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CHAPTER I

WELL BEGUN IS HALF DONE

by Sonia Antinori

Translation by Giacomo Lilliù

In this variety show about political degeneration there are no characters, only the actors themselves for whom and with whom this text has been created – Roberta, Fausto and Andrea. Perhaps with the addition of two silent ‘witnesses’ of the horrible decline, a beautiful couple from the previous century.

1. Fiat lux

The stage is in total darkness. No sounds, no noises, then suddenly voices.

ANDREA It's dark.

ROBERTA What did you say?

ANDREA It's dark.

ROBERTA No, before that.

ANDREA What I said before that?

ROBERTA Yes.

ANDREA Nothing.

ROBERTA What do you mean nothing?

FAUSTO I thought I heard...

ANDREA I said it's dark.

FAUSTO We all know it's dark. Just look at it.

ANDREA You mean you know.

FAUSTO Everyone knows.

ROBERTA No, before that. What did you say before that?

ANDREA What do you mean everyone knows?

FAUSTO Yes, before that.

ANDREA I said this is what he sees.

FAUSTO Are you sure?

ROBERTA Maybe he sees a dim light.

FAUSTO We aren't sure.

ROBERTA And anyway he probably remembers the light.

ANDREA How can he?

FAUSTO What do you mean how can he?

ANDREA Yes, after so many years.

ROBERTA Fifty.

ANDREA Fifty? No way. Seventy. At least.



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ROBERTA If you see the light you can't forget it.

FAUSTO And he saw it.

ROBERTA He saw it, yes.

Pause.

FAUSTO They could at least have put a sign out.

ANDREA A sign. Seriously.

ROBERTA And who should have put the sign out?

FAUSTO Those who walked by.

ANDREA You can't be serious.

FAUSTO Those who exploded the bombs.

ROBERTA That's true, now they do put signs out.

ANDREA And who puts them out?

ROBERTA They were there in former Yugoslavia, after the war.

ANDREA Must've been the blue helmets.

FAUSTO Exactly, the Americans.

ROBERTA The Americans?

ANDREA Yes, those throwing packets with chocolate, chewing gums and cigarettes.

FAUSTO Yes, them.

ROBERTA God save the Americans.

ANDREA Well, they didn't put them out there.

FAUSTO And anyway, playing in a minefield –

ROBERTA Playing? They weren't playing.

FAUSTO What were they doing there then?

ROBERTA Looking for fuses.

FAUSTO What did they do with them?

ROBERTA They sold them.

FAUSTO What did they do with them?

ANDREA Where?

ROBERTA In the market.

ANDREA To make lighters.

ROBERTA To light up cigarettes.

FAUSTO The Americans' cigarettes.

They light up a cigarette. A boom. The lights turn on. The stage is empty. A table and a chair are floating in mid-air.

ANDREA Is it a comedy?

FAUSTO Or a tragedy?

ROBERTA Comitragedy.

FAUSTO How do you mean?

ROBERTA It starts as a comedy and ends in tragedy.

FAUSTO But in tragedies there are dead people and crying women and waifs whose future weighs on a community that is hard put to take charge of it.

ROBERTA And aren't there dead people, crying women and waifs whose future weighs on the hard-put community here?

ANDREA No.

FAUSTO Yes. I say no.

ROBERTA Well alright, I say yes then.

FAUSTO Sorry, how do you mean?

ANDREA What are we talking about?

ROBERTA Our old people.

FAUSTO Old people?



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ANDREA What old people?
FAUSTO Don't say old people.
ANDREA Elderly.
FAUSTO Don't say elderly.
ROBERTA Of the story of history, isn't it?
FAUSTO Of their story.
ANDREA Which is our story too.
FAUSTO How do you mean?
ROBERTA And you say it isn't a tragedy.
ANDREA Let's see...
FAUSTO Well I say it isn't.
ANDREA ... we have the dead people.
FAUSTO Where?
ANDREA ... we have the crying women.
ROBERTA Those are always there.
FAUSTO But what about feminism?
ROBERTA Ha! then came the telly.
FAUSTO And the waifs whose future etcetera?
ANDREA We have them too.
FAUSTO Then it is a tragedy.
ANDREA Maybe yes.
FAUSTO But that wasn't the way it begun.
ANDREA No, apparently not.
ROBERTA No.
Pause.
FAUSTO When it begun the tragedy had already happened.
ROBERTA The tragedies.
FAUSTO The first and the second.
ROBERTA The wars.
ANDREA And then peace broke out.
ROBERTA Occurrences and recurrences of history.

2. In the stream of history

They start moving forward, taking on an epic attitude and tone, but it is a difficult march, as if an implacable wind were blowing, forcing them to stay where they are. This does not hinder the solemnity of the moment though – on the contrary, it enhances it.

ANDREA And those who were born...
FAUSTO in the Year of the Empire...
ANDREA when their fathers went out to conquer the empire
FAUSTO Those –
ANDREA Who suffered the hunger pangs –
ROBERTA And ran with sausages under their coat –
ANDREA With dogs at their heels –
ROBERTA On a rickety bicycle –
ANDREA For dozens of miles –
ROBERTA But could still keep pedalling –
ANDREA That's them.
FAUSTO Those who saved their exercise books –
ROBERTA To show them to their fathers –



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ANDREA When they would come back –

FAUSTO Although when the fathers did come back –

ROBERTA They were already in fifth grade –

FAUSTO That's them.

ANDREA Who said my father is a stranger.

ROBERTA So why should I obey him.

FAUSTO That's them.

ROBERTA But also those who were conceived later –

FAUSTO After the liberation –

ROBERTA After the arrival of the Polish army –

ANDREA The Polish, right.

FAUSTO With the English.

ROBERTA To chase the Germans.

FAUSTO Fifty years ago –

ANDREA Fifty? No way. Seventy.

ROBERTA At least.

ANDREA Exactly seventy years.

ROBERTA When the fathers were back from imprisonment –

FAUSTO Down in Black Africa.

ROBERTA But also in White Russia.

ANDREA Those who were born lucky. With a silver spoon in their mouth.

ROBERTA And the girls?

FAUSTO The girls too, those who had a father that came back shocked from the frontline.

ROBERTA That's them.

ANDREA Those who had a Fascist family, but then the father changed his mind.

ROBERTA That's them.

ANDREA Those who said my mother is submissive, but I am not.

ROBERTA That's them, precisely.

ANDREA Those girls and those boys, they had the tragedies behind their backs.

FAUSTO (*indicating behind his back*) You mean there.

ROBERTA (*indicating in front of her*) Or there.

ANDREA Behind their backs, I mean behind.

ROBERTA But from what point of view was it behind?

ANDREA From theirs.

FAUSTO What about ours?

ANDREA Let's see. We are after them.

FAUSTO But before the others.

ROBERTA The others?

FAUSTO Those who come after.

ANDREA So, we are after them and before the next ones.

Roberta stops.

ANDREA Hey, don't stop.

FAUSTO You cannot stop.

ROBERTA Why not?

FAUSTO Can't you see we are in the stream of history.

ROBERTA Exactly.

ANDREA You can't do as you please.

ROBERTA Of course I can.

FAUSTO No, you can't.

ROBERTA Really? And why is that!



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FAUSTO Because you cannot stop history.
ANDREA And we are history.
ROBERTA But I'm fed up.
ANDREA Then you're out.
ROBERTA What do you mean I'm out?
ANDREA Out. Out.
FAUSTO You've only got yourself to blame.
ANDREA And in the meantime we are going onwards.
FAUSTO Onwards. Onwards.
ROBERTA Come on, wait for me then, I'm coming too.¹
FAUSTO No you can't.
ROBERTA But why?
ANDREA Cos you can't.
ROBERTA Come on, wait for me, we could go all together towards the future –
FAUSTO To see if there is any hope left after all –
ANDREA And try to share happiness among everyone.
ROBERTA Can I come?
FAUSTO No you can't.
ROBERTA Can I come?
ANDREA No you can't.
ROBERTA Can I come?
FAUSTO No you can't.
ROBERTA But why?
ANDREA Cos you can't.

3. Mamma

Andrea speeds downstage from the back with a whistle, then simulates an explosion.

ANDREA Boom!
FAUSTO What was that?
ANDREA Boom!
ROBERTA He said boom!
FAUSTO Yes, ok, but boom what?
ROBERTA Boom! Boom! What do you think it is?
FAUSTO I don't know. An explosion?
The lights suddenly go down. Darkness.
ROBERTA Are you serious?
FAUSTO Well he said boom an explosion and the guy killed the lights, what did you expect?!
ANDREA Actually I didn't say boom meaning boom, I only meant boom, I mean you know, I thought we had moved on.
They keep going on, not worrying about being in the dark.
ROBERTA There were a lot of us who thought we had moved on for that matter.
FAUSTO But this means the boom is a long way to come then.
ROBERTA A very long way to come.
ANDREA Wait wait wait, if it hasn't come yet, it means it will come sooner or later.
ROBERTA Occurrences and recurrences of history.
FAUSTO Yes, ok, but do we have to go on like this?

¹ Translator's Note: starting with this line, the dialogue at the end of scene 2 alludes to the popular song *Vengo anch'io. No, tu no* ("Can I come? No, you can't"), by Italian singer-songwriter Enzo Jannacci.



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ANDREA Like what?

FAUSTO Like this, in the dark.

ROBERTA (*bumps into someone*) Ouch!

ANDREA Don't move. We could hurt each other.

ROBERTA Sorry, what about the stream of history?

ANDREA (*whispering, strategically*) Then let's move on the spot.

FAUSTO Everybody make a line.

ANDREA Union is strength.

ROBERTA United we stand.²

ANDREA Keep going, the turbine activates.

ROBERTA Keep going, the handle turns.

FAUSTO I bought the solar torch from Ikea.

ANDREA And we are like the sun.

ROBERTA The sun of tomorrow.

ANDREA March on.

ROBERTA March on.

ANDREA March on.

FAUSTO Rot on. March on. Rot on.

With extreme slowness, the lights start to grow brighter, until they come back to full. The silhouette of a big tree has now appeared in the middle of the scene.

FAUSTO (*relieved*) Those were dark times.

ANDREA Yes they were.

FAUSTO You came home after a bombing to find out your home wasn't there anymore.

ANDREA You could walk on that. On your home and all your things.

FAUSTO The dice. The toy train. The hand catapult. The skipping rope.

ANDREA On the life you had before that.

FAUSTO Not even the pictures.

ANDREA We all have a picture from when we were little.

FAUSTO I don't.

ANDREA Goddamn the bloody war, as my grandma used to say.³ (*With a sudden change*). Bomb or shell?

FAUSTO Huh?

ANDREA Bomb or shell. The difference between bomb and shell.

FAUSTO Shells are fired from mortars.

ANDREA That's right.

FAUSTO And bombs are shot from planes.

ANDREA (*correcting him*) Dropped.

FAUSTO Dropped. Dropped from planes.

ROBERTA Shells are worse because when they explode they turn into shrapnel so they don't destroy just their target but also all that's around it.

ANDREA And why don't bombs deflagrate?

FAUSTO Dunno.

Very short pause.

ANDREA And anyway, it had its charm.

FAUSTO What?

ANDREA The bombing.

FAUSTO (*under his breath*) How can you say something like that?

ROBERTA (*desolate*) Chiaravalle, all razed to the ground.

² TN: In the original Italian, the sentence "United we stand" is always in English.

³ TN: in the original Italian, this is said in Ancona dialect and sounds quite humorous.



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FAUSTO It was the patron saint's feast, big open-air market.
ROBERTA The hospital, razed too.
FAUSTO Such a scare.
ANDREA But then you see an abandoned tank –
ROBERTA You hear a sound coming from within it –
FAUSTO You sneak into it and... you find a radio.
ROBERTA Yeah, just like what happened to Zaira's son.
FAUSTO In those times we didn't have radios.
ANDREA Proper grinding poverty.
ROBERTA But Zaira lived in the centre of the village.
FAUSTO The village was shaped like a cross.
ANDREA And Benito lived there, next to the bakery.
FAUSTO When he was cold, he'd sit by the common wall, to warm himself up.
ANDREA A village of wool-spinners, he was actually born in the wool.
ROBERTA His mother was alone, she worked as a knitter.
FAUSTO With her husband a prisoner of the British in Africa.
ROBERTA He was a bonny baby, he kept on suckling for ages.
FAUSTO Every time the husband came home, he'd leave a new baby behind.
ROBERTA And she'd give birth at home.
FAUSTO And she'd bathe us all together in a tub.
ANDREA Proper grinding poverty.
ROBERTA But Zaira lived opposite them and she had a radio –
FAUSTO And in summer when we were all in bed already, mum would lean out of the window and call out –
ROBERTA Zaira, turn up the radio so we can hear it too!
FAUSTO Beniamino Gigli was on. We'd sing all together.
ANDREA (*to Roberta, as if he were the father coming home*) Darling I'm so very happy
Come let me hug you once more
There is no war that can stop me
I'll give you kisses galore
Darling I'm so very happy
The frontline, it is such a bore!⁴
FAUSTO Mamma, my song is soaring just because of you.
ROBERTA *Sebben che siamo donne* –
FAUSTO Mamma, I've never left you and I'll be always true!
ROBERTA *Paura non abbiamo* –
FAUSTO *Quanto ti voglio bene!*
ROBERTA *Abbiam delle belle buone lingue* –
FAUSTO *Queste parole d'amore* –
ROBERTA *Abbiam delle belle buone lingue* –
FAUSTO *Che ti sospira il mio cuore* –
ROBERTA *Sebben che siamo donne* –
FAUSTO *Forse non s'usano più* –
ROBERTA *Paura non abbiamo* –
FAUSTO (*with Andrea*) Mamma, the one and only.
ANDREA (*with Fausto*) Darling!

⁴ TN: in this line and the following ones, Andrea and Fausto are “riffing” on the song *Mamma*, by Cesare Andrea Bixio and Bixio Cherubini; Gigli's interpretation of the song was the first and most popular. Roberta is instead trying to sing the third verse of *La Lega* (“The Union”), a socialist folk song. The author provides a translation of this verse in Roberta's last line from scene 4 (“Although we are women / Fear we do not have...”)



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ROBERTA *Abbiam* –
FAUSTO The one and only –
ROBERTA This sucks!

4. The gum of the bridge

ANDREA What did you say?
ROBERTA I said this sucks. This sucks!
ANDREA No, before that.
ROBERTA What I said before that?
ANDREA Yes.
ROBERTA Nothing.
FAUSTO What do you mean nothing.
ROBERTA I said nothing.
FAUSTO You were singing.
ROBERTA Yes I was.
FAUSTO Beniamino Gigli was on. We'd sing all together.
ANDREA (*interrupting him*) No, no, we've already said that one. Let's keep going or we'll never get to the end of this.
ROBERTA I was singing *Sebben che siamo donne*.
ANDREA That's not good.
FAUSTO Not at all.
ROBERTA What's not good?
FAUSTO Definitely not good.
ANDREA Yes, I'm sorry, but that's not good.
ROBERTA (*losing her temper*) What?
ANDREA Past or future?
ROBERTA Future.
ANDREA Then that stuff is...
FAUSTO (*interrupting him*) Everyone knows *Mamma* though.
ROBERTA Fancy that.
ANDREA Italy or Europe?
ROBERTA Oh God, no.
FAUSTO That's a tough one to crack, we don't have enough time.
ANDREA No?
FAUSTO (*with Roberta*) No.
ROBERTA (*with Fausto*) No.
ANDREA Well ok then, Italy or the world?
FAUSTO The world, Italy can't make it on its own...
ROBERTA (*interrupting him*) So what?
ANDREA So we have to translate.
FAUSTO He's right, yes, we definitely have to translate.
ROBERTA Translate what?
ANDREA Everything.
FAUSTO We have to translate ingredients, traffic signs, side effects, calls for proposals –
ANDREA Songs –
ROBERTA In what language though?
ANDREA Yeah, in what language?
FAUSTO In Esperanto.
ANDREA In English, right? In English.



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FAUSTO The bridge language.

ANDREA (*in a glib tone, as in a spot from the 1950s*) Hey you, get-up-and-go people, smart kids always on the ball, Brooklyn is your everyday bridge between you and tranquillity, the tranquillity of those who are self-possessed, who stand out because they are calmer, stronger, more confident, Brooklyn, and if you can't remember the name, just say *the gum of the bridge*.

ROBERTA Alright then.

FAUSTO What?

ROBERTA No problem. We are ready for Europe and the whole world!

(*with accelerating rhythm*)

Although we are women

Fear we do not have

We have good tongues

We have good tongues

Although we are women

Fear we do not have

We have good tongues

And we defend well!⁵

5. Dad

ROBERTA My mum and my dad were such a nice couple.

FAUSTO What was it they called him?

ROBERTA *Mario de Roma*. He liked boxing, gymnastics. I used to be a gymnast too, you know.

She starts making some simple gymnastics-like movements.

FAUSTO Why? Was he from Rome?

ROBERTA He was a partisan and a trainman. No, it's because his dad, he once almost got ran over by a train going to Rome, but he sneaked in a *vespasiano* (a urinal) and saved himself, and so from then on he was known to everyone as *Vespasiano de Roma*.

ANDREA *Anvedi oh!*⁶

ROBERTA Yeah, but he actually liked that nickname. He was a train driver, guess the route!

FAUSTO I don't know!

ROBERTA Ancona-Rome, obviously! Everyone knew him.

FAUSTO (*in a Roman accent*) A' Mario! Say ciao to San Pietro and the dome.

ROBERTA Everyone loved him. (*Pause*). When he died I died a little too.

ANDREA Mario de Roma, how's it going today?

FAUSTO Fine, I'm coming back from my funeral.

ROBERTA I made a party for him, with all the comrades. He was the biggest Communist in Chiaravalle.

ANDREA Mario, where did you drive the train to today?

ROBERTA Where the railway drove us. When I was two I lived in Sicilia, near Enna.

FAUSTO Castelvetro?

ANDREA The real South, the South, more South than the South.

ROBERTA And in this village there was the Madonna.

ANDREA (*surprised*) The what?

FAUSTO (*perplexed*) The Madonna.

⁵ TN: this whole line is in English in the original Italian (see previous TN).

⁶ TN: expression in Roman dialect similar to "Look at that", or, as in this case, "Would you believe it?"



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ROBERTA We'd play in the streets at the time and the neighbours had a Madonna. Guess what she had on her head instead of a nimbus.

ANDREA Cannoli.

ROBERTA No, oranges. The Madonna of the orange garland. (*She kneels down. Andrea is behind her with his arms open in a prayer-like attitude*). Madonna of the oranges save us.

ANDREA (*in response, singing along the tune of the litany*) A nice orange juice.

ROBERTA That's what my mother used to say.

FAUSTO (*he kneels down too*) Madonna save us.

ROBERTA Because one time, when my father was driving the freight train carrying the water barrels, the Mafia had stopped him, guns in hand. (*She goes back to praying*) Save us from all evils.

FAUSTO (*clouting Andrea round the head*) Pray the Madonna.

They all pray.

ROBERTA My mum was a real Catholic, dad was a Communist, but there was no problem if I went to Sunday school, and I mean I liked my communist dad, I observed his example. I've always observed his example. (*She finishes praying, murmuring her prayers under her breath*). God almighty, world without end, amen.

ANDREA (*standing up, blessing himself*) For me, it was my father who sent me to Sunday school, he was a Christian Democrat.

ROBERTA And of course he worked in a bank.

ANDREA At the beginning. Then one day the manager called him and told him –

FAUSTO You are good at what you do, but you have not joined the fascist party yet. Take the membership card.

ANDREA No sir, I prefer not to.

FAUSTO Then your job goes to a fascist.

ANDREA So my father got kicked out of the bank.

FAUSTO He didn't yield, did he.

ANDREA Because he believed in democracy.

FAUSTO And he was a Christian.

ROBERTA But he lost his job.

ANDREA And in those times that meant you'd end up starving.

ROBERTA Not like now, now I'm two hundred and twenty pounds and can't move anymore.

FAUSTO We eat too much.

ANDREA The problem with Italians is that they eat too much.

FAUSTO And once you've put them on a diet they get voracious.

ANDREA Let them reopen their mouth and they'll devour everything again.

ROBERTA Each other, they will eat each other.

ANDREA They would never eat each other.

FAUSTO No, they wouldn't, Italians are good people.

ANDREA They are Catholics.

ROBERTA Good people, yes, very decent.

FAUSTO Round of applause for Italians.

General applause.

6. Sixties Album

Roberta looks up towards the chair and table floating in the air, which may have got caught in the leafs and branches of the big tree (perhaps an English walnut) that has



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magically appeared on the horizon some time ago.

ROBERTA You know what happened, right?

FAUSTO The earthquake.

ANDREA No, not the earthquake, that's the scene we're doing next.

FAUSTO The... (*to the light op*). Hey don't black out, ok, we're off script. The bombing.

ANDREA No, not the (*speaking under his breath, not to be caught by the light op who maybe blacks out for a second, jokingly*) bombing. That's the scene we did before.

ROBERTA Come on, come here, have a look.

The three of them are busy trying to pull the chair and table down.

ANDREA The world is upside down.

FAUSTO Lots of things happening.

ANDREA Yeah, so many things happened in those years.

FAUSTO Incredible things.

ANDREA Unbelievable things.

ROBERTA Like what?

Fast.

ANDREA The first man on the moon.

FAUSTO The Cuban missile crisis.

ANDREA The endless war in Vietnam.

FAUSTO Mao's China.

ANDREA The Kennedys' America.

ROBERTA Ok, but what about here?

ANDREA The Berlin Wall. The Paris barricades.

FAUSTO The Prague autumn.

ROBERTA Ok, but what about here, here?

FAUSTO Oh, the factories. The construction site.

ANDREA Not like the post-war years, when we had neither shoes nor identity cards, only passports.

ROBERTA Like today, incidentally.

FAUSTO No, there was work, a lot of work.

ROBERTA Too much even. I had an extraordinary student one year.

ANDREA Intelligent?

ROBERTA Reserved, sensitive, unselfish.

FAUSTO Perfection.

ROBERTA In eighth grade she tells me she won't go on with her studies.

ANDREA She won't?! Come on, we must rebuild Italy.

FAUSTO The world.

ROBERTA Her parents bought her a knitting machine. She has to work. She'll become a knitter.

ANDREA You mean she'll knit sweaters?

ROBERTA You wish. Bits of sweaters.

FAUSTO A collar here.

ANDREA A sleeve there.

FAUSTO Then she'll become a wife.

ROBERTA Is this still the fate for Italian women in the Sixties? I went to talk with the parents.

ANDREA And they didn't back down.

ROBERTA Even worse. I thought she would try to defend herself, she would say how much she enjoyed reading, studying –

FAUSTO But?



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ROBERTA But she didn't say a word instead. I wanted to cry.

ANDREA (*sweetly*) Come here. Don't cry. You never cry. Who did you think you were? How could you think that they'd listen to you? That they'd pay heed to you, a well-dressed teacher, married to me, an engineer? You could have never imagined the kinds of hardships they faced.

FAUSTO Mentalities change slowly, it takes time.

ANDREA A lifetime is not enough.

ROBERTA It depends, sometimes something does happen during a lifetime.

FAUSTO Like what?

ROBERTA The trade union.

ANDREA But people said bosses have always been there and they will always be there!

FAUSTO And said it's not right to rebel against those that fed you.

ROBERTA Still Benito saw that there was no stable work yet, only seasonal work...

ANDREA (*interrupting her*) And the rich, and the rich's kids showing off their richness, he could never really stomach them.

FAUSTO Those who went around in the first cars, when the roads were still dirt, and made him and his friends eat the earth's dust.

ANDREA They thought they owned the world.

ROBERTA So he and his neighbour set their minds on starting a trade union.

ANDREA In the naval shipyard?

FAUSTO Who? Benito? The one that used to live near Santa Maria Nova when he was little, who had a mum that made raw wool sweaters?

ANDREA Carded wool, stung like hell, but protected from bad weather.

ROBERTA (*nods*) The one who now goes around in a reconditioned Cinquecento, vintage car, who listens to Radio Tre, an intellectual, who's a widower and also a little sad, yeah, but who's always laughing.

ANDREA The Cinquecento. Sometimes I dream of going with the Cinquecento into the Ancona shipyard. Imagine that.

ROBERTA When he first went into it, he found hell. Continuous, deafening noise, you always had to shout, you couldn't survive without earplugs and at night that noise followed you home, inside your head.

FAUSTO Dangers, lurking everywhere, because the cranes over our head, they would carry huge loads.

ROBERTA Fire sparks raining on you and dust, asbestos dust.

FAUSTO Then, little by little, I got used to it.

ROBERTA Who? Benito? Not really you know.

ANDREA (*he sits down, and gets in his imaginary car*) Come on guys, jump on, I'll take you for a ride to the shipyards. (*The others get in too*). They've all closed down by now, they are all deserted, see?

FAUSTO It's depressing.

ROBERTA It sucks.

ANDREA It was different before –

FAUSTO The workers exiting all together –

ROBERTA The siren whistling.

Andrea imitates the sound of the siren.

FAUSTO And the red flags.

ROBERTA And the fights every now and then.

ANDREA And the banners.

FAUSTO And the nights spent in meetings.

ROBERTA And blah blah blah blah Italians really suck, they talked and talked and



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didn't do shit.

She gets off the car, immediately followed by the others.

ANDREA No, no, we did do...

FAUSTO We're good, very good.

ROBERTA Come on, come on.

ANDREA The Workers' Statute.

FAUSTO Yeah I remember, there was this guy, famous, very famous, from Marche, what was his name? Sbrodolini.

ANDREA (*with Roberta*) Him.

ROBERTA (*with Andrea*) Him. He enters and it was full of workers, the people from the union, and they were all waiting for this MP who walked with a limp and it took him ages –

FAUSTO To mount the stairs –

ANDREA So at a certain point workers stood up everywhere, and started clapping. (*To Fausto and Roberta*). They started clapping. (*Fausto and Roberta start clapping*). They start clapping and this little old man, with his limp and his walking stick, finally got to the top, turned around and said –

FAUSTO (*after an instant of suspension*) What did he say?

ROBERTA Yeah, what did he say?

ANDREA A rhetorical, emphatic, pathetic pause.

ROBERTA Cut the crap Andrea.

ANDREA Alright, the value of the pause should not be annulled by useless procrastination. He said: the Statute of the Workers' Rights and Duties has been approved.

FAUSTO So what?

ROBERTA What do you mean so what? Applause. Applause. Bravo, bravo. (*Roberta turns to face the audience*). Bravo, and bravo again. And then?

ANDREA (*half-singing*) Then I'm taking my Cinquecento for a ride. In the completely empty shipyard.

FAUSTO No, but then?

ANDREA Then what?

ROBERTA No guys, I'm not taking it well. It can't be. I feel like fainting.

ANDREA (*to Fausto*) The salts.

FAUSTO (*to Andrea*) The peppers.⁷

ROBERTA I think what I need is some...

FAUSTO Some...

Fast and furiously.

ANDREA Hope?

FAUSTO Future?

ANDREA Scope?

FAUSTO Perspective?

ANDREA Air?

FAUSTO Water?

ANDREA Fire?

⁷ TN: in the original Italian, this exchange between Andrea and Fausto is as follows:

ANDREA (a Fausto) *I sali*.

FAUSTO (ad Andrea) *I tabacchi*.

(literally translated as:

“ANDREA (*to Fausto*) The salts.

FAUSTO (*to Andrea*) The tobaccos.”)

It is an untranslatable pun on *Sali e tabacchi*, an expression put on panels and signs in Italy to indicate a tobacco shop.



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FAUSTO Earth to feel under your feet?

ANDREA Ferrero Rochers?⁸

FAUSTO Love?

ROBERTA (*she is at death's door*) If music be the food of love, play on –

ANDREA Music?

ROBERTA (*jumping up, with a shout*) Zaira, turn up the radio.

Fausto gets on all four and acts as the radio table. Andrea acts as the speaker's (or rather His Master's) voice. Roberta turns the knobs.

ANDREA The ghost of the atomic bomb... (*The transmission is disturbed, but the voice comes back, distorted at first, then clear again*) The two superpowers, USA and USSR, are vying for control over the world and are taking their dispute into space. (*Fausto starts to sing along the tune of Richard Strauss's Also Sprach Zarathustra*). Nuclear energy, robotics, electronics, telecommunications will allow...

ROBERTA This sucks. Can we have some music? (*Fausto turns up the volume*). Yeah, not this stuff though. A love song would be nice.

Fausto stands up and starts to sing Vedrai Vedrai by Luigi Tenco.

ANDREA How do you see the future?

ROBERTA A bed of roses.

ANDREA Christian Barnard performs the first heart transplant.

ROBERTA Do you know whose it is?

ANDREA No.

ROBERTA A mixed-race person's.

7. The earth shakes

FAUSTO But I mean, apart from anything else, Europe must start moving.

ANDREA We need to combine some large sectors in the areas of public affairs.

FAUSTO To turn to domestic economy.

ROBERTA Not that again.

ANDREA For example, what are we waiting for to have a common defence force?

FAUSTO But weren't we saying that after war there was peace and...

ANDREA (*interrupting him*) What's the point of 20 different armies, air forces, contingents?

FAUSTO Europe needs to be filled with content though.

ROBERTA Yeah, right, no mun no fun.

FAUSTO It's because we're poets and navigators.

ANDREA We lack the plane of actuality.

FAUSTO The plane of actuality.

ROBERTA It teeters.

FAUSTO It's cracking.

ANDREA It's crumbling.

ROBERTA It's all plate tectonics' fault.

ANDREA (*with a sudden start*) It's a land of earthquakes!

Andrea sneaks under the table, Fausto shakes it noisily, Roberta bangs the chair on the floor.

FAUSTO When the earthquake comes you must go under the table.

ROBERTA Or under the architrave.

FAUSTO Look, the furniture is wobbling.

⁸ TN: this is an allusion to a popular series of commercials for Ferrero Rocher chocolates, which aired in Italy during the 90s.



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ROBERTA The glasses are clinking.

FAUSTO The wall mirrors are shattering.

ANDREA The small birdcages are skating.

ROBERTA The balconies are scrunching.

ANDREA The stairways are opening.

FAUSTO The buildings are collapsing.

Andrea stops it all, as suddenly as he started.

ANDREA No, we can't say that.

FAUSTO No, can we?

ANDREA No, that would be just insensitive.

ROBERTA Yes, wouldn't it?

ANDREA Yes, because they went through it.

FAUSTO What about you?

ANDREA No I didn't. I wasn't around yet.

ROBERTA What about you?

FAUSTO No, I was elsewhere. What about you?

ROBERTA Just who do you think I am?

ANDREA Then we can't say it.

ROBERTA (*not listening to him*) The earth shakes. The local administration doesn't.

FAUSTO Italy is busy interrogating itself on the Historic Compromise.

ROBERTA Moro on one side.

FAUSTO Berlinguer on the other.

ROBERTA And Ancona goes for a secular city council, presided over by a Republican.

FAUSTO (*incredulous*) Ancona? Former Papal States?

ANDREA Ancona, Greek then Roman city, maritime republic.

FAUSTO Ligurians, Sicilians and Lombards.

ROBERTA United we stand.⁹

FAUSTO To face the disaster.

ANDREA No prefabs, no caravans.

ROBERTA That is, no shacks.

ANDREA Houses, immediately.

FAUSTO But how can you pay for them?

ROBERTA No mun.

ANDREA A special law for Ancona.

FAUSTO No waaay.

ANDREA Yesss. The defence of the historic centre.

FAUSTO The historic centres radically restored?

ROBERTA No bulldozers?

ANDREA No speculation.

ROBERTA No waaay.

ANDREA The historic centres to the old residents.

FAUSTO The stevedores.

ROBERTA The dockers.

ANDREA The people who had actually built the city –

FAUSTO While the middle class went downstream, closer to the sea.

ANDREA They had learnt the lesson in the post-war years, when a special law had been requested for the main ten Italian cities damaged by the war...

FAUSTO (*interrupting him*) And it was such a mess there. The harbour, the shipyard, all destroyed.

⁹ TN: see TN 2.



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ROBERTA ...but the minister said no law, there's no need for one –
FAUSTO Don't worry, the state will reimburse all damage –
ROBERTA The majority agrees.
ANDREA And after twenty-four years that money had still to arrive.
FAUSTO But a while later they actually thought about how to rebuild the city.
ANDREA And engaged the citizens.
ROBERTA Who intervened by the hundreds.
ANDREA In the neighbourhood committees.
FAUSTO To fix up the parks.
ANDREA You see? Everything could also be different.
FAUSTO We have proof. It's in the records. We could even make it.
ANDREA Get out of this *merdre*.
FAUSTO Of this what?
ROBERTA No way. That's pataphysics.
FAUSTO Pata what?
ROBERTA (*gradually lowering her voice*) It's stuff you smoke.
FAUSTO (*ditto*) Where can you get it?
ANDREA (*ditto*) Have you got any on you?
ROBERTA (*ditto*) No, you can't talk about it.
ANDREA (*ditto*) It's stuff you can't talk about in public.

8. *Faccetta Nera*¹⁰

ROBERTA Zaira, turn up the radio!
ANDREA Yes do, they're playing *Faccetta Nera*. (*Nostalgic*). I haven't heard it for ages.
ROBERTA Excuse me.
ANDREA What?
ROBERTA (*hinting at Fausto's presence*) I don't know.
ANDREA Why?
FAUSTO Fascist!
ROBERTA No no no, come on.
FAUSTO No, no, he's a Fascist. I wondered where they'd gone.
ANDREA It's just a song. It reminds me of my granddad. (*Murmurs the song*). *Faccetta nera bell'Abissina* –
FAUSTO Stop it.
ROBERTA Turn it off.
ANDREA (*keeps murmuring, now with a hint of provocation*) *Aspetta e spera ché già l'ora s'avvicina*. (*He stops*). Come on, let's stop it with these stereotypes, the right is not only Fascism and Fascism can also be revolutionary.
FAUSTO (*attacking him*) What do you mean eh?
ANDREA A social right, that helps companies to create jobs and wealth for the whole of society.
FAUSTO But, in terms of beatings, were you a giver or a taker?
ANDREA Both gave and took.
ROBERTA Where?
ANDREA Down in Rome. So much thwacking.

¹⁰ TN: *Faccetta Nera* ("Pretty Black Face") was a popular song during the fascist regime, linked to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Here is a translation of the chorus: "Pretty black face, beautiful Ethiopian girl / Keep waiting and hoping, the time is drawing near. / When we shall be together with you / We shall give you a new law and a new king."



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FAUSTO Who beat who?

ROBERTA Everybody beat everybody.

ANDREA The police beat everybody.

ROBERTA Right-wing, left-wing, middle-of-the-road. They were all beating each other.

FAUSTO Different times. Ideologies meant something.

ROBERTA Sometimes they meant too much.

ANDREA Ideas or people?

FAUSTO Ideas meant something.

ANDREA The Social Movement.

ROBERTA The Communists.

ANDREA The Christian Democracy. Long live the Christian Democracy. (*He darts to the back of the stage*). In the secrecy of the electoral urn god can see you. Stalin can't. Did you know this one?

FAUSTO Children eat Communists?

ANDREA No, Communists eat children.

ROBERTA I used to dream about them. I used to dream about the Communists eating children.

ANDREA Luckily that is no more.

ROBERTA We live a quiet life.

FAUSTO With serenity.

ANDREA And civility.

ROBERTA Well, not really.

ANDREA (*doubtful*) Do you feel safe, I mean properly... let's say sufficiently safe?

FAUSTO Well, not really.

ANDREA Anyway, no more politics please.

FAUSTO (*pretending to place a sign*) No politics allowed.

ANDREA Fuck all changes anyhow.

ROBERTA Well, not really. There have been some hard bits, because of politics.

FAUSTO Like what?

ROBERTA Like when I was in kindergarten. One day I was eating my wee little lunch on my wee little table, when my wee little bowl falls onto the ground. Thud. Thud. Thud. Thud. It echoed so much, it made a horrible noise, and you couldn't make a noise. Because the *Duce* was speaking on the radio and if you disturbed him you would be in trouble.

ANDREA Zaira, turn off the radio, thanks.

FAUSTO Yes please. Let's get rid of it, let's get rid of everything.

ROBERTA But how can you?

FAUSTO You stop voting.

ROBERTA Hey, there are no such things as empty spaces in politics. (*She puts an empty chair in the middle of the stage*). Come on Africa, it's your turn. Come on, come on, come up and save us, otherwise we're all going under here. (*She claps her hands, inciting him*). Come on.

FAUSTO But I'm Italian.

ANDREA You're Italian? Really? I thought you had been living here for some time. I mean you speak Italian well. But I mean like, a couple of years. Then a school of diction... *He is so used to the idea that he is paradoxically amused.*

ROBERTA You're a crossbreed.

FAUSTO (*laughing*) My mother always tells it, yes, she tells how she, a Nigerian, met this Italian man, who then became his husband, my father. Angelo. She obviously had a different culture and a very different skin colour too. She was kind of black. She is rather black. Well anyway my father was a doctor in the village and Cathy goes to the hospital,



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Cathy, she's got an ingrown nail.

ROBERTA This ingrown nail is hurting really, really, really bad and Angelo, the doctor, coming into the room, oh a young girl, a wonderful girl, ok ok.¹¹

FAUSTO Angelo does the whole operation and so Cathy goes home, and in the following days she comes back for medications.

ROBERTA Right¹². It was love at first sight.

FAUSTO He had been impressed by this figure, this proud, elegant –

ROBERTA Because Angelo is white, but milk white, Aryan race, *natürlich* Aryan race from Puglia. Martinafranca, like the mozzarella. Because we're all a bunch of mestizos, come on, it's Europe.

FAUSTO Well anyway she comes back for medications –

ROBERTA She's beautiful, a dream, even now she's just celebrated fifty years of marriage. Wear your age with grace, she says.

FAUSTO She comes back and they tell her she must wait.

ROBERTA And they say the doctor¹³ will come and do the medication.

ANDREA The medication?¹⁴

FAUSTO (*amused*) Exactly. One day, two days, three days.

ROBERTA He keeps her waiting? But it's just because he wants to be the one takes care of her, he in person, there in the middle of the jungle, and leprosy, and apes, and the gashes, and he works from morning to evening, at night, he does everything, he's the cardiologist, the anaesthetist, the surgeon.

ANDREA The podiatrist.

FAUSTO (*ditto*) Yes, the podiatrist too.

ROBERTA He does the work of ten people.

FAUSTO And then when they fell in love and he decided to marry her, according to tradition he had to go and ask her hand to her father, who was in jail at that time though, for political reasons. So he went to the deputy, the one who acted in his stead, my mother's uncle, who was blind. And he couldn't see him, so he based his judgement on other things, the tone, the voice pitch, the sweetness with which he expressed himself, and so he said that yes, he seemed like a good person. But then, still according to tradition, he had to also go and present himself to the mother, my grandma. So my father went and he asked: may I marry her? At first she kept silent, she didn't say a thing. My father was a bit perplexed but he said to himself well alright, she'll give me an answer another day. So that same evening, my mother asked her mother what she thought about him and she said: my child, I prayed so much for you, for you to have a good husband, good and generous, but I forgot to tell god the colour.

ROBERTA Four children they had together. All beige. And when war breaks out in Biafra, he's in the womb, in Cathy's womb. (*With an unexpected change, to Fausto*). These are all excuses, you don't want to fight. Come on Africa, bring it. Save us, before the next *merdre*-head arrives.

ANDREA (*interrupting her*) I talk to the Italians' ass. I talk to the gut.

ROBERTA There where humours turn into rancour and rancour into political project.

9. Foursquare

ANDREA Italians are not mature as a people.

¹¹ TN: “the doctor, coming into the room, oh a young girl, a wonderful girl, ok ok”: in English in the original.

¹² TN: “Right”: ditto.

¹³ TN: “the doctor”: ditto.

¹⁴ TN: “the medication”: ditto.



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FAUSTO They always need a leader, someone bossing around.

ROBERTA No matter who.

FAUSTO France or Spain, as long as we can eat.

ROBERTA Well Germans used to eat only potatoes, but now it's not long before they eat us too.

ANDREA The English wouldn't, no, the English are better.

ROBERTA The English are arseholes, they are.

FAUSTO And the Welsh?

ROBERTA You're asking me? I don't even know where Wales is. (*She draws the shape of the island in mid-air and looks at it, perplexed*).

ANDREA Left or right?

FAUSTO The Poles!

ANDREA Ah, the Poles, they did a lot for us, it's incredible. There is so much Poland blood on our land.

ROBERTA So much blood? How much?

FAUSTO In every town you go there is a memorial to the Poles that liberated us.

ROBERTA I actually had a Pole in my house.

ANDREA Who, the one who was renting in Via Trieste?

ROBERTA Yes, I was little, I can't remember well.

FAUSTO An officer, it was an officer that took lodging at your house.

ANDREA He wasn't alone though, he was with his wife.

ROBERTA (*as if letting a memory emerge*) Yes, they were renting at ours and then...

FAUSTO Then, right there, in your house, a baby was born.

ROBERTA (*nodding dreamily*) I used to hold him, I used to hold him myself, the Polish baby.

ANDREA There in via Trieste.

FAUSTO And guess what happened last month?

ROBERTA Marta comes back home and finds an old lady in front of the main door.

FAUSTO With a younger man next to her.

ROBERTA And they're looking at the street, the number. And Marta looks at them as if she knew them. But she doesn't know them. No she doesn't.

ANDREA And do you know who they were?

FAUSTO (*he has understood*) No waaay.

ROBERTA Yes.

ANDREA The baby, now a grown-up, had come to Italy to see the house where he was born.

ROBERTA Just think about how much these guys have been through.

FAUSTO Yes, General Anders's boys.

ANDREA Those who threw chocolate from camions.

ROBERTA That's them.

ANDREA Good people. Catholics.

FAUSTO And kind. If you go to a bar on your own, there's always someone that talks to you.

ROBERTA Last year I was sitting in a small place on the Marshalkowska in Warsaw, getting myself some hot chocolate, when a guy, about seventy, walks up to me and says: excuse me miss, is everyone in Italy like Berlusconi?

FAUSTO Uediskie nakate. Woliski podiski Berlusconi?¹⁵

ROBERTA Listen to that, he knows Polish!

FAUSTO Tak.

¹⁵ AN: an invented Polish.



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ANDREA Are they going to say everyone's like Renzi now?

ROBERTA Why do we always end up looking like *merdre*?

ANDREA Who knows!

FAUSTO We are better than we portray ourselves, you know, better than they portray us.

ANDREA You reckon?

FAUSTO I don't know.

10. Goods on sale

ANDREA Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

FAUSTO Denmark?

ANDREA It's a figure of speech.

FAUSTO And to think that these people actually believed in it.

ROBERTA Who?

FAUSTO Old people. Our old people.

ANDREA (*as if he had been repeating it a hundred times*) Don't say old people.

FAUSTO The elderly.

ANDREA (*exhausted, even*) Don't say elderly.

ROBERTA Sorry, but how did we get to this point then?

FAUSTO Don't you know that history is round?

ROBERTA But then what about left and right?

ANDREA Exactly. *Passé*. It's back to either high or low now.

They start going in a circle. They walk at first, then get faster and faster.

FAUSTO And the Radical Party? Do you remember it?

ROBERTA Now that was original.

ANDREA Everyone's eating everything away –

FAUSTO And they go on hunger strikes.

ANDREA Some healthy spirit of contradiction at least.

ROBERTA When we were out with the Radical Party, we all stuffed ourselves...

Andrea stops, the others crush into him.

ANDREA (*accusingly*) You stuffed yourselves?

ROBERTA (*defending herself*) With clothes¹⁶! It was cold, we were out in the piazza selling pin badges... I mean, trying to sell...

ANDREA No one stopped.

ROBERTA No one, indeed.

ANDREA Then let's go.

They start moving again.

ROBERTA Jesus, it used to be really freezing there, in piazza Cavour –

Andrea stops, they crush into him once more.

ANDREA Piazza Cavour, where?

ROBERTA How would I know, there are squares called piazza Cavour all over the country.

ANDREA Oh.

They start again.

ROBERTA I've got so many pins at home though! I wonder if I should put them on EBay.

Fausto stops all of a sudden. The others crush into him.

FAUSTO (*indignant*) Sorry but one can't sell everything!

ROBERTA Like what?

¹⁶ TN: in the original, this little exchange is a pun based on the ambiguity of the word *banchetto*, which can mean both "stall, stand, booth" and "banquet, feast".



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FAUSTO Like, every single good Italian business.
ANDREA Who has to take responsibility?
FAUSTO Corporate responsibility?
ANDREA Responsibility for the way businesses closed.
FAUSTO The Italian way of business?
ANDREA Agnelli-style.
FAUSTO Olivetti-style.
ANDREA Merloni-style.
FAUSTO The salvation of the territory.
ROBERTA Or the territory of salvation?
ANDREA Or salvation from the territory?
ROBERTA The starvation of the territory.
ANDREA Do you realise how they destroyed Olivetti?
FAUSTO The state didn't defend it?
ANDREA The state, the unions, culture, media, politics, the church. No one did.
ROBERTA Work, achievements, patents, know-how. Nothing.
FAUSTO And then the nation loses power.
ANDREA A social murder.
FAUSTO Do the people ruling us actually realise what it means to live in insecurity?
ANDREA What a dispersion of values.
ROBERTA What do you think?
ANDREA *(to the tune of the football chant "Arsenal till I die")* Italian till I die, I'm Italian till I die, I know I am, I'm sure I am, I'm Italian till I die! Hey!
They start bouncing up and down until they hit their peak of ridiculousness, then Andrea puts a chair in the middle of the stage, and they all go back to moving in a circle, walking at first, as in a prison yard, then whirling faster and faster, as if they were playing Ring Around the Rosie, as if they were in the wheel of a family of hamsters, as if they were on a swing ride. Suddenly Andrea stops. The others crash into him.
ANDREA Reverse course. All wrong.
He starts again, going the other way round at a very slow pace. The others look at him and don't move.
FAUSTO What do you mean?
ANDREA We thought it was an evolutionary path.
FAUSTO Is it not?
ANDREA It's a devolutionary path.
ROBERTA This sucks.
ANDREA Let there be politics.
FAUSTO Then?
ANDREA Then let it be no more.
ROBERTA So we are in the reign of anti-politics.
ANDREA *(stops)* Hooray.
ROBERTA Hooray?
ANDREA We're lucky you know.
ROBERTA Why?
ANDREA We know where we are.

11. The polls

They are very tired, so they rush onto the chair. Andrea manages to sit down. Roberta sits on him. Fausto has to stand.



FAUSTO (*increasingly hastily*) People. Good evening, good evening. It is with the greatest of pleasures that I am here to present my programme. Healthcare first: no more additional charges for patients, everything will be free. Work: we are going to employ a momentous number of civil servants. Crime rate, no problem: we bang them all up. Vote for me, vote for me, vote for me, a clean face, a strong person, an upright person, who believes in this country. Thank you.

ROBERTA (*pulling him down and taking his place*) We have gathered here today to talk about the environmental question, who doesn't think about their own environment?, and therefore clean air, an environment where we can live, the hills of Marche¹⁷, the beauty of this sun between autumn and winter, who doesn't think about the environment?¹⁸ (*The two guys lift her onto the table. She continues in the same tone*). Our environment is full of rhetoric and bullshit. Bullshit on bullshit on bullshit and everyone smiles, because the more bullshit you talk the more people smile.

ANDREA Excuse me madam, yesterday I saw daddy throwing a butt on the ground.

ROBERTA Bad, Johnny, bad, in Poland there wasn't a single butt on the ground.

FAUSTO Madam, madam, when we were on holiday in Berlin mummy left chewing gum all over the zoo.

ROBERTA Bad, Johnny, bad, because then when the lions are on the run they remain stuck and the Humane Society fines her for twice the amount Lufthansa cost her.

FAUSTO (*to Andrea*) What are you voting for?

ANDREA I really don't know, I haven't decided yet.

FAUSTO I voted for her, she's offered both me and my wife a job.

Roberta gets off the table elegantly.

ANDREA In the civil service?

FAUSTO No, in her mortadella factory.

ANDREA Wow, if she can manage a mortadella factory then she can also run a country.

FAUSTO And she fills the female quota.

ANDREA Alright, I'm running off to vote for her. Ciao.

Fausto turns the table round and goes behind it. Roberta stands next to him. Andrea arrives at the polling station.

FAUSTO Voting card.

ANDREA Oh gosh, I don't have it on me.

FAUSTO Nothing doing then.

ANDREA I've lost it. Can't you make me a duplicate?

FAUSTO (*tsks*) No duplicates.

ROBERTA You have to go to the police station.

ANDREA No, ok, I haven't lost it, I lied, I have it at home.

Fausto tsks again, Siciliano-style.

FAUSTO No card, no right.

ROBERTA No card, no duty.

ANDREA But I have one!

FAUSTO If you have not lost it we cannot do anything about it.

ROBERTA Rules are rules.

ANDREA But I wanted to vote.

Fausto tsks once more.

ROBERTA I'm sorry, you will have to come back another day.

ANDREA But the station closes in... When?

FAUSTO It closes in... In one minute.

¹⁷ Author's Note: to be adapted according to the local area: e.g. *the Po plain* for the show in Rubiera.

¹⁸ AN: ditto – add an ad hoc specific.



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ROBERTA Yes, in one minute.

ANDREA Alright, then I'll try. (*He goes at the back, stage right, and starts running desperately*) When are you closing?

ROBERTA In one minute.

He runs and runs and runs and runs.

ANDREA How much time left?

ROBERTA One minute.

ANDREA How much left, how much left?

ROBERTA One minute.

The two are sitting at the table, laughing. He arrives with the certificate in hand, and falls in front of the table.

ANDREA (*exhausted*) I've got it.

FAUSTO It's closed.

ROBERTA Sorry.

FAUSTO That's how it goes.

ANDREA But I've been running like mad.

ROBERTA Yes I know, but it's closed.

Roberta and Fausto dismantle the station and slide upstage, where they start dancing, half-singing the tune of Verdi's Va' Pensiero. Their singing gets increasingly unhinged. They laugh, they shout.

FAUSTO Long live the Italian anthem.

ROBERTA This is not the Italian anthem.

FAUSTO No, but it's the Italian anthem par excellence.

ROBERTA Oh drop it, the Northern League has taken Verdi too.

Andrea is upstage, moving in slow motion. The other two soon join him. They advance from the depths of the stage until they reach the proscenium.

ANDREA (*spelling it out, as if from light-years away*) Shambles. Shambles.

12. The museum of the night

ROBERTA Those were times.

FAUSTO Which ones?

ROBERTA Those.

FAUSTO Radical Party?

ANDREA Already said.

FAUSTO Italy of Values.

ROBERTA Vanished.

ANDREA When Andreotti was around everything worked perfectly though.

FAUSTO Meritocracy.

ANDREA There was a school of politics.

ROBERTA A political class who studied.

ANDREA (*doing Andreotti at the back, pulling his ears out*). We had some real style. (*No one laughs*). Ok I'll do another one. (*He performs*). In a certain zenze we gould. Who's that?

FAUSTO (*without skipping a beat*) De Mita.

ANDREA One more. Because we have a great dream.

ROBERTA No, no, no one from today, ok? This sucks.

ANDREA (*perplexed*) Let me try Aldo Moro. (*He does not know how to do him*). The only thing that comes to my mind is the picture with the flag of the Red Brigades behind him, I think. (*Pause. Then he remembers an image*). And then the legs, with the bent knees



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showing from inside the Renault 4. In the trunk.

FAUSTO (*thoughtful*) In the trunk.

ANDREA That's the only thing.

FAUSTO When did it happen?

ANDREA Oh, I don't know, I was... Let's see... I was... I can't remember...

ROBERTA I can never remember the years.

FAUSTO I can't remember.

ROBERTA It's not my stuff.

FAUSTO It's not my home.

ANDREA Anyway, at a certain point they were all dead.

FAUSTO You become a hero, when you're dead.

Fausto goes slowly upstage. Andrea grabs the chair he is sitting on and, wielding it in front of himself as if it were a weapon in rest, starts running in zigzags on the stage.

ANDREA I wanted to go and put a bomb in Montecitorio. A bomb a bomb. To blow everything up. Everything.

He makes a whistling sound. An explosion. Darkness.

ANDREA Hey, is it all over?

FAUSTO Where are we?

ROBERTA Have we been erased?

ANDREA Have we died too?

ROBERTA No, we are at Aldo's home.

FAUSTO Aldo who?

ROBERTA Aldo, the one from the beginning. The little boy.

ANDREA The one that was looking for fuses?

ROBERTA That's him.

ANDREA The one the world has gone dark on.

FAUSTO Who has spent the last seventy years going round and round –

ANDREA Looking for beauty.

FAUSTO That's him.

ROBERTA The one who once got really mad because he was at the Berlin Museum and he couldn't touch the Ishtar Gate.

FAUSTO Couldn't see it with his fingers.

ANDREA So –

ROBERTA With his wife –

ANDREA He came up with the museum of the night –

ROBERTA Where you can touch art –

FAUSTO You touch it with your fingers.

ROBERTA That's him.

ANDREA Hey, I've touched something.

FAUSTO A statue? A bas-relief?

ROBERTA No, no, it's me.

ANDREA You're smiling. Are you smiling?

ROBERTA Yes, I am.

ANDREA I have seen you with my hands. You are beautiful.

ROBERTA You too.

FAUSTO We are beautiful. We too.

ROBERTA Yes, we too.

They stop talking. Thin laughter. Then silence. They start whistling Domenico Modugno's Vecchio Frac. Little by little the music starts stemming from their whistling and keeps growing, until it covers their voices and mixes with the soundtrack of the century. Light.