

# **DOG AND CROW**

**A Play by Michael Springate**

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## **SCENE ONE**

*A railway station, Italy, early 1930's.  
A man is barking. A woman stops to watch.*

GRAZIA

What are you doing?

ANTONIO

I'm barking.

GRAZIA

I know that! Why?

ANTONIO

To show that it's not natural,  
that I'm not a dog.

GRAZIA

I thought maybe you wanted me  
to throw you some spare change,  
a few pennies to watch a man grovel.

ANTONIO

I don't beg.

GRAZIA

A dog that barks and doesn't beg?

ANTONIO

I'm not a dog.

GRAZIA

Not yet, but you are practicing to become one.  
Or perhaps you want to show the public that you're crazy.

ANTONIO

If they think a man barking is crazy, then they are asleep.  
So now I have two reasons to bark, first I should wake the public,  
and second...

*He wavers in his thoughts, distracted.*

GRAZIA

When was the last time you ate?

*Ezra and Dorothy are seen passing to catch a train.*

ANTONIO

I am dizzy because I am standing at a great height,  
far below me, catching trains, wearing hats, kissing...  
You ask why I bark, for the price of a meal I'll tell you.  
Buy me a meal and I'll tell you why I bark

## **SCENE TWO**

*On the train.*

EZRA

Morte gentil, rimedio d'cattivi  
Merze merze, a man glunte ti chieggo,

Viemmi a veder, o prendimi, che peggio  
Mi face Amor che miei spiriti vivi.

I'm having trouble translating this one.  
It's meaning resides in the intangibles.

DOROTHY

Why do you say that?

EZRA

The words are simple, simple enough,  
but the voice which places them just so,  
inflects them just so, makes them cohere...  
That's the hard part, making it cohere.

DOROTHY

The landscape is so beautiful,  
an horizon gently appearing,  
gently disappearing.

EZRA

It doesn't so much elude me as...  
perhaps it eludes me.

DOROTHY

What eludes you?

EZRA

His intentions.  
His intentions elude me.

DOROTHY

Don't stop reading. I enjoy it.

EZRA

Son consumati e spenti si che quivi,  
Dov'io staba gioiso, pra m'avveggio  
In parte lasso la dov'io possegui  
Pene e dolor, e'n pianto vuol ch'arrivi,

E molto maggior mal, s'esser piu puote.  
Morte, or e il tempo, che valer mi puoi  
Di tormi da le man di tal nimico.

Aime lasso, quante volte dico:  
Amor, perche fai mal sol pure a'tuoi,

Com'fa quel de l'inferno, che percuote?

*Overlap into scene three.*

### **SCENE THREE**

*Antonio and Grazia in a small crowded cafe.*

ANTONIO

If it was my cafe I wouldn't serve us.  
I certainly wouldn't serve me.  
Not unless we showed our money first.

GRAZIA

I know the cook.

ANTONIO

It helps, it helps.

GRAZIA

Have you ever read this?

ANTONIO

It's a newspaper.

GRAZIA

Have you ever read it?

ANTONIO

I don't think so.

GRAZIA

Can you read?

ANTONIO

Slowly, very slowly.

GRAZIA

What do you do?

ANTONIO

I'm learning Latin.

GRAZIA

How are you learning Latin if you can't read?

ANTONIO

I look at the words carved in the buildings.  
I look at the letters, then I ask the people  
who pass by what the words mean.  
That is how I am learning Latin.

GRAZIA

Do you work?

ANTONIO

Soon, soon.

GRAZIA

Soon?

ANTONIO

I left the South two years ago.  
After a while I found a job at Fiat.  
My wife and child still live in the South,  
I send them money.

GRAZIA

Recently? Have you sent them money recently?

ANTONIO

Soon. You'll see. I'll find something

GRAZIA

Were you fired?

ANTONIO

Why are you asking all these questions?

GRAZIA

It's not a lot of questions.

ANTONIO

They serve us food.  
You say it's because you know the cook.  
How do you know the cook?

GRAZIA

We work together.

ANTONIO

Doing what?

GRAZIA

Political work.

ANTONIO

What does that mean?

GRAZIA

We belong to the same party.

ANTONIO

A secret party?

GRAZIA

Illegal, not secret.  
There's a difference.

ANTONIO

I understand. You have secret meetings  
to discuss how not to get caught at secret meetings.

GRAZIA

Exactly.

ANTONIO

You print a newspaper?

GRAZIA

Yes.

ANTONIO

You don't believe in what we're told?

GRAZIA

Do you?

ANTONIO

I don't know. I try to sniff out the truth.

GRAZIA

Very scientific.

ANTONIO

Why do I think your newspaper  
says the same thing over and over?

GRAZIA

If the crimes are repeated  
the analysis should be also.

ANTONIO

Nothing is going to change.

GRAZIA

To those who hunt us nothing is changing.  
To those who need us we are getting stronger.

ANTONIO

You're an idiot.

GRAZIA

Then you won't help?

ANTONIO

You haven't asked.

GRAZIA

I'm asking.

ANTONIO

What exactly do you want me to do?

GRAZIA

Help in distribution.

ANTONIO

Why should I help you?

GRAZIA

The paper is printed in the country.  
It gets brought to a depot in the city  
which changes as often as we can.  
From there it has to be brought in small bundles  
to certain factories, churches, houses.

ANTONIO

Cafes?

GRAZIA

A few.

ANTONIO

Why do you trust me?

GRAZIA

You have nothing to lose,  
in our eyes that makes you valuable.

ANTONIO

I have nothing to lose.

## **SCENE FOUR**

*Benito Mussolini and Ezra Pound, Rome 1993.*

BENITO

I have been told that you are a distinguished man of letters,  
that your work has had international influence.  
It is a pleasure to meet you.

EZRA

It was kind of your cultural offices to arrange this interview.

BENITO

My offices indicate that you have played  
a significant role in the world of English writing

EZRA

Perhaps I have some influence, these things are hard to say.

BENITO

It is always difficult to initiate change.

EZRA

It was less difficult when I was younger.  
I was more certain of success when I was  
less certain of what I was doing.

BENITO

You also translate?

EZRA

Yes.

BENITO

From Italian?

EZRA

Increasingly. I have just finished a translation of the complete works of Cavalcanti.

BENITO

The Renaissance.

EZRA

Early Renaissance.

BENITO

Yes. History will look on that period as only one of the Italy's great accomplishments. Do you enjoy living here?

EZRA

I was born in the USA, emigrated to England, moved to France and settled in Italy. Some would call it a logical progression.

BENITO

You show a quick wit.

EZRA

I like plain talk.

BENITO

So do I. I consider it a virtue.  
You have asked to present a submission.

EZRA

There are a few matters of importance  
I have long wanted to bring to your attention.  
This is an eighteen-point memorandum outlining  
certain contemporary ideas on economic policy.

BENITO

So many, when discussing money matters,  
never consider the possibilities of will,  
a disciplined national will.

EZRA

That is why Italy is being so closely watched.  
You are not afraid to make changes. To choose.

BENITO

It's rare, isn't it, a government not afraid of governing?  
Strikes were crippling the country, we re-organized the unions.  
Why not? It was for the good of all. I believe in the good of all.  
We have made Italy internationally competitive, respected.  
We have created order from chaos. Not everyone accepts it.  
They prefer to hide behind concepts from the last century--  
bourgeois, proletariat. They don't realize that upon the ashes  
of the World War a new society is being built.  
We live in a very exciting time, Mr. Pound.

EZRA

I think your struggle quite comparable  
to that of the founding fathers of America.  
You remind me of President Jefferson, a man committed  
to sound economics as the basis of social order.

BENITO

It's not the first time I have heard that comparison.  
An editorial in The New York Times made a similar comment.

EZRA

I see you pay close attention to details.

BENITO

An editorial in The New York Times is not a detail.  
The foreign perception of Italy is important.  
For too long the English speaking world  
has perceived my country through British eyes.  
That is changing. Perhaps you noticed  
that it was your kind American ambassador  
who wrote the introduction to my autobiography.

EZRA

I had noticed.

BENITO

A generous introduction. Generous, but true.  
I was born poor. I am not ashamed of it.  
But here I now stand, head of my country,  
proof that change is possible.

EZRA

It's with faith in change  
that I offer this memorandum.

BENITO

When time permits I will consider it carefully.

EZRA

I have brought something else, a draft of the thirty cantos,  
the beginning of my major work as a poet,  
I would be honoured if you would accept this copy.

BENITO

Tell me, how is it that a recognized man of letters  
is so concerned with economics?

EZRA

Aren't they related? Isn't it all a part  
of a man putting his thoughts in order?

BENITO

And why should a man put his thoughts in order?

EZRA

Isn't it the responsibilities of those  
who are capable of it?

BENITO

Do you often answer one question with another?

EZRA

Yes.

BENITO

Then permit me one in return.  
These poems of yours, are they written  
to stir the enthusiasms of the people?

EZRA

I don't write for those who despair.

BENITO

Entertaining.  
A very entertaining distinction.  
Not for those who despair.

EZRA

I think writing should be useful.

BENITO

Yes, so do I. Useful.  
I'm glad to receive your works.  
I hope you will continue to correspond  
with our cultural offices.  
Exchanges such as these can only increase  
understanding between our peoples.

EZRA

Perhaps we could correspond directly,  
there are so many thoughts...

BENITO

If you wish...of course.  
My door is always open.

EZRA

I appreciate, I do appreciate  
your time.

*Exit Ezra Pound. Enter Claretta Petacci.*

CLARETTA

Are all your conversations so boring?

BENITO

Most of them. It was kind of you  
not to enter before it was over.

CLARETTA

You said I could use your private entrance.

BENITO

Did I say that?

CLARETTA

You enjoy being surprised.  
But you always say the same things  
in your interviews. Why?

BENITO

You don't know?

CLARETTA

I wouldn't have asked.

BENITO

To succeed you don't need many thoughts,  
just a few infinitely repeated.

CLARETTA

It's not the first time you've said that, either.

BENITO

You asked. It helps, too,  
if you keep the ideas simple.

CLARETTA

A disciplined national will.

BENITO

Claretta, leave me alone.  
I'm working. This is a working day.

CLARETTA

Are you angry I came in?

BENITO

Have you ever seen me angry?  
Stern, perhaps, impassioned, moved,  
bitter, thunderous, but angry?  
Why should a man who has everything  
be angry?

CLARETTA

That woman is outside again,  
the crazy one who claims that you  
are the father of her child.

BENITO

Is she yelling?

CLARETTA

She was. Now she's just standing quietly.

BENITO

Tell my secretary to give her some money.

CLARETTA

Not everything can be solved with money.

BENITO

I'm sure she puts on a fascinating show.  
The money can come from the cultural budget.

CLARETTA

He's an ugly child.

BENITO

She brings it with her?

CLARETTA

Him, she brings him with her.

BENITO

If it's ugly it can't be mine.

CLARETTA

Why not? She says she is not a whore  
but the mother of your child.

BENITO

I don't know the woman.  
I never saw her before she started coming.  
There are many women who fantasize  
about important men. She is...

CLARETTA

Insane?

BENITO

Yes.

CLARETTA

I believe you. She is insane. But still,  
she has her own feelings, her own world.  
Is there nothing we can do?

BENITO

Let her go to church, to those blessed fathers  
who make a virtue out of ignorance and poverty.

CLARETTA

Don't speak of the church like that.

BENITO

Don't make me laugh. You don't believe  
in religion any more than I do.

CLARETTA

They deserve respect.

BENITO

For what? Their history of lies?  
Their long and noble history of lies?

BENITO

I went to a school run by the sacred fathers.  
At meal time we were separated into tables  
depending on the fees paid by our parents,  
and then we were fed; fed accordingly,  
according to the fees. I was fed the least.  
It made no difference who was hungry,  
only who paid what. Divine rule.

CLARETTA

Benito, my little Benito.

BENITO

Yes, there is something  
you can do for me.

CLARETTA

What?

BENITO

Faith, Claretta. You need more faith,  
in this world, this world.

CLARETTA

What do you want, Benito?

BENITO

Such beautiful eyes, skin.

CLARETTA

There's more in this world than your desires.

BENITO

Claretta, come back.  
I want you to rub my forehead.  
The dome needs polishing.  
Your touch is so good.  
Why are you with me Claretta?

CLARETTA

I don't know.

BENITO

Why?

CLARETTA

I told my sister that you always  
keep a loaded gun in your pocket.  
She took it literally.

BENITO

That's not why.

CLARETTA

No.

BENITO

To be poor is to be humiliated,  
and to be with me isn't to be poor,  
is that it?

CLARETTA

Yet you try to humiliate me all the time.

BENITO

To find out why you stay.

## **SCENE FIVE**

*Antonio and Grazia at street corner.*

ANTONIO

Fides, fides.  
So many building have the word fides on them.

GRAZIA

Where are the newspapers?

ANTONIO

Fides means trust, doesn't it?

GRAZIA

The papers.

ANTONIO

The banks in particular like that word.  
High up, cut in thick stone.

GRAZIA

Where are they?

ANTONIO

Fides.

GRAZIA

How can we make the delivery?

ANTONIO

We can't.

GRAZIA

What did you do with the papers?

ANTONIO

I junked them.

GRAZIA

Where? Where did you junk them.

ANTONIO

In the sewer.

GRAZIA

Which sewer?

ANTONIO

The one closest to me at the time.

GRAZIA

You have wonderful powers of observation.

ANTONIO

I noticed I was being followed.

GRAZIA

Those papers are printed through donations  
of those who don't have pennies to spare.  
People risk their lives to get the bundle  
into your hands and you junked them  
and now think it's funny.

ANTONIO

I don't think it's funny.  
I don't think it's a tragedy either.  
They're not sacred.

GRAZIA

People learn of the present situation, the present situation,

they make decisions dependent on that knowledge.  
Their decisions count. They need our newspaper.  
Actions in the factory are coordinated by our newspaper.

ANTONIO

Each issue says the same thing.

GRAZIA

That's not true.  
I trusted you.

ANTONIO

You said I was doing fine.

GRAZIA

And now because you think you might have been followed,  
at the very first sign of...

ANTONIO

You remember you said I had nothing to lose.  
You were wrong. I have my head.  
I am not anxious to lose it.

GRAZIA

At the first sign of danger you squirm.

ANTONIO

The people in the streets have never seemed so happy.  
They are all waving flags and singing patriotic songs.

GRAZIA

People cling to what they know.  
They want to cling to what they know.

ANTONIO

And what they know is authority  
and what they want to know is success.  
Mussolini gives them both.

GRAZIA

The joys of a military victory in Africa  
will be short-lived I promise you.  
Aerial bombing of unarmed Ethiopians  
is not the resurrection of the Roman Empire.  
The people would interpret events differently  
if they had the right facts, the right analysis.

ANTONIO

That's why the newspaper.

GRAZIA

Bravo.

ANTONIO

Analysis.

GRAZIA

Yes.

ANTONIO

That's the word you use to pretend  
that the obvious doesn't exist.

GRAZIA

What's the obvious?

ANTONIO

Nothing we do makes any difference.

GRAZIA

Is that why you junked the newspapers?

ANTONIO

No.

GRAZIA

We do what we believe in.

ANTONIO

Everybody says that.

GRAZIA

I've made a terrible mistake.

ANTONIO

Grazia, you can trust me.

GRAZIA

Why? Why should I believe you?

ANTONIO

I don't have to defend myself.

GRAZIA

You no longer answer only to yourself.

ANTONIO

Then who do I answer to? To you?  
I answer to myself and that's how it's going to stay.

GRAZIA

I've made a terrible mistake.

ANTONIO

No, you didn't. You haven't.  
You just don't understand what you're doing.  
You can trust me because I trust you,  
and if I didn't trust you then no amount  
of analysis would keep me here.  
I trust you, do you understand?  
I trust you.

## **SCENE SIX**

Grazia and the Interrogator.

GRAZIA

Why are the lights so bright?

INTERROGATOR

Are they bright?

GRAZIA

Yes.

INTERROGATOR

We have nothing to hide.  
We don't mind bright lights.  
Our hands and rooms are clean.

GRAZIA

I understand.

INTERROGATOR

How do you make a living?

GRAZIA

I don't.

INTERROGATOR

You are, then, a parasite.  
Do you confess to being a parasite?

GRAZIA

How do you make a living?  
Talking to parasites?

INTERROGATOR

Finding them.

GRAZIA

And then?

INTERROGATOR

We think you are in contact with certain people  
we would like to find, certain people difficult  
to track down.

GRAZIA

I don't understand.

INTERROGATOR

Of course not. I haven't made myself clear.

GRAZIA

Why am I arrested?

INTERROGATOR

You are not arrested.  
This is a job interview.  
I am offering you a job.

GRAZIA

I'd rather beg on street corners.

INTERROGATOR

Lucrative?

GRAZIA

Educational.

INTERROGATOR

That's not where you get your money.

GRAZIA

I don't understand.

INTERROGATOR

Not yet.  
I don't expect you to understand yet.  
Have you seen this?

GRAZIA

It's a newspaper.

INTERROGATOR

Have you ever read it?

GRAZIA

I can't read.

INTERROGATOR

You can't read?

GRAZIA

Well, I can, but slowly, slowly.  
By the time I get to the end of the sentence...

INTERROGATOR

Tell me, what do you do with your time?

GRAZIA

I am trying to learn Latin.  
I look at the words carved in the buildings.  
I ask the people who pass by what they mean.  
So far I have learned that Fides means trust.

INTERROGATOR

You get foreign funding for the paper, don't you?  
We know you're funded. We also know  
that you agitate within the factories.

GRAZIA

I have never felt comfortable at job interviews.

INTERROGATOR

I have been asked to find out why certain factories  
continue to produce defective weapons. Sabotage?  
That at least is what your newspaper suggests.  
I think you can help me, and I know I can help you.  
You talk and I'll pay.

GRAZIA

You'll pay.

INTERROGATOR

You understand.

GRAZIA

I don't think so.

INTERROGATOR

This is a spoon, a small spoon.  
Very simple technology, a spoon. Simple design.  
It's easy to understand what to do with a spoon.

GRAZIA

It's good for soup.

INTERROGATOR

We agree. It's good for soup.  
A spoon isn't good for cutting, is it?  
I mean, it's not very sharp.  
And it's too small to hit you with.  
If I wanted to cut you or beat you  
I wouldn't use a spoon, would I?  
What can I do with a spoon?  
I can balance an egg on it.  
It's well designed for that.  
Or an eye.

I could balance an eye on it.

If you talk... perhaps then I could put the spoon away.  
Such a small spoon, just slip it into my pocket.

Right now I am going to relax and listen.  
You can give the names I seek,  
the information I want,  
or you can be silent...  
In which case, after a certain pause,  
I am going to take out one of your eyes.

And if you stay silent,  
I'll fill the spoon again.

You shouldn't be frightened.

If you really are a beggar  
then being blind can only help business,  
and if you aren't a beggar  
and yet tell me what I want to know  
then I will pay you for your troubles.

You see, in my own way,  
I am anxious to help the poor,  
to help the poor help themselves.

GRAZIA

I understand.

INTERROGATOR

Good.

GRAZIA

You are hungry and want to eat my eyes.

INTERROGATOR

I am a patient man, performing his job patiently.  
Isn't it nice just to sit back and look around.  
Such a clean, bright room.  
Quite a privilege, isn't it, sight?  
Not a right, a privilege.  
We shouldn't take it for granted.

*A pause. She screams as he removes her first eye.*

## **SCENE SEVEN**

*Dorothy and Ezra Pound, on the shore of Tigullio Bay.*

DOROTHY

When I first came to Italy I thought  
That to breath the same evening air and  
watch the same sun over the same water  
would somehow connect me to the ancients--  
that water, earth and air were constants,  
one had only to stand in the right place  
to sense the origin of our values.

EZRA

And now?

DOROTHY

I no longer equate an image with the eternal,  
no matter how beautiful the image,  
no matter how much I wish it would last.

EZRA

It's the aspirations which endure,  
aspirations allow the images to endure.

DOROTHY

Things change. Even hopes change.

EZRA

Once a year, it's a very ancient custom,  
the local women come here, to this bay,  
to this shore, and set lit candles on the water.  
They put them on trays and float the trays  
out with the tides. It's thought to be  
an ancient fertility rite, first associated  
with Adonis. It's a very beautiful to watch,  
the little lights like a thin red necklace  
on the black water.

And they sing, the women.

In semi-darkness, they sing.

DOROTHY

Songs to Adonis?

EZRA

No, Christian hymns.  
One tradition swallows another.

DOROTHY

Which tradition will swallow the Christian?

EZRA

A matter of some dispute, some anxiety.  
Whatever it is, the roots are already formed.  
Perhaps we are the first tiny blossoms.

DOROTHY

Is that your hope?

EZRA

I admit it.  
How often do you think I can skip this rock?

DOROTHY

I don't know.

EZRA

It's a knack, skipping rocks.  
In a way it's a picture of intelligence.

DOROTHY

Bravo!

EZRA

The mind leaps from reference to reference,  
inference to inference.

DOROTHY

When will we return?

EZRA

Return?

DOROTHY

To England. Simple England.

EZRA

Are you feeling nostalgic about England?  
Simple England?

DOROTHY

Perhaps a little.

EZRA

We left to get away from the hypocrisy.

DOROTHY

I remember.

EZRA

It's probably even worse now.

DOROTHY

At least there was Fleet Street,  
one got to read the different views.

EZRA

There was a certain chaos of strident voices,  
a certain cacophony of daily absurdity,  
captured in the headlines,  
is that what you mean?

DOROTHY

Yes. Exactly.

EZRA

Have you considered the real function  
of the so-called free press:  
not the intelligent discussion of ideas, no,  
but the creation of public hysteria  
based on meaningless scandal,  
wiping clean the memories  
of the population day by day.  
And it succeeds admirably.  
The England I remember is a country  
without a history, the only people  
who thought differently were the tourists.

DOROTHY

You make the confusion  
sound like a conspiracy.

EZRA

Not confusion, immorality.  
The English elite make a financial killing  
off the money markets, the control of credit,  
the armament industry. They're parasites.  
Usury. Medievals called it usura.  
And the free press? Not a word.

DOROTHY

You were well respected there.

EZRA

Was I?

DOROTHY

Yes.

EZRA

I was forced to beg for pennies  
writing reviews of works best forgotten  
in magazines best ignored.

DOROTHY

That's not true.

EZRA

In England, to be well respected  
isn't to be well employed. In fact,  
they are held to be mutually exclusive.  
Here my articles are published in learned journals.  
I am asked to speak at the Universities.  
I meet the Head of State.

I don't want to return.

DOROTHY

I want to go home.

EZRA

When do we admit that the present immorality  
is not a result of random activity, confusion.  
It's organized. Organized by  
certain people and, I could add,  
certain types of people.

DOROTHY

Don't you have any doubts, Ezra?

EZRA

I try to rely upon the facts.  
Given the right facts,  
an intelligent interpretation flows easily.

DOROTHY

It's hard to avoid rhetoric.

EZRA

It isn't rhetoric.

DOROTHY

I prefer the silence.

EZRA

Lethargy?

DOROTHY

Silence isn't lethargy.

EZRA

How are we to tell the difference?

DOROTHY

Why is my silence lethargy  
and your silence tranquillity?

EZRA

I didn't say that.

DOROTHY

You imply it. Ezra, did you leave  
your son and me a long time ago?

EZRA

No.

DOROTHY

Then let's go back, let's go home.  
Why are we staying?  
So that you can be closer to Olga?

EZRA

No.

DOROTHY

How am I to think otherwise?  
Have all your friends met her?

EZRA

It's not important.

DOROTHY

Ezra, our son...

EZRA

...is fine.

DOROTHY

Goes to boarding school in England.  
Your daughter, your and Olga's daughter,  
boards with a German speaking family.  
Your own children have never met.  
They speak different languages.

EZRA

I'm aware of that.

DOROTHY

I am gnawing at the hands of our son.  
I am on a beach, and every yard apart  
sits a mother with her child.  
Olga is there also, and we are all  
chewing the flesh off our children's hands,  
like dogs gnawing on bones.

The children weep,

yet we can only tell that by looking at their faces  
because we can't hear a sound.

When war breaks out I don't want to be here.  
I want us to be with our child.

EZRA

War used to follow trade paths,  
now it follows credit lines.  
If you want to avoid war, then you must  
change the financial structures.

DOROTHY

Do you need someone to run into your arms?  
I'll run into your arms.  
I'll run along the beach into your arms.

EZRA

Are you making fun of me?

DOROTHY

No. I'm trying to remind you...

EZRA

Of what, the things I used to believe?  
The person I once was?

DOROTHY

Of us. Of our family.  
Hold me, Ezra.  
I need you to hold me.

## **SCENE EIGHT**

*1939. Benito Mussolini and Claretta Petacci on a luxury traincar to Brenner Pass.*

CLARETTA

Why do we enjoy looking at horizons?

BENITO

Because they are far away,  
and what is close, hurts.

CLARETTA

Hurts?

BENITO

Here, in the head, behind the eyes, it hurts.  
Is it raining or snowing? Early for snow.  
Are we almost at the Brenner?

CLARETTA

Gray sky, pale gray mountains.

BENITO

Are we almost there? I need to know.  
Where are we? How close are we?

CLARETTA

The mountains are the size of delicate ink stains.

BENITO

You have an over-refined temperament, Claretta,  
anyone would think you had been born rich.  
If I were to look out the window  
I wouldn't think of delicate ink stains and...  
and...  
                  whatever.

CLARETTA

Oriental scrolls.  
No. You think God paints with a trowel.  
Huge black mountains against a huge white sky.

BENITO

Monumental.

CLARETTA

Very sensitive.

BENITO

Modern.  
Why do I have to go to meetings  
when the decisions are already made?  
There are no decisions. Just ratifications.  
Ratifications of previous decisions.  
Whenever I close my eyes I hear barking.

CLARETTA

Most people call it a headache.

BENITO

I have those, too.

CLARETTA

Perhaps it's a conscience.  
Have you ever considered that?

BENITO

No.

CLARETTA

Why are we persecuting the Jews?

BENITO

Why are you asking?

CLARETTA

You don't often talk about it.

BENITO

It improves our trade relations.

CLARETTA

I don't understand.

BENITO

If you have powerful friends  
it's best to walk in step.

CLARETTA

That's all?

BENITO

That's enough.  
When the English placed a trade embargo on us  
who provided us with coal? Germany.  
The majority of Italians would rather do  
without Jews than without coal.

CLARETTA

They weren't asked.

BENITO

You suggest a plebiscite,  
Jews or coal?

CLARETTA

At least then they'd know the price.

BENITO

We aren't partners with Germany for nothing.

CLARETTA

We were supposed to be partners.  
They treat us like servants.

BENITO

We have signed an agreement.

CLARETTA

He has only ever lied to us.

BENITO

So? I don't expect the truth,  
certainly not from Herr Hitler.

CLARETTA

You don't expect the truth from anyone.

BENITO

From you, Claretta, from you.

CLARETTA

Tear up the agreement.  
Throw the Pact into their faces.

BENITO

Pacts of steel aren't so easily torn.

CLARETTA

Then ignore it. It's only words.

BENITO

It isn't words. No!  
Not delicate ink stains. Geography! Land!  
If you can read the map you can read the future.  
There's a straight line between Berlin and Rome  
and around this Axis the continent spins.

CLARETTA

The churches are filled with those praying for peace.

BENITO

People are soft.

CLARETTA

They are holding midnight masses.

BENITO

They gather in buildings with high ceilings,  
talk in unison, and believe anything is possible.  
There is no limit to human stupidity.

CLARETTA

Your speeches work the same way.

BENITO

Yes, well, that's not my fault.  
They always confuse duty with divinity.  
They've gotten used to it.  
You fear war, Claretta, you shouldn't.  
Certain aims are met, certain people die.  
It's a balance sheet.

CLARETTA

For the accountants?

BENITO

Among others.

CLARETTA

Maybe the Germans are ready for war,

but we're not.

BENITO

Are they better than us?

CLARETTA

No. Not better. Just stronger.

BENITO

How is that possible, stronger but not better?

CLARETTA

We shouldn't fight.

BENITO

Why not?

CLARETTA

First, because...

BENITO

Stop! I don't trust people who count  
when they answer questions.  
First, second, third... I don't like that.

CLARETTA

People like you.  
They don't like war.

BENITO

Then they misunderstand me.  
Strength is defined by its victories.  
There is only one principle in history, it is  
to take advantage of the principles of others.  
You don't think things will stay the way they are?  
Why should anyone respect me if all I do is postpone  
the inevitable?

There will be a war.

Whether we like it or not Europe will be cut up.  
I must be at the peace table to stake my claims.  
I must earn my pair of scissors.  
True, after I am dead they will dissect my corpse.  
It is, after all, a political corpse.  
And they will find a certain rot, a certain,  
    what's the word, intangible  
        smell, traces of blood  
in the stomach, but that will mean nothing.

Dissections don't interest people, power does.  
I used to pity people, Claretta.  
I used to pity myself, too,  
a poor boy with only a labourer's future.  
That's why I was a socialist.  
When one has nothing one lives on beliefs,  
but life is too short for that.  
Pity is a false belief. It's an evil.  
It deters one from beginning the difficult climb  
over the bodies of others.

The Socialists believe in pity.  
They think about purity.  
They despair because they can't attain perfection.  
I am successful because I want power.  
The people understand.  
In their pig-headed way they understand.

Words, my Claretta, words,  
who is willing to admit the lies they are?

I admit it, and that's why the people love me.  
They trust me because they know I lie.  
When I speak into a microphone millions listen.  
Millions beneath the same sky listening

to the same voice, is that not inspiring?  
They don't want to hear the truth, sweet Claretta.  
The gift they want is the gift of vision. Vision.  
There is no greater gift that a leader can give.

CLARETTA

Maybe there won't be a war.  
They didn't fight over Czechoslovakia.  
They didn't fight over Austria.  
Why will they fight over Poland?  
Why go to war over Poland?

## **SCENE NINE**

*Dorothy and Ezra at home in Rapallo.*

EZRA

Did you listen to my broadcast?

DOROTHY

Yes.

EZRA

You have nothing to say?

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

Nothing?

DOROTHY

No.

\*\*\*\*\*

EZRA

Did you listen to my broadcast?

DOROTHY

Yes.

EZRA

It was good, wasn't it.

DOROTHY

The income helps.

EZRA

I didn't do it for the income.

DOROTHY

It's the money we're living on.

EZRA

I know that.  
You have nothing to say?

DOROTHY

No.

\*\*\*\*\*

EZRA

Did you listen to my broadcast?

DOROTHY

Yes.

EZRA

I think they're improving. More pertinent.

DOROTHY

I'm not sure I agree.

EZRA

No.

DOROTHY

No.

\*\*\*\*\*

EZRA

Did you listen to my broadcast?

DOROTHY

Yes.

EZRA

You have nothing to say?

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

Nothing?

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

Why are you being so self-effacing?

DOROTHY

Am I?

EZRA

Yes, damn it! Yes!

DOROTHY

I wasn't being self-effacing.  
I was trying to protect a small corner  
of calm in my mind.

EZRA

I see. Well, by all means, then,  
let us have quiet.

DOROTHY

What was the mood in Rome?

EZRA

Elated. The continent belongs to the axis.

DOROTHY

Not England.

EZRA

I said the continent, which doesn't include  
the odd island lying to the far Northwest.  
Besides, Churchill will be forced to resign  
and then England will recognize  
the new world order for what it is.

DOROTHY

What is it?

EZRA

A new age, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

From this war...

EZRA

Peace.

DOROTHY

From this butchery?

EZRA

A long peace, resting on new foundations.  
There is a straight line from Berlin to Rome  
and around this axis Europe is reborn.  
Modern means seeking classical ideals.

DOROTHY

I listened to your broadcasts.  
I wanted very much to listen to them.  
I was very excited, I had so many hopes  
you would... that given the opportunity you would  
say something, something inspired, noble, but...

EZRA

You didn't understand.

DOROTHY

If I didn't, who did?

EZRA

I have to assume that there are people who want  
to hear the truth, who are willing to think.

DOROTHY

Yes?

EZRA

And are capable of understanding.

DOROTHY

Ezra, please!

EZRA

I have to assume.

DOROTHY

You talk of so many things at once.  
You confuse issues, you quote from either  
ridiculous or unknown sources.  
You speak in different accents,  
slur your words, sometimes yell,  
sometimes whisper.

EZRA

I try to get my points across simply,  
with emphasis.

DOROTHY

You take all your anger,  
cut it up into little pieces  
and paste it on the airwaves.

EZRA

Analysis, not anger.

DOROTHY

Analysis for those who share your prejudices.

EZRA

I am not prejudiced.

DOROTHY

The Jews.

EZRA

The western attitude to money is all wrong.

DOROTHY

Yes? And?

EZRA

It's a Jewish attitude.

DOROTHY

Is it?

EZRA

And if you hate injustice  
then you hate that sort of thinking,  
Jewish thinking,  
and it's not only Jews who think it.

DOROTHY

You're sick.

EZRA

Don't call me sick.

DOROTHY

Mad.

EZRA

What?

DOROTHY

Mad, rabid. You hate Christianity too,  
why don't you condemn the Christians?

EZRA

What's good in Christianity derives from the Greeks,  
what's rotten stems from the Hebrews,  
you don't have to be a scholar to realize that.

DOROTHY

Foam on the mouth is not a sign of genius.

EZRA

They shoot rabid dogs.

DOROTHY

So others won't become infected.

EZRA

Why are you always calling me a failure?

DOROTHY

You speak like one.

EZRA

When I'm with you I feel like one.

You make all my thoughts appear common.

DOROTHY

They're your thoughts.

EZRA

You see what I mean?

DOROTHY

And if your thoughts are common, so what?

EZRA

So what?

DOROTHY

Yes, so what. You have common thoughts,  
common passions, common solutions to  
common problems. They are commonly wrong.

EZRA

I believe in the courage to look  
at the roots of our culture, the very roots,  
and if they are found to be rotten  
I believe in the courage to pull them.

DOROTHY

To pull them?

EZRA

There is such a thing as human choice.

We must understand and choose.

DOROTHY

How do you pull these rotten roots?  
Do we destroy everyone who wears different clothing,  
has a different place of worship?

EZRA

I am not talking about destroying people.  
I am talking about clear thinking.

DOROTHY

You are crossing the Acheron and entering hell.

EZRA

Why do you say that?

DOROTHY

You are consenting to evil.

EZRA

I have never hurt anything or anyone in my life.

DOROTHY

Except now, with the only tools you have, words.

EZRA

I should be allowed to say what I think.

DOROTHY

But other persons can't, and they can't  
because of words like yours.

EZRA

After the last war, with all its horrors and futility,  
after it had ended  
    and the maimed had returned  
and the bandages were removed leaving the permanent scars,  
and we had counted the graves of friends uselessly killed,  
    or have you forgotten them,

and when we asked who was responsible,  
what was the answer?

    Noman!

Noman built the weapons and Noman bought them.  
Noman lied about the motivations and  
Noman conspired in self-interest against  
the common good. Noman! Noman!

DOROTHY

And now you know his identity.  
A Jewish banker.

EZRA

The financial institutions built  
on Jewish attitudes, the usage of credit,  
the trade wars, the armament industries.  
God, how much more obvious can it be  
that these are not random activities?

DOROTHY

You have created a conspiracy  
and now look for a scapegoat.  
The Jews are blamed for wrongs  
for which they are not responsible.

You know that Ezra.

EZRA

I am not talking about the corner shopkeeper.  
I don't care where he prays or how he dresses.  
I am judging cultural values.

DOROTHY

There are no cultural values without people.  
You have failed, Ezra. It's a sad sight.

EZRA

Because innocent people get hurt.

DOROTHY

Get killed, yes.

EZRA

What appears as an injustice may in fact be a necessity.  
It's no use complaining about necessity.

DOROTHY

Necessity. Necessity.  
Small sibilant stutterings  
ending in a dying vowel.

EZRA

Necessity is not a trick of the tongue.

DOROTHY

You have a facility with language  
that hides a lack of insight.  
It is truly frightening.

EZRA

Why do you hate me?

DOROTHY

I don't hate you.

EZRA

You don't understand.

DOROTHY

I understand your thoughts, Ezra.  
I understand them as well as anyone,  
and I forgive them.

EZRA

I detest you for saying that.

DOROTHY

Perhaps you are right.  
Perhaps they shouldn't be forgiven.

EZRA

This war will be short. It will be short, Dorothy,  
because the German and Italian societies are healthier  
than the English. There has been less decay.  
Less moral rot.

## **SCENE TEN**

*Antonio and his brother Pietro. Farm. Southern Italy.*

ANTONIO

How did that thin dried-up old goat of a mother  
give birth to an ox like you?

PIETRO

I was smaller at the time.

ANTONIO

Where's Elena?

PIETRO

She's out with the child  
She'll be back soon.

ANTONIO

She knew I was coming?

PIETRO

Yes, yes, we heard.  
It's been a while Antonio.  
We haven't seen you for a while.

ANTONIO

Time passes. Like piss under a bridge.  
I sent money whenever I could.

PIETRO

Lately? I haven't seen any money from you  
for what seems like a long time.  
What have you been doing?

ANTONIO

I've been writing for a newspaper

PIETRO

They pay?

ANTONIO

Well...

PIETRO

What newspaper?

ANTONIO

A small one.  
It's time, you know,  
Elena, I, the boy ...  
I want to come home.

PIETRO

Good, good.

ANTONIO

Nothing's wrong? The boy...

PIETRO

No, no, healthy.  
My God, he eats and fights,  
a wonderful boy.

ANTONIO

The paper I work for, it's a communist paper.

PIETRO

Communist?  
You believe in God? You believe in land?  
You believe in God, you believe in land,  
and you work for the communists.

ANTONIO

When the army comes down to the south who is in it?  
The unemployed from the north.  
And when the army breaks the strikes in the north, who is in it?  
Peasants from the south who have lost their land.

PIETRO

So? If you don't have land or a job  
it's best to join the army. Besides,  
no-one should be allowed to strike.

ANTONIO

What do you know about it, asslicker?

PIETRO

The child, you know, meets other children, plays.

ANTONIO

Good, that's good

PIETRO

Sometimes he calls me papa.

ANTONIO

You don't tell him that you're his uncle?

PIETRO

He thinks his uncle ... he thinks that his uncle  
is coming for a visit, today. He thinks his uncle  
is coming today for a short visit.  
He's really looking forward to seeing you.

ANTONIO

Bastard! Bastard!

PIETRO

Do you want me to break you neck?

ANTONIO

Where's my wife?

PIETRO

Later. She'll be here later.

ANTONIO

You sleep with her?  
Brother? You sleep with her?

PIETRO

No.

ANTONIO

A stupid ox that can't even lie properly.

PIETRO

Don't call me stupid. She chose.

ANTONIO

Ignorant peasant.

PIETRO

It was your idea to go north, not mine.  
It was you who lost your job, not me.  
It was you who stopped sending money.  
I've worked all that time, day in, day out,  
rain, hot, cold. Years!  
You want to know where you get arms like this?  
Working, or have you forgotten?  
Where were you? Where was the first born?  
Denying God. Denying the right to own  
our father's farm. Fighting for the enemy.  
You are the ignorant peasant.

ANTONIO

Let me go. Let go of me.  
What did you and Elena decide?

PIETRO

We love you like a family loves an uncle,  
that's all. It's better for everyone.

ANTONIO

For everyone?

PIETRO

It's a fact, that's all.  
Why discuss questions that don't have answers?  
You can't stay long.

## **SCENE ELEVEN**

*Dorothy and Ezra, simple dinner with candles.*

DOROTHY

Before the war friends seemed to find their way,  
but obviously...

EZRA

This is civilized.

DOROTHY

I thought we could pretend  
we were having guests.

EZRA

At some point life will return to normal.

DOROTHY

We have no salt, and the vegetables  
certainly aren't fresh.

EZRA

It's not important. A small sacrifice.

DOROTHY

I know.

EZRA

America will regret its decision one day.  
They'll wish they had sided with Berlin and Rome  
to defeat Moscow. Why is America fighting  
on the side of Moscow? It's so stupid.  
Communism is such an aberration of the spirit.  
You would like to discuss something else.

DOROTHY

Yes.

EZRA

Did you listen to the radio?

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

You haven't been listening to the radio?

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

Protecting that small corner of your mind?

DOROTHY

Ezra, I want tonight to be special.  
I am trying to make it special.

EZRA

Yes. I suppose.

DOROTHY

You could read aloud later.  
It's been awhile.

EZRA

I don't know.

DOROTHY

Or I could read aloud.  
Why not? Cavalcanti's sonnets?  
You're always amused by my Italian accent.

EZRA

That's true. Your inability with foreign  
languages has always amazed me.

DOROTHY

I amaze you. That's good.

EZRA

Spoons quietly clinking.  
Our conversation.

I have so much to say, to drive into those soft fuzzy heads,  
so many hard facts that need hammering in.  
When I prepare my notes I can't type them fast enough,  
I get frustrated changing paper, changing typewriter ribbons.

DOROTHY

It's an anxious time.

EZRA

Goddamn Roosevelt! His ignorance.  
Why is America in this war for Christ's sake?  
You think it has something to do with democracy I suppose?

DOROTHY

I never said that.

EZRA

You agree with our son who said that.  
Did anyone vote for this war? The last war?  
Will anyone vote for the next war?

DOROTHY

Ezra, our son...

EZRA

... Is fine. I'm sure he's fine,  
tucked into crisp sheets in England.

DOROTHY

You don't know Ezra.

EZRA

There are things we each don't know.

DOROTHY

What are you saying?  
What are you trying to say?

EZRA

Nothing. What are you trying to say?

DOROTHY

Our son...

EZRA

Is fine. I said so. He's fine.  
You haven't listened to the BBC.

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

They read out a list.

DOROTHY

What are you talking about?

EZRA

They read out a list, now that America is in the war, officially in, so to speak, now that America and Italy are officially enemies, someone has been paid to draw up a list.

DOROTHY

Of what?

EZRA

A fairly short list.

DOROTHY

Please, tell me.

EZRA

My broadcasts...

DOROTHY

Yes.

EZRA

I have been indicated for treason by the American government.

DOROTHY

What?

EZRA

My name was on a list.  
They say my broadcasts  
aid the enemy, that I am a traitor.

DOROTHY

Your broadcasts are incomprehensible.

EZRA

Clearly not to some.  
It means if I should ever be caught  
by the Allies then I would be tried.

DOROTHY

For what you say.

EZRA

Yes, yes.  
I have a right, a sacred right to free speech.  
I am invited for my opinions, *my* opinions.  
No one tells me what to say or how to say it.

DOROTHY

No-one need tell you anything.  
You just happen to say all the right things.

EZRA

How could any American jury find me guilty?  
I'm defending the ideals behind the American constitution.  
That's what I'm defending.

DOROTHY

Is it?

EZRA

Yes.

DOROTHY

How?

EZRA

I am an individual willing to take responsibility for my thoughts.  
My conscience, my individual conscience, is guided  
by an understanding of human history.  
I choose to be guided by that understanding.  
I am Emerson. I am Thoreau. I am Whitman.

DOROTHY

I see.

EZRA

Do you.

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

Why not?

DOROTHY

If you don't choose compassion  
then no conscience exists at all.

EZRA

No conscience? No conscience?

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

You know what I think?  
The Anglo-Saxon race has become so tied down  
with silly ideas of equality and pity  
that it has damn well worn down its own genius,  
its own will to survive.

DOROTHY

Don't talk to me like that. If you want to speak  
like that on the radio, go ahead! Go ahead!  
But please don't talk to me like that!  
I won't stand for it! I won't put up with it!

EZRA

There is a natural hierarchy of ability, in individuals and races.  
If you block that then everything else goes to hell.  
That's a fact, not a choice.  
And it becomes all too apparent in free societies.  
You hate the logic of my arguments, don't you?  
It means you have to give up your British hypocrisy,  
your false sense of pity.

DOROTHY

A natural hierarchy? Of ability?  
And should we be bred like cattle?  
The best heifer? The best bull?

EZRA

Courtship is a slow form of eugenics,  
choosing the appropriate mate.  
But there must be better means.  
Less romantic. More scientific.

DOROTHY

I hate you! I hate you, Ezra.  
I spit! I spit at you!  
Our son is not an example of a race.  
He's a boy, just a boy.  
Our son is a boy we conceived in gentleness,  
who was born with joy.  
And he has written to us.  
He has written...

EZRA

What did he say?

DOROTHY

He has joined the American army.  
He expects to be sent to the European front.

EZRA

Why did he do a damn-fool thing like that?  
Why is he risking his life for the kike  
money merchants of London?  
Why is he such a fool?

DOROTHY

Read the letter.  
It's quite... eloquent.

EZRA

Give it to me. Good.  
I'm going to burn it.  
I'm going to burn this damn thing.  
I don't ever want to see it.

*He burns the letter.*

Good. Good.

DOROTHY

This is civilized, isn't it?  
Is that what you said earlier? Civilized?  
Tell me, is there any sight more horrifying  
than this civilization?  
Ezra, help me, I want to throw up.  
Oh Jesus, Ezra, I can't take it anymore.

EZRA

Dorothy, I'm sorry.  
Here's something.  
I'll wipe it up.

DOROTHY

I can't take it. I can't.  
There's no peace anywhere,  
not in the world, not in my mind.  
Oh god. It hurts.  
My whole body hurts.  
I'm not myself, I can't control...

EZRA

I know. I know.

DOROTHY

Apologize, Ezra, apologize.

EZRA

No.

DOROTHY

Admit that you're frightened.  
Admit that it comes from your fear.

EZRA

No.

DOROTHY

Admit it. Say it. Tell me.

EZRA

I can't deny what I believe.

DOROTHY

Tell me!

EZRA

No!

DOROTHY

Say it!

EZRA

No!

DOROTHY

Tell me! "I apologize. I am afraid."

EZRA

No.

DOROTHY

You are a religious man  
with a political God.  
It must be frightening.

EZRA

I must go back to Rome soon.

DOROTHY

How will you ever explain to our son?

EZRA

I won't be convicted.  
Free speech is guaranteed  
in the constitution.

DOROTHY

You've made ashes of his words.

EZRA

I'll stay the night and return to Rome tomorrow.

DOROTHY

Ashes.  
I once loved you, but now I find  
even that idea morally reprehensible.

## **SCENE TWELVE**

*Clear night. Pietro is calling Antonio in an empty field..*

PIETRO

Antonio! Antonio! Antonio!

*Antonio emerges*

ANTONIO

Why did you find me?

PIETRO

Antonio.

ANTONIO

Why?

PIETRO

I'm your brother.

ANTONIO

That's a reason?

PIETRO

Lot of stars.

ANTONIO

Each one is a bullet hole.

PIETRO

Lot of bullet holes.

ANTONIO

How's my son?

PIETRO

Your son is hungry. He's fine.  
I want to fight.

ANTONIO

You do?

PIETRO

Yes.

ANTONIO

On whose side?

PIETRO

Beside you.

ANTONIO

You don't believe what I believe.

PIETRO

So what? We share an enemy.

ANTONIO

How did you find that out?

PIETRO

Nothing has been easy.

ANTONIO

No.

PIETRO

Nothing.

ANTONIO

Nothing.

ANTONIO

How's Elena?

PIETRO

I have to piss.

ANTONIO

So go piss. You can do that by yourself.

PIETRO

There's a dead body over here.

ANTONIO

There are dead bodies everywhere.  
Piss in the other direction.  
Against the wind. Piss against the wind.

PIETRO

It's a young woman.

ANTONIO

Death has no age! No sex! Idiot!

Let him look at it. Hold it. Caress it.  
Let him love the dead. He's a Catholic.  
It's allowed. Think: he goes to the priest and says:  
"Father, I have sinned." So the priest asks:  
"How did you sin my son?" And he says:  
"I had relations with a woman, Father."  
So the priest asks: "And did you have to pay, my son?"  
And he answers: "No, I did not have to pay."

So the priest considers all this and says:  
"Well, my son, in these troubled times to love a woman  
"is not so great a sin, perhaps you can ask her to marry."  
And my brother says: "I asked, Father, I whispered in her ear,  
"marry me, marry me, but she didn't answer."

The priest now comes to his conclusion:  
"Well, my son, I see that your intentions were good,  
"and I have known many cases where woman  
"have led men into temptation. Clearly,  
"the fault is not yours. Go in peace."

What took you so long?

PIETRO

There was that dead body.  
I covered it with newspapers  
and some stones. It's sad.  
So many dead bodies.  
Antonio, I am sad so often.  
Antonio, this is the happiest  
I have been in a long time,  
looking up at the stars with you.

ANTONIO

How's Elena?

PIETRO

She died, Antonio.  
There was a riot for food.  
The police shot on us.  
The boy is with his aunt.

ANTONIO

She died.

PIETRO

Full of bullet holes.  
From our own police.  
The women were at the front,  
beating their pots, chanting  
for food, for fair prices.  
I saw her shot.  
I saw her shot so many times.  
I held her. Antonio, I held her.  
I swear to God I will kill them.  
I don't need a gun, Antonio.  
Just let me get at them.

Let me get close, I swear,  
I swear to you, Antonio.  
I held her and she was bleeding  
from so many places.  
I was trying to clean her face.  
I was licking her face.  
Let me help you, Antonio.  
There is nothing else I want to do.  
We buried her, your boy and I.  
You'd like him, Antonio.  
He works hard.

## **SCENE THIRTEEN**

*Benito Mussolini and Claretta Petacci. The actors  
play it with almost life-size puppets of themselves. Salo, 1943.*

BENITO

Government is a technique of domination,  
I had forgotten, but I remember now.  
Perhaps it is not too late.

CLARETTA

Too late for what?

BENITO

How can you ask?

CLARETTA

For honour?

BENITO

That word.

CLARETTA

We are all living on borrowed time.

BENITO

What do you suggest?

CLARETTA

As a final gesture?

BENITO

To get control.

CLARETTA

There is nothing to be done.

BENITO

Nothing?

CLARETTA

You have been overthrown.  
It's simple.

BENITO

I was betrayed.

CLARETTA

Overthrown by your own government.  
Imprisoned by party hacks of your own choosing.

BENITO

I am free. I have been set free.

CLARETTA

By the Germans.

BENITO

With German assistance.

CLARETTA

Holed up in a resort hotel smelling of sauerkraut,  
head of a republic that doesn't exist.

BENITO

It is a disagreeable trait, isn't it,  
their love of rancid food?

CLARETTA

Colonel Dolmann has suggested  
the disarming of all Italian troops.

BENITO

Colonel Dolmann is ridiculous.

CLARETTA

Why? Our soldier defect to the partisans  
and take their weapons with them.  
Why should the Germans supply  
both sides of a civil war?

BENITO

You talk nonsense.  
You talk like a person condemned.

CLARETTA

Why are we being kept alive?

BENITO

I am an inspiration to the fighting man.

CLARETTA

You are useful for propaganda.  
Your name is useful for propaganda.  
And when a defector is captured  
he's tortured. I don't know why.  
They only tell us what we already know.  
Did you know I watch the torture?  
I expect to learn something.

BENITO

I don't watch it.  
It's disgusting.

CLARETTA

You order it.

BENITO

Not for my amusement.

CLARETTA

A technique.

BENITO

Justice must be felt to be done.  
Responsibilities aren't pleasant.  
I am fulfilling responsibilities.

CLARETTA

I used to turn my eyes but now I watch it all.  
I watch with the same feeling as at my first communion,  
when I knew something incomprehensible  
and vaguely sick and ridiculous was happening,  
but everyone was pleased to see it.  
Drink the blood. Eat the flesh. Redemption.  
That's what I'm looking for when I watch,  
that moment of redemption, and in the filth  
and pain that moment of grace, divine mercy.  
But it never comes. Not in front of me  
and not in my mind. I never see it.  
You say I am condemned.  
By who? By who am I condemned?

BENITO

I will defeat this anti-Fascist reaction.  
I can defeat it. Given a choice between communism  
and ourselves the people will always choose us.

CLARETTA

That's not the choice any more.

BENITO

I will tell them what the choice is.  
I will tell them what to think.

CLARETTA

In peace time they might listen.

In a war they know they're losing  
they make up their own minds.

### BENITO

I tell you that they will listen.  
They will see their choices, no, their one choice,  
and then they will flock to me.  
They will raise me with their voices,  
shouting in unison, ecstatic: "Viva! Viva!"  
We will sing the old songs.  
Bonfires will burn on the beaches.  
Everyone will dance with the flames.  
We will shoot those who sulk in the shadows.  
It is time to be hard, to stand erect.  
I will be hard. I will fondle the people until they are hard.  
You are not laughing. You must learn to laugh.  
We laugh so as not to be frightened.  
Claretta, my love, my mother my child, come here.  
That's it. Closer.

### CLARETTA

Do you have a camera, Benito?  
Do you know how to take pictures?  
I would like you to take my picture.  
I will stand here and smile, a slight smile  
because I don't want anyone to see my teeth.  
I hate my mouth. That's why I never smile.  
You say that it's very important to laugh.  
Laugh so as not to go crazy, but my teeth  
are rotting behind my lips.  
How can I laugh? How can I smile?  
Take my picture and make me look  
like I did when I first met you,  
when I was young and beautiful  
and almost a woman. And sign  
the back of it, and date it, and add  
some silly words. You must ratify it.  
But choose another name, Benito, another name,  
or I'll have to rip the picture up.  
I'll rip it anyway.  
There, I've ripped it.  
It falls like confetti on my shoes.

I am very happy now, here with you.  
Do you know why I am happy?  
Because the end is in sight.  
Oh, God! I want to die!  
I want everything to die!  
I want everything, everything,  
everything to die.

BENITO

You are beautiful.  
So beautiful.

CLARETTA

Not like this, Benito.  
Let's lie down.  
I will hold you softly.  
I will hold you close.

BENITO

No, I don't want that.  
I want your mouth.  
I want your mouth.  
You hate that, don't you?  
But you do it.  
That's what I want to see.  
Your self-hatred.  
Your self-hatred keeps me alive.  
Ah! Ah!!

CLARETTA

You always whimper when you come.  
You come like a little boy sniffing with a cold.

## **SCENE FOURTEEN**

*Grazia cooking at a small fire, beside railway tracks. Enter Ezra.  
The actors play it with half-sized puppets of themselves.*

EZRA

Who are you?

GRAZIA

Why do you want to know?

EZRA

You are cooking something.  
I'm hungry.

GRAZIA

You want to steal it.

EZRA

I've been walking for two days  
without food. Two days.

GRAZIA

That's not long.

EZRA

I'm following the tracks. Two days.  
I'm hoping that a train will pass.

GRAZIA

Will you get on it?

EZRA

If it goes north.  
I'm trying to get home.

GRAZIA

Why?

EZRA

The government has deserted Rome.  
The city is in chaos. The city has fallen.

GRAZIA

Is a city fallen when the rats have fled?

EZRA

It's the government which has fled.

GRAZIA

Then the city is liberated.

EZRA

It's a cold night. Clear and cold.

GRAZIA

Is anything clear?

EZRA

Blind?

GRAZIA

A blind beggar.

EZRA

It smells good.

GRAZIA

Why should I share it?  
I don't know you.

EZRA

I'm hungry.

GRAZIA

No.

EZRA

I need something to eat.

GRAZIA

Eat.

EZRA

It's good.

GRAZIA

I was sitting still and humming.  
It came up to me whining.  
It wanted a little petting, a little warmth.

I broke it's neck.

EZRA

What is it?

GRAZIA

I eat with my fingers,  
only my fingers.  
I don't need...spoons.  
Soup I drink from the bowl.  
I don't have any soup.

EZRA

What is it?

GRAZIA

No more questions. Please.  
No more. I won't answer.  
No names. I won't give names.

EZRA

What names?

GRAZIA

I hear a train. Listen.

EZRA

I hear nothing.

GRAZIA

But as you say, there are tracks.  
Perhaps a train.  
It's coming this way.  
I can hear it.  
Will you get on it?  
Let's sing. We can sing rounds.  
I start then you join in,  
or you can start, I'll join in.  
Sing. Sing.

EZRA

What are you hearing?

GRAZIA

No more questions. Please.  
No more. I won't answer.  
I don't know any names.  
I don't know any names.  
Leave a little light, please,  
a little light.

EZRA

You're mad. You must be mad.

GRAZIA

Yes, mad. Mad. Insane.  
Concentrate. Concentrate.  
The wind is singing.  
The wind and the children  
are holding hands and singing,  
among the ashes.

EZRA

A train.

GRAZIA

The labour camp trains.  
The concentration camp trains.  
The death trains.  
A system designed,  
a few orders give  
and then nothing is left.  
I see nothing.

EZRA

Apparitions.

GRAZIA

Trains. Concentrate.  
Car after car. Car after car.

GRAZIA

Supply and demand.  
Supply and demand.  
We can sing rounds.  
You begin and I join in.

EZRA

Car after car.  
Car after car.

GRAZIA

Cheap labour needed, poor bodies supplied.  
Supply and demand. Supply and demand.  
A system designed, a few orders given,  
and then nothing remains.

EZRA

Apparitions.

GRAZIA

Faces, faces on death trains.

EZRA

Car after car, car, car.

GRAZIA

No more questions. Please.  
No more. I won't answer.  
I don't know any names.  
I don't know any names.  
Leave a little light, please,  
a little light.

The wind and the children  
are holding hands and singing,  
among the ashes.

The labour camp trains.  
The concentration camp trains.  
The death trains.  
A system designed,  
a few orders given  
and then nothing is left.  
I see nothing.

EZRA

Caw! Caw! Caw.

## **SCENE FIFTEEN**

*Overlapping conversations. Ezra and Dorothy in one,  
Benito, Claretta, Antonio and Pietro in another.  
Only Benito and Claretta are played with puppets,  
still smaller than in scene fourteen or fifteen.*

EZRA

I'm afraid, Dorothy.

PIETRO

What do we do?

ANTONIO

We let him go for a walk in the woods.  
The whore can guide him.

PIETRO

He's quiet.

ANTONIO

And unexpected improvement.

DOROTHY

The American Army has landed on the coast.  
It's better to hand yourself over to them  
than to be caught by the Partisans.  
They would kill you without a trial.

EZRA

I know.

CLARETTA

You are going to shoot him.

ANTONIO

Yes.

CLARETTA

Why?

ANTONIO

Shooting him is ripping a poster off a wall.  
There is no difference.

EZRA

I want a trial. I have always believed  
that to understand something is to call it  
by its right name. Let them decide my name.

CLARETTA

You'll shoot him without a trial?

ANTONIO

The trial is over.

CLARETTA

A simple question.  
To the other one.  
You are Italian?

PIETRO

From the South.

CLARETTA

Do you feel nothing for him?

PIETRO

A desire to see him dead,  
and once dead, to see him killed again.

CLARETTA

I will walk.  
We will walk.  
Have faith, Benito.  
I have faith.  
Let's go towards the trees.  
The shade. Yes.

*They walk, Claretta turns.*

CLARETTA

No, this is wrong,  
You can't! You can't!

*Claretta is shot, Mussolini turns, is shot.  
The actors leave the puppets on stage*

EZRA

Are you all right?

DOROTHY

I'm fine.

ANTONIO

You all right?

PIETRO

I'm fine. Calm.

DOROTHY

You look pale.

EZRA

I feel pale.

ANTONIO

Put the bodies in the truck.  
We're going to Milan.

*Mussolini's and Claretta puppets are strung upside down by Pietro and Antonio.*

PIETRO

We'll hang them upside down  
as they will hang in hell.  
We'll let the wind, the rain, the birds  
clean their flesh until nothing remains  
except the bones, and the sins  
which are the marrow of those bones.

ANTONIO

You're talking like a Catholic.  
If we string them up it will be to show  
that authority can be overthrown, that's all.  
No-one is so large or powerful he can't be  
cut down and strung up.

## **SCENE SIXTEEN**

*1945. Washington, D.C., USA, Dr. Overholser, psychiatrist, and Ezra Pound are in a consulting room of St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the Criminally Insane.*

EZRA

Why should I talk to you?

DOCTOR

You don't have to.

EZRA

But you are...you want to listen to what I say.

DOCTOR

It is my job.

EZRA

Being a psychiatrist.  
And you, what brings you to the nation's capital,  
the cerebellum of the United States of America,  
the five-star ganglia of the New World?  
I know why I'm here.

DOCTOR

My name is Dr. Overholser.  
I am the director of the hospital.  
I've been asked to assist in evaluating  
your mental condition.

EZRA

Before the trial?

DOCTOR

Yes

EZRA

Before the kangaroos gather. Bad image.  
Wrong continent. Before the jackasses bray.  
The human mind is difficult to understand.

DOCTOR

We are fortunate to have such excellent tools.

EZRA

Words.

DOCTOR

Yes.

EZRA

So I have to be careful.

DOCTOR

On the contrary.  
Speak as you usually would.

EZRA

I want to defend myself at the trial.  
In court I would like to be my own counsel.

DOCTOR

The crime is considered too serious.  
You must have legal counsel.  
That is the law.

EZRA

The law must be interpreted.

DOCTOR

I believe that is why counsel is obligatory.

EZRA

I am my own judge.  
I understand the issues  
and I am my own judge.

DOCTOR

What happened after you handed yourself in?

EZRA

You know I turned myself in?

DOCTOR

Yes.

EZRA

I was an America citizen turning myself  
over to American soldiers on Italian soil.  
I expected protection.

DOCTOR

And?

EZRA

They imprisoned me.

DOCTOR

You didn't know you had  
been indicted for treason?

EZRA

I was put in a cage...a cage.

DOCTOR

Didn't you hand yourself in because  
you knew you had been indicted  
for treason by the American Government?  
Didn't you know you had been charged?

EZRA

Yes. I knew.

DOCTOR

Perhaps you were also frightened by the anti-Fascist  
reaction at the end of the war. Perhaps you were  
frightened for your own personal safety.

EZRA

No. I wasn't frightened.  
Not for my safety.

DOCTOR

It would have been normal.

EZRA

And that's what you seek, isn't it,  
the normal, the mundane, the mediocre.

DOCTOR

And after you handed yourself in?

EZRA

I was put in a cage.  
It was called the Pisan Detention center,  
but it was just a few rows of cages,  
cages without roofs.  
There were a few buildings for the guards,  
a medical dispensary.  
There was a typewriter in the dispensary.

DOCTOR

You used the typewriter.

EZRA

Yes. Not at the beginning, but eventually.

DOCTOR

What did you write about?

EZRA

I'm not sure. Purgatory,  
the beginnings of paradise.

DOCTOR

A literary vision?

EZRA

My...interpretation.  
My...fragments.

DOCTOR

You wrote in the cage?

EZRA

Mostly, and then transcribed my notes  
in the dispensary. Next to me, in another cage,  
was a black man from South Carolina.  
Such a beautiful face, a perfect African mask.  
He called me “little white mouse”

DOCTOR

Why did he call you “little white mouse”?

EZRA

He said I squeaked in my sleep,  
and that I always slept huddled in a corner.

DOCTOR

Did you mind him calling you that?

EZRA

No. When it rained we had no shelter.  
Nothing but sky over our heads.

Once I mentioned the smell of mint  
growing outside the cage.  
After it rains you can smell the mint.  
That's what gave him the idea I was killing spiders.  
If you kill spiders, he said, then it rains,  
if it rains, you smell the mint.

DOCTOR

Were you killing spiders?

EZRA

I don't know. It's hardly important.  
I suppose I killed a few.  
Boredom. I don't know.  
I didn't mutilate them.  
I didn't pull off their legs one by one,  
I just...  
In any case it doesn't cause rain.

DOCTOR

Can you describe the smell of that mint?

EZRA

It's the smell of relief.  
The scent of starting over.

DOCTOR

Do you want to start over?

EZRA

The black man from Carolina didn't.  
He said he was hoping to be convicted,  
killed and cremated all on the same day.  
I remember that clearly.

DOCTOR

It meant something to you when he said that.

EZRA

He said he didn't want to be buried  
because he'd been buried all his life,  
and he liked cremations because  
they hardly left any traces.  
I've spent so much time creating traces.

DOCTOR

The writing?

EZRA

Yes.

DOCTOR

Why was he being held in the detention center?

EZRA

Insubordination.  
I suppose you could call it that.  
He aimed a flame thrower at an officer  
who had called him a dirty lousy nigger.

DOCTOR

How long were you in the cage?

EZRA

Six months. I'm told.

DOCTOR

The reports indicate a sudden change in behaviour during your stay.

EZRA

I was afraid.  
I acted afraid.  
Sometimes.

DOCTOR

It's normal to be afraid while awaiting trial for treason. Is that what you meant when you said you were afraid?

EZRA

No.

DOCTOR

You meant something else?

EZRA

I was afraid of everything.  
Not just the future.  
I was afraid of the past.

DOCTOR

Can you continue that thought?

EZRA

No. Have you talked to Dorothy?

DOCTOR

Briefly.

EZRA

I want you to tell her something.

DOCTOR

You can tell her yourself.

EZRA

She hates me.  
You must know that.

DOCTOR

I don't think she hates you.

EZRA

Sometimes I liked the cage.  
It protected me.

DOCTOR

From?

EZRA

Others.  
I want you to tell her I'm sorry.

DOCTOR

You can tell her yourself.

EZRA

No.

DOCTOR

What are you sorry for?

EZRA

I don't know. I'm not sure.

DOCTOR

Why can't you talk to her?

EZRA

I try to talk...to her...no words.  
Tired. Tired.  
I want to yell.

DOCTOR

You want to yell at Dorothy?

EZRA

Yes.

DOCTOR

Why?

EZRA

To scream and yell.  
Because I hurt her.  
She's telling me I hurt her.  
She's telling me.

DOCTOR

Has she told you that?

EZRA

She talking to me now.  
I can hear her now, telling me.

DOCTOR

There's no-one here but us.

EZRA

They're here.

DOCTOR

What are they saying?

EZRA

I don't know.

DOCTOR

I hear only silence Mr. Pound.

EZRA

Would you close the window, Dorothy.  
The sounds are bothering me.  
I'm trying to think.

DOCTOR

Mr. Pound...

EZRA

Close the window, for Christ's sake!  
Stop that noise! Stop that!

DOCTOR

I know that you can hear me.  
I know that you understand.

EZRA

*Caw! Caw!!*  
I know exactly what I'm doing.  
I always have. Tell Dorothy that.

DOCTOR

Why are you pretending to hear voices?  
Why are you pretending to be a crow?

EZRA

The sky above the cages  
was often quite beautiful.

DOCTOR

Are you hoping to be found mentally unfit  
to stand trial?

EZRA

Rain clouds above, dust below,  
legless spiders in the dust.

DOCTOR

If you stand trial you may be convicted.  
The sentence for treason can be death.  
If you are found mentally unfit for trial  
you won't suffer that sentence  
but you won't be released either.  
You will be held, here, at St. Elizabeth's Hospital,  
with other mentally ill patients.  
You will be held indefinitely.  
I repeat my question.  
Why are you pretending to be a crow?

EZRA

I want to write paradise, having been to hell.  
Do you think I'm closer to achieving that  
as a bird than as a man?  
I dreamt about the black man,  
I wanted him in the cell with me,  
with his little white mouse.  
On sunny days, in the heat,  
I wanted...In court  
I would like to defend myself.  
Who decides if I'm mentally unfit?

DOCTOR

Three psychiatrists.  
Myself and two others.  
We will talk to you and observe you  
over a period of time.

EZRA

I defended the American constitution  
in a foreign country. That's all I did.  
Did anyone tell you that?  
That during the war I defended the constitution?  
That, apparently, is my shame.

DOCTOR

My understanding is that you are accused of accepting employment  
with the Italian government as a radio propagandist.  
My understanding is that you incited racial hatred  
and demoralization among the troops.

EZRA

I am not a Fascist!

DOCTOR

You are not being accused of being a Fascist.

EZRA

What is a Fascist?  
Do you know? Any idea?  
You think we're all sick don't you?  
You want to treat it like an illness,  
some...problem of the mind.

DOCTOR

Is that what you want me to think?

EZRA

It's all right to act like a Fascist in America  
as long as you talk like a Christian.

DOCTOR

Why do you say that?

EZRA

We were millions. Millions.  
Do you think that each of us,  
individually, was sick.

DOCTOR

You began to speak of certain erotic dreams,  
would you like to continue?

EZRA

You don't know how to deal with it, do you?  
There's a world war and you think it's caused  
by mental illness, or repressed sexual desires.  
You're not willing to look at the facts, are you?

DOCTOR

Do you have difficulty maintaining feelings of self-respect  
while with members of the opposite sex?

EZRA

I don't understand the question.

DOCTOR

No?

EZRA

I understand the words,  
but not the question.

DOCTOR

The words?

EZRA

I don't understand your intentions,  
so I can't understand your questions.  
I am talking calmly, aren't I?

DOCTOR

Yes.

EZRA

But I want to kill you.  
I want to cut off your head.

DOCTOR

What causes this rage in you.

EZRA

I don't know.  
I'm not angry.  
I'm dead.  
A drowned dog...

DOCTOR

That caws.

EZRA

Caws?

DOCTOR

Earlier you were cawing  
like a crow.

EZRA

Was I?

DOCTOR

I have noticed, over and over,  
that when we believe that nothing  
can change we talk of human nature  
in animal terms or racist terms,  
something bestial, something fixed.

EZRA

I have always had faith in change.

DOCTOR

A drowned dog cawing  
is hardly a symbol of change.

EZRA

My words are precise.  
I have studied ancient cultures,  
learned ancient languages,  
seeking that precision.  
I have studied the most enduring masks.

DOCTOR

Masks?

EZRA

Yes.

DOCTOR

They help you?

EZRA

To juggle. I juggle masks.  
I juggle personae.  
How often do you think I can skip a rock?

DOCTOR

I would like to talk about your rage.

EZRA

We don't speak the same language.  
After my breakdown they gave me a tent,  
a tent in a cage, a triangle in a square.  
They gave me medication, too.  
I was having trouble urinating, the pain.  
I needed the medication.

DOCTOR

I have your medical reports.

EZRA

Would you like to know when I found out  
about the concentration camps?  
It was after Rome had fallen.

DOCTOR

But before that, you were there,  
did you think it was all in the abstract?

EZRA

At the end of the war I saw pictures  
in an issue of *Time* magazine,  
There were atrocities on both sides.  
Do you think it's propaganda,  
the pictures?

DOCTOR

No.

EZRA

How do you know?

DOCTOR

Are you surprised by the horror  
of which we are systematically capable?

EZRA

Are you?

DOCTOR

No.

EZRA

Having studied the human mind?

DOCTOR

Having studied the human condition.

EZRA

Which can be changed?

DOCTOR

It begins with speech. Talking.

EZRA

Speech is memory. Judgment.

DOCTOR

Without the possibility of change  
speech is a mask for silence.

EZRA

Dr. Overholser, you are German.  
You have a German name.

DOCTOR

Does that lessen me in your eyes?

EZRA

On the contrary.

DOCTOR

I wish you hadn't said that.  
I will present my views to the court.  
The prosecution has a chance to cross-examine  
my findings, and then there will be a judgment.

However if all three examining psychiatrists concur  
then it is difficult for the judge  
to go against their testimony.

EZRA

And will they concur? That I am...

DOCTOR

Mentally unfit?  
I don't know.

EZRA

Holding me indefinitely in an insane asylum  
is still imprisonment. Am I not innocent  
until proven guilty, or is it different  
for the mentally unfit?

DOCTOR

You seem to have a good grasp  
of the situation.

EZRA

I want a trial. I want to defend myself.

DOCTOR

To use the trial as a platform?

EZRA

The psychiatrist is a dog catcher.  
He silences rabid animals  
before they wake the sleeping.  
You muzzle us with ...dream analysis.

DOCTOR

Do I?

EZRA

Clearly.

DOCTOR

What are the moral benefits of your state execution?

EZRA

You are suggesting that I should be thankful  
for being held here indefinitely?

DOCTOR

Frankly?

EZRA

You think I'm guilty.

DOCTOR

That's up to the jury.

EZRA

What do you think?

DOCTOR

Feelings of patriotism run strong after a war.

That is understandable. I should know,  
my lineage is, as you point out, German.  
That is all I will say.  
While you are here I will do everything  
I can to make you as comfortable as possible,  
as I would any patient. You have said  
you wanted time to write your paradise,  
perhaps you will, perhaps you won't,  
but here you will have quiet and time.  
The grounds at St. Elizabeth's are quite good.  
There are trees with squirrels.  
Guests are permitted, not at first, but later.  
One can lunch on the grass.  
Some of the patients are quite entertaining.

EZRA

Quite. Entertaining.

DOCTOR

Given recent history, this insane asylum,  
your words, is a perfect city of the mind.  
I has a certain order.  
It's not particularly vicious.  
One escapes the past.

## **SCENE SEVENTEEN**

*We are on the grounds of the insane asylum. Ezra sits at a distance, talking to himself. Autumn leaves are spread over the playing area. There is a small foot bridge. Dorothy enters and approaches a young man raking the leaves.*

EZRA

I return to an empty room  
and am met by an image  
of you in an empty room; you  
are reading. You feel the  
relief upon those bruised

pages, our son. Your head  
turns towards me. I watch  
beads of sweat in creases  
of your neck like streams  
caught among pebbles.

I am a crow, Dorothy, see  
me hidden among the twist-  
ing limbs, perched on a h  
ollow branch, cawing, a c  
row, Dorothy, a crumpled  
shadow in the shallow wat  
ers of a receding tide.

My beak open, my wings br  
oken, I've drowned in rep  
eating patterns I cannot  
understand.

DOROTHY

Excuse me, I am looking for someone.  
*(The young man shakes his head.)*

YOUNG MAN

English, no good.  
*(They smile at each other.)*

DOROTHY

Lei parla italiano?

YOUNG MAN

Si, signora. Io sono italiano.

DOROTHY

Nato in Italia?

YOUNG MAN

Si, sono arrivato solo da poco.  
I miei genitori sono morti durante la guerra.  
Ma ho uno zio, un uomo buono assai,  
e stato lui a farmi venire in America.  
Que posso ricominciare da capo in un paese nuovo.  
Sono molto grato agli americani.  
Ho perfino già trovato un lavoro, come  
giardiniere.  
Domani chi sa?

DOROTHY

Mio marito è uno dei pazienti.  
M'hanno detto di cercarlo in giardino,  
ma non mi riesce di trovarlo.

EZRA

I knew a woman, I knew a woman.  
A goddess standing against the evening light.  
So beautiful. A spirit floating  
in the azure air.  
What was her name,  
the woman I once knew.

DOROTHY

Grazie.  
Ce bel cielo!

YOUNG MAN

Yes. Beautiful.

EZRA

Why can't I remember her name?  
Small fragments of remembering

that, to be coherent,  
call,  
    call forth,  
        calling.

DOROTHY

Ezra?

EZRA

Do I have to go in soon?  
I can't tell if it's dawn or dusk.

DOROTHY

Ezra.

EZRA

The man you are looking for isn't here.  
Keep going. There are cardboard men everywhere.  
They wander about. Perhaps he's one of them.

DOROTHY

I'm looking for the one  
who walked with me in Kensington Gardens,  
who recited the Poets of Provence  
and knew the sonnets of Cavalcanti.

EZRA

I have heard of him, but I  
have never looked him in the face.

DOROTHY

Am I disturbing you?

EZRA

Do you know what paradise is, Dorothy?  
It is small fragments, shards of memory.  
It is a discontinuous jangling,  
like loose change clinking in a pocket.

DOROTHY

Your poems are being read again.

EZRA

Nothing like a little press,  
a little controversy.

DOROTHY

You have always wanted to stir your readers  
into action, but it's your words of resignation  
that stir them the most. They find your cries  
of despair and humility, what they take to be  
despair and humility, quite...  
They find it beautiful.

EZRA

It's not what I intended.  
I despise them for thinking my despair romantic.

DOROTHY

What were your intentions?

EZRA

When I am silent I hear other voice.  
It's always been so.

DOROTHY

I don't accept that.

EZRA

Small fragments of remembering  
that, to be coherent,  
call,  
    call forth,  
        calling.

They contradict.  
Now what?

One thought. Another.  
Let the contradictions speak.  
I scratch in the dust,  
words?  
The wind stirs the dust,  
singing?  
Small fragments that,  
    to be coherent

DOROTHY

Ezra, talk to me.  
Don't polish the fragments.  
Talk.

It is quite pleasant tonight.  
Not quite Rapallo.  
Not quite the Bay of Tigullio.

I have started water colours again.  
Nothing major. Just pictures  
of my potted plants on the window sill.

I have been walking around the city.  
There is a great deal of white marble,  
huge buildings with wise sayings cut into them,  
spacious roads, a tangible order to everything.

This is the city of your dreams, Ezra.  
I always thought that Washington  
would be like London, but it's not.  
It's much more like Rome. So Imperial.

EZRA

Have you found an apartment?

DOROTHY

A small basement apartment, but clean.  
It's not far from her, close to Capitol Hill.  
Sometimes in the evening I find myself humming.  
I quite like living alone.

EZRA

Have you hear from our son?

DOROTHY

Yes. He says he will visit soon.  
He says he looks forward to meeting you.

EZRA

What is that scratching sound?

DOROTHY

The gardener is raking leaves.  
He's just a young man from Italy,  
a recent immigrant.

EZRA

You talked to him?

DOROTHY

Yes, I find it easier now, to talk to people.  
He has no family left in Italy, they died in the war,  
all except for one uncle who arranged for him to come here.  
He overflows with gratitude at finding himself in America.

EZRA

A gardener in an insane asylum.  
Dorothy, I want to hold you.

DOROTHY

No, I don't want to lie any more.

EZRA

What lie?

DOROTHY

To myself.  
There are no cycles.  
We can't begin again.

EZRA

Memories are a cage,  
a cage.

EZRA

They needn't be.

EZRA

They are.

DOROTHY

The judge has found with the psychiatrists.  
You won't be tried. You will have time.

EZRA

On grounds of insanity?

DOROTHY

You were found mentally unfit to stand trial.

EZRA

Will I ever be released?

DOROTHY

There can always be an executive pardon.  
The lawyer seems to feel that when the issues  
die down, and the facts are forgotten,  
when you've become a stray piece of paper  
on a bureaucrat's desk, then, perhaps,  
a pardon might be arranged,  
on the grounds of pity.

EZRA

Of pity. Freed on the grounds of pity,  
when I am an old and toothless man,  
when I am forgotten.

DOROTHY

Yes.

EZRA

Oblivion will be my release.

DOROTHY

It is for us all.

EZRA

You say that very calmly.

DOROTHY

I am calm. I have faith.

EZRA

In what?

DOROTHY

Oh, I don't know. Perhaps in the fact  
that this insane asylum has a gardener.

EZRA

You place your faith in small things.

DOROTHY

Yes and No.

EZRA

The will of one person?

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

The will of many?

DOROTHY

No.

EZRA

What then?

DOROTHY

The compassion native to us all.

EZRA

To us all?

DOROTHY

Yes.

EZRA

Is it enough? Is it strong enough?  
When you walk though the city  
beyond the wall of this garden of ghosts,  
tell me, is your compassion enough?

**THE END**