

MARC  
IN  
VENICE

*A Romantic Adventure  
in Three Centuries*

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# MARC IN VENICE

## CAST

### In 1st Century Venice:

Marcus – writer of the Gospel, male, 30's  
Angel – messenger from God, female, ageless

### In 13<sup>th</sup> Century Venice

Marco Polo – the great adventurer, male, 40's  
Niccolo – Marco's father, male, 60's  
Maffeo – Marco's uncle, male, 60's  
Francesca – Marco's aunt, female, 60's  
Catherine – Marco's aunt, Maffeo's wife, female, 60's  
Fiordelisa - Marco's cousin, Maffeo's daughter, female, 30's  
Maffeo, the Younger – Marco's brother, male, 30's  
Pietro – Marco's friend, male, 30-40's  
Giovanni – Marco's friend, male, 30-40's  
Cardinal – Archbishop of Venice, male, 60-70's  
Rustichello – a scribe from Pisa, male, 40-50's

### In 21<sup>st</sup> Century Venice

Marc – American tourist, recent college graduate, male, 20's  
Nic – Marc's traveling companion, male, 20's  
Will – Marc's traveling companion, male, 20's  
Angelo – a young, Venetian restaurant owner, male, 20-30's  
Millie – American tourist, female, 60's  
Edna - Millie's traveling companion, female, 60's  
Vaporetto Conductor – Simple civil servant, male, 50-60's  
Julie – Marc's fiancé, female, 20's  
Father – Marc's father, male, 60's  
(Non-Speaking roles: Boat hands, Italian girls)

### *For doubling roles using 11 actors (8 M, 3 F):*

Marc  
Marco  
Marcus  
Angelo  
Angel/Fiordelisa/Julie/Nic's Italian Date (non-speaking)  
Will/Pietro/Hand on Vaporetto (non-speaking)  
Nic/Giovanni/Hand on Vaporetto (non-speaking)  
Niccolo/ Maffeo, the Younger/Vaporetto Captain/Rustichello  
Maffeo/Cardinal/Father  
Edna/Francesca  
Millie/Catherine

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Venice!  | MARC      |
| Home!  | MARCO     |
| A swamp?   | MARCUS    |
| We're in Venice!!  | MARC      |
| We are home.   | MARCO     |
| We're in a swamp!!   | MARCUS    |
| I can't believe I'm  | ALL THREE |
| Here.  | MARC      |
| Back.  | MARCO     |
| In this...   | MARCUS    |
| Amazing city...  | MARC      |
| ...of my birth.  | MARCO     |
| This cesspool.   | MARCUS    |
| Look at this place, it doesn't look real.  | MARC      |
| Of all the places I have been, nothing can compare with your beauty, my lovely queen of the sea. | MARCO     |
| This is a nightmare. God, get me out of here! (MARCUS and MARCO exit.)                           | MARCUS    |

NIC

You see pictures, but...

MARC

But nothing can prepare you for seeing it for real.

WILL

Nothing. This is the real thing.

MARC

Amazing

WILL/NIC

A – maz - ing

NIC

Hey, with all these canals do we get to do a pub swim rather than a crawl. (Laughs)  
Wouldn't that be awesome?

WILL

Awesome until you drown.

NIC

I can swim.

MARC

It's not the swimming we're worried about. It's the drinking you can't do.

NIC

Screw you.

WILL

Blitzed in Berlin.

MARC

Crippled in Copenhagen

WILL

Puked in Prague

NIC

Shut up.

MARC

Vivisected in Vienna.

NIC

Liars.

WILL

A-hole, how would you know the truth, you've passed out in every city we've visited.

MARC

Thanks to you, Nic, our pub crawls have never been more than a short walk.

WILL

Three pubs long at most.

MARC/WILL

London

WILL

And that's only because you spilled your beer in the first pub.

MARC

Kicked us out before you could order anything more.

NIC

I didn't realize I was traveling with my parents.

WILL

I didn't realize I was traveling with such a light weight.

MARC

It's alright man, we love you anyway. *(Goes to hug him.)*

NIC

Get off me.

WILL

Don't worry, Nic, we'll get you a life vest in case you do stagger into a canal.

NIC

Gee, thanks, numb nuts. Hey, Marc, where are we staying?

MARC

I made reservations at a pensione not too far from the Basilica of San Marco.

WILL

How do we get there? A Gondola?

MARC

Only if you want to sink a week's worth of our food money on it. They have bus boats for peasants like us.

NIC

Anybody who has your father for a father is no peasant.

MARC

Yeah, but until I start working for him, I have the bank account of a just-graduated student who worked his way through college as a waiter.

WILL

I'll never understand why you had to work, when he...

MARC

You're right, you will never understand because it's all about that oh, so foreign word integrity.

NIC

Come on, let's get going. This place looks fantastic.

WILL

Are you sure you want to stay here? I noticed some nice hotels before we crossed that long bridge thing.

MARC

The causeway? Of course we want to stay here in the city. It's such a cool place. Let's get the full experience. Come on.

WILL

It's just that I hear that it's sinking. I don't trust the place. *(MARC and WILL exit.)*

NIC

What do you mean sinking? Look here, this building has been standing here since 1285. *(Runs off after the other two.)*

MARCO

*(Looking at same building NIC was looking at.)* This was not here when we left, was it?

MAFFEO

Not that I remember. You have a good eye and a good memory, Marco.

MARCO

So much has changed. Where is father?

NICCOLO

*(Off stage)* A curse be on your house!

MAFFEO

And some things never change.

*(NICCOLO enters brushing himself off.)*

NICCOLO

Superstitious wench.

MAFFEO

What happened?

NICCOLO

Twenty four years of traveling the world, entering city after grand city, welcomed warmly everywhere except here among our own.

MARCO

What is it, father?

NICCOLO

That woman took one look at my attire and started beating me with her broom, shouting “foreign devil, get away from here.”

MARCO

Perhaps the stories of our travels will open Venetian minds to the world beyond our city.

NICCOLO

For all that these adventures have taught you about the world and how they have shaped you, my son, and still you are the idealist.

MAFFEO

There was a day when you were the same, my brother.

NICCOLO

Yes, well clearly I have been paying attention to what life had to teach me.

MAFFEO

Which stories will you tell to change their minds, Marco?

MARCO

I have so much to tell, I fear I might bore them to tears.

MAFFEO

Nonsense, they will be excited to hear.

MARCO

Where will I start, Uncle Maffeo? I want to tell them of Armenia and Persia, of Cathay and India, of the Great Khan...

MAFFEO

And Baghdad. Oh, and you mustn't forget Princess Kokachin.

NICCOLO

Before any stories are told, let us first go to the church of your name sake to offer prayers of thanksgiving for all that has been and for our safe homecoming. And prayers for your, dear mother, God rest her soul.

MARCO

Yes, father. The news of her passing makes this homecoming bittersweet.

MAFFEO

(to NICCOLO) Good you heard of it in Constantinople, dear brother, offering you time to prepare yourself.

NICCOLO

Our family has lived with this grief for 15 years. For us, this news is but three months old. My tears are still fresh. (To MARCO) And you, your sainted mother is gone, how your heart must ache.

MARCO

I fear my memories of her are only those of the child I was.

NICCOLO

Perhaps I was wrong to take you away from your mother and your home when you were just 17.

MARCO

No, father, I would not have had it any other way.

MAFFEO

Peace, Niccolo. Think of what a gift...what a treasury of knowledge you have given him? Be at peace. Your heart will heal from this grief. Come, let us go and pray to our beloved San Marco.

*(MARCUS crawls on stage as if coming on to shore having been washed up from a long period of time in the water. ANGEL enters unseen by MARCUS. Looks to heaven to confirm that this indeed is the one. Works hard to assume the most perfect angelic stance. Takes a big breath and then booms it out.)*

ANGEL

Pax tibi Marcus.

MARCUS

(Startled) Ahh! Who are you?

ANGEL

I am a messenger.

MARCUS

Were you on the ship that I was on?

ANGEL

*(Breaks angelic stance to explain.)* No. I'm from heaven. And I bring you a message. *(Again, works to assume angelic stance.)* Pax, Marcus...

MARCUS

Pax? Ha! Where am I?

ANGEL

(Stepping out of "the stance" again.) The important thing is that you are safe.

MARCUS

I am in a swamp.

ANGEL

But safe in a swamp.

MARCUS

I thought the storm was a dream.

ANGEL

It was real.

MARCUS

The sinking a nightmare.

ANGEL

It happened.

MARCUS

What is going on here?

ANGEL

Peace, Marcus, you are where you are meant to be.

MARCUS

How can I be at peace when I do not know where in God's creation I am?

ANGEL

You are in God's creation, therefore you can be at peace.

MARCUS

Don't talk to me of peace in this wild world, you...you...you who know only God's perfect heaven.

ANGEL

You are safe here.

MARCUS

Am I? Shipwrecked and sitting alone in a swamp. No food, no fresh water, barely any dry land. I'll probably die of mold and mildew.

ANGEL

You will not die. The Lord has need of you. Be at peace.

MARCUS

Stop telling me to be at peace. I do not feel the slightest bit of peace. You know nothing of what makes for peace in this world of insanity. No matter how many times you tell me to be at peace, I WILL NOT BE AT PEACE! (Pause) Perhaps death would be the best thing; then I would know peace.

ANGEL

No, the Lord says (*stops to assume angelic stance for the message*) “You, Marcus, are my evangelist.”

MARCUS

What good news do I have to tell?

ANGEL

You know.

MARCUS

What I know is not what makes for good news.

ANGEL

What you know will bring peace to many.

MARCUS

What I know has brought death to many, and I will find peace when I, too, am cold in the ground. Now leave me to die. (*Stomps off.*)

NIC

Hey, don't leave me. It's like a maze with all these alleys and courtyards and I don't have the map.

WILL

Well, keep up.

NIC

I'm just taking a few pictures.

MARC

A few? You're stopping every five feet.

NIC

I can't help it. Every time I turn a corner I see another beautiful subject.

WILL

Yeah, it's kinda unreal, isn't it?

MARC

Says the man who wanted to stay on the mainland.

WILL

Sure, throw that back in my face.

*(MARC and WILL exit unseen by NIC.)*

NIC

*(Taking another picture.)* You guys are gonna be happy I took these pics. This is the trip of a lifetime. When will we ever be able to travel like this again? *(Sees they're gone and runs after them.)*

MARCUS

Why did I decide to travel with him?

ANGEL

Paul?

MARCUS

Yes, Paul. What was I thinking? I wasn't thinking. That's the problem. I left him once, why did I take up with him again? I should have seen this coming with all that he had been through. Trials, imprisonment, beatings, nearly stoned to death, even. But no, boneheaded me was determined to prove that I had the courage to run the course, finish the race, as he liked to say. I should have embraced my cowardice and stayed home in Jerusalem.

ANGEL

Is that what you really wanted? Would that have been enough for you? Maybe you went with him because you believed with all the passion that he does.

MARCUS

Did, you mean. He did believe. Before...*(Motions getting head cut off. Steps away not really listening to next line.)*

ANGEL

*(Big smile.)* He still has passion for the message, only now what he had hoped in faith he sees in truth.

MARCUS

Of course it would have been enough for me. I would have been more than happy helping my parents run their guest house. They would have been happy. I would have taken it over for them and supported them in their old age. But now look at me. I've abandoned them, run off, and I have nothing to show for it.

ANGEL

Staying there would have been enough even after all that you witnessed that night? And the days that followed?

MARCUS

*(Walks away.)* Oh, don't bring that up.

ANGEL

Don't bring up the great truth that has been revealed to you? Did those days not change your life forever? Change you to the very core of your being?

MARCUS

*(Confronting the angel)* The only thing I want to change about me is where I am now. I want to be at home! *(Exits)*

MAFFEO

We are home. This is our city. We belong here. Why is this so difficult for them to understand?

NICCOLO

Because they are small minded and filled with ignorance.

MARCO

But to not even let us enter the Basilica?

MAFFEO

Dim-witted simpletons dressed in guards' uniforms.

NICCOLO

We don't look like them. We are not dressed like them. Makes me want to shake off the dust of this witless city and go back into the world that has welcomed us at every turn.

MAFFEO

Come, Niccolo, let us go to our family where we can count on a warm welcome.

MARCO

This is our home? Yes?

MAFFEO

Just as you left it.

NICCOLO

Go on, knock. Let us see who is keeping my house and how well.

*(MARCO knocks. FRANCESCA, sister of Marco's mother, answers.)*

FRANCESCA

Who is knocking? Leave us in peace.

NICCOLO

*(Aside)* Oh, not her, too.

MAFFEO

Is this the home of Niccolo Polo?

FRANCESCA

Niccolo the Bastard, you mean.

MARCO

Tanta... (*MAFFEO stops him.*)

MAFFEO

But we understand him to be a good, honest, and upright man.

FRANCESCA

You are strangers to this fair city, as I see by your bushy beards and your strange clothing. Clearly you have been talking to fools who did not know the truth about him. Whoever they were, they did not know this scoundrel who was married to my poor sister. God rest her soul.

NICCOLO

We are most sorry for your loss. What happened to her?

FRANCESCA

The great fool who was her husband went off, taking my dear nephew with him, off to God only knows where. Broke the poor girl's heart. She died fifteen years ago now, leaving the second son in my care. With no father to raise him, the young man has turned into the biggest rascal that Venice has seen.

MAFFEO

*(Aside with pride)* My name sake.

FRANCESCA

It is now, twenty four years since this great abandonment. We can only assume that father and oldest son are dead, as well. It would serve him right. And as if this is not tragedy enough for one family, God help us, any day this house will be taken from us and we will be left to beg in the streets.

MAFFEO

We heard he also had a brother.

FRANCESCA

Insanity must be a curse of the family, for the equally small-minded Maffeo followed his brother into oblivion. His wife and daughter live here, also. Her house lost to the creditors. We are three women alone in this tomb. The scalawag son comes and goes as he wills offering no support, only further heartache. Polo men should be drowned at birth. (*She spits.*) All but one of the servants have been discharged, and soon we, too, will be out, into the street with nothing. Now leave us alone in our grief for what can you strangers do except pray for our speedy death. (*Suddenly an idea hits her and she becomes softer in an instant.*) Unless of course you fine gentlemen...where did you say you were from? (*She makes advances on MARCO.*)

NICCOLO

We did not say...

CATHERINE

*(coming out)* Who is there, Francesca?

FRANCESCA

Three travelers who say they know of your husband. *(Looks to the men asking them.)* Three rich travelers? Yes?

MAFFEO

Pardon our intrusion, madam. We simply were told to come to this house and ask after its master, Niccolo Polo.

CATHERINE

My husband's brother. May he rest in peace.

NICCOLO

He is dead?

CATHERINE

If he is not, then he'd best get to dying and fast, because if I ever see him again I will kill him, slowly and painfully just as these 24 years have been for me a slow and painful death. Niccolo Polo... *(spits)*... this blowhard who led my husband away from me and my daughter. Who stole away his son from my sweet sister-in-law, breaking her heart and sending her to an early grave. This buffoon who has ruined the noble house of Polo, who brought shame on this once great family. May it please God that he be with him and no longer on this earth so that I might not murder him with these hands. *(She lets out a threatening yell that turns into a mournful wail.)*

FRANCESCA

*(Trying to lighten the mood.)* Come, Catherine, these men do not want to hear of our woes. Come, let us welcome them and find hope in their arrival.

FIORDELISA

*(Coming out at the sound of her mother's wailing.)* What is it momma? *(To FRANCESCA)* Why are you upsetting my mother so?

FRANCESCA

These travelers, handsome and noble, wise from many miles of travel, and, I'm sure, enriched by success, these fine men – *(aside)* and there is a young one for you – come speaking of your father and uncle and cousin having met them on the road.

FIORDELISA

How long ago did you see my father? Is he alive? What of my uncle? And of dear, Marco? Oh please, good sirs, tell us of good news and be harbingers of their joyous return.

MAFFEO

Sweet maid, you appear most dedicated to your father.

FIORDELISA

Good sir, I love my father most dearly and have missed him with the deepest sadness. I have pledged not to marry until he returns. Knowing that if he never returns I will die a virgin. And I have so longed for his kind brother, my uncle, and his dear son, who was...(stops) no, is my dear friend. God, bring them home to us.

NICCOLO

Your father and kin, who we met on the road and have great regard for, would be very proud to see such faith and respect in his daughter.

FRANCESCA

*(Breaking in)* Pardon me, please, good gentlemen. *(She picks up CATHERINE from her wailing, and grabs FIORDELISA by the arm.)* Listen to me both of you, since I am the only one not lost in grief nor sailing in the clouds of delusion. Mend your widow's heart and see that you are still very much alive. And gather up your maidenhood and see that you have not even begun to live. It is time to face the truth. Your husband, your father, is never coming home. The list of possible perils that could have befallen him is beyond my speaking. God rest their souls. But as for you who are still in this world, God in his infinite mercy has sent us salvation. Standing before us are three men, two mature and one young, perfectly designed to take the places in this house that we most desperately need them to assume. So shake off your gloom and show them your heart, and more. And let us now, finally, provide for ourselves. *(Flirtatiously taking the lead.)*

Where is it that you have traveled? What riches are you interested in trading for now?

MAFFEO

I cannot continue this any longer. Dearest Catherine, it is me. We have returned.

*(CATHERINE is speechless and looks hard.)*

FRANCESCA

Who is this me? Who is we?

MAFFEO

Catherine. Maffeo, your husband has returned.

CATHERINE

*(Confused, trying to find words.)* I...don't know...

FRANCESCA

*(Stepping in to protect the other two women.)* Oh, vicious scheme. Oh, despicable scoundrels. I see your plot. You learned of us and our vulnerability from our kinsmen, then you killed them thinking you could come and assume their identities. Someone call the guard. Have these men arrested.

FIORDELISA

Wait! Father? Is that really you?

FRANCESCA

Look these men with their bushy beards and their funny clothing. These men are not Venetians. Guards!

CATHERINE

*(Walks up to MAFFEO. Looks him straight in the eye. Kisses him. Steps back and slaps him. Then turns on NICCOLO.)* You who have stolen from me what little life we poor morals have...I will never forgive...*(She starts to rush NICCOLO.)*

*(NICCOLO pulls out a knife which stops CATHERINE'S advance.)*

WOMEN

Oohh!

*(NICCOLO cuts open the sleeve of his robe. Jewels come pouring out. MAFFEO and MARCO do the same.)*

WOMEN

Oohhhhh!

*(FRANCESCA begins to gather up the jewels with unfettered joy.)*

CATHERINE

*(Picks up jewels and looks at them. Turns back to MAFFEO.)* My husband!!! Welcome home! *(They hug.)* Niccolo, you bastard, come give me a kiss. *(They do.)*

FIORDELISA

*(Hugs MAFFEO.)* Papa. *(Then turns to MARCO.)* My cousin. Where have you been?

MARCO

Oh, the stories I have to tell you, dear Fiordelisa, who has grown into such a beautiful young woman. They will fill our evenings long into old age.

FRANCESCA

*(Collects up the jewels. Gives a good look. Yells into the house.)* Angelo, open some wine. The good vintage you were saving for my funeral.

*(ANGELO, dressed as a waiter in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, enters. Music plays. The POLOS exit as if party is off stage.)*

WILL

Can we get a table for three?

ANGELO

Si, if you don't mind a little noise.

NIC

Somebody celebrating something?

ANGELO

A local family is welcoming home some long lost members. Here's a table here.

MARC

They sure look happy.

ANGELO

Italians and our families, we cherish the ones we love. *(He pulls out the chair for MARC, their eyes meet for a second.)*

MARC

*(Taken a bit off guard.)* Thanks.

*(ANGELO exits)*

WILL

This is great. We get to soak up some of the local color.

NIC

And what beautiful color it is. Look at that one dancing there.

MARC

Just when you thought it couldn't get any better. Amazing.

WILL

And smell what's cooking in the kitchen.

NIC

No Chef Boy-ar-dee here.

ANGELO

A bottle of wine compliments of the celebrating family.

NIC

Now you're talking.

MARC

*(To ANGELO)* Thanks.

WILL

Let's hope you do better with wine that you did with beer.

NIC

Stick a meatball in it, pizan. I'm getting a good feeling about this city.

MARC

Right there with you, my friend. It's...breathtaking. *(He can't take his eyes off of ANGELO.)*

*(FRANCESCA returns leading the family in a dance. She comes to NIC and pulls him up to join the dance. WILL and MARC are pulled in as well. At the dancing's height, MARCUS comes running into the middle of the group. ANGELO walks past MARCUS with a tray on which is a bread basket. MARCUS grabs a piece, looks at the bread with disappointment and yells...)*

MARCUS

Take me away from here!

*(The crowd of dancers gives a cheer. MARCUS bites into it and collapses. Blackout. ANGEL enters and sits next to him in silence. He awakens.)*

MARCUS

What was in that bread?

ANGEL

It is the same bread that fell from the heavens and kept the Hebrews nourished in the wilderness. The same bread that I fed to Elijah.

MARCUS

*(Jumping in.)* The bread he served that night.

ANGEL

No. That was something else. So you are remembering. You were there?

MARCUS

I'm always remembering. I can't forget. And yes, I was. I hid in a corner. It was the upper room in my parent's guest house. Two of his disciples came early, to prepare. I'll never forget how silly they were. They were men. They didn't know how to prepare the Passover meal. All their lives they had been served by women. Now, they had to do it themselves. Well, they were supposed to do it. The master had instructed them to do it and yet, they were helpless. So, my mother did it for them. And I helped her. I was eager to help her so that I could see.

ANGEL

See what?

MARCUS

I wanted to see the truth about this man that we had heard so much about. I had seen him once or twice, maybe a little more. But it was always just for a moment as he passed or from deep in a very large crowd. Like that day, a few before Passover, when he came into the city. The cheering crowds were so big. I thought the Roman's would start marching on them. On us. I kept my distance. But that night, here was my chance to really see him, to be close to him, to hear him.

ANGEL

So, what did you see and hear?

MARCUS

I can't put it into words. The warmth, the compassion, the anguish. All the world was in that room.

ANGEL

Yes, it was.

MARCUS

I couldn't breathe. He...he...

ANGEL

Go on.

MARCUS

I can't. I told you, I can't. It's beyond words.

ANGEL

But you must.

MARCUS

I said, I can't. (*runs off*)

ANGEL

(*Calling*) You must find the words.

(*MILLIE and EDNA arrive at the restaurant. It is lunch time.*)

ANGELO

Boun gerno.

MILLIE

Boun gerno.

(*ANGELO brings the two women to a table and gives them menus. He exits.*)

MILLIE

What are you going to have, Edna?

EDNA

Oh, I don't know, I'm too upset to even think about food. We should have never come here.

MILLIE

Relax dear, she'll be all right. But you need to eat something otherwise your blood sugar is going to go all crazy.

EDNA

You order for me. Oh, poor, Doris. Poor, poor, Doris. It's all my fault

No, it's not.

MILLIE

ANGELO

Signori, what may I bring for you?

MILLIE

Just two plates of spaghetti with meat sauce, per favore.

ANGELO

Anything to drink?

EDNA

I need some water.

ANGELO

Spring or sparkling?

EDNA

I just want water.

ANGELO

Yes, I understand, but would you like spring or sparkling?

EDNA

Why must everything be so hard here? I just want water.

ANGELO

Flat or bubbles?

MILLIE

We'll have a bottle of flat, thank you. Per fay-vor-ee.

ANGELO

Prego.

EDNA

Millie, you should have heard her scream in pain when she fell over that other toilet in the bathroom. Why do they need to have two toilets? I don't understand that either.

MILLIE

It's a bidet, dear.

EDNA

Whatever. And why do they make their shower stalls so small? We had more room in our phone booths back home.

MILLIE

Is that what happened?

EDNA

Yes, she was stuck in that tiny stall. She's not as trim as she used to be, truth be told. And when she finally got herself free of that...that...peapod, she stumbled out and tripped over that...that bidet thing. And if the pain of the fall wasn't enough, then she kept crying out as we tried to put some clothes on her before the ambulance came. Ambu-boat I should say. This city is just so strange. Poor dear, she got sea sick on the way to the hospital.

MILLIE

Well, I was worried sick when I knocked on your door and there was no answer. The nice man at the front desk told me where you had gone.

EDNA

A broken arm on our second day here, and it's all my fault.

MILLIE

Stop saying that. It is not.

EDNA

Doris wanted to go to Vegas. We could have gone on a gondola in Vegas just like here, and seen the Eiffel Tower to boot. But no, I had to say "Let's ride in the thing. Let's go to Venice."

MILLIE

Well, I'm glad we came here. I love it.

*(ANGELO brings out a tray with water and bread. MARC enters and sits at another table.)*

MILLIE

Have something to eat, dear. You'll feel better.

*(As ANGELO puts the basket of bread on their table.)*

EDNA

Don't put that basket of bread down. We're on to you and all your hidden charges. Two dollars for a basket of stale bread at dinner last night. They should be ashamed.

MILLIE

Euros, dear.

ANGELO

No charge for bread at this restaurant, signore.

EDNA

What about...

ANGELO

And no service charge. Please, enjoy your meal.

MILLIE

Grazi

ANGELO

Prego.

EDNA

Besides, the one in Vegas isn't old and smelly. And it certainly isn't sinking.

MARC

You must hear it all from us tourists.

ANGELO

Some are more...how should I say...colorful than others.

MARC

So you are a diplomat, as well. Sometimes I want to start speaking with an accent just so that people don't think I'm just another obnoxious American tourist.

ANGELO

Speaking of which, where are your friends?

MARC

Hey, we weren't that bad last night. Were we?

ANGELO

No, I am joking.

MARC

They're still sleeping. Hang over. Too much drinking and up too late.

ANGELO

Staying up late is not easy in Venice. There is so little night life.

MARC

Yeah, well, we have a way of making our own.

ANGELO

Yes, I certainly saw that last night. It was good to have a little life in the trattoria for a change. It sung of stories that we hear of what Venice used to be, in the days of the great merchants and traders; when this little city ruled the world.

MARC

It is amazing how much history is wrapped up in this place. Every step, around every corner.

ANGELO

I am glad that you are appreciating my city so much. Some cannot look past the stories of the sinking and the smell of the water.

MARC

They're blind. And I don't even smell anything. I only see wonder and legends coming to life.

ANGELO

Perhaps you would enjoy a personalized, private tour of the Queen of the Sea. From the water. I have a small boat.

MARC

Really? No, you can't...for me. That would be amazing. Really?

ANGELO

Si. It would be my pleasure.

MARC

Wow. Thanks. Grazie. When?

ANGELO

Let's go now.

MARC

Don't you have to work?

ANGELO

It's a slow day. The rest of the staff will be fine without me. Besides, I own the place. My family owns it. (*ANGELO exits.*)

MARC

Well, if you can.

(*ANGELO comes back without apron.*)

ANGELO

Done. Never let work get in the way of life. In Venice, our history and our culture tells us to live for now, for here. Is this city the sea with land or land with sea? Whichever, we are here, and this is now, and so we live. (*They begin to leave.*)

MARC

Sounds good to me.

ANGELO

This is our truth; it has drawn many to us, and, ironically, sent many of us far. (*They exit.*)

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Gentlemen, never since our Lord God did mold with his hands our first father Adam, even until this day, never has there been – Christian or pagan, or Tartar, or Indian, or any man of any nation, who has traveled as far, amassed as much knowledge of the world's wonders, encountered the vast diversity of earth's people as have my brother, Marco.

PIETRO

Marco!

GIOVANNI

We never thought we would see you again.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Gather round, gentlemen, to listen and to learn. And if you seek riches, rather than knowledge, come even closer. For he recently returned wearing his treasure, literally.

GIOVANNI

Marco, where have you been?

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Where hasn't he been?

PIETRO

Maffeo, we know where you have been.

GIOVANNI

In the skirts of every available woman of Venice.

PIETRO

We want to hear from the legend who is your brother.

MARCO

I am hardly a legend. Just a humble merchant...

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Who has been to the farthest reaches of creation.

PIETRO

Did you visit Armenia?

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Pietro, please. Armenia is our backyard compared to where this man has traveled.

GIOVANNI

Did you go to India?

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

India, please. Of course India. This man has been to Cathay.

PIETRO

Marco, tell us all about it.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Ask him who he worked for.

MARCO

Served.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Forgive me, who he served.

GIOVANNI

Who?

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

The Great Kublai Khan.

GIOVANNI/PIETRO

Maffeo!!!

PIETRO

Let your brother tell his story.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Stories. Many stories. He is going to keep us fascinated for years. That is the truth. Now I'll be quiet.

PIETRO

If only that were the truth.

*(MARCO leads the three off.)*

MARC

This city is amazing. Around every corner there's another amazing sight, another piece of history. It takes your breath away.

ANGELO

It is so refreshing to show a visitor around. It reminds me to look again and to appreciate anew that which I take for granted because I see it every day.

MARC

I don't know if I could ever take this for granted. But then, to tell the truth, I'm sure I do the same back home.

ANGELO

And this is the center of the city. The Piazza de San Marco.

MARC

Oh, my God. This is stunning. What's with the lion? I see it everywhere.

ANGELO

That is the symbol of our patron saint - San Marco.

MARC

And what's that book that he has his paw on?

ANGELO

Tradition tells us that San Marco came to these islands before Venice was here. And while he was here, an angel came to him in a vision and told him to write his gospel. So, on that book it says:

*(MARCUS and ANGEL enter as ANGELO says their respective names. They strike poses.)*

ANGEL

*(In the perfect angelic stance, pulling out all the stops.)* Pax tibi, Marcus, evangelista meus.

ANGELO

Peace unto you, Marc, my evangelist. And he went on to write the gospel that bears his name.

MARCUS

NO! *(ANGELO leads MARC on.)* Find another.

ANGEL

There is no other. You have witnessed a truth that few have seen.

MARCUS

*(Stops just before exiting.)* The truth that I have witnessed few can hear. Few can abide.

ANGEL

But all must hear, so that...

MARCUS

*(Turns)* So that they too can be crucified?

ANGEL

So that they too can live.

MARCUS

Talk to Peter and Paul and hundreds of dead believers of Rome about living.

ANGEL

Peter and Paul talked to you about living, did they not? Did you not hear them?

MARCUS

I heard. But I also saw. Saw Nero massacre hundreds as scapegoats for the fire. Use them for entertainment in the circus. Use them as human torches. Is that the life you are asking me to write about, to draw people into? Who is crazy enough to take that on? Not me. NOT ME! *(Runs away again)*

MARCO

After serving the great Khan for nearly seventeen years, having gained his trust after countless missions and as his ambassador, he entrusted us to take the Princess Kokochin to be married to his nephew in India.

PIETRO

Was she as exotic as her name suggests?

MARCO

In truth she was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.

GIOVANNI

Did she arrive as pure as she departed?

MARCO

In truth she did. The Great Khan trusted me. How could I have insulted him by betraying him?

PIETRO

You do our city proud, oh, honorable one.

MARCO

So finally after many petitions, the Great Khan had given us leave to go from India back to our beloved Venice. (*Looks around.*) Where is my brother?

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

(*entering*) I am here, I am here, hanging on every word.

GIOVANNI

Almost every word. Where did you go?

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

In truth, I must confess, while you were describing the 20,000 courtesans serving the men of Cambaluc... You did say, 20,000 working for the pleasure of the city's men?

MARCO

Yes, it is a large city.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Yes, still 20,000 prostitu...courtesans. (*Big smile*) Hmm...But having heard of them, I found myself suddenly hungering for the far fewer who serve our fair city in such a delicious manor. Forgive my absence. But a brief taste was necessary.

PIETRO

You missed your brother's account of delivering the lovely Princess Cocochin to her intended.

GIOVANNI

The loveliest of buds who remained un-deflowered in your brother's good keeping.

PIETRO

A story you would neither understand nor be able to duplicate.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

That is a truth I cannot, and will not, dispute. Gentlemen, let us retire to our house for food and more of Marco's stories.

MARC

*(Laughing)* Is that story true?

ANGELO

But, of course.

MARC

*(Looks at his watch.)* I gotta get back to the hotel. Will and Nic are gonna be wondering where I've been. Thank you so much, Angelo. This has been amazing.

ANGELO

For me also. It is a pleasure to spend time with you.

MARC

Yeah, I feel the same.

ANGELO

Perhaps we can have more time together.

MARC

I'd like that.

ANGELO

Please, come by the restaurant again tomorrow.

MARC

I will. How about in the morning? Give us more time.

ANGELO

More time. I would like that. *(Starts to leave, remembering)* Oh, yes. This weekend is a great celebration – Festa del Redentore. There will be fireworks in the Lagoon that you and I will watch from my boat and then we will go to the Lido for fires on the beach and to watch the sunrise.

MARC

Wow, that sounds amazing.

ANGELO

It will be amazing. Till tomorrow. *(Kisses him on the lips.)* Arrivederci. *(He exits.)*

MARC

(*Stunned*) Arriveder...

WILL

Hey, there you are.

NIC

Let's get moving and see this stunning city.

MARC

(*Still stunned.*) Well...I've...just had quite a tour. (*Shaking it off.*) So now it would be my pleasure to show you around.

NIC

Someone's in a good mood.

WILL

A tour? By who? Hey, did you shoot a wad of cash and hire a gondolier?

MARC

No, I met someone who...

WILL

You met a girl? Damn, you work fast.

NIC

An Italian girl? She must be gorgeous. Everyone around here is gorgeous. The women, the men.

WILL

Yeah, but let's stick to the women.

NIC

Just saying...

WILL

What's her name?

MARC

(*As WILL slaps him on the back.*) Ange....

WILL

Angela? Nice, name. When do we get to meet her?

MARC

I'm not sure if I'll find her again. We sorta just bumped into each other and then she took me on a tour.

WILL

And you let her get away?

MARC

Well, I knew I needed to get back to you...

NIC

Always the loyal friend. Now if it were Will here, we'd have never seen him again until our departure.

WILL

Ah, forget her. There are plenty of others, and we have only begun to look.

MARC

Speaking of our departure...Angela tells me that there is a big festival this weekend with fireworks. Would you guys be willing to stay a few extra days?

NIC

No complaints from me. I'm planning on loving this place.

WILL

You're not sure if you'll find her again? Sounds like someone is setting up to spend more time with a certain angel. You can tell us the truth, buddy. Come on, let's go find angels for the rest of us.

*(MARCUS comes walking on with hands over ears. ANGEL is following.)*

ANGEL

Peace, Marcus. Be at peace.

MARCUS

Do you want me to be at peace? Is that what God in his infinite wisdom wants for me?

ANGEL

Of course, God is love and...

MARCUS

Then leave me alone. Leave me to die in peace.

ANGEL

But you are called.

MARCUS

Call on someone else. I'll give you some names.

ANGEL

No one else has seen what you have seen. Heard what you have heard.

MARCUS

I'm a failure, remember? Just ask Paul. I'm sure he's up there right now telling everyone what a foolish young man I was and how I came close to ruining his mission.

ANGEL

You mean, Paul the arrogant hothead?

MARCUS

What?

ANGEL

Are you any more of a failure than Peter the denier or Thomas the doubter, James the control freak or Philip the always confused? Are you catching a theme here? He has a way of calling the...ill-equipped.

MARCUS

So I'm being called because of my weaknesses?

ANGEL

Not for me to say. But you must admit there is a bit of a pattern here.

MARCUS

Am I to be the next punch line of this divine joke?

ANGEL

Hey, I'm just delivering the message.

MARCUS

Well, I don't care how perfect this failure is, I'M NOT TAKING THE JOB! NOOO!  
(Runs off.)

ANGEL

(Looks up to heaven) I'm beginning to see his point. Maybe he's not the right one. (Hears an answer.) Okay, okay. (Follows MARCUS off. Calls very half-heartedly.) Peace, Marcus, God says: "you are my evangelist."

(ANGEL stays on stage as MARC, NIC, and WILL enter as if entering a church. Organ music is in the background.)

MARC

(Seeing the altar out in front of them over the audience) Wow!

WILL

Cool church.

NIC

It's not a church. This is a basilica. The second largest in Venice.

MARC

(to NIC) Did you know this was in here?

NIC

Yeah, when I saw that this was the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, I remembered from that Art History course that Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin* was the altar piece.

WILL

You were actually paying attention to the professor in that class? I thought we audited it because it was a chick course.

NIC

I got inspired.

WILL

Wasn't a complete waste. I did bag that one girl. She turned out to be a real screamer. Too loud.

NIC

We are in a church.

MARC

Yeah, and this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

NIC

(*Back to focusing on the art.*) Anyway, Titian was known as the greatest master of the Venetian school. He was celebrated for his use of color.

MARC

I can see why. Look at the red in her robe, and the gold in the clouds. It's breathtaking.

NIC

Bravo, Marc. I never knew you had such an eye for art.

MARC

It's grabbing me like nothing I've ever seen before.

NIC

It is a masterpiece.

MARC

Amen to that. It takes my breath away.

(*Pause*)

WILL

Are we done here?

NIC

Shhh.

MARC

I can't stop looking at it.

WILL

Please don't tell me you're turned on by those little angel dudes.

NIC

They're cherubs. And is it possible that he's turned on by the beauty of this great work of art?

WILL

Whatever. I'll be outside. *(He wonders off.)*

*(As NIC continues, the ANGEL takes MARC'S hands and throws them up as if inviting him to fly with her. They continue to fly as ANGELO walks on from behind MARC. At NIC's "blessing" ANGELO wraps his arms around MARC from behind and MARC melts into the embrace. The ANGEL beams with joy.)*

NIC

Look at them reaching for her. Their faces in unbridled ecstasy. Look at that one who can't even stand up. They all want what she is experiencing. And she is stunned into perfect submission. Eyes set on the one who chose her, challenged her, who loved her. It wasn't a perfect or easy life being the mother of Jesus. But she knew a pinnacle of blessing that no one else in that crowd, or in any crowd, would ever know.

MARC

I feel it. I feel her joy.

*(As soon as NIC speaks MARC snaps out of the fantasy, ANGELO releases him and exits.)*

NIC

Okay. Another Titian fan. I knew you had it in you. *(Takes a good look at MARC.)* This Angela is having quite the effect on you.

MARC

Why do you say that?

NIC

We've looked at a lot of works of art on this trip and I've never seen you react like this to anything. You're seeing the world in a new way, my friend.

MARC

Maybe it's Titian.

NIC

Maybe it is. Or maybe it's...whatever it is, it suits you. Go with it. Come on, we better go and collect up the artistically challenged one. *(Starts to leave. MARC continues to stare at the painting.)* You coming?

MARC

*(Not taking his eyes off the painting.)* Yeah, yeah. Right behind you.

*(As they exit, MILLIE and EDNA wonder in. After some looking around MILLIE sees the altar piece that the boys were looking at. She consults her guidebook.)*

MILLIE

*(In a loud "churchy" whisper.)* Edna. Edna. Look at this.

EDNA

*(Walks over to her.)* Well, that's certainly a big painting.

MILLIE

Isn't it beautiful. It's by Titian. And it is called "The Assumption of the Virgin."

EDNA

Is that suppose to be Mary?

MILLIE

Yes. That's her being taken up into heaven at the end of her life.

EDNA

Where is that in the Bible? I don't remember ever studying that story in Bible study.

MILLIE

Well, it's not in the Bible.

EDNA

You mean they made it up?

MILLIE

The story is part of the tradition.

EDNA

Whose tradition? Not ours.

MILLIE

Roman Catholic tradition.

EDNA

We don't believe it. *(Slight pause.)* Do we?

MILLIE

No, dear. It's not part of what we believe. But just look at how beautiful it is. And look at those colors.

EDNA

How can they just make this up? So Mary didn't die? She just floated up into heaven.

MILLIE

I think, since they believe she was born without original sin, she didn't die. And so she was taken up bodily into heaven.

EDNA

Well, I never. I'm not comfortable with them making up stories. And putting them in churches. I think we should leave.

MILLIE

Maybe we could just look at it as an expression of faith.

EDNA

Faith in made up stories? That's not for me. Come along.

*(MILLIE holds back. The ANGEL brushes her cheek as she continues to lose herself in the painting. MILLIE gives a pleasurable shudder. Then sees that EDNA is just about out of sight.)*

MILLIE

Coming, dear. *(She exits.)*

*(The ANGEL exits in a different direction looking for MARCUS. MARCO, at home with MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER, PIETRO, GIOVANNI. Food and drink is being enjoyed.)*

MARCO

My dear brother, here is a story of a woman some might think unreal. And I tell it just for you.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

For me? Then it must be her unmatched beauty that makes it so fantastic.

MARCO

I heard this one, I did not live it. But it does indeed feature a woman without equal.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Tell us the story, dear brother.

MARCO

Kaidu is a king in Turkestan. His daughter, whose name means 'Bright Moon' was known throughout the land for her...

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Her beauty?

MARCO

Her strength.

*(The gentlemen react, eager to hear more.)*

MARCO

Now Kaidu wished to give his daughter a husband. However, she vowed that she would not marry anyone unless he could get the better of her in a trial of strength. No one in the kingdom could match the dear princess, Bright Moon.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Obviously no men of Venice had been put to the test.

MARCO

Finally, at a loss for any further suitors, or shall we say opponents, her father, the king, granted his daughter the privilege to marry whomever she pleased. The young princess rejoiced at this and made it known in many parts of the world that the invitation was extended to any youth to come and try his strength and perhaps win a princess for a wife.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

How is it that this invitation never reached our great city?

MARCO

*(Grabs PIETRO's hand pretending to wrestle him.)* The trial was such that if the young man forced her to the ground, he would have her to wife. But if she vanquished him, *(Tosses him.)* he must forfeit one hundred horses. By these trials she gained ten thousand horses.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Not a real man in their midst, obviously. Give us a try.

MARCO

Now there came a son of a rich king, *(Uses GIOVANNI as the prince.)* a handsome and youthful prince, attended to by a fine company and leading a thousand very fine horses, asking to try his strength with the damsel. For, like her, he had never been matched by anyone. The king, her father, was delighted with this prospect. The youth was handsome, his father was rich and royal. So eager to see him marry his daughter, he pulled the princess aside and urged her to let herself be vanquished. But she refused to surrender thus for anything in the world.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

This truly is the woman for me. If only I could find such fire in a Venetian lady.

GIOVANNI

What would you do? Marry her.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Indeed I would.

PIETRO

And tie you down with matrimonial cords? Never, even if she could lift those thousand horses.

MARCO

So the day of the contest arrived. The king and queen took their place, a great gathering of men and women had assembled. The two entered the ring of contest, each one more handsome than the other. The crowd was taken by the perfection of this match and wished for this to be the day that the princess would finally lose and thus win a husband. The two came to grips. (Wrestles with GIONVANNI) One pulled this way, the other pulled that way. (Pause)

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

And? The outcome was?

PIETRO

Come, Marco, make the tale no longer.

MARCO

(Throws GIOVANNI) The princess vanquished the young prince, winning the thousand horses that he had pledged, and sending the humiliated prince, till that day unvanquished, home to his father.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

And what of my wife to be?

MARCO

After that, Kaidu took his daughter into many a battle. And in every mêlée, there was never a knight who could best the dear Princess Bright Moon.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Take me to her. I will pin her and she will be happiest for her loss.

PIETRO

Who is telling the tales now?

ANGELO

Boun gerno, amore mio. (Goes to embrace MARC.)

MARC

(Participates passively in the hug.) Hey, Angelo.

ANGELO

Did you have a nice evening with your friends?

MARC

Yeah, we had a good time.

ANGELO

Molto bene. Today I am going to show you the notorious romantic side of Venice.

MARC

Great. But, before we do, I need to ask...

ANGELO

Yes?

MARC

Yesterday, when you kissed me good bye, was that just something that Italian men do among friends?

ANGELO

They do. But I kissed you because after spending a wonderful day with you I found myself developing good feelings for you.

MARC

That's what I was afraid of.

ANGELO

Oh, please forgive me. How forward of me? You have a boyfriend. Of course you do. Someone as handsome and sweet as you.

MARC

No, no. I don't have a boyfriend. I have a girlfriend.

ANGELO

Oh, then I am truly sorry.

MARC

No need to be sorry, I should have said something.

ANGELO

No, I am not sorry to you. I am sorry for me. For my heart is sad at what now seems impossible.

MARC

Then, it is I, (*corrects*) it's me who should say, I'm sorry. I had a feeling that there was something (*searching for the word*) happening while we were together. I should have spoken up. But I liked it. I was really enjoying it, you, our time.

ANGELO

And your girlfriend?

MARC

Yeah, I don't know. (*Trying to make light and not ask the heavy questions*) Land, sea, which am I?

ANGELO

And when you find the answer, perhaps my heart will even break...a little.

MARC

God, I hope not. I don't want that.

ANGELO

Bene. I believe you.

MARC

Before this gets any more complicated maybe I should just go. Just pretend this never happened.

ANGELO

No! Pretend? You mean lie to ourselves. Lie about the good feelings we have. How can you lie about something of value? No. Perhaps we will become friends who enjoy spending time together.

MARC

I feel that already.

ANGELO

So, this is now and we are here, who is to say where we will go. But, how can we do other than take the risk? Our adventure has already begun.

MARC

Such a risk you take for me? I don't deserve...

ANGELO

Well, I deserve you, so come. Let's continue our tour and see what we discover. Venice has a way of exposing the truth as we stand between land and sea.

FRANCESCA

(*Dressed in ostentatious finery compared to the tattered rags she was wearing when the travelers arrived home.*) Marco. Marco! (*Runs on and off.*)

MARCO

(*Entering engaged in conversation with CATHERINE, who is also nicely dressed.*) It was the ugliest animal. With just one horn coming right out of the middle of its head.

CATHERINE

You mean a unicorn.

MARCO

No, it had none of the beauty and elegance that they are said to have had. This was big and armored and hideous.

CATHERINE

Do I dare believe you?

MARCO

I speak the truth.

FRANCESCA

*(Reenters, sees them, and interrupting)* Marco! There is a messenger. From the Cardinal. You have been summoned for an audience.

MARCO

Why does the Cardinal wish to see me? I've done nothing wrong.

FRANCESCA

There is no why. There is only a summons. Immediately.

CATHERINE

What could it be? I would understand if he summoned your brother and threatened him with castration for all his notorious whoring and cockleding.

FRANCESCA

God have mercy on that boy's soul. I have spent more hours on my knees in prayer than his countless women have spent on their knees in *(Shrieks.)*...God forgive my thoughts. *(Crosses herself.)*

CATHERINE

But why Marco?

MARCO

Perhaps he has heard of my adventures and he wants to hear stories for himself.

FRANCESCA

Mary, Mother of Jesus, you have been away a long time. You know nothing about your own city. The Cardinal does not invite people like us for social calls.

CATHERINE

*(Explaining to MARCO)* He has grown to be a very powerful man.

MARCO

Well, I have nothing to hide. I will go and see what he wants.

FRANCESCA

Not before you prepare, my dear nephew. *(Kneeling)*

MARCO

Prepare?

FRANCESCA

Prepare. We must pray to our dear patron and your namesake, San Marco, for guidance and protection.

MARCO

He would not have brought me through 24 years of danger and adventure only to see me fall victim to an old man in scarlet robes.

FRANCESCA

*(Pushing him to his knees)* Pray. He will be faithful. But we must pray to him.

CATHERINE

But, my dear Francesca, doesn't the church commune with the saints in way that we never can? Would a saint protect any of us against the church to which they are so completely devoted?

MARCUS

*(Running across the stage and stopping, ANGEL follows.)* NO! I will have nothing to do with this thing you call the church.

FRANCESCA

Do I look like a theologian? All I know is that San Marco, faithful and blessed...

MARCUS

NOT ME!! *(Exits)*

ANGEL

Peace, Marcus!!! *(Follows)*

FRANCESCA

... has protected you and has brought you home with riches beyond any of our wildest dreams. If we ask it, he will guide you through any treacherous waters that this Cardinal might try to stir up. So let us pray. Most blessed San Marco, our patron and protector,... *(stops herself)* ...That's it!

MARCO

What?

CATHERINE

Did you get an answer to your prayer already? I must pray to him more often.

FRANCESCA

No, I have discovered why he has summoned you. He's looking for you to make a large donation to the church from the riches that you have returned with.

MARCO

But we have kept our riches a secret.

FRANCESCA

Secret? In Venice? This city has more channels of communication than channels of water.

ANGELO

*(Playing tour guide, as he enters with MARC. Others freeze.)* And as your tour of the unseen Venice continues, here is certainly a site that few tourists lay eyes on. This was known as the docklands. Here was where Count Corvo - real name Frederick Rolfe - came to watch lustfully as the young Italian men off loaded the cargo. *(ANGELO is flirty. MARC is gitty and eating it up. ANGELO uses MARCO as his Amadeo.)* On one of his trips he found again the handsome Amadeo Amadei, an assistant gondolier he met a year earlier. Corvo appreciated dearly his gondoliers – handsome young men who introduced him - and others - to Venetian romance and so much more. *(ANGELO and MARC exit.)*

FRANCESCA

Knowledge of your riches has trickled right up to his grace. The old miser wants a portion.

MARCO

But wouldn't he summon father to discuss such matters?

FRANCESCA

He knows your father is a tough business man. But he figures that he can put the pressure on you and get you to hand over half of what you brought back.

CATHERINE

Do you really think that is his motives?

MARCO

I won't give him anything.

FRANCESCA

You'd better not. And don't let him catch you with your heart open by claiming this gift would be in honor of your mother, God rest her soul, and that some chapel would be named in her honor. This money is for the living. Our living. We went without for long enough. So, gird up your loins, young man. May San Marco keep your strong.

MARCUS

*(Enters exhausted)* I give up. I give up. I give up. *(Collapses on the floor)*

ANGEL

So you will be the Lord's evangelist?

MARCUS

*(Sits up)* No, I just give up fighting with you. I'm just going to lay here until I die. Perhaps it will be by starvation. Perhaps it will be from drowning when high tide rolls in. Either way, I will lie here until I die. *(Lies down. ANGEL shrugs and exits.)*

MARC

Wow, a whole island dedicated to being a cemetery.

ANGELO

In a city of islands, does it not make sense?

MARC

Yeah, I guess it does. It's so peaceful here.

ANGELO

On All Saints and All Souls day a bridge of boats is created so that people can come to visit and decorate the graves of loved ones. On one such occasion, our dear friend Count Corvo of the Docklands was wondering through the graveyard in his typical melancholy state, and he came upon some of his favorite gondoliers. They were attending to the grave of a fallen boat man. As the men joined Corvo in his walk around the graves decorated with flowers and candles, they each took turns whispering, "Sior, when shall we go to Burano for the night?"

MARC

Burano?

ANGELO

One of the outer islands. It was notorious as a place where gentlemen could go with their gondoliers.

MARC

I'm sensing this tour has a leaning towards a certain strain of romance.

ANGELO

I could speak to you of Casanova or of Lord Byron's affairs with over 200 Venetian women. But I choose to highlight the men who have found Venetian romance in the arms of other men. Call it self-serving – I am guilty.

MARC

And I am intrigued.

ANGELO

Intrigued? This intrigued I like.

VAPORETTO CONDUCTOR

Murano. Partenza per Murano. Tutti a Bordo. (Meaning: *All off for Murano. All aboard*)

MILLIE

This is our stop, come on, Edna.

EDNA

I can't do it.

MILLIE

Yes, you can. Just step off.

EDNA

The boat is rocking too much.

MILLIE

Come on, dear. On three. One. Two.

EDNA

NO!!

*(ANGELO and MARC cross the stage as if coming ashore from another docking place. They see the trouble being caused by EDNA as they exit.)*

VAPORETTO CONDUCTOR

Porforvore, signore. You must step quickly. People are waiting.

EDNA

Let them wait. It's too rocky. I'll fall and end up in the bed next to poor Doris with a broken hip.

MILLIE

Let me go first and you can see how easy it is. *(She steps over MARCUS who is still lying down.)* There. Now it's your turn.

EDNA

I can't, Millie. Please don't make me. Why can't they have normal roads with proper buses. What is this nonsense with bus boats. It's just not safe.

VAPORETTO CONDUCTOR

Voi due, datemi una mano! *(Meaning: Lend a hand, here.)*

*(TWO CREW MEMBERS flank EDNA on each side and lift her over MARCUS.)*

EDNA

What are you doing? Let me go? Millieeeee!

MILLIE

It's okay, dear. They're just giving you a little help.

*(EDNA is released.)*

EDNA

Well, I never. How rude. No one would ever treat me that way back home.

MILLIE

*(Aside)* Perhaps they should.

EDNA

*(Unaware what was said.)* What, Millie?

MILLIE

I was just asking if you are okay.

EDNA

No, I am not. And I blame you for that. First you drag me to Venice. Then, with poor Doris in the hospital you, you drag me out here to God knows where...

MILLIE

Murano.

EDNA

What?

MILLIE

Murano. This is the island of Murano.

EDNA

Why did we have to leave Venice? Doris is in the hospital in Venice. We need to stay in Venice.

MILLIE

Murano is in Venice. It is one of the islands that makes up the city of Venice.

EDNA

So.

MILLIE

And it is famous for its glass. I know how much you like glass objects, so I thought you might enjoy seeing how they make them.

EDNA

*(Pause.)* Thanks.

ANGELO

*(Flirtatiously suggestive.)* Shall we go on to Burano?

MARC

I gotta get back. The guys will be wondering what happen to me.

ANGELO

We will save Burano for another time, perhaps?

MARC

Another time. *(Big smile and a kiss on the cheek as he walks past.)* Perhaps.

*(ANGELO follows as they exit. MARCUS continues to lay on the stage. If there is a throne for the CARDINAL, putting it over where MARCUS is laying would work well.)*

CARDINAL

My dear, Marco, come in, come in.

MARCO

Your grace.

CARDINAL

Welcome home, my son.

MARCO

Thank you, your grace. It is truly good to be home.

CARDINAL

Thank you for accepting my invitation for this visit. Thank you for making time.

MARCO

Of course, your grace.

CARDINAL

You have been busy since your return to Venice.

MARCO

Never too busy when you summon me.

*(ANGELO enters with two goblets. CARDINAL takes them.)*

CARDINAL

Summons? No, invitation. *(Handing a goblet to MARCO.)*

MARCO

As you wish, your grace. Of course.

CARDINAL

Twenty-four years away. So many adventures.

MARCO

Now that I am home, I look back and it feels a dream.

CARDINAL

Yes, I understand. But still, a long time, many miles, many deeds and *(with a friendly smile)* misdeeds. It is a very long time to be beyond the loving arms of the church. *(Pause)* When was your last confession?

MARCO

Well, your grace, I have not yet had a chance...

CARDINAL

Please, my son. I know that when you are ready you will take the time to make all things right with God and the church. With all that you have been through in the company of godless people, you must have much to confess.

MARCO

*(Keeping it light.)* Perhaps you are thinking of my brother.

CARDINAL

*(Fretful)* If I was concerned with the sins of your brother I would consult the orphanage at Santa Croce. Your brother has suffered greatly from the absence of your father. And now one who so lacked fathering is fathering too many bastards. *(Restores lightness.)* But I did not invite you here to speak of your brother. He is responsible for himself and his wrongdoings, God have mercy on him.

MARCO

Yes, your grace.

CARDINAL

My dear Marco, I invited you here because I am concerned about these stories that you are telling.

MARCO

I do not understand, your grace.

CARDINAL

Dear boy, I know you want to impress your friends. *(Stops to soften.)* You look at these vestments and you forget that I was once young myself. You young men love to spin your stories spicier than the next. After years of missing your cohort, it is understandable that you would create stories so outrageous as to amaze and astound your friends.

MARCO

Oh, I have created nothing your Grace, they are all true. My stories tell of what I have seen. I do not lie. I have witnessed things that even though my eyes beheld them, I still did not believe them at first.

CARDINAL

Perhaps what you were seeing were tricks of magic being played on you by a devious and heathen people. No doubt they felt there was much to gain in leading astray one of God's own children.

MARCO

I beg your pardon, your Grace, but what I saw was real, as fantastic as it all might sound. I speak the truth.

CARDINAL

*(Pause. Then with intentionality.)* Sometimes we think we know the whole story, but we later learn that the small portion that has been made known to us is misleading and causes us to make gravely wrong assumptions.

*(MARCO is confused, unclear what the CARDINAL is getting at. )*

CARDINAL

You have been speaking of Brother William of Tripoli and, our own, Brother Rocco who began the journey with you. You said that they left your company in Acre because they were afraid to go on. Did the brothers specifically say to you that they were afraid?

MARCO

I saw them speak to father. And he told me...

CARDINAL

But they did not speak to you. You were not in the role of their confessor to whom they would have been bound to fully confess all that they were feeling.

MARCO

No.

CARDINAL

In fact it would have been most inappropriate for them to speak to you about the matters of their heart and soul and so there is no way you could possibly know the whole story of why they did not continue on with you and your father and uncle. And yet you, in your stories, are painting them to be men of little faith and great fear. Your tales besmirch the image and reputations of these men who have taken vows of obedience and whose faith has brought them ever closer to God.

MARCO

I never said that about them. I merely said...

CARDINAL

What you merely said has caused any fool that will listen to you to think that these men who have sacrificed everything for God and the church, that these most religious brothers, have less courage than you, have less faith than you, and that they have failed to live up to the duty to carry the gospel to the far ends of the world. And when your listeners see failure in these brothers, they start to look for failure in others who have dedicated their very lives to the church. *(Pause, then gently)* I'm sure you did not realize just how dangerous these stories are with which you are trying to entertain your friends.

MARCO

*(Still confident, yet with surrender)* Forgive me, your grace, I did not realize...

CARDINAL

Of course, you didn't realize. Very few people ever realize the power that a simple story might yield. And when you begin to embellish and exaggerate for the sake of entertainment and, do I dare say, gaining popularity and reaping its benefits, well, one could even say you are playing with fire.

MARCO

Your Grace, I have not embellished, I have only spoken the truth as it happened.

CARDINAL

(Gentle but talking down) My son, of course you have embellished, whatever your motive, for, in the case of our two dear brothers, you do not know all the facts surrounding their departure from your little traveling party and their return to Rome. And when one does not know all the facts, one is left to embellish. Do you see?

MARCO

(Pause. Growing discomfort) Yes, your Grace.

CARDINAL

And then there is the misconception you are spreading regarding the pope's decision not to send one hundred priests and brothers to that pagan empire.

MARCO

I said nothing more than the simple truth in this matter. That they did not come in response to the Great Khan's invitation and that he was very disappointed. As were we, for a conversion of such a great leader and all his subjects would have changed the complexion of the world.

CARDINAL

Truth is never simple, my dear boy who is both ignorant and arrogant. And, once again, you do not know all the facts. You couldn't. And when you do not know all the facts than you are not speaking truth. Of this matter or any matter. You don't know of the pope's discernment. Prayerful discernment. Divinely guided discernment. This was not a decision for just a man to make, this was a decision to be made, and actions taken, by the leading of the Holy Spirit. For a very good reason that neither you, nor even I, could know; the pope was led to decline the offer from this pagan cutthroat. He did not decide. He was led.

MARCO

But the Great Khan wanted to learn...

CARDINAL

And the Holy Father was shown reason not to teach him. Very good reason, I am sure. Reason that, perhaps, we will never know.

MARCO

Yes, your grace.

CARDINAL

There is the truth. Our truth. Hidden. A mystery. Not for your assumptions or inferences.

MARCO

(Wanting to leave) I understand, your grace. I meant no harm but I see now that I was speaking of what I did not understand. You have my word that I will not speak about the behavior of the brothers or the decisions of the Holy Father anymore.

CARDINAL

I knew you would see the correct path once it was all explained to you. As much as could be explained to you.

MARCO

I will do whatever I can to repair any damage that my stories have caused.

CARDINAL

Your many years of travel have indeed made you wise.

MARCO

I have been blessed with many experiences and have learned from many wise men.

CARDINAL

*(Dismissive)* Wise...but not men of the church, not men of our Lord's most holy flock.

MARCO

Wise none the less.

CARDINAL

*(Holds up paper money.)* What is this that you have been showing around the city?

MARCO

That is the money that is used throughout the Great Khan's empire.

CARDINAL

How could mere paper be worth anything? Why do they not use what we use – precious metals that clearly have value even when a government loses power?

MARCO

*(New excitement)* Well, first of all, the Great Khan and his family will not be losing power anytime soon. Second, can't you see how practical this is? People do not have to carry around heavy bags of coins just to buy food for their family. The government prints these notes and promises the barer the value in metals if the person ever asked for it. But no one does. The entire empire holds these as valuable. They buy and sell with ease. It is really quite brilliant.

CARDINAL

What is to stop anyone from printing their own and using them in trading?

MARCO

The Great Khan foresaw such intrigue. So he wisely commissioned his finest artists to create intricate artwork to adorn each note. They also put secrets into the design that only they know. If anyone is foolish enough to attempt to counterfeit the notes the punishment is death. This greatly deters anyone from attempting such a crime against the empire. They have had very little issue with counterfeiting.

CARDINAL

Ever since blessed Constantine took up our Lord's cross and made the Roman Empire holy, God has blessed us with a church, a land, kings for governing, princes of the Church for leading and teaching all in the ways God ordains. We are the light of the world that Jesus spoke of. We are the children of God. Therefore, all that is good, all that is wise, all that is necessary for living has been revealed to us and has shaped us in this gift of blessed

CARDINAL (con't)

Christendom for over a thousand years. When you were traveling did you not see peasants who were living centuries behind what you see in our great cities?

MARCO

Yes, but I also saw...

CARDINAL

You saw nothing that can compare with that which God has blessed us. Such tales as you are fanning, of paper money that is so brilliantly practical, cannot be tolerated. The weak will doubt that we are the most favored, the most blessed in all the world. You may think that inventions like this paper money are brilliant, but God in his infinite wisdom obviously sees some flaw in it that even you who are so worldly wise do not see. And so, God has not led the Christian kings of Europe to engage in such folly.

MARCO

*(With dignity and firmness)* Your Grace, I am most proud to be a Venetian. This is the greatest of cities. My praise of the Great Khan's paper money as a great invention is merely my opinion.

CARDINAL

But your opinion can be damaging. Certainly I have just demonstrated that to you. Your friends listen to you, admire you, hear your great tales, see your passion, and soon they are being led astray and hearing your opinions as truth. This cannot be. It will lead to disaster. *(Silence. Pause. MARCO can say nothing.)*

And what of these paintings you are displaying that depict the Khan on horseback with a leopard stretched out on his lap like any household cat of Venice. Is this fantasy?

MARCO

*(Standing his ground)* No, your grace, I saw this with my own eyes. The Great Khan has...

CARDINAL

STOP CALLING HIM GREAT! He is not great. No one who is outside the Holy Church of Rome can be considered great. He is a pagan. I'm sure he or his advisors practices sorcery. For how do you expect me to believe that he has the power to tame wild animals?

MARCO

I saw it, your grace. It is true.

CARDINAL

I don't know what you saw. I don't know what tricks they played on you, with what concoctions they seduced you, or what games they played with your mind. But none of this can be true. It is too dangerous to be true.

MARCO

What would you have me do? Say nothing of the past 24 years?

CARDINAL

*(Victory near, he lightens up.)* Did I hear that you came across a dog-headed people?

MARCO

Well, not exactly dog...

CARDINAL

Speak of them. Talk of them to your heart's content. Tell your friends of the less than humans you have encountered.

MARCO

Yes, your grace. (*Sincerely*) Are there any other guidelines you have for me?

CARDINAL

(*Enjoying his power*) Oh yes, I understand that you encountered the descendants of the magi who visited our Lord as a child and brought gifts for him and the blessed virgin?

MARCO

(*Thinking it safe ground, proceeds with excitement.*) Yes. Here it is centuries later and the people still speak of the journey that the three took following the star that led them to Bethlehem.

CARDINAL

Do I understand correctly that you are saying that they are not Christians - the descendants of these holy men?

MARCO

No, they are not. They practice the ancient religion of Zoroastrianism. The same religion of the magi.

CARDINAL

Well, that is completely wrong.

MARCO

But the people told us and showed us.

CARDINAL

They are wrong and now you are wrong. The magi were blessed by our Lord for their most faithful journey to his crib. They could not possibly have remained pagans after such a blessing as this. Undoubtedly, these fools have lost the precious legacy that was to be passed down to them from the three sainted wise men and now they live in godless ignorance. This, my boy, is why it is so important that I tend closely to what is being told and taught among the people whose spiritual health and life is my blessed responsibility. This is why the truth that is told in this great city is of such concern to me. The city's very salvation is at stake.

MARCO

Yes, your grace.

CARDINAL

Now, my boy, please make an appointment with Brother Lawrence. I am assigning him to be your spiritual advisor and your confessor. With all that you have to confess, you two should

CARDINAL (con't)

be spending a lot of time together. (*Laughs, then with fatherly superiority and demeaning sincerity.*) Use him, my son, as one who can guide you in your future storytelling. (*Holds out hand for MARCO to kiss his ring. MARCO does.*)

MARCO

I will, your grace.

(*CARDINAL exits. MARCO stays on stage.*)

EDNA

What a fabulous place. Doris is never going to believe what we saw. And I can't wait to show her the wonderful earrings I found for her.

MILLIE

They are lovely.

EDNA

And all our treasures. We're going to have to pack them very carefully to make sure it all gets home without breaking.

MILLIE

We will take extra care.

EDNA

You just can't find this kind of craftsmanship at home and at these prices. What a find.

MILLIE

What a find.

EDNA

This is certainly turning into an adventure.

(*MILLIE smiles speechlessly.*)

WILL

Where the hell have you been?

MARC

I've been with Angela, mom.

WILL

Screw you.

MARC

Were you worried about me?

NIC

Yeah, we kinda were.

MARC

Didn't you see my note?

NIC

Yeah, we did.

MARC

I said I'd meet you here at 4. (*Looks at his watch*) Okay, so its 4:45. Sorry, I'm late.

WILL

We planned this trip together. We've toured six cities together. Now we're in the seventh and you suddenly disappear. You better be getting some wickedly good action, friend. Cause that's the only thing I'll put up being traded in for.

NIC

How is it going with Angela?

MARC

It's going great, thanks. We've spent most of our time touring the city. She's a great tour guide.

WILL

Why can't she take all of us around?

NIC

Yeah, right. If you had found a girl would you have wanted to spend your precious time with us?

WILL

I would have worked something out.

NIC/MARC

Bullshit!

WILL

Shut up. Nice to see my friends have so much confidence in me.

NIC

We have confidence in you. Confidence that a pretty girl will send blood rushing to your prick and from that point forward all decisions will be made with that head and not the one on your shoulders.

WILL

You think so?

NIC

I speak the truth, my friend.

WILL

*(Realizes that NIC is right. Then to MARC.)* You lucky bastard. What about Julie?

NIC

Hey, hey, hey. May I remind you of pledge number one of this grand tour: what happens in Europe stays in Europe.

WILL

Yeah, but...

NIC

*(Silencing him.)* Pledge number two: there will be no regrets. Come on, Will, don't dump on him. We said it from the beginning. This is our first and last great hurrah. We go home to jobs, wives...that some of us haven't met yet...responsibilities, lives as defined by...whoever or whatever...but they are the lives that are waiting for us. We pledged to return to that world leaving no regrets in this world of wonderful freedom. So keep your "yeah, buts" to yourself, and *(to Marc)* you - whose aura seems to be shining and little brighter these days - go and live this Venetian fantasy to the frickin' max. I won't be happy until you make me so jealous I have a wet dream just thinking about it.

MARC

You coulda stopped at "go and live."

NIC

*(Getting goofy)* I love ya, man.

MARC

Yeah, that's clear. All right then, united again, let's go eat. That's probably why you were grouchy in the first place.

WILL

I was not grouchy. I was pissed.

MARC

I stand corrected. Let's go eat anyway, and then we'll go drinking and get you really pissed, as they say in London.

NIC

Where do you want to eat?

MARC

Let's go back to that restaurant we went to the first night we were here.

NIC

Yeah, maybe there will be another party of dancing women. *(WILL and NIC exit. MARC lags behind.)*

MARC

*(Aside)* I'll see what I can arrange.

*(MARCO takes his goblet. He offers a drink to MARC, who takes a good swallow from the goblet and smiles a thank you. MARCUS sits up, reaches out to MARC, who passes the goblet. MARCUS grabs drinks. MARCO looks to get it back. MARCUS clings to it. MARC exits. MARCO sits at a restaurant table.*

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

My brother, there you are. I have gathered four lovely young ladies who are begging to hear your tales of the exotic.

MARCO

There will be no more stories.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Certainly you could not have run dry. Come. And may your stories of the exotic inspire feelings of the erotic in these lovely maidens.

MARCO

Leave me be.

MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER

Dismiss this melancholy, dear brother. I am offering you a golden opportunity. Your stories are all we need to unlock the adventurous spirits of young ladies who will be inspired to open for us...

MARCO

No more. There will be no more stories. And wipe the ones you have heard from your mind. May God forgive us all.

*(For once, MAFFEO, THE YOUNGER is speechless.)*

ANGELO

Ah, the Americans have returned. *(MARC enters)* We are still telling stories from your last visit. *(NIC and WILL enter.)* What a pleasant surprise.

NIC

Marc suggested it, and we had such a good time last time.

ANGELO

Well, I am so glad that Marc remembered this humble tavern. Please, sit down.

*(ANGELO shows them to a table.)*

NIC

Thanks.

WILL

I'm starved.

MARC

I told you.

WILL

Shut up.

ANGELO

Gentlemen, please accept a bottle of wine on the house.

WILL

Gladly. Well, Marc you certainly did pick the right place.

ANGELO

Yes, he certainly did. *(Exits to get bottle.)*

MARC

I gotta hit the can, I'll be right back.

*(MARC goes to talk to ANGELO.)*

MARC

Buon sera. I had a great day, grazie.

ANGELO

No, the pleasure was mine, prego.

MARC

I also realized after I left you that I wasn't ready for it to be over. So I dragged them here.

ANGELO

You are so charming.

MARC

Hey, my friends have not quite discovered the romance of Venice, that I have. Any chance you have some friends – girls – who might come and liven up their evening a little?

ANGELO

Charming. And thoughtful of others. How lucky for you I am such a masochistic romantic. The pain of your departure grows more intense with each day.

MARC

You said it yourself. It is about the now. Whether sea or land, we are here.

ANGELO

Have they not told you in America that it is rude to teach people with their own lessons? Go. One order of party girls, subito.

EDNA

Come on, Millie. Let's get something to eat. After all that sightseeing, I'm starved.

MILLIE

I'm hungry, too. Shall we eat here again?

EDNA

This is just fine. And the waiter is so handsome. Good evening, young man.

ANGELO

Buona sera.

EDNA

Buona sera. *(She giggles at her attempt to speak Italian and at the handsome waiter.)*  
*(ANGELO leads them to a table as EDNA says to MILLIE)* And this is my treat.

MILLIE

What? Oh, no.

EDNA

Oh, yes. *(Sitting down.)* Young man, please bring us a bottle of sparkling water. That's got the bubbles, right?

ANGELO

Si.

EDNA

And a bottle of wine.

MILLIE

Edna!

EDNA

Come on, Millie, live a little. We may never come to Venice again. *(to ANGELO)* Right?

ANGELO

Right.

EDNA

How does chicken parmesan sound?

MILLIE

Sounds good to me.

EDNA

And two chicken parmesans. Got all that, handsome?

ANGELO

*(Smiles)* Si, signore.

EDNA

Grazie.

ANGELO

*(Turns, under his breath.)* Two chicken cutlets.

MARCO

Un vino, por favore.

ANGELO

Momento.

*(TWO GIRLS enter. ANGELO points them to the boys' table. When doubling is used, actress playing ANGEL plays GIRL #1 and she is carrying a dummy for GIRL #2. The GIRLS join the THREE BOYS. EDNA and MILLIE are enjoying watching the action. MARCO pays no attention and remains in his somberness. MARC grabs NIC and pulls him off to the side.)*

MARC

Thanks for the little wake-up call earlier.

NIC

What are you talking about?

MARC

That reminder of what we are doing here and what is waiting for us back home.

NIC

Oh, that. No problem. I just call 'um like I see 'um. And right now *(looking to the girls)* I like what I see 'um. Mmm, mmm.

MARC

I think I'm gonna go...

NIC

To find Angela. Yeah, I figured. Go, Casanova. Don't even think about us.

*(Crossing back to the table.)*

Cause we ain't thinking about you.

*(Reaches for the hand of GIRL #1 and she stands as WILL and GIRL #2 stand as well. The four exit. ANGELO enters.)*

ANGELO

Are you happy with your order?

MARC

Sior, when shall we go to Burano for the night?

ANGELO

Let it be tonight. But let us be clear, I am your gondolier.

MARC

*(As MARC motions for ANGELO to lead the way.)* But of course. Porfivore.

*(ANGELO leads him off.)*

End of Act One

## Act Two

*(MARCO is still sitting at the table nursing his bottle of wine. MARCUS is still lying on the stage. MARC comes out on stage wearing only a towel and tries to engage the other two.)*

ANGEL

*(Calling) Marcus! (Crosses but does not see him.)*

NICCOLO

*(Calling) Marco! (Does not see him. No response from Marco.)*

ANGELO

*(Sweetly calling as he enters.) Marc. (Come up behind MARC and embraces him from behind.)* In the gospel written by San Marco, there is an unnamed young man in the garden when Jesus is arrested. Tradition says that it was Marco himself. *(MARCUS sits up and watches ANGELO and MARC)* When the soldiers tried to seize him as well, they were left holding his clothes...as he ran away...naked.

*(ANGELO rips MARC'S towel off him. MARC, now naked, runs off stage. MARCUS shakes his head at this and collapses back onto the floor.)*

NICCOLO

*(Reenters. Crosses to table.)* Marco, here you are.

MARCO

Papa, I am lost.

NICCOLO

You, who have been to the far reaches of the world and come home again. You are lost?

MARCO

Home. Is this my home?

NICCOLO

Of course this is your home. This is the city of your birth.

MARCO

How can my home be a place where I cannot be who I have become? Where I cannot speak the truth that I have witnessed? That I learned from? That has filled my life with priceless riches?

NICCOLO

Pay no mind to the Cardinal.

MARCO

Pay no mind? The man is powerful. He can make my life a living hell. And yours. And whoever he deems a danger to the moral fabric of this city. *(Exploding.)* How can he dismiss everything that we saw and experienced? We are witnesses of the greatness of

MARCO (con't)

civilization and with one blinding declaration he locks it all away so that no one can share in the wonder of what we have learned.

NICCOLO

I will not argue with you. He is small minded, and afraid of anything he himself cannot explain. (*Stuck with the irony.*) What a marvelous comedy. He who asks us to believe sacred mysteries on faith, refuses to believe that which we have seen with our own eyes.

MARCO

Forgive me if this comedy does not leave me laughing. (*They exit*)

MARCUS

(*Lying on the floor, sits up suddenly.*) AHHHHHHH!

ANGEL

(*Runs in.*) Be at peace. What is wrong?

MARCUS

I had a nightmare.

ANGEL

The shipwreck?

MARCUS

No, I was back on that day. On that horrible hill. I was standing close to him. As close as I could get with him on the cross. But much closer than I had been on that day itself. I saw the sorrow in his eyes. Tears rolling down his cheeks. He was dying yet I could see that the tears were for all of us that he was looking on.

ANGEL

That is not a nightmare. You are remembering with all your heart.

MARCUS

But then Peter's cross was planted next to his. On the other side, Paul knelt before his executioner's sword. And blood started spreading everywhere. It was a flood and I was getting caught up in it. (*He stops abruptly.*)

ANGEL

(*After a pause. Asks knowing the answer.*) And then?

MARCUS

Jesus' hands were freed from the cross. He reached out and lifted me out of the flood and soon I was walking on the surface of the blood. You'll be happy to know I felt a sense of peace.

ANGEL

I knew you would if you just remembered. Do you remember everything that Peter told you?

MARCUS

He told me so many things. I will never remember everything.

ANGEL

You will remember what is important; what is important for others to know.

MARCUS

But what if I get it...

ANGEL

Wrong? How many times did Peter and the others get it wrong?

MARCUS

*(Laughing)* So many times.

ANGEL

You will get it right enough.

MARCUS

Shall I tell of the time he walked on water?

ANGEL

Of course, and be sure to tell how Peter sank.

MARCUS

Oh, how he hated it when the others still kidded him about that, long after it happened. But not as much as when they reminded him of the day that Jesus said "Get behind me, Satan."

ANGEL

It wasn't Peter who was Satan.

MARCUS

I know. He knew. It was clear that Jesus himself was...

ANGEL

Was?

MARCUS

Was hesitant...

ANGEL

Frightened even?

MARCUS

Of what was going to happen.

ANGEL

The evil of this world that would hold him to the cross even caused him to be fearful.  
*(Pause)* You are in good company, Marcus.

MARCUS

In spite of it all, he brought good news.

ANGEL

In spite of death, he brought life. And you will bring that good news to others.

PIETRO

Where will you go?

MARCO

I don't know. How can this be my home if I am not permitted to speak the truth?

NICCOLO

*(Handing him a note.)* It is from the Doge.

MARCO

*(As he opens it.)* What new hell is the Cardinal unleashing on me? *(Reads)*

GIOVANNI

What is it, Marco?

MARCO

We are at war with Genoa. The Doge has assigned me command of a ship of the navy. Perhaps God, in his infinite mercy will see me die in this battle rather than endure one more day of a battle in which I am powerless to fight.

EDNA

*(Entering a hospital room. "DORIS" –a dummy – is in a wheelchair, her back to the audience.)*

Doris? Doris, dear. Are you awake? How are you dear? You're looking much better. Are they giving you something for the pain? It must be hard when they don't understand you. Oh, dear, it is just horrible that this happened and so far from home. You must wish you never came here. I'm sorry for dragging you here. I know you wanted to go to Vegas. But I must say, Millie has really got the hang of this city. I don't know what I would have done without her. She's figured out the bus boats and the different islands to visit. I tell you, there really is something magical about this place. When you get out of here, we just have to take you over to Morano. They make the most beautiful glass over there. You can even watch the glass blowers at work. It is fabulous what they are able to create. And tonight, there is a big fireworks display in the lagoon. It's to celebrate the end of some plague or something. Look, I think you'll be able to see it right out your window. *(To herself)* Is that the lagoon? Well, Millie and I will come back this evening and we can all watch it together. Maybe we can sneak a bottle of wine up with us, and some cheese. Won't that be nice? Dear, you'll be out of here any day now and then we'll get this vacation back on track. Or should I say, back in the boat. Okay, you rest now, so that you are chipper for this evening. We're gonna take the boat out to the Lido. We'll find more things to show you when you are back on your feet. You're still gonna have a great time here. I promise you. See you later, dear. *(Exits)*

MARC

*(Entering with WILL and NIC)* So are you guys good for watching the fireworks tonight.

WILL

We are more than good.

NIC

Lucia and Teresa from the other night are taking us to the lagoon for the fireworks.

WILL

This is going to be spectacular. Go off with your mysterious Angela.

NIC

If we didn't know you better we'd think you were ashamed of introducing us to her.

MARC

You know that's not true.

NIC

Just giving you a hard time.

MARC

Thanks for giving me space on this one.

NIC

No sweat. We're your friends.

WILL

Go, have a good time. And just remember, we're having a better time.

NIC

Arrivederci. (*WILL and NIC exit.*)

ANGELO

(*Enters unseen by MARC. Admires him before finally speaking. Gently*) Buono Sera. Signor Marc.

MARC

Buono Sera, Angelo.

ANGELO

Are you ready for a spectacular night?

MARC

I wasn't ready for a spectacular four days. What makes me think I'm ready for this?

ANGELO

I promise you that tonight will be a night you will remember for the rest of your life.

MARC

I don't doubt that in the least.

ANGELO

Signor, as your beloved gondolier, allow me to show you the way to your boat. Fireworks await.

MARC

This has got to be a dream.

ANGELO

Nothing could be more real. *(They exit. Fireworks begin exploding)*

EDNA

*(Carrying plastic cups.)* Come on, girls, the nurse said we will have a better view down the hall.

MILLIE

*(Pushing the wheelchair with "DORIS" in it, who has the bottle of wine.)*  
Hold on to the bottle, dear. We'll toast your speedy recover and watch the fireworks Italian style.

*(NIC and WILL run across with the two girls. Both dummies, if needed.)*

NIC

They've started the fireworks. Look how they light up the sky and the city...

WILL

Come on, girls, let's see if we can get a little closer. *(They run off.)*

MARCUS

*(Running on with the ANGEL trying to keep up. Shouting over the fireworks.)*  
But the story I wanted to hear over and over again was of that morning. Of the women going to his tomb and finding it empty. *(He grabs her hands and they swing in a circle.)* Oh, how they laughed at themselves recalling the terror and amazement that seized them. "We were so frightened," they would say and then giggle with delight because even their terror and fear disappeared on that day he rose.

ANGEL

Their fear turned to faith.

MARCUS

Yes!

ANGEL

Their terror into trust.

MARCUS

Yes!

ANGEL

Their confusion into awe.

MARCUS

In a flash of light everything changed. Their lives changed. Forever! (*Runs off*)

(*MARCO runs on in battle attire.*)

GIOVANNI

(*Off stage*) Marco, the ship has been hit. We are sinking.

MARCO

Give the order to abandon ship.

(*MARCO exits shouting..*)

GIOVANNI/MARCO

Abandon ship! Abandon ship!

(*Final blasts of fireworks as MARC and ANGELO enter. Blackout. Sunrise breaks.*)

ANGELO

(*Beach. Sitting with his arms around MARC. They are both looking to the sunrise.*)

In 1459, when the plague had passed, it is told that those who had survived, having looked death in the face and lived, were compelled to tell the truth about all things. I'm guessing this did not last for long. But, the tradition has been ever since, that as the sunrises on this day, having made it through the night of fireworks and revelry, all Venetians are to tell the truth.

MARC

I'm glad I'm not a Venetian.

ANGELO

Oh, no. You will not escape it so easily. I make you an honorary citizen.

MARC

The truth?

ANGELO

Si, tell your truth.

MARC

Well...until I met you I had never kissed a man.

ANGELO

Yes?

MARC

Yes. It's not that I didn't think about it. It's not that I didn't dream about it. Boy, have I had some dreams.

ANGELO

I'd like to hear about them.

MARC

Hold on, there is a whole lot more truth to tell. You asked for it. I had feelings. Attractions. Guys I played sports with. Strangers I would pass by. But I kept telling myself, that is not me. That is not the true me. I have to marry a woman and have kids. I have to go to work in my father's firm. Carry on the family name in business and in children. My truth? Though it made my heart heavy, I did everything I could to convince myself that this is what my life should be. And it will be a good life. An okay life. Better than most peoples. I should just be happy and do what was expected of me. I figured that in time these feelings, if I didn't act on them, would disappear. I would stop thinking about men and be satisfied with my wife. And the kids would fill me with joy and...hey, a job is a job. At least there are weekends.

ANGELO

I am sorry your life has been so filled with pain.

MARC

No, I've been...yeah, it sounds pretty bad doesn't it? I've just never spoken it out loud before. But that is the truth. Was the truth. Angelo, ever since I met you everything that I thought I was supposed to do, to be, has been tossed out the window. Or should I say tossed overboard. My heart has gone from feeling heavy and numb to flying higher than I could've ever imagined. I kiss you and I think of nothing else. I say good bye to you and I immediately start counting the minutes until we are back together. The truth is that I can't believe that I will ever feel like this about anyone else. Woman or man. Angelo, I love you. *(He grabs ANGELO and kisses him. Then they step back.)*

ANGELO

When you tell the truth you don't hold back.

MARC

You have unlocked this. And it feels great. *(There is a silence. ANGELO is overwhelmed.)* So, your turn. What's your truth?

ANGELO

Well...

MARC

I'm sorry, did I say too much. Am I jumping in too deep. God, I don't want to scare you. It's just...

ANGELO

Hey, it's my turn. My truth.

MARC

Sorry.

ANGELO

*(Puts his finger to MARC'S lips to silence him.)* My truth is that I have never been so moved by the story of one's life. My heart arches to hear this. I had no clue. But... *(Marc breathes as if to speak, Angelo replaces his finger to silence.)* But what I feel is not pity. For I have grown to love you in these days of being together. I thought my joy was the highest it had ever been. Could ever be. But now that I hear how your sorrow has turned to joy. Your pain has been cured. Your heart that was closed is now opened. Seeing this light in your eyes, makes my joy even more complete. I am happier to see you happy, than I was happy about my own happiness. *(Pause)* Does that make any sense in your strange English language?

MARC

*(Laughs)* Yes.

ANGELO

My truth? In a way that I have never felt it before...I love. And it is you, Marc, that I love. *(They kiss.)* Marco, my love.

MARC

Marco. I like the sound of that. *(The kiss again.)* Here's to telling the truth.

ANGELO

Marco Polo of Venice was a great adventurer. His travels took him to places he could never have dreamed of. May Venice be the start of your adventure, Marco.

MARC

It's nothing I could have ever dreamed of.

*(MARC and ANGELO stay with arms around each other looking into each others eyes as MARCUS and ANGEL enters.)*

MARCUS

The whole world changed that morning.

MARC

Everything has changed.

MARCUS

In our eyes God changed. *(Pause)* And there was peace like never before.

MARC

Peace. *(ANGELO and MARC exit hand in hand.)*

MARCUS

*(MARCUS watches MARC as he speaks.)* I saw it in them every time they told their stories. I felt it growing in me. Whether I wanted it or not. It took root and it grew. *(Realizing)* It grows. It still grows. *(Jumping up.)* I have not lost it. It grows.

ANGEL

Peace, Marcus, you are my evangelist.

MARCUS

*(Shouting with ecstasy)* Yes, peace. Yes, I can be. I can tell it!

ANGEL

*(ANGEL takes his face in her hands and kisses him. Then says tenderly.)* Finally. *(She sends MARCUS on his way. He exits. ANGEL looks up as if hearing a voice.)* Yes, you were right all along. Don't you get tired of hearing that? *(Exits after MARCUS.)*

*EDNA and MILLIE looking at their treasures.*

EDNA

Oh dear, I am so nervous about packing this wonderful glass from...from...

MILLIE

Murano.

EDNA

Murano. Of course.

MILLIE

Oh, look at the time. We need to get Doris from the hospital.

EDNA

We've got plenty of time. Those boat buses will take us right there. Millie, you are such a worry-wart. Where should we take her first?

MILLIE

Doris?

EDNA

Of course, Doris. She has lost five days in that hospital room and we need to show her how beautiful this city is.

MILLIE

She might just want to come back to the room and rest.

EDNA

Rest? She's had plenty of time to rest. Come on, where is your sense of adventure? Well, we will certainly have to take her out to Murano. She'll love the fabulous glass jewelry we saw.

MILLIE

How about the Lido?

EDNA

No, she's never been much of a beach person. We'll just tell her all the wonderful things we have seen and then see what she wants to see.

MILLIE

Sounds like a good plan, Edna.

EDNA

Let's go and liberate her. *(Laughs as they exit.)*

*(NIC, WILL, and MARC are packing in their hotel room.)*

NIC

Are you sure we can't stay just a couple of more days? Last night was perfection.

WILL

It's not like there will be fireworks every night.

NIC

Theresa and I can make our own fireworks.

WILL

Keep packing, Casanova. We have a train to catch. *(to Marc)* Speaking of Casanova, did you say goodbye to Angela last night? Or should I say this morning?

MARC

Yeah.

NIC

Not easy, huh?

MARC

Yeah. I don't know.

NIC

Hey, we'll be in Madrid tomorrow and soon some Angelina will catch your eye.

MARC

Sure.

WILL

I can't believe we are into our last week of travels.

NIC

It's been incredible. Everything I hoped for and more.

WILL

Yeah, it's been good. But I'm looking forward to going home. To tell the truth, the thing I've learned on this trip is that I'm just a hometown boy. I'll leave the adventures to others.

NIC

I'd do this again. I'd love to come at a different time of year and get pictures with different light. Winter light must be stunning. But, not sure we'll ever have the chance. With the three of us anyway.

WILL

*(No sadness.)* Nope, real life is back home. Time to buckle down and live the life that's waiting for us.

*(MARC looks up from his packing and sees JULIE come in.)*

JULIE

What do you mean you can't marry me? What about the children we will have? Since the day I met you I have dreamed of our life together and the family we would build and cherish.

FATHER

*(Entering his dream)* What do you mean you're going back to live in Venice? What about your place here in this firm? Since the day you were born I have dreamed of the day that you would join me here. Carry on my name and my business.

MARC

I found someone.

JULIE/FATHER

Who?

MARC

To tell the truth, I found myself.

JULIE/FATHER

Who?

MARC

His name...

JULIE

His?

FATHER

His?

JULIE

But you love me.

FATHER

You like girls.

JULIE

We're gonna have children.

FATHER  
You gonna have my grandchildren.

JULIE  
I can't believe this.

FATHER  
This is nonsense.

JULIE  
You're breaking my heart, Marc.

FATHER  
You're my son, Marc.

JULIE  
Let's live the life I've dreamed of.

FATHER  
Be the man I've made you to be.

MARC  
Hey Nic, what time does our train leave?

NIC  
Six

MARC  
I gotta go...I'll be back in an hour.

WILL  
One last kiss from Angela.

MARC  
Yeah. Sorry.

WILL  
Forget the sorry.

NIC  
We'll see you back here in an hour. That will give us plenty of time to get to the train station.

MARC  
Thanks.

*(NIC and WILL exit. MARC stays on stage.)*

MARCO

*(Defeated. Crawling up on a beach)* All is lost. *(Seeing soldiers around him.)* I surrender.

MARC

I surrender.

MARCO/MARC

I surrender. *(MARCO is captured, exits.)*

MARC

*(Entering the restaurant. ANGELO enters.)* Buon Sera.

ANGELO

Where have you been? We were to have lunch together.

MARC

*(Lying)* I was catching up on the sleep I lost being up all night.

ANGELO

Is this not your last day in Venice? Were you going to leave without saying good bye?

MARC

Angelo...

ANGELO

You are saying good bye, yes?

MARC

Yes.

ANGELO

*(Dismissing)* Then, good bye.

MARC

Angelo...

ANGELO

I told you my heart was destined to break more.

MARC

Exactly, you knew this was coming.

ANGELO

And that truth gives you peace?

MARC

No. My heart is breaking, too. But I can't stay here.

ANGELO

Yes, you can. You can move in to my flat. I can take care of you. I will love you. You can write as you have dreamed of doing. This city has inspired many great writers. What about everything you told me as we watched the sunrise this morning? Was there any truth in that?

MARC

Yes! *(Catches his breath)* Angelo, I've been thinking about this all day. And believe me, it has not been easy. Everything I said I meant. But, I'm just a guy from Indiana. I don't fall in love in Venice. I don't get to have a gondolier who takes me to Burano. That's all too...too... adventurous. Guys like me get married, have kids, work, retire and die. After a day of thinking, I realized that is my truth. The truth that is handed down to me.

ANGELO

Oh, Marco, my heart is breaking not because you are leaving me, but because you are going to that life that is no life. *(Takes MARC'S face in his hands and kisses him.)*

*(WILL and NIC enter and see the kiss.)*

WILL

What the...

NIC

Whoa. So this Angela?

ANGELO

Angelo. Yes. Marc was too embarrassed to tell you the truth and introduce me to you.

*(MARC runs off. WILL and NIC follow.)*

MARCO

*(Entering prison cell)* The battle is lost. And now I am a prisoner.

RUSTICHELLO

*(In the cell.)* You are not alone.

MARCO

I am Marco Polo of Venice...

RUSTICHELLO

The great adventurer? I have heard of your travels.

*(MARC runs on as if still running from last exit. Stops abruptly. Conversation does not stop.)*

MARCO

You'll hear of them no more.

MARC

No more.

MARCO

I'll speak of them no more.

MARC

No more.

RUSTICHELLO

What you have experienced, what you have seen, what you have learned, is a gift that must be shared with those of us who are not so blessed.

MARCO/MARC

Blessed?

MARC

The Cardinal would not use that word. For him all this that you say I have experienced and seen and learned is a curse.

RUSTICHELLO

It is only a curse to those who do not understand the richness of God's great creation. It is a threat to those who fear what they have themselves not seen.

MARCO

*(Saying much of this looking right at MARC.)* And when you have explored what others have not, when you have discovered that which is hidden from them, when it has made you who you are, you yourself become a threat, a pariah even, to those whose power is centered in controlling what is known and what is hidden away. And I do not wish this life on even my enemy who has locked me in this prison. Not only do you live in fear of the power that is lorded over you, but you burn with all that you cannot say and all that you cannot be.

*(NIC, WILL, enter with suitcases.)*

WILL

I don't know if I want to kick your ass or just walk away from your sorry ass. Who the hell are you, Marc? Four years of college together and I'm thinking you're about the best friend I've ever had. And now this? Shit. If you wanted to rock my world you couldn't have done anything worse.

MARC

I'm sorry.

WILL

You got any guys back home?

MARC

No.

WILL

Was this something you just had to get out of your system? A phase? What?

MARC

Yeah, I guess. I don't know

WILL

What about Julie?

MARC

It's cool. We're fine.

NIC

Well, we're not fine.

MARC

I said I was sorry. I just got caught up in...this crazy city. Let's go and just put it behind us.

NIC

I don't care you if you fell in love with a guy, a girl, or a cocker spaniel. What I'm not fine with is that you didn't trust us with the truth. Whatever was going on with that guy was making you feel pretty great. I've never seen you happier. And I'm just really sad that you couldn't bring us in on it. Although with the Neanderthal's (*indicating Will*) reaction over here, maybe you had to do it the way you did.

WILL

Screw you, Mr. Open-Minded.

ANGELO

(*Runs in.*) Marco, please, stay. Here with me.

MARC

I can't, Angelo

ANGELO

What is I can't? Do you want to?

MARC

Yes. You know I do. More than anything. This has been amazing. With you. Here. Happiness to the point of confusion. But...

ANGELO

No but...

MARC

But this is not life. This is vacation. It's not real.

ANGELO

Not real? Marco, what you have been living is not real? But this...this is your truth. You told me. This will be our truth. Marco and Angelo.

WILL

No, pizzono, it will not be. (To MARC) Whatever has been going on these past five days, which I don't want to know about, is not real. This whole city is not real. (Back to ANGELO) This is not Marco. This is Marc. He lives in the USA. He's my best friend and he's got one hell of a girl waiting to marry him back home. And if that wasn't enough, his father is waiting to paint "and Son" on the firm's sign. So, you go back to your restaurant. (To MARC) And let's forget Venice ever happened, get on the train and head to wherever the fuck we're going next.

NIC

Madrid.

WILL

Shut up. (To Marc) We're going to Madrid. Got it?

ANGELO

Marco may be from the United States of America, but he lives in Venice. I know it for I have seen it. His spirit soars in Venice. His heart sings in Venice. His light shines in Venice. Strange his best friend does not see how Marco lives in Venice.

WILL

His name is Marc.

ANGELO

He is Marco in Venice.

MARC

No, I'm Marc. In Indiana, in Venice, I'm Marc. Just Marc.

ANGELO

I thought you liked Marco.

MARC

I did. I have. It was...I got caught up in it. Will's right, it's not real.

ANGELO

Then be Marc. Marc in Venice. Can that not be real?

MARC

I gotta...

ANGELO

What's this "I gotta"? We have no "I gotta" in Italian.

WILL

Yeah, and that's why your country is so screwed up. Lazy ass bunch of...

NIC

Come on, Mr. Ambassador, let's get to our train.

WILL

You coming, Marc? ...Hell, this place is one big confused mess. Water for streets. No cars. Let's just forget it ever happened. And if you know what's good for you, you'll get your ass on that train. (*Exits*)

NIC

(Kisses Marc's forehead.) If you know what's good for you, you'll do what you want. Nice meeting you, Angelo. (*Follows Will.*)

ANGELO

Is it truly time for you to go? Don't think about forever. Just here and now. Is it time to go?

MARC

I don't know. I can't. (*He runs after NIC and WILL*)

(*MARCUS enters followed by the ANGEL. ANGELO does not move from where he has watched MARC run off.*)

ANGEL

God goes with you.

MARCUS

I know.

ANGEL

Be at peace.

MARCUS

I am.

ANGEL

There is nothing to fear.

MARCUS

Yes, there is.

ANGEL

Well, you have a story to tell that dispels fear and brings peace. Tell the good news, evangelist.

MARCUS

(*With a smile*) What choice do I have? (*starts to go*)

ANGEL

Peace, Marcus, you are my evangelist.

MARCUS

*(Gives a heavy sigh and walks off as if with a heavy burden.)* Got it. Got it. I've got it.  
*(Trails off.)*

ANGEL

*(To Angelo)* You asked him to tell the truth. That was noble and right.

ANGELO

It was all too wonderful to hear, and then heartbreaking to lose.

ANGEL

Truth is not always easy.

ANGELO

I thought the truth set us free.

ANGEL

Only if it is embraced.

ANGELO

He fears.

ANGEL

Fear. Exactly. That is what stands in the way of truth unlocking freedom.  
*(ANGELO exits. ANGEL stays on to watch continuing scenes.)*

*(NIC, WILL, and MARC are on a train. There is a heavy silence. No one has spoken. Finally NIC speaks.)*

NIC

Do you know why we drink?

WILL

What?

NIC

Do you know why we drink? As in party?

WILL

To get a buzz. To have fun. To get laid. I don't know.

NIC

One thing I've learned on this trip is that it goes deeper than that for me. And I'm guessing for most people, if we face up to the truth.

WILL

*(With disgust)* Truth. *(Pause, then playing along)* Well, I know why I drink. But why do you drink, Nic?

NIC

Cause I'm afraid of the dark.

WILL

*(Mocking)* Nothing to be afraid of, Nicky, I'll protect you. Now shut up and go to sleep.

NIC

Not that dark. I'm talking about the dark in here. The lack of an answer to the voice that asks me why am I here, why am I alive. The fear that people hate me as much as I hate myself. The sinking feeling that I've never experienced real love. The terror that I am going to live out a long life of meaninglessness with nothing to show for it in the end. The hopelessness that I will never find someone to love and who loves me. The overwhelming burden that something is expected of me and I am clueless to figure it out and helpless to do it if ever I do figure it out. It's really dark in here. And that's only a peek. Not sure I can even speak of what is deeper and darker. And crowded bars and keg parties all tell me that I am not alone in being afraid of the dark. It's like I am looking at a life sentence of this darkness. So, numbing seems to be the answer. For now anyway. *(To MARC)* But I saw something in you, Marc, these last five days that has sparked a ray of hope even in my darkness. You have caused me to rethink my all-but-signed surrender. You, my friend, have lit up like a torch. And from my deepest, darkest caverns, I thank you for that. Even if you didn't have the balls to share it with us...or to stick to it for yourself.  
*(Only MARC on the train car remains visible.)*

RUSTICHELLO

Have you recorded the stories of your adventures so that the world might read them?

MARCO

Are you the torturer of this prison? Why must you make me remember that which I have been told, no, ordered with deepest threat, to forget?

*(ANGEL beckons MARCUS back on. Through this section the three men slowly come to share the same space on stage.)*

MARCUS

There is a light. *(There is no reaction from MARCO or MARC.)* A light shines.

MARCO

There is darkness

MARCUS

*(to Marc)* There is a light that shines.

MARC

There is emptiness.

*(MARCUS goes to ANGEL who encourages him to try again.)*

MARCUS

*(To MARCO)* You are not forsaken. *(To MARC)* You are not alone.

A light?

MARCO

(To MARCO) A light shining in the darkness. (To MARC) A light shining within.

MARCUS

It hurts within.

MARC

(Getting it) A light to lead?

MARCO

(Encouraging) A light to kindle.

MARCUS

(Hungering) I want...

MARC

Yes?

MARCUS

(Discovering something he has just said for the first time.) I want.

MARC

You can. (Realizing) I can.

MARCO

There is a light.

MARCUS

Yes.

MARCO

That shines.

MARCUS

Yes?

MARC

A light to inspire.

MARCUS

A light to lead

MARCO

A light to warm

MARC

Embrace it  
MARCUS

Explore it  
MARCO

Cherish it  
MARC

It shines with truth.  
MARCO

Run for it.  
MARCUS

Run with it.  
MARCO

Run to it.  
MARC

But run...  
MARCUS

...where it shines.  
MARCO

Live...  
MARCUS

Labor...  
MARCO

Love...where it shines  
MARC

(*To ANGEL, victoriously.*) It shines.  
MARCUS

RUSTICHELLO  
Look around you. You are here, this is now. Perhaps this prison is a protection. And I am the angel that will help you fly free. (*Lighter*) Forgive me, do I speak too highly of myself?

MARCO  
(*Seriously considering what he has been hearing.*) No. Not at all. I am thankful for your company. Especially in this hell. Who are you, please?

RUSTICHELLO

I am Rustichello of Pisa. It would be a blessing to me if you will allow me to be your scribe. Please, speak your tales out one more time. Let me record them. If nothing else, they will transport us out of this prison and back into the world that you have traveled so well.

MARCO

The Cardinal cannot do anything more to me here.

RUSTICHELLO

This is most certainly true.

MARCO

Very well, Rustichello of Pisa, my good scribe, shall we begin?

RUSTICHELLO

It is my honor to record the Travels of Marco Polo. *(They stay on stage.)*

*(MARC is in the restaurant. ANGELO enters and sees him. Goes about his work.)*

MARC

Angelo.

ANGELO

Did you miss your train? Or perhaps there was a strike? *(Under his breathe)* There are always strikes.

MARC

No. I got off in sad Verona and caught the first train back. It suddenly hit me that I have not finished speaking my truth. It took just hearing the conductor call out that name – Verona, and some very wise words from Nic, to reignite the light in my heart. And in its glow I realized that I do not want...I cannot bury what I have come to love in myself in some dark grave of submission. For the first time in my life I am facing the truth about my world...and I am scared to death.

*(ANGELO goes to kiss him. MARC stops him, and keeps talking.)*

MARC

And truthfully... I know this may not last. This may be some fling that you will cut off, or I will cut off. But I know right now - this now - that my heart has brought me home. Maybe it's land with sea or maybe it is sea with land. But whatever it is, God, I pray this truth that you have helped me discover will shine with even more beauty than this most amazing city.

*(They finally kiss. ANGELO hands MARC a pad and pen. ANGEL hands MARCUS a scroll.)*

MARCUS

*(Reading)* This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

MARCO

In the year 1276, my father, my uncle, and I, a young man of 17, left our fair city of Venice and traveled east.

MARC

Dear Julie. It is not easy to write this letter. But I owe you the truth.

*(All freeze. EDNA walks among them as she talks on the phone.)*

EDNA

*(On the phone.)* Truth to tell, I loved Venice the minute we arrived, Oh, sure, the little mishap with Doris had me worried, but I was only concerned with her wellbeing. Once I saw that she was fine I fell head over heels in love with that city. They have boats instead of buses... Well, there are no streets... Yes, that's what I'm telling you. And *(giggles)* if you stumble from the rocking of the boat, those handsome Italian men just smile at you and hold you up. It's the most romantic place I have ever been. I loved it.

END OF PLAY