

**I RAGAZZI**  
**(“THE CHILDREN”)**

UNA COMMEDIA IN DUE ATTI BY  
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AND **MADELEINE**  
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A workshop presentation of I RAGAZZI (“THE CHILDREN”) was produced by Kevin McCollum in New York City on February 19, 2015. The cast was as follows:

CAMILLE .....	Kate McGonigle
SIMONA .....	Claire Siebers
CONRAD .....	Nate Miller
TOMMASO .....	Marcus Crawford Guy
FEDERICO .....	Richard Dent
UMBERTO .....	Sam Lilja
RAFFAELLA .....	Sarah Hunt
SOFIA .....	Jenny Leona
COOPER .....	Auden Thornton

**CHARACTERS**  
*(in order of speaking)*

Camille—20, American, on her junior year abroad from Tufts

Simona—24, Italian, landlady of the house

Conrad—22, German, in puppy love with Camille

Tommaso—22, Italian, Simona's boyfriend

Federico—25, Italian, in love with Camille, BFFs with Umberto

Umberto—26, Italian, object of Camille's affections

Raffaella—24, Italian, friend of Simona

Cooper—20, American, Camille's roommate from Tufts

Sofia—18, Spanish, in love with Federico

**PLACE & TIME**

Ferrara, Italy. A four-bedroom, one-bathroom boarding house, with a bed & bath in the adjoining palazzo; a café or two; various other bedrooms; and the Piazza Castello in the center of town.

From January to September of 2012, and one day in early September a year later.

## A NOTE ABOUT THE LANGUAGE

To expound upon the scripted supertitle that explains in two short, sweet sentences what takes the following wordy paragraph to divulge: Although the dialogue is written (for the most part) in English, English is here a theatrical device. In reality, the characters would be speaking, primarily, in Italian. Therefore, the Italians will speak fluidly, with Italian accents; German, Spanish, and American characters will speak the English language with their own respective accents, but with the fluency level they would be evincing in Italian. So we hear Camille speaking in English with an American accent, but in the reality within the play she is speaking in Italian to the other characters, somewhat more haltingly than Simona, who will speak it effortlessly but in an Italian accent, yet far more expertly than Cooper, who will speak English with a tortured American accent reflective of her discomfort with Italian, and so on, commensurate with each characters' level of experience and proficiency.



# I RAGAZZI ("THE CHILDREN")

## ATTO UNO

### Scena Una

*First, we hear:*

*Music: upbeat, retro strains of Italian popular music reminiscent of "Tu Vuo Fà L'Americano" by Renato Carosone.\**

*At rise:*

*La casa. Early evening.*

*A charming, if somewhat rustic, multi-roomed, multilayered boarding house in the quaint and charming Italian town of Ferrara.*

*It is January. The place is drafty, cluttered, and a bit unkempt, reflecting the transience and chaos of a home of international students in their early 20s.*

*As the music continues underneath, we see in one of the rooms, Simona (24, Italian, the landlady of the house, slim, sexy, gorgeous) and Tommaso (22, Italian, same) finishing up a bout of lovemaking; Conrad (22, German, skinny and bespectacled, tidy-looking) carefully and somewhat obsessive-compulsively making up his bed; and Camille (20, American, free-spirited, naturally pretty) bustling about the kitchen/dining room (they're essentially the same room and the center of the house), preparing what looks to be a big event of a meal.*

\* See note on songs/recordings at the back of this volume.

*The music comes to a vocal-free interlude as Simona gets up from the bed, dons a robe, and checks herself briefly in the mirror as Tommaso lights up a cigarette.*

*She looks back at him with a smile, goes over and steals a drag on the cig, taking it with her into the main room, where she and Camille start a conversation.*

*We see two supertitles. The first one reads:*

*“THE CHARACTERS WILL BE SPEAKING TO EACH OTHER (MOSTLY) IN ITALIAN.”*

*Then: “WE WILL BE HEARING THEM IN ENGLISH.”*

*As the music comes to an end, the lights bump up.*

CAMILLE. (*Laughing.*) Oh my God please, there is *nothing* to forgive!

SIMONA. I know we can be quite...vocal sometimes, despite the crucifix above the bed...

CAMILLE. I *totally* understand...

*They laugh, together.*

SIMONA. I *am* sorry you've been slaving away in here, all alone.

CAMILLE. Well, it is *my* dinner party. I'm enjoying having the whole kitchen to myself. And being head chef for once isn't so bad either.

SIMONA. Ha! Well here I am, your *sous* chef for the evening, at your service.

CAMILLE. Now, don't screw it up! This pecorino isn't going to grate itself. Everything has to be perfect for Umberto.

SIMONA. Umberto? I thought this dinner was to welcome your friend Cooper.

CAMILLE. Oh yes, of course.

SIMONA. Yes of course, and her Italian is as good as yours?

*Camille stops tending to the sauce, to level with Simona.*

CAMILLE. Oh. Oh my.

SIMONA. That bad, huh?

CAMILLE. She's trying so hard.

SIMONA. Not everyone has a talent for language.



CAMILLE. You've got to be nice.

SIMONA. It's not me you should worry about. It's Raffaella. One nonagreeing verb form and she'll eat your friend Cooper alive.

CAMILLE. Oh, Raffa means well. Doesn't she?

SIMONA. Well...

CAMILLE. We just all have to be patient with Cooper. She's got the best heart. Unfortunately it also comes with the worst ear.

*Back to the sauce. Simona sends one last puff of smoke out of the corner of her mouth.*

Uh-uh-uh—cigarette?

SIMONA. Yes, yes. And yet it is for Umberto that the dinner must be perfect.

CAMILLE. (*Busted.*) Is that what I said?

SIMONA. Why do you fret so about Umberto?

*Camille pauses, overwhelmed.*

CAMILLE. I just don't know what to say when I'm around him! Umberto's face is just so perfectly—symmetrical.

SIMONA. I prefer a man like Tommaso. He's good-looking, but not intimidatingly so. He's normal. I don't have to worry about other girls.

CAMILLE. He doesn't say much.

SIMONA. Best thing about him.

*She takes in a drag of the cig.*

CAMILLE. (*Reprimanding.*) Again, Simona.

SIMONA. Sorry sorry, not around the food, I know. (*Stubs out the cig.*) All done.

CAMILLE. (*A beat.*) Is it that you don't trust Umberto?

SIMONA. It's not that. (*Back to helping.*) It's just that, you know, Federico is like a brother to me.

CAMILLE. Who said anything about Federico?

SIMONA. I see how he is with you. He lights up. I don't want to see anybody get hurt.

CAMILLE. Oh Simò, I've done nothing to encourage Federico.

*Conrad has started out of his room, heading down the stairs.*

SIMONA. You don't have to. You're like the shiny new American car for these boys. They all want a ride.

*Hearing this, Conrad turns around and starts back upstairs without missing a beat. Camille notices.*

CAMILLE. Conrad! You're just in time, Simona was being her usual progressive self.

SIMONA. What can I say, I am basically the Gloria Steinem of Italy.

*Conrad has turned around again.*

*He nervously clears his throat and speaks politely, with a German accent, trying desperately not to fall over himself in his infatuation with Camille.*

CONRAD. Good afternoon, Camille. Well, good evening. What time is it? (*Checks his watch.*) Technically it is still the afternoon, so good afternoon, Camille. So I was correct. Good. Yes. Look at you, making the evening meal. You are such a lovely house-holder, is that the word? Holder? Ach.

SIMONA. Housekeeper.

CONRAD. (*Never taking his eyes off Camille.*) Keeper! That's it, housekeeper. I am still in my head thinking in German, but my mouth speaking Italian.

SIMONA. You're doing just fine, Conrad.

CONRAD. (*Not noticing Simona.*) Look at you Camille, how helpful and beautiful you are. Beautiful-ly. Helping. You are. That is.

SIMONA. (*Quietly amused.*) Good evening, Conrad.

CONRAD. (*Barely a look to her.*) Ah, Simò. Camille, may I assist you by setting the plates and utensils for the dinner?

CAMILLE. That would be lovely.

*Conrad gets right to it.*

CONRAD. Yes! Lovely! Lovely as...what are you preparing?

CAMILLE. A classic *spaghezzata*.

CONRAD. Ah! Lovely as such a meal. You are so special, Camille.

SIMONA. (*Mock-playing for attention.*) I'm grating the pecorino.

CAMILLE. Conrad, you're so formal.

CONRAD. (*Beaming as if she'd said "you're so handsome."*) Thank you, Camille!

CAMILLE. It's kinda refreshing. Isn't it, Simò?

SIMONA. Like a splash of cold water in the face.

*Conrad continues setting the table, blithely endeavoring to be charming and witty.*

CONRAD. I don't get it from my father, believe me. Or my mother. They were the proverbial bohemians. Neither one of them was good householders. My sister and I were left to fend for ourselves, like wild wolves cut loose from the pack. It was so funny, the two of us, cooking, cleaning, pretending Mother and Father were not at home when the taxman came! Uwe ("*OOH-vuh.*") would say the funniest things when the taxman came, Uwe, that was my sister, she would say, "Ah! Taxman! So sorry, but Mother and Father not at home!"

*He laughs at this, alone.*

Ah yes, so funny, Uwe, until she would drink too much and pass out on the floor. In a pool of her own vomit.

*Camille and Simona are looking at each other, horrified.  
Then:*

I am sorry, what was it I was saying?

SIMONA. I think you mean *housekeepers*.

CONRAD. Ach! Yes! *Housekeepers!* (*To Camille.*) You must forgive my Italian, unacceptable, unforgivable.

CAMILLE. I think your Italian is splendid.

CONRAD. (*Fervent, grateful.*) Oh thank you, Camille, thank you.

CAMILLE. Of course, I'm an American, so—

CONRAD. I have always wanted to go. America.

CAMILLE. Not all it's cracked up to be.

*They stare at her, blankly.*

It's an expression. It means "not as magnificent as advertised."

SIMONA. Yes, we don't have that expression. Here everything is exactly as magnificent as advertised.

CAMILLE. Anyway Conrad, I don't find anything about you unforgivable.

CONRAD. So gracious. Not like we Germans, so *strict*. I love Americans, I do. Look at them—Black man in the White *House*! So lovely, Americans—like you, Camille. And the Jews. I loooooove the Jews. Such industrious, intelligence people.

CAMILLE. Thank you, Conrad. We actually won't be needing spoons on the table...we aren't having soup...

CONRAD. Ach! I thought perhaps for the spaghetti, we would need it for the twirling.

CAMILLE. That's not a thing.

CONRAD. Oh, is it not?

SIMONA. She's right, it's really not a thing.

CAMILLE. Everything I know about Italian cooking I learned from you. Like how to take the skin off the salami.

CONRAD. Skin off the salami! Hahahahaha.

*This comes to an ignominious end.*

So then, forks?

*Tommaso then appears, shirtless, in the doorway, a little groggy. Simona notices him.*

SIMONA. Ah! My beast slumbers no more!

TOMMASO. (*Still in a postcoital haze.*) How can I help?

CAMILLE. (*Winking at Simona.*) You've already helped enough I'm sure.

*Simona slaps her arm playfully.*

CONRAD. Tommaso, good evening.

*As Tommaso nods to them both:*

SIMONA. My love, we need some snacks for *l'aperitivo*. Can you go out?

TOMMASO. I'll wear a shirt.

*He kisses her on the lips and starts back into their bedroom.*

SIMONA. Some chips, something interesting, maybe some good olives.

TOMMASO. And a jacket.

SIMONA. Yes, my love, it's January.

TOMMASO. Some olives.

SIMONA. There's money in my purse!

TOMMASO. No no no no no.

*He exits.*

SIMONA. (*Back to the room.*) Now that's a man.

*Conrad, having finished setting the forks, looks up to see the women looking at him.*

CONRAD. Ah yes. Well, then. I will see you both at dinner.

*Camille notices Conrad's second attempt at setting the table.*

CAMILLE. You set a magnificent table, Conrad, thank you.

CONRAD. (*Blushing.*) I am self-taught.

CAMILLE. I am so impressed.

*He goes, inappropriately, to embrace her.*

CONRAD. Thank you, Camille, that means so much.

*He holds the embrace. Too long. She pats his back.*

There is actually something I have been wanting to say. (*Looking at her.*) It is terrible, what we did to your people during the war.

*It's not really what he wanted to say. Stiffly, he turns and retreats up the stairs to his room, mortified. A beat.*

CAMILLE. (*To the empty stairs, bewildered.*) We forgive you?

*She looks back at Simona, amused.*

SIMONA. You cannot forgive him on behalf of all the Jews.

*Alone, on his bed, Conrad beats himself up.*

CONRAD. "What we did to your people during the war"?! Ach.

*He flops over in humiliation.*

CAMILLE. Why is he so awkward?

SIMONA. (*Leveling her gaze.*) Cammie.

CAMILLE. (*Rolling her eyes.*) Ugh, whatever.

*A commotion outside: two male voices laughing, drinking,*

*shout-singing a rhythmic chant in the distance: "L'ombelico Del Mondo...! L'ombelico Del Mondo...!"*

It's them! Fède brought him *thank God*.

*She wipes her hand on an apron, brushes back a lock of hair.*

How do I look?

SIMONA. Like a Disney Princess *before* the Fairy Godmother.

CAMILLE. Aww, yer nice.

*Through the door burst Umberto (26) and Federico (25) who have already both started drinking early, shouting their song joyfully (a cappella). Federico speaks his lines in between the exclamation of the song lyrics.*

UMBERTO e FEDERICO. L'OMBELICO DEL MONDO...!

FEDERICO. *Hello Cammie, how're you doing?*

UMBERTO e FEDERICO. L'OMBELICO DEL MONDO...!

FEDERICO. *Evening Simò, how's my pal?*

UMBERTO e FEDERICO. L'OMBELICO DEL MONDO...!

FEDERICO. *Cammie, you are looking lovely!*

UMBERTO e FEDERICO. L'OMBELICO DEL MONDO...!

FEDERICO. *(Still in tempo, to Camille.) Get ready, come on dance with me!*

*He takes Camille in his arms to dance with her.*

UMBERTO. *(By himself, dropping off...) L'ombelico del...*

*She deftly extricates herself from Federico's embrace.*

CAMILLE. God, come on! I'm all covered in flour!

FEDERICO. *(Devilishly.)* Exactly.

*Camille brushes that off and turns the awkward moment into a greeting, kissing Federico on both cheeks, as Umberto greets Simona, who hugs him hello, also double-kissing.*

SIMONA. Hello boys, a little more uproarious than usual, I see.

*Simona embraces Federico the same, while Umberto faces Camille, arms open. She smiles.*

UMBERTO. Well, it is a special occasion.

*They embrace, double-kiss.*

FEDERICO. Why, because an American has cooked dinner?

UMBERTO. No, because *our* American has cooked dinner.

CAMILLE. Not a word until you actually *taste* the food. Otherwise you're just gonna jinx it. What song was that? Catchy.

*The boys look at each other—and crack up, singing it again.*

UMBERTO e FEDERICO. *L'OMBELICO DEL MONDO...!*

FEDERICO. *Yes, we know it is quite catchy!*

UMBERTO e FEDERICO. *L'OMBELICO DEL MONDO...!*

FEDERICO. *In fact it is a famous saying...*

CAMILLE. Okay, okay! What is it? “The Umbilical of the World”?

UMBERTO. *(Correcting.)* “The Bellybutton of the World.”

CAMILLE. And what, pray tell, is that supposed to mean?

FEDERICO. *(Passionate, drunk, inspired.)* It means *us*, Camille, our town, *Ferrara*, center of the Universe. Some say it's Rome, some say it's Paris or New York, but no, to us it is this place, where we are right now, *Ferrara*, heart of Italy, giver of life, nurturer of art, the cradle of civilization as we know it! Home of the *Diamanti* and the Medieval Walls, *Castello Estense* and its glorious moat! And *we few*, we happy few, we band of misfits—it is for us alone to put it to our lips, to suck it into our bellies, and to *fuck the living shit out of it* until it begs for mercy!

*Camille laughs at Federico delightedly; he is, in his exuberant way, quite charming.*

SIMONA. He really does love that moat though.

CAMILLE. I love it too! It's one of the only original moats left in Italy, did you all know that?

SIMONA. No we did not, Ms. America, we just live in this town, we don't study it.

CAMILLE. Well, maybe you should. My medieval art professor could teach you a thing or two.

FEDERICO. I'll teach you a thing or two. Smoochie-Goochie...!

*Federico launches into one of his many games.*

CAMILLE. What?!

SIMONA. Oh no, not Smoochie-Goochie!

UMBERTO. This is how we got into trouble with the wine merchant.

FEDERICO. (*Playful, defiant.*) I've called Smoochie-Goochie!  
And now you must submit!

*He dips Camille, to kiss her. She's embarrassed in front of Umberto, but without killing the playful mood, extricates herself deftly once again.*

CAMILLE. (*As if disciplining a dog.*) No! Bad Smoochie-Goochie, sit!

SIMONA. I hate Smoochie-Goochie.

FEDERICO. *No, you don't! Smoochie-Goochie!*

*Goes to kiss Simona on the lips—*

SIMONA. Ugh, *fine.*

*She grabs his face and does the kissing for him.*

*He laughs, and continues onto Umberto, his next victim.*

FEDERICO. *Smoochie-Goochie!*

UMBERTO. We all hate Smoochie-Goochie, Fède! Just accept it and move on!

FEDERICO. Smoochie-Goochie can never move on! It must be satiated!

*Federico goes to kiss Umberto on the lips. Umberto resists briefly before giving in to get it over with. Camille laughs delightedly.*

UMBERTO. Ugh! You reek, my friend!

SIMONA. Wait, what about the wine merchant?

FEDERICO. What?

SIMONA. You said something about the wine merchant and Smoochie-Goochie.

FEDERICO. I said nothing.

CAMILLE. You Smoochie-Goochied the wine merchant?

SIMONA. Oh, my lord. Not Paolo.

FEDERICO. Well, what was I supposed to do? We had no money for the wine! Well, we had *some* money for the wine.

UMBERTO. But we drank that wine.



FEDERICO. So we went to buy new wine, and found ourselves unaccountably short. Not Umberto, you understand, whose stature is second to no man, morally anyway—

SIMONA. So what did you do?

FEDERICO. I did the only thing a man in my situation could do.

CAMILLE. You called Smoochie-Goochie?

FEDERICO. *I called Smoochie-Goochie!*

SIMONA. (*Visibly frustrated.*) Now we can never go back there again! Paolo wouldn't want to kiss a man!

FEDERICO. Woman, man, female, male, Smoochie-Goochie cares not of such things! Smoochie-Goochie is all-knowing, all-seeing, and all-consuming with the power of love!

*He makes another pass at Camille, who has finally had it.*

CAMILLE. (*Sternly, not fun anymore.*) Fède, it's enough!

*The jollity stops. A pause.*

FEDERICO. Smoochie-Goochie is impervious.

*Tommaso has reentered with his jacket on.*

TOMMASO. Did I miss Smoochie-Goochie?

*Simona goes to him, lovingly ushering him out.*

SIMONA. Wine, my love. *Spaghetтата alla Norma*, nine people.

TOMMASO. I love Smoochie-Goochie.

SIMONA. I know my love, I know.

*He is gone. Simona reenters the room to a sheepish Federico.*

Now you see sir, how your fooling grows old and people dislike it.

FEDERICO. Really? *Twelfth Night*?

SIMONA. (*On her way to the bathroom.*) You cannot play Smoochie-Goochie with everyone!

*Simona enters the bathroom adjacent to the kitchen and shuts the door.*

FEDERICO. (*To Camille.*) Will she never learn to love me as I am?

CAMILLE. She might. If you stop forcing your mouth onto her mouth.

FEDERICO. Interesting.

UMBERTO. (*Surveying the kitchen.*) Is this all for your friend, Cammie? It is quite elaborate.

CAMILLE. (*Love haze for him.*) Uhhh, yeah...and boys, listen. Speaking of Cooper. You have to indulge her.

UMBERTO. How so?

CAMILLE. Her Italian...just a bit.

UMBERTO. She doesn't speak Italian?

CAMILLE. No no, of course she does! Two years of college-level courses!

FEDERICO. So then, no Italian.

CAMILLE. Of course, she speaks it, it's just not at the—level you all are used to, so you have to be nice. I want her to have a good first impression of Italy.

UMBERTO. That is kind of you.

CAMILLE. I want her to feel what I felt. It was love at first sight.

*As she moons over Umberto...*

UMBERTO. And what was the first sight in *Ferrara* with which you fell in love?

CAMILLE. Well, I arrived at the train station midafternoon and took one of the three taxis in town to right outside this house. I got out of the taxi and rang the bell. No one was home. Great, I thought, here I am with all my possessions and no one to let me in. All of a sudden, a Vespa rounds the bend, and the couple upon it floats to a stop and removes their helmets to reveal the two most intimidatingly beautiful people I've ever seen: Simona and Tommaso. Now *that* was love at first sight.

SIMONA. (*O.S., from inside the bathroom.*) Awwww...

CAMILLE. One so wise, and the other so like a goddess. Who knew she'd turn out to be the most wonderful roommate in the world.

*Conrad has entered the kitchen just in time to hear this last phrase. He lights up visibly.*

CONRAD. Who is the most wonderful roommate in the world?

FEDERICO. You, of course.

UMBERTO. Cammie was speaking of the Lady of the House.

CONRAD. I see.

FEDERICO. (*Undaunted, to Conrad.*) But the real answer is you!  
*Smoochie-Goochie!*

CONRAD. (*Running away.*) Aaaaahhhh!!!

FEDERICO. Come here, you little Bavarian Creampuff!

*As Conrad is chased around the room, Camille and Umberto laughing with glee...*

CONRAD. I do not like the Smoochie-Goochie, Federico!

UMBERTO. (*Half to Camille.*) You cannot have a party without Smoochie-Goochie.

CAMILLE. Apparently not.

CONRAD. Then I would prefer the party start without me!

RAFFAELLA. (*Who has let herself in, grandly, holding up a bottle of wine.*) The party starts now, who needs wine!

*They all turn toward her, delighted at her grand entrance.*

ALL EXCEPT RAFFAELLA. (*Ad lib.*) RAFFAELLA!!!

CONRAD. (*Relieved of the chase.*) Oh, thank goodness.

*Camille is first to meet Raffaella's embrace.*

CAMILLE. Raffaella!

*They all converge on Raffaella and embrace and kiss on both cheeks, one at a time. Where some may air-kiss, Raffaella really does kiss on both cheeks.*

RAFFAELLA. Camille, you are a vision of domesticity!

CAMILLE. Thank you, thank you! (*Taking the wine from her.*) And congratulations! You win the wine-bringing competition.

RAFFAELLA. I have a feeling I was the only one in the race. Where are my boys! Fède, it has been too long!

FEDERICO. (*As they kiss on both cheeks.*) It has been five hours.

RAFFAELLA. It's too long! You too, dear Umberto, good evening. I have nothing to say to you, I am unworthy of your beauty.

UMBERTO. It cannot be helped.

*Raffaella and Umberto kiss on both cheeks.*

RAFFAELLA. My handsome, delicious boys. (*Spotting him.*) And

*you, Conrad! (Kisses both cheeks, then with affection.)* How is my Tin Soldier?

CONRAD. (*Embarrassed.*) Raffaella, you know I don't—

RAFFAELLA. Ohhhh my Little Tin Soldier, where are your manners? You don't offer to take a lady's coat?

CONRAD. Of course, I thought—

RAFFAELLA. What, that I could rely on these two rogues to have any sense of gallantry? They are mere boys compared to my Little Tin Soldier. You're the one who understands how to be a host.

CONRAD. (*Taking her coat.*) Yes, of course, let me take that.

*He exits with the coat, as Raffaella, victorious, grandly breathes it all in.*

RAFFAELLA. Mmmm, it smells so good in here. Where's Simona?

SIMONA. (O.S.) I'm in the bathroom, and I can hear every word!

RAFFAELLA. My best friend, she doesn't trust me.

SIMONA. (O.S.) I hear that too!

RAFFAELLA. And where is my Kitten? Where is Sofia?

CAMILLE. Where do you think? At the library. She hardly ever leaves! I see her brushing her teeth once in the morning and once at night and that's it! She puts every student to shame.

RAFFAELLA. My sweet Spanish Kitten, who wants to be a little school mouse.

FEDERICO. Raffaella is obsessed.

*Camille laughs, delighted.*

If you want to compete with Sofia's books for her attention, I warn you, it is an uphill battle.

RAFFAELLA. And I shall be victorious! I can teach her much more than any one of those silly books she has keeping her company in that old dusty library.

FEDERICO. Oh yeah? Like what.

RAFFAELLA. Like how to *live*, Federico. I could teach *you* the same lesson.

FEDERICO. I *know* how to live, Raffa.

RAFFAELLA. You know how to drink.

FEDERICO. Careful with your life lessons Raffa, Sofia is an innocent.

RAFFAELLA. Ah! Sofia is *playing* an innocent, but I see more under that wild mane of curly locks!

FEDERICO. Yes! She is a person!

RAFFAELLA. Shrewdly observed, Federico. She is a person, she is not, in fact, an alien from out of space, and *yet!* She holds some secret, some deep, dark mystery beneath the surface...

CAMILLE. Oh, Raffa, Sofia is just sweet. You can't accept the fact that someone is just sweet.

RAFFAELLA. Something perhaps not to trust.

UMBERTO. But she is your Kitten.

RAFFAELLA. Kittens are sweet. And yet they have CLAWS!

*She toyingly attacks Umberto, getting physical with him... tickling...when he resists, she grabs at him, and as they tussle:*

Camille! Sister, rescue me from this wild woodland beast!

CONRAD. (*Who has returned.*) Ah, it is a game!

FEDERICO. I'll rescue you.

RAFFAELLA. It must be Cammie.

CAMILLE. (*Uncomfortable at the physicality between Raffaella and Umberto.*) Why me?

RAFFAELLA. He is relentless!

UMBERTO. You started it!

RAFFAELLA. And I shall finish it!

*She plants a kiss on Umberto, a good, hard, long one... It lasts until she knows Camille has seen it...then she breaks it off, muscularly. A beat.*

FEDERICO. Smoochie-Goochie?

*Camille back to work, defeated.*

CAMILLE. You can't call it after the fact.

RAFFAELLA. I have tamed the Wild Umberto!

*Simona enters from the bathroom, dolled up for dinner, and she does look fantastic.*

SIMONA. You cannot tame in others that within yourself runs wild.

*They are mutually breathtaken.*

RAFFAELLA. Poetess!

FEDERICO. Sorceress! Enchantress!

RAFFAELLA. Look at this vision! How dare you, outshine us all?

*Simona grandly holds out her hand, flicking her wrist like demented royalty. Repeatedly.*

SIMONA. Yes, it is I! Kiss my hand. Kiss it!

CONRAD. (*Who has just returned.*) Ach, it is a game.

*Everyone obliges, bowing low.*

RAFFAELLA. My lady.

SIMONA. All of you, I am the Lady of the House. Kiss me. Kiss my hand.

*Federico and Umberto take turns kissing Simona's hand.*

FEDERICO. My lady.

SIMONA. Kiss it! Kiss it!

*Federico does.*

UMBERTO. My lady.

*Umberto kisses her hand.*

CAMILLE. Unless you want flour all over your gown, I will have to sit this one out, m'lady.

SIMONA. This dinner had better be *perfection*. We have a new arrival.

RAFFAELLA. Ah, yes! Where is the fresh American?

CAMILLE. Should be here any minute.

SIMONA. And how is the *spaghetтата*?

RAFFAELLA. I can't wait to sink my teeth into that.

CAMILLE. Well it won't be long now.

RAFFAELLA. I meant the American.

SIMONA. Here, boys, help...

*They do, rushing about helpfully.*

CAMILLE. Oh, and Raffa! That reminds me...about Cooper.

RAFFAELLA. Yes, what about her?

CAMILLE. You have to be—

*But Tommaso, rolling two girly suitcases, ushers in Cooper (20), the aforementioned American.*

TOMMASO. Look who I found!

*The room erupts. Camille screams with excitement, Cooper joining in as they run to each other.*

SIMONA. Tommaso, did you bring the wine?

*He holds it up.*

You are perfection, my perfect love. Where are the snacks, we won't need them.

*She takes the wine and food from him, as Camille introduces:*

CAMILLE. Everyone, this is my best friend in the whole world, and our new next-door roommate for the next nine months, Cooper!

COOPER. (*Eager, nervous.*) Goodbye, everyone! Goodbye!

*A beat...*

FEDERICO. Hello...

*They all echo Federico, helpfully... "Hello..." ad lib.*

COOPER. Hello! Yes, of course, hello. I am Cooper.

*Raffaella drinks this new one in.*

SIMONA. Welcome to Italy.

COOPER. Thank you. (*A grand compliment.*) Everything here smells! (*Off them all looking at her.*) What for dinner?

*Raffaella lifts her glass to Cooper, with secret delight.*

*Blackout.*

*Music: a biting tribal waltz reminiscent of the "Dolcenera" by Fabrizio De André. Leading into:*

## Scena Due

*La casa. Several hours later. Night.*

*Sofia (18, Spanish) is holding forth, with boundless, youthful enthusiasm, despite the lateness of the hour. Still stuffed full of wine and pasta, everyone else is either asleep (Tommaso) or struggling to remain awake (Simona). Federico stands to the side, calm but alert, smoldering underneath. Conrad, sleepy, is too polite not to pretend to follow. Umberto and Camille are in collusion, as if in on their own private joke. Cooper hangs onto Sofia's every word, trying to keep up with her Spanish-accented Italian. And Raffaella sits quietly in the dark, glass in hand, as though lying in wait. Sofia speaks in a sort of lilting stream of consciousness.*

SOFIA. It's an epidemic now in Italy. Not just the McDonald's, that's bad enough, they put it right in the middle of *Piazza Duomo*, do you know that a Quarter Pounder with Cheese does not even qualify as food, it all comes out of the same tube with the fries and the shakes and the apple pies? It's true, there is a thirty-five percent nutritional threshold that must be met to even qualify as food, and it doesn't, with all the chemicals and preservatives and the hormones and the PCBs, anyway, this is what I study, this is not the problem, the problem is the girl in the ads, and this is what I am talking about with my study group in the library.

CAMILLE. The girl in the ads?

SOFIA. So in Italy selling everything to everyone, from soap to nuts, why is it that the girl in all the ads is so sexy, she is eating this hamburger, she is making love to the hamburger, she is making me wish I was this hamburger with her lips and her tongue and her face all over this hamburger, enjoying it like it is her lover's kiss, but on her left hand she must be—and I stress, *must be*—wearing a wedding ring! Yes! This is where I have the Madonna-Whore complex, because this sexy girl eating this hamburger is taken, you cannot be her hamburger, every time you see an ad with a woman



in it she is invariably wearing a huge diamond wedding ring or a nice modest gold one. And what is this saying?

CAMILLE. You cannot be her hamburger.

UMBERTO. (*Playing to Camille.*) It's the McDonna-McWhore meal.

CAMILLE. But that's my McFavorite.

SOFIA. Why does she have to be married to sell this hamburger to me? What about her being married makes me want to buy this hamburger more? She is at once sexy and moral so *oh well!* The sexy married lady you cannot have is selling you the hamburgers you should not eat because they are killing you, to say nothing of how we are all being brainwashed by a patriarchal society that assumes she hasn't chosen to be with a woman for the rest of her life and so thus and therefore will not acknowledge the wide spectrum of LGBT identity, and that is what I am in the library discussing instead of studying my microbiology final. Federico, why are you standing all the way over there?

*All eyes on Federico.*

FEDERICO. I'm sorry, what?

SOFIA. It's an epidemic!

COOPER. McDonald's?

SOFIA. Have you been listening?

COOPER. My Italian... I understood "McDonald's."

SOFIA. It's the ads! The ads! The message is you are only worth taking advice from in Italy if you are married!

CONRAD. Yes!

COOPER. Hamburgers is bad!

UMBERTO. (*Playfully.*) Yes!

CAMILLE. (*Enjoying him.*) Really? That too?

COOPER. I'm just trying to keep up.

SOFIA. They are perpetuating institutional misogyny! Federico, why are you standing so far away. (*Patting a chair beside her.*) Come, sit.

*A pause. Federico, deathly, possibly nudging her with his foot:*

FEDERICO. Simò. Extricate yourself.

*Simona jerks awake.*

SIMONA. Eh?

FEDERICO. I need a smoke.

*Simona is trapped under Tommaso. She looks up helplessly at Federico. As he comes to her aid, flopping Tommaso to the side and ushering her out for a smoke, Sofia looks longingly at Federico:*

RAFFAELLA. (Now with the “adults” out of the room.) Did they shush you in the library?

SOFIA. What?

RAFFAELLA. It sounds like you were making a lot of noise in the library. Did they shush you?

SOFIA. (Uneasily.) No...

RAFFAELLA. Not even to call “bullshit”?

*Lights shift to join Federico e Simona. They light up.*

SIMONA. You should be nicer to Sofia.

FEDERICO. Why? Because she makes reference to the Madonna-Whore complex without knowing what it is?

SIMONA. She is young and passionate, do not fault her for being just like you at eighteen.

FEDERICO. Being like me is not a defense.

SIMONA. I think she likes you.

FEDERICO. I don't care. Did you see Umberto in there? Flirting with her, coming up with all these private jokes?

SIMONA. With Sofia?

*Federico glares at her.*

FEDERICO. You are not so dim, yes?

SIMONA. Fède, you have to forget about Camille, she is not for you.

FEDERICO. She is precisely for me, and Umberto fucking knows it.

SIMONA. Have you told him how you feel?

FEDERICO. I shouldn't have to. He should know.

SIMONA. How? He has magical powers?

FEDERICO. Apparently he does. He has bewitched her.

SIMONA. And have you told her how you feel?

FEDERICO. You see us together, how she laughs, how I am able to be myself with her!

SIMONA. You are afraid to tell her. So she'll never know. She's not bewitched, sweet boy, she's not a child. She has feelings for him. Genuine feelings. She loves him.

*Federico pauses.*

FEDERICO. She said that?

SIMONA. In so many words.

FEDERICO. What were the words?

SIMONA. Fède.

FEDERICO. She doesn't know him.

SIMONA. He is your best friend.

FEDERICO. Not anymore.

SIMONA. Fède, you're drunk, and tired.

FEDERICO. I am perfectly lucid. And what I have been witnessing for the last two hours has only wakened me up. To what is real. Umberto is a snake.

*He stubs out his cigarette, starting back inside.*

SIMONA. Federico! Think this through. She does not love you.

*This successfully holds him back, as again the lights shift.*

*Raffaella is deftly, calmly picking Sofia apart. No one else knows what to say, or dares.*

RAFFAELLA. You act as though you are offended by these ads. They are sexist, they diminish women to a man-hungry, marriage-obsessed stereotype. When you are the biggest cliché of all.

CAMILLE. Come on Raffa.

RAFFAELLA. *(Still to Sofia.)* You are practically salivating for the attention of Federico. If only he would see you there, wanting him, that would be enough. It will never be enough. You talk a big game of stamping out the patriarchy and dismantling institutional

**The play doesn't end here...**

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