

# **THE CABALA**

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A drama in two acts

By  
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**BASED ON THE NOVEL BY THORNTON WILDER**

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Act 1

SCENE 1 TRAIN FROM NAPLES TO ROME

Sam and Blair, two American students descend from the train.

SAM

Let's rush.

BLAIR

No need to rush.

MAN IN BLUE

Ti posso aiutare

SAM

Gaziare, non.

Man in Blue appears.

BLAIR

Haven't we seen this man many times before?

SAM

This train is so overcrowded! They are all beginning to look blue.

BLAIR

Have you ever been in an Italian train that is not overcrowded?

SAM

It was also cold.

BLAIR

Stop complaining. We had some delights. A Jesuit speaking in Latin And that Russian sculptor reading the bony structure of our heads.

SAM

And that Italian woman and her hen. And those Oxford students dressed for tramping.

BLAIR

Not very interesting compared to some of the goings on in Sicily.

SAM

You know what I think. These Italians all look alike. They are actually reincarnations of Olympian Gods

BLAIR

Some people think that all humans are re-incarnations of Olympian Gods.

Ottima walks by with a suitcase.

BLAIR

Oh my God. (Shouting out) Ciao, Septima. Is that you!

Ottima

I am not Giovanna!

BLAIR

But you are! Certo!

OTTIMA

Have you been in Sicily?

BLAIR

Just returning.

OTTIMA

I thought so.

BLAIR

Why?

OTTIMA

My sister Septima was the cook for a motion picture company We are twins.

BLAIR

Ah yes. I just finished filming The Gods of Sicily. A great motion picture. She's the best cook in Italy.

OTTIMA

SECOND best.

BLAIR

Who's the best?

OTTIMA

I AM!

SAM

I like this woman!

OTTIMA

I now go back to Sicily.

SAM

Why?

OTTIMA

I need work. I was just fired.

SAM

Why?

OTTIMA

By a scoundrel. A long story. Do you need a chef, a house cleaner, a..... ,

SAM

(interrupting)

Yes we do. But we need an apartment first.

OTTIMA

I have one for you.

SAM

You own it?

OTTIMA

No, but I know the man who does. Five bedrooms, a balcony, high ceilings, and in good condition. Four hundred year old.

BLAIR

Must be in a crummy part of town.

OTTIMA

Across from the Spanish Steps.

SAM

Then we can not afford it!

OTTIMA

He wants ten thousand lira a month

SAM

No way can we afford it.

OTTIMA

Offer him five hundred.

SAM

What! You mean five THOUSAND!

OTTIMA

You heard me right!

SAM

But.. .

OTTIMA  
He'll take it.

SAM  
Why!

OTTIMA  
None of your business. Wise Neapolitan saying: Don't  
look a gift jackass in the mouth.

BLAIR  
But he may be a member of the Mafia.

OTTIMA  
Don't be silly! You're Americans. You'll pay, and he  
needs money.

SAM  
Surely there must be some problems with the apartment.

OTTIMA  
Three inches of dirt, smelly toilets, and mice. All  
three will be gone.

SAM  
Great!

OTTIMA  
I know a lady who can clean.

SAM  
WHO?

OTTIMA  
A lady with a cat named Geranium. Do you like cats?

BLAIR  
Yes we do.

Sam  
And so do I.

BLAIR

Where is this cleaning woman?

Ottima

You are looking at her now. You will have a clean house in two days. I am also the best cook in Rome.

BLAIR

Is your cuisine Southern or Northern Italian.

OTTIMA

You want the truth?

BLAIR

Yes.

OTTIMA

The whole world loves my northern Italian cooking.

BLAIR

Now nice. But I prefer Sicilian cuisine.

OTTIMA

Good, because my cooking IS Sicilian. I tell them its NORTHERN Italian and they are too dumb to know any better Now I must clean the apartment. It will be ready for you when you move in.

SAM

Wait! We have not even signed a lease.

OTTIMA

Knock on his door. 2337 Somilia Piazza.

SAM

But we have no furniture.

OTTIMA

The place has more furniture than you need. Needs to be cleaned and polished.



SAM

I should tell you I have a German shepherd named Kurt.

OTTIMA

Geranium loves dogs. Especially German Shepherds. And I was named after a German Shepherd. Arriverdici.

SAM

Arriverdici.

OTTIMA

And you and Sam will be the Greek Gods of Rome.

BLAIR

One question before you leave.

OTTIMA

What?

BLAIR

Have you ever heard of the Cabala?

OTTIMA

Arriverdici. See you in two days

Sam

What's the Cabala?

Blair

Never mind.

SCENE 2      APARTMENT      SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Blair and Sam walk into a beautiful furnished 17th century salon.

BLAIR

Gorgeous apartment!

SAM

Only a stones throw from the Basilica of Santa Maria  
a Trastavere.

BLAIR

This has to be the cleanest apartment in all Italy.

SAM

Not a speck of dust The floors are immaculately  
waxed.

BLAIR

The place smells heavenly. The windows lustre.

We hear Kurt barking'

SAM

That must be Kurt's barking at his happiest.

OTTIMA (O.S.)

Yes it is!

Ottima enters

SAM

That smell from the kitchen?

OTTIMA

Come and see!

They walk into the kitchen

SAM

These smells are delicious!

OTTIMA

Look!

SAM

Wow! But we don't eat that much. A lot of food for two people.

OTTIMA

This is food for twelve.

SAM

What!

OTTIMA

Blair told me to prepare for twelve.

SAM

Twelve!

BLAIR

Yes, Twelve. That is how many we are having for dinner.

SAM

What! Twelve!

BLAIR

I thought I would surprise you.

SAM

Surprise me!

BLAIR

Yes.

SAM

Who are they?

BLAIR

You will see.

SAM

This is no time for games!

BLAIR

Games. You should feel honored.

SAM

Why?

BLAIR

Because you will meet some very nice people.

SAM

Who!

BLAIR

The Cabala?

SAM

That thing!

Phone rings

Sam

Pronto. No! I am not looking for a chef this week.

BLAIR

I must go. I don't have a minute to waste!

Sam

What!

BLAIR

I just got a gig in Venice! John Crock Studios from London is filming a motion picture on the Medici family and their cameraman just got fired for over drinking. They need someone and are paying me handsomely. This will be one of the greatest pictures of all time.

SAM

Can't you go tomorrow?

BLAIR

I either go tonight or.....

SAM

But you set up this dinner! NOT I!

BLAIR

BUT I DID IT FOR YOU!

SAM

For me!

BLAIR

Yes.

SAM

How so!

BLAIR

This is the Cabala!

SAM

THE Cabala

BLAIR

Yes.

SAM

Who are they?

BLAIR

I'll give you a hint.

SAM

Yes?

BLAIR

The most uniquely powerful group in the world!

SAM

Really!

BLAIR

You are in for a treat.

SAM

But....

BLAIR

I must go. I will miss my train.

SAM

You haven't even packed.

BLAIR

So why are you holding me up.

SAM

When are you coming back?

BLAIR

I will pay my rent and be back when I can.

SAM

Blair. I DON'T KNOW ANY OF THESE PEOPLE!

BLAIR

You'll manage. And I should be back in a month.

SAM

Do not straddle me with these people.

BLAIR

Ottima. Can you send my things to Florence? I have to leave now.

OTTIMA  
Leave your address.

Blair exits. A knock at the door.

OTTIMA  
Not yet. Too early.

SAM  
Oh my God! They've arrived. Come in.

Princess Alix enters.

OTTIMA  
Princess Alix.

ALIX  
Blair!

OTTIMA  
He's leaving,

ALIX  
Blair!

BLAIR  
Yes, Alix

ALIX  
You have ignored my letters.

BLAIR  
What letters!

ALIX  
I sent you eight of them.

BLAIR  
I never got any.

ALIX

I don't believe you!

BLAIR

Please, Alex. I must go.

ALIX

Go where?

BLAIR

Sam can explain. Will send you a note in a week.

ALIX

Blair. Please.

BLAIR

I must go I will miss my train. And yes I will write to you. Tell Sam about the Cabala.

He exits

ALIX

Again. Why doesn't he like me.

SAM

You have to know him!

ALIX

A thought I did.

Blair runs back in..

BLAIR

Ottima!

OTTIMA

Here's your sandwich.



SAM

How did you know the type of sandwich I like?

OTTIMA

My sister told me.

ALIX

And am I no more worth than sandwich?

OTTIMA

Be quiet and let him eat his sandwich. A growing boy must eat. And the movie company serves slurp.

BLAIR

I will write you like I said.

He exits.

ALIX

God never had any intention of making me happy.

OTTIMA

Tell him about the Cabala. (She exits)

ALIX

They all love you, Samuele.

OTTIMA

Ha. They do not know me.

SAM

They haven't even met me.

ALIX

But we already love you.

**SAM**  
What do you know about me?

**ALIX**  
Blair told us all we had to know.

**SAM**  
So why do you all like me?

**ALIX**  
Because you're an American. You went to Yale. And you are a writer. .

**SAM**  
And you love me for that! Tell me about the Cabala.

**ALIX**  
What about them?

**SAM**  
Who are they?

**ALIX**  
Well let me give you a rundown.

**SAM**  
Begin!

**ALIX**  
First there is the Cardinal.

**SAM**  
A real one?

**ALIX**  
Yes. Cardinal Vaini.

**SAM**  
A member of the Curia?

**ALIX**  
Of course.

SAM

You said Vaini?

ALIX

Yes.

SAM

The name strikes me. I recall his name from somewhere. Newspapers perhaps.

ALIX

He has managed to never get his name in the newspapers.

SAM

Should he?

ALIX

You will find that out. Does China strike a bell?

SAM

My parents were a missionaries there..

ALIX

Ah that might explain it.

SAM

As a child I was fascinated by that man.

ALIX

Might not be the same person.

SAM

Perhaps.

ALIX

His China experience has instilled fear throughout the Curia,

SAM

And the others?

ALIX

There is Antonio. He's only sixteen and a twin We never see his sister. But his mother, the Countess Giovanna, has the finest pedigree in all of Europe . A very fine woman.

SAM

And her son? Tony

ALIX

He is the handsomest person you will ever see. I think you will like this confused young man.

SAM

And the others?

ALIX

There is Princess Lucia? She comes from French and Italian nobility. But she is a strong willed Roman, and she supports Catholic charities too.

SAM

Who else?

ALIX

Forgot to mention her most ardent cause.

SAM

Yes?

ALIX

She believes in the Divine Right of Kings.

SAM

I know of a quite a few people who feel the same way. Some are even Americans.

ALIX

Hers is different.

SAM

How is that.

ALIX

She wants the Divine Right of Kings to become Church Dogma.

SAM

Ha. And who else?

ALIX

The Duchess Bernstein

SAM

Might she be from the family?

ALIX

You bet.

SAM

You even know Americanisms. I thought she was dead.

ALIX

No. She's the Cardinal's favorite

SAM

Why?

ALIX

He calls her the most charitable woman in the world. And she has saved orphanages and so on and so on.

SAM

How nice. And I presume she's Jewish.

ALIX

Nobody knows for sure. Someday's she wakes up and shes Jewish and the next day she's reciting rosaries.

SAM

Any others.

ALIX

There are actually twenty six members. Some only come occasionally. And then there's Miss Grier- the American.

SAM

Ah, Indeed.

ALIX

Elizabeth Grier believes that the members of the Cabala are actually reincarnations of Olympian Gods. All are rich powerful bored lonely and intellectually snobbish. All hate what is new.

SAM

Seems like a group of people losing sleep over a host of notions that the rest of the world has outgrown several centuries.

ALIX

Almost sounds like a joke to an outsider.

OTTIMA

Some people say a big joke.

SAM

There is no Cabala, really now!

OTTIMA

Make up your own mind

SAM

Are they rich.

**Alix**

Some are some are not. The Cardinal is not. The Duchess comes from the oldest family in Italy but she doesn't have a pot to piss in.

**SAM**

Well are they intellectually inclined?

**Alix**

Maybe. But some are really dumb!

**SAM**

Do you think they can cause a lot of trouble?

**OTTIMA**

Mostly to themselves.

**SAM**

Any advice for me?

**OTTIMA**

Act stupid so they can feel intelligent.

**SAM**

Ha! Not malevolent I hope. Or are they?

**ALIX**

Only when they are together.

Bell rings. Cardinal Vaini enters.

**ALIX**

Your eminence.

**CARDINAL**

Ah, the Americans have arrived.

ALIX

Both have arrived. One left. This is Sam.

CARDINAL

Shall I call you Samuele.

SAM

If you wish. I feel honored, Your Eminence.

CARDINAL

No formalities tonight.

SAM

Yes your Eminence.

CARDINAL

Carlo or Carl will do. (Shouts out) Welcome to Rome.  
Ottima!

ALIX

How do you know she's here?

CARDINAL

I can smell her cuisine.

ALIX

I would avoid her. She's on the warpath.

CARDINAL

Ottima!

OTTIMA

Get out!

CARDINAL

You don't say that to me!



OTTIMA

I will say what I want!

CARDINAL

Come Ottima. I have some news for you

OTTIMA

I don't want to hear it.

CARDINAL

News you will want to hear.

OTTIMA

I do not speak to skunks.

CARDINAL

Gloria has been fired.

OTTIMA

You are no longer a skunk, your Eminence!

CARDINAL

You were right about her.

OTTIMA

Ah! Your Eminence!

She rushes in, kneels before him  
and kisses his finger

CARDINAL

A little theft.

OTTIMA

What theft.

CARDINAL  
All of the kitchen funds.

OTTIMA  
Has she been arrested?

CARDINAL  
No. We sent her back to Abruzzi.

OTTIMA  
I told you so. Now I must go back into the kitchen.

CARDINAL  
You can come back when the boys go back to America.

SAM  
What! That may be sooner than later.

CARDINAL  
What!

SAM  
I have been abandoned by my roommate.

Marcantonio, 23, enters.  
Inordinately handsome and dressed  
well.

PRINCESS  
My son. .

MARCANTONIO  
I had to meet the new arrival.

PRINCESS  
But...

MARCANTONIO  
Do you want me to leave. I know.

SAM  
Please stay.

Samuele  
MARCANTONIO

But..  
PRINCESS GIOVANNA

SAM  
You must remain.

MARCANTONIO  
I have wanted to meet you the moment I heard about  
you and Blair

SAM  
Well we must chat.

CARDINAL  
Will you have time to stay?

SAM  
Why of course he does

CARDINAL  
You do not know him as well as I do. My son

SAM  
Let us all go into the dining room

CARDINAL  
Countess Bernstein has not arrived.

SAM  
Explain religion

CARDINAL  
Who can understand religion unless he has sinned. Who  
can understand literature unless he has suffered.  
Who can understand love unless he has loved without  
response.

Sam  
I do not understand.

CARDINAL

You will after your ride with Marcantonio.

SCENE 3      MARCANTONIO'S CAR LATER

Marcantonio and Sam are in  
Marcantonio's Car

SAM

So nice of you to ask me to come with you.

MARCANTONIO

The pleasure is mine.

SAM

Why do you like me so much?

MARCANTONIO

An abrupt question for an American to ask!

SAM

Oh what do you say!

MARCANTONIO

Who says I like you!

SAM

I thought you did. Tell me about Marcantonio.

MARCANTONIO

I love to talk about Marcantonio. I am in love with  
him. Are you?

SAM

Proceed.

MARCANTONIO

I am son of the Duchess of Acquilerra, descended from the lineage of Rome' oldest and noblest families. My family looks down on the Colonna family and the House of Savoy, Italy's Royal Family. I am unique. At 23, I am simply the world's handsomest man, and lead a life of promiscuity. I can not escape my good looks or my passions. Nor do I want to.

SAM

Exciting indeed..

MARCANTONIO

I have experimented with sex all of my life beginning at age 8. That is when I was approached by an older woman (known throughout the world). I rejected her. I have experimented with both homosexual and heterosexual relationships, but concluded I really prefers heterosexual relationships. The plumbing works better.

SAM

Ha. Ha Ha

MARCANTONIO

I like what I see when I look into the mirror. Tonight is another conquest-if only I can escape the Duchess' dinner for some wealthy Americans and dull Roman nobles. Some of them don't even clean up. They smell in fact. Life is made for enjoyment. I am happy indeed. That is why I must escape tonight, and conquer my victim-all in fun. I can become melancholy when I stay at home

SAM

Fascinating.

MARCANTONIO

I love new experiments. The wealthy American heiress wants to be dominated. That may take me out of my mood.

And of course mother continues to pester me about going to church to take me out of my melancholy. I have no idea how she knows.

SAM

Mother knows best.

MARCANTONIO

What nonsense! And now do you want to come to the hunt with me?

SAM

Not tonight.

MARCANTONIO

Why?

SAM

I am tired. A hectic day. Hosted a party for 12 at midnight as you saw!

MARCANTONIO

You have been spending too much time with these old ladies.

SAM

Well perhaps you can change that.

MARCANTONIO

That is why I say come with me tonight

SAM

I can't.

MARCANTONIO

Chicken.

SAM

So be it.

## SCENE 4 CEMETERY A WEEK LATER

Alix, Lucia, Miss Greir, and  
Countess Bernstein are together.  
They are crying. Samuele enters  
dressed in black.

SAM

Why no church funeral?

LUCIA

Perhaps the Cardinal will explain?

Cardinal arrives with a shovel.

SAM

Why no church funeral?

LUCIA

Do you Protestants understand anything?

SAM

I became so fond of him.

LUCIA

You became the closest of friends, my American  
friend.

SAM

I am still in shock.

LUCIA

His mother is in grief.

SAM

Here she comes now.

The Duchess surrounded by Alix,  
Ms. Grier and Countess Bernstein  
enters. All are crying.

LUCIA

My dearest Giovanna!

PRINCESS GIOVANNA  
My son! My son! My Son!

LUCIA  
He rests now.

PRINCESS GIOVANNA  
I cry. I weep! And what they say is not true.

LUCIA  
But.....

PRINCESS GIOVANNA  
It is not true!

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN  
Giovanna! Giovanna!

PRINCESS GIOVANNA  
The Cardinal is meeting us here. He can fix things  
( she begins sobbing again)

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN  
Why is he not here now?

LUCIA  
He will show up.

Suddenly the Cardinal appears with  
three shovels..

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN  
Carl!

LUCIA  
Cardinal!

CARDINAL  
No time for weeping



PRINCESS GIOVANNA

You do not even comfort me.

CARDINAL

No time.

PRINCESS GIOVANNA

I lose my only son and you do not comfort me. I want to die.

CARDINAL

One death in the family is enough.

PRINCESS GIOVANNA

Please!

CARDINAL

I am fulfilling your wish.

LUCIA

What is that?

CARDINAL

That the Prince should be buried in hallowed ground.

LUCIA

You make us cry even more. Please, Your Eminence.

CARDINAL

I do not need to be "your Eminence" at this time.

LUCIA

Oh Father.

CARDINAL

We have work to do!

PRINCESS GIOVANNA

Work! My son is dead and you say work.

CARDINAL

Yes.

PRINCESS GIOVANNA

But! ( She begins sobbing uncontrollably

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

Stop!

PRINCESS GIOVANNA

Please! What is this!

CARDINAL

I have five shovels. Each of you take one.

LUCIA

What!

CARDINAL

You too.

LUCIA

I have never used a shovel in my life.

CARDINAL

This will be good for you. A gift from God!

LUCIA

Why do we need shovels?

CARDINAL

To bury the prince!

SAM

Have pity. He is already buried.

CARDINAL

(To Giovanna) Do you want him buried on hallowed ground?

GIOVANNA

Yes! Yes! Yes!

CARDINAL

We shall almost be able to do it.

GIOVANNA

How!

CARDINAL

Begin shoveling.

MISS GRIER

What?

SAM

Oh, my God.

CARDINAL

You too, Sam.

ALL

Oh, God!

CARDINAL

We should all pray to God. Now take our shovels.

LUCIA

What are we doing?

CARDINAL

We are digging a grave site.

LUCIA

Don't make Giovanna cry.

CARDINAL

What?

GIOVANNA

You know he cannot be buried on hallowed ground. Help us, God.

SAM

Please, Carl!

GIOVANNA

My dead son!

CARDINAL

You see that hole? .

ALL

Yes.

CARDINAL

And we are going to dig more.

GIOVANNA

But this is Church ground.

CARDINAL

Almost.

GIOVANNA

He can not be buried on Church ground.

CARDINAL

He will be buried with respect.

GIOVANNA

But not Church ground.

CARDINAL

He will be buried here.

GIOVANNA

But this is church ground.

CARDINAL

It is not.

ALIX

It is inside the Church Cemetery.

CARDINAL

It is not.

ALIX

Then someone else's property?

GIOVANNA

We can not bury my son on stolen property

CARDINAL

The property can hardly be stolen..

GIOVANNA

What!.

CARDINAL

I OWN THE PROPERTY.

GIOVANNA

What?

CARDINAL

It is mine.

Yours!

ALL

Mine.

CARDINAL

No!

GIOVANNA

Shall I show you the deed?

CARDINAL

But then this is not church ground?

LUCIA

How dare you!

CARDINAL

Why do you say that?

LUCIA

Because God owns the entire earth, Church ground and non church ground. All the earth is holy!

CARDINAL

But you defy Church teachings!

LUCIA

Church teachings do not supercede Gods teachings and common sense.

CARDINAL

I am shocked to hear you say that!

LUCIA

What is our religion about!

CARDINAL

Following the orders of the church!

LUCIA

No! No! No! About love. LOVE! LOVE! LOVE!

CARDINAL

LUCIA  
WHAT DO YOU MEAN!

CARDINAL  
And now he will be buried with dignity

LUCIA  
What?

CARDINAL  
The world will never know.

ALL  
Amen.

CARDINAL  
Now let us recite our prayers.

ALL  
Yes

The casket is brought in and laid  
into the ground

GIOVANNA  
My son! My son!

CARDINAL  
And he will be buried with dignity.

LUCIA  
But not on church ground

CARDINAL  
God's ground.

LUCIA  
But...

CARDINAL

No one will now the difference.

LUCIA

Oh dear!

GIOVANNA

But now we must celebrate.

CARDINAL

Celebrate what?

GIOVANNA

My daughter's nuptials.

CARDINAL

What!

GIOVANNA

She is about to be married to the nicest man in the world. And a pedigree even greater than ours

CARDINAL

How wonderful.

GIOVANNA

I also have some other news. My daughter says that her brother did not violate her the day he died.

CARDINAL

How wonderful!

ALL

Indeed!

CARDINAL

I will perform her marriage.



GIOVANNA

We await you. As does the Colonna family. And you are all invited.

ALL

The Colonna family.

GIOVANNA

Yes!

ALL

Oh, my! We will be there.

SCENE 5 A MONTH LATER CARDINAL'S RESIDENCE

Cardinal and Lucia are eating.

LUCIA

This soup is so good. It was recommended to me by Father.

CARDINAL

Strange, because he has never been invited to eat here.

LUCIA

That is a surprise.

CARDINAL

Would you like more risotto? I do not entertain dreary bureaucrats like that fart. And now I have an announcement.

LUCIA

What!

CARDINAL  
I am returning to China.

LUCIA  
That can not be!

CARDINAL  
I can make my own decisions!

LUCIA  
Please remain.

CARDINAL  
End of subject.

LUCIA  
But...

CARDINAL  
End of subject,

LUCIA  
You are out of sympathy with any plans I might have  
of helping the Church.

CARDINAL  
That can wait.

LUCIA  
I want to talk over with you about the problem of my  
wealth and its disposition.

CARDINAL  
I have no opinion on the matter.

LUCIA  
Please!

CARDINAL  
I wish to exercise no influence on this aspect of  
your life.

You have an enormous instrument for progress. You must not allow it to drift down the wind of ecclesiastical administration.

LUCIA

But you are leaving, your Eminence.

CARDINAL

I should have died at the moment of leaving my work in China. The eight years that have elapsed since then had been a dream of increasing confusion.

LUCIA

Oh, My poor Cardinal!

CARDINAL

The people of Rome hate me. I would live in dying a memory without affection and without dignity.

SAM

Stop!

LUCIA

Please, your eminence!

CARDINAL

Gossip says that even in Naples, children are kept in good behavior with threats that the Yellow Cardinal will skin them. If I were young I would laugh at such a rumor, but being old I grew cold. I am leaving a world where I am shuddered.

LUCIA

I always long to hear your discourse upon prayer. Every word of yours is sacred. But sometimes I do not understand!

CARDINAL

But we discussed communion and the invocation of the saints last week.

LUCIA

You are so much like Paul. I pray for you often.

CARDINAL

In prayer one should never ask for anything. We are judged only by our works.

LUCIA

You have been sounding very strange lately. Are you well? You sound Socratic. I don't understand. I don't understand! You are joking, Father. Aren't you ashamed of saying such things to bewilder me, when you know how I value everything you say.

CARDINAL

I shall ask Samuele about this.

LUCIA

Father, I can't stay and hear you talk this way.

CARDINAL

You are a slave to the idea of bargain. The money changers are still in the temple!

LUCIA

But, Father, you know God answers the requests of a good Catholic. But you were there, dear Father. If you had deeply wished it you could have altered the...

CARDINAL

Insane child! What are you saying? Tony

LUCIA

There is authority for our hoping that our prayer may do good things.

I prayed for a friend, but she died. Then we were not sincere enough! Or persevering enough!

CARDINAL

Sometimes He grants and sometimes He doesn't, and Christians are expected to pray hard on the chance that this is one of the times He might relent. What a notion! Lucia, what a thought!

LUCIA

What is the answer? I will not let you go until you tell me. Dear Father, you know that prayer is answered. But your clever questions have upset me. What is the answer?

CARDINAL

My daughter, tell me yourself.

LUCIA

Look Father, Madam Fonatine died that very night. But we thought that if we prayed very sincerely we might change His mind.

CARDINAL

It is incredible that He should change His mind. Because we frightened mortals are on the carpet?

LUCIA

Why are you are saying these things to me?

CARDINAL

Think! You are questioning the idea of the benignant power behind the world.

LUCIA

This is an exercise in rhetoric.

CARDINAL

I thought you were a woman with reason.

LUCIA

I think of myself as a deep thinker.

CARDINAL  
Not tonight! More wine?

LUCIA  
Yes. You are speaking nonsense!

CARDINAL  
My dear, remember that prayers spring from fear or the greed for comfort.

Sam pleads with the Cardinal by gesture.

LUCIA  
Stop tormenting me.

SAM  
Do you realize how devoted she is to you.

CARDINAL  
That too is a sin.

LUCIA  
But I know now what you mean me to answer. We may not ask for things, or people, or relief from sickness, but we may ask for spiritual qualities; for instance for the advancement of the Church.

CARDINAL  
Vanity! Vanity! How many years have we been praying for a certain good thing? What have statistics shown us? I refer to the conversion of France.

With a cry Lucia rises and leaves the room.

SAM  
I protest!

CARDINAL

She is foolish, Samuelino. You cannot call those convictions deep that were overturned with straws. No, trust me. This is for her good.

SAM

But.. .

CARDINAL

I have been a confessor too long to go astray here. She has the spiritual notions of a school-girl. She must be fed on some harsher bread. Understand that she has never suffered. She is good. She is devout.

SAM

Just the same, Your Eminence, I know her well enough to know that this very moment she thinks of her chapel, clinging to the altar-rails. She will be depressed for weeks.

Lucia returns. Her manner is agitated and artificially gracious.

LUCIA

Will you excuse me if I go to bed now?

CARDINAL

Please stay and talk with Samuele.

LUCIA

No, no. I must be going. But before I go let me tell you one thing. The real truths are difficult. At first they are forbidding. But they are worth all the others. I shall be thinking over what we have said. I . . . I . . . Excuse me, if I ask you something? Promise me you weren't joking.

CARDINAL

I wasn't joking at all.

LUCIA

Did I really hear you say that the prayers of good men are of no avail?

CARDINAL

Good night. You will forgive my slipping away now?

LUCIA

Good night, your eminence. (Exits)

CARDINAL

And have a good night's rest. (Motions to Samuel to remain) You seem so concerned, Samuele.

SAM

Carl?

CARDINAL

I almost thought you might find it comic.

SAM

The loss of one's faith can be comic to outsiders, especially when the loser is in fine health, wealth, and a fairly sound mind. But..,

CARDINAL

The loss of anyone or all of these has a sort of grandeur. Lucia should not have the loss of her faith depend on one of the others.

SAM

I am still worried, Sir.

CARDINAL

Faith is not a thing one loses in fine or bad weather. Are you familiar with the works of St. Augustine?

SAM

I am not.



## CARDINAL

You Ivy League heathens miss the mark again. Please go to my library and take out a copy of "The Confessions." Be sure to return it. A seventeenth century copy given to me by Countess Bernstein. Good night, young man. And do remain for the night. At this hour it may be difficult to find a coach. You do not have a personal driver like Lucia.

## SAM

Thank you. , Sir. I Shall. Good night. (Exits)

## Act 2

## SCENE 1

Samuele is asleep with a copy of "The Confessions" by his side. Heavy knocking begins at the door. The clock reads four o'clock.

## SAM

Who is it?

## LUCIA

LUCIA.

## SAM

Come in.

LUCIA enters, tired, white and hair dishevelled. She goes to Sam with both hands extended.

## LUCIA

Will you forgive me. I did not go home. I have spent the night praying in the chapel. I want you to help me.

## SAM

I shall.

LUCIA

Tell me. Were you made unhappy by the strange things the Cardinal said after dinner.

SAM

Yes.

LUCIA

Have you any Protestant ideas on these things?

SAM

Oh, no.

LUCIA

Were his ideas new? Is that what everyone is thinking?

Sam

No.

LUCIA

Oh, Samuele, what has happened to me! I have sinned. I have sinned the sin of doubt. Shall I ever have peace again.

SAM

Go easy on yourself!

LUCIA

Can the Lord take me back after I have had such thoughts? Of course, of course, I believe that my prayers are answered, but I have lost? The reason why I believe it. Surely, there is a key here. Perhaps it's just one word. All you have to do is find the one little argument that makes the whole thing natural. Isn't it strange!

SAM

Slow down!

LUCIA

I've been looking here (pointing to the table which is covered with open books, the Bible, and Pascal but I don't seem to be able to put my finger on the right place. Sit down and try and tell me, my dear friend, what arguments there are that God hears us speak and will answer us.

SAM

I am sure that you still believe. The very fact that you are distressed proves that.

LUCIA

I shall go into my chapel and pray for faith.

SCENE 6 LUCIA'S GARDEN TWO DAYS LATER

Lucia and Samuele are seated in the Garden.

LUCIA

You are trying to spare me, Samuele. But I know. There are other stories about him.

SAM

Just gossip!

LUCIA

His enemies have been at work systematically poisoning his prestige. We know that there is no one in Rome who is kinder, more humble, higher-minded; but among the common people he has almost the reputation of a monster.

SAM

I have never heard anything. After what he said to you last night!

LUCIA

You are so naive. Some people have been at work spreading such rumors deliberately. And the Cardinal has heard of them, through the whispering of servants or by cries in the road, or by anonymous letters, in all sorts of ways.

SAM

But the Cardinal does not even know it.

LUCIA

He exaggerates this attitude. He feels that he is in a hostile world. It has made his old age tragic. And that is why he will not write. Yet it is within our power to save him still.

SAM

The cardinal can save himself!

LUCIA

Rumors are unalterable, the result of a clever campaign. A counter campaign can save his reputation. In the first place our enemies have taken advantage of the Italians' prejudice against the Orient. An Italian enjoys the same delicious shudder at the sight of a Chinese that Americans have the mention of a trapdoor over a river.

SAM

What a silly metaphor.

LUCIA

The Cardinal has returned from the East yellow, unwrinkled. His walk troubles me.

SAM

He is perfectly fine. You are obsessed by him. You worry too much.

LUCIA

It is easy to build upon this, to pass the whisper along thee underworld that he kept strange images, that animals, his garden of rabbits and ducks and guinea fowl) could be heard shrieking late at night, that his faithful Chinese servant had been seen in all sorts of terrifying places.

SAM

A little gossip never hurt anyone. Last night you were upset because he hurt you.

LUCIA

I have forgotten. There is more. Next, his frugal life stirs their imaginations. Everyone knew he was fabulously wealthy. Rubies as big as your fist and sapphires like doorknobs, where were they.

SAM

Ha!

LUCIA

Did you ever go up to the gate of the Villino Wei Ho?

SAM

I believe so.

LUCIA

Come with me Sunday. If you sniff hard enough you can get the strangest odor, one that will leave you drowsy for days and give you dreams.

SAM

His eightieth birthday is approaching. So Sad. There should be presentations.

LUCIA

Exactly.

SAM

Mlle. de Morfontaine is donating a Raphael altar piece to his titular church.

LUCIA

She is such a dear Sameuele. Most of all we would send out agents among the people, telling them of his goodness, his simplicity, his donations to their hospitals, and ever so faintly his sympathy with socialistic ideas.

SAM

I remember anecdotes of his snubbing the arrogant members of the College, of his defending a poor man who had stolen a chalice from his church.

LUCIA

Now I weep.

SAM

I know China. China must be re-created here.

LUCIA

We are to prop up the Cardinal so that help could prop up Europe.

SAM

Yes, indeed.

LUCIA

The Cardinal was not to know that we are putting up a scaffolding about his good name but we were to persuade him to do some of the things that particularly antagonized the public.

SAM

Good for you.

## LUCIA

I found him as one could find him every sunny al the year round, seated in the garden, a book on his knee, a reading glass in his left hand, a pen ,in his right, a head of cabbage and a Belgian hare at his feet. A pile of volumes lay on the table be-side him: "Appearance and Reality," Spengler, "The Golden Bough," "Ulysses," Proust, Freud.. Already their margins had begun to exhibit the spidery notations in green ink that indicated a closeness of attention that would embarrass all but the greatest authors. He laid aside his magnifying glass as I came up, the path of shells.

Then we shall have to see him.

## SCENE 1 CARDINAL RESIDENCE

Cardinal and Sam are alone

CARDINAL

Lucia wants you to come to dinner Friday night, just the three of us.

SAM

What do you want, Father, for your birthday? Lucia wants me to sound you tactfully. (Laughs)

CARDINAL

Samuelino, walk to the back of the house and tell my sister you will stay to lunch. I am to have a little Chinese vegetable dish. Will you have that or a little risotto and chestnut-paste?

SAM

Both.

CARDINAL

How is Lucia?

SAM

Very well.

CARDINAL

I don't believe you.

SAM

What!

CARDINAL

A little illness would be good for her. I am uncomfortable when I am with her. There are certain doctors, Samuele, who are not happy when they are talking to people in good health.



They are so used to the supplicating eyes of patients that say: Shall I live? In the same way I am ill at ease in the company of persons who have never suffered.

SAM

What do you mean?

CARDINAL

Lucia has always illustrated the futility of goodness without intelligence.

SAM

OH, please. Cardinal! Tony

CARDINAL

She has eyes of blue porcelain.

SAM

I consider her truly beautiful.

CARDINAL

She has a fair pure heart. It is sweet to be in the company of a fair pure heart, but what can one say to it? There was St. Francis, Father Sental? But he had been libertine in his youth, or thought he had. Who can understand religion unless he has sinned? Who can understand literature unless he has suffered? Who can understand love unless he has loved without response?

SAM

Makes sense.

CARDINAL

Lucia is in trouble. The first sign of trouble was last month. There is a certain Monsignor who wants her millions for his churches in Bavaria. Every few days he climbs the hill to Tivoli and breathes into her ear. "And the rich He hath sent empty away".

SAM

Is she that gullible!

CARDINAL

The poor child trembles and pretty soon Bavaria will have some enormous churches, too ugly for words. Oh, you know, there is for every human being one text in the Bible that can shake him, just as every building has a musical note that can overthrow it.

SAM

I learn so much from you

\*

CARDINAL

Material for you to use in your books and plays?

\*

SAM

Of course.

CARDINAL

But We all have weaknesses.

SAM

Right!

CARDINAL

I will not tell you mine.

SAM

I already know them.

\*

CARDINAL

But, you want to know Lucia. She is a great hater, and they say that during the Pater Noster she doses her teeth tight.

SAM

But was not Lucia devoted to her mother?

CARDINAL

No, she has had no losses. That was when she was ten. She has poetized her, that is all. Still hates the woman.

SAM

Father, why did not that literal faith of hers carry her to a convent?

CARDINAL

She promised her dying mother she would stay alive to put a Bourbon on the throne of France. (Laughs hilariously)

SAM

How can you laugh, Father, at her devotion to YOU?

CARDINAL

We old men are allowed to laugh at things that you little students may not even smile about. Oh! The house of Bourbon. Would you be surprised if I gave up my life to reviving the royal brother and-sister marriages of Egypt? Well! It is not more impossible. Ha!

\*

\*

SAM

Dear Father, won't you write one more book?

CARDINAL

I am a man of the cloth.

SAM

And so much more Look, you have about you all the greatest books of the first quarter of my century. And many are very stupid.

CARDINAL

What should I write about?

SAM

A great book, Father Vaini. About yourself, essays like Montaigne- about China and about your animals and Augustine.

CARDINAL

Foolish! No! Stop at once. You frighten me.

SAM

Why!

CARDINAL

Do you see that the first sign of childhood in me will be the crazy notion that I should write a book?

SAM

You can handle it.

CARDINAL

Samuele, Samuelino, how bad of you to come here this morning, and awaken all the vulgar prides in an old peasant. No, don't pick them up. Let the animals soil them. What is the matter with this Twentieth Century of yours? You want me to compliment you because you have broken the atom and bent light?

SAM

Now, now!

CARDINAL

Well, I do, I do. You may tell our rich friends, tactfully, that I want for my birthday a small Chinese rug now reposing in the window of a shop on the Corso. It would be unbecoming for me to say more than that it is on the left as you approach the Popolo. The floor of my bedroom is getting colder every morning, and I always promised myself that when I became eighty I might have a rug in my bedroom.

SAM

Thy will be done!

Amén  
CARDINAL

Will you write that book?  
SAM

No!  
CARDINAL

Please!  
SAM

Let us dance.  
CARDINAL

Together.  
SAM

Of course not.  
CARDINAL

How  
SAM

We will do The Old Soft Shoe  
CARDINAL

The Cardinal turns on the  
phonograph and he and Samuel tap  
dance to the Old Soft Shoe.

You should be in show business.  
SAM

I have thought about it.  
CARDINAL

You know American music?  
SAM

CARDINAL  
I love it. Especially Gershwin.

SAM  
You dance beautifully.

CARDINAL  
You too, young man.

SCENE 2 A DAY LATER

Lucia enters. The cardinal is asleep at his chair, but is awakened.

CARDINAL  
My dear child.

LUCIA  
My beloved cardinal.

CARDINAL  
I thought you had gone home. You need some rest.

LUCIA  
Dear Cardinal Vaini, I will always honor you above all my friends. I think you love me and wish me well. But in your great learning and multiple interests you have forgotten that we who are not brilliant must cling to our childhood beliefs as best we may.

CARDINAL  
I understand, my dear!

LUCIA  
I have been saddened this evening. I want to ask a favor of you.

CARDINAL  
Yes Lucia.

LUCIA

That you indulge my weakness to the extent of not touching upon matters of belief when I am with you. It gives me great pain to have to ask you this. I beg of you to understand it as apart from any personal feelings of unfriendliness. I hope that I may grow strong enough to talk of these matters with you again.

CARDINAL

Yes my dear. Now I must go to bed.

LUCIA

But, your Eminence!

CARDINAL

I must go to bed.

LUCIA

Good night.

He exits. Lucia puts her head down and begins crying. Samuel enters.

SAM

Why are you crying?

LUCIA

Samuele, you have been with me during the saddest days of my life. I cannot deny that all interest has gone out of living for me.

SAM

But you will recover?!

LUCIA

I still believe, but I don't believe as I used to. Perhaps it was not right that I went through life as I did. Now I know that I rose up every morning full of unspeakable happiness. It seldom left me.

I had never thought before that my beliefs in themselves were unbelievable. I used to boast that they were, but I did not know what I was saying.

SAM

But surely your God will not abandon you.

LUCIA

Now hours come to me when I hear a voice saying: There is no prayer. There is no God. There are people and trees, millions of them both, every moment dying.

SAM

You must get rest. You need some rest.

LUCIA

You will come and see me again, won't you, Samuele?

SAM

Why of course.

Countess Bernstein enters.

LUCIA

Countess!

SAM

I was about to leave.

LUCIA

Please remain, Samuel.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

Please have something to eat, Lucia.

LUCIA

I have no appetite.



COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

You seem so upset lately.

LUCIA

I am not upset.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

You must spend more time with me in the country.

LUCIA

I told him, "Father I can't stand to listen to this anymore. I must go.

SAM

You are not well.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

My dear.

LUCIA

Stay with me.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

The Cardinal can be barbaric..

LUCIA

Please don't say that.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

But.....

LUCIA

My faith has abandoned me.

SAM

Let us help you.

LUCIA

No one can help.

SAM

Please!

LUCIA

I must now go to sleep,

SCENE 3 THE NET DAY

Sam and the Countess, are seated,  
The Cardinal enters

SAM

We thought you were asleep.

CARDINAL

I want to say to all of you that I have sinned.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

How?

CARDINAL

I can not rest until I have repaired the harm I have done. How is she? Is she well?

SAM

No, Father, she is in great trouble.

CARDINAL

I want to say to you that I have sinned, greatly sinned. I cannot rest until I have tried to repair the harm I have done. Look, look at this letter she has written me. Is there no way I can reassure her?

SAM

There is only one way now. You must regain all her confidence before you touch on such matters again. You must come and go about her house as though nothing had happened.

CARDINAL

Oh, but she will never ask me again!

SAM

Yes, she is having you all to dinner quite soon. May I speak quite boldly, Your Eminence?

CARDINAL

Yes. I am a poor old man, all mistakes. Speak to me as you like.

SAM

If you go, take great care not to let slip any remark to reinstate yourself with some orthodox comments. She might misunderstand one little word and think you were attacking her.

CARDINAL

You're right.

SAM

It is very serious. Your ideas are not orthodox, Father, and if you said an orthodox thing it would not sound sincere and that would be worst of all. But if you come and go simply and affectionately, she will lose her horror of you.

CARDINAL

Horror of me!

SAM

Yes, and very gradually, perhaps after a year, you may be able.....

CARDINAL

But I may not live a year! God has chosen to take away my reason. I am an idiot, falling into every ditch.

Oh, that I had died long and yet I cannot die until I have righted myself. Hand me that red book behind you.

SAM

(Handing him book) Here, Sir. But surely you must not speak of death.

CARDINAL

There are two plays about old men, Samuelino, that grow dearer every day to an old man. There is your Lear, and opening Oedipus at Colonus he translated slowly: Generous son of Aegeus, to the gods alone old age and death come never. But all else is confounded by all-mastering time. The strength of earth decays and the strength of the body. Faith dies. Distrust is born. Among friends the same spirit does not last true.

SAM

Let us turn back to the subject. I see two people in distress. Don't you see that the whole thing rests, not on the abstract question as to whether her prayers may be answered, but on the question as to whether ONE prayer may be answered? Her prayer for France. Don't you believe such things real to other people?

CARDINAL

Again, she has never suffered.

SAM

What can you do?

CARDINAL

I want to say to you that I have sinned greatly sinned. I have tried to repair the harm I have done. Look at this letter she written me.

SAM

Yes I have seen it

CARDINAL

Her letter forbids explaining. There no way I can I can assure her.

SAM

There is only one way now. You must gain all her confidence before you touch on such matters again. You must come and go about her as if nothing has happened.

CARDINAL

But she will never ask me again.

SAM

But she is inviting us all over for dinner. May I speak boldly your Eminence?

CARDINAL

Yes I am a poor old all man all mistakes Speak to me as you like mistakes.

SAM

If you go take great care not to let slip any remark n religious matters. I beg of you do not try to reinstate yourself with some orthodox comments. She might understand one little word and think you were her faith again.

CARDINAL

You are right.

SAM

It is very serious. Your ideas are not orthodox , and if you said an orthodox thing it would sound sincere and that would be worst of all. But if you come and simply and affectionately she will lose her forever

CARDINAL

Horror of me

SAM

Yes and very gradually perhaps after a year, you may be able

CARDINAL

But I may not live a year. I should have stayed in China. God has chosen to take away my reason.

SAM

Stop

CARDINAL

I am an idiot, falling into every ditch. Oh that I had died long ago, and yet I cannot die until I have righted myself. Hand me that red book behind you. There are two plays about old men Samuelino that grow dearer every day to an old man.

SAM

I don't understand Father.

CARDINAL

We must revert back to the Greek and Roman Gods.

SAM

I am shocked.

CARDINAL

Generous son of Aegeus to the gods alone old age and death come never. But all else is confounded by all mastering time. The strength of earth decays and the strength of the body. Faith dies. Distrust is born. Among friend the same spirit does not last true.

SAM

What are you saying!

CARDINAL

It must be.

SAM

What must be.

CARDINAL

You sill see.

Lucia enters the room. She seems  
distraught

SAM

Lucia

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

You have come back. We have been awaiting you.

SAM

Are you all right

LUCIA

Yes.

SAM

Thank God.

CARDINAL

My Daughter.

LUCIA

Your eminence.

CARDINAL

I believe you need some rest.

LUCIA  
My world has fallen apart.

CARDINAL  
Why do you say that.

LUCIA  
I have no worth.

SAM  
You have worth Oh Lucia.

LUCIA  
My faith is my world

SAM  
You can regain your faith. Tony

LUCIA  
Give me some wine.

ALIX  
Have some my dear. Our best wine.

CARDINAL  
Drink, my daughter.

ALIX  
We all love you.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN  
You must rest at my home on the Amalfi coast.

ALIX  
Or at my home in London.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN  
We love you.

LUCIA  
I will be fine. But is there a heaven and earth.



CARDINAL

Of course there. .

LUCIA

Cardinal

CARDINAL

Yes my daughter.

She pulls out gun and shoots  
twice.

LUCIA

I have killed him!

SAM

Quick the cardinal is dying.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

Call the doctor

ALIX

Immediately.

LUCIA

I have sinned.

CARDINAL

I am fine!

SAM

Get a doctor immediately.

CARDINAL

I am fine.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

Blood is streaming from your chest.

CARDINAL

I am fine.

SAM

You need a doctor!

CARDINAL

I will be fine.

Ottima rushes into the room.

Ottima, get a doctor.

OTTIMA

I found one

SAM

Who?

OTTIMA

Me.

SAM

You're a cook not a doctor!

OTTIMA

This wont be the first bullet I have extracted.

SAM

But..

CARDINAL

Ottima can handle it. We must keep this silent.

LUCIA

I have sinned and I am damned forever

CARDINAL

No, my dear. You are not a sinner and you have not sinned.

LUCIA

I tried to kill.

CARDINAL

I am still here.

OTTIMA

Shut up both of you.

She pulls out a towel some hot  
want and a small knife.

SAM

Are you operating?

OTTIMA

Yes. We can not loose time. And get me some  
scotch.

SAM

But...

Ottima pulls out the knife.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

I can have my own doctors here in no time.

OTTIMA

I am better. Do you want them to come and call the  
police.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

But.....

CARDINAL

Proceed, my Ottima.

LUCIA

Oh, I have sinned.

CARDINAL

You are a child of God.

LUCIA

I will be damned forever.

OTTIMA

Good for you. It's what you deserve. Now hand me a cloth with hot water, and shut up.

LUCIA

I will burn in hell.

OTTIMA

I hope so.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

Where did you learn to operate.

OTTIMA

In Sicily, you learn to remove bullets at an early age. NOW SHUT UP ALL OF YOU. Now Carlo, not a word out of you. This will be painful.

CARDINAL

Proceed, my daughter.

She begins operating. She takes out one bullet and then the other.

OTTIMA

No pain!

CARDINAL

I felt t nothing.

OTTIMA

Now drink this whiskey. All of it.. And here. These bullets are for you.(Handing them to him)

CARDINAL

I am so tired.

LUCIA

We must call a real doctor.

OTTIMA

Shut up. I AM A REAL DOCTOR.

CARDINAL

No. Never. And not a word outside of these rooms.

ALIX

Yes.

CARDINAL

Do you hear that, Samuele.

SAM

I do.

OTTIMA

Now rest and shut up

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

Shall I drive him back to his home?

OTTIMA

Yes and give him some whiskey.

CARDINAL

No, Samuele will drive me home.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

What?

CARDINAL

No one must know about this. The butler will talk. I know butlers.

COUNTESS BERNSTEIN

Yes.

LUCIA

I have sinned and will burn in hell.

OTTIMA

I hope so.

LUCIA

Please....

OTTIMA

Shut up and ask your damn divine kings to help you!

CARDINAL

Let us go Samuel.

OTTIMA

Let him help you walk.

CARDINAL

I can walk alone.

OTTIMA

I will help you. Take my arm.

They walk out, the Cardinal  
struggling.

LUCIA

I am the most worthless woman of all time.

OTTIMA

Yes you are!

SCENE 4 A WEEK LATER

The cardinal is seated. A small suitcase beside him. A knock at door.

CARDINAL

Come in.

Samuel enters

SAM

You are fully recovered?

CARDINAL

Look at me. Fully recovered.

SAM

Is it true?

CARDINAL

You see the suitcase.

SAM

Why are you leaving?

CARDINAL

Who informed you that I was leaving?

SAM

A little Italian Bluebird told me.

CARDINAL

Ah, yes. The man in blue and the bird in blue.

SAM

What?

CARDINAL

Oh, nothing.

SAM

You intended to leave without seeing me?

CARDINAL

No.

SAM

Well!

CARDINAL

Look behind the desk

Sam goes and retrieves two boxes  
nicely wrapped.

SAM

Two gifts.

CARDINAL

Yes!

SAM

Who are they for.

CARDINAL

An American student.



SAM  
Who?

CARDINAL  
Open it and shut up. Tony

SAM  
Let me open. A copy of Homer.

CARDINAL  
For you.

SAM  
I don't want your gifts now. Why are you leaving!

CARDINAL  
Take them. I must go back to China.

SAM  
But you are now 80 years old!

CARDINAL  
That is not true.

SAM  
Then I have been misinformed.

CARDINAL  
I am 89 years old.

SAM  
All the more.

CARDINAL  
I should have never left China.

SAM  
I know China as well as you do.

CARDINAL  
No you don't. Care to try some Mandarin.

SAM  
All right! All Right!

CARDINAL  
SAMUEL! There is only thing I regret about leaving.

SAM  
What is that?

CARDINAL  
Leaving you!

SAM  
Yes, Sir.

CARDINAL  
But I must go back to the only country I have ever loved.

SAM  
But why?

CARDINAL  
There is only one China

SAM  
I will never understand you.

CARDINAL  
I like your candour.

SAM  
I will never forget you.

CARDINAL  
I know that.

SAM  
No tears.

CARDINAL  
No tears. Grovers Corner awaits you.

SAM  
And how do you know about Grovers' Corner?

CARDINAL

A man in blue told me.

SCENE 5 MISS GRIERS HOUSE A WEEK LATER

Knock on the door. Miss Grier answers.

MISS GRIER

I have been waiting for you.

SAM

You don't think I'd leave without seeing you?

MISS GRIER

And I have so much to share with you.

SAM

Please.

MISS GRIER

We will miss you terribly. What do you want to know?

SAM

I shall never know such a company as the Cabala again. And yes there seems to be some last secret about you that I have never been able to seize. Haven't you anything to tell me that will show me what you all meant, how you found one another and what made you so different?

MISS GRIER

I don't know how to answer that. Let me think. You know this is something I have never thought about.

SAM

I beg of you.

MISS GRIER

Well once I begin, it will only confuse you, and besides it's very long.

SAM

Miss Grier. I await you.

MISS GRIER

Let me keep it short.

SAM

Take as long as you want, Miss Grier.

MISS GRIER

Well, first you must know that the gods of antiquity did not die with the arrival of Christianity.

SAM

M-M-M.

MISS GRIER

Why are you smiling?

SAM

You're adorable.

MISS GRIER

Thank you Sam. So are you.

SAM

I worry about the Cardinal and you have gone back to Jupiter.

MISS GRIER

Sam! You're acting smart.

SAM

I am in grief.

MISS GRIER

I know you are.

SAM

And you!

MISS GRIER

The Cardinal is gone. And I know he is where he will want to be.

SAM

And I will never recover.

MISS GRIER

Yes, you will.

SAM

Will he survive.

MISS GRIER

If he dies he will die where he wants to die. Samuele, let me share with you a letter I received which made the Cardinal's departure bearable.

SAM

Proceed.

MISS GRIER

Because of Christianity, when they began to lose worshippers they began to lose some of their divine attributes. They even found themselves able to die if they wanted to.

SAM

I never thought of that.

MISS GRIER

Oh yes. But when one of them dies his godhead was passed on to someone else.

SAM

How fascinating.

MISS GRIER

No sooner is Saturn dead than some man somewhere  
feels a new personality designing upon him like a  
straight jacket,

SAM

Oh my.

MISS GRIER

Do you see?

SAM

Now, Miss Grier!

MISS GRIER

I told you it would make you angry.

SAM

But you don't pretend this is true.

MISS GRIER

You don't even pretend that is true.

SAM

But...

MISS GRIER

Next I am trying to read document that came into my  
hands. It was written by a certain Hollander who  
became the God Mercury in 1912. Will you listen?

SAM

Has this anything to do with the Cabala?.

MISS GRIER

Yes. Everything.

SAM

Well..

MISS GRIER

And with you!

SAM

At last!

MISS GRIER

Actually sometimes I think you are the new Mercury.

SAM

Oh, my God!

MISS GRIER

Take some claret and listen quietly.

Miss Grier begins reading.

MISS GRIER(

I was born in a dutch parsonage. In 1885 I was the despair of my home and the terror of the village, a little liar and thief in the full enjoyment of my health and wit. My real life began one morning of my twenty seventh year when I experienced the first of a series of violent pains in the center of my head. This was my deification. Some hand was emptying the cup of my skull of its silly gray brains and filling it with the divine gas of instinct.

SAM

Ha!

MISS GRIER

Stop laughing.

SAM

OK.

MISS GRIER

My body too had it part in this: each microscopic cell had to be transformed. I was not to fall sick or grow or die, save when I chose. As a historian of the gods, I have to keep record of an accident whereby through some monstrosity in spiritual law, and Apollo of the Seventeenth Century failed to completely deify : one arm remained corruptible.

Scientists will tell you that they have never seen the sequence of cause and effect interrupted at the instance of prayer. Do they the think the fools that their powers of observation clearer than the deices of a god? The poor laws of cause and effect are so often set aside that thy may be the merest approximation. I am not merely a god but a planet and I speak of things I know. So I stole my mothers savings form under her pillow and went to Paris

SAM

Ha! Hilarious! May I have some more claret?

MISS GRIER

Of course, Sam. Help yourself.

SAM

Thank you.

MISS GRIER

Let me continue. "I am not merely a god but a planet and I speak of thins I know. So I stole my mothers savings from under her pillow and went to Paris."

SAM

So he's a thief! Please continue!

MISS GRIER

It was that I discovered the first great attribute of our nature , namely to wish for a thing is to command it. It certainly does not suddenly fall into your hand or descend in a rosy mist upon your carpet. But circumstances start a discreet ballet about you and the desired thing comes your way through the neatest possible imitation of natural law and probability scientists will tell you that they have never seen the sequence of cause and effect interrupted at the instance of prayer of divine regard or retribution. Do you think, the fool, that their powers of observation are clearer than the devices of a god?



SAM

Ha. A riot!

MISS GRIER

But it was at Rome that were we last worshipped under our own name, and it is thither that we are irresistible.

During the Journey, I gradually discovered further traits of my new being.

I woke mornings to discover the bits of information had been deposited in my mind overnight, the enviable knowledge for instant that I had the power of sinning without remorse

I entered the Porta del Popolo one midnight in June 1912. I ran the length of the Corso, leapt the fence that surrounds the Forum, and flung myself upon the ruins of my temple.

All night in the fine rain I tore my clothes in joy and anguish, while up the valley came as an interminable and ghostly procession singing my hymns and high in a tower of incense. With the coming of my worshippers, I vanished and wings no longer fluttered at my heels. I claimed out of the sunken ruins and went out into the misty streets in search of some coffee.

SAM

Ob Brother!

MISS GRIER

Godlike I never reflect: all my actions arrive of themselves. I pause to think I fall into errors. During the next year I made a great deal of money on the races at Parioli. I speculated in motion pictures and African wheat. I went into journalism and made many misrepresentations. I love discord among gods and men. I have always been happy.

SAM

This man is insane. Or has a sense of humor.

MISS GRIER

I had been called to Rome to serve as the gods' messenger and secretary, but more than a year had passed before I recognized them. The Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva is built over an ancient temple of the gods and there one day I found her. So impatient was I to discover the others that I disobeyed the laws of my nature and went hunting for them. I spent hours hanging about the station in search of newly arrived divinities. One night strode the platform waiting for the Paris Express. I was trembling with premonition. I had donned a silk hat and its complements, a coral camellia, and a little blond moustache. Plumed with the blue smoke and uttering splendid cries the train rushed into the station. The travelers descended from their compartments into a sea of relatives.

SAM

I have has enough!

MISS GRIER

Let me continue. I bowed to a Scandinavian diplomat and a Wagnerian prima donna. They returned my greeting hesitatingly; a glance into their eyes showed me that they were brilliant but not supernatural. There was Bacchus among the Oxford students on vacation; the Belgian nuns on pilgrimage discovered me. I scanned faces for half an hour until the length of pavement was deserted and a long line of old women appeared. I stopped by the engine to ask a guard if another section of the train was to follow I turned to see a strange face looking at me from the small window of the locomotive -misshapen, black with coal dust, gleaming with perspiration and content grinning from ear to ear, was Vulcan.

SAM

Fascinating. But is it bull.

MISS GRIER

I don't think so.

SAM

How does it all end.

MISS GRIER

Let me summarize.

SAM

What am I to understand? You've made it twice as confusing. Explain some more

MISS GRIER

You're the last person I would expect to say what you have just said. There follow fifty pages describing his encounters with other god. Have you anything to say?

SAM

Please!

MISS GRIER

And he goes on to say that the gods were afraid of being laughed at for what they had lost: flight, for instance and invisibility, and omniscience and freedom from care.

SAM

What became of him?

MISS GRIER

Finally he decided to die.

SAM

Miss Grier I will never forget you.

MISS GRIER

Certainly you will keep in touch, Samuel. If you do not, you will be as dreadful as most of our fellow Americans.

SAM

You will hear from me. Trust me.

MISS GRIER

Thank you. Now you must be off

SAM

Off I go.

SCENE 6 THE SHIP

Blair and Sam are drinking wine on the deck. They are inebriated.

SAM

We go back.

BLAIR

I can't wait to return to Italy.

SAM

How can we ever forget this experience.

BLAIR

Ah! Italia.

SAM

Look there. That man in blue

BLAIR

That creep! Why is he following us.

SAM

Shall we contact the police?

BLAIR

Why spoil things. Besides he harms no one.

SAM

Eerie

BLAIR

I think I'll have some lunch

SAM

I think I'll just sit here

BLAIR

No lunch.

SAM

I just want to think about Rome and the Cabala and honor the dusk to the gods

BLAIR

A glutton for punishment. See you at the pool later.

He exits. Same stares at the ocean .

SAM

Virgil, Virgil. Where are you?

VIRGIL

Death's brother, Sleep.

SAM

What is the Cabala?

VIRGIL

They are able because they think they are able.

SAM

Where will they go?

VIRGIL

The gates of hell are open night and day;

SAM

Really?

VIRGIL

Fortune favors the brave.

SAM

What about my poems.

VIRGIL

Do not commit your poems to pages alone, sing them, I pray you.

SAM

Why should I trust you?

VIRGIL

Trust one who has gone through it.

SAM

Tell me about the Cabala?

VIRGIL

Nothing to say.

SAM

Oh?

VIRGIL

Practice and thought might gradually forge many an art.

SAM

What have I learned?

VIRGIL

Look with favour upon a bold beginning.

SAM

What have I gained?

VIRGIL

Your descendants shall gather your fruits.

SAM

What are your last words?

VIRGIL

Oh tyrant love, to what do you not drive the hearts  
of men?

SAM

What can you tell me about my writing

VIRGIL

Happy is he who gets to know the reasons for things.

SAM

And how can I succeed?

VIRGIL

Fortune favors the bold.

SAM

And whom should I consult.

VIRGIL

Believe one who has proved it. Believe an expert.

SAM

Will I suffer in life?

VIRGIL

Each of us bears his own Hell.

SAM

And in eternity?

VIRGIL

It is easy to go down into Hell; night and day, the gates of dark Death stand wide; but to climb back again, to retrace one's steps to the upper air - there's the rub, the task.

SAM

And what do I do here on earth?

VIRGIL

Yield not to evils, but attack all the more boldly.

SAM

Shall I forget about the Cabala.

VIRGIL

Whatever it is, I fear Greeks even when they bring gifts.

SAM

Will you help me?

VIRGIL

I have known sorrow and learned to aid the wretched.

SAM

And my Christian faith?

VIRGIL

Love conquers all things; let us too surrender to love.

SAM

I must take leave of you.



VIRGIL

Let us go singing as far as we go: the road will be less tedious.

SAM

Any caution?

VIRGIL

A snake lurks in the grass.

SAM

But what must I do?

VIRGIL

As a twig is bent the tree inclines.

SAM

I shall always remember you.

VIRGIL

May you have a pleasant memory.

SAM

I am still confused by the Cabala.

VIRGIL

They can do all because they think they can. They can conquer because believe they can. But they are foolish. But I must leave and you will never see me again.

SAM

Please stay.

VIRGIL

Goodbye. I must go.

SAM

Please stay.

VIRGIL

You Americans are so persistent. Specially you young ones. In the heavens we are still apprehensive about you people.

SAM

Prince of poets, Virgil, one of your guests and the last of the barbarians invokes you.

VIRGIL

I must go.

SAM

O greatest of all Romans, out of the eternity and that limbo to which the Florentine, perhaps wrongly, consigned you, grant me a crumb of time.

VIRGIL

Silly boy.

SAM

Now indeed the shade in midair stands just above the rail. Oh gracious spirt of the ancient word and prophet of the new, by that unfortunate guess wherein you foretold the coming of him who will admit to you His mountain, thou first Christian in Europe, speak to me.

VIRGIL

Except for this last salutation wherein you have touched my only pride, I would not delay here.

SAM

Thank you, Sir.

VIRGIL

Detain me not from the absorbing games of my peers. Erasmus in debate with Plato, and Augustine has descended from the hill and sits among us.

SAM

Was I right then in assuming that Dante was not completely in God's confidence?

VIRGIL

Someday you may learn.

SAM

Goodbye, sweet soul.

VIRGIL

I must advise you to do one thing

SAM

Yes, Sir!

VIRGIL

Go back to America.

SAM

I am.

VIRGIL

And only write about America.

SAM

I intend to write a play about a place called Willow Corners.

A worthy idea. I have been there.

SAM

Do the residents of Willow Grove know that you have been there?

VIRGIL

Of course not. And don't tell them. They will accuse you of being insane.

SAM

Ha.

VIRGIL

I must be off.

**SAM**

I will follow you into the sunset.

We see a large sunset in the background. And the whole cast of characters arrives on stage dressed in blue.

**END OF PLAY**