrable ones. You say they are bound together? All the better for us. We will lead them all to the same trap. I already know the bait. Oil.

IRIS

Avocado oil won't work. It needs to be crude.

AURIELA

It will be downright boorish.

(Then)

The question is, what to do with them once we have them.

She considers this for a moment, then:

AURIELA

Celia, Dominique, I have a task for you both. *

CELIA

Yes, Countess? *

AURIELA

Go find Madam Gabrielle and Madam Constance and tell them to come to me in three hours time.

DOMINIQUE

(To Celia)

You go to Gabrielle, I'll go to Constance. *

AURIELA

Keep in mind that Madam Gabrielle won't open her door unless you've knocked the secret knock.

CELIA

Secret knock? *

AURIELA

Three times, then twice, then you must meow like a cat seven times. Can you meow like a cat?

CELIA

I'm better at barking.

*

DOMINIQUE

I can meow.

AURIELA

You two switch. You go to Gabrielle, you go to Constance.

CELIA

Does Madam Constance have a secret knock?

*

AURIELA

No, you should be fine. But you must know the passphrase.

CELIA

Passphrase?

*

AURIELA

"Let me in, let me in or I'll pluck the hairs from your chinny chin chin."

CELIA

Very good.

*

AURIELA

And then you must meow seven times.

CELIA

*

(Uncertain)

...OK.

AURIELA

Go now, and when you're done with that, free yourself from worry. The time for despair will soon be over.

Celia and Dominique exit.

*

AURIELA

Now Iris, you must prepare the bait. In a small, dirty bottle mix avocado oil with some black paint.

IRIS

An oil based paint?

AURIELA

Yes. And mix in some mud, as well.

(To the Ragpicker)

Morgan, you will take the bottle and deliver it with a message to the Chairman and his cronies.

RAGPICKER

What message?

The Ragpicker crosses to a pool of light on the other side of the stage where the Chairman, Deputy Mayor and Prospector are already mid-conversation with him.

CHAIRMAN

(To Ragpicker, holding the bottle of "oil")

You say you found the sample contained in this bottle underneath cafe Chaillot?

RAGPICKER

I did. I think it's oil. Probably worth a lot of money.

PROSPECTOR

I'll be the judge of that.

He dabs his finger in the bottle, then takes a taste.

PROSPECTOR

It's oil, alright.

RAGPICKER

Countess Auriela, who owns the cafe, has no idea what her property is sitting on. She is mentally unstable, you know. Ripe for exploitation.

DEPUTY MAYOR

And you would exploit her?

RAGPICKER

Opportunities like this are few and far between. I'd be a fool not to reach out and take it. But I require partners. Come this afternoon at 4:00pm to the basement at Cafe Chaillot and you can verify the source of the oil for yourself, and then steal it from underneath the Countess' feet.

CHAIRMAN

And for your trouble?

RAGPICKER

I'm not greedy. A small percentage is all I require.

CHAIRMAN

Deal. We will see you at 4:00pm.

The pool of light on the Chairman, Prospector, Deputy Mayor goes black. The Ragpicker once again faces Auriela.

AURIELA

Once the hook is in, we'll be on our way to restoring things the way they should be.

IRIS

But that's only three of them, Countess. What of the others?

(To the Ragpicker)

Morgan, you said the bad people were everywhere, right?

RAGPICKER

Yes.

AURIELA

You also said they were bound together, united in their greed. Where these three go, the others will follow. We will bait them and trap them all.

RAGPICKER

What will you do once you have them?

Auriela doesn't respond.

JESÚS

Whatever you do to them, you should do to me, as well, Countess. You know what I almost did. I'm as bad as the rest of them. I should go back to the bridge. Climb over the rail. And just... jump.

*

He doesn't move.

JESÚS

Please don't stop me.

*

AURIELA

I won't stop you.

IRIS

Countess!

AURIELA

If his life means so little to him then by all means he should jump. Personally, I love life. Every moment of it. Or most moments anyway. There are some times, I suppose that I enjoy less than others. Political debates, for example. Those aren't entertaining at all. I find them too boring. No! I find them six boring. Three times more boring.

(Continuing)

And when I take the dogs for a walk, which I do love, the bags I use to pick up their poop, I don't like that in order to open them I have to lick my fingers first. That makes me slightly uncomfortable.

(Then)

Otherwise, I just adore being alive. I love the smells I smell and the sounds I hear. I love getting up in the morning and deciding what clothes to wear. This dress or the pink one with the ruffles and the bow. They are both so beautiful. What a wonderful decision I get to make. And every day I get to make it. I love the routine of life. And the break from routine that life some times throws your way, that can be nice, too. Like when you fall in love. So unexpected. And it can happen in an instant. Don't you agree?

Jesús and Iris exchange a glance.

*

AURIELA

I remember when I first met my Adolphe Adelson. He swept me off my feet. Literally. He was a janitor at a broom factory. I fell in love immediately. We were so happy... until...

*

Jesús looks to Iris.

*

IRIS

...He died.

RAGPICKER

He was stung by a bee.

JESÚS

*

He was allergic to bees?

The Ragpicker shakes his head.

RAGPICKER

Trains.

Jesús looks confused.

*

AURIELA

I don't like the way things ended, it's true. But I loved the way they began. Is it wrong to want to go back to the beginning? Go back to the way things were, even though everything else continues to change?

(Then, to Jesús)

You've changed everything today. Can't you tell?

*

JESÚS

I nearly killed a museum filled with innocent people. God will never forgive me.

*

AURIELA

Oh? She's told you as much?

*

(Then)

I for one don't judge people by what they nearly did,, just by what they actually did. You saved everyone in that museum. And for that you wish to punish yourself? Strange. I do wish you'd reconsider. Perhaps sleep on it. A nice nap I think always makes things better. I have a spare room that you can use. You can always jump off the bridge later.

*

JESÚS

...I am a little tired.

*

AURIELA

We should all rest.

(To the Ragpicker)

Morgan, will you take me inside.

*

The Ragpicker takes her arm.

AURIELA

(To all)

Today is a big day. We're going to make the world right again. What a delightful way to spend an afternoon.

Aurelia and the Ragpicker exit into the cafe. Beat.

JESÚS

*

I didn't save everyone in that museum. I went in there to... To do what I was asked to do. To do something horrible. But then I saw you. And I couldn't. I couldn't do the hateful thing they wanted... But I also couldn't live with the shame that I even considered it.

(Then)

You saved everyone in that museum. And then you went out on the bridge and saved me, too. You changed everything. You.

Jesús heads into the cafe. Iris watches him, then looks to the heavens.

*

IRIS

The sky is still grey... and yet... suddenly I can see beyond the dark clouds. I can see the sun fighting to break through and shine its luminous glory onto the world again. I wonder who will win. The darkness... or the light? I so much prefer the light.

The lights fade on her and rise on the Chairman, Deputy Mayor and Prospector.

CHAIRMAN

Prospector, go to the museum. Search the area. The bomb I gave Jesús must still be there. Find it. We're going to need it. Today at 4pm.

*

Black out.

ACT 2

The Basement of Cafe Chaillot. It's furnished, though the furniture looks aged. It is also filled with the knick knacks one might collect over many years. Empty bird cages, old artwork, boxes of clothes, easels and what not. On the right wall are stairs leading up to the cafe and above that the Countess' living quarters. Mounted on the left wall is an antique looking wall sconce, though it doesn't look like it functions. The Countess AURIELA is asleep on a couch.

Jesús enters. *

JESÚS *

Countess? Are you awake?

He gently shakes her.

JESÚS *

Countess? There is someone here to see you.

AURIELA

(Her eyes still shut)

Adolphe, is that you?

JESÚS *

No, it's Jesús. *

AURIELA

I know it's you, Adolphe Adelson. You're so handsome with your dark hair and your brown eyes, and a smile that would melt even the coldest heart. You gave me my feather boa and my hat. The boa was taken from me, but I still have the hat. I love it so. Because it's from you. Tell me it's you.

(Desperately)

Please tell me it's you!

JESÚS *

(Reluctantly complying)

Fine. It's... it's me. It's Adolphe Adelson.

Auriela, still in her dream state, smiles contentedly. Then:

AURIELA

Prove it.

JESÚS

...what...?

*

AURIELA

Do you remember how we met?

He thinks a moment, then, excitedly:

JESÚS

Yes. I swept you off your feet.

*

AURIELA

That's right. At the broom factory.

(Then, provocatively)

And do you remember what we did later that night?

JESÚS

...I am embarrassed to say.

*

AURIELA

Why are you embarrassed? There is nothing shameful about it. Many people eat pork.

JESÚS

What?

*

AURIELA

That herb-encrusted tenderloin was the best we've ever had. Don't you agree?

JESÚS

I do. But I've since converted to Judaism that's why I was embarrassed to admit it.

*

AURIELA

(More seductively)

Do you remember what we did after we ate the pork?

JESÚS

That is definitely awkward to talk about.

*

AURIELA

That coffee was so delicious.

JESÚS

Because I then converted to Mormonism.

*

AURIELA

Why are you converting so much?

JESÚS

I don't know. I am trying to find myself, I guess.

*

AURIELA

Was I holding you back? Is that why you left me?

JESÚS

Left you? No. I didn't leave you. I... I mean... I went to a better place.

*

AURIELA

What could be better than to be with me?

JESÚS

No, that's not what I meant. You are wonderful. It's just I... Well... I died, Countess.

*

AURIELA

Did you?

JESÚS

I mean, I thought I did. That's what they told me.

*

AURIELA

Who told you that?

He reflexively points upstairs, struggling
how to proceed with this hole he's dug
himself into. Finally:

JESÚS

God... told me. When I showed up in heaven, God sat me down, told me I died.

*

AURIELA

And how do you know God wasn't pulling your leg?

JESÚS

*

(He laughs a little)

Oh Countess, God doesn't lie.

AURIELA

No? Were you not created in God's image?

(Then)

I mean, I am sure it wasn't ill-intentioned. People lie for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes it's to protect the ones we love. Sometimes it's to protect ourselves.

JESÚS

*

Well... then if I am not dead, where am I?

AURIELA

I imagine... you're with her.

JESÚS

*

What? No. Who?

AURIELA

Georgette.

JESÚS

*

No. Who's Georgette?

AURIELA

Why did you leave me for Georgette?

JESÚS

*

I didn't. Who's Georgette?

AURIELA

Was she prettier than me?

JESÚS

*

No. Of course not!

AURIELA

Smarter then? More gifted at the violin?

JESÚS

*

Not more gifted than you.

AURIELA

I don't play violin.

JESÚS

I'm sure she doesn't play even worse.

AURIELA

Is it her soul you love? Is that why you left me? Is that why you stopped loving me?

JESÚS

I didn't stop loving you.

AURIELA

I remember all the places we went together. The Opera House. The Japanese Garden. The Tree Top Walk. Places I heard you started taking Georgette.

JESÚS

Countess, I never stopped loving you.

AURIELA

It's nice to know that while you were there with her, you never stopped loving me.

JESÚS

There is no Georgette. I didn't leave you. I... I died. There is only you. I promise. I'm only ever with you.

AURIELA

You are only ever with me when my eyes are closed. But I have to open them now. And when I do, you will be gone.

JESÚS

Countess...

AURIELA

I'm sorry, Adolphe. I have to wake up now. So nice seeing you. One last time.

Beat.

She opens her eyes and yawns herself awake.

AURIELA

(As if nothing has happened)

Jesús.

JESÚS

Sorry to disturb. You asked me to wake you when the “Sewer Man” arrived. I believe he’s here now.

*

AURIELA

Wonderful. Send him in. I’ll see him alone.

JESÚS

Very good.

*

He exits.

The SEWER MAN enters. He is dressed like a king in the midst of a coronation.

He also carries over his shoulder a sack.

SEWER MAN

Countess Aurelia.

AURIELA

Jeffrey, thank you for coming on such short notice.

SEWER MAN

You said it was urgent.

AURIELA

It is.

Beat.

She notices his outfit.

AURIELA

(Gently probing)

I can’t help but observe you’re dressed differently then when last I saw you.

SEWER MAN

(Unsuccessfully trying to be nonchalant)

Just because I work in the sewers doesn’t mean I don’t like to mix it up.

AURIELA

Of course.

(Then)

As I recall, last time you were here I asked you if the rumors were true.

SEWER MAN

Rumors?

AURIELA

About there being a secret society amongst the people that work in the sewers. A society whose system of government is a monarchy... with a king.

SEWER MAN

(Another poor attempt to play it off)

A king of the Sewer People?

He laughs as he adjusts his golden tunic. Then:

SEWER MAN

I've never heard of something so ridiculous.

AURIELA

Yes, that's what you said before. Only now I feel like maybe you told me that because you're not allowed to confirm the rumors, as I am not a sewer person.

SEWER MAN

(Nodding)

It does stand to reason that if the society were secret, I would have to deny it emphatically.

(Then, emphatically)

But there is no such thing, Countess, don't be absurd.

AURIELA

I'm sure you're right. Silly rumors. Nothing more.

(Then, gently)

Though I had heard that the elderly king of the Sewer People had recently died and his throne was being passed down to his son in a grand ceremony. If that were true, I imagine such a transition would be very... bittersweet.

SEWER MAN

(Suddenly, a little sad)

It would be... if it were true.

(Then)

But now tell me what can I do for you? I don't mean to rush, but I am in the middle of something somewhat important down below and I should get back to it as soon as possible.

AURIELA

Of course, I don't want to get you in trouble with your superiors.

SEWER MAN

(Laughing)

Superiors.

(Then, playing it cool)

I wouldn't worry about that. Besides, you did say it was urgent. And after all, I do owe you a life debt. So whatever you need.

AURIELA

I don't require much. Just some information.

SEWER MAN

I have no shortage of that. It's amazing how much you can learn about people by what they toss into the sewers.

AURIELA

More than just their diet?

SEWER MAN

Much more. All it requires is a little deductive reasoning. For example, earlier today someone tossed in the sewer this lovely attache.

He pulls from his sack a blue attache case and hands it to her.

AURIELA

What a beautiful blue case. What do you deduce from it?

SEWER MAN

Well, attaches are normally used by business people. As this one was thrown away, I can only assume that whoever did it has put the corporate world behind them, no doubt to pursue other interests. Not dissimilar from what I did myself.

AURIELA

Is that true?

SEWER MAN

I was in the corporate world for years trying to work my way up, going from one meeting to the next.

AURIELA

I had no idea.

SEWER MAN

Oh yes. We'd have a pre-meeting every day at 10am to prepare for the main meeting we'd have at noon and then have a post mortem meeting at 3pm to discuss what we learned from the previous two meetings.

AURIELA

What were all those meetings about?

SEWER MAN

Efficiency.

(Then)

It turns out though the business world and I weren't a good fit. So I stopped trying to move up. Went the other direction instead. Down. Into the sewers. My father was a sewer man for years. He was a very important person. I'm proud to fill his shoes.

AURIELA

The sewers are lucky to have you.

Beat. Then: the Sewer Man holds up the case again.

SEWER MAN

But look, there's more to this attache than meets the eye. Notice this.

He hands her the case and points to a timer display.

AURIELA

Some kind of clock.

SEWER MAN

Yes. Though, sadly not working.

AURIELA

Well, you have to turn it on. There's a switch right here.

Auriela flips a switch turning the "clock" on.

AURIELA

There it goes. Now it's ticking. Why is it counting backwards, though?

SEWER MAN

I don't know. Ticking but still broken, I suppose. Maybe that's why it was thrown away.

AURIELA

Even a broken clock is right twice a day. But I don't think this is broken. I imagine this is a magic attache with a magic clock that counts backwards and when you open it up, it will bring you back in time.

SEWER MAN

Your imagination, Auriela, is one of my favorite things about you.

AURIELA

Is it? I didn't know I had things about me that were your favorite.

SEWER MAN

Many things. Your optimism, your insight, your beauty, and your ability to take a broken case and turn it into a magic attache.

(Then)

Do you want to go back in time?

AURIELA

Not at this moment.

(Then)

There were many times, though, when I did. Now, however, I think that's not such a good idea. We can't dwell in the past forever, can we?

SEWER MAN

Not when the future is so imminent. And the present is so... present.

Beat. The two have a moment.

SEWER MAN

Now tell me, what kind of information can I provide for you?

AURIELA

Right.

(Then)

Do you recall that day I found you near dead here in my basement?

SEWER MAN

How can I forget? You saved my life that day.

AURIELA

In your stupor you said you found a secret passageway right here and that it led... someplace horrible.

SEWER MAN

It did indeed. A nightmare of a place. Why do you want to find it?

AURIELA

I have my reasons.

SEWER MAN

I made an oath to myself that I would take that secret to my grave.

AURIELA

And yet you said yourself that you owe me a life debt.

SEWER MAN

I wish you would ask me something else.

AURIELA

It's time to pay your debt, Jeffrey.

Beat.

SEWER MAN

Very well. Though I am surprised you didn't discover it yourself. This is your basement, after all.

AURIELA

Maybe I did and just forgot about it. My memory is not what it used to be.

He heads to the wall and turns the wall sconce.

SEWER MAN

This light reveals the passageway.

Suddenly a section of the wall opens up revealing a secret passageway that leads down.

SEWER MAN

But I urge you not to go down there.

AURIELA

What did you find down there?

SEWER MAN

Down an impossibly long flight of stairs, stairs that seemed to lead to the center of the Earth, I ended up in a town square with buildings all around.

AURIELA

That doesn't sound so bad.

SEWER MAN

They were all destroyed. The roofs were torn off, the floorboards had been rotted. The structures could barely stand. On the streets were the remains of the dead, which is no surprise as this is no place you'd want to live. There were no trees, there were no birds, there were no bees. The climate was hostile, the water lined with lead and the air barely breathable.

AURIELA

Good thing you turned right around.

SEWER MAN

I didn't turn right around. I got lost down there. I couldn't find my way back. I think I was down there for years. Barely surviving. I had to eat rodents and bugs. I thought for sure this is where I am going to die.

AURIELA

What happened? How did you get out?

SEWER MAN

I heard you calling for me. A voice from the heavens above. I was able to follow your voice and find the passageway and make my way back up. The door thankfully had stayed opened, had it been closed I'm sure I wouldn't have heard a thing. I shut it behind me and collapsed on your floor. That's when you came back downstairs.

AURIELA

You say you had been down there for years? But it was only a few minutes.

SEWER MAN

A few minutes here. Years down there.

AURIELA

This place sounds awful. I wonder what it is.

SEWER MAN

What it is? The town square I was in was not unlike the one outside your door. There was a museum, a church, and even a cafe with an awning mostly tattered and torn, but I could just make out the words: Cafe Chaillot.

Beat. She closes the passageway door.

AURIELA

Thank you for telling me this.

SEWER MAN

I trust now that you know this information, you will act on it wisely.

AURIELA

I plan to.

(Then)

I appreciate your time. But you should go now. I know you are in the middle of something important. I wouldn't want you to be late.

SEWER MAN

Always a pleasure to see you, Countess.

He starts to go.

AURIELA

Oh, your attache.

She goes to hand him back the attache.

SEWER MAN

You keep it. Perhaps when you look at it, it will bring you back in time to this moment and you will think of me.

AURIELA

Maybe I will think of you regardless.

He smiles.

SEWER MAN

Till we see each other again.

The Sewer Man politely nods then heads to the door.

AURIELA

Farewell...your Majesty.

The Sewer Man stops for a moment, smiles again then heads off, passing IRIS who now enters.

IRIS

Countess, madam Gabrielle and madam Constance have arrived.

AURIELA

Just in time. Do have them come in.

Iris calls up.

IRIS

Right this way, ladies.

CONSTANCE and GABRIELLE enter. Gabrielle is carrying a small dog carrier.

GABRIELLE

Thank you, my dear girl. I wonder if you'd be so kind and fetch me a bowl of water.

IRIS

A bowl of water? What for?

GABRIELLE

My dog, obviously.

She shows her the inside of the dog carrier.

GABRIELLE

His name is Dickie. Isn't he adorable?

IRIS

I'm afraid I don't see a dog.

GABRIELLE

Well, he's imaginary, so you have to look quite hard.

CONSTANCE

Gabrielle, I so wish you hadn't brought Dickie today.

(To Iris)

Bradley thinks she looks absolutely crazy when she talks to her imaginary dog.

IRIS

Who is Bradley?

CONSTANCE

My imaginary friend.

GABRIELLE

I am sorry Bradley feels that way, Constance, but where I go Dickie goes. I love him that much.

IRIS

Do you prefer imaginary dogs to real ones?

GABRIELLE

Oh absolutely.

IRIS

Why is that?

GABRIELLE

Well, for one thing they live longer.

CONSTANCE

I wish the same could be said for Bradley.

GABRIELLE

Oh no, he's not ill, is he?

CONSTANCE

I'm afraid so. No doubt due to his broken heart.

GABRIELLE

Did something happen to he and Patricia?

IRIS

(To Gabrielle)

Patricia?

GABRIELLE

(To Iris)

Bradley's imaginary girlfriend.

IRIS

(To Constance)

Your imaginary friend has an imaginary girlfriend?

CONSTANCE

He did. They were to be married, until she broke it off. She gave it back thankfully and he had it stitched back on, but it's never been the same.

GABRIELLE

How dreadful.

CONSTANCE

I am afraid it will be the death of him.

GABRIELLE

He can't let it get him down, Constance. He's young, he has his whole life ahead of him.

(To Iris)

Isn't that right, miss?

IRIS

Oh yes. He needs to get back out there. Jump back on the imaginary horse. There's a lot of other imaginary fish in the sea. I'm sure he can have his pick of the imaginary litter.

Beat.

CONSTANCE

Are you insane?

IRIS

I might be. A little. Yes.

AURIELA

Iris, I wonder if you'd let me and the ladies have a moment alone.

IRIS

Of course.

Auriela hands Iris the blue attache.

AURIELA

Oh, and will you take this upstairs to my room?

Iris takes the case.

IRIS

It's ticking.

AURIELA

There's a magic clock inside.

IRIS

Oh.

(To Constance)

Madam Constance, pleasure. I hope your friend Bradley gets better.

(To Gabrielle)

Madam Gabrielle, it was nice to see you, as well.

(To Dickie, in the carrying case)

And Dickie, nice to make your acquaintance, too.

GABRIELLE

He's not in there anymore, darling. He's over there. Sitting on the couch.

IRIS

Oh. Sorry. Imaginary dogs. They're so precocious.

(To Auriela)

I'll be upstairs with Jesús and Morgan, if you need us.

*

AURIELA

Very good.

Iris exits. Auriela heads over to the couch.

AURIELA

Gabrielle, if it's all right with you, I'd like to put Dickie on the floor now, so we can all sit and discuss the urgent matter for which you both are here.

Auriela places "Dickie" on the floor.

CONSTANCE

Shall I ask Bradley to go?

*

AURIELA

No, he can stay. Just please ask him not to interrupt, as the fate of the world is at stake.

GABRIELLE

The fate of the world? Is this a joke?

AURIELA

Not remotely.

GABRIELLE

Good. Because it's not particularly funny and usually your jokes are quite hilarious.

AURIELA

You flatter me.

CONSTANCE

Not at all, Auriela. I find you very witty, as well. But this end of the world routine you have going on is not clever at all.

AURIELA

It's not a routine, I'm afraid. Men are conspiring to destroy our village, nay, the entire planet.

CONSTANCE

That doesn't sound like something men would do. They are usually so gentle, in touch with their emotions, hardly ever violent or aggressive, they loathe sports, hate manning the grill, and think they're paid way too much compared to women doing the same or similar work.

*

*

GABRIELLE

How many men do you know, Constance?

CONSTANCE

Just Bradley.

AURIELA

I should say not all men are determined to destroy the world. Just the rich, evil ones.

GABRIELLE

Those are the worst kinds. Personally I prefer a poor, good man to a rich, evil one. They tend to be fatter and I like a man with a little meat on his bones.

AURIELA

I should also say in fairness, it might not just be men.

GABRIELLE

(Horried)

Evil women, too?

(Then, cheerily)

That's progress.

CONSTANCE

How do you tell them apart? The evil and the non-evil.

AURIELA

The evil are ruled by their greed. They don't care about anyone else. Or anything. Not the oceans or the trees or the birds and the bees.

GABRIELLE

Auriela, you know not to talk about the birds and the bees in front of Constance. She's still very innocent.

CONSTANCE

No, I know about the birds and the bees now. Bradley explained it to me.

GABRIELLE

And you understood it?

CONSTANCE

I think so. "Conjugal love is about the strong emotional connection between two beings manifested in a physical way."

GABRIELLE

Very good, Constance.

CONSTANCE

Thank you.

(Then)

I just think the bird's penis is way too big for the bee's vagina.

*

AURIELA

The dire point I'm making ladies is that if we don't stop these evil people we will have no more planet for which to make conjugal love. Or any other kind.

CONSTANCE

There are other kinds?

GABRIELLE

How do you propose we stop these people?

AURIELA

I have a plan to eliminate them all. My concern is, and the reason I asked you here, do I have the right to do so? Do I have the right to remove every last one of these evil people? I need your guidance. I am confident the world will be better off without them, my eyes have been opened to the atrocities they cause, but who am I to determine their fate?

GABRIELLE

Who better than you? This is your town. Your planet, which they intend to destroy. If someone were to come into your home with a notion to set it on fire and kill your children-

AURIELA

I don't have children.

GABRIELLE

If you had children-

CONSTANCE

I think it's too late for her to have children.

GABRIELLE

If someone else's children were in her home...

AURIELA

Whose children?

GABRIELLE

My children.

AURIELA

What would your children be doing in my home?

GABRIELLE

Well, they certainly wouldn't be visiting me. They're horrible kids. They never call, they never write. They don't care about anyone but themselves.

CONSTANCE

I had them over just last week.

GABRIELLE

What?

CONSTANCE

We had a wonderful time. Bradley was there, he can tell you.

AURIELA

(To Gabrielle)

I see your point, Gabrielle. If someone were to come into my home with a torch, threatening to set the place on fire, I'd be obligated to act.

CONSTANCE

How do you know they plan to set the place on fire?

AURIELA

They have a torch.

CONSTANCE

How do you know the torch isn't just so they can see?

AURIELA

See what?

CONSTANCE

See their way around. It's not their home.

AURIELA

But what are they doing in my home in the first place?

CONSTANCE

Maybe they're looking for you. To tell you something important.

AURIELA

Like what?

CONSTANCE

Like something happened to your children.

AURIELA

I don't have children.

CONSTANCE

Maybe something happened to Gabrielle's children.

AURIELA

Why don't they tell Gabrielle?

CONSTANCE

They know Gabrielle's children are not talking to Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE

They're horrible kids. They don't call, they don't write.

AURIELA

I see your point, as well, Constance, and now I'm more confused than ever.

CONSTANCE

Bradley has a suggestion.

AURIELA

I'd be happy to hear it.

GABRIELLE

Dickie has a suggestion, too.

AURIELA

I'd be happy to hear it.

CONSTANCE

As you know, Bradley worked across the street from a law office.

GABRIELLE

Also as you know, Dickie is incredibly cute.

CONSTANCE

Bradley suggests we have a trial.

AURIELA

A trial?

GABRIELLE

Dickie agrees.

AURIELA

Like a courtroom trial?

CONSTANCE

Absolutely. You can't very well condemn people without first giving them a fair trial.

AURIELA

I hadn't considered that.

CONSTANCE

Once these criminals have had their due process and are found guilty you can dole out whatever punishment you wish, confident in the fact that the system has worked and justice has prevailed.

AURIELA

Excellent idea.

CONSTANCE

One caveat. Bradley says the system does not work if you're black, Arab, Asian, Jewish, Latino, Latina, LatinX, female, homosexual, transgender, poor, overweight, handicapped, elderly or any person of non-white, non-heterosexual, non-wealthy, non-male status.

AURIELA

...I think we're safe to proceed with this trial idea.

GABRIELLE

Wonderful.

(Then)

But how do we put people on trial when they are not actually here?

AURIELA

They have to be here to be on trial? That won't work at all.

(Then)

I know. We'll have Morgan stand-in for them. He seems most familiar with these types of people so he can speak on their behalf.

CONSTANCE

Bradley says that sounds fair. And he worked across the street from a law office so he would know.

She heads to the bottom of the stairs.

AURIELA

(Calling upstairs)

Morgan, Iris, Jesús. Can you all come down here?

*

(Then)

Gabrielle, Constance, why don't you start rearranging things so it looks more like a courtroom down here.

GABRIELLE

Absolutely.

Gabrielle grabs a nearby empty birdcage.

GABRIELLE

(To Constance)

Where does the birdcage go in a courtroom?

CONSTANCE

By the judge's bench, I think.

The Ragpicker, Iris and Jesús come downstairs. *

IRIS

What is it, Countess? Is everything OK?

AURIELA

We're going to have a trial. Morgan, you're going to be the defendant.

RAGPICKER

What else is new?

AURIELA

You're going to play the part of the rich and evil people that are plotting to destroy the world.

RAGPICKER

Finally, a role I was born to play!

AURIELA

Iris, Jesús, you both will be witnesses for the prosecution. I will be the prosecuting attorney. *

(Then, to Constance)

Constance, tell Bradley he will be the judge, as he has the most experience with these matters.

GABRIELLE

Oh, Countess, I wanted to be the judge.

CONSTANCE

(As Judge Bradley)

Overruled!

AURIELA

(To Iris)

I'm afraid it has to be Bradley.

(Then)

Oh and Constance, you, yourself, shall be the bailiff.

CONSTANCE

What's the bailiff do?

AURIELA

You swear people in.

CONSTANCE

Let me practice.

(Then, to the Ragpicker)

Let's go you damn bastard and get your ass in the witness chair!

RAGPICKER

I don't think that's the kind of swearing in she means.

AURIELA

Gabrielle, can you be the stenographer?

GABRIELLE

(Excitedly affirmative)

Is Georgia a city?

IRIS

Georgia is a state.

GABRIELLE

I meant Georgia, Russia.

IRIS

Georgia and Russia are both countries.

GABRIELLE

Yes, I can be the stenographer.

(Then)

But wait. I don't have a stenograph.

CONSTANCE

Bradley does.

Constance takes out a stenograph from her bag.

CONSTANCE

He always carries one around just in case we decide to have a trial.

IRIS

Your imaginary friend carries around a non-imaginary stenograph?

CONSTANCE

Yes. Yours doesn't?

AURIELA

Good. Is that everyone?

GABRIELLE

What about a jury? Don't we need a jury?

AURIELA

Iris and Jesús will be the jury.

*

GABRIELLE

But they're witnesses for the prosecution.

AURIELA

Can't they be both? There is no one I trust more than these two to fairly evaluate the evidence and decide the innocence or guilt of the alleged criminals.

IRIS

I don't know how impartial we can be, Countess. Those criminals are the ones trying to kill us.

AURIELA

Details.

(Then, to all)

OK. Are we ready?

RAGPICKER

Wait! I don't get a defense attorney?

CONSTANCE

You can be your own defense attorney.

RAGPICKER

Only a fool has himself as a lawyer.

AURIELA

Dickie can be your lawyer.

RAGPICKER

Excellent. So long as I'm not a fool. Who's Dickie?

GABRIELLE

That's my imaginary dog.

AURIELA

And so we begin. Constance.

CONSTANCE

Hear ye, hear ye, this court is now in session. All rise.

Everyone but Jesús rises. *

GABRIELLE *

(To Jesús)

That means you, too, young man. *

JESÚS *

Oh, sorry. *

He rises. *

GABRIELLE

Jesús has risen!

*

*

(Laughs, then)

Sorry, had to be said.

*

*

CONSTANCE

Case number one, the good people of cafe Chaillot versus the rich, evil people of planet Earth. The honorable Judge Bradley presiding. Please be seated.

GABRIELLE

(Typing at the stenograph)

This is so exciting.

(Then)

How do you spell honorable?

CONSTANCE

(As Judge Bradley)

Prosecution, your opening statement, if you please.

AURIELA

The prosecution intends to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the planet, along with a majority of its citizens, both human and non-human alike, are under attack by a small but wealthy and powerful minority, whose only consideration is to gain more wealth and power no matter who or how many may suffer. We must put a stop to them now. Thank you, your honor.

CONSTANCE

(As Judge Bradley)

Defense, your opening statement, if you please.

Beat.

RAGPICKER

Gabrielle, your imaginary dog is the defense attorney, remember?

GABRIELLE

Oh right. Thank you.

(Calling)

Dickie? Where are you, Lovie? Come to momma!

(Then, to Dickie)

Here you are. You're so cute. Who's mommy's little defense attorney? Come now, it's your time to shine.

She picks up Dickie and holds him close to her face.

GABRIELLE

What's that? You want me to speak on your behalf? Because you're shy. And you don't like speaking in front of people. I understand. I absolutely will. What do you want me to say? Uh huh. Yes. Uh huh. I understand. OK. Uh huh. I got it!

(Then, to Iris and Jesús)

Lady and gentleman of the jury... the defense rests!

*

RAGPICKER

Oh my lord! Your honor, after some consideration, I've decided I'd like to represent myself.

*

CONSTANCE

(As Judge Bradley)

As you wish.

(Then)

Prosecution, your first witness.

AURIELA

The prosecution calls to the stand Jesús.

*

Jesús crosses to the witness stand.

*

CONSTANCE

Jesús, do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

*

JESÚS

I do.

*

CONSTANCE

Please be seated.

He takes a seat.

AURIELA

Jesús, is it true that you were met by three representatives of this evil consortium, coerced to take a bomb into our museum for the express purpose of detonating and killing the mayor, so these men can put their own man in place and get the permission they need to drill for oil and consequently destroy our town?

*

JESÚS

Yes, ma'am. It's true.

*

AURIELA

No further questions!

CONSTANCE

(As Judge Bradley)

Defense, your witness.

The Ragpicker approaches the witness.

RAGPICKER

Jesús... When you were approached by these three "evil" men... were you wearing your glasses?

*

JESÚS

I don't wear glasses.

*

RAGPICKER

(Triumphantly)

So you were not wearing your glasses!

(Then)

Also, no further questions!

CONSTANCE

(As Judge Bradley)

The witness is excused.

AURIELA

The prosecution calls to the stand Iris.

Iris changes places with Jesús.

*

CONSTANCE

Iris, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

IRIS

I do.

AURIELA

Iris, can you corroborate Jesús's account of what happened? *

IRIS

I can. At lunch today, the evil men shared their nefarious plan with me.

AURIELA

Then what happened?

IRIS

They sent me into the museum to be murdered along with the mayor and the rest of the museum patrons.

AURIELA

And what happened when you arrived at the museum?

IRIS

Almost as soon as I walked in, I saw Jesús. He looked... so vulnerable. Like he was tasked to do something that he didn't want to do. There was something about him, I don't know what it was, but... I was taken immediately. *

AURIELA

Taken by whom?

IRIS

...Taken by love.

Jesús stands and faces her. *

JESÚS *

You love me?

IRIS

I know that sounds ridiculous. You hear about love at first sight all the time, and probably assume as I always have that it's not real.

JESÚS *

It's real.

IRIS
That it's the stuff of fairy tales.

JESÚS
It's no fairy tale.

She nods.

IRIS
...I know. Because there I was staring into your eyes, the eyes of a man I never met before and yet somehow I saw my future.

JESÚS
I saw mine, as well.

IRIS
I saw our lives together.

JESÚS
Our first date.

IRIS
Our first kiss.

JESÚS
Our wedding.

IRIS
(Provocatively)
Our wedding night.

RAGPICKER
Objection. They got married after one kiss?

IRIS
When it's right, it's right!

RAGPICKER
Your honor, what does this have to do with anything?

CONSTANCE
(As Judge Bradley)
I am going to allow it.

*

*

*

*

(Then, leaning in)
What happened on your wedding night?

RAGPICKER

(Disdainfully)
This is ridiculous! This trial is a sham. Do we really need to hear about this silly little girl and her stupid little crush.

IRIS

(Shocked)
Morgan.

RAGPICKER

(Whispers)
I'm in character.

IRIS

Oh right.

RAGPICKER

(Back in character)
Where is this all going to lead? With the two lovers fawning all over each other, falling into each other's arms.

JESÚS

I'm in favor of that.

*

IRIS

As am I.

RAGPICKER

Your love is futile and a waste of time. What future can you possibly hope to have? You're poor.

IRIS

If we have no future, it's because you stole it from us.

RAGPICKER

I don't steal anything. I don't have to because I'm rich.

AURIELA

Hold on. If you have something to say, say it on the witness stand. Bailiff, swear him in.

CONSTANCE

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

RAGPICKER

I certainly do not. I'll tell the truth only if it serves me and freely lie if it doesn't.

AURIELA

So you admit to telling lies?

RAGPICKER

I admit to nothing.

AURIELA

We have it on record. Stenographer, will you read back what he just said.

GABRIELLE

Yes.

(She reads from the stenograph)

Blk gjdo ho oijh...

(Then)

Sorry. This machine only has like 8 buttons.

RAGPICKER

You see. These rules don't apply to me. They are only for you. To keep you in control. To make you think you have power. But all you really have is what I give you.

AURIELA

We have you under arrest for breaking the law.

RAGPICKER

What law did I break?

AURIELA

Loving money.

RAGPICKER

That's not a crime. Who among you doesn't love money? Doesn't wish you had more. Doesn't go to the corner shop down the street every weekend to buy a lottery ticket in the hopes of winning buckets of money.

IRIS

We want money only to survive. You want it as a trophy.

AURIELA

Iris, I can handle this.

(To the Ragpicker)

We want money only to survive. You want it-

(Then, to Iris)

You know what, you do it. My feet are tired anyway.

Iris and Auriela switch places.

IRIS

(To the Ragpicker)

You define yourself by the number of things you have. We define ourselves by the people in our lives who love us.

AURIELA

That's good.

IRIS

We define ourselves by the number of friends we have.

GABRIELLE

She's right. If I won the lottery, I would buy so many friends.

RAGPICKER

Yes, you would. Because that's what money can do for you. It gets you friends, it makes you popular, it gives you power and respect. You can buy whatever you want.

IRIS

You can't buy love!

RAGPICKER

I can buy every manifestation of love so what difference does it make. And when I buy it, I buy quality. Unlike you, a slave to what your heart chooses. And if your heart chooses someone poor or weak, or abusive and alcoholic, that's what your stuck with. If I don't like what I've purchased, I can return it. Get something better.

(Then)

Loving money is not a crime, and if it were you should arrest yourselves because you love it more than me. That's all you think about is money. How will I pay my rent? How will I purchase food? How will I buy clothes for my children? I don't think about any of that stuff. I don't have to. You balk at the price of milk if it goes up twenty cents.

I don't even know what the price of milk is. Is it five dollars or five hundred dollars. I don't know. I don't care. I don't think about money.

IRIS

If it were up to you it would be \$500.

RAGPICKER

And you'd give it away for free? Where's the sense in that?

IRIS

That's what compassionate people do.

RAGPICKER

Really? Suppose I make a medicine, a life saving medicine. It costs me one dollar to make. Should I charge nothing for it? How am I to live? How am I to do my work? How am I to create additional medicine for other life threatening diseases? Surely there is more than one. But if I give the one away for free, I can't make the others. So I charge for it. Make a little money, so I can continue my work. Would you not do the same? Is that not the compassionate thing to do?

IRIS

The difference is I would charge two dollars, you would charge two thousand.

RAGPICKER

That's right. And now you have to sell it one thousand more times to make the kind of money that I did. You have to hope you find one thousand more sick people. What a horrible thing to hope for. I don't want more sick people. I want less sick people. That's why I make medicine in the first place.

IRIS

You don't make medicine! You don't make anything. You just destroy. You destroy the oceans, you destroy the forests, you destroy the planet.

RAGPICKER

I didn't destroy the planet. Look, you're standing on it right now. It's totally fine. What a wonderful planet.

IRIS

The planet is sick. The sea levels are rising.

RAGPICKER

How is that possible if I destroyed the oceans?

IRIS

The climate is changing.

RAGPICKER

Who wants the same weather every day.

IRIS

More than 15 billion trees were cut down last year.

RAGPICKER

And you take no responsibility for that? What's your house made of? Sunshine and fresh air?

IRIS

I have not killed as many trees as you.

RAGPICKER

You don't have as many houses as I do.

IRIS

Why do you need so many?

RAGPICKER

The houses aren't for me, darling. They're for my money. It needs a place to live, too, you know. To grow, mature, reach its potential. You don't understand that because you have no money. And that's what this is really about. You have no money. And you want it. Because you love it. Because it let's you be more like me.

IRIS

We don't want to be anything like you.

RAGPICKER

Oh but you do. And I don't blame you for wanting to be like me, I just don't understand why I would get punished for being me. It doesn't seem fair. I'm the victim here, not you. And why? For committing the same "crime" that you all commit every day. Loving money.

IRIS

You love it more than anything. More than everyone.

RAGPICKER

No. I love every one. And every ten, every twenty, every hundred.

IRIS

That's not real love.

RAGPICKER

It's better! Because real love leads to pain! You'll see young lady. Your real love will blow up in your face. Like a bomb. Heartbreak, misery, grief. They're all bi-products of real love. And where does all that lead?

He points to Auriela, Constance and Gabrielle.

RAGPICKER

One need only look at the three mad, delusional women in the room to see where that will get you.

AURIELA

That's enough.

RAGPICKER

So you'll forgive me if I choose money over everything else and do whatever I can to get it. Exploit your fears, manipulate your beliefs, derail your politics, take your land, chop down your trees, pollute your air, poison your water, kill your children, whatever it takes, because money is the only thing worthy of real love!

AURIELA

I said that's enough! The prosecution rests. This trial is over. I think we've heard enough to reach a verdict, don't you agree?

IRIS

I do.

JESÚS

I do, as well.

*

AURIELA

How do you find the defendant?

IRIS

Guilty.

JESÚS

Guilty.

*

AURIELA

So I may punish these rich and evil people as I see fit?

CONSTANCE

Any way you want, Countess. The trial was fair.

GABRIELLE

You can execute them all, if you wish.

AURIELA

Jesús, what do you say?

*

JESÚS

*

If these people have caused atrocities, then it is our responsibility to mete out an equal and appropriate justice, so saith the Bible. Genesis chapter 9 verse 6 “Whoever sheds the blood of Man, by Man shall his blood be shed.”

AURIELA

Then it’s settled.

JESÚS

*

On the other hand...

AURIELA

What? There is another hand?

JESÚS

*

Are the crimes of Man ours to judge, or God’s alone? For are we not all sinners? John chapter 8 verse 7 “Let Him who is without sin, cast the first stone.”

CONSTANCE

But no one is without sin. How are we supposed to cast any stones?

JESÚS

*

On the other hand...

GABRIELLE

There’s another hand? That’s three hands. The man’s an octopus.

JESÚS

*

(Ramping up)

Exodus Chapter 21 verse 12 “Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death.”

CONSTANCE

That seems reasonable to me.

JESÚS

But Exodus 20:13 “You shall not murder.”

*

CONSTANCE

That seems reasonable to me.

JESÚS

*

(Crescendo)

Matthew 5:38 “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Mathew 5:39 If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also!”

Beat.

IRIS

So what do we do now?

GABRIELLE

...I agree with Jesús.

*

Slight pause, then Auriela walks over to the wall sconce.

AURIELA

I know what we’re going to do.

She turns the sconce and re-opens the door to the passageway.

AURIELA

We are going to send them down this secret passageway and shut the door behind them. A passageway that leads from my basement to a hellish, nightmare of a place at the center of the Earth. A place where they will surely die... should we allow it... Lest we hope to become like them however, we will show a little mercy, compassion, love, and from time to time re-open the door, and give them an opportunity for redemption. If they’ve learned the error of their ways, we will let them come back, so they too can know what a beautiful place this world can be when it is not corrupted by greed. What say you all?

They all nod. Then:

IRIS

There’s a passageway that leads from your basement to the center of the Earth?

AURIELA

Gabrielle, Constance, thank you for your help today. You needn’t stay. I think I can handle it from here.

RAGPICKER

Ladies... I apologize if I said anything earlier that was hurtful in any way. I... got lost in the character.

*

AURIELA

You played the part well, Morgan. Very dramatic. And dark. And truthful. You should be proud.

The Ragpicker nods appreciatively.

RAGPICKER

(To Gabrielle and Constance)

May I escort you both out?

GABRIELLE

Absolutely.

*

*

(Then, to Auriela)

Auriela, any time you want to rid the world of greedy people, you can always count on us. Or prideful people, too. Really any of the deadly sins.

*

*

*

CONSTANCE

Maybe not lustful. How is one supposed to learn.

*

*

Gabrielle, Constance and the Ragpicker exit upstairs.

AURIELA

Jesús, Iris, why don't you both go upstairs, as well. It's nearly four. Check and see if the rich, evil people have arrived.

*

JESÚS

Yes ma'am.

*

Jesús heads upstairs. Iris starts to go but then stops.

*

AURIELA

Iris?

IRIS

...Do you think Morgan was right? I mean, I realize he was only playing a role, but when he said that the love that Jesús and I share for one another is futile, a bomb that will blow up in our faces, do you think that's true?

*

AURIELA

I don't know.

(Then)

If it is?

IRIS

Then we should end it before it even begins.

AURIELA

But the beginnings are the best part.

IRIS

And if it ends badly? How am I to get over that?

Auriela shakes her head unsure.

AURIELA

I don't know.

IRIS

All of my life I wanted to find someone to love, and who would love me in return, and now I found it and it scares me. The sheer power of it.

AURIELA

It is powerful, that much is true.

(Then)

But it's not love that scares you. It's the absence of love. So it makes no sense to hide from it. Only a mad fool would do that.

Auriela places her arms on Iris' shoulders.

AURIELA

And you're no mad fool.

Beat.

Jesús and Morgan return urgently.

*

JESÚS

*

Countess, they're here! Thousands of them. All of the rich and evil people of the world.

RAGPICKER

I have to be honest. I'm a little surprised this has worked out as well as it has.

JESÚS

The Chairman and his cronies have asked to come down here first to speak with you. They seem to be in charge.

*

AURIELA

Send them down. I'll see them alone. Everyone upstairs.

Jesús and Iris head back upstairs.

*

RAGPICKER

Are you sure you'll be all right?

AURIELA

I think I can manage.

The Chairman, the Deputy Mayor and the Prospector make their way down stairs. The Ragpicker passes them on the way up, exchanges a glance with the Chairman and exits.

CHAIRMAN

Countess Auriela, it's so nice to be in your company again.

AURIELA

Are you hungry? We have some Salvanilla, still.

CHAIRMAN

No, thank you. They offered as much already upstairs.

AURIELA

My people are good that way.

CHAIRMAN

And I can tell by the loyalty of your people that you must be a good leader. Someone who exercises sound judgment. I trust you will do the same with us.

AURIELA

I certainly will try. But you have to give me one moment first. I see my friend has left her dog behind.

DEPUTY MAYOR

A dog?

AURIELA

(To Dickie, the imaginary dog roaming the floor)

Dickie, come here. Dickie. Here we go. Let's go find mommy.

She snags him up.

AURIELA

(To the others)

Let me return him real quick. I'll only be a moment.

She exits upstairs with Dickie.

DEPUTY MAYOR

That woman is crazy as hell. She should be easy to exploit and will probably be none the wiser.

CHAIRMAN

Doesn't matter if she does figure it out. She'll be dead soon enough.

(To the Prospector)

Please tell me you found the bomb.

PROSPECTOR

The tracking device you gave me led me right to it. I found it upstairs in the countess' living quarters, if you can believe it. I snuck up there, shut the timer off and set up a remote detonation instead.

He shows them a remote.

PROSPECTOR

All we have to do is push this button.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I'll take care of that.

The Deputy Mayor grabs the remote.

CHAIRMAN

Don't press it just yet. Wait until the mayor gets here.

DEPUTY MAYOR

The Mayor?

CHAIRMAN

I sent him a note pretending to be the countess asking him to come here to meet with her about something “important.” Once he arrives, all of our loose ends will be in one place and we can eliminate them all.

Auriela returns.

AURIELA

Hello gentlemen, I’m back.

CHAIRMAN

Countess, we don’t want to waste your time, so we will get right down to it. We understand you found a bit of oil underneath your cafe here.

AURIELA

Yes. Disgusting stuff. I just want to get rid of it all.

CHAIRMAN

As luck would have it, we have some people here that are willing to help take it off your hands.

AURIELA

I saw them. Quite a crowd.

CHAIRMAN

We want to make sure we do it correctly, so we brought experts from all sorts of industries. All you need do is sign this paperwork.

He hands her some paperwork and a pen.

CHAIRMAN

No need to read it, it’s fairly standard.

AURIELA

I never read anything without signing it first. But what about payment?

CHAIRMAN

Payment? Of course. I think you’ll find our offer very generous.

He reaches in his pocket.

CHAIRMAN

One... Hundred... Dollars!

He hands her a one hundred dollar bill.

AURIELA

Wow. One hundred dollars! For me? I thought I'd have to pay you to get rid of that disgusting muck below.

CHAIRMAN

(Surprised)

Oh... well... if you prefer...

AURIELA

No, no. This will come in handy. Give all the employees a bonus at the end of the year.

PROSPECTOR

You should put that in a high-yield savings account. In a few months it will be worth even more.

She starts to sign the papers.

AURIELA

I don't trust banks. I keep all of my money underneath my bed.

PROSPECTOR

It won't appreciate that way.

AURIELA

I appreciate it. I have a very saggy bed. The money helps keep it firm.

She hands over the papers.

AURIELA

Here you go. Your papers are signed.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Excellent.

AURIELA

(Calling up the stairs)

Iris!

DEPUTY MAYOR

(Discreetly to the Chairman and the
Prospector)

That woman is such a fool. She doesn't realize what she just signed away.

CHAIRMAN

(Discreetly to the Deputy Mayor and the
Prospector)

I feel like an idiot though giving her that money. She would have signed the damn thing for free.

DEPUTY MAYOR

It doesn't matter. There's millions more where that came from.

Iris enters.

AURIELA

Iris, tell the people they can start coming down. Also, put this money in the grey suitcase underneath my bed.

Auriela gives Iris the hundred dollars.

IRIS

Yes ma'am.

Iris exits. Auriela crosses to the passageway.

AURIELA

Gentlemen, let me show you the passageway so you can see where all of the oil is.

CHAIRMAN

Excellent. We will get it out of your hair in no time at all. I see our people coming now. I'll escort the first group.

AURIELA

Who do we have here?

A silhouetted line of people behind a scrim can be seen heading towards the passageway. *

CHAIRMAN

These folks run many of the major industries in all the world. CEOs, CFOs, COOs. *

VICE PRESIDENT (BEHIND SCRIM) *

Don't forget us Vice Presidents.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT (BEHIND SCRIM) *

I'm a Senior Vice President. *

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT (BEHIND SCRIM) *

I'm an Executive Vice President. *

SENIOR EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT (BEHIND SCRIM) *

I'm a Senior Executive Vice President- *

CHAIRMAN

It doesn't matter your title. Just head down the passageway. Make room for me first.

They all including the Chairman enter the passageway.

AURIELA

Don't stop until you hit the bottom.

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT (BEHIND SCRIM) *

This is a Win Win! *

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT (BEHIND SCRIM) *

It's a paradigm shift! *

VICE PRESIDENT (BEHIND SCRIM) *

I like to think outside the box!

The last of them cross through.

AURIELA

Wonderful. Who's coming now, Deputy Mayor?

The next group of silhouetted people start to head towards the passageway.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Many of the planet's most important and respected political figures. There's Heads of State, Presidents, Prime Ministers.

I'm a Despot!

DESPOT (BEHIND SCRIM) *

I'm a Dictator!

DICTATOR (BEHIND SCRIM) *

I'm a Lobbyist.

LOBBYIST (BEHIND SCRIM) *

AURIELA
Just head straight down. There's room for everyone.

DEPUTY MAYOR
Out of my way! Let me get in the front.

The Deputy Mayor and other political figures head down the passageway.

AURIELA
I see what looks to be a final group of people. Who do we have here?

A group of silhouetted people head down the passageway.

PROSPECTOR
This group is an assorted bunch with various areas of expertise including Russian oligarchs, Technology Entrepreneurs, People who are famous but have no discernible talent, College loan lenders, Lecherous Film Producers, People who overshare when you ask, "how was your weekend," Men who sit with their legs wide apart while traveling on public transportation. Women who always ask to speak with the manager. People who make it about them when it's really about you. Talk Show Hosts Posing as Journalists. Religious leaders who claim moral superiority while being morally bankrupt. People with vocal fry. Parents who go out of their way to remove obstacles from their children's lives thereby making it more difficult for their children to function on their own as adults and Theater goers who are easily offended. *

AURIELA
All worthy of what awaits them.

(Then)
Down you go.

The Prospector heads down the passageway with the others.

AURIELA

Mind the steps all of you. Mind the steps.

Jesús enters.

*

JESÚS

Countess.

*

*

AURIELA

Jesús, is that everyone?

*

*

JESÚS

I believe so. Though, the Mayor is here to see you. He's upstairs.

*

*

AURIELA

The Mayor? Pity. I thought he was one of the good ones.

*

*

JESÚS

I don't think he's with them. He said you sent for him.

*

*

AURIELA

Me? I don't recall sending for him.

*

*

(Then)

I'll see to him in a moment. More important things first. Help me shut this door.

*

*

They close the door to the passageway.

JESÚS

That's it then? You trapped them all?

*

AURIELA

I believe so. And there they will stay until they've learned their lesson. They won't be harming anyone else, ever again.

A sudden light shift and we are now down in the passageway, lit only by some torch light. The Chairman is cutting his way through a group of people to catch up with the Deputy Mayor and the Prospector.

CHAIRMAN

Deputy, Prospector. Wait up.

DEPUTY MAYOR

What are you doing here? I thought you were ahead of us.

CHAIRMAN

I snuck out while the others were filing in. I wanted to see if the Mayor had yet arrived.

DEPUTY MAYOR

And?

CHAIRMAN

He has. Time to eliminate our loose ends.

DEPUTY MAYOR

Excellent.

The Deputy Mayor takes out the detonator.

DEPUTY MAYOR

I wish I could see the look on their stupid faces just as the bomb goes off.

CHAIRMAN

Count it down, Deputy Mayor!

DEPUTY MAYOR

With pleasure. 3!

CHAIRMAN

(To the Prospector)

While I was up there, by the way, I also got my money back.

DEPUTY MAYOR

2!

CHAIRMAN

The grey suitcase underneath the Countess' bed.

The Chairman shows the Prospector the suitcase he stole.

DEPUTY MAYOR

1!

PROSPECTOR

That suitcase isn't grey, it's blue.

CHAIRMAN

What? Damn my color blindness!

The Deputy Mayor presses the detonator. An explosion!

A light shift and we're back in Auriela's basement.

AURIELA

What was that noise?

JESÚS

Sounded like an explosion. From deep in the passageway.

*

AURIELA

Shall we open the door?

Jesús goes to check the door.

*

JESÚS

I don't think we can anymore. It's... sealed shut.

*

He turns to Auriela.

JESÚS

They're stuck down there forever.

*

The Ragpicker rushes in.

RAGPICKER

Countess, you won't believe it!

AURIELA

Morgan, what is it?

RAGPICKER

It's no longer grey anymore. Outside. It looked like it was about to rain. It was windy. Suddenly the sun came out. The weather is perfect!

AURIELA

How wonderful.

*

*

Celia rushes in.

*

CELIA

Countess!

*

	AURIELA	
Celia!		*
	CELIA	
The birds are singing. The bees are humming. The trees are doing whatever it is trees do. I don't know what they do, but they haven't done it in so long and now they're doing it again!		*
	Dominique rushes in.	
	DOMINIQUE	
Countess!		
	AURIELA	
Dominique!		*
	DOMINIQUE	
The Mayor. He wants to give you the key to the city.		* *
	AURIELA	
The key to the city?		*
	DOMINIQUE	
He heard what you did for the town. He says it's the least he can do to thank you for all you've done.		* * *
	AURIELA	
I appreciate that.		* *
	(Then, exchanging a glance with Jesús)	
Tell him, however, I'd prefer the city not require a key. Let's keep it unlocked, shall we. And open to everyone. So as many people can prosper as possible.		* * *
	DOMINIQUE	
Very well. Is there anything you want instead? I mean, he is the mayor. He can probably get you anything you ask for.		* * *
	AURIELA	
I don't know that there is anything I need.		* *
	Officer Stevens enters.	
	OFFICER STEVENS	
Countess.		

AURIELA

Officer Stevens? What are you doing here?

OFFICER STEVENS

You're not going to believe it. I found your feather boa.

AURIELA

...You did what?

OFFICER STEVENS

I found it! I was two towns over visiting my brother when I see a man and a woman at a cafe. The woman had a feather boa that is identical to the one you had taken from you. I'm sure of it!

*

AURIELA

Oh my gosh, that's... That's incredible.

OFFICER STEVENS

I can't believe I actually cracked this case.

RAGPICKER

Did you arrest the woman and retrieve the boa?

OFFICER STEVENS

No, of course not. It's my day off. But I can. I'm sure they're still at the cafe. The service there is unbelievably slow.

AURIELA

Tell me, the man she was with... can you describe him?

OFFICER STEVENS

The man? Well, I didn't take that good a look at him. Handsome, though, to be sure. Dark hair, brown eyes. A smile that would melt your heart.

(Then)

Do you want me to go back there? Arrest the woman and retrieve the boa?

*

AURIELA

I do. But not to arrest the woman. Or to retrieve the boa.

*

OFFICER STEVENS

No? What would you have me do?

*

AURIELA

Go back there and give her this.

*

She takes off her hat and hands it to Officer Stevens.

OFFICER STEVENS

I don't understand.

AURIELA

Give her the hat. I think it's time to reunite the set, don't you?

OFFICER STEVENS

...As you wish.

(Then, half mumbling)

Though it is my day off.

*
*
*
*

Iris now enters holding a gift box.

IRIS

Auriela, this just came for you.

AURIELA

What a busy afternoon. Who's it from?

IRIS

The card says, "From his Royal Highness."

AURIELA

Well... would you look at that.

RAGPICKER

You know someone royal? Who is the person?

Auriela opens the box and pulls out a beautiful scarf.

IRIS

Who ever he is, he has impeccable taste.

AURIELA

That much is true.

RAGPICKER

So the feather boa has been found. The bad people are all gone. Humanity has been saved. It seems this little story is coming to an end, I'm afraid.

AURIELA

Why are you afraid?

*

(Then, to all)

You needn't fear endings, my children. They make way for new beginnings.

*

Auriela puts the scarf around her neck.

CELIA

A new beginning? What will the next story be about?

*

RAGPICKER

It will be bigger! Better. A more powerful force intent on taking over the world?

DOMINIQUE

More powerful than greed. What can possibly trump that?

Iris holds out her hand to Jesús. He grabs it.

*

IRIS

How about love?

JESÚS

I like it.

*

AURIELA

As do I. For though love be powerful, it's good. It's so, so good.

Iris and Jesús fall into each other's arms and kiss.

*

Fade to black.

CURTAIN CALL EPILOGUE

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During the curtain call, a reprise of the song from earlier starts to play. After everyone has bowed, the cast begins to sing one final chorus.

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