

# *Monte Verità*



# *Monte Verità*

drama in five acts

by Christian Lanciai (2000)

(after *Daphne du Maurier*)

## *Dramatis Personae:*

Harry  
Victor  
Anna  
a waiter  
Rudolph  
a butler  
a nurse  
an old mountain man  
his wife  
village people  
an innkeeper  
a villager  
a guest  
the innkeeper's wife  
the innkeeper's daughter  
a middle-aged half idiot  
a boy  
chorus of moon virgins

The action takes place during the first part of the 20th century

Copyright © Christian Lanciai 2000

*Monte Veritá*

Act I scene 1.

A common restaurant. Not too many people.  
A man by a table is obviously waiting for someone. He is smoking hard.  
Then suddenly he is relieved, and a couple enters the place.

*Harry* Victor! At last!

*Victor (the man)* Harry! Have you waited long? *(They greet each other cordially.)*

*Harry* So here is the miracle.

*Victor* Allow me to present my wife to be, Anna.

*Harry (kissing her hand)* Enchanté.

*Anna (to Victor)* Couldn't your friend be polite without exaggerating?

*Harry* I didn't expect this of you, Victor. Your becoming bride has proved a beauty.

*Victor* I told you that you would be surprised! But why do we stand when we could sit?

*Anna* Good question. *(They sit down.)*

*Victor* Have you already ordered?

*Harry* I only wanted tea for myself.

*Anna* We all could do with that, I suppose. I need nothing more.

*Victor* As you wish, dearest.

*Harry (to a waiter)* Tea for the three of us, please.

*Waiter* With scones?

*Harry (with a glance at the others, who nod approvingly)* Yes, please.

*Waiter* At once, Sir.

*Victor* You have grown thinner, Harry. I guess you stress too much.

*Harry* I am still a bachelor.

*Victor* Is that an accusation or a complaint?

*Harry* You were the last bachelor among my friends, Victor. Still I grant you with all my heart such a beautiful life companion as this one.

*Victor* You haven't heard the best yet, Harry. She climbs mountains.

*Harry (surprised)* What?

*Anna* Don't exaggerate, Victor. I don't climb. But I happen to be born and grown up in the mountains.

*Harry* So you will take her up to the mountains on your honeymoon?

*Victor* Yes. Would you like to join us?

*Harry* What is her handicap?

*Victor* This is not golf, Harry. *(to Anna)* Harry is my oldest friend. We always followed each other, and our fates were definite when we both acquired a taste for climbing mountains.

*Anna* Carry on with that, boys, if you like, but I don't climb.

*Victor* But you were made for the mountains, Anna. They are in your blood and soul. You grew up by inestimable heights and made them like nothing.

*Anna* It's not that I am afraid. I just have such a respect for the mountains. They demand everything. That's why I don't visit them voluntarily but let them remain unattainable in peace.

*Harry* A sound natural instinct. She knows the mountains, Victor. She knows what they are all about. You have found yourself a worthy wife and colleague.

*Victor (holding her hand)* You must come to our wedding, Harry. You must be my best man.

*Harry* I would love to, if it pleases you. Will we go up the mountains afterwards?

*Victor* I was just thinking of Switzerland.

*Harry* Jungfrau or Matterhorn?

*Anna* Why not the Himalayas at once? The mountains of Switzerland are so plain.

*Victor* You are joking, Anna.

*Anna* Of course. Why not Wales or Scotland? Mountains as mountains. They are the same everywhere.

*Waiter (enters)* Tea, ladies and gentlemen.

*Harry* At last! (*tea is served*)

*Victor* You decide, Anna. Choose any mountains in the world you like. But Harry here must be able to come with us.

*Anna* Then I choose Monte Verità.

*Harry* Monte Verità? What mountain is that?

*Anna* I only heard about it. It should be some mysterious mountain in the south somewhere.

*Victor* You have decided the matter, Anna. Monte Verità it will be.

*Harry* It means the mountain of truth. What do you know about the truth of that mountain, Anna?

*Anna* Nothing. That's why I am curious.

*Harry* It sounds like an exciting project.

*Victor* Mysteries exist to be resolved so that they no longer are mysteries.

*Anna* Or their mysteries will appear and get you deeper in. Either or.

*Victor* Nonsense! There are no mysteries. Everything can be explained.

*Harry* But mysteries will remain mysterious until they are explained.

*Victor* Of course.

*Anna* But everything is not explainable.

*Harry* Thank heavens for that. But tell me at last when your wedding will be.

*Victor* We thought rather soon, in three months.

*Harry* In May then, the best wedding month.

*Victor* Why not?

*Harry* If only Anna is on, I am on.

*Anna* Do you mean the wedding or Monte Verità?

*Harry* Both.

*Anna* Good, Harry. You are now our man.

*Harry* Have your tea now while it's hot.

*Victor* How is it they say? Let's harvest while the iron is hot.

*Anna* No, Victor. You have got it all wrong. You shall forge while the crop stands fair.  
*Victor* That's how it was.  
*Harry* You will make a good couple.  
*Victor* Let's go to a bar from here. We have something to celebrate, don't we?  
*Harry* Cheers to that!  
*Anna* Cheers!  
*Victor* Cheers!

*(They join their cups and toast them cheerfully.)*

*Rudolph (enters)* Victor! And Harry! What a surprise!  
*Victor (rising)* But that is Rudolph! *(greets him cordially)*  
*Rudolph* And who is your lovely lady?  
*Harry* She is Victor's lovely lady, Rudolph. I am just an appendage.  
*Anna* Who is invaluable to both of us, though.  
*Rudolph* Am I disturbing important issues?  
*Harry* You already did.  
*Victor* Not at all, Rudolph! Have a seat! We had already settled all serious matters of the world. Only the pleasant ones remain.  
*Rudolph* And you are having tea.  
*Victor* We were just considering moving over to a bar.  
*Rudolph* Why didn't you say so? Come on! Let's abandon this menagerie. Be my guests! *(rises. They all leave in the best of moods.)*

Scene 2. A nice cozy home with a pleasant open fire in the fireplace.  
Victor, Anna and Harry at dinner, well dressed.

*Harry* Thanks for a wonderful dinner.  
*Victor* It's all due to Anna.  
*Anna* What do you think of our home?  
*Harry* Couldn't be better.  
*Anna* It's Victor's family chateau. It has passed through a number of generations.  
*Harry* But I seem to notice that you have made some improvements, Anna.  
*Anna* Yes, some.  
*Victor* Anna is so Spartan in her taste. She wants everything simple and basic. That's why she has almost no furniture at all in her room.  
*Harry* That's what I seemed to notice.  
*Anna* But for the rest, there are no changes.  
*Harry* How long now have you been married? Six months?  
*Victor* Five and a half. And we are still happy.  
*Harry* Yes, it seems like something of an ideal marriage. So there will soon be time for you for some heirs, Victor.

*Victor* We have all the time in the world. You shouldn't hurry and stress such matters, should you, Anna? Nature will decide in her own time. That's the safest way.

*Harry* Yes, that's probably how it is, Harry. I have no experience myself.

*Victor* I hope you will have one day, Harry.

*Harry* I prefer to remain the last bachelor as long as possible.

*Victor* A wise decision, Harry. (*enter the butler. He talks quietly with Victor.*) Pardon me, my friends. I have a telephone call in the library. It's my father. (*leaves*)

*Anna* Has Victor told you anything about our honeymoon?

*Harry* No, nothing.

*Anna* Then he will do so later on.

*Harry* Was it successful?

*Anna* In every way.

*Harry* Where did you finally go?

*Anna* Victor insisted on bringing me on up in the mountains. He only had himself to blame.

*Harry* What happened?

*Anna* He had better tell you himself.

*Harry* I gather he has a rather mystical attitude to the mountains.

*Anna* I have a tremendous respect for them. Victor doesn't.

*Harry* You if anyone should know something about them, since you were born to them.

*Anna* You also climb mountains, don't you, Harry?

*Harry* Yes, I have a passion for them.

*Anna* I think we both are for the same thing.

*Harry* Which is?

*Anna* I thought you knew.

*Victor (coming back)* My father always calls in the most improper moment possible to discuss his latest pains. Still no one is more fit than he.

*Anna* You haven't told Harry about our wedding journey, Victor.

*Victor* Did I really forget to tell you about it? I got her with me in the end, Harry, up the mountain.

*Harry (to Anna)* Was it dangerous?

*Victor* Dangerous? She just disappeared! She left me behind in no time! I couldn't understand where she went. Where did you go, Anna?

*Anna* Have you forgotten that we had bad weather? I had to find shelter in a gorge.

*Victor* Yes, it was a hell of a bad weather, and I had to stand alone shivering all night! When I finally managed to get down at five in the morning, I was as stiff and cold as a frozen mammoth!

*Harry (to Anna)* And how did you manage?

*Victor* She wasn't even wet! She was neither cold nor complained! She came down as if it had been nothing, as if she had been born in the clouds!

*Harry* Are all mountain girls like that?

*Anna* No. Most of them keep away from the mountains.  
*Harry* From respect?  
*Anna* By awareness of the risks.  
*Victor* There you are, Harry! We have the stonebuck of all times at our disposal! So now we really thought of trying Monte Verità next time.  
*Harry* Monte Verità? The mountain you planned already for your honeymoon but abandoned as too risky? The mysterious mountain that never was climbed and from which no climber ever returned?  
*Anna* Yes. Victor wants to try it.  
*Victor* Are you coming with us, Harry? Three is better than two.  
*Harry* Do you wish me to, Anna?  
*Anna* There are legends of a monastery close to the top. I am curious to find out whether it exists.  
*Harry* Then I am on.  
*Victor* Bravo, Harry! I knew we could rely on you as a sportsman!  
*Anna* So we might both find what we are looking for.  
*Harry* I am interested to find what you are looking for, Anna.  
*Anna* So am I.  
*Victor* Cheers, then! One for all, and all for one!  
*Anna* You will be our expedition leader, Victor.  
*Harry* And I am the baggage.  
*Anna* What then shall I be?  
*Victor (suggests)* The figurehead. *(They drink and laugh.)*  
*Harry* When did you plan to go?  
*Victor* Now in the summer.  
*Harry* I am afraid I'll then be in America.  
*Victor* Can't you postpone it?  
*Harry* I am afraid it's impossible. I am sorry.  
*Anna* Pity.  
*Harry* But I would be the worst climber among us three. You'll probably manage better without me.  
*Victor* Of course we'll manage without you, but it would have been so much more fun and felt safer to have you with us.  
*Harry* I am sorry. But I really wish you good luck.  
*Anna* Thanks, Harry. We'll see each other again on another mountain.  
*Harry* Maybe.  
*Victor* Anyway, Harry, it's great to have you here. Cheers!  
*(They toast and drink, but Anna hardly touches the drink and looks dreamily far away.)*  
*Harry* What is it, Anna?  
*Anna* It's a full moon tonight.  
*Harry* How does that affect you? Will you turn into a vampire or werewolf?  
*Victor* She only gets restless. She can't sleep but must go out in the middle of the night, usually with bare feet.

Harry Doesn't she catch cold then?  
Victor She never catches a cold. She is a mountain girl, remember.  
Anna Pardon me, my friends. I gave to go out for a while. (*leaves*)  
Victor There you are.  
Harry A real mountain girl. But how high can she climb?  
Victor Perhaps we shall know on Monte Verità. Pity that you can't join us.  
Harry Yes. But next time, Victor. (*raises his glass*)  
Victor Next time! (*they toast intimately.*)  
(*Anna is seen in her nightgown in the light of the full moon on a balcony – barefoot.*)

Act II scene 1.

Same place as act I scene 1.

Harry alone at the same table, reading a paper. Enter Rudolph.

Rudolph Harry!  
Harry Rudolph! Have a seat!  
Rudolph Welcome back! How was America?  
Harry Tiresome as usual. You never get through with New York.  
Rudolph Yes, I know. The career is like an addiction. You just need more all the time.  
Harry New York is the very worst for that syndrome.  
Rudolph I know. I deplore your fate.  
Harry So do I. But do you know anything about Victor? I haven't heard from him since they went away.  
Rudolph Then you haven't heard the sad news.  
Harry What has happened?  
Rudolph His wife has left him.  
Harry Why?  
Rudolph Nobody knows. He sits alone isolated in a hospital, and no one can get a word out of him.  
Harry That's shocking news! Then we must visit him!  
Rudolph Perhaps you could help him.  
Harry And where is Anna?  
Rudolph Nobody knows.  
Harry Hasn't she returned?  
Rudolph No one knows. (*meaningly*) I thought you perhaps would know...  
Harry I promise you, Rudolph, I am at least as ignorant as you about all this. I should have followed them on their quest for Monte Verità...  
Rudolph What did you say it was?  
Harry Monte Verità.  
Rudolph The mountain of truth. Such a mountain does not exist.  
Harry Yes, it does exist.

*Rudolph* In that case maybe that was where their marriage broke. Good luck, Harry. I must get on.  
*Harry* What hospital?  
*Rudolph* St. Lazarus, room 49.  
*Harry* Thank you, Rudolph.  
*Rudolph* Be seeing you. So long. (*leaves*)  
*Harry* I should never have left them alone. (*finishes his tea in haste and departs.*)

Scene 2. At the hospital.

*Harry* Could I see Victor?  
*Nurse* He does not accept visitors.  
*Harry* He must know who I am. (*writes some words on a card*) Give this to him. (*The nurse accepts the card and leaves.*)  
Victor, what have you done? Have you frightened her away? What happened on that damned mountain of truth? She did warn you against it! (*The nurse returns.*)  
*Nurse* This way, please.  
(*Harry is let and shown to an isolated room, where Victor sits apathetic like a parcel.*)  
I will leave you alone. (*leaves*)  
*Harry* Victor, you old daredevil! Do you recognize me?  
*Victor* She has left me, Harry.  
*Harry* I know. I am sorry. But you will get over it, Victor. There are others.  
*Victor* No, there is no one like her. She was absolutely unique.  
*Harry* You will find your next one equally unique. Besides, I am almost sure she will come back. Where did you lose her, Victor? Did she run away with the first and best ski instructor? That happens all the time in the mountains.  
*Victor* You don't know how it is, Harry. No, she will never be back. It's not at all as you think. If only she had run away with another! That would have been so much easier.  
*Harry* But what the devil happened, Victor?  
*Victor* She was spirited away.  
*Harry* People don't get spirited away. You find that only in old medieval legends.  
*Victor* You see it so casually, Harry. You can't see how deep it struck me. She is no longer available to us. She has let us all down.  
*Harry* Try to explain what happened.  
*Victor* There was a monastery up there.  
*Harry* On Monte Verità?  
*Victor* Yes. It was the sanctuary of a sect. She became one of them.  
*Harry* So she has just gone for a holiday. She wants to meditate in a monastery for some time. Let her do so. It will only do her good. Then she can return later in better condition than ever.  
*Victor* You don't understand. They took her.

*Harry* Did the sect take her?

*Victor* Yes.

*Harry* Then go back and reclaim her! No one has the right to take your wife away from you, not even a sect!

*Victor* This sect was unlike all others. You can't get in touch with them. They occasionally choose novices and take them in. But those who have been taken never return to the mortals.

*Harry* You have got a sunstroke up on the mountain, Victor. That explains everything.

*Victor* You can't simplify the greatest problem in the world, Harry. She was taken in for life because she wanted it herself.

*Harry* This is getting more and more abstruse. You make me curious about that mountain.

*Victor* You should have come with us. Then perhaps she might not have been lost to us...

*Harry* Business is business. You know how it is. But I suggest, that as soon as you are well, we'll go back down there and get her back. What do you say?

*Victor (sadly)* It will not work.

*Harry* Why not?

*Victor* You don't understand.

*Harry* What is it I don't understand?

*Victor* You understand nothing.

*Harry* Then instruct me, so that I may understand something! You give me no chance! You just ramble about sects and monasteries up in the clouds... How could I understand such fleeting mists of nonsense?

*Victor* How could I explain it to you?

*Harry* Just tell me exactly how it happened, and then I might understand.

*Victor* She always amazed me. And when we went together up the mountain she became like a totally different person. Her feet acquired almost wings, and, I know it sounds ridiculous, but she kind of was raised to a higher state of being.

*Harry* I think I understand what you mean.

*Victor* You don't understand at all. You haven't seen her in the mountains. This is how it went.

It was a lovely day. There was not a cloud in the sky, and it was quite still. You know how it could be in the mountains. I provoked Anna and asked her not to leave me this time. She laughed – and left me behind. She only walked lighter and easier the higher up she came, while for all ordinary beings it's the contrary.

*(He loses himself in his memories.)*

*Harry (to himself)* She must have fallen down. Victor just has never been able to accept it. The shock was too hard on him. She is dead, and he has never been able to face it and comprehend it.

*Victor* I know how you think, but it wasn't like that at all. Finally we reached a village. It was about three hours from the top.

*(The scene shifts. You see Anna reach the village, only a few houses with goats and a few goatherds, with a splendid mountain landscape around.)*

*The villagers become aware of Anna approaching and are scared. They show clear signs of fear.)*

*Anna* I am not dangerous. Don't be afraid. I am just from another country.

*Victor (enters after her, sweating and exhausted)* At last! A village! What luck!

*(The villagers disperse. You hear shutters and bolts being closed and bolted.)*

Are they afraid of us?

*Anna* So it seems. *(An old man shows up on his way home.)*

*Old Man (watching Anna with dislike, turning to Victor)* Who is she? What does she want here?

*Victor* It's my wife. We wish you no harm.

*Old Man* Your wife? Impossible! You are kidding me.

*Victor* No, it's true. We are tourists. We are here on a vacation. We have never been here before. Look! *(shows his own and Anna's hands)* Our wedding rings!

*Old Man* So she is not from Monte Verità?

*Victor* Certainly not!

*Old Man* Wait a moment. *(enters his hut. You hear some mumbling conversation from inside.)*

*Anna* What are they thinking about us?

*Victor* Obviously the worst.

*Anna* But it was I who frightened them, not you.

*Victor* Yes. Apparently the fact that you are my wife makes extenuating circumstances.

*Old Man (coming out with his fear-stricken wife)* Forgive us. You are welcome. So you are husband and wife from abroad?

*Victor* Yes. We came up from the valley. We are married.

*Old Man* We believe you. *(cries to the village)* The coast is clear! They come from below! *(You hear shuts and bolts being opened again, and people coming out.)* We must be careful. What can we do for you?

*Victor* We have been walking all day, and it is getting late. Would it be possible to spend the night here? We could sleep on the floor. We have our food and sleeping-bags.

*Old man* And we have goat milk and delicious goat cheese, which we would like to offer. Yes, there is plenty of room for you inside. No problem. When do you intend to go on?

*Victor* Tomorrow.

*Old man* Up the mountain?

*Victor* Yes.

*Old man* We would like to send someone to follow you, but no one wants to go in that direction. Your wife could stay with us in the meantime. We will take well care of her.

*Anna* I and Victor go together.

*Old man (with doubts)* That would not be very wise. It could be dangerous for you up there, my lady.

*Anna* Why?

*Old man (still dubitatively)* It's dangerous for women and girls.

*Anna* But it looks easy enough. I saw no precipices on the way.

*Old man* That's not the danger. A child could go that way. The danger is something completely different.

*Victor* What is it?

*Old man (almost whispers)* The holy ones.

*Victor* What kind of holy ones? Are you superstitious or afraid of ghosts? Is it spirits or some kind of a sect?

*Old man (worried, looking from one to the other)* You can safely go up the Monte Verità, Sir, but not your wife. They can take her. Here in the village we are very much afraid of them, for a number of girls have disappeared up there and never come back.

*Victor* What kind of nonsense is that?

*Anna* It's not nonsense, Victor. This is serious. *(to the old man)* I have heard about a monastery up there. Is there some sacred order?

*Old man* Yes, but no one knows anything about it, for no one comes back alive from there.

*Anna* Except men and old men.

*Old man* Yes, but they are never let in.

*Victor* Very mysterious.

*Old man* I advise you to go to bed and take it easy and sleep on the matter. Hopefully you have second thoughts tomorrow. Look, it's already getting dark.

*Anna* Let's follow our old friend's advice, Victor. I long for that hot milk.

*Victor* And the cheese.

*Anna* Yes.

*Old man (opens his cottage)* Help yourselves, please. *(They go inside. It gets dark.)*

*(Back to the hospital scene.)*

*Victor* We slept well all night. It was the clearest and purest air in the world. When I woke up in the morning completely rested and restored, the weather was perfect and ideal again. We couldn't have had a better day for climbing mountains. When I turned around to see if Anna was awake she wasn't there. Her sleeping-bag was empty. She was gone. *(dries a tear)*

I went out from the hut. She was nowhere. She had even left her eatables behind. She hadn't brought anything with her. And still she had promised me that we would go together. *(starts crying)*

*(Back to the village scene.)*

*Old man (outside, notices something is wrong in the hut)* What's wrong, Sir? Has anything happened during the night? Haven't you slept well? Is anything missing?

*Victor (comes out)* She is gone!

*Old man* Your wife?

*Victor* Yes. Haven't you seen her?  
*Old man (accusing)* I warned you not to let her go alone!  
*Victor* But she went without me! She didn't wake me up! She just left!  
*Old man* You should never have allowed it!  
*Victor* I will catch up with her! Then we will be back at once in the afternoon.  
*Old man* I am afraid it's too late. They have already gone too far.  
*Victor* What do you mean?  
*Old man* If she once has left for sure and reaches the monastery, then she will never come back again.  
*Victor (upset)* What do you mean?  
*Old man* What I say.  
*Victor* What nonsense is that? What kind of an infernal monastery is that? Are they kidnapping people in the middle of the day?  
*Old man* It's worse than that. My own daughter disappeared that way more than thirty years ago. No one has seen her since. Every now and then some new virgin or lady is assumed in their order, and they have never come back.  
*Victor* What kind of a weird order is that?  
*Old man* It's a powerful order that belongs to the Moon. They get their power from the moon, and they are at their most powerful under the full moon. The moon happened to be full this night.  
*Victor* So they cultivate some kind of a moonstruck lunacy?  
*Old man* No, it's worse than that. It's all about power. They have always existed, no one knows how long, and now and then vague rumours come out that they are ruling the whole world by its destinies...  
*Victor* I must go there and get back my wife.  
*Old man* Let me send a boy with you. He will not go all the way, but he can show you the whole way.  
*Victor* As long as I get there the soonest possible... I can't afford to lose more time on nonsense! I came here for some sport with my wife, not to waste time on arguing with kidbappers from a lawless monastery!  
*(The old man looks at him with compassion and follows him out with a gesture of resignation.*

*Back to the hospital.)*

*Victor* They all stared at us when we left the village. I could feel the eyes of the goatherds and their old wives on me from behind bushes and through fences. And the boy who led me on the way did it most reluctantly.

The way up was a hard climb. It was stony and steep, and I cursed the whole situation. Everything would have been easy if only she had been with me. Now it only felt awkward and ridiculous to have to chase her.

We reached above the clouds, and for the first time far above us we saw the double top. The mountain has two peaks, which are not seen from the ground. The cloven top is sharp and spectacular, a natural wonder, and you can't understand how the mountain could have been shaped in that way. My young guide pointed at the

top and said: "Monte Verità! Monte Verità!" And then he ran back as fast as he could back to his village and left me all alone.

I continued walking up no matter how difficult it was. Soon I would not be able to go on any longer, for the mountain was bare and steeper all the time. Finally I was only some hundred meters from the tops. Then I saw it. Exactly between the two peaks there was a monastery. It could have been immeasurably old. To reach it you had to walk across a thin ledge with precipices on both sides some hundred meters down. But I came across and reached the monastery.

It was enclosed by walls that were impregnable. I found no entrance, no gate, no opening, no nothing. And the entire ancient monastery seemed completely abandoned and dead. There was no sign of life.

*Harry* It's getting more and more weird.

*Victor* Yes. There was nothing I could do. So I sat down and waited. I waited the whole day. Nothing happened. I consumed my eatables. The sun blinded me and fried me. I waited for the sake of Anna. But no Anna appeared. But I refused to give up. I refused to accept that Anna was lost.

I sat there all night. You know how it is way up in the mountains several thousand meters up in the middle of the night. It is the ultimate terror. I was almost dead in the morning. Then I went back to the village. Or else I would not have survived.

*Harry* What did they say in the village?

*(Back to the village scene.)*

*Old man* I see him now. He is coming back.

*His wife* Then at least he is alive.

*Old man* Bu the is a lost man.

*(Victor appears.)*

Well?

*Victor* Is she here?

*Old man* Who?

*Victor* My wife!

*Old man* No. We are sorry.

*Victor (exhausted)* I waited by the monastery all day yesterday. I waited all night. No life. Nothing. No one has been in that monastery for thousands of years. She must have gone down.

*Old man* No. She is in there.

*Victor* There is no one in there! No one can live in there! There is nothing but frost and darkness and death! The monastery is deserted! It is dead!

*Old man* No. They just keep away from visitors. They are unavailable. It's always the same thing when someone disappears. Everybody think they are dead, but there has never been found a single corpse. No one has ever gone down. They are all in there. But only children can see them.

*Victor* Children?

*Old man* Yes. Children sometimes lose their way up there. *(to his wife)* Get little Dorothea. *(The wife fetches a young girl.)* Tell our guest whom you met at the monastery.

*Girl* We had lost our way. Then we went to the monastery for help. The most beautiful lady in the world came out and talked with us. She was dressed all in white and as beautiful as an angel. We asked if we could enter, but she said we had to wait until we reached thirteen. Then we would be welcome inside.

*Victor* Nonsense. The girl is imagining things.

*Old man* Show us the necklace you had, Dorothea.

*Dorothea (shows a necklace she is carrying under the collar)* Look!

*Victor (examines the necklace)* You have made that yourselves.

*Old man* We can't make such artifice. We are only goatherds here. Look how well shaped and sculptural the stones are, as if they were formed by a goldsmith. Who could create such a piece of work? No one here in the province. They come from Monte Verità.

*Victor* I will go to the bottom of this! I don't give up that easily! If there is anyone in the monastery they must open to me! They can't treat me in this manner!

*Old man (sighs)* You are not the first one. I have myself spent weeks there waiting outside for my daughter. One man sat there for three months without any result. They are too secretive to be able to expose themselves to mortals, except to children.

*Victor* I will go back there! May I stay another night?

*Old man* You are welcome. The hut is yours for as long as you please.

*Victor* Thank you. I had better have something to eat. *(follows the old man into the hut)*

*(Back to the hospital scene.)*

*Victor* I refused to accept and believe it. I tried other ways to the monastery. It was as the old man had said. There was only one way there, and that was across the ledge over the abyss. I went back. I lay waiting again. Nothing happened. I waited another night and almost froze to death once more. I waited the entire following day. The sun scorched me. The time passed to five shortly before dusk. Then suddenly she was there. She appeared on a ledge outside the monastery. I could not reach her, but I could speak with her.

*Anna (appearing high up on a ledge, dressed all in white with her hair cut short)*

Darling Victor, go home. You don't need to worry about me any more.

*Victor* It was so unreal. It was as if a medium or a spirit was speaking with me. But it was quite real. It was she herself.

*Anna* I am all right here, dearest. This is not folly or magic or hypnotism or anything such. They have frightened you down at the village, and that's understandable. But this is stronger than everything else. I must have known always that it existed, and now I have found my home. It took many years, but I am on the safe side now. When men go to monasteries and we women lock ourselves up and become nuns it always hurts in the hearts of relatives, but they will get over it. They

learn to live with it, especially when they understand that the initiated has it good. I only wish for you to understand, Victor.

*Victor* Do you mean that you intend to stay here for the rest of your life, I cried up to her.

*Anna (smiling kindly)* Yes, Victor, there is no other life for me any more. Go home to your own life, take care of your property and marry if you want and get some heirs, since that's what you want. Be happy, and think of me as if I was in paradise. For I would rather throw myself a thousand meters down the abyss below than return to the mundane world from here at Monte Verità.

*Victor* And there was a kind of beaming light about her. I have never seen anything like it before. You know the chapter in the gospel where Jesus is transfigured and appears together with Moses and Elijah. There was something similar about her. She was transfigured. Do you have all that you need? I asked her. Food, clothes, blankets? She just smiled back and said that within the walls she had everything she would ever need. I promised to come back every year and visit her. She said that she no longer would be able to show herself to me. It would be for me like laying flowers on a grave. She wanted to spare me that.

There was dusk, and I didn't see her any more. She had disappeared. The walls of the monastery were closed up again, and there was no life visible any more. It was as if it always had been dead. I had nothing more to do than to stagger back down to the village in despair. I cried like a child all the way. It was my life's first, greatest, only and utterly devastating defeat. I couldn't take it. They then had to carry me down from the village to the valley. From there I was transported to this place. I was completely out of my mind for weeks.

*Harry* No wonder, Victor, with such a trauma. But Anna lives. I believe we will meet her again.

*Victor* Do you?

*Harry* And I will visit you regularly until you are well and discharged as fit for life outside again. Next time you go to Monte Verità I will follow you.

*Victor (patting his hand)* Good old friend! We will settle with that monastery!

*Harry* Sooner or later!

*Victor* I feel stronger already.

*Harry* You will be completely restored, Harry, you will find yourself again and be able to do anything, and we will get up any mountains in the world.

*Victor* I would like to begin with Monte Verità once again.

*Harry* Me too.

Scene 3. The same old restaurant again.

Enter Harry, sitting down at his usual table, reading a paper.

*Harry (to a waiter)* Tea, please. The usual thing. *(The waiter leaves. Soon Rudolph arrives.)*

*Rudolph* Harry! That was ages ago!

*Harry* It always is.

*Rudolph* What news from the big world) (*takes a seat*)

*Harry* The old story. And you are lucky as usual. I will soon go back to America.

*Rudolph* That's what I thought. That's why I had the feeling I had to come and see if you were still here.

*Harry* How are you yourself?

*Rudolph* As usual. You know. (*more intimately*) And how is the patient?

*Harry* He is discharged and on his way to his ordinary life. But he will not remarry. He has transferred his estate to a nephew.

*Rudolph* And how was it really about that wife of his?

*Harry* Yes, that's the question. She is stuck in a monastery way up high in the mountains. She appears to be completely lost to this world. But Victor goes there faithfully once every year and waits patiently outside the monastery until he gets a sign of life. Each time he has to wait for very long. Last time he gave up and left a letter. To his astonishment he had an answer. The answer was delivered in the shape of a stone table with an inscription.

*Rudolph* That's like the ten commandments!

*Harry* Yes, something in that direction. She just communicated that she was fine and that Victor should not worry or trouble himself to come back there any more. The old story. But between ourselves I doubt that she had written it herself. Someone else might very well have etched the message in her place.

*Rudolph* Do you think so?

*Harry* I suspect it.

*Rudolph* So she might be dead or gone?

*Harry* She could be anywhere anyhow.

*Rudolph* Will you probe deeper into the matter?

*Harry* No. I am going to America now. It might take some time before I come back, maybe twenty years or something.

*Rudolph* Will you keep in touch?

*Harry* Of course. With both you and Victor.

*Rudolph* See you, Harry. (*leaves*)

*Harry* He is still in a constant hurry. (*gets his tea and continues reading the paper.*)

Act III scene 1. An inn in the mountains.

(*Enter a villager.*)

*Landlord* Anything new?

*Villager* Good news. Relief has arrived. Everyone is saved.

*A guest* Thank goodness!

*Landlord* That means the news is over. Now there will be nothing more happening in this corner of the world.

*Villager* But you can't have airplane accidents constantly here in the vicinity, Manuel.

*Landlord* No, one was bad enough. Who wants all the attention of the world on yourself for nothing?

*The guest* But it was still some distance from here.

*Villager* But still in the vicinity.

*Landlord* It's the same thing. The main thing is that all the passengers survived. And I sure hope it will never happen again, that an airplane makes an emergency landing here in the mountains.

*Guest* Yes, it's better not to have it.

*Villager* May they navigate better in the future – for the best of all.

*Landlord* May I offer a glass on the house? To celebrate the happy conclusion?

*Villager* You are welcome to.

*Guest* You are always so generous, Manuel.

*Landlord* Towards people I know and trust. Cheers!

*Guest* Bottoms up!

*Villager* Cheers! (*They drink. Enter Harry.*)

*Harry* Can I have a room here?

*Landlord* Of course. Where do you come from?

*Harry* I actually come directly from the plane that crashed. I was one of the passengers.

*Landlord* What are you doing here then? Should't you be on your way out of here like everyone else?

*Harry* I decided to have a look around. I used to be a climber in my younger days, and I felt like trying some of the mountains here around.

*Landlord* It's late for the season.

*Harry* Not too late, I hope?

*Villager* But those are few who come her to climb. We are hardly used to tourists.

*Harry* I hope it will work out well anyway.

*Landlord* What are you after?

*Harry* Monte Verità. (*All are stupefied.*)

*Landlord (recovering)* What did you say?

*Harry* Someone told me that the mountain with a cloven top is called Monte Verità.

*Guest* That's correct. But that's no mountain for climbers.

*Harry* I heard of that mountain before. Two friends of mine used to climb it twenty years ago. If they could, so can I.

*Landlord* You cannot have a guide up there.

*Harry* But there is a village not far from the top, and there is a road there, isn't it?

*Landlord* Yes, to the village, but no further.

*Harry* I could manage on my own from the village to the monastery even without a road. (*They are perplexed again.*)

*Landlord* What is really your business here?

*Harry* I will tell you. For twenty years I have been working in America. Twenty years ago the wife of a good friend of mine disappeared up there. I have never been here myself earlier. But when the flight you are taking happens to crash

with that very mountain within sight, there is some reason with that crash. And I decided now to solve the mystery of Monte Verità, since I happen to be stranded here against my will.

*Villager* You are brave. It's dangerous to go up there.

*Guest* Recently a girl was lost again on her way up there. She had dreamt about Monte Verità and mumbled about it in a dream just before.

*Landlord* The general sentiment is not good here at the moment. There are discussions about going up there, destroy the monastery and disperse the order.

*Harry* So there is an order.

*Villager* Yes, they say so. No one knows for sure.

*Harry* Wouldn't it be worth while to find out about it first?

*Guest* None of us has any clue about what's the matter with that place, for only women are capable of understanding anything about it.

*Harry* And children, I heard.

*Guest* Only girls in that case.

*Villager* That's why it's safe for us men to go up there, for we never find anything. All we find is dead quiet ruins, and that's all what any man can find there. But for women and girls it is mortally dangerous, for they just disappear and are never heard of any more.

*Landlord* So the wisest thing for you to do is to turn back home, stranger. There is nothing you can get out of there. It's not even any tourist attraction. It's just cold hard mountains and stones, dead ruins, ice and snow and an all annihilating scorching sun.

*Harry* I know. I'll take the risk. At least I will reach the village up there.

*Landlord* No one will help you or encourage you.

*Harry* Thank you, I am already enough motivated.

*Landlord* Suit yourself. It's your funeral. Do you wish for something?

*Harry* Thank you, I would love a cup of tea.

*Landlord* We can always fix that. Sugar or milk?

*Harry* Thanks, only milk, please.

*The wife'(s voice from the kitchen)* The milk is finished.

*Landlord* I'll have to get some then.

*Harry* I would be grateful.

*Landlord* I have to go anyway to get some other things. *(leaves)*

*Villager* Good luck, Sir.

*Harry* Thank you.

*Guest* But don't expect anything. *(They leave. Harry is left alone. Enter a girl.)*

*Harry* Whose girl are you?

*Girl* Daddy's.

*Harry* And who is daddy?

*Girl* He who owns the place. Who are you?

*Harry* A tourist. I intend to climb the Monte Verità.

*Girl* It's dangerous.

*Harry* I know. Have you been there?  
*Girl* Certainly not. I was never allowed to leave the valley.  
*Harry* Are you afraid of Monte Verità?  
*Girl* No, but it is a forbidden subject to discuss.  
*Harry* In America nothing is so eagerly discussed as everything that is forbidden.  
*Girl (smiles)*  
*Harry* You must be whispering with other girls about Monte Verità.  
*Girl* Yes, but only quietly. We dare not speak openly about it. Quite recently a friend of mine was to be married. One day she left and didn't come back. We think she went to Monte Verità.  
*Harry* Instead of getting married?  
*Girl* We know nothing about that.  
*Harry* No one saw where she went?  
*Girl* No, since she left in the middle of the night.  
*Harry* Was it a full moon?  
*Girl (tries to remember)* Yes, I think it might have been.  
*Harry* What is attracting people to Monte Verità? Mustn't life there be hard and cruel, cold and inhuman?  
*Girl* Not for those who receive the calling. They remain young forever.  
*Harry* Is that the fascination?  
*Girl* Don't ask me. I know nothing.  
*Harry* So people don't get old up there?  
*Girl* No.  
*Harry* How do you know, if no one has seen them?  
*Girl* That's what they think. That's why they are so hated and feared, for they are envied by all. They are the guardians of the secret of life.  
*Harry* I see. And what about you? Do you feel summoned?  
*Girl (looks down)* No, I am not worthy. You have to mature first, and you might never reach full maturity. *(lowering her voice, and more intensely)* And now there might be trouble. Some from the valley here have gone up to the village to make them join in an attack against the monastery. After the last disappearance, some have become like mad and only feel like destruction.  
*Harry* Yes, men become like that about things they don't understand  
*(Enter the landlord.)*  
*landlord* Now at last you can have your tea.  
*Harry* I am very much obliged to you for that.  
*Landlord (to the girl)* Get out to the kitchen, girl! *(She leaves.)* I hope you haven't discussed Monte Verità with her?  
*Harry* No, but she mentioned something about a lynching sentiment here.  
*Landlord* They are gathering together. I advise you to go home.  
*Harry* Thank you, I will go up to Monte Verità early in the morning and might be gone for some days.  
*Landlord* Then you'll need some rest tonight.

Harry            Yes, I do.  
Landlord        Fortunately there is no full moon. *(leaves to get out into the kitchen)*  
Harry *(alone)* The full moon will always be back sooner or later, my good man, and nothing can stop it from growing to power.  
*(drinks his tea)*

Scene 2. The village.

*(It seems decrepit and partly deserted.)*

*Some cottages have collapsed, and others are obviously sealed and deserted.*

*Enter a boy, goes to a hut, knocks and opens, makes eager signs about someone coming.*

*Out from the hut appears a middle-aged half idiot. Both stare at the point from which Harry gradually enters with his walking staff.)*

boy            Are you the doctor who was expected?  
Harry        I am no doctor. I am a stranger looking for a place to sleep. Could I stay here for the night?  
Boy            We have a very sick person here. We don't know what to do with him. They promised to send a doctor from the valley. Haven't you seen anyone?  
Harry        I am sorry. I started early this morning, and I haven't seen anyone else the whole day. Who is the patient? Is it a child?  
The older     No, we have no children here.  
Harry        All I have is a bit of aspirin and first aid. Could it help?  
The older     You had better come and see for yourself.

*(The boy shows the way in. Harry enters.)*

*The scene changes to inside the hut.*

*A man lies outstretched in the faint light. Harry bows down to have a look at him.*

*The man opens his eyes and turns his head to Harry. He grasps Harry's hand.)*

Victor *(very much aged)* Harry! Thank God!  
Harry        Victor! Of all people... *(is dumbfounded)*  
Victor *(to the boy and the older man)* This is an old friend of mine. We have known each other since we went to school together! And he happens to turn up at this moment...  
Harry *(has quickly examined Victor)* You are very ill, Victor. How long have you been lying here?  
Victor        Almost five days. I am not so young any more, Harry. I don't course in the mountains like a stonebuck any more. *(coughs a bit but recovers)* But you seem to have managed well. You are almost unchanged. Was your career successful in the states?  
Harry        Somewhat. And as soon as I go home after twenty years I am forced to land here. Why haven't you kept in touch?  
Victor        I slipped my moorings and left off. I have lived like a hermit in a small fishing village. But what's that you have got in your hand?

*Harry* Just aspirin. That's the only thing I have, and it's not what you need. What you need is to quickly come down to the valley. I suggest that I spend the night here with you and that we get down together as soon as possible in the morning.

*Victor* It's no use. I am finished. I know it.

*Harry* Nonsense. You need a real doctor and medical care. You can't get that here.

*Victor* Don't bother about me. Someone else here is more important.

*Harry* Who?

*Victor* She is still here at the monastery. Every year I returned here on the same day and left a letter for her, and she always answered with a short stone table but never showed up.

*Harry* Every year for twenty years?

*Victor* Yes. I love her. How then could I let her down? It's almost obligatory that I always must be faithful to her. I have saved all her small stone tables. I have researched her order. It's an ancient sect since before Christianity. It has always existed and had its sanctuaries in the mountains as remote as possible and preferably by the most inaccessible and most forbidding peaks as high up as possible. In ancient times all mountain people were in touch with each other, and this monastery is perhaps the only remnant of maybe the world's original and most ancient culture.

*Harry* Is it a sort of a moon cult?

*Victor* Yes, it is. The full moon gives them eternal youth and eternal life under the right discipline. The ancient druids and Celts knew the same culture.

*Harry* So you believe yourself in the possibility of this Shangri-La?

*Victor* All children around here do as well, that is, those few who are left. Now the thirst is burning again. *(reaches for a vessel of water)*

*Harry* These aspirin tablets will only help you if you have a fever, and they can also help you to sleep. Do you want some?

*Victor* I could try them. *(takes a few and swallows them with the water)*

*Harry* Are there no women around here?

*Victor* No, they all left with the children. I think there are only about twenty people left in the village.

*Harry* Why did they leave?

*Victor* There is something strange going on. They left just before I reached here. But these two boys will take well care of you. The older one is the son of the old man I used to know who lived here, and the younger one helps him. *(coughs terribly)*

*Harry* You had better try to get some sleep, Victor. I will not strain you any more.

*Victor* Are you staying here tonight?

*Harry* I will lie here next to you.

*Victor* Then I will be safe and have a sound sleep. *(turns around and falls asleep.)*

*Boy (to Harry)* Can he get better?

*Harry* Yes, I think so, if only I get some help in carrying him down to a doctor in the village.

*Boy* I will help you and get two others. But we must leave tomorrow. Later it might be difficult.

*Harry* Why?

*Boy* People are coming up here from the valley the day after tomorrow, and I and my friend will go with them.

*Harry* Where? What will you do?

*Boy (avoiding the question)* I don't know. *(runs out)*

*Victor* What did the boy say?

*Harry* He is expecting some expedition the day after tomorrow.

*Victor (turns right)* No expedition ever comes here. There is something wicked going on. I don't like it.

*Harry* In the valley I heard about a girl who had disappeared.

*Victor* That's it then. They are angry. They want revenge. They want to attack the monastery and maybe destroy it. You must go there tomorrow, Harry, and warn them. You must warn Anna.

*Harry (at a loss)* How could I do that?

*Victor* I will draw a map for you. Then you must leave a letter. I will write a letter to her also. It's strange that you should come here at this moment. It must be Anna who with her power brought you here.

*Harry* Or my mountain sickness.

*Victor* Isn't that the same thing? – Then you shall leave the letter in the wall where there is an aperture. Then you must leave and wait. After two or three hours you can go back, and then there will be an answer. I shall write in my letter that you have turned up. It's possible that she might wish to talk with you personally.

*Harry* Don't exert yourself, Victor. The best thing for you would be to sleep.

*Victor* Do you think I could sleep with something incomplete about me when I can save lives? You must start immediately as the light comes, so that you have time enough of the day up there. Be prepared for a long wait. *(writes a letter in haste)* She knows how much I love her. Therefore my letters are always well received. But they must be warned in time for the great danger. Here is the letter. *(hands it over)* May all possible good powers be with you tomorrow.

*Harry* And with you.

*Victor* A human life like mine means nothing. It is the idea and the culture and the eternal life that must be saved.

*Harry* Your faith and fidelity is heart-rending, Victor. She left you for a sect. You had no obligation or reason to remain faithful to her.

*Victor* But I loved her. And even if it is a sect, doesn't it have a right to survive? She has her right to give her life for the sect if she wants to, and I have the right to give my life for her if I wish to. And if I give my life for her, perhaps I might save her sect and the world's oldest living cultural tradition. Perhaps they carry the destiny of the world in their hands? In that case maybe I might save the world! We don't know.

*Harry* Very well, Victor. I will take your letter tomorrow, go there and do my best, if only you will go to sleep now.

*Victor* I will try, Harry.

*Harry* You can take it easy. In one way or another, I will succeed tomorrow thanks to you.

*Victor* Thank you, Harry. *(turns around again and falls asleep)*

*Harry (reads the letter)* My own eternally beloved... I have never loved you more than now. Farewell, dearest beloved... Why does sentimentality always become so ridiculous when it is true, when it actually is so beautiful?

*(starts preparing himself for the night. The light is put out.)*

#### Act IV scene 1.

*Darkness.*

*(Finally you hear Harry in the darkness panting and groaning in his exertion.)*

*Harry (without being visible)* Accursed clouds! That's the worst thing you can encounter in the mountains: clouds and fogs! Damn this freezing cold! All you need now is minus temperatures! And I can't return, for I can't see a bloody thing! *(lights a cigarette. Minimal spotlight on him.)* I must be close to the peaks now. But all this damned day has been wasted on erring around in the fog! And now the night is coming, and I can't turn down. Well, let's sit down here then and start freezing through the night! *(sits down shivering, but rises soon again)* But that's the worst thing you can do. But wait, wasn't there to be a full moon tonight? Then perhaps the clouds will disperse. Up in the mountains it's never cloudy with a full moon. *(Gradually the full moon appears. A spooky bluish light is spread over the stage. Fantastic silhouettes of mountains gradually appear.)* I am here! I have reached it! I can see the twin peaks! How is it possible for a mountain to be so beautiful? I am lucky in spite of all, but this is more magic than skill. *(moves closer to the mountain. The monastery appears. Then suddenly figures dressed in white appear everywhere above him, their hairs cut short and with their eyes to the moon, to which they raise their arms.)*

*Chorus* O Moon, the innermost being of womanhood, you light shining in the darkness, give us the life that humanity denies and refuses to believe to be eternal!

*Chorus leader* Sisters, lift your hearts to the light that shines in darkness, and open your souls to the truth and light of eternal life!

*Chorus* We are open forever to the mystery of light that always conquers darkness!

*Chorus leader* Hail thee, divine light, that shines over good and evil, but which only the good are capable of absorbing, preserving and increasing!

*Chorus* Against the divine light all human follies and weakness vanish, and only wisdom and eternity free from all darkness will remain.

*Chorus leader* Beam over the world! Replenish humankind with your light! Expand life in all nature, and bestow health and well-being on all that lives!

*Chorus* Only the light is alive, for darkness is a lie, and death is like the night just a passing sleeping moment.

*Chorus leader* Enlighten all living minds with your wisdom, and let it come to all those who know what is right and practise it!

*Chorus* May the world be lead away from the darkness of destruction and barbarity to the light of reason and the eternal wisdom and expansion of constructive effort!

*Chorus leader* Disseminate life! May all beings born be sacred!

*Chorus* May death be dead and only life be alive!

*Chorus leader* Sisters, join in the hymn!

*(Female chorus singing without words and without melody and rhythm but extremely harmonic.)*

*Harry* Strange vibrations are awakened to life in my heart at this euphoric voice. Haven't I heard that high priestess' voice before?

*Chorus leader* Sisters, we have a guest among us. Let me speak with him.

*(The entire chorus vanishes. Only the chorus leader remains and turns to Harry.)*

*Chorus leader* It took a long time for you to reach here, Harry.

*Harry* Anna! It's you!

*Anna* Twenty-six years have passed, Harry, but it's still me.

*Harry (overwhelmed)* This is too much! *(falls on his knees)*

*Anna* No, it's too little. Rise up, Harry. The mountain is too hard for your delicate knees. Why did it take you so long?

*Harry (rising, shaking)* I had so much to do...

*Anna* Nonsense! You had sealed your soul and closed up your mind. That's why I never achieved any contact with you, no matter how hard I tried. You were locked up in your career.

*Harry* Do you mean to say that it was you who got me here at last?

*Anna* I knew you would come sooner or later.

*Harry* Victor is lying dying in a hut down in the village.

*Anna* I know. He has been there for a week.

*Harry* And you will not go down and visit him?

*Anna* Our only duty to life is to follow nature. Victor only follows the course of nature, and I cannot alter that course.

*Harry* He still loves you.

*Anna* I know. But you were the one among you who understood me. I knew that we were looking for the same thing.

*Harry* But only you dared to walk the whole way. I was always a coward. If I had followed you the first time you went down here to Monte Verità, you would never have gone up alone on the mountain. I would have kept you from it or followed you.

*Anna* Why didn't you follow me then? In your incredulity you preferred to neither follow men nor detain me.

*Harry* I didn't want to come between you and Victor.

*Anna* But now you have followed me, and Victor lies dying. What will you do now? Detain me or follow me?

*Harry* I came here to warn you. The villagers are angry because a girl vanished up here again. They will come here tomorrow and maybe ruin your monastery and your life.

*Anna* We know. Nothing is new under the moon. It has happened many times before. (*calls*) Magda! Come! (*A girl in white comes up to Anna. She still has her long hair.*) You know the conditions, my child. You may still return to the village and your wedding. Do you want to go back or stay up here on Monte Verità?

*Girl* I want to stay here and become one of you.

*Anna* Your will is your law. No one can oppose it. So be then liberated from all your womanly duties. (*Anna swiftly cuts Magda's hair, who is bobbed.*) Now you are one of us as long as you please.

*Girl* May it be forever.

*Anna* Your will is your law. Be it as you will. (*embraces Magda and sends her smiling away.*)

*Harry* You seem to be very happy here.

*Anna* We are in harmony with nature. That's all.

*Harry* But why only women?

*Anna* Women respect life. Only women give birth to life. Men represent death. They only suffer, and most of all they suffer from their desire, which they will do anything to satisfy and quench, and the only way for them to satisfactorily quench it is to violate us women. A coitus is death to us, but we overcome the death's violation by the creation of life. We are all virgins up here, and therefore we can maintain and sustain eternal life. That's why virgins always were worshipped, from Artemis and Athena to the holy virgin mother, for instinctively men have always felt that the innermost inviolability of life was always inherent in virginity. Nobody can violate us even if they try.

*Harry* And you really live forever?

*Anna* Believe it if you want. We don't ask of mortal men to believe the impossible. But at least our continuity is as eternal and inviolable as life itself.

*Harry (humbly)* May I stay here with you?

*Anna* No, my friend, you must return to the mortals. Stay with Victor in his difficult passing moment. When he leaves his earthal life he will see everything clearly and unite with me if he wants to. But your mission is among the mortals. Be our Orpheus and return to the mortal world of the blind alley and sing for them about us and Monte Verità, so that they might return to life.

*Harry* There is another Monte Verità in southern Switzerland close to Ascona...

*Anna* A distant offspring. We are everywhere. Don't worry about us. Let the villagers come and destroy our monastery if they think it's funny. Such matters won't touch us. We will always come back and remain present. Look, dawn is on its way. Your place is now with Victor and the mortals. Farewell, my friend. And thanks for coming here at last. (*Anna disappears.*)

*Harry* Was it true or was it a dream? A night hallucination alone up in the mountains in the vicinity of death? No, we are on Monte Verità, the mountain of truth, and there are no lies here. Here is only bare life in its most naked truth. Anna is right. I must go down to Victor. (*leaves in the increasing daylight, but the sun hasn't risen yet: the magic of the full moon still hangs on.*)

Act V scene 1. The hut.  
*The older man with the dying Victor.*

*Victor* He has been gone now for a long time.  
*Old man* We think he is on his way here now. There is a wanderer coming down the mountain.  
*Victor* Then it's him. He made it.  
*Boy (enters)* He is on his way back! He is here!  
*Victor* Yes, I heard. He is just in time. Have all the villagers arrived?  
*Boy* Several hundreds of them armed with rifles and dogs have come up from the valley. They are impatient to get to the monastery.  
*Victor* Ask them to wait until I am dead after I have talked with my friend.  
*(The boy leaves. Enter Harry.)*  
*Harry* Victor! They told me you were already dead.  
*Victor* I waited for you, my boy. I usually stick to my word.  
*Harry (sits down on the floor close to him)* She is all right, and everything is well up there. She tells you not to worry.  
*Victor* That's her constant communication. Were you allowed to see her?  
*Harry* Yes.  
*Victor* It's too late for jealousy now. *(enter the boy)*  
*Boy* They only wait for your word.  
*Victor* Ask their leader to come in to me. *(The boy leaves.)*  
*Harry* What will you say to him?  
*Victor* Exactly as it is. All you have to do is to confirm.  
*(enter the boy with the landlord)*  
*Landlord* Is the coast clear? The men are impatient.  
*Victor* My friend, ask them not to get excited for nothing. For twenty-six years I have gone up there to the monastery of Monte Verità. I don't know how many nights I have spent up there in strenuous efforts to freeze to death without succeeding. There is only ice and chill and a cold naked mountain. That's all of Monte Verità. There is nothing. The old monastery ruin is dead and has always been dead. During my twenty-six yearly visits I have never seen the faintest trace of life there. My friend here has just come down from there and may confirm that what I say is true. Isn't it, Harry?  
*Harry* Yes.  
*Victor* So you had better not make any bother in vain but go back home before any of you maybe slips and falls down a slope or happens to an avalanche. Mountains are to be respected. They are not to be trifled with.  
*Landlord (to Harry)* You have just been up there? And everything was dead? You found nothing but dead ruins?  
*Harry* Yes.  
*Landlord* I will talk to the men. It's unnecessary to do anything stupid. *(exit)*  
*Victor (to Harry)* Nothing can be so much alive as dead ruins.

*Harry* I believe you might have learned a great deal from Anna and Monte Verità.  
*Victor* At least I finally acquired the proper respect for the mountains.  
*Boy (enters)* The villagers are leaving! They dare not go up the mountain!  
*Victor* Have I saved her, Harry?  
*Harry* It looks like it. And many others with her – perhaps eternity itself.  
*Victor* Then I can die in peace. I never knew her, Harry.  
*Harry* I know. Neither did I.  
*Victor* But we both loved her.  
*Harry* To both of us she was the only woman in the world.  
*Victor* Thanks, Harry. (*grasps his hand. Harry accepts it.*)  
*Harry* Always at your service, Victor. (*Victor is dead.*) Victor! Victor! (*beats his hand, tries to recall him to life, but it doesn't work.*)  
*Old man (coming forth, beholds the dead man's eyes, closes them)* He is dead.  
*Harry* Monte Verità has claimed its first and last victim. He died for its truth by lying about it.  
*Old man* But no one besides us know about it.  
*Harry* Can we keep it between ourselves? (*Both put a finger to their mouths. The boy shares it. They shake hands in quiet agreement.*)  
*Old man* Will you go up to Monte Verità again?  
*Harry* No, I will leave it in peace and make sure that the world does the same. My life is among the mortals.  
*Old man (shakes his hand)* Welcome back anyway and any time when you feel like it.

*Curtain.*

(Virhamn, 11-14.6.2000,  
English translation  
7-11.10.2019)