

WINNER: International Ernest Hemingway Playwriting Contest

THE TOTAL IMMERSION OF MADELEINE FAVORINI

A Play

by

Frank Gagliano

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CHARACTERS

One actress plays

Madeleine Favorini

One actor plays

Dr. Rathjib

Nonno Pazzotesto

Jonathan

Palsied Papa

Captain Marvel

El Bandido Grandido

One actress plays

Nurse Ida Wendling

Niece Cassandra

Yiddish, Irish, Southern Mamas

La Bandida

The Dwarf Prometheus

Giant Koala Bear

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

THE TOTAL IMMERSION OF MADELEINE FAVORINI

is a full-evening's production that
has a playing time of about 80 minutes,
and is played without an intermission break.

This version of THE TOTAL IMMERSION OF MADELEINE FAVORINI
 was revised at the 2nd FESTIVAL OF NEW WORKS
 Ann Arbor, Michigan
 and had a rehearsed, sit-down, reading
 on June 16 and 17, 2000
 with the following cast of Equity actors:

MADELEINE	JANET MAYLE
THE MEN	JOHN SEIBERT
THE WOMEN	MICHELLE MOUNTAIN

Directed by SARA-BEY CHENG

AND,
 with further revisions,
 was read by the Epic Repertory Theatre
 on December 3, 2001
 at the Josè Quintero Theatre
 534 W. 42nd Street, NYC, NY 10036
 with the following cast:

MADELEINE	CAANAN ERGUDER
THE MEN	DAVID WAGNER
THE WOMEN	ALICIA REGAN

Directed by CARRIE STROUD

(During the 1998 SHOWCASE OF NEW PLAYS Season,
 Robin Walsh, Tony McKay and Natalie Baker read the play,
 during a retrospective week of Gagliano plays)

The International Ernest Hemingway Writing competition

is held each year at Sanibel Island, Florida, in the United States—in honor of the great American writer, Ernest Hemingway. Awards are given for novel, short story, poetry, essay — and play categories.

The 1999 award for playwriting went to Frank Gagliano for his play:

“THE TOTAL IMMERSION OF MADELEINE FAVORINI” _

THE TOTAL IMMERSION OF MADELEINE FAVORINI is a surreal 3-performer piece (some have called it a dramatic poem) in which thirty-eight year old Madeleine Favorini journeys from dutifulness to rebellion on a gynecological examining table that takes wing.

When the play begins Madeleine Favorini, in her slip, has been waiting for her doctor, her feet in the stirrups of a gynecological examining table — for two weeks! Madeleine is a dutiful woman who, all her life, has denied any rebelliousness in her nature. Today, her exhausted body rebels and the gynecological table — the play’s only prop — becomes a kind of magic carpet that takes Madeleine through a series of encounters; with her Italian-American family, her philandering former husband — and out into the realm of mythology, where she meets and falls in love with a Sicilian bandit, El Bandido Grandido — actually a God who, like an earth-bound Flying Dutchman, is doomed to roam the earth, until a specific woman can release his despairing spirit. Madeleine Favorini is that woman and she must destroy El Bandido Grandido, her first grand love, in order to give him his “full out rest;” and in order for her to face an eternity that has frightened her all her life.

THE TOTAL IMMERSION OF MADELEINE FAVORINI is noted for long spoken arias (including the soaring “vacuum vagina” speech) filled with lyricism and images; and for its outrageous humor, painful discoveries and theatrical encounters.

The role of Madeleine Favorini is very demanding and the other two performers must play the many characters who confront Madeleine on her journey.

Scene: A black space.

In center hot-white light, a gynecological examining table. MADELEINE FAVORINI on it. In the stirrups. She wears a slip.

Madeleine discovers the audience when the audience discovers Madeleine.

MADELEINE

O !!

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

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

(Pause)

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

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

(She has a body spasm)

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

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

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

WOMAN'S VOICE

(Over. Amplified. Coming from everywhere)

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

(Madeleine jams her feet back
into the stirrups)

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

MADELEINE

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

(Dr. Rathjib materializes)

DOCTOR RATHJIB

(Kindly; always kindly)

Questions?

(To Loudspeaker Voice)

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

NURSE WENDLING

(Voice over)

Not "allowing," Doctor Rathjib. She just

MADELEINE

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

NURSE WENDLING

(Voice over)

She started to destirrup, Doctor Rathjib!

DOCTOR RATHJIB

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

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

MADELEINE

But, perhaps in this case, you could—

DOCTOR RATHJIB

(Kindly)

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

MADELEINE

Of course not. I just want—

DOCTOR RATHJIB

(Kindly)

And Nurse Wendling must do as she's told; namely, to see that you stay stirrpped—or she gets into serious trouble.

WENDLING

(Voice over)

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

MADELEINE

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

DOCTOR RATHJIB

(Kindly)

—I admit NOthing to patients, Patient Favorini.

MADELEINE

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

DOCTOR RATHJIB

(Kindly)

Thinking is frowned upon in this institution, Patient Favorini.

MADELEINE

But couldn't you make an exception and—?

DOCTOR RATHJIB

(Kindly)

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

(He quickly dematerializes)

MADELEINE

(Her feet dutifully in the stirrups)

Doctor Rathjib! Wait!

(Nurse Wendling quickly materializes.

Checks out Madeleine's feet)

NURSE WENDLING

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

MADELEINE

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

NURSE WENDLING

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

(She dematerializes)

MADELEINE

(Her feet dutifully in the stirrups)

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

(She turns to the audience)

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

DOCTOR RATHJIB

(Head materializes. Kindly)

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

(Rathjib's head dematerializes)

MADELEINE

(Her feet dutifully in the stirrups)

Dead.

(Pause)

Why can't I dutifully cry.

(Pause)

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

DOCTOR RATHJIB

(Head materializes. Kindly)

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

(Doctor Rathjib's head dematerializes)

MADELEINE

(Her feet dutifully in the stirrups)

Fired?

(Holding back tears)

That's terrible. I work. . .worked

(She cries)

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

(Music: The Voice of Amalia is heard.

It is very Muzak sounding)

O! That must be the "Music To Numb The Brain" and—

(She has a body spasm)

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

DOCTOR RATHJIB

(Materializing)

Goodheavens!

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

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

WENDLING

(Head materializing)

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

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

MADELEINE

Doctor Rathjib!—a five minute stretch! Please!

DOCTOR RATHJIB

Nurse Wendling! One foot is out!

WENDLING

I'm coming!

DOCTOR RATHJIB

Quick! I'M DEALING WITH AN ELEMENTAL FORCE!

(Wendling joins Rathjib and they wrestle with
Madeleine's anarchic feet)

MADELEINE

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

(She kicks Doctor Rathjib and Nurse
Wendling into the shadows.

"Music To Numb The Brain"—out!
"Journey Music"—in and under)

And suddenly I'm on the move! . . . to god-knows-where. . .because the table's
not a table anymore. . .it looks like. . .like one of those. . . —Yes! —Disney World
wagons! That's right; those little carts that scoot you through the robot
worlds?. . .and moves and moves AND PICKS UP SPEED and more speed. . .and
even more speed and LOOKASIFWEWILLHITAWALL! but don't. . . Instead, we
barely squeeze through a thin, thankgod, fissure slit into an O! O! black cave.
And lose sight of the up-front carts in the wall's folds; real walls. Not like the
dioramas in the Museum of Natural Wonders. Real walls; walls that sweat; that
smell like. . .cucumber skins. . .and move and jerk past

MADELEINE

(Continued)

. . . omy! —grotesque exhibitions in the apses of the walls. Like. . . cartoon stations of the cross. Of. . . Bozo The Clown?! —Yes! Bozo, the clown. Mostly. Being crucified.

. . . But instead of a spear in his side; they're honking his red horn nose!

PAZZOTESTO

(Off)

Honk! Honk!

(Journey Music--OUT!)

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

(Very stereotypical Italian))

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

(Shift to perfect English)

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

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

Of course.

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

(Still looking)

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

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

(Still looking)

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

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

(Stops looking)

You remember, huh? As a matter of fact, Maddalena, I have all that stuff—bread, oil, salt, pepper and Parmesan cheese. But I can't give you any; they're munchies for my trip.

MADELEINE

Munchies? Trip?

PAZZOTESTO

(Sniffing the bouquet)

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

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

To Sicily! Home. To die.

MADELEINE

Sicily? To die? But why?

PAZZOTESTO

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

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

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

(Moved)

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

(Reflective)

Never his pecker, though.

(Discovery)

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

(Lyrical)

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

(Acceptance)

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

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

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

MADELEINE

But no one ever taught me Sicilian.

PAZZOTESTO

Pish! What does that have to do with it?

MADELEINE

You teach me, Nonno!

PAZZOTESTO

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

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

"Move 'em out!"

(Himself again. Gets down
from examining table)

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

MADELEINE

Nonno! Take me with you!

PAZZOTESTO

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

MADELEINE

Is it that bad? What I have?

PAZZOTESTO

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

(He dematerializes)

MADELEINE

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

(She gets back onto the examining table)

Go! Go! Follow Nonno Pazzotesto! Follow him to—YES! Sicily. Sicily! There! There! This table is moving me there. To the end of this magical tunnel! And there!. . .there it is. I see it! —Sicily! My land of roots and ruts and riverdercis! Singing couples, singing in Piazzas on the holy days; pinning molti, molti Euro to statues of the blue Madonna, bobbing on the young men's shoulders, through the crowded square. My family's there! See?!! See!! In and on a painted cart pulled by our family donkey! And everyone protects me. And everyone is proud of me. Because on this feast day, I play. . . —the Holy Ghost. A tongue. A dove. A presence. And I need my family. They're the only ones who care for me. No one else would give a roast for the Holy Ghost. After all, what's he do? After all, what's she do? But my family, they knew and cheer me on. So , I choose to play

MADELEINE

(Continued)

the tongue and lick my way over every head that's bowed before the bobbing blue Madonna. And so I do, but am not seen; and maybe that's the best way? — No! It is not! Not being seen is death, is rot! So all I've got is my family, who do see and dote on me. And Papa gets angry and takes his whip and lashes every guinea ass in sight! "See my daughter!" he screams. "Grab onto each holy rung and climb and mount that holy tongue! See my daughter or this lash will burn your lower cheeks to ash!" And that's how Papa does for me. . .IN SICILY!

(Laughter is heard off)

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

(Jonathan and Cassandra materialize)

JONATHAN

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

CASSANDRA

(Shivering)

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

JONATHAN

You see how niece Cassandra shivers. That's why I thought a nice steaming pot of beef bourguignon would do her good. I also thought, this time, I'd thaw her out before dinner. So you will get off the table. Right?

. . .Madeleine? . . .Now none of that "Our-Lady-of-the-Sorrows" look.

(Pause. Deadly.)

Get. Off. The. Table.

(Madeleine does so.)

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

(Jonathan and Cassandra get under the sheet)

MADELEINE

What is it I've probably got, Jonathan?

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

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

(discovery)

something new? A new place I'm at?

. . .In any case, I do something I have never done before; I delicately tap on Jonathan through the sheet there, making lumpy waves with niece Cassandra, and I tap and delicately say: O Jonathan, I know. I know she's really not your niece. None of them are. I'm ready to talk about it.

JONATHAN

(Rises from under the sheet)

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

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

MADELEINE

(Pleading)

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

(Pause)

JONATHAN

(He slowly removes her hand.

Pause)

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

(Shift)

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

(Gets back under the sheet)

MADELEINE

(Young girl now;
talking out over the audience)

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

(She addresses the Woman under the sheet)

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

MAMA

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

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

PAPA

(Pops up from under the sheet. Shakes)

Burrap! Burrap!

MADELEINE

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

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

MAMA

(Heavy Irish brogue now)

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

PAPA

(Shaking)

Burrap! Burrap!

MADELEINE

(Still pulling)

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

MAMA

(Very Southern Redneck)

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

PAPA

Burrrup! Burrrup!

MAMA

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

MADELEINE

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

(Stops pulling)

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

PAPA

Burrrup. . .burrrup. . .brp.

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

Pause)

MADELEINE

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

MAMA

(No accent now; very tired through the following)

I know.

MADELEINE

And he cheats.

MAMA

I know.

MADELEINE

I mean, besides in business.

MAMA

I know.

MADELEINE

And he beats me.

MAMA

With what you have, is it any wonder.

MADELEINE

What do I have, Mama?

MAMA

Listen, Madeleine. Your mother is exhausted. Your vegetable father exhausted me. The roles I have had to play: The rages I have had to sit on: Not having money—having to "make do"—exhausted me. And trying to mother you, make sense out of what you are or could be, really exhausted me. From the time you were born, you wore me out. An almost impossible delivery. You nearly killed me. And not long after, the hysterectomy. Oh, they said there was no

MAMA

(Continued)

connection, but I don't know: A Sicilian lady with just one child—a girl child at that. "Vergogna." Shame. "Vergogna." That's the only Sicilian word I've not been able to forget. "Vergogna," your grandmother would spit at me—"Vergogna," for a Sicilian lady to have just one girl child. All right. Then I'll not be a Sicilian lady. I'll be an American lady. And, like every American lady, I'll work to be totally free. So that no one could ever "vergogna" me again. Well, now I am free; of your poor father; there's some money trickling in; I am totally assimilated—with not one trace of Sicilian peasant in me any longer, thank God—and I want to be free of you. Unencumbered. To be unencumbered. What you have can drag me down again. And now I want "up." Up. Up!

MADELEINE

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

PAPA

(Sitting up)

Listen, Maddie.

MADELEINE

Papa?

PAPA

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

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

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

(discovery)

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

(Hums a bit of the melody)

Simple and beautiful.

(Hums again)

Yes! Perhaps there might be other such minutes for you. Yes, that simple Sicilian gift of song may still be alive in you. In that sense we may not be alike.

. . .For the melody left me long ago. For good. . . .

—So it's in your own self interest, Maddie. Break the bonds. Unencumber your mother. And perhaps you'll unencumber yourself. There's a good girl.

MADELEINE

And daddy dies again.

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

MADELEINE

(Continued)

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

(does a stomach contraction)

O! Cramps! . . .Pain! . . .stomach pain and--!

(The Voice of Amalia is heard.

Off. In The distance.

Still bent over)

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

(Voice of Amalia out)

O! The cramps and voice are gone and—

PAZZOTESTO

(Off)

Honk honk.

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

(Materializing)

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

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

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

(Gets on it)

MADELEINE

NO NONNO! DON'T GO! NOT WITHOUT ME! I'M A 46-YEAR-OLD DISCARDED WOMAN AND SOMETHING IS SLIPPING AWAY! PLEASE NONNO!

MADELEINE

(Continued)

Deodorants make me nauseous and don't work on me anymore—though I dutifully use them. . . .Mindlessness scares me—always has—but here I am in a mindless age and I don't know how to act—except to shiver. I shiver a lot now, Nonno. And I'm afraid to jog for fear my breasts will fall off. . . .Since Jonathan ran out on me I've wanted desperately to have my ears pierced like every Sicilian child has, but every time I pierce them, the skin grows back. . . .I went to college and I feel so dumb. I majored in Literature and so was good for nothing. And laughed at, of course. But at least I could thrill to the audacity and awesome language of the Masters. Could quote them from memory, in fact. But now—those great words frighten me—make me dizzy, sick. And every time I need to use the "facility"—I mean, the toilet—I have this fear that I won't be able to go because all of my orifices will have been sewn up. . . .I look at babies and old people and I imagine infinity. Which scares me and makes me want to throw up. The only foods that have any taste for me are fast foods. But fast foods nauseate me. And make me fat—though I dutifully eat them and hold them down. The really awful thing, though. . . .is that I can't look people in the shoulder anymore. Only in the back. And so I always walk behind. Even when I'm in front. . . .The only thing I seem to get close to—immerse myself in, I guess, are motel bed sheets reeking with stale smoke. But stale smoke makes me sick now. So does loud talk and trendy things and giant portable stereos growing out of the heads of walking young men and—

PAZZOTESTO

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

MADELEINE

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

PAZZOTESTO

Who knows? It's a dump! is Sicily!

MADELEINE

Then why are you going?!

PAZZOTESTO

Because it's my dump! Not yours!

MADELEINE

But you will be there!

PAZZOTESTO

Not for long!

MADELEINE

(Monumental despair)

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

(Pause)

PAZZOTESTO

Okay. I'll do this much: I'll test you. I happen to have just recorded my last Sicilian aria, about Sicily, in Sicilian; on a CD that I was about to include in my time capsule of Pazzotesto memorabilia. Okay. You will listen to it, the Sicilian aria, over headphones. And you must try to immerse yourself in its meaning. If you do, I'll take you with me.

MADELEINE

(Hugging him)

Nonno, thank you, and I—

PAZZOTESTO

But I must warn you—and I can't help this, Maddalena—part of me will continue to seek the just-right posh gift to leave to The Duke—even while I speak. Understood?

MADELEINE

O yes!

(Pazzotesto taps the table. Madeleine sits on it.
Then Pazzotesto makes two fists of Madeleine's hands and
places each fist over each of her own ears.
Then he raises her index fingers
so that her fists resemble ear phones.)

PAZZOTESTO

(Translating the Sicilian Madeleine is hearing
over the headphones)

My Sicily. By Nonno Pazzotesto. My Sicily is an Island off the coccyx of Italy. My Sicily is surrounded by green water. There are giant green fish in this green water because, legend has it, Poseidon, the mighty sea God, had a passion for the herb—basil! fragrant, green--basil! —which the Gods distilled into their favorite nectar, "Basilosia." So favorite a God-nectar was Basilosia, that basil was forbidden to leave the

PAZZOTESTO

(Continued)

mountain of the Gods. But, so hooked on "Basilosia" did Poseidon become, that he pinched, legend continues, bunches of the sacred basil; hiding it in his jockey shorts—a cover he almost blew when the God Ganymede tried to cop a feel—and so, he planted, Poseidon did, the pinched basil in the hundreds of thousands of his favorite underwater acres touching the Sicilian shore: Mankind's bassinet. . .the mighty Mediterranean!

(Madeleine thinks she's got it.
Removes her own earphone fists)

MADELEINE

I think. . .I think—yes! — you are talking about SUNSHINE! —how Sicily is flooded with sun and, therefore, that the Sicilians are a sunny race. Though dark.

(She makes headphones of her fists again)

PAZZOTESTO

(Translating the Sicilian Madeleine is hearing
over the headphones)

Basil! Which creeps up from the bottom of the green Mediterranean onto the Continent of Sicily itself; covers every inch of Sicily. There is basil on the beach, on the roads, on rooftops. The toilets have basil seats. The bells of the great Cathedrals are covered with basil and cushion their clang!

MADELEINE

(Making hands of her hands again)

Now you are talking about the place religion plays in the hearts and minds of the Sicilians. And how the love and fear of God sustain them in their sunny darkness.

(Makes headphones of her fists again)

PAZZOTESTO

And only in Sicily is there a Saint's day celebrated in honor of the martyrdom of Saint Basil; killed by his corrupt basil brethren, at the Monastery of Our Lady of the Basil Bush, when Saint Basil blew the whistle on their Libertine ways.

MADELEINE

(Making hands of her hands again)

About the sweet Sicilian girls, you speak; ripening to womanhood. Innocent, pretty, faithful—though serious, flirtatious and cunning.

(She makes headphones of her fists again)

PAZZOTESTO

And women are considered beautiful when they have thick basil bunches hanging from under their arms. And on their chins. And down below, around their pasta pits.

MADELEINE

(Making hands of their hands again)

And about the men, you chant: Virile, chunky, arrogant; but thoughtful and caring and gentle as they rape their wives and sweethearts.

(She makes headphones of her fists again)

PAZZOTESTO

In fact, basil is the official ground cover of Sicily. It is Sicily's grass. Sicily's Ivy. Sicily's Ajuga. Above all—Sicily's Crown Vetch. And that is why Sicily is called—The Emerald Isle.

MADELEINE

(Making hands of her hands again)

And everyone loves, laughs, eats and eliminates with great child-like gusto in Sicily.

(Makes headphones of her fists again)

PAZZOTESTO

When I die I want to be buried on a basil window sill in a window box covered with basil and I will have in my folded hands, over my heaveless chest, this basil bouquet which I sniff now even as I speak my basil aria and—

(He removes Madeleine's fists from her ears)

. . .yes Yes. YES!! When my soul flies to basil heaven—for heaven will be a replica of Sicily, I'm convinced of that—I will present THIS BASIL BOUQUET to Duke Wayne!

MADELEINE

Nonno Pazzotesto, what is this about a basil bouquet and Duke—?

PAZZOTESTO

Of course! I've been trying to find the perfect gift to present in memory of The Duke! But when our wings tangle on the great basil cloud in the sky—YES! — then I will personally present this basil bouquet to The Duke! And he'll understand! Oh yes! With that basil bouquet, I will make a green pesto sauce, and The Duke and I will become basil comrades, and cover the basil range of eternity forever! Goodbye, Maddalena! You failed the test. You didn't immerse! Goodbye, Maddelena! The Duke WAAAAAITS!

(He dematerializes)

MADELEINE

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

(Takes in her new surroundings.)

(Slow discovery as the images drop in)

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

(Coyly)

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

(She tangoes)

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

(She dips.)

Captain Marvel materializes,
 keeping a distance)

CAPTAIN MARVEL

Lovely.

(Madeleine falls)

Do you need help?

MADELEINE

No. No.

(She rises, leans against the table)

CAPTAIN MARVEL

(Keeping a distance)

Are you all right, then?

MADELEINE

Yesyes. fine.

CAPTAIN MARVEL

I'm Captain Marvel.

MADELEINE

I know.

CAPTAIN MARVEL

And I'm sorry I startled you.

MADELEINE

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

CAPTAIN MARVEL

Fool? I don't understand.

MADELEINE

My dancing. Out here. By myself.

CAPTAIN MARVEL

(Always keeping a distance between them)

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

MADELEINE

And you thought it was lovely? My dancing?

CAPTAIN MARVEL

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

MADELEINE

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

CAPTAIN MARVEL

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

MADELEINE

May I—. . .?

CAPTAIN MARVEL

Yes?

MADELEINE

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

CAPTAIN MARVEL

Yes?

MADELEINE

May I join you. . .in the fog?

CAPTAIN MARVEL

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

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

MADELEINE

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

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

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

WOMAN

(Voice off. As if over a distant megaphone)
Siiiiiiiiiiillyyy. Siiiiiiiiillyyy. Siiiiiiiiillyyy.

MADELEINE

What? Who said that?

WOMAN

(Off. As if over a distant megaphone)
Look down. The lifeboat.

MADELEINE

O my! A woman! Gypsy woman! In a lifeboat.

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

WOMAN

(As if over a distant megaphone)
Are you Madeleine Favorini?

MADELEINE

(Through cupped hands, calling off)
Yes. But how did you know?

WOMAN

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

MADELEINE

(Through cupped hands)
Yes. Of course.

WOMAN

Then you will come WITH ME!

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

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

MADELEINE

(In shock)

Yes. You mean business!

WOMAN

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

(She releases Madeleine and rows,
facing Madeleine)

And you will not cry out.

MADELEINE

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

(The Voice of Amalia is heard)

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

(The Voice of Amalia--OUT)

WOMAN

We have arrived.

MADELEINE

Yes. Land. Is this Sicily?

WOMAN

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

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

MADELEINE

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

LA BANDIDA

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

(gently touches his face and outlines his mask)

Wipe away the tears from his mask.

EL BANDIDO

Do we have the right woman?

LA BANDIDA

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

EL BANDIDO

Then you are MF?

MADELEINE

My name is Madeleine Favorini.

(He leans against the table)

LA BANDIDA

El Bandido! Is there pain?

EL BANDIDO

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

MADELEINE

Saved? Because of me?

LA BANDIDA

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

MADELEINE

"Full out rest?" How?

LA BANDIDA

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

(She moves away to tremble)

EL BANDIDO

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

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

(The Voice of Amalia is heard)

I was passing through from some rebellion I had instigated and which, in the long run, would not change anything; when I heard the voice. I was outside, not even in the tavern, but the voice stopped me. For suddenly, in the midst of all my pain, suddenly, in that voice, I heard — real pain; something from the marrow; beyond hunger; beyond betrayal; beyond injustice; beyond loneliness — not the person screaming the pain—but the pain itself. They called the woman "Amalia." And when she sang, all rebellions stopped. Everything stopped. But the tears. Look. Look through the tavern window with me, MF, and cry to the pain of Amalia.

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

LA BANDIDA

Then rough hands are laid on him!

(The Voice of Amalia OUT.

El Bandido mimes the following)

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

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

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

(As La Bandida again)

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

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

"Hisssssssssssssssssssssss!"

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

And in the instant, his face and mask are one! Soldered together! Homogenizèd! Congealèd! Laminated! Fusèd! And, for good measure, the Dwarf Prometheus brands that mask again: "Hisssssssssssssssssssssss!"

(Madeleine runs to El Bandido. Kneels to him)

MADELEINE

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

LA BANDIDA

No!

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

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

EL BANDIDO

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

MADELEINE

LOOK! THOSE MEN! WITH GUNS!

EL BANDIDO

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

LA BANDIDA

He's discovered our camp!

EL BANDIDO

Defend yourselves!

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

MADELEINE

OmyGod it's real! Real fighting. And real bullets. And—and OGod that rebel! Just shot!

. . .dead at my feet.

(Sounds out.

El Bandido and La Bandida freeze)

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

(Shooting sounds up again)

OGod—look—enemy with eye patch—about to—about to shoot El Bandido Grandido! No! NO!

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

Silence)

EL BANDIDO

Good Christ! You shot Baron Rathjib himself!

LA BANDIDA

Beginner's luck. Shit!

EL BANDIDO

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

(They get onto the table)

Now I will pull. . .

(Madeleine and La Bandida vocally react to the journey; heavy breathing, grunts, shivers, ooh's, ah's, clicking on of flashlights, etc.

El Bandido grabs onto the stirrups.

Pulls in place)

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

LA BANDIDA

Click!

EL BANDIDO

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

LA BANDIDA

Un-click!

EL BANDIDO

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

(Madeleine and La Bandida vocally shiver)

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

LA BANDIDA

Click!

MADELEINE/LA BANDADA

O! O! oooooOOO!

EL BANDIDO

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

MADELEINE

Help! I'm fall—

EL BANDIDO

"MF!"

MADELEINE

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

EL BANDIDO

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

MADELEINE

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

LA BANDIDA

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

MADELEINE

No! Help!

EL BANDIDO

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

LA BANDIDA

—I'll help her!

MADELEINE

O! O. good. yes.

EL BANDIDO

"MF," are you back on the cart?

MADELEINE

I'm on the cart.

LA BANDIDA

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

MADELEINE

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

LA BANDIDA

El Bandido Grandido! Jump on! Jump on!

EL BANDIDO

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

LA BANDIDA

I've got you. . .one hand. . .

MADELEINE

And. . .I've got. . .the other.

I'm . . .ON!	EL BANDIDO
I'm OFF. Sliiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii--ping. . .	LA BANDIDA
La Bandida!	EL BANDIDO
O my God! Down!	MADELEINE
Down!	EL BANDIDO
DooooooooooooooooowwwwwwwwwN!	LA BANDIDA
MADELEINE and EL BANDIDO Into the Ravine of Boiling Ooze!	
And we're still rolling.	MADELEINE
Turning!	EL BANDIDO
Through a cavern!	MADELEINE
Down an alley!	EL BANDIDO
Over a MyGodPRECIPICE!	MADELEINE
A runway!	EL BANDIDO
Blackness! Blackness again! But we're on flat land!	MADELEINE

EL BANDIDO

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

MADELEINE and EL BANDIDO

Stop!. . .AND LIGHT!

MADELEINE

I'm blinded! I'm blind!

EL BANDIDO

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

. . .Can you see?

MADELEINE

. . .yes. . .Yes myGod yes.

EL BANDIDO

A rotunda. Look up. A natural dome.

MADELEINE

. . .So high.

EL BANDIDO

And the stones.

MADELEINE

. . .Diamonds?

EL BANDIDO

Rubies?

MADELEINE

Garnets?

EL BANDIDO

. . .Like stars.

MADELEINE

. . .and the walls. . .

The jagged walls. . . EL BANDIDO

Chunks of—Emeralds? MADELEINE

. . .Sapphires? EL BANDIDO

. . .Diamonds? MADELEINE

Like bricks of stained glass. Shattered. EL BANDIDO

Jaggèd. MADELEINE

And sucking to the wall. EL BANDIDO

And—look—up. The Stalactites. Gold. MADELEINE

Listen. Water. Rushing. EL BANDIDO

Soothing. MADELEINE

Escape route? EL BANDIDO

Calming. MADELEINE

Horrible reminder! EL BANDIDO

Of what? MADELEINE

EL BANDIDO

Of La Bandida. Falling into The Ravine of Boiling Ooze.

MADELEINE

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

(Radiant discovery; great delight)

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

DEEDO

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

MADELEINE

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

DEEDO

For always?

MADELEINE

For always.

EL BANDIDO

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

MADELEINE

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

DEEDO

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

MADELEINE

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

DEEDO

It is a place that requires rebels and therefore is corrupt; as all places require rebels and as all places are corrupt. I have been there; to Sicily—have triggered a rebellion there, but many more rebellions are required.

MADELEINE

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

DEEDO

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

MADELEINE

"Die!?" Is that what your talking about? Dying?

DEEDO

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

MADELEINE

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

DEEDO

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

MADELEINE

No, it's because I love you.

(Pause)

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

DEEDO

(Gently)

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

MADELEINE

But you! You can live forever!

DEEDO

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

MADELEINE

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

DEEDO

Listen!

(Growling heard off)

MADELEINE

What is it?

(Enter a giant Koala bear)

DEEDO

It's a giant Koala bear!

KOALA

Snoon! Snoon!

MADELEINE

Watch out! It's coming this way!

DEEDO

Can it. . .can it be?!

MADELEINE

What, Deedo? What?

KOALA

Snoon! Snoon!

DEEDO

madre mia. Meine Mutter. Mum! . . .It's mother.

MADELEINE

Mother?

DEEDO

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

KOALA/MOTHER

Yaooooooooon! Yaooooooooon!

DEEDO

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

KOALA/MOTHER

Niaaneen! Niaaneen!

MADELEINE

(Distantly)

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

KOALA/MOTHER

Yaooooooooon! Yaooooooooon!

MADELEINE

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

KOALA/MOTHER

Yaooooooooon! Yaooooooooon!

DEEDO

But I need more than an embrace! I need—

MADELEINE

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

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

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

MOTHER

And I can become myself again. Before I die.

(She slowly stands erect)

DEEDO

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

MOTHER

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

(She begins to dematerialize)

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

(She's gone. Pause)

DEEDO

"MF?" You really know?

MADELEINE

Yes.I was inside both of you.

DEEDO

Tell me.

MADELEINE

No. I want you here immersed in me.

DEEDO

ooooooooooooooooOoooooooo

MADELEINE

—Listen, Deedo: Before—a journey ago—I felt all sewn up. But becoming all those others has—. . .yes!—it has cut the thread; opened me up! Totally. Has made me feel one long tunnel; from my pasta pit up to my mouth! Now —if I want—I can mount telephone poles. Skyscrapers. Giant Sequoias. Capitol domes. The entire Italian Alps! YES! I recline and my openness is as powerful as a million Hoovers. And a humongus procession can be sucked in. Truck fleets.

MADELEINE

(Continued)

Giant discarded D.C. 10s. A thousand teenage boys on skateboards. The Boston Marathon. Hundreds of illegal aliens streaming into me, the juice of me. And I suck it all in, yes. . . .yes. . . .Yes! YES! I, Madeleine Favorini, am now the Vacuum Vagina of the World! I suck in all the world's debris, redundancies, fads and pain. And when I've anointed them all with my life's fluid, and my belly skin is stretched to transparent—THEN I push them all out in one great Lamaze effort; flush them out of me in one cleansing tidal wave. And because they've all been part of me, I can be part of them. But you. . . .you I'll keep forever—warm behind some secret fold in me until. . . .until I die. But you won't. Because my death contraction will push you out for you to journey on and on and on and—

DEEDO

(In Sicilian)

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

(Pause)

MADELEINE

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

(She answers in perfect Sicilian)

Deedo, no vuoi diri chissu.

DEEDO

Yes, Madeleine, I do mean that.

(In Sicilian)

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

MADELEINE

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

(In Sicilian)

Ma Deedo, Deedo, chi possu fari?

DEEDO

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

MADELEINE

(In Sicilian)

O povera, povera Maddalena.

DEEDO

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

(In Sicilian)

Maddalena, dimmi. Dimmi.

(Pause)

MADELEINE

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

DEEDO

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

(Pause)

Then do it.

(Pause)

MADELEINE

Listen.

(The Voice of Amalia is heard)

DEEDO

The voice of Amalia.

MADELEINE

Why now? What does that mean?

DEEDO

That means there will be pain; lots of pain.

MADELEINE

No!

DEEDO

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

MADELEINE

No!

EL BANDIDO

There. Now —Tira 'ssa mascara! Rip.

MADELEINE

I'll kiss it instead!

DEEDO

—Rip it off

MADELEINE

(Kissing him)

—There! There!

DEEDO

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

MADELEINE

Yes. Yes! I want to kiss your face!

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

Silence)

MADELEINE

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

(She kisses Deedo)

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

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

Pause.)

MADELEINE

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

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

What's that?! . . .Why, it's bits and pieces of all the words from all the people
I've immersed myself in, on my journey!. . . .Listen! Now it becomes a chant, a
kind of song. And listen to how it rises; seems to want to lift off, rise into
another place! And I, I seem to want to rise with them—the words! be one with
the words; fly with the words through the fluorocarbons and ozone hole and not
barf at eternity!. . . .Yes! Up! Up!

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

And now I'm up and I'm moving along; part of a jet stream of words!
Millions of words; used words; spent words but still with the power to move.

—Of course! Words don't die. Once they're said they start to move out, and I'm
told they move out forever!. . . .Oh, Deedo, Deedo, somewhere in
this stream are the words we spoke when I gave you your name. Maybe I'll catch
up with them! speak them again as we move toward—
. . . .where?

—Oh! There! There!
The black edge of time!

No! No! I still can't face that!
Deedo, Deedo, I've got to stop!
I'll become. . . .I'll become. . . .

—a new constellation! Yes! Constellation "Mouth!"
No! Constellation "Dragon Mouth!"
And I station my mouth, my dragon's mouth, at the rim of it all
where nothing but blackness spreads out;
stick out in the void my dragon's tongue—made up of the stuff of a billion stars
—and I light up the dark for Madeleine Favorini. . . .and for all of those moving
words!

MADELEINE

(Continued. The whispering wind of words
crescendos; then suddenly cut out)

The words move out. And I remain.

(Pause)

Silent.

(Pause)

Too silent?

(Pause)

And is this what infinity looks like? feels like?

Endless. Bottomless. Topless.

(Pause)

Silent.

(Pause)

Frightening?

(Pause)

. . .Listen.

(We hear the Voice of Amalia)

The voice of Amalia.

(She listens for a long while.)

That means there's pain.

(Slowly, she smiles)

It's all right then. Yes.

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

CURTAIN