

Maddalena



Maddalena

A play in four scenes,

based on a true story,

by Christian Lanciai (1995)

The Characters:

Marquess Enrico de Santini

Maddalena, his wife

Livia, their daughter

Evelyn, Livia's cavalier

Giacomo, servant

Doctor Ettore Bianco

Luciano, bandit

Cosetta, his partner

Aldo, his brother

Bruno, his cousin

The mother, a Gipsy

Arnold, an artist

The action is in Florence in the 1920s.

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Maddalena

Scene 1. Palazzo Santini i Florens.

Enrico How is Madame today?

Servant She has just got up and is dressing.

Enrico Has she had a good sleep?

Servant So it seems. She appears calm and relaxed but at the same time eager and expecting.

Enrico No wonder. Her daughter is coming home to her today.

Servant That's why Madame's relaxed calm is the more remarkable.

(The doorbell.)

Enrico Would you please open, Giacomo. *(The servant opens and lets in the doctor.)*
My dearest friend!

Doctor How are you, Enrico? And how is Maddalena?

Enrico Everything is in perfect order, my dear friend. It's a great day today, since our daughter is coming home after years of studies abroad.

Doctor That's why I am here. You never know. You didn't answer my question about Maddalena.

Enrico She appears to be at her best, calm and relaxed, has slept well and is looking forward to her daughter coming home.

Doctor You never know about women. A relaxed cheerfulness could conceal abysses of worries and tension. She if anyone should be tense with excitement about her daughter's arrival.

Enrico How so?

Doctor Enrico, don't you know your wife? She is a madonna! She can't tolerate the least breach against the etiquette of virtue! And your daughter has been abroad for years and learned God knows what liberal ideas and habits!

Enrico A mother can always trust her daughter. Maddalena knows that.

Doctor That's why an eventual shock could be the more upsetting. That's why I am here.

Enrico Thanks for your good intentions, my dear friend. *(The telephone.)*

Pronto? Livia, my dearest girl! Where are you? *(listens in the phone)* Then you will be here any moment? Within an hour? By car? Splendid! Of course your friend is welcome! Welcome, my love! *(hangs up)*

She will come with a friend from England.

Doctor Good, then she haven't travelled alone, and Maddalena could feel safe.

(Maddalena has started descending the stairs, a beautiful mature woman with something solemn and serious about her.)

Maddalena Was it Livia calling?

Enrico Yes, dearest. She will come in the company of a friend.

Maddalena How nice.

Enrico How have you been sleeping?

Maddalena I never slept better.

Enrico You seem very relaxed for today's great event.

Maddalena So I am. Good morning, doctor Bianco.

Doctor You look healthier than ever.

Maddalena You have nothing to worry about, doctor.

Enrico Livia could come any moment.

Maddalena I just hope she hasn't changed too much.

Enrico You should be able to recognize your own daughter, Maddalena.

Maddalena I haven't seen her for three years. They say, that your son is your son till he takes a wife, but your daughter is your daughter all your life. Still I always feared losing my daughter.

(*The doorbell.*)

Enrico Here they are.

(*The servant opens to Livia and Evelyn, her very English and proper boyfriend.*)

Livia (*young and fresh*) Mother! Daddy! (*flings herself into Enrico's arms.*)

Maddalena (*doesn't leave Evelyn with her eyes*) And who is this?

Livia (*hugs her*) It's Evelyn, my boyfriend from England. He is already a promising diplomatic ace.

Enrico It's wonderful to see you so fresh and happy, Livia.

Maddalena (*greeting Evelyn cautiously*) I thought Livia would come with a girlfriend.

Evelyn I hope I will not make you disappointed, Mrs Santini.

Maddalena Have you travelled alone with Livia all the way from Cambridge?

Livia Don't worry, mother. He is the most perfect gentleman in the world. Or else I wouldn't have brought him here. – Evelyn, you must make allowances for mother, but she is very catholic and can't endure any frivolities.

Evelyn I assure you, Madame, that there has been nothing improper between me and your daughter.

Maddalena Isn't it more than enough that you travel alone together?

Enrico There, let's come into the house. You must be tired after your journey. Take care of the baggage, Giacomo. (*The servant does so.*)

Doctor How are you, Maddalena?

Maddalena Not very well.

Livia We are the ones who should be tired and not you.

Maddalena I am sorry, Livia, but I can't bear with irregularities. My whole being revolts against anything that isn't correct, and I can't endure what I don't know is right.

Livia Don't you trust me, mother?

Maddalena (*embraces her*) I haven't seen you for so long. You are my only daughter. We gave you the finest and safest education in all Europe. Still there hasn't been a day when I didn't worry myself to death for your sake. And then you come home – with a man.

Enrico Maddalena, Livia is now grown up and of age.

Maddalena And you travelled alone through all Europe. For how many nights?

Enrico Maddalena!
Evelyn With all respect, Madame, for your concern about your daughter, but I can assure you and vouch for, that if there is anything in the world you can safely trust, it is an English gentleman.
Maddalena No, there is nothing you can trust in this world!
Livia Not even your own daughter?
Maddalena I am afraid, Livia, of what your lightheartedness could lead you to without your even being aware of it! The animal in man is also latent in every saint!
Doctor (to Enrico) I think Maddalena had better go up for some rest.
Enrico Maddalena, take it easy.
Maddalena You all think that I worry about nothing, but I see things that others don't see! Where others see only sunlight I see the black darkness of true destiny, and where happiness is smiling I see monstrous tentacles seep out of earth to attack happiness from behind in slimy bloodsucking horror...
Enrico Maddalena, it's enough!
Livia Mother, I am still your daughter.
Maddalena Yes, you are, but who was really your father? (*rushes in panic up the stairs.*)
Enrico She doesn't know what she is saying.
Doctor Luck brought me here. Some measures could be needed here.
Enrico Evelyn, was that your name? You are as heartily welcome here as our daughter. Livia, you must excuse your mother. It will pass.
Livia I know, father. We need patience with her.
Evelyn Under the circumstances I think I had better not be seen here any more for the sake of your mother, Livia.
Livia Rubbish! Of course you shall stay here with us! Mustn't he, daddy?
Enrico The house is at your disposal, Evelyn.
Evelyn First the mistress of the house must accept me. I can't risk upsetting her again.
Livia Do you call it upsetting? She is just sensitive and pious. That's all.
Evelyn No, Livia, there is something more than just sensitivity and piety, and I don't want to risk calling it forth. It's for the best of all of you. You will find me in town, Livia.
Enrico At least stay for lunch.
Evelyn Some other time. Thanks for your kindness. (*shakes hands*) Take care of your lady, doctor. (*shakes hands*) Good bye so long, Livia. (*kisses her on her chin and leaves*)
Enrico You have found yourself a good boyfriend, Livia.
Livia That's why I don't want to lose him. Do you think mother could accept him?
Enrico Yes, in time.
Livia What do you think, doctor Bianco?
Doctor It's all too clear that something is amiss. Livia, I would like to speak alone with your father.
Livia Then I will go unpacking. (*leaves*)

Doctor Enrico, you always kept quiet about your wife.

Enrico And with good reasons.

Doctor Shouldn't you tell me something before it's too late?

Enrico What are you afraid of?

Doctor A crisis.

Enrico Ettore, you are my best friend, and no one knows as much about my wife as you. You know and understand her maybe even better than I. But I love her. For me she is the only one. I adore and worship her. I never met anyone so refined and sensitive as she, so saintly and consistent in her noble integrity and so wonderful a human being. For me she is everything, and I could never do her any harm or betray her.

Doctor So she has a secret?

Enrico Yes, she has a secret, which not even I know anything about.

Doctor But Livia is your child?

Enrico Yes, our only child.

Doctor What do you know about her secret?

Enrico In some manner she has always tried to save Livia from her own fate, Maddalena carries a trauma, which she has never been able to release. All her endeavours for Livia's part have been to keep Livia out and free from this trauma.

Doctor What do you think the trauma could be? Some rape in younger years?

Enrico That cannot be excluded.

Doctor Was she a virgin when you married?

Enrico She married me on the condition that I would never try to find that out.

Doctor So she wasn't.

Enrico She was in her soul. That was enough for me.

Doctor It's her very soul that I fear has been subject to a worse rape than her body ever could be.

Enrico Is it possible? Can the soul be more raped than the body?

Doctor It couldn't be worse when someone is physically ravished, but if the soul is sensitive and vulnerable, a ravishment could thereby have a thousand times worse consequences.

Enrico Let's remember that we are just speculating. We know nothing, and I couldn't believe any such thing about Maddalena.

Doctor You mean that you don't *want* to believe it.

Enrico (at a loss) I don't know. I actually don't know her at all.

Doctor Perhaps that is the problem.

Livia (from upstairs, invisible, screams) Iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiih! Mother!

Enrico (rushes to the stairs) Livia! What is it?

Livia (screams) She is gone!

Doctor Here it begins.

Enrico (rushes up the stairs) It must not be true!

Livia (meeting him) Someone has taken her away! And he has broken up the jewellery box and stolen all her jewels!

Doctor (coming up) Has she been kidnapped?

Enrico No, it's even worse. – Livia, go to your room. We will take care of this.

Livia It's my fault!

Enrico Not at all! She will be back!

Livia Are you certain?

Enrico I promise. She always comes back. This has happened before.

Livia What is the matter with her?

Enrico Go to your room, Livia. *(She leaves reluctantly.)*

Doctor What is this, Enrico?

Enrico Come, let's go down. I need a drink.

Doctor You talk like a wise man. *(They go down.)*

Enrico I am shattered, Ettore. I am a lost man. I have an enemy, but I don't know who it is.

Doctor Tell me.

Enrico Will you also have a drink?

Doctor Thank you. We'll need it both.

Enrico This has happened before, Ettore, several times. Each time she has come back, and each time I have hoped it would never happen again. But it has always happened again.

Doctor So your wife has left and taken with her all her jewels? And it has happened before?

Enrico The answer is yes. Three times.

Doctor Your wife is getting more and more interesting.

Enrico The first time she stayed away for three months. When she came back it was to her as if she had never been away. She even asked where the flowers had gone which she had put in a vase the day before she disappeared.

Doctor Do you mean to say that she had no memory of having been away?

Enrico No memory at all. She knew nothing about the three months she had been gone.

Doctor But she must have noticed it was three months later?

Enrico First she refused to believe that it was August and not May. She thought everyone was pulling her legs. When she finally had to accept it she asked: "Have I then lost my memory of the last three months?" I said yes, and that was that. Life went on as if nothing had happened.

Doctor Pardon me, Enrico, but your wife is a unique medical case. How could you have kept this away from me?

Enrico My wife is all perfect health and has never wished to have anything to do with any doctor.

Doctor Probably for the very reason that she is so sick at heart as she is. Well, what happened the second time?

Enrico It was three years ago when we separated from Livia. She disappeared the following night with all her jewellery. After two months she came back and cried her heart out for having lost Livia the day before.

Doctor The same symptom? The same amnesia?

Enrico Exactly.

Doctor Was Livia told about it?

Enrico I said that Maddalena had gone away to visit some cousins. When she came back and understood she had lost two months again, she forbade me to tell Livia anything.

Doctor She wanted to protect her daughter from herself.

Enrico What do you think, Ettore? Is there any hope?

Doctor There is always hope. But what happened the third time?

Enrico We don't know yet. That's what we are facing now.

Doctor Then we have a chance to solve the mystery. We could start by posting her as a missing person.

Enrico It will be of no avail. The first time I turned all Italy upside down in public search for her. But she was totally vanished – until she came back.

Doctor But someone must have seen her steal away!

Enrico No one has seen her. She stole away like a cat, and she will come back the same surprisingly sudden and unnoticeable way.

Doctor A very intricate problem.

Enrico What can we do but wait?

Doctor We can at least send out detectives all over Florence. I know a good artist who knows the whole town and its people. He will be a good spying watch and observer.

Enrico At least something.

Doctor If you had told me this before, Enrico, this situation could have been avoided.

Enrico Do you really think so? Do you think it would have been better to lock her up or kept a watch on her? Rather the contrary. We would have lost her for good.

Livia (showing up) Have you reached something? Will mother be back?

Enrico Take it easy, Livia. We will post her as missing and send out detectives. She will be back.

Livia Perhaps Evelyn could help us.

Doctor Does he know people in Florence?

Livia He knows all the English people of Florence.

Enrico By all means, engage him. Perhaps we could also need some diplomacy in the case.

Doctor It could do no harm.

Giacomo Dinner is served, signori.

Enrico Come now, let's plan our strategy at dinner!
(*puts his arms around the doctor and Livia and takes them to dinner.*)

Scene 2. The taverna, a rowdy place with doubtful customers.

Cosetta How is he today?

Aldo He is sentimental again and drinks.

Cosetta It's not good for business.

Aldo No.

Cosetta Will he then never forget her?

Aldo He loves you, *Cosetta*.

Cosetta And you want me to believe that? He loves her, that frivolous wench, who always comes from nowhere and disappears to nowhere!

Aldo But she is gone. You are the only one who can help her in the meantime. He has no other.

Luciano (outside) Lucia!

Cosetta He is crying.

Aldo He has been drinking too much again.

Cosetta I am not sufficient. Even when he lies with me he only thinks of Lucia.

Aldo Not even his mother can keep him in order.

(Noise of upset chairs and bottles falling down.)

Cosetta There you are.

Aldo A fine way to start the day.

Luciano (outside) Damn!

Cosetta Do you think he can get up from the floor?

Aldo That's the question.

Cosetta If he starts calling for mummy we know the answer.

Luciano (has got up, enters staggering on the point of falling) Where is mother today?

Cosetta Out shopping. She must provide for the family when you can't.

Luciano Just you wait! We'll soon make the great strike! *(falls over)*

Cosetta (helps him up) Luciano, you are drinking too much.

Luciano No, I drink too little. Wine is only good for me, for it helps me forget her.

Cosetta You'll never forget her.

Luciano Yes, I will! I forget her all the time!

(Cosetta and Aldo succeed in putting him on a chair.)

Aldo Take it easy now, Luciano.

Luciano Can you give me something to drink?

Cosetta Give him something to drink, to make him forget her.

Luciano I'll never forget her! *(drinks)*

Cosetta (to Aldo) He will never get right again.

Aldo Don't give up, *Cosetta*. He could still grow up.

(Enter the mother.)

Mother (an impressing Gipsy lady) Are you sitting there drinking again, you worthless bandit! When will you start working again!

Luciano Don't worry, mother. We will make the great hit!

Mother When, if I may ask?

Luciano As soon as Lucia comes back. (*passes out at the table*)

Aldo It's like that every day. He only lives for Lucia. Till the day she comes back he will just go on washing himself up.

Cosetta If she comes back.

Mother (to Cosetta) And what kind of a woman are you, who can't help him?

Cosetta Don't you think I have tried?

Aldo Lucia is in the way.

Mother So you suggest that we will just roll our thumbs and let business go to hell and watch Luciano drown in his misery until Lucia once more reappears from above?

Cosetta We are three who can work in the meantime.

Mother Our work makes no money!

Aldo That's the problem. We need Luciano's intelligence.

Arnold (an artist, comes by with his easel) Pardon me, would you allow me to make some sketches of your picturesque inn?

Mother Of course. An artist is always welcome.

Arnold Thank you. (*finds a discreet place and gets down to work.*)

Cosetta Isn't it a risk to let an artist watch us?

Mother Nonsense! Artists are sacred and on our side. Also we have nothing to be ashamed of, poor as we are, while that miserable bum can't work. (*indicating Luciano*)

Luciano (half asleep) The bi-i-i-i-i-ig strike!

Cosetta Don't disturb him. Let him sleep.

Bruno (coming by) My friends! I have a tip! – What's the matter with Luciano?

Cosetta For the moment out of order.

Bruno Is he drinking to Lucia again?

Cosetta Yes, to the bottom.

Bruno Can you tolerate it, Cosetta?

Cosetta To the point, Bruno. What's up?

Bruno (takes a seat) An attractive dame has come to town. She likes to enjoy herself and will accept any offer. She is rich and naïve and has an English education, so she is open to anything. Her cavalier is a boring diplomat dry to the bone who has no control of her. She is the only daughter of the rich family Santini.

Cosetta And what do you want with her? Kidnap her? Rape her? Take her for a hostage and ask for ransom?

Bruno I would love to do it all.

Cosetta Bruno, you are incorrigible.

Luciano (has gradually awakened during Bruno's talk) Here is our great hit. We kidnap the daughter, lure the family out of the house and loot it all.

Bruno Good morning, Luciano. It is well guarded.

Luciano We have to plan the strike carefully.

Mother Now I start to recognize my son.

Aldo Welcome back, Luciano.

Luciano There is only one thing missing.
Bruno What?
Luciano Lucia. (*drinks*)
Cosetta (*dosappointed with the rest*) Oh no!
Aldo We can never trust Luciano.
Bruno Can we make it without Luciano?
Aldo Impossible.
Cosetta Luciano, you must sober up!
Luciano Impossible.
Mother It's been like that now I don't know for how long. We have every opportunity but no chance, for Luciano is missing his love.
Cosetta It's hopeless.
Bruno (*to Luciano*) You never seem to be able to forget her, do you, Luciano?
Luciano Don't remind me. (*drinks*)
Bruno (*to the others*) Who is this strange Lucia then?
Aldo Nobody knows.
Cosetta No one knows anything about her. She just turns up from nowhere and vanish again no one knows where, and no one knows her or anything about her.
Bruno And she made a pathetic shadow out of our Luciano.
Mother She is probably out there somewhere making shadows out of others. I know such women: they make it their sport. No sons are safe for them.
Cosetta And no husbands either.
Bruno But someone must know something about her. What's her name besides Lucia?
Cosetta I don't think she knows herself.
Lucia (*coming by*) Did anyone mention my name?
Luciano (*sober at once*) Lucia! At last! Where have you been?
Lucia Out on business. What do you think? (*opens a handkerchief on the table full with jewels.*)
Luciano Lucia! Come into my arms! I knew you wouldn't let us down! (*hugs her passionately*)
Lucia I am back, Luciano.
Mother (*examines the jewellery*) But this is a fortune.
Aldo It's like that every time. Lucia always comes back to save us.
Cosetta Where did you steal them, Lucia?
Lucia That shouldn't bother you, Cosetta.
Cosetta Or did you have so many customers?
Luciano (*strikes her*) Cosetta, I forbid you to insult Lucia!
Lucia (*condescendingly*) Forgive her. She is only jealous.
Luciano That's no excuse! How cruel you women can be against each other!
Mother That's no news.
(*The artist Arnold packs his things and leaves.*)
Arnold (*raising his hat*) Thank you so much!

Mother Welcome back.

Luciano Now we can make our plans. Lucia is here. Bruno is here. Aldo is here. Everyone is here. And Bruno has the best idea in the world. The entire world is ours! And it's Lucia who has given it to us!

Lucia I wouldn't have come back if I wasn't certain to bring some luck.

Luciano My beloved! Now we shall make love like tigers! And live like princes!

Cosetta You are his rescuing angel. He was a wreck until you came back.

Lucia We'll change that now.

Luciano I was lost, my love. Every night without you was an eternity in hell.

Lucia But you had Cosetta.

Luciano Cosetta is like a sister. She can never be like my only beloved.

Cosetta Where have you been so long, Lucia?

Lucia You sound as if I had been away for years.

Mother And you sound as if you had left only yesterday.

Lucia Wasn't it just yesterday?

Cosetta And who did you steal all this priceless jewellery from? Are you sure the police is not after you?

Lucia No one knows who I am, and no one knows I am here, I can assure you.

Luciano For Lucia time does not exist nor matter. If she is gone for a few years, to her it's like a few hours. The time dimension does not exist for her.

Aldo And when she comes back it is as if she hadn't been gone.

Lucia What kind of a palace is it that we shall plunder?

Bruno Palazzo Santini.

Lucia It sounds familiar. Is it here in Florence?

Aldo Yes, in the outskirts towards Fiesole.

Lucia I know those parts.

Luciano Have you been there?

Lucia No.

Bruno How do you know them then?

Lucia I know the whole world.

Luciano To the point, Bruno! What is the plan?

Bruno I know the only daughter of the house, a young spoilt girl who has studied abroad and is perfectly naïve. She lived in protection all her life, like another tropical flower in a pot, and hasn't learned anything of real life. She will fall like a ripe fruit into our hands.

Aldo How, if she enjoys such protection?

Bruno You don't understand. Her only protector is a foolish Englishman who doesn't even live with her, so they hardly see each other. She just wants to go out to town all the time hunting pleasures, and during such a tour she met me. We have made an appointment for tomorrow.

Lucia And then?

Bruno I bring her here, we discreetly inform the family that she has been taken away, and when everyone leaves the house we sack it.

Luciano It sounds simple enough. But isn't the house carefully watched?
Bruno No, it's in confusion. The lady has run away, and all Italy is searching for her. If the daughter also is abducted the house will soon be empty.
Lucia And you will be here alone with the daughter in the meanwhile?
Bruno Yes. Any objections?
Lucia (casually) By all means, we all have to go that way.
Aldo It almost sounds too easy to be true.
Mother Lucia returns with a harvest of priceless jewels, and at the same time you get the opportunity to a magnificent burglary. We are only to thank Lucia for the luck and happiness she brings.
Luciano Exactly! And today we shall celebrate!
Lucia And party!
Luciano And love like tigers!
Lucia And live like princes!
Cosetta While it's possible.
Bruno What do you mean?
Cosetta Who knows when Lucia will leave us again?
Luciano You mustn't, Lucia!
Cosetta What do we really know about her?
Lucia You should be glad that you don't know any more than you do.
Luciano I know where I always have her!
Aldo Where?
Luciano Here in my heart.
Mother To the party! Let's celebrate!
Lucia All night!
Luciano Lucia, you are the only light of my life. If you leave me again I'll murder you.
Lucia I will never leave you willingly, Luciano.
Luciano You will never leave me any more!
Cosetta Luciano, you cannot rule over a woman.
Luciano I could always try.
Lucia Kiss me, you big childish villain!
Luciano (kisses her) May our whole life be just a kiss that goes on forever!
Lucia I agree. *(They kiss again.)* It's good to be alive again!
Luciano Were you dead in between?
Lucia I am afraid so. It almost feels like that. I don't want to die again.
Luciano You will never die in my arms, my love.
Mother Get ready for the party!
Aldo To the party and dinner!
Luciano May it last all night! *(carries Lucia out. All follow with joy and cheer, while only Cosetta has second thoughts.)*

Scene 3. Palazzo Santini.

Enrico Ettore, could you explain anything of this? I find myself groping in total darkness and can't understand anything. In one way she seems lost, but at the same time I know that I still have her. But in what form or capacity? If she comes back, how long will I then be able to keep her before she vanishes again and for how long?

Ettore Whatever she does, Enrico, I think it is unconsciously.

Enrico Does that make it better?

Ettore You are on the right track, Enrico. We must try to understand her. All indications are of some kind of a trauma. Try to think. Have you any hunch of what a possible trauma of hers could be about? From where for instance does she get all her phobias?

Enrico She always saw a potential rapist in every grown man.

Ettore Still she married you.

Enrico She made very strict conditions. I really loved her, Ettore, like I love her still. Maybe she saw my love as a redemption possibility from a trauma.

Ettore What were her conditions, except that you were forbidden to probe her virginity?

Enrico She saw marriage as a duty to begetting children. That's the normal conventional catholic attitude embraced by most. She wanted a child by me but only one. When once she got pregnant I was forbidden to know her again.

Ettore I call that hard terms. You must have loved her very much.

Enrico Infinitely. I still do. She is the only person ever that impersonated my ideal.

Ettore If you disregard her temporal disappearances.

Enrico But she always came back unchanged.

Ettore A very odd case indeed. I never heard of anything like it. But suppose she is carrying a rape trauma perhaps from a very early age. It could leave the most monstrous marks. She is sanctity herself and the most perfect of mothers and wives. I have seen it myself. But with a rape trauma she could have developed another personality besides. A common way of handling a personal trauma is to escape into an alternative personality, to split into two different beings. It's more common than you think. What you can't handle yourself you will handle better as the other personality, and when that one isn't needed any more you become yourself again.

Enrico Go on.

Ettore On two occasions your wife has disappeared after a crisis, when she was separated from her daughter, and when the daughter came home with, as Maddalena saw the matter, a dangerous cavalier. These situations Maddalena herself could not handle. It's possible that she took refuge into another personality and left.

Enrico It's an interesting theory that makes a logical impression.

Ettore That's the only explanation I can find. But if it fits she will surely come back, for sooner or later the other personality will not be needed any more, which only is an escape from an unendurable reality.

Enrico In that case it's just for us to hope that her escape will be agreeable to her.

(enter Livia from outside with Evelyn and the artist)

Livia (beaming happy) There is hope, daddy!

Enrico We also found that. Who are you bringing along?

Livia This is Arnold, an outstanding artist, who knows all Florence. He has promised to open his ears as well as his eyes to everything he sees and hears.

Enrico (cordially shaking hands with Arnold) Welcome, Arnold. We know you already by doctor Bianco here, who knows most of all of Maddalena and who is our greatest hope. Everything will be fine if only we can find her.

Evelyn Any clues, Arnold?

Arnold Not yet, but I have only started.

Livia But our best bait is something else.

Enrico Tell us.

Livia I have met a man who might know something. He knows all the deepest secrets of Florence and the entire underworld.

Enrico Is he to be trusted?

Livia If he can lead us right we must trust him!

Enrico What is your plan?

Livia I have made an appointment with him at a taverna in the poorest part of the city.

Arnold What's the name of the taverna?

Livia The Madonna of the Seven Moons.

Arnold I know it. I was there today. It's a very picturesque quarter. I often go there to sketch original types, especially gipsies. It could be an interesting track.

Enrico The Madonna of the Seven Moons does sound rather picturesque. Will you go there?

Livia Absolutely. But I must come alone, he says.

Arnold What's his name?

Livia Bruno.

Arnold Don't know him.

Enrico Do you dare to go there alone?

Livia I would dare anything for mother.

Enrico She would never have approved of you going there alone with an unknown man.

Evelyn What do you think, doctor Bianco?

Ettore Something tells me that it would be wiser to wait until Maddalena comes back by herself.

Enrico But it could take months!

Ettore We are dealing here with an exceptionally sensitive psyche. To me she is a patient, and I would never risk anything with a patient.

Livia What risk could there be in tracing her?

Enrico I view the risk as minimal. Arnold knows the place, and Evelyn can protect her.

Evelyn Call me any time.

Enrico The case is clear. Livia, you may visit the tavern.

Livia But I must go there alone.

Evelyn Without any protection?

Livia Without being watched. That was the condition. I can't risk anything going wrong when mother is concerned.

Enrico As you wish.

Arnold I could keep close by with my easel.

Enrico Could Evelyn come along with you?

Arnold He had better not. I was always seen alone.

Evelyn I can do my own research in the meantime.

Enrico Ettore?

Ettore I don't like it. You can't force a patient to become well.

Livia But this is perhaps a matter of life and death! Who knows? Shouldn't we do everything we can, just because we don't know?

Enrico Livia is right.

Ettore I hope she is right.

Evelyn Very well, Livia. Take your risks on your own.

Livia It could be a full hit at once.

Evelyn Do you think so?

Livia Something tells me I am on the right track.

Enrico The case is clear. But keep alert and available, Evelyn.

Evelyn Of course.

Ettore I renounce all responsibility. You have to act on your own.

Evelyn Doctor Bianco, I understand you.

Livia Are you jealous?

Evelyn I haven't even seen your Bruno yet.

Enrico Evelyn, it's only for her mother's sake.

Evelyn I know.

Arnold Then we had better get moving. The day is short, and time is passing.

Evelyn I follow you, Arnold. Are you coming, Livia?

Livia You bet.

Enrico Good luck.

Livia If we are lucky we will come back home with mother.

Ettore (aside) But in what condition?

Enrico It sounds good, my children. Good bye.

Ettore How old is Maddalena, Enrico?

Enrico Forty years.

Ettore The apex of maturity. In that age anything could happen. I hope it will all end well.

Enrico Could it go worse than it has done already? Uncertainty, Ettore, is the worst of all.

Ettore I agree. What about a drink?

Enrico Ettore, you are a good doctor. *(They go to the bar.)*

Scene 4. The taverna.

Luciano You are almost too good for us, Lucia. What made you come back?

Lucia Don't set me on some kind of pedestal. I am much worse than you think. Why do you think I left you?

Luciano You cruel angel, of course you know, that no woman is so irresistible to a man than she who loves by her cruelty.

Lucia Still I prefer men who can't stand human cruelty and who diplomatically and sensitively back out as soon as they get involved in some jealousy triangle.

Luciano Are you in love with such a one?

Lucia Luciano, let's stick to the point. We have business to attend to.

Luciano If anyone could drive me mad of jealousy it is you.

Lucia Who can feel jealousy can also love. Therefore jealousy is a sign of health.

Luciano Jealousy often leads to violence.

Lucia So does love.

Luciano You are not afraid of anything, Lucia.

Lucia Only of myself.

Luciano Is that why you vanish from us for such long periods?

Lucia I think so.

Luciano Always this vagueness, this uncertainty, this unreachable detachment! But if anything makes your body irresistible, it is your soul.

Lucia Stop fooling around now. *(enter Bruno)* We have work to do. Is everything ready, Bruno?

Bruno Everything is ready. She will come any time.

Luciano What will you do with her?

Bruno Only the usual thing. First we drug her, then we carry her off to my room where we lock her up in safety, and then we inform the Casa Santini that we have abducted her.

Luciano Is she very young?

Bruno She is a veritable rose bud.

Luciano Will you deflower her?

Bruno Why not? Such young ladies have a thing or two to learn from life.

Luciano And you have no second thoughts about the consequences for a young virgin of such noble family?

Bruno They are just marquess.

Lucia Let him do what he will with her. The sooner she matures into a woman, the more grateful she will be. Such a rosebud must be allowed to break. Just rape

her, Bruno, and tie her hands to the bedpost if needed. She must be allowed to feel alive.

Luciano Sometimes you surprise me, Lucia. Who turned you so cold and hardened?

Lucia Don't ask me. I have forgotten them all. (*Enter Aldo and the mother.*)

Mother Is everything ready?

Bruno She will be here any moment.

Mother Then I'll go out to prepare the knockout drops.

Aldo The house is already rather unguarded. As soon as we have sent word that the girl has been abducted and we have got them out to here, we can move in and plunder the house. You had better leave already, so that you are ready for the operation in the right moment.

Luciano Are you with us, Lucia?

Lucia I am with you on any foolish venture.

Luciano Let's leave then. (*leaves with Lucia*)

Bruno Everything is well prepared. The girl must feel safe here. She mustn't suspect anything.

Aldo Just make her drink quickly, and all will be set.

Bruno I think she will be our best and most delicate catch so far.

Aldo I suppose it's best for you to be alone with her when she comes?

Bruno Yes, join your aunt in the meantime. (*Aldo leaves.*)

Here we are at the feverish moment of truth. Whenever I have a hit to make it feels like entering a stage and play a demanding part with great effort. But it will pass. The curtain always falls.

(*Enter Livia.*)

Livia Bruno!

Bruno Livia!

Livia What have you learned about mother?

Bruno I have found a lead. Sit down. How about a glass of wine?

Livia Only a small one. I am very excited about your lead.

Bruno Just wait. Take it easy. I don't know how reliable my information is, but I have heard that your mother could have been abducted.

Livia (terrified) Abducted!

Mother (enters, cajoling) What will it be?

Bruno Just a small glass of Chianti for the lady.

(*Mother curtseys and leaves, all affectation.*)

Livia But who could have abducted her and why?

Bruno Still it must be better to be abducted than to have run away?

(*Mother returns with a small glass of wine.*)

Mother Here you are, signorina. (*curtseys flatteringly and leaves*)

Livia (ignoring her completely) What do you mean?

Bruno Do you think your mother could have run away?

Livia That's what everybody thinks.

Bruno But who would she elope with – such a noble marchesa?

Livia With no one. That's the mystery.

Bruno So she is probably abducted.

Livia Yes, that would actually be better. Then she would be the victim to others and not to herself. (*empties the glass*)

Bruno You know how to drink.

Livia In England you learn to drink beer and whisky.

Bruno Like this? (*imitates her quick drinking*)

Livia Yes. You can't imagine how the men keep constantly on.

Bruno You don't drink wine in that way.

Livia They don't drink wine in England.

Bruno Is whisky and beer something similar?

Livia Yes, but tastes worse. I would rather drink wine and can take any amount. (*starts feeling dizzy.*)

Bruno What is it?

Livia What have you done to me?

Bruno Don't ask me. I thought you could take wine.

Livia (rising) Now I see everything clearly! It's a plot!

Bruno Relax, girl. Sit down.

Livia You have kidnapped my mother, and now you also will have me in your power! Why? How have we offended you?

Bruno You are delirious. Sit down.

Livia No, I can see the whole conspiracy! Arnold! Evelyn!

Bruno Sit down, I said. You are delirious. It will pass.

Livia No! (*faints*)

Bruno That's that. You can come out now. (*enter Aldo and the mother.*)

Aldo Shall we carry her upstairs?

Bruno No, I'll do it myself. (*takes Livia in his arms*)

Mother Don't be rough with her.

Bruno Just be calm. First I will caress her until she wakes, and then it's just to let nature have its course. (*carries her tenderly upstairs*) Aldo, you can go to Palazzo Santini now with our message.

Mother Bruno knows what he is doing.

Aldo Why always only he and never me?

Mother He has a good hand with women. You are not mature yet, Aldo. Get going now.

Aldo Very well, I am off. (*meets Arnold in the door*)

Arnold I thought I heard a cry from here. (*looking around*)

Mother Are you looking for someone?

Arnold Yes, a young lady.

Mother She isn't here.

Arnold Are you sure?

Mother Have you seen a lady at this shabby place, Aldo?

Aldo There are no young ladies coming here.

Arnold I will be back. With the police. (*leaves*)

Aldo What do we do now?

Mother I know that artist. He will never fetch the police.

Aldo But he knows that the girl came here!

Mother Yes, and that's bad enough. If he doesn't fetch the police he could fetch someone else.

Aldo We must hurry!

Mother Yes. Hurry at once to Luciano and Lucia. Don't go to Casa Santini.

Aldo Is the operation cancelled?

Mother Not yet. Hurry on!

Aldo I run. (*meets Luciano and Lucia in the door.*)

Luciano Lucia saw that artist in the vicinity. She lingered and kept an eye on him and then saw him come here. Does he know anything?

Mother He suspects something. That's all.

Luciano Where is Bruno?

Aldo (*indicates the stairs*) He is doing his part of the job.

Luciano (*calls*) Bruno! (*runs up the stairs*)

Lucia He will be interrupted in a delicate moment.

Aldo Not even Bruno can always be lucky.

Mother Pity on such a sweet virginity.

Luciano (*opens the door*) Bruno! There is no time for games now!

Bruno (*from inside*) What the hell are you doing here?

Luciano Dress at once! They are on to us!

Bruno Already?

Cosetta (*enters below*) Do you have a problem?

Mother Is it you who sent the artist here?

Cosetta Not at all. Has anything gone wrong?

Aldo Everything has gone wrong! The police will be here any moment!

Cosetta Is it Luciano or Bruno they will find with his pants down this time?

Luciano (*upstairs*) Hurry on, Bruno! Leave her as she is! (*comes down with Bruno*)

Mother Did he accomplish the rape?

Luciano She is unconscious but fortunately dressed and untouched.

Mother Then I will stay here until they come. They will be satisfied to find her alive.

Bruno But they will take her away from here!

Mother Yes, but without further measures. I will say she had a shock, the dear thing.

Lucia Hard cheese, Bruno. Better luck next time.

Cosetta Will you all escape?

Luciano We had better disappear at once.

Lucia I am just curious about the girl. I'll just go up and have a look at her. I always wondered what a virgin could look like.

Luciano We have no time, Lucia.

Lucia Run along. I will follow. (*walks towards the stairs*)

Luciano What has gone into her?
Cosetta Let her be, Luciano.
Mother Just get away at last, before it is too late!
Bruno No, I will not leave without that girl. (*follows Lucia*)
Luciano Bruno, come back!
Cosetta Don't be crazy, Bruno!
 (*Arnold, Evelyn, Enrico and the doctor storm into the taverna.*)
Enrico Where is my daughter?
Mother Too late!
Arnold (*points to the stairs*) There he is! Stop him!
Evelyn (*shoots, aims at Bruno but hits Lucia*)
Arnold Bad shot, you bungler!
Evelyn (*shoots again and hits Bruno.*)
Bruno Aaaaaargh! (*falls down the stairs dragging all kinds of things with him.*)
 (*In the meanwhile Lucia badly wounded reaches the room and opens the door.*)
Livia ('s voice) Mother!
 (*Lucia collapses in the doorway.*)
 (*The doctor and Enrico look at each other.*)
Doctor What is this? (*rushes up the stairs before Enrico.*)
Bruno (*dying*) No harm is done. I never knew her.
 (*The doctor breaks into the room.*)
Livia Mother!
Aldo I don't understand anything.
Luciano You are mistaken. She is my wife Lucia.
Cosetta She was never your wife, Luciano.
Doctor How is it with her? (*examines Maddalena*)
Livia (*throws herself over her mother*) Mother!
Maddalena (*faintly*) This is what I wished to spare you, my daughter. (*dies*)
Enrico No!
Doctor It's over.
Luciano No! (*rushes up the stairs*) Don't tell me it's true! She mustn't be dead!
Enrico Out of the way, young man. She is my wife.
Luciano And who are you?
Enrico (*rising*) Marquess Enrico de Santini. And this is my wife the Marchesa Maddalena.
Luciano (*helpless*) I loved her also!
Doctor You obviously did, my friend. Here is a strange story to wind up about a wondrous double love affair of two men who loved the same woman without suspecting she was two different women.
Livia (*inconsolable*) Mother!
Mother I have never seen something like it.
Doctor Why did you fire, Evelyn?
Arnold It was my fault. On my advice he brought a gun.

Evelyn Unfortunately I am a good shot.
Livia (*in despair*) You have murdered her!
Doctor Enrico, we must let the police sort this out.
Enrico An unfortunate accident. A most unfortunate accident. Nothing else.
(*lifts Maddalena*)
Luciano Can you ever forgive me?
Cosetta You were not the shot, stupid.
Luciano But I was responsible for her fate.
Mother Take care of him, Cosetta. (*Cosetta takes care of him.*)
Cosetta Here, Luciano, sit down, and cry out. It's over now.
Luciano No, it will never be over! (*breaks down in complete despair*)
Arnold Come, Evelyn. We have done enough.
Evelyn I never missed before in all my life.
Doctor You have nothing to worry about, Evelyn. This was a bandit's nest, and
you shot to defend a lady. The police cannot charge you.
Evelyn No, it's just my entire career that is ruined.
(*leaves with Arnold, who takes care of him*)
Doctor (*to the mother*) We regret the turmoil, signora.
Mother Just carry out the bodies, so that we can get back to work.
Enrico (*carries out Maddalena followed by the inconsolable Livia*) Come now, Livia. We
have all the future to spend grieving.
Doctor Alas, if only we had let her be free!
Mother She is free now, doctor.
Doctor Who?
Mother Maddalena.
(*Aldo takes care of the dying Bruno. Enrico carries out Maddalena with Livia close to him.
The doctor is the last to leave. Luciano remains inconsolable, comforted by Cosetta. Only the
mother is seemingly untouched by the drama, like a Gipsy who has foreseen everything and
never seen anything new.*)

The End.

Maddalena was an authentic case in Florence in the 1920s. A film was made in England 1945 on the subject with Phyllis Calvert and Stewart Granger, called *The Madonna of the Seven Moons*. The case is still one of the most extreme examples of duality of personality ever.

Verona, October 1st 1995,
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