

The Time of the Cuckoo

A Comedy in Two Acts

by Arthur Laurents

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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The Time of the Cuckoo

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

TIME: The 1950's.

SCENE: *The garden of the Pensione Fioria is a green oasis of quiet near the center of Venice, bordering on a small canal. A vine rises from the flagstoned floor; in U.L. corner, a dining section is under a vine-covered arbor; a high stone wall is also trellised with leaves. This wall borders a "rio" (a small Venetian canal) on one side, then angles to continue along the back of the garden. On the canal side R., the wall parts for a small door and three steps leading down to a gondola landing. Just above and beyond the right-angled corner is visible part of a small stone footbridge which crosses the canal. A small stone wall, now unused and covered, is in U.R. corner of garden. Behind the back wall, there is an unseen, narrow "calle" (street) and then the back of a Byzantine house. Some day, this house will slip quietly into the canal; now it merely leans in its eventual direction.*

You might enter the garden via the gondola landing. Or, you might cross the footbridge, disappear into the narrow calle, continue to the end where it meets a small piazza, turn right and enter a doorway which opens directly into the U.L. corner of the garden.

But if you are staying at the inexpensive Pensione Fioria, you might simply enter the garden from the Renaissance facade of the Pensione itself at 1. Two steps lead up to this door.

It is late afternoon now and the wooden shutters of Venice are open wide. From beyond the garden come the CHIMES of vague church bells, bursts of LAUGHTER, VOICES; from inside the Pensione comes a ready but happy female VOICE SINGING a popular Italian song; and clearest of all, from over the wall comes the loud cry, "GONDOLA, GONDOLA!"

The setting sun has reserved some soft tones for the three people in the garden. One is SIGNORA FIORIA who is sipping coffee and smoking. She wears sandals and a casual summer dress. She is rather tall, bony, dark and forty-ish. Her physical attractiveness is more in her body than in her face; and more, in her manner. She is intelligent, perceptive, usually quiet (with her "guests"), has a sardonic humor—but we feel that she can blow up like a volcano. The feeling is probably influenced by the extremely uncomplicated sex she exudes without the slightest effort.

The two others in the quiet garden are EDDIE and JUNE YAEGER, a blonde and rather typically handsome young American couple. They are typical, too, in their manner and behavior, for, like so many, the YAEGERs try to be what they look and to conform to standard ideals. The crew-cut EDDIE is sprawled out in a chair, quite relaxed. Yet we feel his intensity. He is a painter, superior in Europe, inferior at home. He tries to be a high spirited, casual, cheery, easygoing American. Naturally, he isn't (who is?) and the cracks show at

times. He is slightly uneasy with his wife because his love for her is not pure. He has a deep need for her but they have never really talked or faced an important personal problem. JUNE is extremely pretty, has a lovely body and adores her husband. Her concept of love, however, is romantic; she must be his complete life. She is sometimes insensitive out of ignorance and stubborn out of fear. Any unpleasantness, she rationalizes out of being. She is not very bright and although she knows this, she is not very bothered by it. Right now, for example, she is reading a big tome on Italian art—and painting her fingernails.

Both the YAEGERs, like FIORIA, wear sandals. EDDIE has on light slacks and a white shirt, JUNE a light peasant dress. The peaceful silence lasts for a long moment. Then EDDIE reaches slowly to the table near him on which is a bottle and two glasses of Cinzano. He sips from one of the glasses. At this, FIORIA suddenly bellows:

FIORIA. Giovanna!

EDDIE. If I were rich, I'd present Giovanna with an ice-cube machine.

FIORIA. If I were rich, I'd present her with singing lessons—Giovanna! (*For a moment, the singing stops. Then it resumes, though softer. FIORIA shrugs and sits back with a smile.*) My husband used to say: if you are not going to fire her, the least you can do is strangle her.

JUNE. Of course!

EDDIE. What?

JUNE. Tiziano is really Titian.

EDDIE. (*laughing*) I can learn to speak Italian, I can learn to do without showers, I can't learn to drink without ice.

JUNE. He feels good.

EDDIE. Molto bene. Tomorrow, Signore, I start work.

FIORIA. Ah, yes: domani.

EDDIE. Not domani, tomorrow.

JUNE. You said that Friday.

EDDIE. (*correcting her previous pronunciation a trifle sharply*) By the way, it's Tiziano.

FIORIA. Bene!

EDDIE. Grazie, la mia professoressa.

FIORIA. Prego. (*They chuckle together. From over the wall, again the cry "GONDOLA, GONDOLA!"*)

JUNE. If you ask me, he's not very ambitious.

EDDIE. You're talking to the wind. No one gets a rise out of me this evening.

JUNE. I meant the gondolier, honey.

FIORIA. (*after a moment*) Why don't you think he is ambitious?

JUNE. There's nothing but pensiones around here. Why doesn't he park by the big hotels like the Danielli?

FIORIA. Oh, I think he does quite well here. Don't you, Eddie?

EDDIE. There's always an American who can be hooked.

JUNE. (*trapped by her wet fingernails*) Turn the page for me, please, honey . . . Grazie tanto.

EDDIE. Prego. (*kisses her; then, to FIORIA*) Scusami, Signora.

FIORIA. I have pleasure in all kinds of lovemaking.

JUNE. Do you? I don't.

EDDIE. She's too concerned with her own.

JUNE. Eddie!

EDDIE. Which is lovely.

(GIOVANNA, a rather sloppy, but nice-looking girl,

shuffles out of the Pensione in carpet slippers. She carries two small bowls: one with lemon peel, one with ice.)

FIORIA. (*sarcastically*) Ah! Benvenuto, mia cara Giovanna.

GIOVANNA. (*ignores this and hands EDDIE the ice, saying very carefully:*) Lem-mon. (*then, triumphantly, the lemon*) Ice!

EDDIE. I wish it were. Guarda, Giovanna: Limone, lemon. Ghiaccio, ice.

GIOVANNA. To hell wit' English. (*She goes into the Pensione, singing a bit again. EDDIE sits down and fixes drinks for himself and JUNE.*)

JUNE. Believe you me, I know just how Giovanna feels. Tiziano for Titian, Venezia for Venice, Parigi for Paris. Do you know we were in Firenze for two whole days before I realized we were in Florence?!

(*As they laugh, a woman appears on the footbridge, coming toward the garden. She is well in her thirties, blondish, plumpish, pleasantly attractive. She carries a large shoulder-bag, a guidebook, a dictionary and one or two packages. Her name is LEONA SAMISH. She stops and calls out gaily:*)

LEONA. Buona sera!

FIORIA. (*rises*) Buona sera, signorina! Come sta!

LEONA. Not so bene. I fell in a canal. (*She grins as they laugh, and disappears down the footbridge into the unseen calle behind the back wall of the garden.*)

EDDIE. I've just fallen in love.

JUNE. Her name is Leona Samish. I showed her where the bathroom was this morning.

EDDIE. (*rises*) Ah, an American.

LEONA. (*entering the garden from the rear door*)
Wouldn't you just know?

(*Close up, LEONA seems even more attractive. She wants so much to be liked and is by everyone almost at once. She is warm, she is generous, she is funny and bright. She is also lonely and, despite her many friends, always has been. But LEONA's pattern is to hide this, both from herself and the world, always with a joke and often with a drink. She is independent, she says, and almost believes it herself. There is something comforting and understanding and gay about LEONA that makes people glad to see her. Later, there is something else that makes them wonder why they do not cry.*)

FIORIA. You must be wet. (*bellowing*) Giovanna!

LEONA. (*dumping her parcels on the table*) I'm semi-dried out now. It happened over an hour ago and anyway, I only fell in up to here. No, here.

EDDIE. Miss Samish, may I offer congratulations?

LEONA. It was nothing. A mere slip of the foot.

FIORIA. This is Mr. Eddie Yaeger.

EDDIE. You know my wife.

LEONA. Oh, sure. Hello, cookie.

JUNE. Hi.

LEONA. And you're the husband. Is there anyone on this continent who isn't spoken for? It's like Noah's Ark: everybody's in twos and I'm Noah.

EDDIE. (*bows*) Signora Noah.

LEONA. Signorina, unfortunately.

FIORIA. I am dying to know. How did you fall in?

LEONA. Feet first.

FIORIA. No. Details, please.

LEONA. Well—you may not be aware of it, but you are looking at Leona Samish, Girl Tourist. I have to take a picture of everything. Even those bloody pigeons in front of San Marco. And that was a narrow escape, too. Anyway, this afternoon, I bought a goblet. Eighteenth Century Venetian glass, fellas. The wildest dark rose. And the only one left, damn it. I got it in a cute little shop—Di Rossi's.

FIORIA. Ah, yes. You should know Signor Di Rossi.

LEONA. I met him.

FIORIA. (*smiling*) Anh?

LEONA. I met him.

FIORIA. (*to JUNE*) Silver-grey hair, prematurely grey.

EDDIE. (*clapping his hands*) Ladies, ladies. (*to LEONA*) You were saying—?

LEONA. I wanted to get a picture of the shop where I bought the goblet, but a plain simple picture wouldn't do. I never owned a Brownie before this trip, but I had to have composition in the lousy picture. An authentic old Venetian church on one side and an authentic old Venetian lady on the other. So—(*acting it out now*)—I start backing up. I back up and up, and right in back of me was an authentic old Venetian canal. (*They laugh. Sadly, she comes back to table.*) I felt so foolish.

FIORIA. But it happens.

EDDIE. Who fished you out?

LEONA. I have an admirer. A little monster has been following me. The only male who has, I might add, and he's possibly a hot ten if he's a day. The minute I got to the gondola landing yesterday, there he was: "Lira, signorina, lire."

FIORIA. He wears enormous blue jeans?

LEONA. And sings "Home on the Range."

FIORIA. Mauro.

LEONA. What?

EDDIE. That's his name: Mauro.

LEONA. Oh. Well, little Mauro fished me out. But I must say he was a lot more worried about my camera than about me.

EDDIE. (*laughs*) Have a drink.

JUNE. Honey, let her change first.

LEONA. Yeah. The charm of it all is beginning to seep through.

EDDIE. (*rises*) I'll get a glass for you meanwhile.

LEONA. (*gathering up her packages*) Don't anybody move. I'll be two seconds.

FIORIA. Giovanna can bring those up for you.

LEONA. We swimmers are a hardy lot. Where's my dictionary? Ah. (*Finding it, she kisses it.*) I'd be speechless without it. Honest now, you'll all be here, won't you?

JUNE. Sure.

LEONA. I'll only be a minute. Don't go away. Oh, hello there!

(She has started for the door into the Pensione just as an elderly couple, the McILHENNYS, comes out. He wears a wrinkled white suit, shirt and tie, and a panama hat which he whips off at the sight of the ladies. MRS. McILHENNY wears a light coat over a print dress. LEONA rushes by them.)

MRS. McILHENNY. Buona sera, signore e signor.

MR. McILHENNY. Oh, for Pete's sake, Edith!

FIORIA. Buona sera. You know Mr. and Mrs. Yaeger?

MRS. McILHENNY. We've seen each other, but we haven't had the pleasure.

FIORIA. Mr. and Mrs. McIl—I'm afraid I cannot say it.

MR. MCILHENNY. McIlhenny.

JUNE. Hello.

EDDIE. Hello.

MR. MCILHENNY. (*after a stiff pause*) Well, the weather is nice here, anyway.

EDDIE. Excuse me. I have to get a glass. (*He goes in.*)

JUNE. Don't you love Venice, Mr. McIlhenny?

MR. MCILHENNY. I keep looking for an automobile.

MRS. MCILHENNY. Now Lloyd. We've covered almost everything today, anyway. Tomorrow, we're going to do the Lido, the Galeria Academia and the Church of—what is it?

MR. MCILHENNY. The Holy something.

JUNE. You should see the Biennale.

MRS. MCILHENNY. Pardon?

JUNE. That's the big art exhibition at the Public Gardens.

MR. MCILHENNY. If I have to look at one more painting, I'll yip.

FIORIA. Excuse me. Mrs. Yeager's husband is an artist.

MRS. MCILHENNY. How interesting!

MR. MCILHENNY. (*to JUNE*) No disrespect intended, ma'am. Truth is I don't understand pictures. And I've got bad feet for standing.

JUNE. I know just how you feel. But actually, Eddie is practically the head of the Art Department of Y & R in Chicago . . . Young and Rubicam.

MR. MCILHENNY. You don't say!

JUNE. Oh, yes. We're on a six-month sabbatical. He's going to paint a few pictures over here, but once we're back home—

EDDIE. (*has entered behind her*) June's going to become a model and support both of us.

FIORIA. (*after a small pause*) Are you going on to Firenze from here? (*MRS. McILHENNY looks at JUNE.*)

JUNE. That's Florence.

MRS. McILHENNY. Oh yes indeed! We're doing all of Italy: Florence, Rome, Capri. And then off to Spain, Portugal, and home!

MR. McILHENNY. Flying home. Come over by boat.

EDDIE. You get around a bit.

MRS. McILHENNY. Dear me, yes!

MR. McILHENNY. We've been to Ireland, Scotland—

MRS. McILHENNY. The Edinburgh Festival was sweet.

MR. McILHENNY. England, London—France, Paris—

MRS. McILHENNY. Well, Paris! C'est la vie!

MR. McILHENNY. Belgium, Holland—(*waits for MRS. McILHENNY but she beams without comment*)—Germany—Switzerland, and here we are in Venice.

EDDIE. Some itinerary. How long you been at it?

MR. McILHENNY. Docked at Southampton 10:37 a.m. June 15th.

EDDIE. When are you flying from Portugal?

MR. McILHENNY. September ninth.

EDDIE. This year?

MRS. McILHENNY. —I guess we have crowded things a bit.

MR. McILHENNY. Oh, no, dear. Our travel agency did a crackerjack job. Planned every step of the way. (*He has taken a paper from his pocket which he hands to EDDIE.*) See? That was today.

EDDIE. (*reading*) "Eight a.m., breakfast; nine—Doge's Palace and Bridge of Sighs; ten a.m.—San Marco Cathedral; ten-thirty to twelve-thirty—I.A." What's I.A.?

MR. MCILHENNY. Independent activity. We have two hours of it every day.

EDDIE. (*hands paper back*) Oh.

MRS. MCILHENNY. That's when I make him go shopping. It's our first trip abroad, you see. Mr. McIlhenny retired this year and we don't have any children, so — we decided to have our little fling while we still —

MR. MCILHENNY. For Pete's sake, Edith.

EDDIE. (*nicely*) The trouble is everybody wants everybody else to have a good time their way.

MRS. MCILHENNY. Yes. We've had a fine time. It's all been lovely, just lovely. (*wistfully*) Not quite what we expected, perhaps —

JUNE. How do you mean?

MRS. MCILHENNY. I don't know, really. I don't know what we expected, but — (*brightly again*) Well, it's been lovely, just lovely.

EDDIE. Will you have a drink with us?

MR. MCILHENNY. Well —

MR. MCILHENNY. No, dear. (*to EDDIE*) Thank you.

EDDIE. It's just Cinzano.

(*LEONA, in a fresh dress, comes out with a bottle in hand.*)

LEONA. How about a real drink with me and il Signor Gilbey: gin!

MRS. MCILHENNY. We're on our way to dinner. We're going to Quadri's. Would you like to join us, Miss Samish?

(*From here the LIGHT begins to DIM slowly to soft blue-purple evening.*)

LEONA. No, thanks . . . but the book says that's a

real elegant place.

EDDIE. And real expensive. (*hands her a drink*)

LEONA. Thanks.

MRS. MCILHENNY. Miss Samish, I meant to tell you. On the same side of the piazza with Quadri's there's a big jewelry shop, and I'll bet they have garnets.

LEONA. Oh, elegant. Garnets are my one passion. Well, garnets and people. And Venice and the Pensione Fioria and an evening like this. You're all so nice. McIlhennys, don't go. Have a drink.

MR. MCILHENNY. I'd like to, but this wop food has wrecked my digestion.

FIORIA. Then Quadri's is the perfect place. The cooking is very light.

MR. MCILHENNY. Good. Let's go, Edith.

MRS. MCILHENNY. Well—arrivederci, all.

MR. MCILHENNY. For Pete's sake, Edith.

MRS. MCILHENNY. (*as they disappear from garden*) Now, Loyd, you just let me be—(*They are seen going over the bridge.*)

LEONA. You think the Voice of America knows about him?

JUNE. He didn't know what he was saying, Signora.

FIORIA. He is not a sensitive man. He has no heart, not that much. Italian food has ruined his miserable belly. He probably likes French food.

LEONA. I must say I did.

FIORIA. But it's so refined. In Italy, you sit down to eat, and you eat a meal. In Paris, you sit down, and what do you eat? A sauce. And in America, this Mr. Mc—whatever it is—sits down and what does he eat? Pills. You want me to get excited about a man like that?

LEONA. Have a drink.

FIORIA. Grazie.

LEONA. Prego. Hey, is that right?

EDDIE. Yes.

LEONA. It's used for so many things, I figure when in doubt, say "prego."

EDDIE. Junie, we ought to be getting a move on.

JUNE. I'm so lazy.

LEONA. Ah, have a drink. It's good gin, cookie.

EDDIE. No, thanks.

LEONA. Prego? Pretty prego?

EDDIE. We're late for dinner. Give us a rain check.

LEONA. Sure. (*They exit.*) I thought in a pensione, everyone had meals in.

FIORIA. Most prefer demi-pensione so they can have either lunch or dinner out.

LEONA. Well—that leaves us. Or does it? I guess it doesn't.

FIORIA. I am dining with an old friend.

LEONA. Signor Di Rossi?

FIORIA. No. Faustino is his name. He is in the government. For fifteen years, he has been in our government.

LEONA. *All* your governments?

FIORIA. (*laughs*) He is very ambiguous. Why did you ask if it was Di Rossi?

LEONA. You said you knew him.

FIORIA. I see him here and there.

LEONA. I saw him in the piazza last night, in front of Florian's. I didn't know who he was then, but you can't miss that silver hair. Look, if you have to go, Signora, please do. I enjoy being alone.

FIORIA. Are you a writer?

LEONA. Just an executive secretary.

FIORIA. Then why do you like to be alone? I hate it!

LEONA. I'm the independent type. Always have been. Got time for a short one?

FIORIA. Yes, but I don't want it, thank you.

LEONA. Maybe I can persuade myself. (*raising the bottle*) Prego? (*pouring*) Grazie. This is a nice place. There are two people in the States I wish were here. A darling couple, but they can't move two feet without me. (*raising her glass*) Luck. They're rather like the Yaegers, except Mac and Franny are older. Not older than me, older than the Yaegers. *Nobody's older than me.*

FIORIA. I am. And in Italy, age is an asset.

(*OFF in the city, BELLS CHIME.*)

LEONA. If it is, I'm loaded. You know, I took this vacation to get away and be on my own. And what happens first night out on the boat? Up pops a honeymoon couple. Helpless kids, but sweet. We had a ball in Paris. What a city!

FIORIA. Yes.

LEONA. You don't have to go yet, do you?

FIORIA. (*sits*) No.

LEONA. Everything everybody ever said, wrote or sang about Paris is true. Except you shouldn't be allowed there unless you're in love. Paris is just laid out for it.

FIORIA. So is Venice.

LEONA. So is any place, if you have it. Paris is beautiful except—I don't know. I don't really know what I expected. On the train coming here, I met another American girl. In America, Signora, every female under fifty is a girl.

FIORIA. And after fifty?

LEONA. Who cares? This girl on the train was waiting.

FIORIA. For what?

LEONA. She came to Europe to find something. It was

way back in the back of her mind: past seeing places and getting some culture—that was up front, here. (*touches her forehead*) Buying perfume cheap was about here, and letting loose for once in her life was about here. But way way back was the something she was waiting for.

FIORIA. What?

LEONA. A wonderful mystical magical miracle.

FIORIA. No! To do what?

LEONA. Beats me. I guess to find her whatever it was she'd been missing all her life. The bargains some people expect on a hot six-week vacation! (*FIORIA rises.*) Now you do have to go.

FIORIA. Would you care to come with me?

LEONA. Oh no. Thank you, no.

FIORIA. When in Italy, you should meet Italians.

LEONA. Two's company—

FIORIA. Oh, Miss Samish! Signor Faustino and I are, oh for several years now, we have been—ahh—(*waves her hand, as though to pluck the word from the air*)—not magical.

LEONA. By me, you're a twosome. (*shaking her head*) Grazie tanto.

FIORIA. Prego. (*They laugh.*)

LEONA. Va bene! Oh, there's no holding me! Don't worry, Signora. I do fine on my own. Last night, I had dinner with the McIlhennys. I feel sad for them: the "big fling" they're having. They went to bed right after dinner but I had coffee in San Marco and listened to that lovely band concert.

FIORIA. The concerts are every next night.

LEONA. Oh. Maybe I'll take a gondola after dinner.

FIORIA. Oh, don't take a gondola alone at night. Wait.

LEONA. Okay. I mean va bene. Have a good time.

FIORIA. Thank you. Would you like dinner out here?

LEONA. Yes, I would—if it isn't too much bother for Giovanna.

FIORIA. None at all. Just don't let her rush you.

LEONA. Giovanna?!

FIORIA. After sunset, she flies around like an American. She has a friend: Alfredo. All day long, she is only recuperating from the night before.

LEONA. I should be so sick.

FIORIA. And I! Buona sera.

LEONA. Buona sera.

(FIORIA enters the Pensione. The dusk is light purple now. LEONA sits down and takes a sip of her drink. Then she just sits. From the night, far-off MUSIC is heard, a lovely Italian tune. It has a lonely sound and, after a moment, LEONA gets up and wanders about the garden, looking up at the buildings, seeming a little lost. She sees something, perhaps up in the tree, perhaps in the shadows on the rear wall—puts her drink on L. table and goes to rear door.)

LEONA. Here, kitty kitty, kitty. Pretty little baby. Here, kitty, kitty, kitty. Please—How do you say it in Italian? Ssspspspspspsps. *(But the unseen cat goes.)* Ah, kitty—*(She straightens up and listens to the music again. From over the canal wall comes the cry, softer now: "GONDOLA, GONDOLA!" Then abruptly, LIGHTS go on in the garden—gay, gently colored bulbs strung through the arbor and the tree. She whirls around. A moment and GIOVANNA comes out, carrying a tray and collects the empty glasses.)* Giovanna. Lei a—*(She points to the lights.)*

GIOVANNA. Sì, sì. Molto bella, ah?

LEONA. Oh, molto bella.

GIOVANNA. (*making conversation*) Venezia e molto bella.

LEONA. Sì. Venezia e molto bella.

GIOVANNA. Sì.

LEONA. Alfredo e molto bella. (*GIOVANNA stares at her, then bursts into laughter and runs into the Pensione. Alone again with the music, LEONA sits. She sips her drink, gets her voluminous bag, rummages around and comes up with cigarettes, postcards and a pen. She sips her drink and starts to write.*) Dearest Mac and Franny: Venice is where it all cometh true. How I wish you both were—(*Stops, puts the pen down and sits for a long, lonely moment. Even the music has stopped. Then:*)—you both were here because this time, we'd be a quartet. Mio amico has silver-grey hair. (*She stops again and looks in the direction of the Pensione. A moment, then JUNE comes out. She is now wearing high-heeled sandals and a thin sweater over her dress.*) Cookie, you're a very pretty girl.

JUNE. I know but I'm not interesting-looking. Like the women in paintings. You are.

LEONA. Oh, go on.

JUNE. You are!

LEONA. Say, when your fella's busy with his palette, how about you showing me the town? Maybe we could go swimming?

JUNE. Sure!

EDDIE. (*breezing on in a light jacket now, and loafers and socks*) Pronto, Signora Yaeger?

JUNE. (*pokes him*) I've been pronto for ten minutes.

EDDIE. (*slapping her on the fanny*) I told you that was a great color for you. We are off. (*to LEONA*) Off to a real Venetian pizzeria: Harry's Bar.

LEONA. The book says that's a Must.

EDDIE. You don't Must, but you will. (*He has been fumbling for a match for his cigarette. LEONA gives him one.*) Thanks. Excuse us?

LEONA. Sure. Have fun.

JUNE. See you.

LEONA. Right. (*They are almost off the footbridge when she calls:*) Say! Why don't I get it over with and give Harry his big break tonight? (*pause*) Would it be all right if I walked along with you?

EDDIE. — Sure.

LEONA. (*runs to her bag, sweeps the things in*) I always buy my guides a drink.

EDDIE. We're meeting some friends.

LEONA. Oh. Well, can I buy them a drink, too? Or are there too many?

JUNE. Just another couple, but—

LEONA. It would be awkward.

EDDIE. We're going on to dinner together from Harry's.

LEONA. Oh, sure. (*puts her bag down*) I guess I'll just have to give you another rain check, that's all.

EDDIE. We'll take it.

JUNE. Good night.

LEONA. Buona sera. Or do you say—what is it? —“ciao.”

EDDIE. Well, you really say “ciao” to family and very close friends. Otherwise, buona sera. Or—arrivederci.

LEONA. Oh. Arrivederci, Signor. Arrivederci, Signora.

JUNE. Arrivederci.

EDDIE. (*nicely*) Arrivederci. (*He takes JUNE's arm and they go.*)

(*LEONA watches them leave, then slowly walks back to the table. She stuffs a postcard or two left lying there into her bag, then stands. She picks up her glass, looks at it, then, with a wry smile, raises it and says:*)

LEONA. Ciao, honey. (*She finishes the drink as GIOVANNA enters with a tray on which is LEONA's dinner. She puts the tray on the table as from the Pensione comes a thin, scratchy PHONOGRAPH RECORD of an Italian singing some tune.*)

GIOVANNA. Buona notte, Signorina.

LEONA. Buona notte, Giovanna.

(*GIOVANNA goes. LEONA slowly sits and takes the napkin from the tray and carefully spreads it on her lap. She arranges the dishes a bit, then reaches into her bag for her guidebook. She opens it, props it against the glass so she can read as she slowly begins her lonely dinner. From the canal comes the soft cry, "GONDOLA, GONDOLA." Someone LAUGHS.*)

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE 2

Early afternoon heat. All the shutters in Venice are closed. Even the doorway to the Pensione has slatted wooden doors to bar the sun. The YAEGERs

are stretched out in bathing suits, lazily sunning in canvas deck chairs. BOTH JUNE and EDDIE each have a glass of beer carefully placed in the shadows cast by their own chairs. She is lying still and serene, her face tilted to the sun. By her side is a pair of sunglasses, a bottle of suntan oil and the big Art book. EDDIE is staring into space. After a moment:

JUNE. The sun makes me feel funny. Does it do that to you? . . . Would you like to go upstairs? . . . Eddie? (Now she opens her eyes.) Eddie?!

EDDIE. June, I'm trying to work.

JUNE. I thought you were sun bathing. Well, it's awfully hard to tell. I mean, you're not *doing* anything.

EDDIE. I'm looking.

JUNE. At what?

EDDIE. The light.

JUNE. The light.

EDDIE. Yes, the light.

JUNE. Why couldn't you've looked at the light at the beach?

EDDIE. I told you if you wanted to go to the beach, go.

JUNE. I didn't want to without you . . . Honey, I'm very content here.

EDDIE. Good.

JUNE. You're not being fair. You're in a bad mood because you're not really working.

EDDIE. Jesus! Why doesn't anybody understand thinking is working?!

JUNE. You're not painting, I mean. And you're not painting because you're hungover from last night, not because of me.

EDDIE. I'm not painting because . . .

JUNE. Why? . . . You can tell me. I love you.

EDDIE. Oh, Christ. Sometimes I think language is a means of ex-communication.

JUNE. Yes! Because words can hurt. Well, it's feelings that count.

EDDIE. (*gently now*) I'm having trouble painting because . . . there's no point in saying anything the way it's been said before, but I can't find my own way.

JUNE. You will. You've got months, honey.

EDDIE. Turn around—and it'll be weeks.

JUNE. Eddie, what's important? People; us; you and me. Honey, I don't care if you paint or you stay in advertising—

EDDIE. But I do!! I want to paint!

JUNE. Then paint! . . . Whatever you want is fine with me. Just don't let it come between us. Okay?

EDDIE. Okay.

JUNE. I love you very much.

EDDIE. I know.

JUNE. . . . Would you like to go upstairs?

EDDIE. Oh, we might as well get the sun.

JUNE. Okay. (*They settle back in their deck chairs. Then:*) It's really not that important.

EDDIE. What?

JUNE. —Upstairs. Only . . . if you love me—

EDDIE. Once I start painting . . . that'll be fine again.

JUNE. (*taking his hand*) Anyway, we're fine, aren't we?

EDDIE. Yes, we're fine.

(*JUNE waves her hand at him, blindly. He catches her hand and holds it. They lie there quiet, peaceful, their eyes closed to the sun and themselves. In the*

silence, LEONA enters the garden from the rear door with all her tourist paraphernalia and a package identical to one she had the day before. When she sees the YAEGERs, she stops and hesitates wistfully. Then she starts to walk by them on tiptoe but EDDIE opens his eyes)

LEONA. I thought you had baked yourselves to sleep.
(*June opens her eyes.*) Hi.

JUNE. (*sitting up*) Hi. (*EDDIE sits up. Brief, awkward pause.*)

LEONA. Say, I haven't gotten a picture of you two yet.

EDDIE. Oh no!

LEONA. (*putting package and bag on table*) Be a sport. I could use some cheesecake between churches.

JUNE. Come on, honey.

EDDIE. I hate this. (*as LEONA prepares her camera*)

JUNE. I love it.

EDDIE. (*grinning*) Peacock.

JUNE. Uh-huh.

LEONA. You'll have to get close. I have small eyes. (*As they get ready, MAURO sticks his head out of the canal door, then comes into the garden to watch.*) You're going to look the idle rich the Italians think we all are.

EDDIE. (*to LEONA*) About last night—

LEONA. Forget it.

EDDIE. No. You see, we—

MAURO. (*to LEONA, who is focussing her camera*) Hey, lady, wanna buy real good Swiss watch? Ten dollar.

LEONA. Not this minute.

MAURO. You crazy? It got works inside. (*holding the watch out to EDDIE*) Look! Tell her!

LEONA. Hold it! (*snaps picture*) Grazie.

MAURO. (*goes to her*) You take my picture?

LEONA. Yes.

MAURO. (*plaintively with outstretched hand*) Lire, Signorina.

LEONA. You know, I think that's all the Italian the kid knows. (*to MAURO*) Listen, Signor Lira, you were supposed to take me to the Galeria Academia this morning, remember?

MAURO. (*scratching his head*) This morning?

LEONA. Sì. This morning. I got lost. Where were you?

MAURO. I have business.

LEONA. Is that so?

MAURO. (*importantly*) I worked for my friend, de gondolier. Every customer I bring, he pay me. Why you no wanna buy good Swiss watch?

LEONA. I have a watch.

MAURO. Only ten dollar. Come on. What da hell.

EDDIE. Mauro, va via. (*MAURO retreats. To LEONA.*) I was going to say—Oh, excuse me. Beer?

LEONA. Beer gives me a cardboard mouth.

JUNE. Have a sip. It's cool, anyway.

LEONA. Well, that's more than I am. (*She drinks—returns glass.*)

MAURO. (*to LEONA*) Lady, wanna buy Parker 51 Pen? (*holding one out*) Two thousand lire.

LEONA. No, thanks.

EDDIE. Cigarette? (*She takes one.*) For the last five minutes, I've been trying to—well—

MAURO. Lady, special price for you: fifteen hundred lire.

EDDIE. Mauro! (*MAURO scampers away. To LEONA.*) What I started to say was—Oh hell. I'm trying to find a way of apologizing for last night that won't embarrass either of us.

LEONA. That does it very nicely, cookie.

EDDIE. We were kind of trapped. We're sorry and we wanted you to know.

LEONA. Well—grazie tanto *and* prego.

EDDIE. Prego to you.

JUNE. You were up early this morning 'cause we looked.

LEONA. Girl Tourist. (*holding up her guidebook*) I'm attempting to zip through the six-day tour in three-and-one-half.

EDDIE. Why the rush?

LEONA. I've got to be back in the salt mines around Labor Day, and I should see Rome.

EDDIE. Why?

JUNE. Maybe there's someone in Rome she wants to see.

LEONA. It's a big city, there should be. (*wryly*) Ah me. When I was a kid, I used to wish on the moon.

JUNE. I still do.

LEONA. Any luck?

JUNE. (*looks at EDDIE*) Uh-huh.

LEONA. I'm thinking of giving the stars my business.

MAURO. Lady, you got any brothers and sisters?

LEONA. Three, cookie.

MAURO. You very lucky. For t'ree brudders and sisters, I got t'ree Parker 51 Pens. (*holds them up*) Presents. Souvenir of Italy!

LEONA. No, Mauro.

MAURO. Special for you—

LEONA. No.

MAURO. Come on. What da hell?

LEONA. (*laughs*) How do you say No in Italian?

EDDIE. Watch. (*turns to MAURO who immediately backs away*)

MAURO. Okay, okay, I only want to give her present. (*crossing to LEONA*) You so pretty and nice; here, lady. (*puts pen in her hand*)

LEONA. (*touched*) Why, Mauro!

MAURO. You like?

LEONA. Very much.

MAURO. One thousand lire, Signorina. (*LEONA shoves the pen back into his outstretched hand and EDDIE advances on him.*)

EDDIE. Okay, ragazzo. (*MAURO scampers over to the canal door.*)

LEONA. He'll hook me yet. What's more, he knows it. (*waves at the little figure*) Arrivederci, Mauro.

EDDIE. (*putting on his shirt*) Tan or no tan, I quit.

LEONA. (*indicating MAURO*) He's the one shop in all Venice that doesn't close in the afternoon. (*to the mournful-looking MAURO*) Nothing today. (*a step toward him*) Cookie, it's so hot. Close up for a few hours. I'll be around. (*He just stares.*) Ah, Mauro—

MAURO. You no buy nutting now?

LEONA. No.

MAURO. You no give me lira?

LEONA. I gave you yesterday.

MAURO. Then give me cigarette. (*EDDIE laughs.*)

LEONA. You're too little to smoke.

MAURO. But I smoke!

LEONA. Not with my help.

MAURO. Come on. One cigarette. What da hell.

LEONA. (*laughs and reaches in her bag*) You know a sucker when you see one. Here. (*He reaches greedily for the cigarette.*) Easy does it.

MAURO. Grazie.

LEONA. Prego.

MAURO. You okay, lady. (*grinning slyly to JUNE and EDDIE*) So long, cookies. (*pushes open the door and goes*)

EDDIE. (*folding his chair*) Coming up, June?

JUNE. Do you want me to?

EDDIE. (*joking to cover his annoyance*) Oh, for Pete's sake, Edith.

JUNE. I thought maybe you wanted to be alone to think.

EDDIE. If I did, I would've said so. (*to LEONA*) See you later.

LEONA. Yeah. (*He goes into the Pensione.*)

JUNE. He's a little hungover, that's all that was.

LEONA. Have a big time last night?

JUNE. (*putting on a robe and gathering up her things; folds her chair and puts it alongside of EDDIE's*) No. Those friends we were with—well—she's a very rich American who collects art. The husband is kind of an Italian count. The comtessa buys us drinks and dinner, and maybe when Eddie does a painting, she'll buy it. Oh, she's very nice. But she kind of doesn't like unattached women around. (*Embarrassed, she quickly picks up art book and sees LEONA's package.*) What'd you buy?

LEONA. (*getting package*) A mate for that Venetian glass goblet I told you I got yesterday.

JUNE. At Di Rossi's?

LEONA. (*unwrapping the goblet*) Yes.

JUNE. Wasn't he nice to find another one!

LEONA. He wasn't there. I saw him in the Piazza last night, though. We nodded. (*JUNE is waiting for more. LEONA smiles.*) That's all.

JUNE. Oh.

(*Over the little stone footbridge comes a MAN wearing a pale blue shirt and light trousers. A jacket dangles from one shoulder. He looks over into the garden at the TWO WOMEN who do not see him. Forty-odd, he has slightly tired good looks made striking by prematurely silver-grey hair. This, of course, is DI*

ROSSI, a man most women are attracted to and whom most men like. He is invariably at ease, and although he is a worldly man, his knowledge is a product of experience and his senses rather than of his mind and thought. He is so very charming, so direct, so simple [like a child] that it is difficult to believe he might not always tell the precise truth. At any rate, since he always believes it is the truth when he is saying it and since there is so much truth in what he does say, does it matter? Actually, it shouldn't, if only because RENATO DI ROSSI is very eager to accept almost anyone and almost any moment—A moment, then he continues across the bridge and disappears into the calle behind the garden. During this: LEONA has unwrapped the goblet and JUNE takes it, exclaiming:)

JUNE. Isn't it dreamy!

LEONA. Eighteenth century.

JUNE. Were they terribly expensive?

LEONA. Sixteen hundred lira each.

JUNE. My! How much is that in money?

LEONA. I'm still with French francs. Under three bucks, anyway. (*JUNE sighs as she hands it back.*) Cookie, it was very sweet of you to explain about last night.

JUNE. (*crossing toward Pensione*) Oh—

LEONA. It was. (*following*) What're you going to be doing later on?

JUNE. Depends on Eddie. We might go swimming over the Lido.

LEONA. I have one of those French bathing suits.

JUNE. Oh. Well, if we decide to go, we'll knock on your door.

LEONA. Would you? When would that be?

JUNE. In an hour or so.

LEONA. You won't forget?

JUNE. No.

LEONA. If I'm not in my room, I'll be down here.

JUNE. (*at the door*) Okay.

(*DI ROSSI now enters the garden.*)

LEONA. (*hurrying back to the table with the goblet*) I'd better hold on to that box so I can pack this. I'll only be a—(*But the door has closed after JUNE. LEONA stands, unaware of DI ROSSI, who mops his brow with a handkerchief. As she slowly begins to re-wrap the goblet, he comes up with a smile:*)

DI ROSSI. (*a soft but marked accent*) Good afternoon.

LEONA. (*turns, startled*) Oh—Hello there.

DI ROSSI. Hello.

LEONA. You played hookey this morning.

DI ROSSI. I beg your pardon?

LEONA. I bought this at your shop. Didn't the boy tell you?

DI ROSSI. Yes.

LEONA. He was very kind. And very cute.

DI ROSSI. He is my niece.

LEONA. (*laughs*) Your nephew.

DI ROSSI. (*laughs*) Oh yes, nephew, nephew! Just when I think I speak English like a trooper, something happens. Anyway, he is the son of my eldest sister.

LEONA. Bravo!

DI ROSSI. Grazie.

LEONA. Prego. And that about concludes my entire performance in Italiano. (*She puts goblet back in box.*)

DI ROSSI. (*moves to table*) Is this beer?

LEONA. Help yourself. It isn't mine.

DI ROSSI. (*smiles*) Thank you.

LEONA. — Shall I call someone for you?

DI ROSSI. Who?

LEONA. I don't know. Signora Fioria?

DI ROSSI. I scarcely know her. (*sips beer*)

LEONA. Oh.

DI ROSSI. Do you want to call someone?

LEONA. No.

DI ROSSI. (*puts glass down*) I came to see you.

LEONA. Oh. Oh! You found some more of those glasses.

DI ROSSI. Unfortunately, no. But perhaps there is something else I might find for you?

LEONA. You don't happen to know a good black market in money?

DI ROSSI. The best. And very legitimate. (*LEONA laughs.*) But that's easy. Give me something difficult.

LEONA. Why?

DI ROSSI. So I can do it for you.

LEONA. — I've been trying to find some garnets.

DI ROSSI. Garnet?

LEONA. They're jewelry. Dark red stones.

DI ROSSI. Ah. Rubies.

LEONA. Not on my salary. Garnets — garnets.

DI ROSSI. (*sadly*) I'm sorry. No.

LEONA. Where's my book? (*getting it and thumbing through*) Not that there's anything useful in here. "At the Restaurant — The Motor Accident — The Shipwreck — At the Hospital." (*plunks it down; rises; goes to him*) Garnets. They're not expensive. Do you know "topaze"?

DI ROSSI. Yes.

LEONA. Garnets are a semi-precious stone like that. But red and —

DI ROSSI. (*thinks a moment, then*) Ah, granate!

LEONA. (*shaking his hand*) We did it!

DI ROSSI. Yes! — There are not many garnets in Venice anymore. But we will look.

LEONA. Don't go to any trouble.

DI ROSSI. For you, it is not trouble. (*pause; mopping his brow*) You don't mind the heat.

LEONA. Signor di Rossi, why did you come to see me?

DI ROSSI. (*smiles*) It is only natural. After all, you are not going to keep buying glasses every day.

LEONA. No.

DI ROSSI. So — I came.

LEONA. But why?

DI ROSSI. Why? You knew I would.

LEONA. I did not!

DI ROSSI. Maybe it's my English.

LEONA. Maybe it's mine. (*turns away*)

DI ROSSI. (*goes to her*) Listen. Two nights ago, I am in Piazza San Marco. You are in Piazza San Marco. We look. Next day, you are in my shop. We talk about glasses, we talk about Venice: You like Venice? I like Venice.

LEONA. Molto bella.

DI ROSSI. Sì, molto bella. I understand your jokes. Ecco. We talk about Venice, glasses, but we are not speaking about them, are we? No. So, last night, I am in Piazza San Marco again, you are in Piazza San Marco again.

LEONA. Half of Venice is in Piazza San Marco again!

DI ROSSI. But half of Venice is not in my shop this morning or I would be a rich man!

LEONA. I wanted another glass.

DI ROSSI. And that's all?

LEONA. That's all!

DI ROSSI. There are shops all over Venice. Did you look in any of them for your glass?

LEONA. No.

DI ROSSI. Ah!

LEONA. But you said you would try to find one for me.

DI ROSSI. And that is why you came back.

LEONA. Yes.

DI ROSSI. No other reason?

LEONA. (*shaking*) I don't know what your experience has been with American tourists—

DI ROSSI. My experience has been that tourists have more experience than I! (*A beat, then he mops his brow.*) It's very hot. Can't we sit down?

LEONA. (*half-angry, half-crying*) No!

DI ROSSI. I have offended you. (*She shakes her head.*) You are sorry I am here.

LEONA. No.

DI ROSSI. Then you are glad.

LEONA. All this may be silly to you, but—I'm not an Italian. I'm an American.

DI ROSSI. I thought everything happened so fast in American.

LEONA. Not this sort of thing. Not to me.

DI ROSSI. I *have* offended you.

LEONA. Signor, I'm not a child. But I don't understand.

DI ROSSI. What?

LEONA. Why should you want to see me?

DI ROSSI. Because when we spoke yesterday, I knew you were *sympatica*. You know what that means?

LEONA. Yes: like a sister to you.

DI ROSSI. I have four sisters and I am not looking for another. Oh—you were making a joke. You make many jokes but inside, I think you cry. (*Touched, she turns away.*) That is nice; that is why you are *sympatica*. (*very quietly*) I came here to ask if you would do me the

honor of seeing me this evening. I would like to take you to dinner but I cannot. Our family is very large. At a nice restaurant, I could not even pay for myself. But, if you would like, we could have coffee together in the Piazza. There is the concert tonight. All Puccini. Do you like Puccini?

LEONA. Yes.

DI ROSSI. Would you have coffee with me?

LEONA. — I'd like a cigarette.

DI ROSSI. I have only Italian cigarettes.

LEONA. I have some. (*During the following, she gets one from her bag which DI ROSSI lights for her.*) Signor, I'm afraid you've made a small mistake.

DI ROSSI. Why?

LEONA. — When I was about your nephew's age, I had three children to bring up.

DI ROSSI. Three?

LEONA. Yes.

DI ROSSI. It is Miss Samish?

LEONA. It always has been.

DI ROSSI. Ah, I see. Well—(*smiles*) I admire you. It is not a sin in Italy, you know.

LEONA. A sin?

DI ROSSI. Not if the children are baptized. Yours were, of course?

LEONA. Oh no, look—

DI ROSSI. Perhaps you don't believe in baptism. (*grins*) Anyway, I am not the Pope.

LEONA. They weren't my children. They're my two brothers and sisters.

DI ROSSI. But—

LEONA. You decided they were mine.

DI ROSSI. You seemed to have something to tell me, so naturally—

LEONA. "Naturally" seems to mean only one thing in Italy! My father died when I was sixteen. He didn't leave anything because he never had anything. Six months after, my mother died. I had to bring up the kids. Do you understand?

DI ROSSI. Some words here and there I may miss. But I understand. You say you were not rich and if that is why I am here, I am making an error. You do not know me very well yet, Signorina, so you are not insulting me. But yourself you know. Don't you?

LEONA. Very well.

DI ROSSI. (*gently*) Then why do you insult yourself?

LEONA. (*shaking her head*) You come to see me—

DI ROSSI. You cannot understand why.

LEONA. No.

DI ROSSI. (*goes to her*) Because you attract me. Why? Because you do. Why? I do not know. You Americans are even more suspicious than the French. Listen: we saw each other, we liked each other. This is so nice, how can it be wrong? You are very young, Miss Samish.

(*Through the rear door, the McILHENNYS enter the garden laden with packages.*)

MRS. McILHENNY. Buon giorno, Signorina Samish. We've been shopping!

MR. McILHENNY. Let her guess, Edith.

LEONA. This is Signor Di Rossi. Mr. and Mrs. McIlhenny.

MRS. McILHENNY. Come sta, Signor?

DI ROSSI. Bene, grazie. E Lei?

MRS. McILHENNY. Bene, grazie.

DI ROSSI. Non fa troppo caldo per Lei, Signora?

MRS. McILHENNY. Oh dear!

MR. MCILHENNY. Serves you right.

LEONA. What'd you buy?

MRS. MCILHENNY. Glass, glass and more glass!

MR. MCILHENNY. (*rather proudly*) She even sent home a chandelier.

MRS. MCILHENNY. We found a place behind San Marco cathedral—oh, I've got to show you! (*starts to undo a package*)

MR. MCILHENNY. Now, Edith—

MRS. MCILHENNY. But they're so pretty, Lloyd.

LEONA. What are they?

MRS. MCILHENNY. Venetian glass.

LEONA. Don't bother to unwrap them.

MRS. MCILHENNY. I must show just one. And you've got to go to this place. They have a blast furnace, and you sit right there and watch them put stuff on long poles and presto, chango! Glass! And such colors, you have no—there! Isn't that exquisite? (*What she has unwrapped is a goblet exactly like the one LEONA has.*)

LEONA. Stunning. Oddly enough, I was looking for one just like it.

MRS. MCILHENNY. Oh, they're only too happy to make them for you. I bought half a dozen.

DI ROSSI. If I may ask, how much did you pay?

MR. MCILHENNY. Too much.

MRS. MCILHENNY. (*returning the goblet to the box*) Lloyd, you know I did extremely well. They wanted twenty-five hundred lira apiece but you never give them what they want. Beat them down every—oh! I'm terribly sorry.

DI ROSSI. (*picks up goblet*) No, no. Italians love to bargain. What did you pay finally?

MRS. MCILHENNY. Twenty-one hundred apiece. That's a fair price, isn't it?

LEONA. It's fair.

MR. McILHENNY. Edith, we have a lot of packing to do.

MRS. McILHENNY. We! He can't even pack his own toothbrush. (*to DI ROSSI who has helped her with her packages*) Why, grazie!

DI ROSSI. Prego.

MR. McILHENNY. Nice to have met you, Mr. Di Rossi.

DI ROSSI. Thank you. It was a great pleasure.

MR. McILHENNY. (*as they go in the Pensione*) Arrivederci.

MRS. McILHENNY. Arrivederci—! Why, Lloyd McIlhenny!

MR. McILHENNY. Oh for Pete's sake, Edith, don't make such a fuss! (*and the door closes after them*)

LEONA. I know a little shop where Mrs. McIlhenny could have saved three thousand lira.

DI ROSSI. I did not run out and have that glass made for you.

LEONA. Of course not. It's eighteenth century, cookie!

DI ROSSI. Do not call me "cookie"!

LEONA. It's politer than some other names that come to mind.

DI ROSSI. Now you are angry!

LEONA. Nope.

DI ROSSI. And suspicious again.

LEONA. Angry, no. Suspicious, yes!

DI ROSSI. I tell you now: you can always find something to be suspicious of in anyone!

LEONA. All right, I can! And this doesn't help!

DI ROSSI. Suspicion will never—

LEONA. What do you want me to feel? How do you expect me to feel?!

DI ROSSI. (*takes out goblet*) In Venetian glass, the same design is used over and over for years and years.

That is true! That goblet is eighteenth century. It is not true that I had to search for it. (*puts goblet back and goes to her*) I had it yesterday when you came. I wanted to be sure I could see you again. You can believe me or not—No. Believe me, please.

LEONA. I used to believe in advertisements.

DI ROSSI. But I am not selling anything. I am not anything to sell! I would like to be with you so we could know us better. What happens after that, happens—or does not happen.

LEONA. If you were trying to convince someone else, I could even help you.

DI ROSSI. But you cannot help me with you. (*She is silent. A pause. Then:*) Peccato. And you didn't even admire the shirt.

LEONA. What shirt?

DI ROSSI. (*touching his*) It is silk. I borrowed it from my brother so I would be fine and elegant for you. Pure silk.

LEONA. Really?

DI ROSSI. Sure. Feel!

LEONA. It is. Beautiful.

DI ROSSI. And you did not even know.

LEONA. I'm sorry.

DI ROSSI. (*covers her hand with his*) Prego. Have some coffee with me this evening. It is a beginning to hear music with someone. (*She moves to withdraw her hand.*) Relax. Relax and the world is beautiful. (*releases her hand*) Take a deep breath like for singing. (*He inhales. She smiles.*) It is not very much to have coffee with me, is it?

LEONA. No.

DI ROSSI. Then I may come for you?

LEONA. I'd be honored.

DI ROSSI. Grazie. (*kisses her hand lightly*) Arrivederci.

LEONA. Arrivederci. (*stopping him just before he leaves*) Signor di Rossi—(*She hesitates, then says something else.*) What time will you be here?

DI ROSSI. A bit before nine.

LEONA. All right.

DI ROSSI. Is there something else?

LEONA. — No.

DI ROSSI. Until later, then. (*She watches him go out and over the bridge, then stares at her package. She takes out the goblet as FIORIA comes out of the Pensione.*)

FIORIA. (*The inevitable cigarette dangling from her lips.*) I wanted to come out before, but I heard a man's voice. Ah, you found another goblet! Very handsome. Very very handsome.

LEONA. Do you know anything about Venetian glass?

FIORIA. I have lived here all my life.

LEONA. Is this eighteenth century?

FIORIA. (*takes it*) Yes, it is. (*shrugs; hands it back*) But it is so lovely, what is the difference? (*turns to close the canal door*)

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE 3

It is evening. The garden is soft and dusky; only a few of the little lights glow in the shadows. Delicate

BELLS CHIME and, from somewhere, sweet MUSIC is heard.

A young man (VITO) is in the garden; a boy, really, in white sports shirt, slacks and sandals. He is leaning pleasantly against the well, finishing a cigarette. There is a CRY, soft and romantic now of "GONDOLA, GONDOLA!" from the canal. VITO hears only the music; he hums a few bars, then stops as a light goes on in the open hallway of the Pensione. He snuffs out his cigarette against the well and puts the stub in his pocket. LEONA appears in the doorway wearing something pretty, but not fancy; her appointment is not yet an occasion. She peers around, puzzled, then takes a few steps into the garden.

VITO. (*in a soft voice and quite good English*) Miss Samish—

LEONA. Oh, hello!

VITO. Good evening.

LEONA. Don't tell me you found some more goblets.

VITO. (*smiling, too*) No. I bring a message.

LEONA. Signor di Rossi can't make it.

VITO. Oh no. He will be here, but he must be a little late.

LEONA. It's very nice of you to come and tell me.

VITO. We have no telephone and this is on the way to the Piazza.

LEONA. Sit down.

VITO. (*shyly*) No—

LEONA. (*sitting*) Come on. The concert doesn't begin until nine. Or aren't you going to hear the music?

VITO. (*sitting*) Well, I will hear it—(*laughs*)—while I am walking around. Music is very helpful, with the girls. (*points to canal*) Like that.

LEONA. Where is that coming from?

VITO. They play in the gondolas.

LEONA. That's nice. Would you like some coffee?

VITO. No, thank you.

LEONA. Cigarette?

VITO. American?

LEONA. Be my guest.

VITO. Thank you. I will save it for later, if you don't mind. American cigarettes are marvelous. Permit me. (*lights a match for hers; getting expansive*) This is quite luxurious here, but nothing compared to America.

LEONA. Have you been to America?

VITO. No, but everything in America is better. I am intending to go there soon. Soon as I can get enough money. But all the money is in America. It's a problem.

LEONA. Don't you like working for Signor di Rossi?

VITO. Very much. Many Americans come in. Americans are marvelous. Everybody has money.

LEONA. Not quite everybody, cookie. Tell me: do you think the Signor is a nice man?

VITO. Oh yes. He likes you very much, too. (*She laughs.*) And he is very particular. He thinks you are marvelous.

LEONA. Not marvelous.

VITO. Is that not a good word? An American lady used it. But I was too young.

LEONA. How old are you now?

VITO. Older. (*They laugh.*)

LEONA. The Signor didn't really say I was marvelous, now did he?

VITO. Perhaps not, but it is clear he thinks so.

LEONA. Why?

VITO. You had only to see how upset he was that he would be late for you. He did not want to be, but my most little sister—she got ill and he had to take her to

the doctor. It is nothing serious, nothing at all, but he always worries about the children. He is a very excellent father, you know.

LEONA. No, I didn't know.

VITO. Oh marvelous!

LEONA. He worries about whose children?

VITO. His. Us.

LEONA. You?

VITO. I am Vito.

LEONA. (*puts out cigarette*) Vito Di Rossi. His son.

VITO. Yes.

LEONA. And your mother?

VITO. She is fine.

LEONA. (*gets up*) Give her my regards.

VITO. (*gets up*) Miss Samish, Papa married very young. His hair was like that when he—

LEONA. Cookie—you better tell Papa not to come.

VITO. But Papa won't be very long.

LEONA. Tell him not to come!

VITO. Yes, Miss Samish. (*starts out rear door—turns back*) Perhaps I can tell him to come tomorrow night?

LEONA. I don't think so.

VITO. He will be very disappointed.

LEONA. Mama will be glad.

VITO. My mama? Why?

LEONA. I just don't understand anything, not a thing!

VITO. Papa could explain.

LEONA. (*turns on him*) You tell him not to come.

VITO. Yes, Miss Samish.

LEONA. You hear me?

VITO. Yes, Miss Samish.

(*He goes. During the following, he ascends the stone footbridge from the calle and disappears. LEONA*

stands aimlessly. The music has stopped some time ago. BELLS RING occasionally. GIOVANNA comes cheerfully out of the Pensione, carrying a tray with two cups of demitasse and sugar.)

GIOVANNA. Signorina, non vuole del caffè? (*LEONA stares.*) Caffè. (*She pantomimes, with gusto, drinking coffee.*)

LEONA. Sì. Prego.

GIOVANNA. Qui? (*pointing vigorously to table*)

LEONA. Sì. Prego.

GIOVANNA. (*puts tray on table*) Va bene. (*turns to go in; then, gently*) Signorina, che cosa è?

LEONA. (*smiling a little*) Nothing. Niente, Giovanna. Grazie. (*a beat, then taking a step closer*) Giovanna—Signor e Signora Yaeger—

GIOVANNA. Sì—

LEONA. Ah—Where?—Dové?

GIOVANNA. In loro stanza. (*points upstairs in the Pensione*)

LEONA. Grazie. (*starts to the Pensione but GIOVANNA stops her*)

GIOVANNA. No! Signor Yaeger—(*angry tones*)—rarararararararararara—Signora Yaeger—(*imitating crying*)—wahwahwahwah. (*clapping her hands to her face*) Terribile! (*She turns, pointing, only to see JUNE who has come into the doorway.*) Mi scusi. Lei vuole del caffè, Signora?

JUNE. Per favore.

GIOVANNA. Subito. (*grimaces to LEONA and hurries inside*)

JUNE. (*apologetically*) Marital troubles.

LEONA. I wish I had 'em. Matter of fact, I do.

JUNE. Everyone just loves you!

LEONA. I know.

JUNE. They do.

LEONA. I don't want everyone. I can't handle a crowd.

JUNE. I can't even handle—(*starting to cry*)—oh, here I go again.

LEONA. (*seating her*) Well, go in comfort. (*getting JUNE a handkerchief*) Don't be ashamed in front of me, cookie. I'm almost glad it happened, whatever it was. With you and Eddie, it couldn't be anything serious, and it gives us a chance to get closer. The three of us could be great buddies, you know.

JUNE. It wasn't anything serious. Giovanna's a terrible exaggerator. Eddie and I weren't fighting like she said.

LEONA. They're all exaggerators.

JUNE. He's having trouble working, so he's a little testy, that's all. No sugar for me.

LEONA. I'll only take one lump. I ran out of saccharine.

JUNE. Everything goes crazy for me.

LEONA. "Everything": one quarrel.

JUNE. Not only one. Everything always does go crazy. It did with my other husband, too.

LEONA. Your other husband?

JUNE. Oh yes. I'm a loser once already. A musician.

LEONA. At least, you're faithful to the arts.

JUNE. Not that kind of a musician. Skipper played trumpet. That pays very well, you know.

LEONA. I never in a million years would've guessed you were married before.

JUNE. It was just as lovely in the beginning with Skipper. I must do something because all of a sudden with him, too—everything went crazy. If he wasn't playing cards all night, he was drinking. So I cleared out.

LEONA. Why?

JUNE. A man does things like that, he doesn't love

you enough. I have to be everything to someone I love.

LEONA. You have to be everything.

JUNE. Is that crazy?

LEONA. Yes. And you're crazy to complain. Good, bad, indifferent, there are two of you, cookie.

JUNE. What do you mean?

LEONA. Two. That's the nicest number in the world. You're two now and you were before. Don't push your luck. Everything doesn't go crazy: you just ask too much.

JUNE. What's the matter? What did I say wrong?

LEONA. Nothing. It's me.

JUNE. Something happened to you.

LEONA. Not a thing. That's my history. (*gets her purse*) Come on, I'll treat you to a pick-up. We're in Venice, cookie. Sometimes, I'm just walking down an alley and it hits me: I finally made it! I'm in Europe. I'm in Venice, Italy! What do you say we jump into our Bikinis and go swimming in Harry's Bar? You and me and El Groucho. That'll fix up all of us.

JUNE. Not Eddie.

LEONA. (*crossing to house*) I'll rout him out.

JUNE. (*gets up and stops her*) No. He'd rather be alone.

LEONA. Oh. Okay. How about you and me?

JUNE. When I feel like this, I kind of always go to the movies.

LEONA. Even in Venice?!

JUNE. Movies are movies.

LEONA. — What's playing?

JUNE. I don't know.

LEONA. Doesn't it matter?

JUNE. It's probably an American picture. They're much better in Italian. Would you like to come?

LEONA. At home, I go once in six months. Well, I

came to Europe for a change, didn't I? I'll walk with you and see what's on.

(As they start to leave by the rear door, FIORIA comes out of the Pensione smoking a cigarette.)

FIORIA. Buona sera.

LEONA. Buona sera.

FIORIA. I thought you were going out this evening, Miss Samish.

LEONA. I am. I'm going to the movies with my girl-friend. *(She takes JUNE's arm and they stroll off. FIORIA sits. Again, CHIMES in the distance. EDDIE appears in the doorway, his hands in his pockets. After a bit, he wanders into the garden.)*

FIORIA. She has gone to the cinema with Miss Samish.

EDDIE. *(Gives no reaction, just looks up at the sky. Then he comes to the table and stares at her.)* You're always on hand after we have a fight.

FIORIA. Yes. I am always on hand.

EDDIE. What about Signor Faustino?

FIORIA. What about il Signor Faustino?

EDDIE. How'd you get rid of him?

FIORIA. I do not have to get rid of him.

EDDIE. I thought you saw him every night when he's in town.

FIORIA. Signor Faustino is an intellectual, so he loves to talk too much. My husband also was an intellectual and loved to talk too much. They two used to talk too much together. It was very amusing.

EDDIE. Was it?

FIORIA. They never talked about me.

EDDIE. You and Faustino were friends even while your husband was alive.

FIORIA. You are so delicate.

EDDIE. And your husband knew.

FIORIA. I am not certain. I would think Yes.

EDDIE. It didn't bother him. Or Faustino. Or least of all you.

FIORIA. You have such impractical morality. In Italy, there is no divorce, there is only discretion.

EDDIE. You think after a fight, I'll be available.

FIORIA. I think after a fight, you may be available. You were once before.

EDDIE. So I may be again.

FIORIA. I hope that.

EDDIE. Why?

FIORIA. It was very pleasant that other time.

EDDIE. (*softer*) Was it?

FIORIA. Didn't you find it so?

EDDIE. You know I did.

FIORIA. I answer the same.

EDDIE. Listen—I don't love you.

FIORIA. Who asked?

EDDIE. You wouldn't, but I have to say it.

FIORIA. Yes: you have to be honest. You have to let me know you will not give me anything. I know. (*laughs*) My God, you people—you worry about the most idiotic things!

EDDIE. (*grinning*) Do we indeed!

FIORIA. You in particular.

EDDIE. (*looks at her a moment; then crosses to canal door; calls*) Mauro! Mauro! (*comes back to her*) Don't you ask anything?

FIORIA. Of course. I ask you to risk trouble with your wife. I ask you not to feel guilty. I ask you to enjoy yourself—so I will enjoy myself.

EDDIE. I will. I am.

FIORIA. So am I—

MAURO. (*comes in*) Buona sera. You want gondola again!

EDDIE. Si.

MAURO. (*opens door*) Okey-dokey.

EDDIE. Signora—

FIORIA. Signor—

(*Together, they walk to the canal door. As FIORIA and EDDIE are going through, the rear door opens and LEONA enters the garden. Their backs are to her. She stops dead, watching them disappear down the steps and then watching the canal door close after them. Laughter comes from beyond the wall. Then, after a time, the door again opens and MAURO comes out. He carefully closes the door and stands in the garden counting the lira notes he holds in his hand. On the little footbridge, DI ROSSI appears. He looks briefly down into the canal, then into the garden, then hurries across the bridge and descends into the calle.*)

MAURO. (*Looks up from his money and sees LEONA who has not moved. He grins.*) Hey, lady, wanna buy American cigarettes? Chestyfield!

LEONA. (*grabs the BOY's wrist in fury*) What did you get that money for?

MAURO. Is mine!

LEONA. What did you get it for??

MAURO. Leggo! (*yanks away*)

LEONA. That's dirty!

MAURO. Is money!

LEONA. (*advancing on him*) You mustn't do that anymore!

MAURO. I work, I get pay!

LEONA. (*grabbing him*) Is that what you do?! (*shaking him*) Is that your work?!

MAURO. Wassa matter wit' you, whassa matter?

LEONA. You stop that, you stop that *now*!

DI ROSSI. (*Has entered. Quickly, he goes to them and pulls LEONA away.*) What happened? What did he do?

MAURO. (*almost in tears*) Nothing!

DI ROSSI. Sta zitto!

LEONA. He's a child, a baby. And just one minute ago—(*She points to the canal door.*)

DI ROSSI. Oh, Signora Fioria and the young painter. (*LEONA stares at him.*) I saw from the bridge. For that, you are angry at a child?

MAURO. Whassa matter?

DI ROSSI. You work for the gondolier?

MAURO. Sì. Che cosa ho fatto?

DI ROSSI. Niente. Va a casa.

MAURO. (*Picks up some of his money which he dropped in the tussle. He is defiant, and trying not to bawl.*) I work, I get pay.

DI ROSSI. Va bene, va bene.

MAURO. All time before, she nice. Friend. Now—now—(*confronting LEONA*) Whassa matter, lady, you crazy?

LEONA. Sì.

MAURO. Is not funny!

LEONA. Mauro—(*She steps toward him, holding out her hands.*)

MAURO. No!

LEONA. (*as she gets pack of cigarettes from table*) I'm sorry, Mauro. You work, you get pay. I'm very sorry, cookie—Okay?

MAURO. (*coldly*) Okay.

LEONA. You want Chestyfield?

MAURO. (*hesitates, then grins at her*) Two?

LEONA. Two.

MAURO. Grazie.

LEONA. Prego.

MAURO. You okey-dokey now, lady?

LEONA. Yes.

MAURO. Be seein' ya.

LEONA. Be seein' ya.

(*MAURO goes out the rear door. She does not look at DI ROSSI.*)

LEONA. Something happens to this city at night.
(*Throws pack of cigarettes on table and moves over to canal door.*)

DI ROSSI. Are you going to be angry at Venice now?
Your friend Eddie would do the same in Kansas City.

LEONA. Not in a gondola.

DI ROSSI. That is an advantage of Venice. Miss Samish, you were shocked.

LEONA. No. Disappointed.

DI ROSSI. No. Shocked.

LEONA. (*turns on him; sharply*) I don't like dishonesty.

DI ROSSI. You are not his wife.

LEONA. She's at the movies fortunately. Didn't Vito give you my message?

DI ROSSI. Yes.

LEONA. He isn't your nephew any more than he's your niece!

DI ROSSI. Ah, I see, I see, I see.

LEONA. Why didn't you tell me you were married?

DI ROSSI. I was too vain.