

PIRANDELLO'S WIFE

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FADE IN:

EXT. AGRIGENTO, SICILY.

TITLE: AGRIGENTO, SICILY, 1894.

EXT. STREET. EARLY MORNING.

CALOGERO PORTULANO, 46, portly, overbearing, unkempt business suit, cloth cap jammed on his head, bustles along street.

EXT. CONVENT.

Calogero enters convent.

Marches across open area.

Enters.

INT. SCHOOL

Calogero Portulano enters office of Mother Superior.

O.C. voices recite Act of Contrition.

VOICES (O.C.)

My God, I am sorry for my sins with
all my heart. In choosing to do
wrong and failing to do good, I
have sinned against you whom I
should love above all things. I
firmly intend, with your help, to
do penance, to sin no more, and to
avoid whatever leads me to sin.

MOTHER SUPERIOR, grim-faced, suspicious, 70s, exits office.

Portulano waits.

Mother Superior returns with ANTONIETTA PORTULANA, early twenties, pretty, shy, withdrawn, head-down, dressed in black, veiled.

Calogero Portulano grabs his daughter's hand and exits.

EXT. STREET.

Portulano drags his daughter through the streets.

PORTULANO
Head down, daughter! Head down!

A GROUP OF YOUNG MEN lounge on the corner. As father and daughter pass, they grab at Antonietta.

YOUNG MEN
Che bella! Che carina! Why hide
your beautiful daughter away from
us in the convent, old man
Portulano? Bella, bella, come e
bella! Let me teach you things
you'll never learn in a convent!

Portulano quickens his pace.

PORTULANO
Look down, daughter, look down!
Outside the gates of the convent,
every lecher in Sicily lusts after
you. The sight of a beautiful
young woman makes a man an animal.
First the eyes meet, then the hands
touch, then the lips caress, and
then . . . il bambino! Look down,
daughter, look down!

EXT. PUBLIC GARDEN-MORNING-LATER.

Path cuts across garden to other from one corner to another.
Fountain in the center.

Antonietta stands next to her father at one end of garden
path.

Antonietta raises her head a fraction. Portulano jerks it
down.

PORTULANO
Last time I went to Palermo on
business, I left your dowry with my
partner, Stefano Pirandello. Do
you know what that means, daughter?

Antonietta mumbles.

PORTULANO (CONT'D)
Speak up!

ANTONIETTA

Si, papa. E la mutria.

PORTULANO

Exactly. The speaking without words. Stefano has a son. If you please the son, you'll be his wife. One, two, three—deal complete and you're off my hands! The son's name is Luigi.

ANTONIETTA

Luigi is a nice name, papa.

PORTULANO

(mocking)

"Luigi is a nice name, papa." It's a name! The young man has studied abroad in universities. He is soberly dressed, aloof. He's also a writer.

ANTONIETTA

A writer!

Portulano spits on ground.

PORTULANO

That for your writer. Give me a man who sweats in the sulfur mines, not some storyteller, some word-juggler.

ANTONIETTA

Have you read his writings, papa?

PORTULANO

Me? Read? Never. Reading and business do not mix. Quiet, daughter, here he comes!

LUIGI PIRANDELLO, 27, tall,, aloof, goatee beard. He chain-smokes. Fedora hat with feather.

Accompanied by friend, RICARDO, 27. Dapper clothing. Walking stick Poses and gestures frequently.

Luigi's father, STEFANO PIRANDELLO, 50s, tall, baggy clothing, skinny, businessman. Straw hat.

Father and son stand at other corner of garden path.

PORTULANO (CONT'D)

(to Antonietta)

You walk across the garden path.
Ten paces. Fountain in the center.
Then you stop, hold up your veil so
Luigi can see your face. A short
pause. He looks you over. And
then you continue walking. Another
ten paces. The father looks at
you. You turn and walk back. Ten
paces you stop by the fountain.
The son looks you over a second
time. Then you come back to me.
Understood? If he'll have you, so.
If not, so. Go!

Antonietta moves slowly up the garden path, head down,
counting her steps.

ANTONIETTA

One, two, . . .

EXT. ROME. FUTURE.

Title: THE SANTA MARIA DELLA PIETA ASYLUM IN ROME, 65 YEARS
LATER. 1959.

The exercise yard. No patients. Shouts.

INT. CORRIDORS OF ASYLUM.

Rooms both sides. Patients inside rooms. Shouts and
screams.

INT. AUDITORIUM.

Patients standing around.

Camera moves to CU of the OLD ANTONIETTA, late 70s, sitting
in wheelchair. Dressed all in black, veiled.

OLD ANTONIETTA

. . . three . . . four . . .

GIULIANNA, patient, mid-20s. Dressed in long, white dress.
Asylum garb. She holds up a sign: THE COURTSHIP OF
ANTONIETTA PORTULANO AND LUIGI PIRANDELLO, 1894.

Giulianna assumes various provocative gestures and poses.

Old Antonietta gestures to SISTER LENTISSIMA, late 50s, portly, nun's habit.

The Sister and some PATIENTS hold scripts.

YOUNG ANTONIETTA/TUZZA, late teens, female patient. Simple long white dress. Head down, veiled.

Beside her GINA/Portulano, 40s, a female patient. Unkempt but white dress noticeable. Belt on waist hold cushion to fatten her. Cloth cap jammed on head.

(All patients involved in the play will be referred to by two names: the first being their character role. If only one name, they have reverted to their patient self. Young and Old Antonietta in the asylum are distinguished.)

Portulana/Gina pushes Young Antonietta/Tuzza.

SISTER

. . . Four, five, . . . Walk forward, Tuzza. Remember, you are the Young Antonietta. Luigi is deciding if he will or won't have you.

Gina whirls to face Old Antonietta . Whips off her cap. Snarls.

GINA

(sing-song)

Will he, won't he? Will he, won't he?

Manic laugh.

SISTER

Gina, stay in character! You are Antonietta's father, Calogero Portulana.

Gina curtsies. Smiles, ingratiating. Replaces cloth cap.

SISTER (CONT'D)

Tommaso, come over here! You are playing Luigi Pirandello. You will choose young Antonietta, that's Tuzza, for your wife.

TOMMASO/LUIGI, late 20s, suit loosely thrown over asylum garb. False goatee beard attached to chin. Fedora hat with feather.

Tommaso has a drawing board in his hand. Writes and draws continually, although no pencil. He moves towards Giulianna who giggles.

SISTER (CONT'D)

Tommaso, it's Tuzza you're going to marry, not Giulianna. Enzo, help!

ENZO(LATER RICARDO/HENRY IV, FLORES), a stocky orderly, 30s, work clothing, attempts to pull Tommaso away from Giulianna.

Giuliana doesn't help, dangling over Enzo's shoulders, and attempting to kiss him.

GIULIANNA

Soon I'm going to marry Enzo. I'll leave this asylum and live with Enzo in Rome.

ENZO

No you won't, idiota! You are a patient, I am an orderly. And put your dress down!

Wrestles her away.

SISTER

Not too rough, Enzo! Point Tommaso towards Tuzza. Back to the script, everyone.

(Turning to Old Antonietta)

Is this right, Antonietta?

OLD ANTONIETTA

Where is Luigi's father? Stefano?

Sister grabs GIOVANNI/STEFANO, tall, a patient, 60s who wanders aimlessly through the group. Straw hat.

SISTER

You, Giovanni, you are the father, Stefano Pirandello. Face Tommaso. He's Luigi, your son!

Enzo force Giovanni to face Tommaso.

OLD ANTONIETTA

You forget Ricardo, a friend of Luigi.

Sister checks her script. Nods.

SISTER

Enzo! You will read the part of
Ricardo! Here is your script!

The Sister reads from her script.

ENZO

I'm not an actor, Sister. Can't
you choose someone else?

Sister gestures to the remaining patients. No choice.

SISTER

Ricardo. Well-dressed, dapper,
bowler hat, walking stick. Ladies'
man.

GIULIANNA

Do you hear that, Enzo? Ricardo is
a ladies' man who falls in love
with the beautiful, seductive
Giulianna!

ENZO

No, he doesn't! Get away from me!
You're not in Antonietta's play

BACK TO THE PAST.

EXT. GARDEN IN AGRIGENTO--NOON.

Ricardo confronts Luigi. Large gestures.

RICARDO

You marry, Luigi? Remember what
you wrote. "I abhor marriage.
I've only have to hear the word and
I get an awful griping in my guts."

LUIGI

Words on a page!

RICARDO

Your words! "I've only to see a
wedding procession, or hear a
friend is getting married, and my
belly heaves."

LUIGI

This Antonietta, if I approve of
her, will be led by me down the
path of Art. We'll be two pilgrims
athirst for the truth!

RICARDO

Blah, blah, blah!

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Ricardo/Enzo reads from script.

RICARDO/ENZO

Blah, blah, blah!

SISTER

Good. Now walk forward Tuzza.
Six, seven, . . .

BACK TO THE PAST.

EXT. GARDEN IN AGRIGENTO--SAME.

As Antonietta walks.

PORTULANO

Eight, nine . . .

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Gina shouts out.

PORTULANO/GINA

Ten.

NUN

Look at Tuzza, Tommaso! You are
Luigi Pirandello, Antonietta's
future husband.

(to Young
Antonietta/Tuzza)

Raise your veil, Tuzza!

Young Antonietta/Tuzza raises her veil. Her head moves back
and forth, lost.

BACK TO THE PAST.

EXT. GARDEN IN AGRIGENTO--SAME.

Antonietta raises her head and lifts her veil. Luigi looks her up and down. Walks around her, checking.

The two finish walking down the path. They turn and repeat the ritual.

Luigi returns to his father, Stefano.

Antonietta returns to her father, Portulano.

Portulano looks across at Stefano who spits on his hand. Portulano does the same. The two men walk to the fountain and shake hands.

PORTULANO AND STEFANO

It's done!

Portulano returns to his daughter.

PORTULANO

The young man will have you?

ANTONIETTA

Who is that with him, papa?

PORTULANO

(spits)

Probably one of his actor friends
from Rome.

Ricardo crossed the path.

PORTULANO (CONT'D)

Don't look at him, daughter!

Portulano confronts Ricardo who looks Antonietta up and down.

Ricardo returns to Luigi.

RICARDO

Thank God we take the daughters,
not the fathers!

LUIGI

She's pretty. She carries herself
well. She has a pleasing eye.

RICARDO

Two quick glances and you saw all
that?

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Tuzza/Antonietta and Tommaso/Luigi exchange quick glances.

Enzo/Ricardo looks Young Antonietta/Tuzza up and down.

Young Antonietta/Tuzza turns to Portulano/Gina.

YOUNG ANTONIETTA/TUZZA

I think he's handsome, papa.

PORTULANO/GINA

You think? Is it for a daughter to think? If he likes you, so, if not, so.

Gina whips around to Old Antonietta and laughs.

GINA

Someone else will have her.

SISTER

Gina! Stay in character! Your line, Tommaso. Say it to Enzo. He's that friend, Ricardo.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

She's been raised in a convent. Still I believe I can make a woman of her.

RICARDO/ENZO

God's already done that! Think carefully, Luigi. Marriage is not for you.

BACK TO THE PAST. GARDEN IN AGRIGENTO-AFTERNOON.

Luigi talks to Ricardo.

ENZO

Think carefully, Luigi.

LUIGI

I find her acceptable.

RICARDO

Acceptable? God in heaven! Acceptable women breed children, not visions. You're a poet, a playwright! You must fly! Marriage? No!

LUIGI

Silence! Here's my father!

STEFANO

Well, what do you say? Speak!

RICARDO

The fool's madly in love, Stefano!
Quaking at the knees, bursting at
the groin, arms hanging loosely,
head leaning pitifully, and that
look of abject stupidity! It's
love!

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

The Sister taps Giovanni on the shoulder. Points to his
script. Giovanni sniffs around Ricardo,

STEFANO/GIOVANNI

Luigi, my son, I hear a noise. It
sounds like a goat farting. And
the smell!

He stares at Ricardo.

STEFANO/GIOVANNI (CONT'D)

Ah, it's you, Signore walking
phallus, Signore corrupter of
youth!

ENZO

(breaking character)

Sister, patients do not talk to me
like that!

SISTER

He's not Giovanni, Enzo. He is
pretending to be Luigi's father,
Stefano.

ENZO

But . . . !

SISTER

The words are exactly what
Antonietta herself wrote.

Antonietta chuckles quietly.

BACK TO THE PAST.

EXT. GARDEN IN AGRIGENTO-SAME.

Portulano confers with Stefano.

PORTULANO

Antonietta is my only daughter.
Her brothers will inherit my
business. It is a father's duty to
provide his daughter with a
generous dowry.

STEFANO

Va bene! My son is a writer. Not
much money. Her dowry will help.
He tells me that soon he'll be a
famous and rich.

Both fathers gesture disbelief.

PORTULANO AND STEFANO

Writers!

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

All action stops as the door to the Auditorium opens.
DIRETTORE RIPENIO enters. Portly, pompous, arrogant, 50s,
glasses, mustache.

DIRETTORE

Fun and games, everyone, fun and
games? What's going on, Sister?

SISTER

We're rehearsing a play to perform
at Easter before the Governor, his
wife, and the Trustees of the
asylum, Signore Ripieno.

DIRETTORE

And you want me to play a part? I
was considered an actor of great
potential at my University.

SISTER

We already have our actors,
Signore.

DIRETTORE

Va bene! What is the play about?
Who are the characters?

SISTER

We're performing some scenes from
the life of Antonietta.

DIRETTORE

Brava, Sister! The wife of Italy's
most famous playwright, Luigi
Pirandello. We must provide our
distinguished guests notes about
her husband's plays, the honors he
received . . .

Gina dances around Old Antonietta.

GINA

His name. His honors.

SISTER

Will our program say anything about
Antonietta?

DIRETTORE

When she was born, when married,
when committed. That should be
enough.

Old Antonietta struggles to her feet. Screams. Tries to hit
at Gina who continues to dance around her.

GINA

(sing-song)

Birth, marriage, madness. That
should be enough.

Old Antonietta points at the Direttore.

OLD ANTONIETTA

No! Not enough! What about my
life? My pain? Why I spend my
final days in this asylum.

DIRETTORE

Your life? Your pain? Ha! You
would be another unknown if you
weren't married to a famous
playwright.

GINA

Crazed wife of famous playwright.
Doomed to live in his shadow.

Manic laugh. Old Antonietta strikes helplessly at her.

Collapses in her chair and pulls her black veil over her face.

DIRETTORE

Stop it! Both of you!

Curtsey and ingratiating smile from Gina.

BACK TO THE PAST.

EXT. GARDEN IN AGRIGENTO-SAME.

Luigi walks towards Antonietta.

DONNA CATERINA, plump, older aunt, 60s, stern, dressed in black, blocks his way.

DONNA CATERINA

Stop! Both of you!

Calogero Portulano joins Donna Caterina. Both wave Luigi away.

Luigi returns to Ricardo, amused at the goings on.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

The Direttore wanders through the "actors."

Enzo tries to hide.

DIRETTORE

Who is playing Luigi Pirandello, sister?

SISTER

Tommaso, Signore.

DIRETTORE

Tommaso? But he rarely speaks! How can he play Luigi Pirandello if he doesn't speak? Listen. How are you, Tommaso? Nothing!

SISTER

You must call him Luigi, Signore.

DIRETTORE

How are you, Luigi? Still nothing, Sister. Nothing!

Tommaso pretends to write on his drawing pad.

SISTER

He's writing, Signore. A writer
never speaks when he's writing.

Tommaso waves script.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

"He who has the luck to be born a
character can even laugh at death."

DIRETTORE

He spoke! He quoted Pirandello.

Direttore delighted. Others stare at him. No reaction.

SISTER

Tuzza plays Antonietta Giovane, the
Young Antonietta .

DIRETTORE

Why doesn't she play herself?

SISTER

We can't have an eighty-eight-year-
old woman playing a young girl.
Even I know that.

DIRETTORE

But Tuzza is so lifeless.

SISTER

That's because her father, the
mayor, beat and raped her every
night!

DIRETTORE

Gossip and rumors, Sister! In my
institution, we deal with facts.
Just facts. And let's not forget:
the mayor is one of our wealthiest
benefactor. But why Tuzza?

SISTER

We needed someone young and
beautiful.

GIULIANNA

I'm young and beautiful, Signore.

DIRETTORE

Put your dress down, Giulianianna!
Tuzza is playing Antonietta .

SISTER

Tuzza's part is very simple: a few lines. Little movement.

GINA

A few lines. Little movement.
That was your life.

Laughs.

SISTER

Gina plays Calogero Portulano,
Antonietta's father!

DIRETTORE

Gina?! Why not a male patient?

Sister gestures to the patients. Not much choice.

SISTER

If you squint your eyes like this,
Gina looks a little like a man.

DIRETTORE

You can't ask an audience to squint
its eyes!

(Beat))

Play your part well, Gina!
Antonietta's father gave her away
to a very famous man.

Gina offers ingratiating smile and curtsy to Direttore.
Spins to face Old Antonietta .

GINA

Gave her away! Gave her away! And
now she's here with me in this
madhouse!

A look from the Direttore. Gina moves away.

BACK TO THE PAST.

INT. A TAVERN IN AGRIGENTO-EVENING.

Stefano and Portulano stare at a legal document before them.

Luigi and Ricardo talk with TWO BUXOM BARMAIDS.

PORTULANO

I am offering a good dowry for you
to take Antonietta off my hands.

Stefano nods.

PORTULANO (CONT'D)
 Antonietta will stay here in
 Agrigento until the day of the
 wedding.

Clink tankards. Deal is sealed.

Stefano looks at Luigi, Ricardo and the barmaids.

STEFANO
 Better get him married soon.

Both older men nod in agreement.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Sister takes the Direttore's arm and guides him to Giovanni.

SISTER
 And there's Giovanni who plays
 Stefano Pirandello, Luigi's father.

Direttore nods. He turns to face Tommaso.

DIRETTORE
 Tommaso!

SISTER
 Luigi, Signore.

DIRETTORE
 Tommaso, Luigi, whoever you are,
 stay away from Giulianna!
 (to sister)
 I see Tommaso has his drawing pad.
 He doesn't have a pencil, does he?
 We all remember what happened last
 time he had a pencil.

He and the Sister nod.

Enzo still trying to hide. Discovered.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)
 Is that you, Enzo?

SISTER
 He's the only non-patient we use.

ENZO

Signore, I don't want to be in this play. I'm not an actor!

DIRETTORE

Who is he?

SISTER

Enzo, Signore.

DIRETTORE

I know that! I mean who's his character?

SISTER

Ricardo, an actor-friend. From Rome. He's very naughty. He chases young women.

GIULIANNA

If you chase me, Enzo, I'll let you catch me!

ENZO

Stay away from me and control yourself!

DIRETTORE

Remember Enzo, Giulianna is a patient. Treat her gently!

GIULIANNA

Enzo can treat me any way he wants.

DIRETTORE

Get away from him, Giulianna! Further, further! Good.

The Sister checks her script.

SISTER

Later Enzo plays a king.

DIRETTORE

A king? Henry the Fourth?

SISTER

What happened to the other three, Signore?

DIRETTORE

They died.

SISTER

We couldn't have three dead kings onstage. Even I know that.

The Direttore ignores her.

DIRETTORE

Let me see if I understand. Enzo is Ricardo, an actor-friend, who also plays other roles in Antonietta's little play. Will the audience understand this? Do you understand it, Sister?

SISTER

Yes, Signore. No, Signore, I do not.

OLD ANTONIETTA

I was a simple, motherless young girl, raised by nuns and protected by my father. My husband, the writer, lived with so many characters, so many fictions. How was I to know what was real and what not real, what truth and what fantasy? None of his figments was real for me, but I had to live with them.

The Direttore ignores her.

GINA

Our Direttore doesn't hear you, Antonietta. Your words mean nothing.

The Direttore stands before Enzo.

DIRETTORE

So, Enzo, you play a number of roles in this little drama. Very interesting.

Turns to Sister.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

If he were like that offstage, Sister, he'd be in an asylum.

SISTER

Enzo is in an asylum, Signore! But he goes home at night and comes back the next morning.

DIRETTORE

Sometimes I forget how literal you are, Sister.

SISTER

Grazie! Next scene. Luigi returns to Rome.

BACK TO THE PAST. ROME.

INT. PIRANDELLO APARTMENT-EVENING.

Tiny, dark, two-room apartment.

Luigi sits alone in the living room, writing by candlelight. Table covered with reams of his writings.

LUIGI

I am here in Rome preparing a life for the two of us. Write to me, my little Antonietta. Tell me of yourself. What shall I tell you of myself? Sometimes I'm a lonely idealist, absorbed in my thoughts. Other times I'm affable, joking, laughing. This self fights off the idealist as the idealist fights off the joker. Which me will you love more? Which me will you really know? Please write soon. I live each day waiting for words from your pen. Yours in love, Luigi.

EXT. AGRIGENTO. DAY.

EXT. LARGE HOME OF CALEGERO PORTULANO AND FAMILY.

INT. STUDY.

Antonietta reads a letter. Portulano takes it from her. Reads.

PORTULANO

What's this? Rome? This writer you plan to marry wants you to join him in Rome after the wedding! The sulfur mines of Sicily are not good enough for him!

(MORE)

PORTULANO (CONT'D)

Working hard with muscle and sweat
is not good enough for him!
Agrigento is not good enough for
him!

ANTONIETTA

But papa...

PORTULANO

Don't 'But papa' me! A man finds a
wife and settles here in Agrigento,
Sicily! Your father did it, your
father's father did it, and your
husband will do it. If not, he can
look for another wife... in Rome!
Write that!

He leaves. Antonietta prepares to write letter.

ANTONIETTA

Luigi, Thank you for your letter.
What shall I tell you of myself?
That I long for...?
(scratching that out.)
That sometimes I feel...? That what
I wish is...?

She tears up the paper and writes on a new sheet.

ANTONIETTA (CONT'D)

Luigi, Donna Caterina has prepared
a list of the wedding guests and
arranged the wedding with the
priest at the church of Madonna
d'Itria as Papa wishes. The
reception will be held at Il Caos.
We await your return. Antonietta.

Hangs her head, frustrated. Portulano reenters.

PORTULANO

Stop weeping, child! There are
plenty more young men besides this
wandering do-nothing. What about
Pascoli's boy? Now there's a
decent young man. A lawyer here in
Agrigento. No writer, no Rome for
him.

ANTONIETTA

I'm engaged to Luigi. It's my duty
to marry him and live where my
husband lives.

PORTULANO

And what of me, your father? Go ahead! Run away to Rome! Leave me here, alone and uncared for!

ANTONIETTA

Both your sons are here, Papa, and, with the dowry, Luigi and I will have lots of money. We'll return to Sicily often. If only Mamma were here to care for you and see the marriage of her daughter.

PORTULANO

But she's not!

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Sister waves her arms.

SISTER

Next scene!

DIRETTORE

Wait, wait! Doesn't Antonietta write of her mother? How she died giving birth?

Sister checks her script.

SISTER

No, Signore. That's the end of the scene. Luigi is in Rome and Antonietta will join him.

The Direttore confronts Old Antonietta.

DIRETTORE

Why didn't you write of your birth? How your father refused to let a doctor see his sick, pregnant wife naked? Extreme jealousy, a genetic disorder, passed from father to daughter. That's why you are here.

OLD ANTONIETTA

A disease? No! A simple, innocent young woman marries a soon-to-be-famous man. There is my story! Watch and listen, Signore! That's all I ask.

SISTER

The marriage scene, everybody!

OLD ANTONIETTA

Come, Tuzza, let me comb you hair.
Let me be the mother I never had.
I used to have long hair as black
as the raven's. Sometimes, when my
father . . .

Sudden reaction from Tuzza.

TUZZA

No, not my father! He--he--.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Be calm, little one! When the nuns
were watching, I'd swing my hair
back and forth, wildly. Like this!
Come, child, today is Antonietta's
wedding day.

(to herself)

If only you'd known, old woman.

SISTER

Marriage scene, everyone! Hurry!
Don't forget: this is the scene you
put on your dark cloak, Enzo.

DIRETTORE

Why does he put on a dark cloak?

SISTER

Because it says so in the script,
Signore. Look!

DIRETTORE

Characters suddenly changing roles.
Some things included, others not.
Don't you question these things,
Sister?

SISTER

Yes, Signore. No, Signore.

She turns to Giuliana.

SISTER (CONT'D)

Giulianna! Your sign.

Giulianna holds up a board: "THE WEDDING AT THE CHURCH OF THE
MADONNA D'ITRIA, SICILY, 1894."

SISTER (CONT'D)
Perhaps you could read the lines of
the priest, Signore.

The Direttore takes script. A variety of poses and voices as he prepares.

DIRETTORE (PRIEST)
We are gathered here this twenty-
seventh day of January in the year
of our Lord eighteen hundred and
ninety-four . . .

BACK TO THE PAST

INT. CHURCH OF THE MADONNA D'ITRIA-NOON.

Church is filled. Mostly business associates of Stefano and Portulano and their families. Hot noonday sun. People fan themselves.

Luigi and Antonietta stand before the priest. Ricardo stands alongside Luigi.

PRIEST
... to join Antonietta and Luigi
together in holy matrimony.

Ricardo grabs Luigi.

RICARDO
No, Luigi! Don't marry! Marriage
imprisons the artist. He becomes
the husband, she the wife. Let it
be just you and me, playwright and
actor. We have so many things to
explore. Let's run from her!.

Portulano and Stefano signal for the Priest to hurry up.

Priest turns to Antonietta.

PRIEST
Do you, Antonietta, promise to love
this man, to cherish and obey him
until death do you part?

PORTULANO
She does. Hurry this up, Priest!
Time is money.

Ricardo tugs at Luigi.

RICARDO
Don't do it! With marriage dies a
world of possibilities.

LUIGI
Even you, my friend, must someday
choose this or that, killing a
thousand maybes.

RICARDO
Never! Fly, while there's time!

PRIEST
And do you Luigi take Antonietta
for your beloved wife to cherish
and hold until death do you part?

RICARDO
Fly!

LUIGI
I do.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Ricardo now Henry IV drapes himself in a dark cloak.

The Direttore is about to interrupt when the Sister signals
quiet.

HENRY IV/ENZO
Farewell to the streams and wooded
forests, farewell to the cry of the
birds swooping freely on summer
days. I see dark clouds ahead.

LUIGI/TOMMASO
No! A new life begins. With
Antonietta's dowry to support me...

Old Antonietta stands and yells at the Direttore.

OLD ANTONIETTA
My dowry to support him!

Enzo pushes her into her chair.

LUIGI/TOMMASO
. . . I'll write and write, basking
in the spotlight that is Rome.

Sister taps Direttore's script. His line. He stands and
poses.

BACK TO THE PAST.

INT. CHURCH-SAME.

Priest joins Luigi and Antonietta's hands in marriage.

PRIEST

I now pronounce you man and wife.

Clapping from those in attendance.

Choir sings.

Bride and groom leave the church.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

Henry IV/Enzo kneels before Old Antonietta.

HENRY IV/ENZO

Consummatum est. The comedy of
Sicily becomes the tragedy of Rome.

The Direttore grabs Sister's script and looks through it.

DIRETTORE

This script says nothing about the
courtship.?

Sister checks through script.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

Calogero Portulana tells Stefano
Pirandello that his son is free to
court Antonietta. But then he
says, "Antonietta's aunt, Donna
Caterina, and I will be with Luigi
and Antonietta at all times." Why
doe he say that?

SISTER

I don't know, Signore. I wasn't
there.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Exactly, Sister. None of you were
there.

DIRETTORE
 Antonietta's father, Portulano,
 warns that until Luigi and
 Antonietta marry, they must be
 watched carefully.

He nods knowingly at the Sister. But she doesn't get it.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)
 Why, sister, why? you ask.

SISTER
 Do I?

DIRETTORE
 Because a young man and a young
 woman have desires. Even the
 watchful eye of a parent closes in
 sleep.

The Direttore waits for Sister's reaction. None.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)
 The father holds the key that
 unlocks the door!

SISTER
 No, Signore. I have the key.
 Calogero Portulano can't get in
 here.

DIRETTORE
 Her father died decades ago,
 Sister!

Sister lost.

SISTER
 Her dead father is trying to enter?

DIRETTORE
 What I'm saying is that it is the
 father who explains why Antonietta
 is here in the asylum.

Old Antonietta screams.

Sister stares at her script.

SISTER
 So you're saying, Signore, that
 after Luigi and Antonietta marry,
 her father and aunt won't let them
 be together?

DIRETTORE

No, Sister. The wedding came after
the courtship. And then she . . .
(a sigh of exasperation)
Carry on!

The Direttore interrupts the Sister.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

You were now a married woman,
walking the streets of Rome with
that great man. Oh to have been
there!

BACK TO THE PAST

EXT. STREET IN ROME. LATER. MIDDAY.

Luigi Pirandello strides down the street.

Antonietta walks twenty paces behind.

Luigi tips his hat to a two pretty women. They smile. He
chats with them. Antonietta remains behind. They continue
their walk. No acknowledgment of Antonietta.

Luigi signals for Antonietta to join him. He points to the
two women he was talking to.

LUIGI

Che bella! Che bella! Rome is
filled with beautiful women! Soon
they will beg to act in my latest
play.

He walks on. Antonietta waits before continuing.

Luigi greets people as before.

They pass the gates of the Santa Maria Della Pieta Asylum in
Rome.

Noise of patients walking around in exercise yard.

Antonietta, frightened, puts her hands over her ears.

A female patient reaches through the gates to touch
Antonietta. She recoils. Patient and Antonietta stare at
each other.

LUIGI (CONT'D)
 Antonietta! Come away! That is
 not a place for you.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Direttore gestures.

DIRETTORE
 Why don't you pretend it's already
 Easter, Sister, and we have our
 audience: the Governor, his wife
 and the Trustees. Say a few words
 to introduce the play?

Sister takes her place facing "audience."

SISTER
 (loud)
 Honored visitors...

Direttore gestures quieter.

Old Antonietta wheels her chair forward, pushing Sister
 aside.

OLD ANTONIETTA
 Welcome to the Santa Maria della
 Pieta Asylum for the insane here on
 the Monte Mario in Rome. "Come,
 wife," my husband said. "A quick
 visit to the doctor and then it's
 home again." Forty years is not a
 quick visit! And I never went home
 again!

DIRETTORE
 That's right! Blame your husband!
 When will you understand? It's
 your fault you're locked up.

Tommaso suddenly rushes for the door. Enzo struggles to
 wrestle him to the floor.

TOMMASO
 Don't lock me up, mamma! Tommaso
 will be a good boy.

SISTER
 (whispering to Direttore)
 You said "locked up," Signore.
 That's the word you don't say in
 front of Tommaso.

(MORE)

SISTER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Enzo, don't hurt him!

Tommaso is quietened.

DIRETTORE

Back to Luigi's life.

SISTER

Antonietta's, Signore.

Old Antonietta stands.

OLD ANTONIETTA

All I ask is a little time before
death to relive my life as I
remember it, as I lived it.

DIRETTORE

Your life? Ha! I know all about
your life. I have your files, your
husband's biographer's book. I
know everything about you.

Old Antonietta screams. Enzo wrestles her back to her chair.
She pulls the veil over her head.

The Direttore confront her.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

And something else, Antonietta!
Your husband's official biographer
doesn't write of this Actor friend.
Was he a real person? No!

The Direttore points at Enzo wrapped in cloak.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

You thought you could fool me, but
no. You now have Enzo playing
Henry the Fourth.

SISTER

That's the Henry who's not dead,
right, Signore?

DIRETTORE

Exactly. Enzo is now Henry the
madman.

SISTER

Enzo a madman? No, Signore.
Enzo's the orderly who washes the
floor and cleans the bedpans.

DIRETTORE

The dark cloak, the tragic
stance—he's Henry the Fourth. And
Giulianna is his lover, Donna
Matilda.

Enzo fights off Giulianna.

SISTER

Giulianna his lover! Never!

DIRETTORE

Not in real life, Sister, in
fiction! Do you understand?

SISTER

Yes, Signore. No, Signore.

DIRETTORE

Listen carefully. Luigi Pirandello
wrote a play about a madman who
believed himself Henry the Fourth
of Germany. So here's Enzo as
Henry and Giulianna as the woman he
loves.

SISTER

And does Henry, the one that's not
Enzo, love this other woman?

DIRETTORE

Yes. But she has another lover.

SISTER

Tommaso? He's in this play too?

DIRETTORE

No, not Tommaso! Listen! Henry
fell off his horse in a carnival.
He was kicked in the head and went
mad.

SISTER

I see. That's when Giulianna,
who's not Giulianna, found another
lover, who's not Tommaso.

DIRETTORE

Exactly. And here's where the plot
thickens. It was the lover who
made Henry's horse stumble!

SISTER

It's all very confusing! It must be a very bad play.

DIRETTORE

No, it's brilliant! You see Henry isn't mad.

SISTER

Nor is Enzo!

DIRETTORE

Henry only pretends to be mad so he can kill the lover. Then he goes mad.

SISTER

The dead lover goes mad?

DIRETTORE

No, Henry!

SISTER

But you said Henry went mad when he fell off the horse.

DIRETTORE

He did. But later we discover he wasn't mad. He was just pretending! Then, when he visited the castle . . .

SISTER

I thought Henry lived in a castle.

DIRETTORE

When the lover visited the castle!

SISTER

But he's dead.

DIRETTORE

Did you understand anything I said?

SISTER

Of course, Signore. Henry, who's not Enzo, is Giulianna's lover—but she's not Giulianna. Tommaso, who's not Tommaso, is her lover. Then Henry, who's not Enzo, falls off a horse, bumps his head and goes mad. But later he's not mad.

(MORE)

SISTER (CONT'D)

He then lives in a castle, but
doesn't live in a castle and kills
Tommaso, Giulianna's other lover,
who's already dead. Did I leave
anything out?

DIRETTORE

No, nothing. It's all mixed
together in your mind!

SISTER

Grazie, Signore!

The Direttore crosses to Old Antonietta.

DIRETTORE

Antonietta, Enzo's character is not
real. You've confused this so-
called friend of your husband with
fictional characters from his
writings. Our files are correct:
your brain is filled with figments
of imagination.

OLD ANTONIETTA

As was my husband's! But he was a
writer. I am a madwoman!

The Sister grabs Antonietta and moves her to the bed.

SISTER

Into bed! Enzo, get Luigi into
bed!

DIRETTORE

Sister, don't interrupt! I'm
making a point!

SISTER

Sorry, Signore! Out of bed!

DIRETTORE

No, no! Forget it. My point is
lost.

SISTER

Back into bed!

Enzo guides Antonietta/Tuzza and Luigi/Tommaso to the bed.

BACK TO THE PAST.

PIRANDELLO APARTMENT. BEDROOM--NIGHT.

Luigi and Antonietta lie in bed. A candle lights the room.

LUIGI

Finally we are married, my little Antonietta. But the marriage bed is cold.

ANTONIETTA

Forgive me, husband. Soon it will be warmer.

LUIGI

The future stretches before us. I'll have my writing, you a home and children.

ANTONIETTA

It's what every woman wants.

Antonietta begins to cry)

LUIGI

Yet so sad on our wedding night. Be happy! Rome lies at our feet.

ANTONIETTA

Rome lies at your feet, husband. What is Rome for me?

LUIGI

Husband and wife are one. Soon I'll be famous. With the interest on your dowry and the money from my writings, we'll be rich. Rome calls! Freedom calls!

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Gina dances around taunting Old Antonietta.

GINA

Freedom calls!

(she spits)

That for freedom. Here we are, the two of us, together, equals, in this prison, until the end.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Cagna!

Gina runs. She becomes Portulano again.

PORTULANO/GINA

You are married, daughter. I give
your father-in-law a dowry of
seventy thousand lire to invest
safely for you in the sulfur mines
of Aragona.

Manic laugh.

DIRETTORE

Gina!

Sister crosses to Giuliana and points to the signs.

Giulianna's sign "LUIGI AND ANTONIETTA'S LIFE IN ROME.
LUIGI'S LITERARY READINGS."

Sister reads from the script.

SISTER

In a short time, Luigi was a
darling of Rome's literary circles.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Serve the wine, Tuzza! That was my
life in Rome.

Inmates crowd into a group before Luigi/Tommaso who reads
from the script.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

"We are fireflies lost . . ."

DIRETTORE

Stop! These lines are too
important to be lost on the
audience. Let's have Luigi stand
on a chair, center stage front.

Enzo get a chair and forces Luigi/Tommaso to stand on it.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

Good. Continue. "We are fireflies
lost . . ."

BACK TO THE PAST

PIRANDELLO APARTMENT. EVENING.

Guests sit and stand around Luigi who stands on a chair.

Antonietta struggles through group filling wine glasses.

LUIGI

. . . lost in the darkness,
desperately casting forth minute
circles of radiance. We each have
our private prison which cuts us
off from the universal, the
eternal, to which we shall all
someday return."

Guests clap. Men shake Luigi's hand. Women sigh adoringly.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

The Direttore is on his feet, clapping. Everyone stares at him.

DIRETTORE

Bravo, Luigi! Bravo!

SISTER

Wouldn't it be hard to keep
fireflies in a prison, Signore?
You'd need tiny netting in place of
iron bars.

Sigh of frustration from the Direttore.

BACK TO THE PAST

PIRANDELLO APARTMENT. EVENING.

All clap. A FEMALE GUEST, beautiful, young, well-dressed is
on her feet standing alongside Luigi.

FEMALE GUEST

Your words take my breath away! To
think it was you, the man standing
beside me, who wrote this. My head
spins. I'm in the presence of
genius.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Giulianna, dangling coquettishly over Luigi/Tommaso, makes
eyes at Enzo.

DIRETTORE

Giulianna, you do not need to
encourage Tommaso.

SISTER

She's not Giulianna, Signore.
She's a woman listening to Luigi's
words.

DIRETTORE

Ah, I understand. Scusi, tutti.
Continue.

Young Antonietta/Tuzza drops a tray disturbing inmates.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

Tuzza!

SISTER

And she's not Tuzza, Signore.
She's the YOUNG ANTONIETTA. She's
supposed to drop the tray. It's in
the script.

DIRETTORE

Why? I see no reason. Luigi read
a few lines of his writing and ...

OLD ANTONIETTA

Perhaps you are looking at the
scene from the wrong side of the
stage.

Sister picks up her chair.

DIRETTORE

Put your chair down, Sister!

OLD ANTONIETTA

"My head spins. I'm in the
presence of genius." You only hear
the words. A wife hears, watches,
feels and knows.

DIRETTORE

An innocent reading for selected
guests, that's all!

Young Antonietta/Tuzza drops the tray again.

BACK TO THE PAST.

PIRANDELLO LIVING ROOM. EVENING.

Guest disturbed as Antonietta drops tray. The female guest
wraps herself against Luigi.

LUIGI

Antonietta, be more careful! You
frighten our guests.

(beat)

The noise has broken the spell! We
shall meet again tomorrow night.

The guests gradually leave. The female guest gives Luigi a
kiss on the cheek before she leaves.

Antonietta cleans up. Luigi returns to his writing.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

Sister gestures to Giulianianna for next sign.

Giulianna holds up a sign: "IN JUNE, 1895, ANTONIETTA GAVE
BIRTH TO A SON, STEFANO."

Young Antonietta/Tuzza screams.

DIRETTORE

That's a sudden leap in time,
Sister! I was hoping for more of
Luigi's readings.

SISTER

We must follow the script, Signore.
Spread your legs, Tuzza!

DIRETTORE

What did you say, Sister?

SISTER

It's a stage direction in
Antonietta's script, Signore.

Young Antonietta/Tuzza stands, legs apart. A PATIENT (new-
born baby)crawls through them. Mother and "son" cry.

BACK TO THE PAST. AGRIGENTO.

EXT. LARGE HOME OF CALEGERO PORTULANO, LATER, DAY.

INT. STUDY.

Portulano walks up and down before sitting down to write a
letter.

PORTULANO

Antonietta, I am pleased to hear of the birth of my grandson. However, I am sorry to spoil this time of happiness with my concerns. Luigi's father, Stefano, ignores my financial advice. He wastes your dowry. You must learn to live on less money.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Throughout Luigi/Tommaso continues to read to guests.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

"Suppose we finally convince ourselves that all this mystery doesn't exist outside us, but only within us? "

At the same time, the "baby" cries.

Young Antonietta/Tuzza cries as she reads her father's letter.

DIRETTORE

The noise of the baby and Tuzza's crying is distracting. I can't hear what Luigi is reciting to his guests.

SISTER

Tuzza, spread your legs again! Giulianna!

DIRETTORE

Sister!

Giulianna holds up another sign: "IN 1897, ANTONIETTA GAVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER, ROSALIA."

Young Antonietta/Tuzza screams.

Young Antonietta/Tuzza stands, legs apart. Patient (new-born baby)crawls through them. Mother and "daughter" cry.

BACK TO THE PAST. AGRIGENTO.

EXT. LARGE HOME OF CALEGERO PORTULANO, LATER, DAY.

INT. STUDY.

Portulano writing another letter

PORTULANO

Antonietta, I'm happy to hear of the birth of your daughter. The news from Sicily is not good. Your father-in-law, Stefano, throws all of his money, including your dowry, into a useless sulfur mine near Aragona.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Luigi/Tommaso on chair, recites.

TOMASSO

"What if death, in short, which frighten us so much, didn't exist and were only-not the extinction of life-but the gust of air that blows out our lantern, ... "

SISTER

Spread your legs again, Tuzza! Giulianna! Sign!

Frustrating sign from the Direttore.

DIRETTORE

Can we have a rest from these childbirths, Sister.

Luigi continues to read and gesture. His words are lost beneath the screams of Young Antonietta/Tuzza and the babies.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

There's too much going on, Sister!

OLD ANTONIETTA

You hear Luigi's words. All I heard was the babies crying. We had no food.

BACK TO THE PAST. PIRANDELLO APARTMENT.

Luigi stands on chair. Guests listen as they drink wine.

LUIGI

"The boundary is an illusion,
relative only to our poor light,
out individually: in the reality of
nature it doesn't exist."

The babies, in bedroom, cry.

Antonietta runs into room looking for food. Runs back into
bedroom.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Guiliana holds up another sign: "IN JUNE, 1899, ANTONIETTA
GAVE BIRTH TO A THIRD CHILD, A SON, FAULTO. THE BIRTH WAS
DIFFICULT."

Young Antonietta /Tuzza screams.

Young Antonietta/Tuzza stands, legs apart. Patient (new-born
baby)crawls through them. Mother and "son" cry.

DIRETTORE

Get these childbirths over
with-quickly! I want to listen to
Luigi's words.

BACK TO THE PAST.

Portulano writes again.

PORTULANO

Antonietta, I'm sorry to hear of
the painful birth of my second
grandson. I'll wait until your
full recovery to tell you of your
father-in-law's stupidity!

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

Enzo and Direttore try to stop the noise.

LUIGI

Antonietta, keep the children
quiet! I'm reading! "She huddled
in a corner of the dark, enclosed
courtyard..."

The Direttore walks into the scene.

DIRETTORE

Sister, stop these childbirths!
They are disturbing Luigi's
readings.

Patients stare at him. Sister points to the chair.
Direttore returns and sits.

YOUNG ANTONIETTA/TUZZA

Silence, my children, silence!
Your father is a magician: he
creates wonders with words.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

"My wife grows more and more mad
each day. She strolls back and
forth in the darkened courtyard,
nodding her head and smiling first
to this one and then to that
one—all figments of her world."

DIRETTORE

The writer's own words! He is
describing Antonietta's madness.

PORTULANO/GINA

My dearest Antonietta, I've delayed
writing this letter as long as
possible.

DIRETTORE

Not again! Concentrate on one
action at a time, Sister.

SISTER

I didn't write the script, Signore.
Antonietta did. It's her life.

BACK TO THE PAST.

Portulano writes again.

PORTULANO

All is ruined! As God is my
witness, I repeatedly warned your
father-in-law Stefano against
investing in the Argano mine. It
is collapsed, flooded! Lives are
lost! Machinery destroyed! With
the mine goes your dowry!

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

Patients becoming increasingly disturbed.

PORTULANO/GINA

You and your scribbler husband are
now penniless!

Young Antonietta runs around frantically.

OLD ANTONIETTA

All is gone! Run from the madness
of their world. Find your place,
safe from them.

GINA

Safe? Here? Ha! This is an
asylum where they lock us up.

TOMMASO

Locked up? No, not that! Not
Tommaso.

DIRETTORE

Enzo, Sister, help! Silence!
(beat)
Now where were we?

SISTER

Back to the script, everyone!

BACK TO THE PAST. PIRANDELLO APARTMENT-DAY.

Antonietta is in bed.

ANTONIETTA

All is ruined, husband. Our
financial loss and a difficult
childbirth paralyzes me. So much
pain.

LUIGI

Lay still. It's a man's task to
worry. I shall find work.

Luigi opens a letter.

LUIGI (CONT'D)

A letter from my father. My son
Luigi, I beg your forgiveness.
What more can I say about the loss
of Antonietta's dowry?

(MORE)

LUIGI (CONT'D)

God has given me this burden to carry. He destroyed the sulfur mine.

Antonietta moans.

ANTONIETTA

So it is God who destroyed the sulfur mine. God who lost my dowry. Even He, the kindly Father with soft, shining eyes, who smiled down on the young girl in the convent at San Vincenzo, now abandons her.

LUIGI

My father tells me to appeal to your father. To tell him that our family will return to Sicily. That I will work for him.

Luigi crumples the letter and tosses it aside

LUIGI (CONT'D)

Me? Work? For him Never! These are the hands of a writer, not those of a common laborer.

ANTONIETTA

Luigi, we are penniless! Rome is not for us. We must return to Sicily and throw ourselves at my father's doorstep. He will pity us.

LUIGI

What of my writing, my art? No! We stay here in Rome where my future lies. One day my writings will feed us well, you'll see. Women do not understand such things.

ANTONIETTA

But we live with them, my husband. I must get up. My children need me.

LUIGI

Rest and get well, Antonietta. I'll find money somehow.

Antonietta takes off her earrings.

ANTONIETTA

They were a gift. They'll pay this month's rent.

LUIGI

A loan from the pawnshop—for a short time. I'll find a teaching position. It won't pay much, but soon, with my writing, I'll be rich and famous.

Luigi takes the earrings.

Antonietta removes bracelet.

ANTONIETTA

The children need shoes, Luigi. Maybe you can sell this.

Takes bracelet.

LUIGI

I'll write and write. A short story a week!

ANTONIETTA

This necklace, inherited from my dead mother, will buy food for a few days.

Takes necklace

LUIGI

Out of poverty, out of suffering, the greatest art grows.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Young Antonietta/Tuzza takes some of Luigi/Tommaso papers.

YOUNG ANTONIETTA/TUZZA

We have no paper for the fire, husband. The children are cold.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

No, not my manuscripts! You wouldn't! No!

The Direttore leaps to his feet and stops Young Antonietta/Tuzza taking the papers.

DIRETTORE

Not the manuscripts, Tuzza!

The patients stare at the Direttore. Sister leads him back to his seat.

She shows Luigi/Tommaso where he is in the script.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

"Art must sacrifice in times of need. But you look so tired, my wife. This business of the dowry has altered you. Your eyes are duller, many wrinkles line your face, where is the woman I married? Where is my little Antonietta?"

The Direttore stands, stopping the action

DIRETTORE

Poor Antonietta, the wronged woman. She does nothing and yet is brought to this asylum! What nonsense! Your script is a lie!

OLD ANTONIETTA

No! It is my story, my life! I beg you, Signore, let my actors perform the school scene. Then you'll understand.

DIRETTORE

I understand the loss of the dowry meant Luigi had to set aside his writing and get a job teaching in a college.

OLD ANTONIETTA

An all-girls college. What would your wife say if you went to work in an all-girls college?

DIRETTORE

I'm not married!

OLD ANTONIETTA

Ha!

The Direttore stands.

DIRETTORE

You know why you're here, but you don't write about it. Insane jealousy, inherited from your father. It destroyed your home and family.

(MORE)

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

If the Governor and his wife see a play at Easter, it will be that truth. And I shall write it!

He strides off.

The patients stand around confused.

Old Antonietta sobs as Gina circles her.

GINA

"Lies, Antonietta, all lies." And you thought they'd listen. Soon the Antonietta they all know, the Antonietta of your files, of your husband's biographers, will tell your story, courtesy of our new playwright, the Direttore. That Antonietta will live forever while you rot away within these walls!

BACK TO THE PAST.

INT. PIRANDELLO APARTMENT-EVENING.

Light of candle.

Antonietta and children squeeze onto table, making sure not to disturb Luigi's papers. They eat scraps.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE-SAME.

Pirandello and Ricardo sit at an outdoor cafe next to the Teatro D'Arte de Roma. . They drink wine.

RICARDO

Ask your publisher for more money for your writing.

He waves some young ladies.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

Why not write of your wife, Antonietta? Since she lost her dowry, each day, each hour she descends deeper into . . . you know.

PIRANDELLO

I am writing of her in my novel, The Late Mattia Pascal.

RICARDO
A novel. Blah, blah, blah.

Mighty snore.

RICARDO (CONT'D)
A novel. A single reader staring
by candlelight at words on a page.
Not so the stage. Drama is action.
Actors! Write me the part of a
madman. Let the audience see
madness before their eyes. Let
them hear, smell and breathe
madness until they begin to
question their own sanity when
compared to that I present onstage.

Ricardo sees a group of young women leaving the theater. He
stands and bows to them.

RICARDO (CONT'D)
Young, beautiful women waiting for
you to clothe them in the words of
the playwright.

LUIGI
Some day. For now I must continue
my professorship at the Istituto
Superiore di Magistero di Roma.
That is how I support my family.

RICARDO
And how are your young female
pupils?

PIRANDELLO
Why do you giggle like that?

RICARDO
If it were me in a classroom with
young girls--.

Gesture.

PIRANDELLO
But it's not you.

Ricardo giggles again.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

INT. THE DIRETTORE'S STUDY-LATER.

The Direttore writes furiously. Stops.

Stands and gestures as he silent reads the lines. Nods proudly.

INT. AUDITORIUM.

The patients wander around aimlessly.

Enzo and Sister try to maintain order.

SISTER

I wish the Direttore would hurry
with his script.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Let's continue with mine, Sister.
Let's do the all-girls' college
scene.

Giulianna giggles as she digs through her posters.

GIULIANNA

The College Scene is the one where
. . . ?

SISTER

Giulianna! You heard our
Direttore. Antonietta's script is
a lie.

OLD ANTONIETTA

It was the life I lived!

SISTER

Forget the life you lived and
prepare for the one to come.

OLD ANTONIETTA

But this life, my life, hasn't
ended yet!

SISTER

Seek forgiveness from God.

OLD ANTONIETTA

For what? What was my sin? Being
born a woman?

SISTER

Questions, questions, nothing but questions!

GINA

Soon our Direttore's drama will tell your story, the truth everyone knows.

SISTER

Enzo, keep order while I find our Direttore!

She exits.

Gina circles Old Antonietta.

GINA

Our Direttore's files tell our truths.

Old Antonietta spits.

OLD ANTONIETTA

That for his files! This was my truth. In this little drama I was the playwright. This was my stage.

GINA

Your drama, your stage! What of us? No stage for our stories, no audience for our pain!

She grabs Tuzza.

GINA (CONT'D)

Here stands Tuzza! Young, beautiful, miserably mad. She scrapes her father's drunken sweat from her young body. Her father the mayor who . . . Hush! No one speaks of it!

Turning to Tommaso busily sketching Giuliana.

GINA (CONT'D)

And what of Tommaso, the artist? Locked in a small dark cupboard by a mother who saw the Devil's hand in everything her gifted son sketched! Why not his story? Why not Giulianna's? Why not mine? No husband, no children for Gina.

(MORE)

GINA (CONT'D)

Just the strait-jacket and padded
cell when the moon is full!
Stories! Dramas! We all have
them! And when we die, our stories
die with us.

OLD ANTONIETTA

But mine doesn't. The lies continue
after my death. Will people know
the woman who lost her fortune
because of the men in her life?
No. The mother who raised her
children though there was not a
lira in the house? No. Whenever
people read of Luigi Pirandello,
they'll only know me as the wife
who raced through the streets of
Rome in her jealous rage.

Enzo interrupts them.

ENZO

Do you want to know what I think?
I thought not. But I'm going to
tell you anyway. Your husband
wrote a play about a lecherous
character called Liola always
chasing women and making them
pregnant. Another play was about
this Henry the Fourth character
killing his rival for the love of a
woman. It's all so obvious. Your
husband enjoyed his women. Maybe
the whole Henry story about killing
a rival was based upon personal
experience, although I'm guessing
the woman wasn't you Antonietta.

Old Antonietta stands and attempts to hit him.

ENZO (CONT'D)

Does the truth hurt, old woman?
That's it, move those old bones!

Hurls her back in her chair.

ENZO (CONT'D)

That's enough! Get back in your
chair! We don't want you to die
before you see the Direttore's
play, do we?

Tommaso is moving closer to Giulianna as he "sketches."

ENZO (CONT'D)
Hey, Tommaso, two feet!

TOMMASO
I'll draw you, I'll paint you, my
naked goddess!

GIULIANNA
Naked. Tommaso wants to paint me
naked. Would you like to see that,
Enzo?

ENZO
Keep your clothes on!

GIULIANNA
Protect me, Enzo. Tommaso might
hurt your poor Giulianna.

ENZO
You are not my Giulianna. And you
think Tommaso will hurt you? Ha!
It's all up here in his head.
There's nothing down there in his
pants. He wouldn't know what to do
if you were naked.

TOMMASO
The naked body is beauty to the
artist.

Enzo forces Tommaso away from Giulianna.

ENZO
Listen to him! You've been looking
at those art books again, haven't
you? Staring at those dirty
pictures. I'll have to tell your
mother. "Where is he? I'll whip
the Devil out of that boy! I'll
lock him in the cupboard!"

Tommaso freaks out. Thrashes around before rolling into a
foetal position.

TOMMASO
No, not the cupboard! Skulls of
dead men, crown of thorns. Not
that!

Enzo kicks him.

OLD ANTONIETTA
 Leave him, Enzo! One day you'll go
 too far!

ENZO
 The idiot feels nothing.

Old Antonietta wheels herself over to Tommaso.

OLD ANTONIETTA
 Come here, Tommaso. My youngest
 son, Fausto, must be your age. He
 too loved to paint. Maybe he is an
 artist like you.

ENZO
 What are you babbling about, old
 woman? Look at him. Tommaso the
 madman, all locked up.

Giulianna steals Tommaso's pad and dances around him.

GIULIANNA
 Tommaso the madman, all locked up!
 Tommaso the madman, all locked up!

Tommaso chases after her. Enzo leaps on him wrestling him to
 the ground.

OLD ANTONIETTA
 Give him his pad, Giulianna!

Enzo releases Tommaso who retrieves his pad and whimpers next
 to Old Antonietta.

GIULIANNA
 I'm going to leave this place soon,
 and live with Enzo.

ENZO
 What a joke!

GINA
 Be careful of her, Enzo!

ENZO
 I'm trembling. Look at me!

Enzo's laughter is interrupted by Sister entering with the
 Direttore.

SISTER
 Here is our Direttore with his new
 script.

BACK TO THE PAST.

ISTITUTIO SUPERIORE DI MEGISTERO DI ROMA-DAY.

Luigi and Ricardo enter the university.

INT. CLASSROOM.

Classroom is filled with young women waiting for class to begin.

Luigi and Ricardo enter the room.

Luigi signals for Ricardo to take a seat. Ricardo checks out young women. Sits surrounded by attractive young women.

LUIGI

Today we begin our study of "A Play for Lovers" by von Goethe, a lesser known story about the rakish Fernando and the two of the women he has wooed and then abandoned.

Looks up as Ricardo and the young women around him giggle.

LUIGI (CONT'D)

Would someone like to tell me the theme of the play?

Young women giggle.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Giulianna giggles as she receives the new cards from the Direttore. Holds them up and strikes provocative poses.

Other patients gather around Direttore.

DIRETTORE

Here are the new scripts. I've also brought your husband's biography, Antonietta, and your file.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Lies! All lies!

DIRETTORE

Tommaso will continue as Luigi, Gina as Antonietta's father, Portulano.

(MORE)

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

A vitally important role, Gina.
 Everyone else will play the same
 role. You, Enzo, will play
 Flores, an artist friend of Luigi.
 Giulianna, you play an actress
 friend invited to the Pirandellos'
 home to listen to the stimulating
 conversation. No, no lines.
 You'll just stand still and look
 intelligent. Like this. Good.

OLD ANTONIETTA

This script is a lie. It's yours,
 not mine.

DIRETTORE

Sit over here with me, Sister, and
 watch carefully. You'll see how my
 play gets at the real issue, the
 one Antonietta conveniently forgot.
 Stefano, face Luigi. Show us the
 first card, Giulianna. That's
 upside-down. Help her, somebody.
 Good.

Giuliann's card reads "ANTONIETTA ABANDONS HER WONDERFUL AND
 LOVING HUSBAND IN ROME AND TAKES HIS CHILDREN BACK TO HER
 FATHER'S HOME IN SICILY."

BACK TO THE PAST.

EXT. AGRIGENTO, SICILY. DAY.

Home of Stefano Pirandello.

INT. STUDY.

Stefano sits at his desk writing.

STEFANO

I spoke with your wife, my son. I
 ask her: Why return to Sicily,
 Antonietta? My son, Luigi, needs
 his wife and children by his side.
 You must return to Rome. And what
 the wicked things she says of you,
 my son. She says you are the idol
 of Rome and have many female
 admirers. I do not believe this.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

Giovanni/Stefano's histrionic gestures. Reading from the Direttore's script.

GIOVANNI/STEFANO
Everyone knows your wife is
insanely jealous, a disease
inherited from her father.

Giovanni stops. He hangs his head, embarrassed. Looks to Old Antonietta. She hangs her head.

GIOVANNI/STEFANO (CONT'D)
Her father was so jealous he let
his own wife die in childbirth
rather than let a doctor see her
naked body! Yes, he did. Yes, he
did. Yes, yes.

Patients join in.

PATIENTS
Yes he did, yes he did, yes, yes.
Yes he did, yes he did, yes, yes.

DIRETTORE
Stop it, all of you! Do not make
fun of Giovanni's acting!

OLD ANTONIETTA
Giovanni's acting? No! It's lousy
playwriting.

Gina tosses the Direttore's script aside.

PORTULANO/GINA
What? Should I allow another man
to slide his lurid hands over my
wife's naked body? Never!

SISTER
Don't be frightened, Stefano.
Gina's only acting. Is she
following your script, Signore?

DIRETTORE
No! I don't know where she got
these lines.

Patients stand around, mesmerized and terrified of Gina.

PORTULANO/GINA

I won't have it, you hear? No, no, no, Stefano! A wife's body belongs to her husband, not to some medical flesh monger, some antiseptic tail-chaser, some Hippocratic lecher.

DIRETTORE

This is good, Sister. Are you writing down Gina's words?

SISTER

I'm writing as fast as I can, Signore.

PORTULANO/GINA

She was my wife, my possession. Dishonor a man's possession and you dishonor him.

OLD ANTONIETTA

I admit my father was a jealous man, but I did not inherit his jealousy. Look instead at the wife, my mother. Silent and obedient to her husband's wishes even as her body is racked in the pain of birth and death. Silence and obedience. That was my womanly inheritance.

BACK TO THE PAST. ROME.

INT. THE PIRANDELLO HOUSEHOLD.

Luigi greets Antonietta and the children on their return from Sicily.

LUIGI

You have returned with my children.

ANTONIETTA

Our children!

LUIGI

Tonight we have a small gathering of intellectuals to welcome you and the children back.

ANTONIETTA

Why not leave me in Sicily with the children? There we were happy.

She moves the children to the bedroom as guests arrive.

Luigi stands on the chair again.

Antonietta exits bedroom. Serves wine.

LUIGI

"Reality is fleeting and
changeable."

Children crying. Luigi looks to Antonietta. She enters
bedroom.

LUIGI (CONT'D)

"It is the task of the artist to
hold time still capturing the form
beneath the changing surface."

Guests clap. Children cry.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Luigi/Tommaso is standing on a chair.

DIRETTORE

O, to have participated in those
discussions, Sister!

SISTER

I don't understand a word he's
saying.

DIRETTORE

They're discussing the difference
between reality and artistic
fantasy.

Giovanni has set aside his script.

GIOVANNI

O to be there with you, my son,
discussing important issues: the
difference between art and life,
life and art, life and life, art
and art.

PATIENTS

(jumbled)

Art and life, life and art, life
and life, art and art.

DIRETTORE

Help, Enzo!

As Enzo controls the patients.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Ha! My father-in-law discussing life and art?! Ridiculous! How to gain money and lose money was his life. And how quickly and easily he lost my money. I was left with nothing!

DIRETTORE

Interruptions, interruptions! Anything to stop my play! You are going to watch my play, even if it means the gag and strait-jacket!

Enzo pushes Tommaso.

ENZO

Two feet, Tommaso!

TOMMASO

A playwright needs an intimate relationship with his actress, Signore Floor mop!

ENZO

Signore what? Who said that, Direttore? Luigi or Tommaso?

SISTER

The actor is Tommaso, and the character is Luigi. Wasn't that clever of me, Signore?

DIRETTORE

Very clever, Sister. Stop interrupting, Enzo. Your line Tuzza.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Finally I speak! Maybe Tuzza should stand on a chair, Signore.

DIRETTORE

Certainly not! Continue.

YOUNG ANTONIETTA/TUZZA
To think how much I can learn from
my brilliant husband, and all I do
is throw away this beautiful gift
and drive my husband crazy! I feel
shame, shame, shame!

OLD ANTONIETTA encourages patients to join in. March around.

PATIENTS
Shame, shame, shame!

DIRETTORE
Sit her down, Enzo!

OLD ANTONIETTA
You make me sound like a repentant
whore in the final act of a
melodrama! I had nothing to be
ashamed of. Nothing! This is
ridiculous. Everybody, go back to
my script!

DIRETTORE
Shut her up, Enzo!

Enzo controls Old Antonietta.

Luigi/Tommaso moves to Giulianna.

TOMMASO
In my youth, Signorina, I wrote
many intimate seduction scenes for
an actress of your beauty and
talent.

DIRETTORE
Where did Tommaso get those lines?
Is that in Antonietta's script?

Sister checks both scripts.

SISTER
No, Signore. I think Tommaso is
making them up.

OLD ANTONIETTA
A young, talented playwright
surrounded by beautiful
actresses—that was his life outside
the home. In the home it was
children and financial problems.
Put two and two together, Signore.
It is not so difficult.

DIRETTORE

You conveniently forgot to mention the jealous, nagging wife waiting at home, Antonietta. It's no wonder your husband stayed out at night.

BACK TO THE PAST.

EXT. AN OUTSIDE CAFE - AFTERNOON.

Luigi, Ricardo and male and female actors.

RICARDO

Our brilliant playwright writes from experience. The misunderstood husband, the increasingly insane wife. He is creating his own life onstage.

ONE OF THE WOMEN takes Luigi's hand.

LUIGI

(gesturing to the actors)

I would love to spend all my time writing for you; I'd love to share with you all that goes through my mind, all that weighs on my heart, all that gives air to my soul; phantoms of art, dreams that would be so beautiful if they could come true.

Same woman rests Luigi's head on her shoulder.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Luigi/Tommaso rests his head on Giulianna's lap.

DIRETTORE

Jealousy, Antonietta. Unwarranted jealousy.

Noticing Luigi/Tommaso.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

Get away from Giulianna, Tommaso.

Enzo pulls Tommaso away.

GIULIANNA

Thank you for rescuing me, Enzo.

DIRETTORE

Your husband was a model of decency, Antonietta. Everyone who writes of him testifies to his restraint.

OLD ANTONIETTA

What about that actress?

SISTER

Is she talking about Marta Abba, Signore?

DIRETTORE

Do not spread gossip, Sister!

SISTER

It's not gossip, Signore. After Antonietta was put here, in the asylum, he . . .

DIRETTORE

Quiet!

OLD ANTONIETTA

Our Direttore prefers to forget, Sister. Do you think she was the first? I had my reasons for following him, watching his every movement in Rome. If it wasn't one of his actresses then it was some college student.

DIRETTORE

Enzo!

Enzo hurls Old Antonietta into her chair. He jams his hand across her mouth. She struggles for air.

ENZO

Be careful, Antonietta. The lion is out of his cage.

DIRETTORE

Tommaso, your line! You and the other men continue your discussion of aesthetics: structure, change, illusion, reality.

SISTER

Not again!

DIRETTORE
Don't interrupt, Sister! Listen
carefully! Tommaso!

Tommaso stands on the chair again.

TOMMASO/LUIGI
The image of this full-breasted
wonder--

Sister leaps to her feet.

SISTER
Tommaso! I'll have your mouth
washed out with soap!

DIRETTORE
The words are in my script!
Continue, Tommaso!

TOMMASO/LUIGI
The image of this full-breasted
wonder here in my writer's
imagination does not resemble that
seen through the eyes of ordinary
men like you . . .

He turns to Enzo.

TOMMASO
. . . Signore Bedpan-Washer!

ENZO
Did you call me a "Bedpan-Washer"
in your script, Signore?

DIRETTORE
Of course not!

ENZO
Signore Direttore, I have no lines!
I stand here silently while Luigi,
Tommaso, or whoever he is, insults
me.

DIRETTORE
Let me see my script, Sister!

BACK TO THE PAST.

THE OUTDOOR CAFE--DAY.

Luigi reading from his scripts again. Surrounded by men and women.

LUIGI

I am creating a scene in which a young actress becomes infatuated with a tormented, older playwright. What a challenge for a budding actress! Here is what I've written so far, "My wife isolates herself more and more in her own savage world where everyone appears to persecute her. She watches me from a distance. Sometimes I feel like going over and kicking her! But it wouldn't be any use. She's like a stray dog."

The group clap.

Same woman clasps Luigi's hand.

WOMAN

What a character! Jealousy! Madness! I feel this role was made for me.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Sister stares at the Direttore.

SISTER

Did Luigi really write such things about Antonietta? They are not very nice, Signore.

DIRETTORE

It's the truth.

OLD ANTONIETTA

I admit it. I followed my husband "like a stray dog." But I had good reasons.

DIRETTORE

You had no reasons whatsoever!

(to Sister)

I'm using these lines of Pirandello, Sister, to establish Antonietta's increasingly insane jealousy.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Your script is not only a lie, it's miserable playwriting. What about the all-girls college, Signore? Or have you forgotten that.

DIRETTORE

Of course not. Next card, Giulia. .

Guiliana holds up her card: TO SUPPORT HIS FAMILY, LUIGI FINDS WORK IN AN ALL-GIRLS TEACHERS' COLLEGE.

BACK TO THE PAST.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO AN ALL-GIRLS COLLEGE-MORNING.

The playground is filled with young women.

They stare at Luigi as he walks towards the entrance to the college. They giggle and share comments among themselves.

INT. CLASSROOM=LATER.

Luigi stands behind his desk.

Classroom filled with young women.

The young women whisper among each other.

One young woman writes a note on a piece of paper and passes it to another. Giggles as they pass it around and read it.

Luigi writes on the board. Kabale und Liebe.

LUIGI

Today we study Friedrich Schiller's "Intrigue and Love," a play reminiscent of William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet."

He writes on the blackboard: "Ferdinand von Walter, aristocrat, wishes to marry Luise Miller, bourgeoisie."

As Luigi turns to the blackboard again, a young woman runs to the front and places the paper on the teacher's desk. Rushes back to her desk.

Luigi turns. All young women's heads down.

Luigi look at note and puts it in his pocket.

He continues to read from the play.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

Sister talks to the Direttore.

SISTER

Signore, Antonietta has a school scene in her script. It's so funny! Luigi gets this love letter from one of his pupils and Antonietta finds it and...

DIRETTORE

A well-known incident recorded in this biography, Sister. But it's the interpretation of the event that's important.

OLD ANTONIETTA

A young woman gives my husband a letter. Then another and another. He saves the letters, and I find them. That is fact, Signore. It doesn't need your interpretation.

DIRETTORE

Of course it does! That's why I needed to establish your pre-existing paranoia. The audience needs to see the incident through my clear eyes. Your whole play was a figment of your imagination.

SISTER

Won't the actors confuse the two school scenes, Signore?

DIRETTORE

Not if they follow my script!
(to GIULIANNA)
Giulianna, you will play a student.

SISTER

As she did in our . . .

The Direttore stares at the Sister.

SISTER (CONT'D)

In Antonietta's script, the student says she'll die if Luigi doesn't . . .

OLD ANTONIETTA
From one of the letter I found,
Signore.

The Direttore glares at both women.

SISTER
Pay attention, all of you! Our
Direttore's script! Begin!

LUIGI/TOMMASO
Let's continue!

STUDENT
"Who was this man without death who
dares walk . . . ?"

OLD ANTONIETTA
Why is she reading Dante? He
taught German. Schiller.

Giulianna/Student pretends to cry.

DIRETTORE
Luigi was a very demanding teacher.

Tommaso upset.

LUIGI/TOMMASO
You must study!

The Direttore leaps up, taking Tommaso's place.

DIRETTORE
You must study! Put some life into
it, Tommaso . . . Luigi!
Giulianna, act out the stage
direction! Creep forward like
this, drop the note on the
schoolmaster's lectern and then
rush back to your seat.

Giulianna does so.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)
Brava!

SISTER
And bravo to you, Signore! Maybe
you should play the part of the
schoolgirl.

The Direttore glares at Sister.

DIRETTORE

Continue, Luigi! And don't be so wooden!

Luigi/Tommaso holds up the note tied with gaily colored ribbons.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

What is this?

DIRETTORE

With gusto, with gusto!

LUIGI/TOMMASO

What is this? What is this? What is this?

Patients march around.

PATIENTS

What is this? What is this?

DIRETTORE

Enough!

LUIGI/TOMMASO

A scrap of paper, reeking of stale perfume, deposited on my lectern. What an insult!

BACK TO THE PAST.

OUTDOOR CAFE.

Ricardo and Luigi sit drinking wine and smoking.

Ricardo sniffs the note from the student.

RICARDO

What aroma! The smell of a young and desperate woman. Has Antonietta seen it?

LUIGI

Of course not. I hide them in my study.

RICARDO

Them? There are more?

PIRANDELLO APARTMENT. BEDROOM. SAME.

Antonietta rummages through drawers.

She finds a bundle of letters. She reads them.

Sobs. Returns letters.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Direttore gives a bundle of letter to Sister.

DIRETTORE

Give these letters to Antonietta.
That's it. Make her hold them
high! You see that? She's
rummaged through his private
papers. What do you think of that,
Sister?

SISTER

I think what you think, Signore.
Still, that is a lot of letters.

ANTONIETTA

Exactly, Sister. I found so many
letters. Letters he kept. Why
keep them? Why didn't he destroy
them.

SISTER

If there are so many love letters,
Signore, and Luigi kept them,
perhaps Antonietta has reason to be
suspicious.

DIRETTORE

What do you know about love
letters, Sister? Continue with my
script.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

Since the loss of the dowry and my
teaching here at the Magistero,
Antonietta has become increasingly
jealous.

BACK TO THE PAST.

INT. PORTULANO HOUSEHOLD-DAY.

INT. STUDY.

Portulano reads a letter.

PORTULANO

What's this you write, daughter?
Your husband receives intimate
letters from his pupils and locks
them in his study? How shocking I
think you are right to suspect your
husband, daughter.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Gina holds letters.

PORTULANO/GINA

Who wouldn't be jealous?

DIRETTORE

The jealous father, Sister.

Old Antonietta grabs at Gina who skips away.

OLD ANTONIETTA

You're more an authority on my life
than I am.

FLORES/ENZO

What temptation, my friend! Still
it's natural for curious, naive
young women to seek the guidance
and authority of an older male.

SISTER

Do curious, naive young women seek
your guidance and authority,
Signore?

DIRETTORE

No, they don't!

SISTER

But if you're a writer and all
writers write from personal
experiences--.

DIRETTORE

Luigi was surrounded by young
women. My version of the script is
meant to show his restraint.

Tommaso grabs at Giulianna.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

I'm desperate!

DIRETTORE

Get your hands off that girl,
Tommaso! Your line is to Flores!
You're desperate because of
Antonietta's jealousy!

LUIGI/TOMMASO

Nothing has happened and nothing
will happen between these foolish
young women and me.

DIRETTORE

Nothing, Sister! His biographer
verifies that.

SISTER

Was the biographer there, spying on
him, Signore?

OLD ANTONIETTA

Good question, Sister!

DIRETTORE

Don't interrupt!

LUIGI/TOMMASO

Father, how can I convince
Antonietta of my innocence?

Giovanni, watching the action, misses his cue.

DIRETTORE

Stefano, Luigi is asking your
advice!

(beat)

It's in the script!

Stefano finds his place in the script.

STEFANO/LUIGI

Oh, what lies that woman says of
you, my son. Oh, oh, oh! She
doesn't deserve to be by your side.
You should put her away, Luigi.
Away, I say... away!

LUIGI/TOMMASO

Father, I cannot. Although she's
in the grip of jealousy, I'll work
twice as hard to make a better life
for us.

DIRETTORE

What a man!

OLD ANTONIETTA

A saint! Definitely not human.

DIRETTORE

Exactly as the biographer
describes... Sister, look here at
what the biographer writes...

While Direttore shows Sister a passage from the biography,
patients create their own script.

STUDENT/GIULIANA

"Who is this man without death who
dares walk in the kingdom of the
dead?"

OLD ANTONIETTA

Again! My husband taught German,
not Italian. Schiller, not Dante.

DIRETTORE

I know what your husband taught!
It's in the official biography.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Then the biographer was wrong!

The Direttore is shocked.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

Put some life into your reading!
I'm here to help you, my sweet
young thing.

SISTER

Luigi just called the student a
"sweet young thing," Signore. I
heard him.

STUDENT/GIULIANA

"Who is this man... without death... ?"

LUIGI/TOMMASO

Excellent, excellent! What a
delightful and alluring student you
are!

Direttore searches through his script.

Giulianna/student creeps forward and places a paper tied with
gaily-colored ribbons on the Luigi's lectern and steals back.

DIRETTORE

Where are we, Sister?

SISTER

The student is reading Dante's lines, Signore.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

Continue, young lady.

STUDENT/GIULIANA

"Who is this man without death who dares walk in the kingdom of the dead?"

OLD ANTONIETTA

German, not Italian!

LUIGI/TOMMASO

Bravissima! What have we here? A perfumed note bound with bright ribbons. Shall I open it?

STUDENT/GIULIANA

Yes, yes! Open it!

PATIENTS AND SISTER

Open it, open it!

DIRETTORE

Sit down, Sister! I didn't write that!

SISTER

No, Signore, the student did.

DIRETTORE

Not the letter, the script!

PORTULANO/GINA

Exactly as I warned you, daughter. The man is encouraging those lascivious wantons.

SISTER

". . . encouraging those lascivious wantons."

DIRETTORE

Don't write that, Sister! None of this happened!

LUIGI/TOMMASO

What sweet-smelling syllables are
nestled in this note?

SISTER

Sweet-smelling syllables. That's
nice, Signore.

DIRETTORE

I never wrote those words! Is this
her script?

Sister looks through Antonietta's script.

SISTER

No, Signore. I think the patients
are making up their own script.

DIRETTORE

What they are saying is a lie.
Continue with my script!

Tommaso reads from the Direttore's script.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

Here is a vile paper left upon my
lectern.

DIRETTORE

Put some feeling into it, Luigi!

Tommaso, as Luigi, rips up the note.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

I have not read this note, nor do I
intend to. The infantile thoughts
of this so-called writer remain
hers alone. So much for that.

DIRETTORE

With feeling, Luigi! Like this!

He shreds the letter.

SISTER

If these letters were ripped up,
Signore, how did Antonietta find
them later?

OLD ANTONIETTA

Your answer, Signore?

BACK TO THE PAST.

INT. PIRANDELLO HOUSEHOLD.

Antonietta glances one of the letters in the bundle she found.

Hearing a sound, she replaces the bundle of letters in a drawer.

INT. KITCHEN

Antonietta hurries back to the kitchen. Luigi enters.

LUIGI

I won't be staying in for dinner
this evening. I have some
theatrical items I need to discuss
with Ricardo.

He enters the bedroom. Exits a few minutes later.

EXT. OUTDOOR RESTAURANT NEXT TO THEATRE.

Luigi hands Ricardo a bundle of letters.

Ricardo takes a letter and begins reading it.

RICARDO

Our budding writer praises your
education, my intelligence, my
creativity, and then tells of a
dream she had in which . . . Luigi!

BACK TO THE ASYLUM

Luigi/Tommaso holds a letter.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

. . . And then tells of a dream she
had in which . .

PATIENTS

Read it professor, read it!

SISTER

Read it professor, read it!

LUIGI/TOMMASO

We mustn't take up any more class
time. We'll discuss your letter in
my private study when class is
over, Giulianna.

STEFANO/GIOVANNI

Oh, my son Luigi, how I wish I was there with you! I do, I do, I do!

DIRETTORE

Take your hands off Giulianna! None of this happened! It's all lies!

PORTULANO/GINA

It's all I can do, daughter, to stop Luigi's father from rushing to Rome to participate in that orgy.

DIRETTORE

Orgy? Stop this, all of you!

SISTER

I can't find any of what they say in Antonietta's script, Signore. They're definitely making it all up themselves.

DIRETTORE

Just as she made up everything in her script. No wonder the patients are confused. Get back to my script immediately.

Luigi/Tommaso picks up the Direttore's script.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

In future, before such nonsense is deposited upon my lectern, remember, I am a respectable, married man with a family. To be exposed to such infantile drivel is insulting.

FLORES/ENZO

But your wife has locked herself and the children behind darkened drapes, Luigi. She knows nothing.

DIRETTORE

A temptation for any man! You see how he is tempted?

SISTER

Would you be tempted, Signore?

DIRETTORE

Of course not! Nor was Luigi!
Antonietta, follow my stage
directions!

OLD ANTONIETTA

I refuse to participate in this
idiocy. This is not my Luigi.
He's not even a human being.

PORTULANO/GINA

Come, Antonietta, let father and
daughter spy upon him.

OLD ANTONIETTA

When did that happen? Never!

DIRETTORE

In Pirandello's short story, "The
Man With a Flower in His Mouth,"
the wife spies on her husband.

SISTER

Why did the man have a flower in
his mouth?

DIRETTORE

Because . . . It's not important,
Sister! Concentrate on what's
before you! Look at that! Father
and daughter, creeping around,
spying upon an innocent young man!
Well done, Gina. You make this so
believable.

OLD ANTONIETTA

You do your work well, Gina. Our
Direttore thinks you are my father.
Deceive him, deceive us all,
deceive yourself.

DIRETTORE

Brava, brava!

ANTONIETTA

Deceive yourself! Play their game!
Be who they want you to be! And
what of your story? What will they
write of you?

Gina stops and stares at Antonietta.

DIRETTORE

Continue Luigi.

LUIGI/TOMMASO

What would my wife think of such a letter? She is very jealous, you know.

He drops the Direttore's script.

LUIGI/TOMMASO (CONT'D)

And, as we know from our reading, consuming jealousy...

SISTER

. . . destroys the lives of both guilty and innocent. I've learnt your theme. Isn't that clever of me, Signore?

DIRETTORE

Are those words in her script?

SISTER

No.

DIRETTORE

Tommaso is quoting my theme. The one I said a short time ago.

SISTER

In your script, Signore?

DIRETTORE

No, Sister, not in my script! In real life!

SISTER

Your script, her script, real life. How does Tommaso remember which is which?

LUIGI/TOMMASO

"Each one creates his own reality to be respected before God."

DIRETTORE

I didn't write that.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Nor did I, Signore. Those are the words of Luigi, the real Luigi. "Each one creates his own reality to be respected before God." Not so, husband.

(MORE)

OLD ANTONIETTA (CONT'D)

What of my reality, the one I lived, the one I continue to live, the one you and others created for me?

DIRETTORE

Stop babbling, Antonietta. Get back to my script.

OLD ANTONIETTA

No. It's time to end this. No script tells the truth. Truth is a shadow we can never grasp. That much you have proven.

DIRETTORE

Nonsense! We'll finish rehearsing my script. It will be performed before the Governor and Trustees at Easter or you will all be . . .

Tuzza/Young Antonietta screams.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

Now what?

SISTER

Antonietta sees Luigi flirting with a schoolgirl.

DIRETTORE

Luigi flirting with a--? She never saw him!

SISTER

Did they meet in a secret place?

DIRETTORE

They never met. It's a fabrication. Probably from Antonietta's script.

SISTER

No, Signore.

DIRETTORE

If it is not in my script, it's not true. Tuzza, stand here. Luigi, up on the chair. Flores and you three are off. Read your lines.

BSCK TO PAST

PIRANDELLO APARTMENT.

INT. SMALL LIVING ROOM.

Luigi confronts Antonietta.

LUIGI

Have you reason to suspect me,
Antonietta? No. I go to college
taking only enough money for bus
fare and a pack of cigarettes.

He paces the floor.

LUIGI (CONT'D)

I have neither the time, money nor
inclination for affairs, especially
with one of those frivolous
students I teach. Your suspicions
are groundless. Have I ever
betrayed you with another? Never.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Patients increasingly disturbed.

OLD ANTONIETTA

End this foolishness, Signore.
Truth or fiction--only God knows.

DIRETTORE

I've been patient long enough,
Signora Pirandello. But even I
have my limits. Since all of you
refuse to follow my script, our
guests will again hear the nuns
singing at Easter. You will all be
locked in your rooms without food
until the Governor has left!
Sister, I'll be in my office!

OLD ANTONIETTA

Signore, you've forgotten my file
and the official biography.

DIRETTORE

Give them to me.

Antonietta holds up the file and book.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Here she lives, the Antonietta of the official biography. She'll remain long after I'm gone. She'll walk the dusty streets of Agrigento past the whitewashed house that was my home. She'll lift the black iron latch on the door of the convent of San Vicenza. She'll marry Luigi Pirandello and have children and... Does she have grandchildren, Signore?

DIRETTORE

Give me those.

OLD ANTONIETTA

She'll walk the streets of Rome with her playwright-husband. Now both fictions.

She throws the file and book at the Direttore's feet.

OLD ANTONIETTA (CONT'D)

I release her.

BACK TO THE PAST

STREET OF ROME. DAY.

Luigi and Ricardo walk along the street. Antonietta shuffles behind, muttering and crying to herself.

Ricardo carries a suitcase.

RICARDO

It is time to release yourself from this torture, my friend. She lives in her own private world, trapped like a character inside her drama, unable to release herself. You are now with someone who shakes the foundations, the logic of the whole structure of everything you've built in and around yourself.

Luigi hangs his head.

RICARDO (CONT'D)

Your art will rise like the Phoenix out of the ashes.

(MORE)

RICARDO (CONT'D)

Your characters wait, like puppets,
hanging on a wall, waiting for
someone to move them and make them
talk.

You will write of madness of those who,

EXT. ENTRANCE TO THE SANTA MARIA DELLA PIETA ASYLUM.

The men stop, waiting for Antonietta to catch up.

She looks up at the gates. Screams. Struggles.

LUIGI

You need rest, Antonietta. Rest
under the care of the best medical
doctors.

ANTONIETTA

No, husband! Not this place!

LUIGI

A few days rest, wife. That's all.

Two attendants open the gates. Hold Antonietta.

Ricardo hands the suitcase to the attendants.

Antonietta is led into the asylum.

Screams of patients from inside.

Luigi and Ricardo walk away.

RICARDO

If only you could see in advance
all the good that can come from the
harm you think you are doing. You
are free to write your greatest
work.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Old Antonietta faces the patients.

OLD ANTONIETTA

And you, my actors, I free you.
Set aside all scripts, all stories.
Do you hear that Tuzza, Giulianna,
Tommaso? I release you.

Gina stares at Old Antonietta.

GINA

Release us to what?

OLD ANTONIETTA

Outside these walls, people speak of us, Gina. We cannot stop them. We must find our peace here, within these walls.

GINA

Here? What peace is there for us, locked inside these walls?

Tommaso panics. Rushes at the exit. Enzo restrains him.

TOMMASO

No walls! Not for Tommaso! Not locked away inside walls!

OLD ANTONIETTA

Come to me, Tommaso. I'll teach you to live freely in this place.

ENZO

Free? In here? The idiot's locked up like you, Antonietta.

SISTER

Signore, Enzo is hurting Tommaso!

DIRETTORE

No. They're still acting. Probably a scene from Antonietta's script. The fight scene from the end of Henry the Fourth. She's completely confused. She thinks this fight scene happened in real life. Very well, go ahead and finish off your little drama. No one will ever see it.

GIULIANNA

Tommaso the madman, all locked up. How brave you are, Enzo.

OLD ANTONIETTA

Don't listen to her, Tommaso! Come to me!

GIULIANNA

Protect me, Enzo. He wants to tear my clothes off! You don't want him to do that, do you?

ENZO

Get away from me! I need the
strait-jacket.

DIRETTORE

Straitjacket? No. In Pirandello's
play it was a dagger. But, if
Antonietta needs a straitjacket for
her little fiction, Sister may give
it to you.

Sister hands Enzo the strait jacket.

BACK TO THE PAST

INT. THEATRE.

Theatre empty except for Luigi and DIRECTOR sitting near the
front of the stage.

Onstage Henry IV.

Ricardo as Henry IV, grabs ACTRESS playing Frida.

He laughs manically.

BACK TO THE ASYLUM. FUTURE.

Giulianna steals Tommaso's drawing pad. He fights loose and
rushes after Giulianna.

DIRETTORE

It's Henry the Fourth attempting to
capture Frida, the ingénue...

TOMMASO

Stay with me!

OLD ANTONIETTA

Come to me, Tommaso!

SISTER

I think he's the real Tommaso,
Signore, not Luigi or Henry...

Tommaso lunges at Giulianna.

TOMMASO

Your hair will not turn grey, your
firm breasts will not sag...

DIRETTORE

Don't be fooled, Sister. It's all
a figment of her imagination I tell
you...

TOMMASO

Wrinkles will not line your face...

OLD ANTONIETTA

This is no fiction, Signore. Stop
them, I beg you.

TOMMASO

Stay with me!

Giulianna clings to Enzo.

GIULIANNA

I don't want to stay with you! I
want to grow old with Enzo!

Enzo tries to control Tommaso while struggling with
Giulianna.

ENZO

You're not helping, Giulianna. Get
away!

TOMMASO

I'll give you eternal youth...

DIRETTORE

Definitely Henry the Fourth. You
can't fool me, Antonietta.

OLD ANTONIETTA

This is not my play. Stop them,
Signore.

DIRETTORE

They've practiced well, Sister.

Sister is frantically checking both scripts.

SISTER

I don't remember practicing this,
Signore.

TOMMASO

To stay like this forever. No
time, no walls...

GIULIANNA

Tommaso the madman all locked up!

Tommaso wraps his arms around Giulianna trying to quiet her.

TOMMASO
No! Not locked up!

GIULIANNA
Tommaso the madman! All locked up!
Help me, Enzo, help!

Enzo tears Tommaso away and struggles to put the strait-jacket on him.

OLD ANTONIETTA
I'm begging you to stop them,
Signore.

SISTER
Listen to her, Signore.

DIRETTORE
You'd like that, wouldn't you? I
get caught up in your little drama,
and then suddenly the action stops
and everyone points the finger at
me and laughs. I become the big
joke.

As Enzo and Tommaso continue to struggle, Giulianna stands over the pair laughing hysterically.

TOMMASO
No more eternity! You're time's
whore now!

The arm of the strait-jacket tightens around Tommaso's throat causing him to thrash about even more.

Sudden stop. Tommaso stops struggling.

Enzo releases the dead Tommaso into Giulianna's arms.

DIRETTORE
Bravo! Very convincing! And a
'Pieta' at the end! Next time,
Tommaso, more shuddering as Enzo
tightens his grip around your
throat. Then, as you are released
into Giulianna's arms, your head
and arm should rise slowly upward
to the heavens. Like this.

SISTER
It's definitely not her script,
Signore!

DIRETTORE

It's from her husband's play! I told you: the lover is killed! But it's with a knife, Enzo!

OLD ANTONIETTA

Fool! Whose figment is this dead man, Senor Direttore? Yours?

DIRETTORE

Ha! Watch, everyone! I shall perform the raising of the dead. Tommaso, you can get up now! Tommaso, get up! I order you!
(beat)
Let me see her script, Sister.

SISTER

(shaking her head.)
It's not there, Signore.

DIRETTORE

You mean he's really—. No! What were you doing, Enzo?

ENZO

Protecting Giulianna, Signore.

DIRETTORE

From what? Did you think Tommaso would harm her? You must be mad!

ENZO

Mad? No, Signore.

DIRETTORE

What am I going to tell the police? The Governor?

ENZO

Tell him, Giulianna! Tell him Tommaso was attacking you! It was my job to defend you. Tell him!!

GIULIANNA

Tommaso? Attack me? No! He was your rival for my love.

ENZO

No, Signore I don't love Giulianna.

GIULIANNA

He was the painter, I was his model. That's all.

ENZO

I was defending her.

GIULIANNA

"Two feet at all times, Tommaso."

ENZO

You can't believe I killed him deliberately.

DIRETTORE

Tommaso is dead and I must account for it!

Giulianna wraps herself around Enzo.

GIULIANNA

You must tell everyone you were a man driven mad with love. Then you can stay here with me forever.

ENZO

No... out there, beyond these walls... there is freedom... friends... a fiancée...

Giulianna comforts him.

GIULIANNA

Out there are police, judges and prisons. Here, there is life and me. Come, Enzo. We're here together, forever.

OLD ANTONIETTA

I warned you, Enzo.

ENZO

No!

DIRETTORE

Go to my office and wait, Enzo!

Enzo exits.

Giulianna chases after him.

GIULIANNA

I'll stay with you, Enzo!

DIRETTORE

What a mess! In half-an-hour we'll have the police crawling all over the place. And what are we to do with the body? What a disaster! Get to your rooms! All of you!

SISTER

I kept warning you, Signore. You wouldn't believe me.

The Direttore confronts Antonietta.

DIRETTORE

If you weren't mad, Antonietta, I'd suspect you of deliberately planning this to dishonor me and this institution.

He exits.

DIRETTORE (CONT'D)

God in heaven! And to think I've lost a whole day because of this, a whole day!

Antonietta looks at the body of Tommaso.

OLD ANTONIETTA

No more walls. Not for Tommaso.

Sister ushers all of the patients out.

Only Tuzza lingers behind with Antonietta.

OLD ANTONIETTA (CONT'D)

You are old, Antonietta. Forty years, half a life-time, here in the Santa Maria della Pieta Asylum. Life drifts away, quietly drifts away.

Tuzza walks forward and stares at the camera.

OLD ANTONIETTA (CONT'D)

No, child, we have no audience. We are alone. Out there, their Antonietta still rages through the streets of Rome, tearing at her hair and talking with shadows. Their Luigi follows, tears in his eyes, his schoolmaster's cloak gusting behind him, his writings flying in the wind.

(MORE)

OLD ANTONIETTA (CONT'D)

They won't die. Ever.

(beat)

And the real Antonietta? What of
her? She sits within these walls,
waiting waiting.

Camera pulls back.

INT. HALLS OF ASYLUM.

Rooms in which patients scream.

EXT. ASYLUM.

Gates close.

FADE OUT.