

Once Upon A River

Fletcher Dale

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CHARACTERS

SELENA 40 years old. Married and divorced young, single until she married Benedict eleven months before. She is an attractive, confident woman, an artist, imaginative, flamboyant, colourful, animated, an extrovert. A non-conformist with a desire to push into taboo areas of life to challenge herself. She shocks many people, feeling they are too stuffy, puritan and judgemental.

BENEDICT 40 years old. Married for the first time to Selena. He is a successful business man with a desire to maintain the status quo. He is sober, serious and conservative with something of a college boy appearance. An intellectual, well spoken and refined, educated in a Catholic boys school he is a puritan, stuffy and judgemental.

ROMANO the maitre de. A handsome 30 year old Spanish man. He speaks English well with a strong accent. Extremely conscientious about his job, he was one of the many of Selena's lovers, ten years before. He kept in contact and now has returned to this country to claim her as his own.

MUSICIAN plays music in the restaurant throughout the evening.

LADY a diner in the restaurant.

The following make very brief appearances, suggest one female plays lady and flower seller, one male plays owner and stripper.

RESTAURANT OWNER 55 years old short, rotund and serious.

FLOWER SELLER

MALE STRIPPER appears as a strip-o-gram for one of the guests.

It is Selena's birthday and Benedict is taking her to dinner and then on to see a play.

Int. House early evening.

The friendly sitting room come art studio of a smart upmarket house, designer décor. Selena's paintings hang on the walls, colourful pictures of people and flowers. A sideboard stands on the back wall beneath a mirror. Three vases of flowers and birthday cards stand on the sideboard. A painting on an easel stands in the corner covered by a white sheet. A sofa is on the right hand wall, a small round table with a telephone, two books and a handbag stands centre stage. A sound system is against the left wall. The door is on the left which leads to the rest of the house. There is large clock on the wall.

"I'm In The Mood For Love" plays. As the saxophone starts playing Selena walks on stage slipping into her dress. She moves about gracefully, goes to sound system and turns up the music. Crossing to the mirror she fusses with her makeup, tries on two sets of earrings, undecided, she puts them both back on sideboard. She sings along with the chorus, I'm in the Mood For Love, looks down to her shoes, scrunches her face and goes out the left door she came from and returns a moment later in another pair of shoes, walking about the room trying them out. Again she goes to the mirror, fussing with her hair. She stops fussing and peers into the mirror.

SELENA

Mirror, mirror on the wall, make this the fairest night of all!

She laughs at herself. The telephone rings and she crosses to the table and answers it.

SELENA

Hello! *pause* Hi, *pause* Thankyou, she laughs Yes, I've had a lovely day. Lots of cards and flowers, lunch with friends. *pause* No, my Spanish lover forgot me this year! It's been ten years now and not a

birthday has gone by without him making contact. It's really sweet, an old lover who never forgets, but this time nothing. He must have found a new interest. *Knock, knock, knock Selena looks toward the left door.* Yes, amazing. Listen I have to go, someone's at the door. *The knock, knock, knock, loud and forceful.* Yes *pause* That's great but I have to go, I believe my husband is trying to break the door down. Thanks, bye!

Knock, knock, knock. Selena rushes to the door; opens it and almost gets knocked in the face by Benedict's fist. She ducks and laughs as Benedict stands there with a large bunch of red roses in front of his face. He is dressed formally in a dark suit and tie.

SELENA *stands back and whistles as he enters.*

Who is this gorgeous hunk with a face full of love? She peers through the flowers. Can it be my husband trying to break down a door in his own house?

BENEDICT

Happy birthday Selena. He hands her the flowers Why do you insist I knock before coming into your studio? I'm your husband!

SELENA

That's exactly why! It makes me elusive and fascinating baby! *Hey, she smells the flowers* These are beautiful! Thankyou my lover!

BENEDICT *looking her up and down*

Looking beautiful as always. *He kisses her* I keep asking myself how I ended up with such a beautiful wife!

SELENA

Just a lucky man I guess! *She hugs Benedict and looks to the flowers* They're just heavenly darling! I'll put them in water and then I'll be ready to roll!

BENEDICT *pulling a letter from his pocket*

I found this in the letter box.

Selena turns about and opens it, reading the card quickly she pushes it into her bra, buries her face in the flowers and goes from the room. Benedict crosses to the sideboard and begins reading the cards. Selena returns with the flowers in a vase and places them on the small table in the centre of the room, then stands back admiring them.

SELENA

Did you know red roses speak of love?

BENEDICT

Yes, I do know. I love you very much birthday girl. Are you ready?

Selena grins at Benedict as she crosses to the sideboard, placing the letter behind the cards.

SELENA

Almost! Which earrings do you prefer?

She picks up two different earrings and holds them to her ears, shaking her head about.

BENEDICT

The gold ones. Come on, if we move we'll catch the play on time.

SELENA *putting on the earrings*

Which play would you prefer to see?

BENEDICT *surprised*

Are you kidding? 'The Taming of the Shrew' of course!

I may learn something!

SELENA

Very funny! I'd prefer to see 'Much Ado About Nothing' myself.

Selena leaves the room and as soon as she is gone Benedict paces across to the sideboard, picks up the letter and studies it intently,

turning it about, hesitant about opening it. Selena returns, spinning about the room in her dress, layers of chiffon flare out as she turns. Seeing Benedict with the letter she crosses to him, takes the letter and puts it in her handbag.

SELENA

Do you like my new dress?

BENEDICT

I love it! You look good enough to eat. We had better go before I decide I would rather have you for dinner. Are you ready?

SELENA

Almost. I told you I would unveil my latest work for you on my birthday.

She leads Benedict across to the easel, removing the sheet. The painting is a group of young naked young men cavorting recklessly. Benedict stands back, folds his arms and looks deeply serious.

BENEDICT *coldly*

Who's the model this time?

SELENA *nonchalantly*

He's a backpacker from Chilli working his way round Australia. What do you think? Have I captured the true feel of Dionysus? Does the story reach you?

BENEDICT

What's your story Selena?

SELENA

It's part of my Greek myth series. Dionysus and the pirates!

BENEDICT *tersely*

What is it with you and those stories of murder, lust and incest? They are brutal and disgusting.

SELENA

Myths contain the essence of human nature!

BENEDICT *indignantly he paces*

What a load of rot!

SELENA

You display your ignorance with comments like that Benedict. All modern films and stories have their roots in ancient myths and legends. They too can be brutal and disgusting!

BENEDICT

Maybe this is just an excuse to surround yourself with hot blooded young men while I am at work all day?

SELENA

Hey! You're a Norman Lindsay fan! Was he really just a pervert?

Selena goes to Benedict as she speaks and peers intently into his eyes.

SELENA

Just as I thought! Your eyes have turned a nasty shade of green!

She kisses Benedict and then walks to the sideboard.

SELENA

Come on babe! Let's set our sights on a good time! She pulls \$20 from her purse, waves it on the air poking it into her bra. A girl must always be prepared for being deserted.

BENEDICT

Who would desert you Selena?

She takes one last look in the mirror, winks at herself, then goes to the table and picks up her purse, steps smartly up to Benedict and hooks her arm into his. You have before today darling! Come on, I'se a ready honey!

BENEDICT

OK, this is your night.

SELENA *she sings the Beatles song*

‘You say it’s your birthday,

Its my birthday to yeah!’

Benedict joins in singing as they walk out the door

Int. restaurant early evening

The restaurant overlooks a city river scene. Very upmarket, quality décor. A bar stands to the right. The main door is on the left, two doors to rest rooms also on the left. On the right a door leads into the kitchen with bar door. Statues of Adonis and David decorate the outside courtyard seen behind the rear wall's large glass windows overlooking the river, with lights reflecting from the far bank. Boats move up and down the river. Diners are seated at the tables. (silhouette cut-outs) Romano and Benedict keep the drinks flowing all evening. Benedict and Selena drink steadily all night.

Benedict and Selena walk through the courtyard, Selena is singing the birthday song while Benedict tries to quiet her. Benedict opens the door and allows Selena to enter first. Romano moves to greet them. On seeing him Selena stops dead in her tracks, expressing enormous surprise, yet she says nothing. Benedict bumps into her then moves to the front.

ROMANO

Good evening Senor, it is good you return. How are you this evening?

BENEDICT

Very well thanks Romano, only too much work and not enough play.

ROMANO

So tonight you play eh! *Looking directly at Selena* You have a new lady in your life senor?

BENEDICT *pulling Selena forward*

Romano, this is Selena. She is not normally this shy Romano. Your good looks must overwhelm her.

Romano steps forward, takes Selena's hand and kisses it. Every one freezes and Romano moves centre front stage

ROMANO

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
Injurious distance should not stop my way;
For then despite of space I would be brought
From limits far remote, where thou dost stay.
No matter then although my foot did stand
Upon the furthest earth removed from thee;
For nimble thought can jump both sea and land
As soon as think the place that he should be.

All unfreeze. He returns to greet Benedict and Selena

ROMANO *looking intently into Selenas eyes*
Bella donna, welcome to Charmers.

SELENA

Hello Romano. And yes I am the new woman in Benedict's life. I am his wife!

ROMANO *looks briefly shattered*
His wife?

BENEDICT

I bought my mother hear while you were away last month Selena.

SELENA

Good, I would not want to be trailing along behind any other woman. I don't wear being second fiddle too well.

A violinist appears in the background playing softly

ROMANO

Yes, his mother, a lovely woman. At least she behaved like a mother.
Ummph...Now we have a special table for you on this night of celebration.

BENEDICT

Did you know we were celebrating Selena's birthday?

ROMANO

Senor, you are dressed to party no!

BENEDICT *looking at his clothes*

Of course, and I want this to be a special night.

ROMANO

Come this way senora

He takes Selena's arm, escorting them to a table by the window, he seats them formally

Now a drink? Something special for a special lady?

BENEDICT

Yes, champagne I think. *he looks to Selena* Moet, Don Perigon?

SELENA *who has been peering intently out the window*

Uh? Sounds great to me.

BENEDICT

Which one dreamer?

SELENA

Oh! Moet thanks.

BENEDICT

So a bottle of Moet.... And how is the service tonight Romano? We're hoping to catch a play in a couple of hours.

ROMANO

Aha, excellent service senor. You shall be my honoured guests. What play is it you shall see?

BENEDICT

We're both Shakespearean fans and tonight we have a choice of two.
Much Ado About Nothing or The Taming of The Shrew.

SELENA

Benedict and I cannot decide which one to see.

ROMANO

'Neither fair maid if either be disliked'!

SELENA *looking up surprised*

Oh Romano, Romano, where for art thou Romano?

A bell rings

ROMANO

Oh Julieta, I hear the chef's bell calling, I must away. Work must come before the heart, yet fear not fair maid, when I say I will return, I return.

Romano strides off to the kitchen, Benedict laughs

BENEDICT

Seems our esteemed maitre de loves Shakespeare as well. *Pause* What do you think of the view?

SELENA

It's wonderful... Great place for a restaurant..... Why did you choose this particular restaurant Benny?

BENEDICT

Because it's the best in town darling and I always want the best for you!
Did you know this whole stretch of river was old wharves and warehouses until a few years ago?

SELENA

No, I didn't. Were you living here then?

BENEDICT

No, that was before I came to town.

SELENA

Well, this is an interesting choice for our dinner my love. *Pause..* Do you ever think that we walk toward our own fate Benedict? As though the script is already written and we just step onto the stage?

Romano returns with the champagne

BENEDICT

Maybe so. All the world is a stage. Isn't that right Romano?

ROMANO *opening the bottle and pouring*

'And all the men and women are merely players! They have their exits and their entrances and one man in his time plays many parts'.

BENEDICT

So you are into Shakespeare too Romano?

ROMANO

Si Senor, *looking deeply at Selena* I learn of Shakespeare from a lover many years ago.....*he shakes his head and becomes serious* How is business on your side of the river Senor?

BENEDICT

Nothing to complain of and no one to complain about. How are things for you Romano? Did you find that woman you were searching for?

ROMANO *looks longingly at Selena who turns to look out the window* Si Senor, but I fear she is taken by another.

BENEDICT

Oh well, woman can be trouble you know. At least you have a good job. That is so important to a man, his job.

ROMANO

Ah yes, my job! I would ask of you a small favour to write for me a letter Senor.

BENEDICT

A letter? he looks at Selena who keeps gazing outside

ROMANO

Later, later we talk! Senora, have a wonderful birthday dinner. A birthday is a very special day no? A day the one who loves you should never forget.

He bows and walks away to the bar

BENEDICT

He is right you know, a birthday is something to be shared with those you love. *Raising his glass* To your birthday and may we share many more together.

SELENA *raising her glass*

Thankyou. After this last year I bet you never dreamt you would share a second birthday with me.

BENEDICT

I did wonder at times.... This has been a fiery marriage. Did you know until you the longest time I had spent with a woman was three months. They usually bore me after that. Where else would I find a roller coaster ride like you Mrs Goodman. You are a very exciting woman and I love you very much.

Benedict reaches across and kisses her

SELENA

And I love you Mr. Goodman. Being married to you has certainly been entertaining, something I would not have missed for the world. Do you know I have never enjoyed a man as much as I enjoy you? You stimulate me as no other man has. You turn me on in every which way.

Benedict takes her face in his hands and kisses her deeply. Romano across the room shows his displeasure.

BENEDICT

And you turn me on every which way too..... Have you thought any more about which play you would like to see?

SELENA

Well, I have seen Taming of the Shrew three times.

BENEDICT

Selena you didn't learn a thing!

SELENA

Are you inferring I should obey your commands Benedict?

BENEDICT

'Nay come Kate, come, you must not look so sour'.

SELENA

'It is my fashion when I see a crab'.

BENEDICT

'Why there is no crab, and therefore look not sour'.

SELENA

'There is, there is'.

BENEDICT

'Then show it me'.

SELENA

‘Had I a glass I would’.

Selena looks upon the glass in her hand and her face alights in glee. She lifts the glass to Benedict’s face.

BENEDICT

‘What? You mean my face’?

Selena laughs happily

SELENA

You really do that well Mr. Goodman. I had no idea you were an actor! But I feel like you would really like me to jump to attention and obey your commands. You are somewhat of a tyrant.

BENEDICT

You jump to anyone’s commands? Not likely. I’m only trying to open your mind Selena. Your trouble began at thirteen when you rebelled against your parents and an education.

SELENA

Benedict, one can get an education walking through a desert. I am an artist, not an intellectual. My priority was to learn about people and what makes them tick.

BENEDICT

Tick, tick, tick! You are a walking time bomb.

SELENA *laughing and shaking her finger at him*

And you do your best to light the wick! You’re lucky you’re such a great actor Benny.

She takes Benedicts hand and kisses it. The musician moves to their table. Selena’s purse sits on the table. She reaches into it for her cigarettes and the letter falls out.

BENEDICT

Ah! *Benedict picks it up.* The letter! Obviously from someone special!

SELENA *taking the letter, puts it back in her purse.*

It's a birthday letter from an old friend.

BENEDICT

Oh yeah, a close friend?

SELENA

Your jealousy is boring Benedict! It's from one of those 'we once shared something nice friends'.

BENEDICT

I believe you have a few of those! What happened that you did not get a card from your Spanish lover this year?

SELENA

I hope you are not going to start on that again..... I think my past haunts you because you were so busy being building a fortune you missed creating a past for yourself. You forgot to live and resent that I didn't. Can't you put it away and let's get on with our life together.

BENEDICT

While you go on receiving secret love letters?

SELENA

It's not a secret! I just have no wish to wave a red flag before a bull?

A group of people enter the restaurant and Benedict is distracted. Looking like untidy country hicks they make their way across the room.

BENEDICT

Oh no! Look at this. They look like they've never been in a place like this before.

Seated beside them Benedict waves to Romano who comes over.

BENEDICT

Do you have another table we can move to?

ROMANO

No worries Senor Goodman. I fix it!

SELENA

Is this really necessary?

BENEDICT

Yes. You'll appreciate this after they've had a few drinks and become rowdy.

SELENA

But two tables away?

BENEDICT

You'll see what a difference such a small change can make.

ROMANO

Just take your drinks and leave the rest to me.

Romano carries their champagne and glasses to the new table and seats them.

SELENA

Done with a minimum of fuss!

ROMANO

It is nothing senora. *He bows deeply* Your wish is my command madam.

SELENA *laughing*

I wish Benedict thought the same way Romano.

Romano smirks knowingly but says nothing before turning and walking away.

SELENA

Wasn't that a rather arrogant thing to do?

BENEDICT

Tell me that later when they get out of control. *He chuckles* How do you like being called madam?

SELENA

Oh it's a nice classy touch don't you think?

BENEDICT

Reminds me of a Victorian school marm.

SELENA

As long as I don't remind you of one!

BENEDICT

You! You're the least likely school marm ever. I would have loved a school marm like you when I was a boy.

SELENA

In an all boys Catholic school!

BENEDICT

You would have thought you had dropped into heaven in an all boy's school. Hundreds of young men to get your hands on!

SELENA

School boys? Why do you always think the worst of me Benedict?

BENEDICT

Selena, I know, you're capable of anything. *When she shows despair he adds* Come on, don't get serious.

SELENA

Sure, and will you laugh with me? I was never as bad as you want to believe you know.

BENEDICT

No, only when you give me a hard time.

SELENA *inquiringly her left hand to heart*
Moi?

BENEDICT

Yes, moi!

SELENA

The only time I give you a hard time is when you play father, judge and jury with me.

BENEDICT

Sometimes I think you're in need of a father. Someone should have done what Petruccio did and put you over their knee.

SELENA

Then you would see the wild cat come out in me! Don't get any kinky ideas Benny.

BENEDICT

Your rear end is one of your many endearing features my dear wife. I would not dream of damaging it. *ROMANO appears at the table unnoticed by Benedict* Then again... upside down could be an interesting angle.

ROMANO

Senor Goodman, are you ready to order?

BENEDICT

Oh! We haven't looked at the menu yet.

Both take up their menus. Romano curls his lip, all freeze and he takes centre front stage

ROMANO

‘Let me confess that we two must be twain,
Although our undivided loves are one:
So shall those blots that do with me remain,
Without thy help, by me be borne alone,
In our two loves there is but one respect
Though in our lives a separable spite
Which though it alters not loves sole effect
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love’s delight’.

All unfreeze and Romano goes back to the table

BENEDICT

Just an entree for now Romano. The Gambas al ahillo thanks.

SELENA

I’ll have the same thank you.

BENEDICT

And a bottle of Katnook Chardonnay Romano.

R O M A N O

Ah! You’re setting the mood for a fiesta!

They all laugh in agreement. Selena points excitedly out the window as a paddle boat comes into view.

SELENA

Oh! Benedict, look, the Lady Diamantina! Benedict and I met on the Lady Diamantina 18 months ago Romano.

BENEDICI’

Yes, within five minutes of meeting Selena I knew she was the woman I

wanted to marry.

SELENA

Cocky bastard isn't he Romano. I believe Benedict saw me on that boat and felt sorry for me; deciding then and there he'd save me from eternal spinsterhood. I think it's very romantic to meet your husband on a paddle wheeler, don't you Romano?

BENEDICT

It was on the gangplank actually.

SELENA *laughs*

A mere technical detail.

BENEDICT

You do have a habit of getting carried away with fanciful ideas Selena.

SELENA

And you have a habit of knocking the wind out *she reaches across the table for the ashtray and knocks the glass of wine over them* quick smart.

ROMANO *jumps in fast*

No worries. I fix it.

BENEDICT

Great! Now who's knocking what? And the Moet of all things! If you cut down on the dramatics a bit Selena, these things wouldn't happen.

ROMANO

No worries. I fix it!

SELENA

It was just a little accident Benedict. You shouldn't let these things get to you so.

ROMANO

No worries, no worries, I fix it. *Stressed* Come now, this is a celebration. *Pausing, he stops wiping up and raises his cloth.* ‘The bitter wine upon the sponge, was the saviour of remorse’.

BENEDICT & SELENA *both looking at Romano*

Thanks Romano

The table of riff raff burst into uproarious laughter and call to Romano.

ROMANO

‘With flutes of fear they fill the ear
As their grisly masque they led
And loud they sang, and long they sang
As they sang to wake the dead’.

Romano bows, and goes off to the other table leaving them both laughing.

BENEDICT

What on earth was that recital from I wonder. It definitely wasn’t Shakespeare.

SELENA

It had the distinct ring of Oscar Wilde.

BENEDICT

That must impress you Selena. Romano seems to be well versed in your favourite poets. He’s a very refined waiter. I’m impressed. I believe I can help refine you a little too.

SELENA *lighting a cigarette.*

So I need refining do I? Not up to your standards Mr Goodman?

BENEDICT

Well it’s just that you do behave rather controversially at times.

SELENA *amazed*

Spilling a drink is controversial? Seems to me you work hard on seeing me as a controversy. My accidents are inconsequential compared to yours Benedict. You break bones and smash cars when you have accidents.

Tension mounts, they both sit more erect.

BENEDICT

Yes well, I may have had a few accidents lately but you do have some unorthodox ways Selena.

SELENA

Why do you look so strange upon your wife?

BENEDICT

Because I have found myself a wife who has been a bad woman in her time, she is definitely not normal.

SELENA

Normal, shormal, why so formal! Good people are normal and decidedly uninteresting. You want to believe me bad because stirs your imagination. If you keep striving to categorise me you will squeeze me into a box and I shall die!

BENEDICT

But you would not die quietly I'm sure! A woman of many faces!

SELENA

I thought that's why you liked me! You told me most women bore you. You don't really approve of me do you Benedict. I don't know why you're with me.

BENEDICT

Well why are you with me if you think I'm an arrogant tyrant?

Romano approaches with the entrée's. *He hesitates then steps forward.*

Selena stares hard at Benedict.

ROMANO

Your meal Senora. *He places the meals 'Chew the food of sweet and bitter fancy' and waves to the musician to come Enjoy! goes back to the kitchen.*

The musician appear playing beside their table. Benedict gets up and quietly requests a song. They play and Selena sings along.

It's written on the rainbow, in letters made of gold,
It's written on the rainbow, there's wisdom to behold,
My friend the little sparrow, flew close enough to see,
It's written on the rainbow, it's this philosophy,
When you walk through life, you will have no cares,
If you walk the lines and not the squares,
As you go through life make this your goal.
Watch the doughnut, not the hole.

SELENA

You can be such a treasure! You remembered.

BENEDICT

Of course! You played that on your grandma's gramophone when you were eight years old.

SELENA

You can be so sweet and thoughtful Benny. I know why I love you.

BENEDICT *eagerly*

What were you like when you were eight years old?

SELENA

I was great on a pair of roller skates!

BENEDICT

Yeah, but what were you like?

SELENA

My only memory of being eight years old is when my two older brothers and I were allowed to go by train three stations away to swim at the local council swimming pool. Back in the days before every second house had a pool. One day my brothers told me they had lost my return ticket and I didn't know if they were telling me the truth or teasing me. Rather than allow myself to be the butt of their joke I said 'I don't care, I'll walk' and off I went down this unknown road towards home. I found my way OK but halfway there my father came along in the car. All he said was 'Get in'. When we got home, I was expecting the hiding of my life. I was used to those; I got a hiding every day in my house. But no one even spoke to me. *She looks up and speaks very slowly* No one spoke to me for days.

BENEDICT

So, your pride was an issue for you even then!

SELENA

Benny, stop looking for flaws. Try enjoying our differences instead of being judgmental.

BENEDICT

Judgmental? You're the one that's judgmental. Why do you want me to wear your faults?

Selena stares long and hard at Benedict.

SELENA

We don't work do we!

BENEDICT

Well, if we don't work then just go. Finish your entree and leave. Don't stay to be polite. You have your taxi money. Just go.

Selena sits, glaring at Benedict

BENEDICT

Well, are you going?

SELENA

No! I'll finish dinner first.

BENEDICT

Don't stay just to take me for a free meal Selena.

SELENA *sweetly*

I don't need a free meal thank you, Benedict. I can pay my own way!

She pulls the \$20 from her bra, waves it gently in the air before placing it on the table.

SELENA *she looks hard at the note*

Best restaurant.....that's a down payment.

BENEDICT *impatiently*

Put your money away.

SELENA *eagerly*

You could cut the rest out on my body!

BENEDICT

Selena! I don't want a prostitute for a wife!

SELENA

Why not, many men have prostitutes for wives! Women who trade sex for security. Take comfort in the fact that I am not one of them. on babe. Lets not argue. We waste so much of our time together arguing.

BENEDICT

Well, stop being argumentative.

SELENA

OK, ok! I'll let you cool off while I go to the ladies. *She stands* Fasten your seat belt honey, I think we're in for a bumpy night.

She kisses Benedict then walks toward the musician doing a little dance and requests a song for Benedict before dancing off to the toilet. Benedict sits heavily watching her, the musician moves to his table and play, Money money money..... Romano appears at the table and refills Benedicts drink.

ROMANO

She is a work of art Senor Goodman. You are a lucky man.

BENEDICT

Yeah, but she's a handful. She keeps me on my toes.

ROMANO *smiling*

Aha! But dancing I'm sure Senor. Now, seriously about that letter I spoke of earlier. If you could write for me to my boss, a letter of commendation for my service. We had a small drama here the other day when he found a cockroach in the dining room. I am very worried, my job may be at stake.

BENEDICT

Sure, I'll write a letter for you and I also have a favour to ask of you. *He pulls \$20 from his wallet.* I may need your help tonight keeping an eye on Selena. I don't want her to leave here without me.

ROMANO

Ah! I will take care of her as if she were my own, my friend.

BENEDICT

Hey, not too well now Romano. *Handing him the money* You're doing

me the favour this time remember.

ROMANO

At your service Senor Goodman!

Romano walks off proudly, Benedict gets up and goes to the gents. As he goes in Selena comes out and returns to the table. She sits, sips her drink, lights a cigarette. She looks about for Benedict, looks at her watch before turning to the people on the next table.

SELENA

Did you see the gentleman who was with me? *The people shake their head no.* Seems I may have offended him and shall have to joined the deserted wives club. Thanks... *She scribbles on a napkin folds it and gets up, hands it to them* Could you give this to the maitre de please.

Taking her purse she walks out the main door. Romano appears from the kitchen, sees her go and smiles wickedly. Benedict returns to the table and Romano goes to him.

ROMANO

Too bad Senor Goodman; your wife has slipped by us both. Come, have another bottle of wine.

BENEDICI'

Left? When? Why? *He takes another \$20 from his wallet handing it to Romano* Romano, you must bring her back.

ROMANO *steps back shocked*

I Senor? I do not chase a woman for another man!

BENEDICI'

Of course! Excuse me Romano I must find my wife! I'll be back.

He rushes off out the door. Romano is called to the next table and receives the napkin. He reads it aloud.

ROMANO

Come to my house at ten tomorrow morning. Selena

Smiling broadly he puts the napkin in his pocket as he begins to clear the table. The musician move toward him playing Spanish Skies, he bursts into a whistle, Benedict and Selena return through the restaurant door. then all on stage freeze as Romano steps to centre front stage.

ROMANO

‘Fair is their love, but not so fair as fickle,
Mild as a dove, but neither true nor trusty
Brighter than glass, and yet as glass is brittle
Softer than wax and yet iron is rusty’.

The musician play and action starts again. Romano clears the table and goes to the kitchen.

BENEDICT *as they return to their table*

I don’t know how you could do that to me.

SELENA

I didn’t do it to you! I left because I thought you had gone.

B E N E D I C T

A man can’t go to the toilet without his wife running off?

SELENA

My Goodman, I apologise for my mistake. Our life together is so unpredictable I can never be sure about anything.

BENEDICT

I’m glad you came back Selena. It wouldn’t fare well to have a drama on your birthday. Now where’s Romano *looking around*, he’s been so on the ball until now?

Romano appears from behind

ROMANO

Senor?

BENEDICT

Oh Romano, could we have water please.

ROMANO

Water, Senor it's on the way. *He walks to kitchen.*

BENEDICT

For such a young man he's a very good maitre de.

He takes Selena's hand I'm glad you didn't go Selena. My prideful little eight year old.

SELENA

Yeah! And what were you like when you were eight years old?

BENEDICT *He lifts his arm over the back of the chair and stares off into space.* While you were busy being a rebellious little monkey, I was responsible from the time I was five years old until I was sixteen for taking care of a horse. My father had always wanted a horse, so I got one. Everyday I had to feed him, brush and clean his stall. A horse is pretty big when you're a little kid. No matter how cold, wet and miserable, out I went, taking care of this enormous animal.

SELENA

So, you had a lot of responsibility for a little kid. That explains a lot about you now.

BENEDICT

It was good grounding in being practical and realistic. Something you could have done with.

SELENA

But you never really had a chance to be a boy. She digs him gently in the ribs. You poor little cootchycoo grew up to fast.

BENEDICI'

I am not complaining. It's a shame you didn't have more responsibilities, it would have done you good.

He kisses her and takes her hand, laughing when he sees the paddle wheeler passing.

SELENA *picking up her drink*

Cheers darling. To you and the Lady Diamantina looking so pretty gliding her way up and down the river.

BENEDICT

Cheers to the love boat. And cheers to us. You also look very pretty chugging yourself up and down on that chair.

She smiles into his eyes and they clink drinks

BENEDICT

Why do we argue? I enjoy you so much.

SELENA

And I enjoy you. We're both a bit mad I think. Here we are in one of the best restaurants in town and we spend the time arguing. We're both wacky.

BENEDICT

Hold on with the plurals there. Selena, I realise I have a problem with our differences but can't you see an ugly approach doesn't work. It just stirs me more.

SELENA

Ok, I'll try to tame the shrew just for you!

BENEDICT

Thank you, and I'll try not to make much ado about nothing. Now listen. There's an art show on over near my work that I suggest you go

and see. Your paintings need more light and this art might inspire you. The guy's name is Rowan Black. I spoke to him and he's happy to give you some lessons.

SELENA

You know I've never had lessons and have no desire to start now! I sell my work; the people who buy it love it. You've been my only critic. I feel you could do with some light in your soul, would you care for some lessons?

BENEDICT

That's your biggest problem. You can't be told anything. That's been your problem since you were thirteen.

SELENA

Thirteen, eight which is it? Seems I have always been a problem.

BENEDICT

I'm sure you have always been a handful.

SELENA

Well, you can empty your hands at anytime my Goodman!

BENEDICT

My darling woman, I have no desire to empty my hands of you. I love you, I need you. I was only trying to be helpful.

SELENA

Don't try! *Exaggerated* I hate helpful! Let me ask for help if I need it. I must live for myself!

BENEDICT

Calm down. You can be a very aggressive woman Selena.

SELENA *laughing and pointing to the wine bottle*

Yeah, well hand me that bottle. We'll see how aggressive I can be.

BENEDICT

Now don't get carried away.

SELENA

Ah! A nervous type Benny? I only become aggressive when I'm defending my territory.

BENEDICT

I have trouble seeing that.

SELENA

Well, I feel I'm forever defending myself from your onslaughts over my past. That would make anyone aggressive.

BENEDICT

OK, let's call a truce. We'll keep the topic of conversation on neutral territory for the evening. If we endeavour to take a philosophical stance and show calmness in adversity we would never argue.

SELENA

But then there is something exciting about our verbal spars don't you think? Philosophy may awaken the human spirit to a search for wisdom but there are many aspects to a human being. Even aggression has its place! Mars is the God of War after all and he is part of the hierarchy.

BENEDICT *throws his hands up*

Controversial! The woman can't help herself! Someone should become an authority around here and ban talk of the Gods.

SELENA

Benedict, I thought you believed in freedom of speech! Besides, I don't cope too well with authority figures.

BENEDICT

No, to you they'd represent discipline and that's anti ethical to your life isn't it.

SELENA *indignantly*

Every authority figure I met when I was young abused their authority. I was belted almost every day of my childhood; I was sexually abused by a teacher, an uncle and a police officer, all by the time I was 16. I could go on but I just want you to understand why I have trouble with anyone having authority over me!

A flower seller enters the restaurant and comes by their table. Benedict waves her away but Selena beckons.

SELENA

A white rose of peace please.

She chooses the rose and hands it to Benedict who takes out his wallet and pays and the girl leaves.

SELENA

With this flower I thee bless. *Resting the rose on his forehead* I love you.

BENEDICT

And I love you. Now come woman, lets make this a night to remember. *He lifts his glass to hers* Cheers birthday girl.... Listen to this, it never ceases to amaze me what you can pick up over the trough in the men's toilet. Two guys in there were talking of their mate who'd walked into a room and found a naked woman lying asleep on the bed. This guy couldn't resist such an open invitation and he went in face first. Turns out she was hoping it was someone else and now this guy is facing assault charges.

SELENA

Any pussy will do boys, but some bite back!

BENEDICT

You should talk with your track record! How many men have you slept with?

SELENA

I wish I'd taken other women's advice and remained a woman of mystery. "Never tell a man anything of your past. He'll never let you live it down". How right they are!

BENEDICT

Well, I do have a hard time accepting your past. Those young men, men young enough to be your son. How did you find anything to talk about with a twenty two-year-old?

SELENA

We didn't spend much time talking..... Your torturous questioning has gone on for a year now Benedict. I can't believe you want to rehash the same boring subject for ever! Why don't you have one big burp and get over it.

BENEDICT

Well, you should go back to hanging out in nurseries, where you're obviously so comfortable.

SELENA *laughing*

At least in a nursery you give them a tit *she lifts her breast* and the tantrum stops.

BENEDICT

You can be so coarse Selena. Listen, I can't understand you and whenever I ask you questions, you get upset. Can't you have a logical intelligent conversation to help me understand?

SELENA

You're big on these Logical Intelligent Conversations aren't you. L.I.C'S Lic's! Lick me baby, lick me.

BENEDICT

After you answer my questions!

SELENA

Would you prefer I lied about who I am? Love the image I wish you to have of me and not who I really am! Is that what you would prefer?

BENEDICT

You keep avoiding the issue.

SELENA

I don't believe I should have to explain my past to anyone. I don't need to justify my sex life. It's my own business. I don't pry into your past. If you can't cope with mine then leave me and find someone more conducive to your sensibilities.

BENEDICT

Is that what you want? It's easy for you to move on, spend your life with endless, empty affairs. A shallow uncommitted existence is all you'll know.

SELENA

Maybe your talking about yourself!

Romano arrives with the water

ROMANO

Are you ready to order your meal now Senora?

SELENA

Yes, Romano. It's time to feed the animals at the zoo then lock them up for the night.

ROMANO

'A little sincerity is a dangerous thing Senora, and a great deal of it is absolutely fatal'.

SELENA *laughs*

Wilde, Wilde, Wilde!

ROMANO *standing more erect he smiles proudly*

Yes! Oscar Wilde.Is it not a lovely evening? Look out there, a lovely river view, city lights, a symphony of moonlight and music. *Benedict looks out the window, Romano slides his hand down Selena's back.* The perfect recipe for a wonderful evening.

SELENA *shrugs him off*

Or a recipe for disaster!

ROMANO

I can come back if you are not ready, Senor.

Benedict picks up the menu and orders

BENEDICT

I'll have the Paella thanks Romano.

SELENA

Menus' overwhelm me. I'll have the same thanks.

ROMANO

No worries, I fix it! Paella for two, this is good. We do a delicioso Paella. *He picks up the menus* Now, will that be all sir?

BENEDICT

Yes, thanks Romano.

Benedict watches him leave then turns to Selena

BENEDICT

What do you make of Romano? Do you find something a little odd about him?

SELENA *laughing*

'A little sincerity is a dangerous thing Senor, and a great deal of it absolutely fatal'

BENEDICT
Drama queen!

SELENA
And how do you like being called sir?

BENEDICT
Comes naturally don't you think?

Selena laughs and nods her head. The musician appears playing quietly in the backgroundSelena stares out the window.

BENEDICT
Where have you floated away to? You haven't answered me yet. Will you spend your life with empty affairs or can you content yourself with one hero?

Selena pours the last of the wine, takes a serviette and Benedicts arm and begins tying the bottle to his forearm as she speaks. Benedict watches but says nothing.

SELENA
I was thinking about a hero. Do you know in the Talmud there is a 'Who is a hero? He who conquers his evil inclinations'.

BENEDICT
And in western culture for much of this century, heroism is defined in 'Antinomian' terms. That means against moral law, and in the sphere of personal morality it's submission to one's evil inclinations. You who have no personal morality must be evil.

Selena takes the other bottle and begins tying it to Benedict's other arm.

SELENA
And you who makes no attempt to curb his judgments does not conquer his evil inclinations. You must also be evil.

BENEDICT

Satanists defy the law by practicing the ultimate in unchastity by indiscriminate coupling.

SELENA

I was very discriminating!

BENEDICT

Yes, she devil! So long as they were young, good looking and horny! One day you may have to pay an accumulated price for your lack of restraint. *Looking at his arms* What are you up to?

Selena finishes tying his arms before turning to stare once more out the window.

BENEDICT

Hello, hello, she's gone again.

Selena lights a cigarette then turns slowly to Benedict.

SELENA

I was thinking of the mythology of our relationship.

BENEDICT

Not that rubbish again! Why don't you put your energy into learning something of value. Or better still you should use the time to build your career. You could make a lot more money than you do if you focussed on work more instead of wasting your time on that useless rot!

SELENA

What and be like you? Two of you darling would be two too many. A soul grows not by material things but by thought. I am here to expand my soul, not my bank account! A man who doesn't think, even if he possesses millions, has a soul that is an infant.

BENEDICT

Well I think you waste your mind space on that myth nonsense.

SELENA

Benedict, if you opened your mind to more than making money you may understand yourself and others better than you do.

BENEDICT *he raises his arms*

I understand my wife is making a fool of me! Take these silly things off.

SELENA *ignoring his request*

The man who believes he has nothing to learn is a fool. You've spent your life understanding and achieving in the outer world. I've spent my time trying to understand our inner world.

BENEDICT

How? By the more men you sleep with the more you understand human nature?

SELENA

Maybe I'm a woman with a mission darling; to wake up men like you from their peaceful male supremacist sleep.

BENEDICT he waves the smoke away with his bottled arm Pah! I should get a medal for taking on a woman like you!

BENEDICT *he waves the smoke away with his bottled arm* Pah! I should get a medal for taking on a woman like you!

SELENA

Never judge a woman until you have walked a mile in her stilettos.

BENEDICT *laughing*

You would love to see me wobbling all over in your high heels wouldn't you.

SELENA *laughing too*

Yeah, cute as! Please Benedict can we not waste any more time on a past no one can change.

BENEDICT

God how I wish I had met you at twenty. You would not have this nightmare history if you had travelled with me.

SELENA

Too late, the damage was already done by then!

BENEDICT

Excuse me, I think I'll just go to the men's. *He waves his arms* Take these things off!

SELENA

Aren't you bursting to share your wine with the gossip mongers over the trough? *Laughing she rises* I think I'll go first.

BENEDICT

That's rather supremacist isn't it?

Selena grins widely and waltzes off to the toilet. Benedict tries to untie the serviettes but only manages to pour wine on himself. He tries to get Romano's attention by waving his bottled arms. Romano rushes over trying not to laugh.

ROMANO

Senor Goodman I know you like your wine, but.....

BENEDICT

I think I'll drown her in it Romano. Please, would you help me.

ROMANO

Drown your wife senor?

BENEDICT

The bottles Romano! *he shakes his arms* Get me out of this!

Romano begins untying the serviettes

ROMANO

She is too beautiful to drown senor.

BENEDICT

Beauty is in the eye of the holder and I behold a devil woman inside my wife. What man in his right mind would take her on!

ROMANO

Set her free and see!

Benedict looks intently at Romano before taking \$20 from his wallet.

BENEDICT

Thanks for the advice. Keep an eye on her while I go to the men's would you. Don't let her slip away again.

They both go off and as he enters the men's Selena comes out chatting with a lady with bright red crew cut hair, and they return to the table.

LADY

Looks like we have both been deserted.

SELENA

Maybe we're better off. They say women without a man in their life lives longer. Less stress.

LADY

Is that cute man giving you a hard time?

SELENA

Oh, just your average battle of the sexes between husbands and wives.

LADY

It sure is a battle isn't it. The war of the worlds!

SELENA

I stayed single for many years to avoid this, yet here I find myself on the front line.

LADY

Well good luck. I've got my head down in the ditches for now. Guys are so busy trying to control you they lose the plot.

SELENA

Haven't you noticed how men try to control things that are unpredictable, confusing and changeable. It frightens them, so they try desperately to put it in a box, label it and store it on a shelf. Or else they undermine you until one day you wake up and find you have lost yourself entirely.

LADY

Sounds familiar. I wonder what it is they are so afraid of? Men...I swear.

SELENA

'Oh swear not by the moon, that changes monthly in her circled orb'.

LADY

Just like a woman (*Bob Dylan*)

They laugh together.

SELENA

Sit down a minute. Benedict takes forever.

LADY

Thank you *they sit* I heard you sing earlier. I thought Maria Callas was singing for us.

SELENA

Oh god no! You liken me to a woman with the reputation of a dramatic bitch! Could you hear us arguing?

LADY

Hey, slow down. I did notice a little drama going on, along with the singing but it wasn't a dig. You've got a great voice.

SELENA

Thank you. I sing to entertain myself and sometimes I manage to entertain others as well. My husband tells me often how I live my life on a stage.

LADY

Oh! Are you an actress?

SELENA

No, I paint. But I guess I see life as a canvas, and paint it with broad and colourful brush strokes. Some more conservative souls find me a little overdone I feel

LADY

Don't you let that stop you girl. You must do it your way or at the end of the day you will have regrets. What bigger crime is there than that?

Benedict comes back across the room, Selena sees him coming

SELENA

Well, back to the fray.

The lady stands

BENEDICT *to the lady*

Please, don't let me spoil your party.

LADY

No, I must join my friends. *To Selena.* Keep it up Maria. Bye.

SELENA

Nice talking to you. See you again.

The lady returns to her table and Benedict sits

BENEDICT

You'll talk to anyone won't you.

SELENA

Sure! It's amazing what you can pick up in the women's toilets.

BENEDICT

Have you been dunny dipping darling? I thought that beneath you. What's with the Maria?

SELENA

She was joking about me sounding like Maria Callas.

BENEDICT

Ah Yes! That's who you remind me of. A woman who spent her life behaving like a landmine. I remember seeing an article on her. She was screaming at police, "I will never be sued. I have the voice of an angel."

SELENA

I don't quite think I'm in her class Benedict. She advised her own mother to drown herself. That's a true Medea.

BENEDICT

There you go with that myth nonsense again.

SELENA

Yeah, and one day you might take it in. What do you think of our neighbour, fantastic hair don't you think?

BENEDICT

Yeah, on a porcupine! Selena how do I know you will not be lured away

by the next horny young man who takes your fancy?

She looks at Benedict and shakes her head

SELENA she sings

“I wanna be loved by you, by you and nobody else but you” *She pulls the \$20 from her bra, waves it then places it on the table* I’d put my safety money on the fact that you’ve never spent time harassing your men friends about their sex lives.

BENEDICT

I am not in a relationship with them.

SELENA *surprised*

A friendship is not a relationship? Sounds hypocritical to me. One lot of values for men another for women.

BENEDICT

You should get into politics Selena. You go round and round in circles avoiding the issue.

SELENA

Look, what’s the problem with two consenting adults enjoying a bit of uncomplicated time together, end of story.

BENEDICT

Your lovers were barely adults, and mostly foreigners! How do you expect me to feel important when you can go off with just anybody’?

SELENA

I would have thought you knew your own value. Listen I was a single woman for twenty years, in that time I crossed paths with a few pleasant men, some of them a little younger than me. You told me you were seeing quite a few women at the same time before you met me. Why should my behaviour be such an issue to you?

BENEDICT

I wasn't sleeping with them!

SELENA *dramatically*

Why not? Maybe you're the one with the problem.

BENEDICT *ignoring her jibe*

If those men were so pleasant why aren't you still with them?

SELENA

I just love the way you ignore my questions and bombard me with your own. There was never any question of it being permanent, that's what made them so pleasant, no complications.

BENEDICT

They must have thought it was Xmas to come to a foreign country and have such a gorgeous woman offer herself up to their pleasure.

SELENA *she smiles*

I haven't left a trail of wounded hearts. I've never touched another woman's man. Harmless fun I'd call it.

BENEDICT

Most people don't go on repeating the same mistakes Selena.

SELENA

Yeah! Well maybe you're one of them! *Stressed* You make much ado about nothing!

BENEDICT

'One woman is fair, yet I am well;
Another is wise, yet I am well;
Another virtuous, yet I am well;
But till all graces be in one woman,
One woman will not be in my grace'.

SELENA

We're a pair of star crossed lovers!

BENEDICT

Come on Selena. You know how much you mean to me. When you feel deeply for someone you get hit a lot harder. I really feel you have paid the price for not having any religious influence in your life.

SELENA *standing abruptly her chair janks backwards.*

Oh pah! You'd be happy to know I was a nun that got none!

Romano rushes over to right the chair then goes again

BENEDICT

You'd make a good Shakespearian actor yourself.

SELENA

Why do people get so passionate about convincing others to believe what they believe? As though their happiness depends on everyone else having the same thoughts and values as themselves. Moral bigots are boring.

BENEDICT

Sit down Selena. How can you speak of values?

SELENA *sitting*

Well, yours are based on patriarchal religious dogma. To have sex with more than two or three men in my life makes me a whore. But I have hurt no-one except people like you who put a judgment on it. If you put as much energy into understanding my nature and the circumstances you wouldn't have time to judge.

Benedict sits back quietly watching Selena, deep in thought

BENEDICT

Do you know when I was nineteen I wondered what kind of woman

God would send me. I thought she would be either a virgin or a whore, yet either way I felt I would be flattered that such a woman could want me.

SELENA *laughs*

I love it! I love it, and here I am.

Benedict stares at her, slowly a grin spreads over his face and he bursts into laughter, reaching out he takes her hand

SELENA

‘Done to death by slanderous tongues,
Was the Hero that here lies,
Death in guerdon of her wrongs,
Gives her fame which never dies,
So the life that died with shame,
Lives in death with glorious fame’.

Benedict sits grinning at her, the musician appear. Benedict stands and invites Selena to dance to Shower the People, James Taylor. Romano stands back watching coldly. The dance goes on until the Lady starts squealing and jumping about

LADY

Ahhh! A cockroach Ahhhhh!

Romano comes running between the dances

ROMANO

No worries, I fix it! swatting wildly at the cock roach who disappears under the bar I fix it, he is gone.

Selena goes to the musician and asks them to play La Cocka Racha. She begins dancing a jig about the floor encouraging others to join in, their arms tucked up like wings they sing and dance freely. Benedict returns to the table disgusted. The owner stands watching with arms folded

looking severe. After the dance Selena returns to the table.

BENEDICT

Why did you have to do that Selena? Romano won't be a happy man.

SELENA

Oh, come on, it's only a cockroach. They come with the territory here in the north.

BENEDICT

But his boss saw it all. That's the second time this week. It might cost the man his job.

SELENA

But he's so good as a maitre de. Surely they won't make a fuss about a little critter. Come on, don't you stress out.

BENEDICT

OK, sit down, let me pour you a drink.

SELENA *with hands on hips she speaks from the side of her mouth* Darlin', you think I can be had for the price of a drink. I ain't that cheap!

BENEDICT

How bout the price of two, or maybe just a double nip.

He pours the wine as Selena sits, then takes up his glass

Smile darling. Cheers.

S E L E N A *Giving a sick grimace*

Salute.

BENEDICT

Chin Chin.

SELENA

Prost

BENEDICT

Yum seng.

The Lady Diamantina comes into view and the musician move in

SELENA

Ah ha! Cheers! Shall we drink to the Lady as she cruises by. Can you hear the whispers in her wake? Benny loves Selena, Selena loves Benny. Benny loves Selena.

BENEDICT

I do love you. Cheers my love. Come on let's try to have that dance.

Selena smiles as she rises and they dance together softly

SELENA

Would you like to keep me around for a good time or a long time?

BENEDICT

Ummm...I think I should keep you around for a long good time, for a good long time.

SELENA *smiling up at him*

You know how to melt me every time.

BENEDICT

Just wait till I get you home. I'll melt you all right.

You'll be butter in my hands.

SELENA *swirling gently against him*

Ah! Melt me baby, melt me until I ooze and trickle all over your body.

Melt me into oblivion.....

They dance together in each others arms, music On this night of a Thousand Stars, Evita. Romano watches from the sidelines, then everyone freezes and he steps centre front stage.

ROMANO

'Like strange mechanical grotesques
Making fantastic arabesques
The shadows raced across the blind
We watch the ghostly dances spin
To sound of horn and violin
Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.
Like wired pulled automatons
Slim silhouetted skeletons
Went sidling through the slow quadrille
Then took each other by the hand
And danced a stately saraband
Their laughter echoes thin and shrill'.

CURTAIN

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

The curtain rises and Selena and Benedict are dancing in each others arm with the musician playing softly the second half of Thousand Stars. Romano is watching them fiercely from the bar, they freeze and he steps forward

ROMANO

‘Tis sweet to dance to violins
When love and life are fair:
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
Is delicate and rare
But tis not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air’.

He turns back to clearing a table while Benedict and Selena finish the dance and return to their table, gulping their drinks

SELENA

I think we’ve missed the play Benedict.

BENEDICT *looking at his watch*

You’re right. It’s too late now. Do you mind? It was for your birthday after all.

SELENA

No! I can still play with you!

BENEDICT

You are such a sweet enigma Selena.

SELENA *smiling softly*

You love a mystery don’t you darling.

BENEDICT

Well, to a point, but don’t overdo it. Now, do you have any other

requests for your birthday?

SELENA

Yes I do. Can I have anything I ask for?

BENEDICT

Sure. It's your birthday. Anything at all.

SELENA

Anything at all? *Slyly quipped* My name may be Salome, my king. I may yet be dangerous.

BENEDICT *laughs*

Well, within reason.

SELENA

Ummm! *pondering* I'll not ask for your kingdom, or a man's head.....
Aha! I shall ask only that you refrain from mentioning my past for the rest of the evening.

BENEDICT *laughing again, obviously relieved*

Yes. OK. If you will just help me to understand why you did those things. I need to understand before I can let things go.

SELENA

Benedict, please! You told me I could have what I asked for! Stop searching through ruins, ancient history.

BENEDICT

You insist on glorifying your past. I need to understand.

SELENA

I do not glorify my past! It's what it was. You've granted me my request, the kindest gift you could give me. Can we just drop it?

BENEDICT *frustrated*

When you tell me so I understand!

SELENA *she reaches out and fondles him*

All I understand is I love you, I want you and the past is dead.

BENEDICT *shyly embarrassed in public but smiling*

OK. I won't make much ado about nothing, but can this *looking down at her hands* wait until we get home?

Romano arrives with their meals, glaring at this display of affection, they all freeze and he steps centre front stage

ROMANO

'Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove:

O, no it is an ever fixed mark,

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

It is the star to every wandering bark,

Whose worth unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not times fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even on the edge of doom

If this be error, and upon me proved

I never writ, nor no man ever loved'

They unfreeze and he delivers the meal

ROMANO *placing the dish and plates before them*

Paella for two Senor Goodman

SELENA

Oh yum! Smells great and looks great too!

BENEDICT

This girl has the appetite of a horse. She does everything with great earnest Romano.

ROMANO

Ahh, 'The Importance of Being Earnest' *he looks deeply at Selena as he serves their meal* So now you enjoy your Paella much eh!

BENEDICT *watching Selena watching Romano he distracts her*
Hey, look at that light out there What is it?

Romano finishes serving and leaves. They both stare intently out the window as a light moves across the backstage on the other side of the river

SELENA

I wonder what it is?

BENEDICT

'What light through yonder window breaks?

Oh, tis my lady, tis my love'

He picks up her hand and kisses it.

SELENA *smiling she responds warmly*

You are such a darling when you're not tying your mind in knots.

They look into each other's eyes and smile, before straining to see out the window once more

SELENA

I don't know what it is, or what it may be.

BENEDICT

'I say it's the moon'.

SELENA *looking quickly at Benedict*
'I know it's the moon'.

BENEDICT
'You lie, it's the blessed sun'.

SELENA *dramatically*
'Then God be blessed, it is the blessed sun. But sun it is not, when you say it is not. And the moon changes even as your mind. What you will have it named even that it is and so it ever shall be for Katherine'.

BENEDICT
You should go on the stage Selena.

SELENA
Hey, what about you! I'm surprised you know so much Shakespeare yourself. *Peering out at the light which moves slowly* Have you worked out what that is yet?

BENEDICT
Maybe it's one of your UFO's.

SELENA
You say that as if I collect the things! Hey! You know what it is! It's the mast on a yacht, *pointing* see, that's the light on the top?

BENEDICT
Yes, you're right. You know a bit about yachts don't you? How long did you work on them?

SELENA
For about two years. It was great while it lasted. You meet such interesting people on those trips, the ones who like a bit of excitement and adventure.

BENEDICT *coldly*

Yes, like young foreign men.

SELENA *her head falls into her hands*

Oh god, not again!

BENEDICT

Well, did you meet your lovers on a boat?

SELENA

Yeah, on boats, bikes, buses and roller skates! *she grasps her hair despairingly* You are driving me crazy!

BENEDICT

Roller skates! Did you start when you were eight years old? You know if you saw these men in their own countries you'd see a different story. The way they treat their women there. Women are objects to Latin men. They may know all the fancy lines but they deliver them to every woman they meet. The minute you're out of sight they're on to the next one.

SELENA

Yeah, like men everywhere.

BENEDICT

You're so cynical Selena. Why do you bother with men then?

SELENA *laughing*

Simple! There's nothing else offering.

Benedict gets up, walking away over his shoulder he speaks

BENEDICT

Now now. Thou shall not be cynical Selena.

Selena pokes her tongue out at Benedict. Romano watching rushes after Benedict

ROMANO

You are leaving senor? You are not having a happy time? Was it something you ate?

BENEDICT

No Romano, but there's something I must do. Can you keep an eye on Selena till I get back? *He takes \$20 from his wallet and gives it to Romano as he pats him on the back and smiles*

ROMANO *grinning widely*

Mmmm, My pleasure Senor

Selena sits staring out the window. Romano goes to the table and stands quietly looking at Selena, she stares back

SELENA

It's been a long time Romano

ROMANO

'Trip no further pretty sweeting, Journeys end in lovers meeting' I am a man of big emotions mia amore. For ten years my heart aches for you.

SELENA

Don't be silly, no one pines for ten years. When did you come back?

ROMANO

One year I search for you. I say I return. You moved. I knew not where, until yesterday. Did you get my card? I never forget your birthday.

SELENA

Yes. Thank you. But Romano, I am married to Benedict.

ROMANO

No worries, I fix it. Tomorrow I come and we will make mad passionate love. I wait such a long time.....

SELENA

About tomorrow.....

The Lady with the spiky hair joins them, obviously tipsy

LADY

What's happening tomorrow?

SELENA *shaken, sits back*

Nothing, nothing! Could I have some water thanks Romano.

ROMANO

Certainly Bella donna. And you madam. Would you like something?

LADY *laughing*

Yeah, I want what she's having! Do you have young foreign men on the menu? Any more like you stacked amongst the plates in the kitchen?

ROMANO

No Senora, no men on the menu, and none amongst the plates. If you take a holiday in Spain Senora there are many men. You ladies would love Espana.

SELENA

Spain! Oh no! Please don't mention Spain Romano.

ROMANO *hesitantly*

Si Bella donna. You do not like Spain?

SELENA

Oh no, I mean yes, no, I mean yes, I do like Spain, but please, don't mention Spain to Benedict tonight, it might spoil his appetite.

ROMANO

Si Senora, no word shall pass my lips.

LADY

Hey, I love Spain. You romantic Spaniards are something else Romano. Are you sure you don't have any like you on the menu? *She picks up the menu and studies it* Must be another Spaniard here somewhere.

SELENA *agitated*

Please, can we not talk about Spain. If you just pretend you're an ordinary Australian bloke tonight Romano, you might be doing your bit for the Peace Corps. Could I have that water please.

ROMANO

Ok mate, a tank of aqua comin' up.

He goes off to the bar.

LADY *watching him depart*

God dam he's one cute man isn't he? Has your husband gone?

SELENA *staring out the window sipping her wine*

It appears so. Maybe he's stolen away to tame a shrew.

LADY

You're welcome to join us.

SELENA

Thank you, that's very kind. I'll be with you in a minute.

The lady goes back to her table watching Selena over her shoulder. Selena takes out the card from her purse and tears a strip off, writing a note and leaves it on the table. Then she joins the others and calls the muso's over and sings along to Bye Bye Black Bird. The owner of the restaurant comes and sits beside Selena.

OWNER

Hello there. *Shaking her hand* Henry Charmers.

SELENA

Selena Goodman. Pleased to meet you. Great place you have here.

OWNER

Thanks. Can I get you a drink?

SELENA

No, thank you, I'll stick with water for now.

OWNER

And what do you do for a living young lady?

SELENA

I am an artist, wielding a wild paint brush. That's what keeps me afloat in this beautiful city.

OWNER

So you are a painter?

SELENA

Yes, what the eye can see the hand can do! Any subject any form. You name it my mighty brush performs. Here let me give you a card. *She pulls a card from her purse* You never know when you may be in need of an artist.

The lady has been watching Selena closely, she gets up and crosses casually by Selena's table, picks up the note and pockets it.

OWNER

Why thank you, you never know, we may do a revamp here in the future. Can you show me some of your work?

SELENA

Ahhh! *Seductively exaggerated* Come up to my studio? Actually, I have a brochure I'll mail you. That will give you a good idea. I am glad to speak with you though. It appears my husband has gone and left me with a bill I can't pay. I only have a taxi fare on me.

She pulls the \$20 from her bra and waves it in the air.

SELENA

This is my taxi money. Would you like to banish me to the kitchen or can you trust I will return tomorrow and fix the bill.

OWNER *looking Selena up and down, he begins to nod*

You look far prettier sitting here singing than slaving away in a hot kitchen. Tomorrow will be fine.

SELENA

Thank you! Actually, see that blue light over there. That's my husband's business. We are not going far, you will be paid.

OWNER

Very good. Now are you sure I can't get you a drink?

ROMANO *hovering at a nearby table*

Excuse me, Mr Charmers. Senor Goodman will be back. He assure me that he will return. Aha! Look there he is coming now. Let me escort the bella donna to her table.

SELENA *rising*

Goodbye Mr Charmers and thank you for your kind offer, it won't be necessary now.

OWNER

Pleasure to meet you Selena. I look forward to seeing your work. Goodbye.

Romano leads Selena across to her table

ROMANO

‘It is only by not paying ones bills that one can hope to live in the memory of the commercial classes’ mia amore.

SELENA

Oscar Wilde! You’ve been studying hard Romano.

ROMANO

Si, mia amore, for you I study hard. I know much of Shakespeare too. You said long ago that the man who could recite Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde to you would win your heart forever.

Selena frowns and looks away as Benedict arrives. They are all standing and Romano pulls out Selena’s chair.

BENEDICT *with air of superiority he pulls two wads of money from his pockets* There you are Selena! thrusting them into her hands Go to Spain and see how wonderful your lover boy is in his own country.

Romano steps back, looking pleased

SELENA *hurling the notes at Benedict*

Keep your goddamn money! I have no desire to go anywhere!

ROMANO

Mumma Mia!

Shocked by so much money thrown about he falls to his knees and grabs at it, piling it on the table.

BENEDICT

Too scared to know the truth about your Spanish lover Selena?

Romano freezes in mid air, listening

SELENA

What is this? Some sick joke? If you can't cope with who I am then go away, just go away and stop driving us both crazy.

Selena turns and walks toward the door. Romano rushes after her, catching her at the door. Benedict gets under the table and begins picking up the money.

ROMANO

Bella donna, you are leaving?

SELENA

No Romano. I'm going outside to escape the heat.

ROMANO

Heat? You are very hot for me mia amore? I too cannot wait until tomorrow. We must talk Selena!

SELENA

Didn't you get my note?

ROMANO

Yes, I will come tomorrow at ten o'clock. I will seduce you and we will once more share wild passionate love making.

SELENA

No! The other note! Don't come Romano. I am married to Benedict!

ROMANO

I heard you tell him to go away.

Selena grabs her head with her hands disappearing into the courtyard outside leaving Romano looking longingly after her. Benedict sits at the table before the pile of money with his head in his hands. Romano returns to the table. He picks up the odd notes left on the floor and puts them on the pile

ROMANO *pouring Benedict a wine*

You would be well rid of the she devil Senor Goodman. It did not cost you at least, she left the money. Now about that letter.

BENEDICT looking up quickly

Oh god! Did she show you the letter?

ROMANO *dismayed*

The letter?

BENEDICT

Her Spanish love letter!

ROMANO *indignant*

Are you suggesting I wrote to your wife a love letter?

BENEDICT

No, not you Romano. *grabbing and rubbing his head*

Look I'm sorry... She addles my brain. Now about your letter.

ROMANO

Yes, about the letter I could wish you would write for me.

BENEDICT

I will write the letter for you Romano. Give me a day or so.

ROMANO

Ah! Very good. And your wife Senor. She is very special. A man would be very proud to have her as his wife Senor. You should take care someone does not try to take her from you.

BENEDICT

Romano, it takes a lot of patience and a lot of compromise to deal with Selena. I never know what she is going to do next. How would you handle her Romano?

All freeze and Romano takes centre stage

ROMANO

That thou hast her, it is not all my grief
And yet it may be said I love her dearly
That she hath thee, is of my wailing chief
A loss in love that touches me more nearly.
In our two loves there is but one respect,
Though in our lives a separable spite
Which though it alter not love's soul delight
Yet does it steal sweet hours from loves delight.....

Action. Romano returns to table refilling wine

ROMANO

I would prefer not to comment Senor.

BENEDICT *taking \$20 dollars from his wallet he hands it to Romano.*
Safer that way I know. Thanks for your help tonight. I already know
what you hot tempered Europeans would do with Selena.
Can I have coffee thanks Romano.

ROMANO

The usual Senor?

BENEDICT

Thank you

*Romano raises his eyebrows and walks off, he watches Selena returning.
She dances toward Benedict.*

SELENA *falling into his lap*

I'm falling for you.

BENEDICT

I thought you fell for me long ago! I want to keep you in my life. I

you being my wife Selena.

Selena laughs and nuzzles his neck before getting off his lap and sitting.

SELENA *picking up notes from the table*

He loves me, he loves me not. He loves me, he loves me not.
He loves me, he loves me not. Can we get out of here?

BENEDICT *smiling*

Always the drama queen. I just ordered coffee.

SELENA

He loves me, he loves me not, he likes me, he
likes me a lot, he wants me, he wants me not!
That was a very rash thing you just did. What if I'd accepted? I'd now
be off planning a holiday to anywhere.

BENEDICT

You had your chance to go to Spain.

SELENA

Hey, maybe we should use this to go there together. A girl would not be
safe around all those hot blooded Latinos?

BENEDICT *raises his brows in disbelief*

You can be too much sometimes Selena. Come on forget it. Let's drink
to us.

SELENA

Because you love me madly, madly, madly don't you Benny..... Would
you fight to keep me Benedict?

BENEDICT

Fight?

SELENA

Well, what if another man decided he wanted me badly enough to fight for?

BENEDICT

No other man but me would be mad enough to take you on my love! Come on. Cheers.

SELENA

Cheers! To us and a marriage made in heaven. Maybe we should go out for another evening cruise sometime Benedict. We could do it in fancy dress from the era of the true paddle wheeler. That would be fun. If I misbehaved you could tie me to the paddle and shed tears on my demise.

BENEDICT

Yes, maybe on our anniversary. But I'm not sure about the fancy dress bit, nor am I ready to churn you up in the river. But then. maybe by next birthday.

SELENA

Do you really think we'll make our second anniversary? I'm surprised we got this far.

BENEDICT

Yes, why not?It's a shame we missed the play tonight.

SELENA

I think we've created one of our own. What do you think we should call it? "Much Ado at Dinner for Two"

BENEDICT

Try "Taming You Takes Much Ado"
That would be like expecting money to tame honey.

SELENA

Hey, this money picking up the notes on the table didn't tame this honey.... What starts with B is as sweet as honey but watch that sting!

BENEDICT

Of course, I Selena. But you are a honey. We have more good times than bad times. You have such a short memory. Remember last week, four days of bliss.

SELENA

I do remember. You excite my heart Benedict, you excite my mind and you excite my body.

BENEDICT

Well, it was wonderful, and I think we really like each other. Come lets dance.

SELENA

Hey, this *money picking up the notes on the table* didn't tame this honey.... What starts with B is as sweet as honey but watch that sting!

BENEDICT

Of course, I Selena. But you are a honey. We have more good times than bad times. You have such a short memory. Remember last week, four days of bliss.

The mood begins slow and they dance arm in arm but as it gets faster they move apart and Selena dances around flamboyantly Benedict walks off in disgust. Selena realising he is gone she returns to their table.

SELENA

Why did you do that?

BENEDICT

I asked you to dance with me, not the whole restaurant!

SELENA

‘Fie, fie, unknit that threatening unkind brow,
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes’.

BENEDICT

Come on Selena, I’m serious.

SELENA

Serious wowser! Where’s your sense of fun?

While they are talking a stripper gram arrives at another table and strips while the musician play You Can Get Your Hat Off. Benedict and Selena get so involved in their conversation they miss the action.

BENEDICT

Can’t you have fun with me?

SELENA

I thought we were. Why did you have to go and spoil it?

BENEDICT

I spoilt it did I? You’re the one who went off on a solo one step!

SELENA

Can’t you cope without a prop?

BENEDICT

Can’t you do anything without performing?

SELENA

You seem to accuse me of the very things you do yourself!

BENEDICT

Come on Selena. I don’t live my life on a stage. Why do you have to goad me.

SELENA

I goad you do I? Well listen here Peter Pan. You do your share as well. Every time we get close to each other you seem to throw a spanner in. The closer we get the harder you seem to push me away.

BENEDICT

If I'm Peter Pan, you must be Alice in Wonderland. You don't live in the real world.

SELENA

Well, how did I get by for forty years before Benedict Goodman?

BENEDICT

It's obvious you stuffed up pretty badly. Reckless and impulsive, with an over active imagination you imagine what you want to see and not what is.

SELENA

Imagine huh! Did I imagine you locking me out of the house last week because of something you imagined I said.

BENEDICT

You drop your little one-liners and then walk away.

SELENA

I went outside for a cigarette! They're your house rules. You could have followed me.

BENEDICT

Why don't you give up the cigarettes? You stink all the time. It makes me sick.

SELENA

Seems a lot about me makes you sick. I smoked when you met me. I don't need a keeper.

BENEDICT

Well, I think you need someone to keep you in line.

SELENA

Well, take comfort in the fact it won't be you.

BENEDICT

Do you think before you open your mouth Selena?

SELENA

I am a woman. When I think I must speak.

The strip ends to loud cheers catching their attention. Romano appears at the table pouring wine

ROMANO

Huh hum. Did you enjoy the performance?

BENEDICT and SELENA *together*

What performance?

ROMANO

Ah! You missed the stripper-gram?

SELENA

You had a stripper in here?

ROMANO

A young man just performed for the table over there.

BENEDICT

Don't tell me you missed a male stripper Selena. She'll probably lose sleep now Romano.

SELENA

Oh pah! You do believe I'm some sort of desperado!

ROMANO *quickly butting in*

Would you care for some dessert? We have some delicioso deserts tonight.

SELENA

Yes, we could do with a little sweetening around here

They take up the menus

BENEDICT

Try the Rojo Tart Selena. It sounds like you.

SELENA

Sarcasm doesn't become you Benedict. I will have the tart thanks Romano.

BENEDICT'

And I'll have the soufflé thanks Romano. *Benedict gets up* Excuse me uno momento.

He walks away to the bar. Romano looks after him perplexed then turns to Selena.

ROMANO

'Oh absence! What a torment wouldst thou prove, Were it not thou sour leisure gave me leave, To entertain the time with thoughts of love'....

He rushes off after Benedict. Selena lights a cigarette and watches the boats go by. Romano catches Benedict in the doorway.

ROMANO

You are going Senor Goodman?

BENEDICT *He pulls \$20 from his wallet and gives it to Romano.*

I need to make a phone call Romano.

Romano grins widely as he returns to Selena but the Lady beats him to her, patting her shoulder.

LADY

Cheer up. The world is not going to end tonight. Did you enjoy the stripper?

SELENA

No. We were so busy in our own performance we missed it. Did he get it all off?

LADY

Only down to a G-string. Maybe something to do with health regulations.

SELENA *laughing*

Just as well. I know I wouldn't appreciate his dangly bits in my dinner.

LADY *laughing*

You might have changed your mind if you'd seen him. Mmmm. Mmm I'd have had him for dessert any day. He was very cute, but then all the men around here tonight are good sorts. Waiters, strippers, *looking sideways at Selena* even husbands, yummy! Would you like to join us?

SELENA

No, thanks anyway. I believe Benedict is coming back.

LADY

Well, if he doesn't there's definitely other options around here. That waiter seems pretty keen on you and so does the guy who owns this place. I wish I could get a hook in. You've got three to my none!

SELENA

Three? I only have my husband.

LADY

Oh yeah! I've been watching that waiter. He hasn't taken his eyes off you all night. I suspect there's something going on between you two.

Does your husband know?

SELENA *uneasily*

Know what? There's nothing to know! I don't know what you're talking about.

LADY

Come on sweetie, you may pull the wool over a man's eyes but you'll never fool another woman. You've also got that Henry Charmers ready to dive on you at any opportunity. What's your secret? How about sharing these men around greedy girl.

SELENA

I thought you said you were out of the line of fire.

LADY

Only while there's nothing interesting on the horizon. Tonight I meet three interesting men and they've all got their mark on you! Come on shary, shary sweetie.

SELENA

Look, I don't know what you're talking about. I think you'd better go.

Benedict overhears as he returns to his seat

BENEDICT

What? You're chasing your friend away. Don't go because of me.

LADY

Oh no! I'd rather stay because of you! I was just talking to your wife about sharing the three hearts she has wrapped about her little finger.

SELENA *angrily*

Haven't you heard? Three's a crowd!

LADY

I have heard that Maria! Three seems to be the number of the night. Maybe you should disappear and let me get to know your adorable husband. Would like to dance with me Ben?

SELENA *glaring*

Benedict! *Turning to Lady* Would you kindly leave our table thank you! I need to speak to my husband. In private!

LADY

Ohhh! She is hot tempered. Watch her Ben. *She gets up* she's sizzling! And she's trouble.

The lady gives him a come on look and walks off leaving Benedict looking perplexed.

BENEDICT

Are your eyes turning a nasty shade of green Selena? What was that all about?

SELENA

She's drunk and feeling bitchy Forget it. I thought you may have left again.

BENEDICT

I have not and will not leave without you! I went to the toilet.

SELENA

Eavesdropping in the dunny becoming a habit honey?

BENEDICT

Yeah, who's drunk and feeling bitchy? It was a call of nature. What did you want to talk to me about? In private!

SELENA

I just wanted to get rid of that meddlesome woman. I thought we had

something nice between us Benedict.

BENEDICT

Who, you and her?

SELENA *angst*

No, us!

BENEDICT

Why are you so touchy'? It would be nice if you didn't argue all the time.

SELENA

Me argue! You seem to thrive on aggressive verbal debates. I think that's how you get your thrills.

BENEDICT

I just like you to see how you can improve yourself. You're into personal growth aren't you?

SELENA *angrily*

Oh! Fuck you!

BENEDICT

Please don't use that word Selena. What did your father say?

SELENA

Only people with a limited vocabulary need to swear. Well fuck, fuck, fuck!

BENEDICT

You can be pathetic sometimes.

SELENA

Yeah! Well, *getting up from the table* you can be so self righteous.

BENEDICT

Are you leaving?

SELENA *glancing over to the Lady*

No. I'll have dessert first.

She turns sharply to walk away and bumps into Romano arriving with the dessert. He juggles and saves the dishes.

ROMANO

Senora! A delicioso desert to lighten your heart.

Selena sits back down.

BENEDICT *gesturing toward Selena*

The tart's over there.

ROMANO *moves to place the tart before her.*

'For sweetest things turn sour by their deeds,
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds'.

Selena has been glaring at Benedict.

SELENA

You make me sick.

ROMANO *stepping back*

Parvavor Madam? I make you feel unwell?

SELENA

No, not you!

BENEDICT

I believe she was referring to me Romano.

ROMANO

Par Favor. Please, enjoy your delicioso treat Senora. This lovely dessert will settle your sickness. Come you must eat.

SELENA

If it were so easy.

BENEDICT

Selena doesn't like things easy. She gets into doing things the hard way.

SELENA standing angrily she picks up the bowl and raises it. I could pour this over your goddamn head.

ROMANO

Oh no, I fix it. Not the dessert! Parfavor, please, sit down you are in a restaurant. Dessert will fix it. Please, calm down.

Selena sits and breathes deeply glaring at Benedict who raises his eyebrows and begins eating. Romano leaves.

BENEDICT

Mmmmm! This is delicious! Good choice for you darling?

SELENA

Are you ever going to give up on this? I really think you should find yourself a nice quiet tame little woman who doesn't incite you as I do.

BENEDICT *he takes another spoonful*

Mmmrnm. The Food is excellent here.

SELENA *dejected*

I've barely noticed with all the drama going on.

Their boat goes by and they both look and pull wry faces at each other but say nothing.

BENEDICT

Selena, can we have a logical intelligent conversation?

SELENA

Lick me, lick me any time you will baby! Albert Einstein said, “Logical thinking cannot yield us any knowledge of the world. All knowledge of reality starts from experiencing it” unquote.

BENEDICT

Well, for me I need to understand things before I can let them go and whenever I try to talk to you about it you become hysterical.

Selena waves to the musician to come over

SELENA

Hysterical? That’s rather extreme don’t you think?

BENEDICT

No. Hysterical!

SELENA

Do you know the meaning of hysterical? It actually means ‘wandering womb’.

BENEDICT

Exactly my point! *he laughs* You are an hysterical woman with an extremely wandering womb.

SELENA

For which of my bad parts did you first fall in love with me?

BENEDICT

For all of them together and the delightful package it makes you. I just don’t know what you are capable of.

SELENA

I tell you but you take that and paint it into the worst possible picture!

BENEDICT

Well, paint it so I understated.

SELENA

Husband of mine, I lie with you and only you. My past life is like a story I once read, forgotten and collecting dust on the shelves of my memory. Why does this haunt you so?

BENEDICT'

You don't like playing second fiddle! How many fiddles am I trailing?

SELENA

Statistics have never been my strong point! You're a product of the system that formed you Benedict. Society needs to number everything because that's the scientific way of keeping control. They observe, measure and label everything in sight. I prefer to be a collector of immeasurable experience that grows and grows.

BENEDICT

'Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes'.
Am I just another experience?

SELENA *waving the muso's over*

Yes, one I want to stick with! Don't try and make me feel guilt for my life, I never will. *She requests a song*

"If it's naughty to use your lips,

Move your shoulders and swing your hips,

Let a lady confess, I want to be bad,
scoob oob e doo,

And if it's naughty to sleep with men,

Four or twenty or two or ten,

Then the answer is yes, I want be bad

This thing of being a good little goody is all very well,

But what can you do when you're loaded with plenty of hell
It figures, when your learning what this is for (*hand over crotch*)
And it's naughty to ask for more,
Let a lady confess I want to be bad, scoob oob e doo"

As she finishes Benedict rises from his chair

BENEDICT

OK, let's go to a nightclub and find you a 22-yr old.

SELENA *stepping back stunned*

I can find my own men thanks very much!

Spinning about to go Romano is standing behind her with a lighted birthday cake.

ROMANO *singing*

Happy Birthday to you, happy birthday to you

The musician play, everyone sings, the Lady appears and stands behind Benedict with her hand on his shoulder. Selena blows out the candles and sits back down. Selena glares at the Lady who leaves with a sick smirk.

ROMANO

Would you care for coffee Senora?

BENEDICT

Selena?

SELENA

Short black, Thankyou.

BENEDICT

By two Romano, and two Grandfather Ports, thanks.

They freeze and Romano steps out to centre front stage

ROMANO

‘Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers eyes
Being vexed, a sea nourished with lovers tears
What is it else? A madness most discreet
A choking gall and a preserving sweet,
And this is a way to kill a wife with kindness;
And thus he’ll curb her mad and headstrong humour;
He that knows better how to tame a shrew’?

Romano goes to the kitchen. Selena sits staring out the window before turning to Benedict.

SELENA

What do you want from me Benedict?

BENEDICT

Want? I want a well behaved wife. That’s what I want.

SELENA

Well behaved! Not a happy wife? Not a loving wife? You want a well behaved wife. I will never fit the bill! You my Goodman are pushing shit uphill.

BENEDICT

Selena please don’t swear, it doesn’t become you.

SELENA *looking up and away*

“Young budding virgin, fair and fresh and sweet,
Happier the man, whom favourable stars,
Allot thee for his lovely bedfellow’.

BENEDICT

I’m not seeking a virgin.

SELENA

No, because the only place you'd find one is in a nursery.

BENEDICT

I just wish you could admit that you were badly behaved Selena. If you could recognise you made ugly mistakes.

SELENA

Ugly, ugly! You need to learn that your reality is not the only reality! You can't stand that I could find beauty in my life before Benedict Goodman!

BENEDICT

You call things beautiful to justify them to yourself.

SELENA

I don't need to justify anything.

BENEDICT

If you don't learn by your mistakes you'll do it again and again.

Romano arrives with the coffee and port

SELENA

Romano, do you call your mistakes in life incredibly. wonderfully, beautiful?

ROMANO *extremely perplexed*

Por Favor? Mistakes? Beautiful? Senora. 'A little sincerity is a dangerous thing' I know nothing.

Benedict bursts out laughing, Romano looks from one to the other and also laughs, Selena also bursts into laughter.

SELENA

He's not silly, our Maitre de. You deserve a pay rise Romano.

BENEDICT

You do Romano. If ever I open a restaurant I want you to come work for me.

ROMANO

Senor Goodman, I do not intend to always be a waiter!

A bell rings, Romano bows and leaves. The table of rowdies leave.

SELENA

Have you noticed you created far more hullabaloo than that table we had to move away from? Look, you've chased them away.

BENEDICT

And you weren't dancing this tango?

SELENA *gulping her port*

Come on, can we go now?

BENEDICT

It's not very polite to jump up and go now. Romano arranged this cake of his own accord.

SELENA

Polite! You're only concerned with your public image!

BENEDICT

It's a pity you're not.

Selena stands to go, Benedict rises

BENEDICT

I see you're in a hurry to get on with this man hunt.

Selena is about to explode but Romano turns up and she bites her tongue.

ROMANO

So this is one unico birthday you will not forget in a hurry Senora. No?

BENEDICT

Unique Romano, but then everything about Selena is unique.

ROMANO

Si Senor, she is very unique, like a precious gem. *He drools openly.*
Be careful someone does not steal your precious gem Senor.

SELENA *jumping in quickly.*

It certainly was an unusual birthday Romano, but not the sort I'd like to repeat too often. Thank you for your excellent service.

The Lady appears at her side.

LADY

I've just come to say goodbye Maria. Goodbye Benedict and goodbye you sexy Spanish waiter. Did you know Romano is from Barcelona Benedict! Barcelona in Spain!

Selena cringes Benedict looks dumb

ROMANO

Si, from Espana, senora.

LADY

How about that Benedict, *She digs Benedict in the ribs.* and he's so handsome isn't he. A regular hot blooded Latino.

Benedict looks annoyed but keeps his cool.

ROMANO *looking from Selena to Benedict*

Si, a hot blooded Latino who goes after what he wants Senora. You do not like Espana, no?

SELENA

I don't know the place Romano. Benedict's the expert on foreign places, especially the men.

BENEDICT

Selena!

Benedict takes her arm, starts moving her toward the door. Romano follows them. The Lady also follows

ROMANO

So, this is very good that you leave together no!

SELENA

Yes, surprise, surprise! We are married after all and Benedict and I love surprises!

LADY

Have you been to Spain lately Romano? How are all those lovely hombres? They're particularly gorgeous around here. *To Selena* Night sweetie *she takes Romano's arm* I'll keep this one hot for you!

Benedict edges Selena toward the door.

BENEDICT

Thanks Romano, I'll be back.

ROMANO *looking longingly at Selena*

Good night, good night. Parting is such sweet sorrow and so goodnight until it be morrow'.

Benedict and Selena go out the door. The Lady pulls Selena's note out and waves it at Romano. The Lady Diamantina appears

SELENA

Ahhh! The dreaded Lady Diamantina. Would you like us to blow her

out of the water now lover?

BENEDICT

I don't think that way Selena

SELENA

No, you're too logical and intelligent aren't you Benny boy.

BENEDICT

And you are drunk!

SELENA *seeing the statues she dances over to Adonis*

Is this what you're afraid of? Adonis in my memory? Memories are big scary things Benedict. They might jump up and bite you!

She moves to the other statue of David singing Willy Nelson

For all the Boys I've loved before, who've travelled in and out my door. I'm glad they came along, I dedicate this song, to all the boys I've loved before.

Going from one to the other statue Benedict follows her.

BENEDICT

You're drunk Selena!

SELENA

Drunk skunk! If singing makes me drunk then yes I'm drunk! Dear God, let me always be drunk!

BENEDICT *pulling her away from the door*

That's enough Selena, wait here, I'll fix the bill, then we'll go man hunting for you.

Selena glares as Benedict returns to the restaurant. Selena stands staring after him, hands on hips indignantly, then turns about and flees. Benedict fixes the bill, says his goodbye to Romano and looks for outside for Selena. He returns inside and goes to their table seeking her,

very embarrassed he flees the restaurant but Romano catches him in the doorway.

ROMANO

She's flown away Señor?

BENEDICT

Yes, She escapes us both my friend. You were a great help though, thanks. *He takes \$20 from his wallet and gives it to Romano.* I will get onto that letter for you very soon.

ROMANO

Thank you Señor. Your wife, she may be too much for any man.

BENEDICT

ThanksSee you later

He turns to leave but the Lady is waiting in the doorway.

LADY *drunkenly*

You're better off without that wife of yours gorgeous. Look at the note she left for the waiter. *Reading aloud* Cancel our ten o'clock appointment, tomorrow morning. I will contact you, Selena. You'd be better off coming home with me Benny. He did not get this note, I did, he will be there.

Benedict takes the note and reads it, looks disgusted at the woman and puts it in his pocket. Romano steps from behind the bar and all freeze as he moves to centre front stage.

ROMANO

'No more be grieved at that which thou hath done
Roses have thorns and silver fountains mud
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud
All men make limits and even I in this

Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss
Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are;
For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense,
Thy adverse party is thy advocate
And gainst myself a lawful plea commence:
Such civil war is in my love and hate,
That I am accessory needs must be
To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me'.

They animate again, Benedict leaves and Romano goes to clear the table.

FADE

INT. *Selena's studio after midnight*

*Selena sits on the couch flicking through a magazine, sipping on coffee.
Music plays softly in the background.
Bang bang bang on the door! She gets up and crosses to the mirror*

SELENA

Mirror, mirror on the wall, this was definitely not the fairest night of all!

She goes to the door and throws it open

BENEDICT *rushing in*

How dare you hang up on me!

S E L E N *agitated*

Hang up what? What are you talking about?

BENEDICT

I rang you three times and three times you hung up on me!

SELENA

The phone didn't ring at all!

BENEDICT

You mean you didn't hang up?

SELENA

I mean the phone didn't ring! Why were you ringing me anyway?

BENEDICT *backing off a bit*

I must have rung the wrong number. I wanted to make sure you were home and not out prowling nightclubs. Why did you walk out?

SELENA

Yeah, sure Benedict. I should wait about for a mad man to a night club on a man hunt.

BENEDICT

I wanted to prove I was not jealous.

SELENA

All you proved is that you're off the rails.

A cockroach flies into the room

SELENA

Look at that! A cockroach! The little devil has followed us home! This is so ridiculous even a cockroach is fascinated to see the outcome.

She gets up and finds a can of spray, Benedict paces about the room while Selena chases the cocky about. She sprays it which sends it over under Benedict's feet setting him jumping. Selena begins to laugh and sings a few lines from La Cocka Racha with her thumbs hooked under her armpits.

SELENA *laughing*

Quick, on the table Benny. I'll fix it!

Benedict ignores her and walks over to the table. She chases the cocky till she finally gets him.

SELENA

There, that's the end of his cheeky eaves dropping.

Do you think he followed us home to catch the third act.

BENEDICT *still pacing*

I don't think cockroaches are that interested in the sordid acts of humanity.

SELENA

No, they're probably not. I don't know that I am Would you like coffee?

BENEDICT

Selena, we haven't finished our conversation yet. It's very important that I understand where you're coming from.. Is there something you should tell me?

SELENA *extremely exasperated*

Tell you what? Haven't I told you enough? It's past midnight, we've both had too much to drink and you want to understand. You are too much Benedict! Can't you leave it alone?

BENEDICT

No, I can't. Why can't you talk to me? That's the way I am, tormented until I understand something. What are you trying to hide?

Selena explodes like a wild woman. Losing control she goes to the sideboard, violently pulling albums out of a draw and heads for the table

SELENA

What is it you want to know Benedict? *shrieking wildly she throws the albums on the table. Opening the albums she pulls out photos* Do you want to know about this one, *tearing out a photo* or this one, *and another* or this one? Look! Goliath on a rock! Is this what you want to hear Benedict? That I like to fuck! Is that what you need to understand? You with your psuedo puritanical front feeding on pornography on the net can't stand that I was out doing what you just fantasise about! *Dragging out another photo* What about this hot young Brazilian! *Ferociously* Do you want the juicy details or would you prefer I be like the rest of the world and hide behind the yawning gulf between what they do and what they own up to? Will you curse me to hell for having dared enjoy something or someone before Mr. Goodman? You who would prefer I be a mummy wrapped in a shroud waiting for you to appear and unwrap this delicate, untouched treasure. Well, you are wrong Benedict Goodman I am touched! I am touched by life!

BENEDICT

Millions of people visit porno web sites Selena. They don't run around

screwing half the world.

SELENA

Just because everyone's doing it doesn't make it right! Isn't a society that treats others as an object for their own gratification out of balance?

BENEDICT

Isn't that what you did with all your lovers?

SELENA

Grow a heart Benedict and you may experience loving the spirit within a lover's body.

BENEDICT

How many lovers have you had Selena?

SELENA *angrily*

Stop giving yourself tumours by spending every waking moment agitating about the deadly perils of my unrestrained sex drive.

BENEDICT

Oh god, we missed the play, I still don't know how to tame the shrew!

SELENA

I thought I was the only one around here into dramatics. Leave the theatre outside Benedict. This is serious.

BENEDICT

Well then seriously answer my questions and stop carrying on like a wild cat, Katerina.

SELENA

I've told you all I have to say!

BENEDICT *with disgust*

You can be so easily pleased? If they were so good why aren't you still

with them?

SELENA *warily*

Maybe I was incapable of giving indefinitely to one man.

Where there's no hope, there's no hope lost, where there's no dreams, there's no dreams destroyed, where there's nothing to lose there is no loss. Maybe that has been my wound but I married you filled with hope and dreams for us Benedict.

BENEDICT

I still do not understand.

SELENA

I don't expect you to understand, you who only see in black and white.
grasping her forehead I give up! *rising* I'm going to bed.

She walks from the room leaving Benedict staring after her.

LIGHTS

INT. *Selenas studio next morning*

Selena in a nightdress wanders into the room with a tray of coffee, Panadol and two glasses of water. She sits at the table holding her head. Benedict stumbles into the room also holding his head and sits at the table with her.

BENEDICT

Do we have any Panadol?

SELENA

Here. I'm one step ahead of you.

Selena breaks open the pack and hands him two pills with the water.

SELENA

There you go.

BENEDICT

This is very sweet of you.

SELENA

I have nothing left but sweetness. I am too hung over to pick up on last night.

BENEDICT

Me too. My head hurts.

Selena gets up and gives Benedicts head a massage.

BENEDICT

Oh, that feels good! Did we really do what I think we did last night?

SELENA

It was us alright!

BENEDICT

We were in the restaurant for a lot of hours! We missed the play. Ahhhh!
What a night! I'm glad you don't have a birthday too often.

SELENA

So am I! I can't believe we did that.

BENEDICT

But did you enjoy the restaurant and your birthday?

SELENA

Are you kidding? I barely even saw the menu! Boy we must have entertained the staff with your attempt to tame the shrew!

BENEDICT

The staff? I think the whole restaurant!... Romano was a perfect maitre de wasn't he.

SELENA

Yeah, I guess so.

BENEDICT

What do you mean you guess so? Did you think he was perfect?
He certainly cost me a lot.

SELENA

What do you mean? You paid him?

BENEDICT

I paid him a \$100 in tips over the night.

SELENA

My god, no wonder he likes you! What were you thinking to do that?

BENEDICT

I needed a hand keeping an eye on you!

Selena bursts out laughing, getting up she begins to do yoga stretches.

SELENA

\$100 to buy the loyalty of your true and loyal wife! Now I've heard it all! You really think you can buy your way through life don't you Benedict.

BENEDICT

Well, Romano was a good a maitre de. *Looking sideways at Selena* He cared for you like his own.

SELENA

Wow! You should write him a PR letter to his boss, let him know of his valuable employee.

BENEDICT *watching Selena closely*

Romano asked me to write to his boss for him. To Pr his job after the cockroach drama. He can't stay in the country without a job.

SELENA

Is that right. *pause* Maybe you shouldn't write.... I met the boss. He joined the table one of those times you disappeared. I asked him could I come back today and pay the bill after I thought you'd left.

BENEDICT.

You did what? *He moans aloud* Oh shame! How can I ever face him again?

SELENA

You paid the bill, what's the problem? I thought you'd gone. I had no way to pay and I didn't want to finish my birthday soaped up to the elbows over a mountain of dirty dishes. I pointed your business out to him as security so he'd have faith enough to trust me to come back today.

BENEDICT

Ohhh! How could you Selena? I'm shamed, Now he'll know all my business, he knows who I am! My god woman, you are capable of anything. I'm a business man, a respected citizen. Married to you I become notorious.

SELENA *she continues the yoga*

Ah! You're so serious about unimportant things. The least of my worries is what other people think of me.

BENEDICT

Yes, even me! Another of the differences between you and I! Selena..... about last night. I know you think I go on and on about something that can't be changed but you must understand a little of how I feel. After the first night we met I was so excited just knowing we had a date. When you rang to say you'd had a better offer, that you were flying off to Fiji with another man and would ring when you got back, I was thrown off somewhat. Nothing like that as ever happened to me before.

SELENA *she stops stretching and looks intensely at Benedict*

I didn't go.... because of you.

BENEDICT

You thought about it, planned it, arranged it and then only at the last minute didn't go.

SELENA *rising she sits at the table*

I didn't go and this is ancient history!

BENEDICT

No, but that was just the beginning of what became a regular shock treatment as you disclosed your past.

SELENA

Well, your reactions invited me to tell it all. The way you cringed

amused me endlessly. I've also never met someone like you. You're right, I did goad you, trying to push you out of your narrow view of the world. If I'd only known the price I would pay by telling you!

BENEDICT

Sshh, let me finish. I've never associated with people like you. You say ten men I say closer to a hundred.

SELENA

Pah! Here you go counting again! If you must, count the months you have been married to me even knowing my past before we married.

BENEDICT

It's not the numbers that count. I have never known a woman like you. I wanted to believe you were making it all up.

SELENA

Yea, well I've never known a man like you Benedict. How can I show you? How do I let you know how special you are? I may have been a female chauvinist, seeing men as only good for sex because I'd learnt not to trust them for anything else but with you it's different. You've turned on not just my body but my heart and my mind. I was the princess in the tower and you are my prince come to my rescue.

BENEDICT

I don't live in your world of fairy tales and myth Selena.

SELENA

My god man, open your eyes! All those myths and legends you abhor are living stories. In my life I have experienced incest, rape, violence and betrayal! I've been running from those things my whole life. I don't want to run any more, I'm tired of running.

BENEDICT

Your past has certainly been a shocker to me, but I live in the real world Selena.

SELENA *angrily*

You live in the world wearing rose coloured glasses. *She pushes her arm out to Benedict* Feel me! *Benedict sits there dumbly* FEEL ME! *Benedict touches her arm* Tell me I'm not real! Tell me what I've experienced is not real! Don't tell me about the real world! Give me fairy tales any day.

BENEDICT

Your past haunts me.

SELENA

My past also haunts me! I had been the princess locked in the tower unable to love or be loved and I took what I could from life. Then I met you and I found love. I thought you were my prince, but princes aren't supposed to drive the princess nuts with a million questions.

BENEDICT

Stop talking fairy tales and give me facts.

SELENA *angrily*

The fact is I love you, and love being married to you. I married you and did not commit myself to this relationship lightly. Please leave it alone Benedict..... I'm going for a walk.

BENEDICT

Yes, typical of you. When the fire gets too hot you jump out! Spend your life walking away.

SELENA

I can't reach you Benedict! You're a tortured man that drags me on a perpetual merry-go-round going around and around going nowhere.

BENEDICT

Always the drama queen.

SELENA

You don't even hear me do you. Your religion has wrapped you in arms of fear until you condemn as you were taught your God will condemn you.

BENEDICT

I feel very privileged to have been educated in my cultures religious history. It's what influenced the western world for thousands of years.

SELENA

Exactly my point! Look at the mess the world is in, look at the mess you're in. You spent all your most impressionable years in religious schools and universities which forged your mind into a stereo typical mentality that does not allow you to see outside the box. You will destroy a truly beautiful relationship with your terrorizing me over a past that's dead and gone. You've spent eleven months married to me, very happily sharing my bed, while at the same time driving us both crazy over who was there before you.

BENEDICT

Can't you understand I do not know what to make of you. You are an alien to me, an unknown quality that scares the hell out of me.

SELENA

Well stretch yourself! You've wasted too much of our time wallowing in your fears. Life is a process of experience and learning. Who are you to say what someone else is here to learn?

BENEDICT

But it's wrong to abuse the rules society sets up to operate in a healthy way.

SELENA

Healthy? Healthy? Even when that society is as sick as ours is? When a women is not safe to walk the streets. When ninety five percent of the women I have met in my life were sexually abused as a child, when

there is a nationwide epidemic of depression, and a rising tide of mental disorders and violence, not to mention an enormous increase in suicides. This is the healthy society you believe in and support, yet you judge me as twisted for a few harmless affairs.

BENEDICT

I just wanted you to recognise that your way wasn't the best way!
There must be social guidelines for a reason.

SELENA

Sure! I respect social responsibilities but within those boundaries
I prefer to follow my own inner prompts rather than societies rules.

BENEDICT

And that is what led you astray!

SELENA

Me! Man take a look at yourself. You can't get out from under the umbrella of your collective security. One that has been so busy being scientific about everything they've missed being humane. You struggle with my past because society would call me a slut, yet who has the right to say where anyone else should seek love.

BENEDICT

Selena, I love you very much. I want this relationship to work. I've asked you to help me understand. I've asked you to help me many times.

SELENA

You only have to understand that I love you. Benedict living with you has been like living with an onion. I constantly cry inside because your fear of what I may do tortures you so until it destroys what we have between us. Please can you just go to work and we'll talk about this tonight.

BENEDICTT *looking at the clock*

Yes! It's almost ten o'clock Selena! Time to get your stupid cuckold husband out of the house before your lover boy comes. I know what

you're up to woman! *He pulls the note from his pocket.* Look at this, your note to the hot blooded Latino. Romano was one of your lovers wasn't he!

SELENA *shocked*

No! I mean yes! But that was so long ago. Benedict please you've got it all wrong. I am in love with you! I am your wife and I have not and do not intend to be with any other man!

BENEDICT

Love! You don't have to go on making a fool of me Selena. How do you explain this? *he shoves the note toward her*

SELENA

The man is obsessed by me. I needed to speak with him so he would understand he must stop this sick obsession.

BENEDICT

I always knew you were capable of anything Selena. That's why I was so afraid, why I harassed you continually to help me understand. But you would never help me because you knew what you were capable of. You invited him into our home! I love you Selena but you can't make a fool of me this way!

SELENA *sobbing*

I invited him here because the world has many prying eyes. I thought it may get too dramatic out in public. Please Benedict I love you and only you! Benedict! Benedict! I may have been a whore in your eyes in the past but you changed that. I married you! I don't want any other man. I love you. I have not betrayed you in either my body, or my soul. Please just go to work and everything will be normal tonight. Please Benedict.

BENEDICT

No Selena. If what you say is true I will wait and face Romano. You asked me last night if I would fight for you. The answer is yes, I will fight for you. I will not stand aside and see you fall back into the sewer

SELENA

Benedict you don't know what you're saying. Please just go to work, I'll get rid of Romano. I asked him here to tell him to go away. To let go his irrational obsession with me and leave us alone. I don't want him, I want only you. Please Benedict!

BENEDICT

You encouraged him all these years Selena.

SELENA

I have not spoken to him once in ten years, nor written him. I received a card every birthday, that's all. I had no idea of his obsession until last night. I did not mention this to you because of your fears. *She goes to Benedict with her arms open* You must believe me Benedict! *He takes her in his arms and hugs her deeply.* Go to work honey, I'll tell Romano where to go. It could get ugly if you stay.

BENEDICT

A man who holds an obsession for ten years is not stable. I can't leave you alone with him. So long as I know you're really with me and you've let your past go. I was afraid, but you're right, it's destroying us and I don't want us to end my little she-devil.

Knock, knock, knock. They both stop still, holding onto each other.

SELENA *begging quietly*

Don't answer it.

Benedict looks deeply at Selena. Knock, knock, knock. He goes to the door and throws it open.

BENEDICT

Romano, come in. We have been expecting you.

ROMANO

Senor Goodman. I was not expecting you.

BENDICT

No, I don't imagine you were. A cockroach usually sneaks in unnoticed. A man with no ethics would not be expected to do anything less. You have come for my wife but I am here to tell you she is my wife and she will remain my wife at her wish. So you can just turn around and leave. And do not return Romano or you will live to regret it.

ROMANO *pushing his way into the room*
Are you threatening me Senor Goodman?

BENEDICT

Yes Romano. I will fight for my wife now will you kindly leave.

ROMANO

Senor Goodman. *walking about the room* I have waited ten years for this moment. Ten years it has taken me to find a way to get back to this country, back to the woman of my dreams! I cannot let you, a man with no ethics himself, steal my thunder.

BENEDICT

Well Romano I'm sorry, but I am here; and I will steal your thunder. As one gentleman to another I am asking you to quietly leave our home.

ROMANO

And Senor Goodman, I as a gentleman tell you, who is not a gentleman, I will not leave without Selena. I have been waiting for this day a long time *He pulls money from his pocket.* Here are the tips you granted me last night. Not much for a wife but take it, I will have her anyway!

BENEDICT

My wife is not for sale. Keep the tips. Money cannot buy loyalty or love. I now realise values do not have a price. But no matter, you will not take my wife.

Romano flings the notes about the room and quickly pulls a gun from

his pocket, pointing it at Benedict

ROMANO

So, be it Senor Goodman! Be bloody, bold and resolute! You leave me no choice but that I steal your wife and your life! *he looks to Selena* Mia amore, did you know your husband is a womaniser with no real love or loyalty to you? Did you know that woman he bought to the restaurant was not his mother? Did you know he has bought three other women also to this restaurant? Did you know our staff have seen him about with a number of other women in the past year of your marriage?

SELENA

You're lying! I do not believe you! Benedict tell me he is lying.

Benedict looks at Selena timidly then at his feet. He shuffles uncomfortably.

ROMANO

You see my little petal he cannot answer you and you are fortunate I have arrived to rescue you.

Benedict rushes Romana and Romano shoots Benedict in the chest. Selena screams and runs to Benedict, crouching beside him she shakes him but he does not move.

SELENA *screaming out*

He is dead! You filthy scum! You have killed the man I love. He's dead! You've killed him.

She gets up and flies at Romano with her fists, screaming like a wounded beast.

ROMANO *grabbing her he holds her to him as she struggles against him.*

‘Why came I hither but to that intent?

Think you a little din can daunt mine ears?

Have I not in my time heard lions roar

Have I not heard the sea, puff'd up with winds,

Rage like an angry boar chafed with sweat?
And do you tell me of a woman's tongue'.

SELENA *screaming*

Shutup! You're crazy! You've killed the man I love.

ROMANO

No Selena! 'These violent delights have violent ends'. I killed your husband, the man who had no love for you, the man who betrayed you. I have much love for you mia amore. 'She who doth teach the torches to burn bright' I am the man you love!

SELENA

You! I never loved you. I asked you to come here today to tell you to go away and leave us alone. I became Benedict's wife because I love him. He's the only man I have ever loved *sobbing* You didn't even give him a chance to speak and now you've killed him.

ROMANO

No Mi amore, I am the man you love. That man was your enemy. You have waited many long years for my return.

SELENA *wailing*

Stop this! Your crazy! I do not love you!

ROMANO

'Years ago you met me, flattered me, and taught me to be vain of my good looks. You finished a portrait of me that revealed to me the wonder of my beauty. In a mad moment, that, even now, I do not know whether I regret or not, I made a wish, perhaps you would call it a prayer'...

SELENA *screaming*

Stop this babble! I never loved you. I never asked you to come back!

ROMANO

But you see I did come back. I said I would return. I have learnt

of Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde to share with you mia amore, because I know you love them as you also love me.

SELENA

Noooo! I do not love you! I love Benedict and you have killed him!

ROMANO

I understand you married in desperation because you could wait no more. You married a man unable to love, a man with no heart, a man who deceived you. Now my precious one we can be together.

SELENA

Never! You were just a plaything. A toy boy! Someone I picked up and played with! It was not serious Romano: we were only playing around. *screaming* You're a murderer, a filthy murderer who has killed my husband.

Selena wails wildly as Romano drags her across the room to the couch, She keeps screaming. He throws her on the couch and pulls a pillow over her head. Selena struggles seriously for her life.

ROMANO

'Down strumpet! weep'st thou for him to my face.

That pig who could not love'! *he lays over the pillow and begins rocking* 'Perseverance my dear Lord until we grow together like a double cherry. Oh! I were damn'd beneath all depth in hell, But that I did proceed upon just grounds To this extremity. Thy husband knew it all'.

When Selena fights no more he throws off the pillow and cradles her in his arms crooning his love.

ROMANO

Mia amore, I am here at last, I told you I would come. I told you we would be together one day. Just you and I, mia amore. Just you and I together forever

Knock, knock, knock, knock

Mia amore, Mia amore

‘Arms take your last embrace, and lips,
seal with a righteous kiss’.

He kisses her then raises his gun

‘A dateless bargain to engrossing death

Here’s to my love and thus with a kiss I die’.

Louder Knock, knock, knock, knock

Romano shoots himself in the head and he falls upon Selena. The door opens and the lady with the spiky red hair walks in and lets out an ungodly scream.

CURTAIN

A powerful male bass voice booms out into the blackened theatre

VOICE

“For each man kills the thing he loves,

By each let this be heard,

Some do it with a bitter look,

And some with a flattering word,

The coward does it with a kiss,

The brave man with a sword.

Some kill their love when they are young,

And some when they are old,

Some strangle with the hands of lust,

And some with the hands of gold:

The kindest use a knife because

The dead so soon grow cold

Some love too little some too long

Some sell and others buy

Some do the deed without a tear

Some without a sigh
For each man kills the thing he loves
Yet each man does not die.

THE END

LIGHTS