

# **Chaste**

an awful comedy

by Ken Prestininzi

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New Dramatists

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**Characters\*:**

Lulu Salomé, 22

Paul Rée 38

NeNe Nietzsche, aka Friedrich, 39

Elisabeth Nietzsche, 35

*(\*these characters may call up and distort other similarly named historic persons)*

**Setting:**

Three chaste beds and one sacred mountain, most likely in Germanic Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The house that contains the three beds is one that can exist in a Grimm's fairytale. It is a house for emotionally and intellectually hungry beasts. These hungry beasts are known to consume excruciating impossible books that speak acutely and rapturously about Woman's Sex, Man's Entrapment, and the Death of Whoever-He-Is.

**Production note:**

Scenes should open out of previous ones like a pop-up book. There should be no transitions of moving furniture or waiting between scenes. It is suggested that the play not use any actual furniture but be played on a multiple-use stage of ladders, platforms, rakes, ramps, steps and trapdoors at askew angles to each other. A bed can be a raked platform. The mirror can be placed on the floor. The door to the bedroom can be a trapdoor set in a raised platform, etc.

The characters should be very energized by their language and each other. Wrestling with and over words, props and each other is encouraged.

## ACT ONE

*A triptych:*

*A man (Paul Rée, 38) sleeps in a longshirt in a bed covered in large opened books. The books spill over the man and onto the floor. He has been reading in bed. The books seem to be alive as he moves in his sleep beneath them.*

*A young woman (Lulu Salomé, 22) sits in her bedclothes. She reads a letter. She seethes as she reads.*

*A second man (NeNe Nietzsche, 39) sits at a writing desk.*

*As the other two stir through dreaming and reading, he wills thoughts to come to him that will force him to write. He is fixed in his focus until he sets pen to paper and writes. The violence begins. He thinks faster than he can write and this drives him mad. Papers fly about him, like gulls greeting a ghost ship about to hit the rocks.*

LULU

I AM NOT RIDICULOUS.

*The two men feel a disturbance.*

*The writing man stops mid-sentence, pen in air.*

*The sleeping man wakes, books fall off the bed.*

*They wait. The writing man goes back to writing.*

*The woman opens her closet and quickly dresses, all the while keeping the letter in her hand. She strides about the stage until, uninvited, she enters the room that contains the man in the bed.*

*Paul is startled by her entrance. He instinctively checks and covers his crotch, for he knows he often gets aroused while reading great philosophy in bed, and learned to hide his erections ever since he was a child.*

PAUL

I'm not dressed.

LU

I'm not ridiculous.

*A fully dressed Elisabeth, Friedrich's sister and caretaker, enters Friedrich's area and immediately tries to collect the scattered papers.*

*Paul attempts to put on pants.*

ELISABETH

Did you number the pages at least?

NENE

Pagination? Pagination! Get out. What's pagination to me?

LU

You wrote my mother without telling me?

PAUL

You said she threatened to send your brothers after you and carry you back to Russia.

LU

You wrote her that you were marrying me?

PAUL

Turn around, let me put on my pants and I'll explain.

LU

I will not turn around.

NENE

Stop. Don't touch one sheet. Out, out, let me think...

*Elisabeth exits.*

PAUL

I'm embarrassed.

LU

You wrote my mother. The enemy.

PAUL

Yes. I knew if I told her we're engaged, she wouldn't object to our living in the same rooms...

LU

You wrote my mother. You've made a mockery of everything I told her we believe.

*In his own world, Friedrich stops scribbling:*

NENE

SOUP!

PAUL

How else will we stop her sending your brothers after you?

LU

She's been sending my brothers after me all my life. I'm not back in Russia with them am I? Am I?

PAUL

Ljola.

LU

O, she's laughing at me now - and all my ideas. Traitor. See what she writes: "You are lucky the sensible and accomplished Dr. Paul Rée is there to stop you from appearing so ridiculous." And here: "ridiculous." And here: "To continue thinking like a little girl at your age is simply to be ridiculous." And here: "Goldilocks herself was never so..."

PAUL

She writes I'm accomplished?

LU

"...RIDICULOUS living in a home that houses three wild bears. No man, learned or no, wants a girl to live with him as his chaste equal. Your habit of reading books with thoughts beyond your ken has done you more harm than good and has led you to imagine that being RIDICULOUS is synonymous with being a free thinker. Yes, you are free to be ridiculous, but if you think I will fund my virgin daughter to live openly with old lechers, learned men though they may be, you are not only being ridiculous but monstrous. Be free. Be a monster. I am free to take action and cut off your allowance."

PAUL

She didn't.

LU

"You are fortunate your fiancé has been good enough to write and to come to your rescue."

PAUL

Ah. See? It's good I wrote her...

LU

"The profoundly considerate Dr. Paul Rée has assured me that your wild girlish stupidity is simply a mask to disguise the happiness of your secret engagement."

My wild girlish stupidity?

PAUL

I never wrote about your wild stupidity. Your girlishness, maybe. Yes, I may have mentioned your naiveté, but I never mocked your – our - ideals. And all worked out for the best. You get to keep your allowance and stay here with me. Hansel and Gretel outsmart everyone!

LU

You don't take me seriously. You wrote my mother. You have no idea the damage you've done.

*Elisabeth brings Friedrich soup.  
She sets it before him.  
He goes to spoon it, but she remains.  
He gives her a look. She exits.  
He spoons his soup.*

LU

When is our marriage to take place?

PAUL

It's not such a horrid idea. It would solve a lot of the awkwardness of our situation, the appearance of a man and a young woman living together...

*Lulu takes off her shoe and throws it at him.  
She takes off the other, but holds on to it, and hits him with it.*

LU

You agree with her! You don't believe a man and a woman can live together as intellectual companions!

PAUL

No, no, no, no, no - ow ow ow ow ow.

LU

She's laughing at me! I can hear her!

PAUL

Ow ow ow. Stop. She's your mother.

LU

She's my mother and she has no faith in me! She thinks I'm a wild stupid girl? Do you?

PAUL

Do I? Don't be...

LU

Am I your equal, Paul?

PAUL

You surpass me.

LU

Are my dreams “wild girlish stupidity?”

PAUL

Stop. You’re being...

LU

Ridiculous?

PAUL

Histrionic.

LU

That’s my mother in me! Drama and emotions. Once, in church, when I told her I wanted a religious mass where I could examine my personal sacredness, not God’s, she stood up and rebuked me in a voice so loud that it silenced the choir: “DON’T BE RIDICULOUS.”

*Paul laughs.  
She puts on her shoes.*

NENE

You call this soup?

LU

I swore never to live in servitude to anyone’s judgment again.

NENE

THIS ISN’T FIT TO POUR ON A DEAD MAN’S GRAVE!

PAUL

I apologize. I...I was only...don’t go.

*Elisabeth enters and takes his bowl away without comment.*

*Paul puts Lu’s shoes on for her.*

PAUL

I thought if we bowed to her need for a little propriety; what was I thinking? I’m a coward...forgive me. I won’t write Mother ever again. Forgive me.

LU

We must destroy this weak need for capitulation that lives inside you, Dr. Paul Rée.

PAUL

Seven brothers sent from Russia would easily overpower me. You're right, I must be brave. I will be.

LU

I will never marry you or anyone. ESPECIALLY ANYONE WHO WRITES MY MOTHER WITHOUT ASKING FOR PERMISSION. I would rather be ridiculous than weak. That decides it. I see what we need to do. We must add a third to our living arrangement. Otherwise, I'll have to leave.

PAUL

I was wrong to write your mother, I know...

LU

I forgive you. I know I must be the brave one of us two.

*She kisses him on the crown of his head.*

NENE

SOUP.

LU

Paul, imagine how much more we could be if we were three. A trinity devoted to a life of the mind. A great mind. A mind greater than ours alone.

*She puts her hand in his. She kisses his palms.*

We could ask him. For our trinity.

PAUL

I knew it. No.

NENE

MEDICINE.

LU

Yes. Think of it. Creator, Preserver, Destroyer. A holy three.

PAUL

No. Not him.



LU

We must demand the best of each other. That is the only basis for love and true kindness. Is there anyone else who could be as demanding? You know I'm right. You know it's destiny.

PAUL

He's my friend. I know him. He'll want you all to himself and there will be nothing left for me.

LU

Trust me. I'm right.

PAUL

You're twenty-two. Friedrich and I are men near forty. You've no experience, you've no understanding how men behave.

LU

My father, my seven brothers, and the priest who once dared to propose marriage to me. Not one was a match for me. Men underestimate women. Don't do that with me. You promised you never would.

PAUL

Do you love me?

LU

I was very happy to be in love with God once. When I was a little girl. Let me tell you why. Because I knew God existed only for me, wholly for me. And no one else knew that about Him. And I deserved him all to myself. But then I suspected God was unfaithful to me, that he wasn't saving up the bread of his omniscience all for me, but was happy to tear it into little pieces for all the other cooing pigeons at his feet, and I swore never to speak to him again. Do you think that's wicked and egotistical for a little girl? I wrote a little letter telling him that we were through and that if he ever tried to call on me again I would hit him on the head and stick pins in all his son's wounds.

PAUL

Let's go get coffee.

*Friedrich starts looking for something he has written among his papers.*

LU

I took my beautiful penmanship to the church and handed it to the priest, who I expected to denounce me to everyone right then and there. But he read the letter and smiled and kissed my little fingertips for writing such a bold letter to God. And that priest became my second love.

NENE

Where the devil did it go? DID YOU TAKE IT?

LU

I went to my priest every afternoon after that to study theology. And being a man, he misunderstood. When I said I wanted to enlarge my world, to free my soul, he assumed his hand in marriage would do the trick. When will you men learn that for a rational girl you are a path, not a goal?

PAUL

You left him crippled, I suspect.

NENE

ELSPETH!

*Elisabeth enters.*

LU

On his knees, he begged me to stay. A grown man, leader of a congregation, sobbing he needed me to be his little bird. But I had already bought my train tickets to Europe.

ELISABETH

What is it?

*She gathers up his papers.*

PAUL

Of course, you didn't tell him his mistake until you had tickets in your hand.

LU

Don't insult me. I know, I know, I insult you every day. You know I don't mean to. You're so good and patient with me. Who else could forgive me so much? You forgive me all my excess, all my mistakes. It's wrong of you. But I love you for it.

PAUL

Of course, I'm to blame for any wrong you do.

LU

You can take a mistake into the palm of your hand, caress it, give it a kiss, and naughty skin and bones becomes a fluttering dove.

*Elisabeth hands Friedrich's papers to him and exits.*

PAUL

He won't say yes. He'll laugh at me. Us.

LU

Let me ask him then. No revolutionary can refuse such a proposition. If he refuses, he'd have to bury his head like an ostrich. He'd no longer belong to the new world order, the great soul waiting for us in the future.

PAUL

Is that what you are?

LU

What we will be. A trinity.

PAUL

We three?

LU

Imagine it, Paul. You know you want to. Be brave. His answer will be yes.

PAUL

He may hate living with his sister. You may get your dream.

NENE

Where is she?

*Friedrich exits, looking for his sister.*

LU

Write him. You wrote my mother, now him. Penance.

*He lets her look him in the eyes. He relents.*

*She kisses him all over his hands and on the crown of his head.*

We will be three. We will be three. Yes, yes, yes!

*She kisses and kisses him*

*He moves to kiss her on the lips.*

Bad. Behave. Write him. Where shall you introduce me to him? It must be somewhere that will make us believe in everything. Away from everything small and judgmental. Outdoors. On a mountain. Write him today.

## INTERLUDE

*Church bells ring from faraway and then surround us and get very loud.*

*The room disappears and Mount Sacro appears.*

*The sun breaks through the clouds. Bluebell flowers drop from the sky.*

*Lu swoops up a bunch of the flowers and runs up the mountainside and is gone. Paul stares after her. Lost.*

## SCENE TWO

*Elisabeth Nietzsche, 35, runs around in a panic on the outskirts, shouting:*

ELISABETH

NeNe! NeNe! Did you fall off a cliff? What's happened to you!

*Paul hides from her in his jacket as he sits. She passes him. He exits in an opposite direction.*

*Friedrich Nietzsche enters, handsome and groomed, almost a different man from the one we saw sitting at the desk with papers and soup. He gathers up some of the scattered papers, but ends up scooping up some of the flowers. Lu enters and runs away, in the way girls run so that men or boys will run after them. Nietzsche scrambles to follow.*

*A beat.*

*Paul enters, with picnic basket and books.*

PAUL

Lu! Lulu! Lulu Saloméééé!

ELISABETH

Nene! Nene!

*Time passes.*

*Lu walks down the mountain and enters. She is carrying blue flowers.*

PAUL

Where have you been? You left me with his sister for over two hours.

LU

I was gone for a half hour, no more.

PAUL  
Over two hours. Did you get lost? What were you doing?

LU  
Picking flowers.

PAUL  
For two house?

LU  
I don't know. Here.

PAUL  
Where is he? What's wrong with you?

LU  
I left him there. He was in...thought. Here.

PAUL  
I don't want your flowers. Where's Friedrich?

LU  
I don't know. Lost. Found. Somewhere on Mount Sacro, I don't know.

PAUL  
Did he give you these?

LU  
I love their deep profound blue.

PAUL  
What took so long?

LU  
Were we gone long? He said yes.

PAUL  
He said...? Why did he say yes to you, but not to me?

LU  
He said yes to us three. The trinity. Not just to me. You don't know how to ask.

PAUL  
He shouldn't have said yes without me.

LU  
When he joins us he can say it again.

PAUL  
Why are you...acting like this?

LU  
How am I acting?

PAUL  
Like a...like a...like you're a schoolgirl and...and you're...

LU  
In love.

PAUL  
What?!

*Paul almost cries.*

LU  
With this mountain. I love you Mount Sacro. This perfect day. I love you, perfect day.  
Us three. I love my part in all of this, don't you?

PAUL  
I haven't played a part.

LU  
Yes. The most essential.

PAUL  
The sister sitter?

LU  
You didn't laugh at me.

PAUL  
People will laugh. They'll talk.

LU  
Yes, people will talk and talk and no one will know what to say. That's the best part.

PAUL  
Why were you gone so long?

LU

It's as if I walked into a dream. Friedrich said to me, "from what stars have we fallen here together?" I knelt before him, and kissed his hands, just as I used to kneel before my father. O, that poor man. I broke his heart.

PAUL

You broke his heart? Already?

LU

My father's. When I left him. I don't think he believed I ever would.

PAUL

Where is Friedrich? I want to hear his yes for myself.

LU

My father would place me on his shoulders, my feet dangling and kicking his chest, so I could look down on my brothers. All seven of them. I was grateful to him for that, even without knowing why I was grateful. But when I had to break free from my father, I broke his heart. But it was to save him, I never knew how to tell him that.

PAUL

Friedrich! FRIEDRICH!

LU

One day picking flowers before school, I was bitten by a stray street dog. I didn't understand what I did to make that dog mean to me. I told no one. I had been forbidden from going off by myself and picking flowers, so I cleaned myself up and told no one. That afternoon my family discovered the same dog foaming at the mouth and had it shot. When I came home they were all seated at the kitchen table telling horror stories of animals and people with rabies and they were laughing as they did their best to scare each other. I realized they were speaking of the dog that bit me. I told no one. If I told anyone, they would have had to cage me away – a rabid girl. But if I kept my fears to myself I could control whether or not the rabies took me. And if I told anyone, I would be sure to lose all control. So, you see, I believed I had to keep away from my father. Because if I did get the rabies, I might bite him and infect him.

PAUL

Did you?

LU

I lived in a state of dread for the next two weeks. My biggest fear was that my father would put me on his knee and I would go mad and tear out his cheek with my teeth. My brothers would try to capture me and bring me to him but I would kick and scream. Finally they stopped trying. I'd watch my father from the stairs, sitting by the fire reading his book. I'd pull back into the shadows if he looked at me. I was determined to protect him. I could see I was hurting him, but I didn't know what else to do. I loved my father more than anything.

PAUL

Did you tell Friedrich your father story? Is that why he said yes?

LU

After a month of this, I decided I had won. I had beat the rabies. But by then my father's heart had been broken. We no longer spoke in that way a father and daughter can - as if they are the only two in the world, almost as if they are lovers. Yes, I told NeNe all of this, and cried horribly in his arms. I had never cried for my father before today. For a great love now lost. I shook and trembled. I miss him more than anyone. More than my mother. I'm thankful. I'm thankful to have known a great love. For that is why I was brought into the world – for that one reason, and only that one – to find and offer great love. He took me in his arms and said, dear child, you have found it again.

*Elisabeth's voice is heard calling:*

ELISABETH

NeNe! NeNe!

*Elisabeth enters. Paul cringes and turns away.*

Where's my brother? We should have started home by now.

LU

Hiking.

ELISABETH

Alone? He could fall. You left him up there alone? He could be dead by now. Doesn't anyone think around here? NeNe!

*Elisabeth exits.*

LU

He's lived with her for how many years?

PAUL

I trusted him to say no.



LU

Did he put these flowers in my hands? He tried to say no. He said there was no happiness he could bring to such a trinity and therefore he had a moral obligation to decline and I would have to understand. We were silent. Time was coming to an end. I stood up and looked him in the eye and said, if you've no happiness to give me, you still possess your pain. He laughed. He said only a virgin would ask a man for that. He laughed so hard he had to sit. O, I loved him for making me feel so grand and ridiculous at the same time!

PAUL

I'm never allowed to laugh at you!

LU

He's allowed, because he's in such pain. If he took me seriously, it would be unbearable. I said perhaps passage through a virgin girl's mind is the only way for an over-educated man to reach the next phase of existence. He laughed!

PAUL

Unbelievable.

LU

Everything unknown to man, yet to be discovered by him, every new thought, every new freedom from false limits, already exists. Man's new freedom is deep within the female mind. Yes! That great unmapped world that even we women have not explored.

PAUL

Ha.

LU

He looked at me, as if for the very first time, and then, o, Paulie, I may have done something.

PAUL

What!

LU

Every time I do something that I believe to be the most natural action to take at that very moment, others misconstrue my meaning. Why is that?

PAUL

What did you do?

LU

I may have kissed him.

PAUL

No.

LU

Maybe, yes, no, I don't know. I can't remember. Maybe I imagined I did. Maybe we both imagined it. How did these flowers get in my hand?

PAUL

Tell me you did not kiss him.

LU

I remember saying to myself I must not stop to pick these beautiful blues, because I must not interrupt this perfect moment. Did he pick them for me? Here they are in my hand. There are times my body cannot be trusted to behave. Moments of ecstasy. Take them from me.

PAUL

What did you do!

LU

I don't know...

PAUL

How could you have been so weak. So...

LU

You must help me if he misunderstands...

PAUL

You female.

LU

I shouldn't have told you.

PAUL

You.

LU

Don't ruin it. My perfect moment. My Mount Sacro.

*Nietzsche enters. He also carries blue flowers in his hands. His face glows, perhaps it's a little sun burnt.*

NENE

I wondered where you'd got to - what a day it's been. Paul. Here. These are for you.

*Paul stares at him, then takes the flowers and kisses him on the lips.*

PAUL

You said yes.

NENE

Yes?

LU

What a day this is. Don't move. Both of you.

*Lu picks up a stick and draws a circle that contains the three of them.*

Our hold on each other shall be no more or less defining than this circle I've drawn. Within it, you can hear the beatings of our one heart.

*She puts her hands on their hearts, then theirs on her hers.*

I have never felt more ready to live than I do now. Nor more protected than I do now.

NENE

I agreed to a temporary arrangement. An experiment.

LU

Temporary has no meaning to someone with faith. I have faith in us three.

PAUL

Let's drink. I brought vodka.

*Paul distributes glasses and vodka.*

PAUL

To the blasphemy of three. Malzetov.

LU

Are you Jewish?

*Nietzsche laughs.*

PAUL

What?

LU

How is it I never knew? You're Jewish.

PAUL  
What do you mean you didn't know?

NENE  
Paul has many secrets.

PAUL  
I hide nothing. I drink.

NENE  
To blasphemy.

LU  
Happiness. Blasphemy!

*They drink.*

*Elisabeth is heard approaching:*

ELISABETH  
NeNe! Did you fall off a cliff? Answer me! There you are! I see you trying to ignore me!

LU  
I can't face her now. I'm too happy.

*Lu bursts into tears and exits.*

NENE  
Where did you find her?

PAUL  
I don't flatter myself. She found me.

NENE  
I've never met such powerful naiveté. Such wonderful prey.

PAUL  
You're an idiot.

*Elisabeth enters.*

ELISABETH  
Did no one hear me?

NENE

There you are, Elisabeth. We've been worried.

ELISABETH

Liar. Where has that girl gone? I want to get us home. It's getting dark. And cold.

PAUL

Lulu's already gone ahead.

ELISABETH

Isn't she going to help gather our things? Are we her servants now?

PAUL

You go ahead, Elisabeth. I'll take care of it all.

*Paul collects the picnic debris.*

ELISABETH

*(To her brother:)* Look how you're dressed. I hope you're not going to catch a cold.

NENE

Let me be.

ELISABETH

Give me those flowers. You have allergies.

*She grabs the flowers and throws them away. Friedrich exits.*

*The sun sets red over Mount Sacro.*

### SCENE THREE

*Lu sits at a window seat in the house now housing three.*

*She stares at the sunset. The mirror swallows it.*

*Friedrich enters and sits at a writing table.*

*( Paul observes from another room, perhaps.)*

NENE

Sit by me.

LU

I'm in thought.

NENE

Think closer to me.

LU

You know I can't sit by you and think my own thoughts.

NENE

I know nothing of the kind.

LU

One must think with you or against you.

NENE

Be of some use. Take my pen and paper. There's work to be done.

LU

You want me...?

NENE

Take notes.

LU

Sit next to you and write down everything you say?

NENE

I want you close. Yes.

LU

I 'm no man's secretary.

NENE

I don't want a secretary. You're being obstinate and stupid.

LU

I'm no man's wife.

NENE

If you're going to ridiculous, please leave the room.

LU

I will not.

NENE

No man's this. No man's that. You will not. You will not take notes. You will not leave the room. What will you do? I don't want a wife or a secretary. I want an heir.

LU

I WILL NOT BEAR CHILDREN. I'LL MOVE OUT TODAY IF THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK THIS IS, WHAT WE ARE.

NENE

I don't want a child, God no, I want an heir – now sit down. Someone to be an heir to all my thoughts. And take me into the future. That was the dream you awoke in me on Mount Sacro.

LU

Oh. Yes. I'm...forgive me.

NENE

Don't fail me, Lu. Now, sit by me.

*She sits at his feet.  
He touches her hair.*

LU

The dream never ends.

NENE

We will populate the world with our thoughts. Nations will surrender to our children. You will be the young empress of a new dynasty.

*He takes her hands and kisses her fingers.*

Write. Not my thoughts, yours.

LU

But what will you do while I write?

NENE

Sit here and watch you. Wait. It's been so long since I sat and waited on someone else's thoughts. It will be a joy. One I may never really have had before today.

LU

What if what I have to write takes all day, weeks?

NENE

I'll be a very happy man.

*She begins writing. She becomes absorbed in her writing. He brushes the hairs on the nape of her neck as she continues.*

I'm not here. Ignore me.

*She writes and writes. She scatters papers as she writes furiously.*

## INTERLUDE:

*Paul enters and picks up the papers and puts them in the picnic basket he had on Mount Sacro. He stops and reads one sheet to the audience, as Lu and Friedrich remain enraptured in their own separate worlds.*

PAUL (*reading Lou's words:*)

And how does the great male mind wrap itself around the beauty of the Narcissus myth? What pejorative words do they use when they do? Pathological? Vanity? Self love as shallow as the oceans are deep? They are wrong. Foolishly and furiously wrong. Let me assure you that the love of Narcissus runs deep. Such self love is not shallow. When he looked into that bottomless pool he saw more than his surface beauty, he saw into his soul. And what beauty he found there! He saw all humanity. God. Why else should we look into the soul if not to find beauty, all humanity and God? When Narcissus stared down into the deep of his reflection he was transfixed because he saw the beauty that lives in us all, which is boundless and has no name. For the pool is the soul and it is also each one of us. We are the pool. We are Narcissus. We are the contained in that circle, the circle that is our soul.

*Lu throws another few sheets to the floor in her writing frenzy. Paul picks up another sheet and continues.*

"For there is only one soul, the great soul, which we all draw from and must stare into."

*The men both look at Lu. She looks up, trembles from her own passion, and then returns to writing.*

"We may talk of the male mind and the female mind, but the soul is one, it is neither male nor female. The Soul is all. And I am She. And I am He. And I am You. And I am God. And I am a simple girl whose mother called her Lu. I am in love with myself more than Narcissus ever was. I am in love with the reflective pool. I am in love with the lake that shows Mount Sacro to the heavens. I am in love with You who open up the wondrous Universe. You, who are always there staring back at me."

*Lu looks to Friedrich.*

PAUL

Tell me you didn't kiss him!

*Paul exits.*



## SCENE FOUR

*Time has passed.  
Friedrich has finished reading her writing.  
He is silent. She waits.*

NENE

Throw it out. All of it. None of it is any good.

LU

It's more than good. It's true.

NENE

I am furiously opposed to a good forty percent of what you have written.

LU

Only forty? Not seventy?

NENE

Yes, seventy. It's what makes the other thirty percent brilliant. I'm furious.

LU

How furious?

NENE

Unforgivably.

*She claps her hands, grabs his hands and kisses them.*

LU

Yes! Yes! Thank you!

*She kisses him on the lips. He pushes her away.*

NENE

You mustn't do that.

*She kisses him on the lips again.*

LU

Ha. I oppose you! Paul! I oppose him!

NENE

Am I in heaven?

*She kisses her essay.*

LU

Heaven. Yes! Yes! Yes!

*She exits.*

NENE

Come back here, my little dove.

*Elisabeth enters carrying packages and cookware.*

ELISABETH

Here I am, you silly old cock.

NENE

Hell. Elisabeth, what are you doing?

ELISABETH

I've brought supplies, food, work you left behind.

NENE

I didn't ask for anything. I didn't ask you...

ELISABETH

I brought what I know you'll need. I brought soup for lunch.

*Lu enters.*

LU

Here, Elisabeth, you sit. Let me take these into the kitchen.

NENE

I didn't ask.

ELISABETH

I don't wait to be asked to be of help.

LU

Sit, sit. Visit with your brother. You must miss him, since we've stolen him from you.

*Lu exits.*

*Brother and sister sit and stare at each other. Elisabeth waits for Friedrich to flinch. He does not.*

ELISABETH

It's been a week. I thought you'd be bored of her by now.

NENE

Go home.

ELISABETH

You don't look well. Have you been eating?

NENE

I haven't looked this well in ten years.

ELISABETH

Fine then.

*Silence.*

Fine then.

*Silence.*

Everyone thinks you're being ridiculous.

NENE

You'll come to love her. I know you will.

ELISABETH

You know no such thing. Let's not discuss it.

*Friedrich picks up one of the sheets off the floor.*

NENE

Elisabeth, listen to this:

"If you've no happiness left to give me  
Well, then! You still possess your pain."

ELISABETH

Did you write that?

NENE

I shook when she read it to me.

*He shivers.*

ELISABETH

I made you soup.

NENE

Soup?

ELISABETH

When you shiver, it's time for soup. Otherwise, the headaches will follow. Mama always said...

NENE

I didn't shiver, I shook.

ELISABETH

The headaches follow.

NENE

I've never met anyone so close...who lives the way, who actually lives and breathes my way of thinking. She...

ELISABETH

It would be horrifying to meet the person who actually lives and breathes what you think. It's one thing to think it. Quite another to...

NENE

I hear music.

ELISABETH

O god, no.

NENE

I must set her poem to music.

ELISABETH

Really! Talk of music! Nothing but headaches and more headaches. And her, more than likely tone deaf! Like the girl's poem, if you must, but you are not to start with the music again, the fits of compositions. YOU ARE NOT A COMPOSER, DON'T PRETEND. No, I won't allow it. Music leads to your seizures. We've been through this.

NENE

She's brave, Elisabeth, a brave soul.

ELISABETH

I hate men. She's got you by the balls and you call her a brave soul.

NENE

I'm almost forty, only a girl with a brave soul can save me from...

ELISABETH

Who will save you from making an ass of yourself over a little manipulative whore?

NENE

She's a virgin!

ELISABETH

A whore is a whore, virgin or no.

NENE

I want a whore!

ELISABETH

I'll have you put away, before I let that girl...that girl believes she can outsmart God and the genius who slew him.

NENE

I want to be slain.

ELISABETH

Must every man be made a fool when a girl pushes her breasts up against his nose? Fine. Be made a fool. Have seizures. I'm leaving. I will not stay and be forced to witness such...

NENE

Blasphemy?

ELISABETH

Banality.

NENE

Come again soon.

ELISABETH

To allow her - HER - to believe she outsmarts you, that she deserves you?! Do you know what she is saying about you? She brags to the grocer how she is snaring you, to strangers she meets in the streets. Yes. She's so proud of getting her prey. Now calm down. You're shaking...I warned you. All this talk of music. It always ends the same with you. You'll have a fit. NeNe, stay calm. Sit.

NENE

Lu! Come back in here!

ELISABETH

I'll go. You'll like the soup. It's Mama's cabbage and peppers.

NENE

You won't go. LU!

ELISABETH

NeNe...

NENE

No tears. Damn you. Damn all of you. I will hear it from her, what she is saying about me to strangers in the street.

ELISABETH

NeNe, you mustn't...

NENE

We three will have this out. I will not be made a fool by either of you.

ELISABETH

You rank HER and I the same?

NENE

Be quiet.

ELISABETH

She is not your Brave Soul. She is a green thing, a princess troll.

*Lu enters with a bowl of soup*

LU

It's delicious. What is it?

ELISABETH

Cabbage and peppers.

LU

Here you are, Friedrich

NENE

I DON'T WANT MAMA'S SOUP.

LU

What do you want?

NENE

Sit there and let me look at you. In quiet.

LU

What did she say about me?

NENE

My sister and I, we don't trust happiness.

ELISABETH

Stop slurping his soup! I made it for him, not for you.

*She grabs the bowl from Lu and thrusts it towards Friedrich.*

NENE

I DON'T WANT SOUP. DON'T YOU LISTEN?

*Elisabeth sets the bowl down on the table.*

ELISABETH

He's easily irritated if interrupted while working. It might be best if we left him to himself.

NENE

YOU WILL DRIVE ME MAD

LU

Be kind to Elisabeth, NeNe. She feels abandoned. I understand.

*Lu sits at the table and enjoys the soup.*

NENE

Don't ever pity, Elisabeth. That would be a fatal mistake.

*Paul enters.*

PAUL

Why all the shouting? O, you're here.

LU

There's soup in the kitchen. Elisabeth, made it. But it's good.

PAUL

Cabbage and peppers?

LU

Yes.

PAUL

For NeNe's fevers. It's their home remedy.

LU

NeNe, you don't get fevers, do you?

ELISABETH

Don't call him that. That's my name for him.

PAUL

All his life.

LU

Well, today that ends. He's cured.

ELISABETH

Whatever do you mean? You can't take away his fevers.

LU

Why not?

ELISABETH

They're his!

NENE

They're my most prized possession.

LU

Yes. That's why you must surrender them to me.

NENE

I will trade them for your most prized possession.

LU

A trade?

NENE

Yes. For *your* most prized possession.

PAUL

We are a chaste trinity! We took a vow!

LU

He means my mind. My mind is my most prized possession.

NENE

I'll win it yet. I will.



LU

You already have.

ELISABETH

Now I'm the one who's going to be ill.

LU

You're such a little schoolboy, Friedrich.

ELISABETH

He's twice your age.

LU

A boy is a boy is always a boy. Isn't that right, Paul?

PAUL

I was never a little boy. I was a little girl when I was young.

LU

See how they mock our sex, Elisabeth? We must close ranks against them.

ELISABETH

Do not include me, thank you.

LU

You mustn't side against me. We're sisters.

ELISABETH

I'm not your sister.

LU

We're sisters in kind, in our womanhood.

ELISABETH

I'm not any of your kind. Good-bye. Remember, I warned you.

*Elisabeth exits.*

LU

What kind am I?

*The men laugh.*

Don't.

*She exits.*

*The men look at each other and then to the soup. They share a spoon and enjoy it. After a few spoonfuls, Friedrich speaks:*

NENE

I'm going to ask her. I'm going to ask her to...

*Paul realizes Friedrich is thinking of making a marriage proposal to Lu and has a physical tremor.*

PAUL

Have you gone mad?

NENE

Don't worry. We won't ask you to leave. We won't force you to stay either, of course. Thank you, Paul. For bringing her to me. For your generosity.

PAUL

I'm warning you...that's the one thing, that she won't...listen to me. You've no idea...

NENE

Everything in me insists I must.

PAUL

She'll never forgive you. She never forgives anyone who would presume he could marry her. Friedrich, no, no, no, no. Trust me on this.

NENE

You betray yourself.

PAUL

Me? Betray? I'm not the one about to ruin everything between us three.

NENE

Are you my enemy?

PAUL

Of course, I only want to save you from extreme pain and embarrassment.

NENE

Don't.

PAUL

Someone has to look out for you, someone has to think of the better good!

NENE

O, of course, you're goodness itself. Good Paul, the self-abnegating saint saving others for their own good. Don't you know everyone can see right through you?

PAUL

I'm your friend...

NENE

Coward. Coveter. Little leech. Jew. Don't think you can come between Lu and I.

PAUL

What did you call me?

NENE

I don't know what I'm saying. I can't be opposed on this. It's all a horrible mistake.

PAUL

Blood-sucking Jew?

NENE

I didn't think she would make me want a life I've never imagined for myself. I'm a wreck. I've decided to be a human being. It's made me weak and vicious. You must help me. I must be sure of her, possess her, or I can't go on. Help me.

PAUL

This Jew is no longer yours to use.

NENE

You know I meant nothing by that. I've gone mad. I feel I've lost something I never knew I had. Paul, is this what others call love?

PAUL

No.

NENE

What is it?

PAUL

Egoism.

NENE

I'm not a weak and vicious man. Ask her to marry me. She trusts you.

PAUL

You should be locked up in an asylum.

NENE

You must save me from this.

PAUL

DO NOT ASK HER TO MARRY YOU.

NENE

I won't. Of course, not. That would ruin everything.

PAUL

Yes.

NENE

You must ask her for me.

NENE

You're our only friend. Save us.

PAUL

Not even God...

NENE

You've only yourself to blame. You set up this whole chaste charade. There is no other end. You must save us.. You must ask her for me. If you leave it to me – catastrophe!

*He shakes.*

*He sobs.*

Save us. Paul...

*A soft little cry emits from Paul.*

PAUL

Get me drunk.

NENE

Yes. Right away.

*End of scene.*

## SCENE FIVE

*Lu enters her bedroom. She sets a large mirror on the floor and stares into it. She slowly undresses. There is a knock on her door.*

LU

Yes?

PAUL

*(behind the door:)* Nothing. I...no, nothing.

LU

Are you still there?

PAUL

Yes.

LU

Would you like to come in?

PAUL

Yes. No. Not by choice.

*He falls to the floor.*

LU

Have you been drinking?

PAUL

I've a message.

LU

Enter.

PAUL

No. Best not. Batter not. Butter not. Better not. But I must. Better must.

LU

You're drunk. I'm going to bed.

PAUL

I promised...I'd deliver the message and wait for a reply.

LU

Good night, Paul.

He... PAUL

Don't say it. If you don't... LU

He... PAUL

Don't you think I heard you two talking? Why do you think I've stayed here in my room all night? LU

He... PAUL

Don't. LU

He wants to marry you. PAUL

*Lu gets into bed.*

What shall I tell him?

I've undressed and gone to bed. LU

He needs an answer. PAUL

Tell him you never asked me. LU

I did ask you... PAUL

I'm never speaking to either of you again. LU

Don't be angry with me. PAUL

LU

Go back downstairs and drink yourself comatose. Tomorrow morning everyone will forget all of this. You never came to my door. Tell him you never asked me. A trinity is a sacred thing!

PAUL

I can't lie. I'm bad at it.

LU

Do not make me kill the messenger.

*She waits. He hasn't moved.*

Go. Do as I say.

*Waiting.*

PAUL

What do I tell him?

LU

GOD IS ALIVE.

PAUL

Ljola...

LU

HE'S PUNISHING US.

PAUL

I warned you.

LU

FOR HAVING AMBITIONS, DREAMS, FAITH. THIS IS YOUR FAULT. How could you pander for him?

PAUL

May I come in?

LU

ENTER. I DARE YOU.

PAUL

I'll tell him you were sleeping...

LU  
COWARD. COWARDS. ALL OF YOU. WHERE IS MY EQUAL? NOWHERE IN THE  
WORLD.

*Paul steps away quietly.*

COME BACK HERE. ENTER. ENTER.

*She sits upright.*

#### INTERLUDE:

*She waits.*

*Paul and Friedrich drink.*

*She goes to sleep.*

*Paul and Friedrich enter Lu's bedroom fully dressed. They shush each other.  
They have been drinking for hours. Lu is asleep. They crawl into bed with her.  
She sleeps. They fall asleep next to her.*

#### THE DREAM AS DREAMT BY THREE

*They roll over each other in bed.*

*Friedrich becomes a gargoyle and sits at the foot of the bed.*

*Paul, at times, neighs, like a blind horse.*

*Lu remains asleep through out.*

NENE

Tell me a story. Tell me a story you would tell a little girl.

PAUL

Once upon a time there was a little girl -

NENE

She has mother breasts.

PAUL

- who was told she must go to her grandmother's house.

NENE

Lift up her nightdress.

PAUL

She was told to bring her grandmother good things to eat. Breads. Jams. Boiled eggs.



NENE

Ham?

PAUL

Yes. And cold cuts too. Headcheese. Yes.

NENE

Tell the one about pork. Three little pigs. Three pigs in a basket. No, two pigs. The red riding slut had two pigs in a basket.

PAUL

What would she do with two pigs?

NENE

Eat them.

PAUL

Red goes walking through the woods. Who should appear?

NENE

The big bad wolf!

PAUL

I've met wolves before, Red said. And I've read all their books. You will never get between my legs in bed. *(He neighs like a blind horse.)*

*She stirs. They near her and stare.*

NENE

He eats her in the end!

PAUL

No. The woodsman comes and hacks him to pieces before he can.

NENE

Pansy Jew. The wolf will eat you too. Did she say yes? Did Red say yes?

PAUL

*(He neighs like a blind horse.)*

*Elisabeth calls from offstage: "Lambkin! Where's my little lambkin?"*

*Friedrich howls*

*Elisabeth enters dressed as Little Bo Peep.*

ELISABETH

There you are, my little boo-boo.

*Friedrich howls and hides under the bed.  
Elisabeth Bo Peep tries to get him with her hooked stick.*

Get out from under there, lambkin.

NENE

Not until she says yes.

*Lu suddenly wakes and sits bolt upright in bed.*

LU

Blind woodsman, get the ax!

*Paul exits as a blind woodsman.*

ELISABETH

Quick my little lamb, run away with me, before they murder you.

*Friedrich rises up as a big bad wolf and chases Elisabeth Bo Peep.  
Paul enters with the ax. A chase. They exit. Much awfulness and screaming.  
Friedrich returns with the ax, now bloodied. He takes his gargoyle pose on the bed.  
He and Lu stare at each other.  
Lu takes the ax.*

NENE

Be a real woman. Use it. Chop me into bits.

*. Paul enters and snorts like a blind horse.*

LU

We promised to remain chaste.

*They stare at each other  
She puts the ax under her pillow.  
She sleeps with the ax.*

## SCENE SIX

*Morning.*

*Elisabeth walks into the house. She hunts out the sleeping. She enters Lu's bedroom and stands over the bed.*

*Slowly and quietly, she kneels and bows her head in prayer.*

*Lu wakes. She watches Elisabeth in prayer. She sees the men sleeping beside her.*

LU

What are you doing?

ELISABETH

Please, don't wake them. I...I'm sorry.

LU

Tell me what you were doing. Were you praying?

ELISABETH

Don't wake him, please.

LU

Were you praying for something nice?

ELISABETH

Yes.

LU

My death?

ELISABETH

That's terrible.

LU

I didn't know you believed in Him. God.

ELISABETH

When necessary. I won't be laughed at. My heart is not small. Don't think I'll let you break it. It's not a nut for you to crack and snack on.

LU

No, your heart is not a little nut. It's a shiny little pebble. A rosary bead.

*The men begin to wake.*

LU

Hello, sleepyheads. Come on, Elisabeth, climb in with us.

PAUL

O...o...my...

NENE

Where am I? What's going on here? Elisabeth?

ELISABETH

NeNe, don't be upset with me.

NENE

I hate that pet name. O god, my head aches...

LU

Paulie, take care of him.

*Paul drags Friedrich to the wash basin.*

Do you think, Elisabeth, that my heart is small? Or that I've no heart at all? Ah?

ELISABETH

NeNe, are you going to be sick?

*Friedrich is sick.*

You've been drinking.

LU

Serves him right.

ELISABETH

If you have a heart, it is of no use to you. I think you have never loved anyone other than yourself.

LU

I never claim to do the impossible.

NENE

Elisabeth? What is she doing here? What were we doing? How did we get here? Ow, my head.

PAUL

Who's making coffee?

NENE

My head...

ELISABETH

I'll pay you to leave and to never see my brother again. Cash. Go to Paris. Cash. Lots of cash.

*Friedrich rises to throttle her, but is entangled in sheets and slips and falls on the floor.*

NENE

Get out, get out, you...

*Friedrich remains on the floor and moans.*

LU

Did Paulie get you drunk last night, NeNe?

NENE

NEVER CALL ME THAT. I HATE THAT NAME.

ELISABETH

You do not.

LU

Open the windows. Please. Can we let in some intelligence, generosity of spirit, regeneraion? Please. This morning is already too humiliating for your brother.

ELISABETH

My brother and I, like all Germans, are born with good qualities. Good and upstanding and...born with them. We are never humiliated.

NENE

Shut your mouth, Elisabeth, shut it, or I will be forced to finally murder you.

ELISABETH

I'll go and I won't return.

NENE

Marry me.

LU

Shall we make coffee?

NENE

Do you want children one day?

LU  
No, thank you.

NENE  
I knew you weren't a real woman.

LU  
Where are the real men?

*He grabs her hand and puts it down his pants.*

ELISABETH  
Friedrich!

LU  
Your sex organ does not make you a man.

PAUL  
He thinks he's big bad wolf!

ELISABETH  
FREIDRICH.

LU  
We're all going downstairs for some coffee. Now, Elisabeth, what shall we make these two bunnies for breakfast?

ELISABETH  
Do not include me...

*Lu exits.*

LU (*from off-stage:*)  
Come Elisabeth, our woman's lot, serve the little men coffee and breakfast. Make them feel virile and strong.

ELISABETH  
I will never forgive you, NeNe.

*Elisabeth exits.*

PAUL  
Poor thing.

NENE  
Never pity Elisabeth.

PAUL

I meant you.

NENE

Why are women cruel?

*Friedrich crawls under the bed. He holds himself.  
He howls.*

PAUL

Get out from under there.

*Paul pulls him out from under the bed.*

She isn't capable of cruelty. A great love. It takes courage. Kindness. Generosity. She believes we three are capable of it. Kindness. Love...

NENE

Why won't the people who love me murder me.

*Friedrich curls into a ball of painful sobs. He puts his hand down his pants.*

*Paul moves to Friedrich and sits with him. He touches him gently.*

*Friedrich contorts.*

*Paul puts his hand down Friedrich's pants. Friedrich accepts, tightens his body, tightens, and then releases.*

PAUL

Dead?

NENE

Yes.

#### INTERLUDE:

*Lu enters the bedroom and retrieves a red cape from her closet.*

LU

I've been invited to give a lecture.

*Lou whips the cape around her and exits.  
Friedrich crawls out on all fours after her.*

*Paul is alone in Lu's bedroom. He looks in the mirror.*

## SCENE SEVEN

*Paul sits in front of Lu's mirror. He runs her comb through his hair. He shifts his weight and apes her. He looks towards the closet. He goes to the closet and takes out a dress. He takes off his clothes and puts on the dress. He strides about the room. He poses with one foot on the bed. He finds his shoes. He puts them on his hands to be puppet Friedrich and puppet Paul.*

PAUL

(as Lu:) Friedrich, you're a genius. Kneel.

*He throws a shoe on the floor.*

Good, NeNe. Now, Paulie, stop being so passive and come over here and give me a kiss.

*He makes the second shoe kiss him on the cheek.*

PAUL (as Lu:)

No, not there, silly. You know where.

*He puts the shoe up between his legs. He squeezes and spins and spins and spins. He drops on the bed still in the puppet shoe-sex state. He finds a real joy and power in this. As he does...the door opens. Lu, in her red cape, enters. Paul stops and the pillow drops.*

LU

You look lovely.

PAUL

I was making your bed.

LU

Don't be embarrassed. I've tried on your shirts and Friedrich's pants. I like you like this. Now, walk. Walk like me.

PAUL

I hate it when you get the upper hand.

LU

You love it. Let's see. Walk.

*Paul walks around the room as Lu.*

No, that's Paul in a dress. Watch.



*She demonstrates.*

LU

Now you.

*He does. She applauds.  
He sits at her table and writes a note as Lu.  
He folds it and puts it in his bosom.*

What did I write? Let me see. Let me see.

PAUL

(as Lu:) I need my private secrets.

LU

Give me the note, you bitch.

*She wrestles him for the note.  
She gets the note and reads it.*

"I love Paul most of all." Um...not true. I love Lu most of all first, and then I love Paul most of all.

PAUL

Of course. Lu most of all.

LU

I want to kiss you, just as you are.

*She approaches and kisses Paul/herself.*

Very nice. Some day we must try it Paul to Paul.

PAUL

I have a message...from him. The big bad wolf.

LU

No.

*She undresses as he stays dressed.  
She leads him to the bed.*

PAUL

He says -

*She covers him in little kisses.*

LU  
No.

PAUL  
He says your refusal is irrational.

LU  
Who says? He? God calls me irrational?

PAUL  
It's what you wanted.

LU  
Why are you angry with me?

PAUL  
You're a virgin.

LU  
Be nice to me. Nicer than I deserve.

PAUL  
We're ridiculous - we three.

LU  
You two may be. Not me. Not we three.

PAUL  
No, you're a bitch with a whip. A virgin bitch.

*Paul gets out of the dress.*

LU  
I said be nice.

PAUL  
I can't participate in someone's pain as easily as you can.

You'll submit. When you do, I'll be sent away.

*Paul kisses her on the forehead.*

*He goes to exit. Upon opening the door, he hits Friedrich, who's crouched and listening at it.*

LU

O dear god, no.

NENE

I'm inexcusable, I know. Marry me.

LU

Someone save him from himself.

NENE

I could have taken you, there on Mount Sacro. You wanted me to. I didn't. Out of respect. Faith in our chaste bliss! And now look what you've made of me!

*Lu pushes Friedrich out of the room as he speaks. She shuts the door. She bolts it. Friedrich knocks, then pounds on the door.*

LU

I REFUSE YOU...

NENE (*behind the door*)

You cannot refuse my pain. That's our agreement.

LU

Paul?

PAUL

Give in. Give in.

*Lu sits on the floor and bursts into tears. Paul embraces her. More knocking. Then pounding.*

NENE

Open the door. Let me in.

PAUL

Forgive...

*Door rattling.  
A final pound.  
Friedrich is heard walking away.*

PAUL

You must forgive him. What else can we do?

*She looks at Paul.*

LU

You could kill him for me.

*She looks into the mirror.*

Paul, I have something to ask of you. You must agree that you will do this for me. Will you? I'll never ask anything from you ever again.

*She gets into bed.*

*Paul does not yet move.*

Say yes.

*End of act one.*

## ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

*Morning. Lu stands, freshly dressed, in front of her mirror. Paul wakes. They say nothing to each other. She goes to the window.*

LU

She's gone. Our prized virgin.

*He dresses.*

*He waits. She does not look at him.*

No one must ever know. This was for me alone.

PAUL

He'll know.

LU

Suspicion is not knowledge. Who did you want to be when you were a little girl?

PAUL

I was never a little girl.

LU

Answer.

PAUL

A virgin princess.

*Lu stares at her reflection.*

LU

And now? Did you dream of letting your hair down and some prince with strong legs climbs up your tresses?

PAUL

How did you know?

LU

When I was a little boy, I believed I was invincible. But then my father called me princess. And I realized I was a little girl. Do you know what I would do if I were a prince? I would yank. I would yank you by your long girl hair and pull you out of your tower window, down to the scrungy ground beneath my feet. I would hose you, bury you in the mud, in the garden of yourself.

PAUL

Thank you.

*Paul exits with the sheets to take them to the laundry.  
Lu bolts the door.  
Lu looks in her mirror.*

LU

So you could grow. So you could flower and bear fruit. So you could be taken and used to replenish the earth. Is that you, Ljola?

### INTERLUDE:

*Lu sings a Russian song from girlhood about a lovely bird.  
She becomes robust and celebratory in her song.  
Early morning turns into day.*

### SCENE TWO

*Paul can be heard singing in the kitchen.*

*Friedrich breaks the bolt off the door, but does not enter.  
He stands, barefoot, at the threshold and stares at the stripped bed. He tries to smell the bed from where he stands.*

*Lu touches the lines in her face gently with her fingertips.*

*Friedrich remains standing at the threshold. The pain is unbearable for him.*

NENE

I know the smell of a brothel...

*Elisabeth calls from the kitchen.*

ELISABETH (*from below*)

NeNe, come downstairs.

LU

Why is she here?

NENE

She wants to save me.

ELISABETH (*from below*)

NeNe, I'm making your coffee. NeNe! NENE!

LU

She hurts the ears. Answer her.

NENE

I haven't been working. She's here to make sure I work.

LU

I've aged. I'm still young but I have lines. Do I look different to you?

ELISABETH (*from below*)

NENE. DON'T MAKE ME COME GET YOU.

NENE

A MOMENT. DON'T COME UP HERE. A MOMENT. I can smell the devil.

*Friedrich stares at Lu who stares in the mirror.*

LU

Why don't you ever wash your feet?

NENE

If you were Mary Magdalene you would wash them for me.

LU

If I were your whore.

NENE

I asked you to be my wife.

LU

You had Paul ask.

NENE

Because you're kinder to him, than you are to me.

LU

Hygiene, NeNe. Cleanliness is next to...

NENE

Wash them for me. Whore. Jesus never balled Magdalene but she washed his feet. Out of her great love...

ELISABETH (*from below*)

NeNe! BREAKFAST.

NENE

I'm thirty -nine. It's you or no one. Marry me.

*Friedrich enters the room and stands behind her at the mirror.*

*Lu goes to the window and pulls on the curtain cords to open them.*

*Sun enters the room.*

LU

Your sister's calling for you.

*She goes to exit. Friedrich grabs her by the wrists and pulls her toward him.*

*She stiffens but does not fight.*

NENE

Even a stupid woman...

LU

Your breath smells worse than your feet.

NENE

Where are your sheets?

LU

I'm going down to have my toast and coffee.

ELISABETH (*from below*)

NENE!

NENE

My sister wishes you were dead.

*Lu exits.*

*Friedrich sits on the floor next to the bed.*

*He pounds on the floor.*

### SCENE THREE

*Paul is in the kitchen and listens to the pounding. Paul sings.*

*As the pounding increases, his singing becomes brighter.*

*Elisabeth hisses at him.*

*Lu enters the kitchen. She stops, then abruptly runs outdoors.*



*Paul takes out a glass pitcher of orange juice and sets it on the table. He puts out a glass pitcher of milk. He takes a bowl of fruit and begins to peel and place the fruit on a plate. Elisabeth butters toast. The pounding stops.*

*The two listen. Pause. Friedrich scratches on the floor with his fingernails and his toenails.*

*Paul peels and peels apple skins, slowly and precisely in thin continuous strips.*

*Lu enters the kitchen from outdoors, leaves and twigs in her hair and clothes. She has been running.*

*The scratching noise upstairs stops. Lu begins to eat the toast.*

ELISABETH

I buttered the toast for my brother.

PAUL

We share everything.

ELISABETH

She's eating my brother's toast and jam.

LU

He's not coming down.

ELISABETH (*calling*)

NENE. YOU HAVE TO COME DOWN AND HAVE YOUR BREAKFAST.

LU

If you are going to visit us, I'll have to ask you not to use that voice.

ELISABETH

Don't speak to me.

*Lu dunks her bread in coffee.*

LU

Paul, please see that he gets a bath today. And I'll need a new bolt on my door.

ELISABETH

You're not even a woman. Cow.

PAUL

Elisabeth.

ELISABETH

Not even a cow. You have no milk. You're a dry nasty smelling monkey with false breasts.

LU

False?

*Lou opens her blouse.*

*She cups her breasts and pushes them out for all to see.*

Touch them, if you don't believe...

*She walks towards Elisabeth.*

*Elisabeth exits.*

PAUL

So that's what it takes to make her leave. May I?

*Lu buttons her blouse and sits at the table with her coffee.*

*The pounding resumes.*

LU

Go see if he wants any toast. I'm giving my lecture this afternoon. I have to be ready. Get him out of my room. Please. Take him somewhere. Out of here, away from me. Please.

PAUL

Where can I take him like that?

LU

Please. I have a lecture to give today.

PAUL

A whorehouse?

LU

Anywhere.

PAUL

You promised not to ask anything from me ever again.

LU

Do it. Please.

## INTERLUDE:

*Paul takes Friedrich away to a whorehouse.  
Lu stands at a podium and gives her lecture.*

LU

In conclusion, dear students, I tell you to be brave. Stand down insults to our sex. Even if they come from our mothers.

This is what I would like to say to my mother: I am not cavorting with the cock-ego, I'm competing.

Men's sexual organs are disobedient creatures. I am not a disobedient creature. I'm a woman. I shall win.

*The howling begins.*

## SCENE FOUR

*Evening.*

*Paul and Friedrich, in rumpled evening clothes, enter a quiet house. Friedrich is without his shoes.*

NENE

We're back? My feet hurt. I can't think.

PAUL

Don't try. Keep moving.

NENE

I need to think if I am to move.

PAUL

You don't. Feel your way.

NENE

I had always believed in the curative powers of the brothel. In theory. What were we thinking taking me there?

PAUL

Wasn't yours nice at all?

NENE

She refused to speak to me.

PAUL

Come in and sit down.

NENE

I knew I was in trouble the moment we arrived. The men were having such a good time around each other, joking with each other - but when it came time for one of them to go up to a room, it was as if a candle snuffer swooped down on him. The flicker of light went out. Each man's face lost all color. Was it the same with me? Did I turn grey when the snuffer swooped down on me?

PAUL

I was looking at the floor.

NENE

How long was I in the room?

PAUL

Until you got back. Not long.

NENE

I was cheated. I always get cheated. I hate to be cheated.

PAUL

As if the girls there aren't cheated every day.

NENE

Don't get all Marxist and humanist on me. I'm more miserable than anyone.

PAUL

How did you lose your shoes?

NENE

I DON'T KNOW.

PAUL

She didn't take them.

NENE

I wouldn't touch her. I kept my hands clean. But she was inept. She couldn't get me there at all. I had to do it myself. Cheated. Is there no color in my face at all?

PAUL

Let's forget we went, maybe that will help bring back your color.

NENE

WILL IT BRING BACK MY SHOES?

PAUL  
They may be a lost cause.

NENE  
You didn't go in a room.

PAUL  
I went there for you, not for me.

NENE  
You're my friend. My good friend.

PAUL  
Yes.

NENE  
I'm not ridiculous?

PAUL  
No.

NENE  
If Elisabeth ever finds out...maybe she should. No. She can't know. And don't you tell that other one. You're my friend, not hers.

PAUL  
I'm seeing a little color. A little pink.

NENE  
You still have your shoes? WHY DID YOU TAKE ME THERE?

PAUL  
We'll buy you new shoes.

NENE  
Can you smell it? Smell it on me?

PAUL  
Shhh.

NENE  
I STINK TO HIGH HEAVEN. Two things in life. Joy. Power. And we went looking for them in a whorehouse!

*He laughs.*

NENE

Thank God I can still make myself laugh.

*He cries.*

I don't know who I am.

*Friedrich collapses on the floor.*

*Paul sits in a chair.*

### SCENE FIVE

*Lu enters the house, returning from her lecture.*

*Paul wakes in the chair.*

LU

I was brilliant. Even I didn't expect me of me. There were about a hundred women there. We were all changed by it. I tell you, we felt the change, inside. Change and renewal. What wonderful women. We must steel ourselves. We women. We must learn to say no. An impassioned no. All women are threatened with marriage, with coming home with a baby. Because we women never learn how to avoid tragedy. We say "this is the best I can do." But we can say, "make a new best." And that is what my mother wanted for me. I didn't realize it until I was standing in front of those girls. My mother wanted a new best for me, one that neither she or her sisters, or her aunts, or grandmothers had ever dreamed. When I tried to comb my brother's thick black hair, my mother broke the brush against my back. I learned never to do that again. I stood in front of that hall of women staring up at me. I could feel their souls ache to be freed from servitude. Say the words. Say the words that will set us free. Life is not a choice between chastity or matrimony. Both are servitude! We must defeat all forms of slavery. Did you fix the bolt on my door? Be happy for me. Soon, I will go the next step. I no longer have a need for a holy trinity. I can be on my own. I must leave you both.

*She kisses him on the crown of his head. She exits.*

PAUL

BUT I'M THE ONE WHO PROTECTS YOU.

NENE

Who is it?

PAUL

Go back to sleep.

*Paul exits.*

## A DREAM - DON'T WAKE HER

*Friedrich sleeps.*

*Paul enters, carrying a book that Lu rests her head upon while she dream-walks.*

*Paul sits with the book in his lap.*

*Friedrich wakes.*

*Friedrich grabs the book away. He tosses the book on the bed.*

*Lu sleeps, undisturbed. She spoons Friedrich.*

*Paul crawls under the bed and softly cries.*

*Friedrich sniffs Lu as she sleeps.*

*Lu wakes, looks for the book.*

*She climbs on the bed to be with the book.*

*She reads.*

*Friedrich perches, gargoyle like, above her as she reads*

*Paul crawls out from under the bed and into the bed.*

*Friedrich licks his thumb and turns a page. Lu reads.*

*He licks again to turn another page.*

*Lu bares her teeth.*

*He stops. She reads.*

*Paul curls up at her feet.*

NENE

I want to know what women want.

LU

I want to read.

*Friedrich grabs the book. He wrestles it violently. All watch.*

*He loses his wrestling match.*

*He exits.*

*Lu gets the book.*

## SCENE SIX

*Early morning.*

*Friedrich is nowhere to be seen.*

*Lu is sitting by the window with her book.*

PAUL

I had a dream I was you, not that I was pretending to be you, but that I was you. You were - no, I was - the most beautiful woman I had ever seen - and I was in love with me.

I know, but I'm hopeless. I'll follow you.

LU

Men have no discipline.

PAUL

Our whole friendship is founded on my discipline!

LU

You'll tell Friedrich I'm leaving? If only a woman's love could give you what you need.

PAUL

Don't...

LU

Be kind.

PAUL

...pity me.

LU

Promise me.

PAUL

Of course.

LU

You'll be kind -

PAUL

To you? Always.

LU

To yourself.



PAUL

The kindest thing I could do for myself is drink that vial of poison I leave on the table in my room.

LU

You must hate me, to want to hurt me in that way.

PAUL

Don't be angry with me. Let's not argue.

LU

I will argue. Whenever and wherever I see hatred trying to secure a place for itself in this world.

PAUL

I could never hate you.

LU

What good are your acts of kindness, your generosity, your sacrifices, if they are born out of hatred towards yourself?

PAUL

Being kind to you is the only refuge I have.

LU

I would rather be your enemy.

*Friedrich enters.*

*All wait.*

NENE

Ah, yes, let's be quiet, mum, everyone, the awful one has entered. How was your lecture last night? Did you influence all those virginal minds and ruin young men's lives? Pentheselia, answer me.

LU

Tell him.

PAUL

She was fantastic. Beyond imagination and understanding.

NENE

You weren't there. You spent the night weeping in that chair.

PAUL

I was there, noting every gasp and cheer.

LU

Tell him.

*A pause.*

NENE

Tell me.

PAUL

Lu wants me to tell you...she's no longer a virgin.

LU

NOT THAT.

PAUL

She made me make love to her.

NENE

YOU COULDN'T MAKE LOVE TO A SHEEP.

LU

TELL HIM I'M LEAVING THE BOTH OF YOU.

NENE

Women! RAPE THEM. That's what they deserve. Rape them one two three.

PAUL

SHE RAPED ME.

LU

I'll never forgive you for this, Paul.

NENE

She's made a monkey of me. Elisabeth said she would!

LU

I'm leaving today.

NENE

A GIRL, A STUPID SCHOOLGIRL...I AM A MAN...A MAN.

*Lu exits.*

NENE

YOU GET BACK HERE. YOU RESPECT A MAN WHEN HE MAKES HIS DEMANDS.  
WHEN HE DEMANDS GENIUS FROM YOU.

*He waits.*

NENE

Lu?

*Paul and Friedrich stare at each other.*

Paul, what do we do?

### INTERLUDE:

*A song.*

*Lu sings. She packs up things into a basket.*

*A good old Russian folk song about love. Or a song about the farm.*

### SCENE SEVEN

*Lu puts on her red cape. Her bags are packed. Paul sits on the bags.*

*Friedrich sits on the floor.*

*Elisabeth enters and stands above Friedrich, holding his shoes, smiling.*

ELISABETH

Friedrich. Put on your shoes.

NENE

I'm not ready.

ELISABETH

Nonsense. It's time for you to give your speech. We mustn't be late.

NENE

Tell them I can't come.

ELISABETH

I won't tell them any such thing.

NENE

Tell her she can't go until I return.

*All look at Lu.*

ELISABETH

Oh, I think the girl is determined to go.

*Elisabeth goes to put on his shoes for him. He kicks them out of her hands.*

Paul.

PAUL

Lu?

LU

I've no control over him.

ELISABETH

I've your notes. All organized. Everything's organized. The speech is wonderful. The papers promise to publish each word. They even paid. All you need to do is remember how powerful your words can be. All you need to do is say them from off the cards. I have them right here. There's no reason to be afraid. Put on your shoes.

NENE

There's a monkey in my head.

ELISABETH

Put on your shoes.

NENE

In a corner pissing on the wood floor, screaming obscenities.

ELISABETH

Put on your shoes.

NENE

Make her promise.

ELISABETH

Paul.

PAUL

Lu?

*Lu goes to Friedrich and puts on his shoes for him.*

NENE

No one thinks better of you than I. No one. Not Paul. Not your mother. No one.

LU

I know. It has meant the world to me.

*His shoes are on, his laces tied.*

NENE

You will never rise to your full measure away from me. You leave and you will always be less; a poor imitation of the great stirrings in your soul. Your soul will shrivel up and blow away. You will live in poverty, for you will be poor in admiration, courtesy, respect, gratitude, piety –

LU

I choose poverty.

*Friedrich stands.*

NENE

People are expecting me.

*Friedrich exits with Elisabeth.*

*Time passes.*

*Lou sits on her bags next to Paul.*

LU

I've not behaved badly, have I?

I'm the monster? Is that what you think?

PAUL

I don't know what I think.

LU

Hold me. Hold me, Paul. I'm still a little girl.

*He holds her.*

## SCENE EIGHT

*Friedrich stands at a lecture podium and stares out at the audience.  
He may attack them. Elisabeth stands at the side, watching.*

NENE

I am an ecstatic witness. Now, what does that signify girls and girls?

O, I think we all know, don't we? Witness. We'll come back to that word. Ecstatic. Ecstasy. Standing next to. Standing out. To stand out of one's body. O girls, sweet untouched girls, how I envy you. And you others, you touched ones, the search has only begun. It is not because we think your minds are less than a man's that we prize the male mind above yours. We prize the male mind above all else because, unlike each of you, it is impenetrable. O, for the girl who can penetrate the male mind. That must become your goal, little girls. Penetrate into that wet labyrinth of the male. You sit before me, your ears open, so I may penetrate; keep your lips parted, your mouths open. Do you understand me, little girls? The virgin Mary was younger than you are today and what she understood changed the world. At Mount Sacro, I met the holy virgin and said, it's you and no one else. What did she do? Refused. God wanted to impregnate her! What would you have done? Change mankind or remain a stupid girl? Stupid girl. Stupid girls. All of you. Remain chaste. Chaste.

*Friedrich abruptly stops speaking.*

*He stares in horror.*

## SCENE NINE

*Elisabeth has returned from the lecture hall with Friedrich.  
She wraps a blanket around him. He is a gargoyle.*

ELISABETH

Do you want something to eat?

*Elisabeth exits to the kitchen and returns with a hunk of brown bread. She tears out the filling and begins to munch on the crust. Friedrich takes some of the white filling and rolls it into a ball. They repeat this in silence.*

*Lu and Paul enter. Friedrich does not look at them.*

I thought she was moved out.

PAUL

We stood in the back. We went to the lecture. We didn't think you would see us in the back rows...

ELISABETH

My brother is quite capable of having nervous breakdowns without her being the cause.

*Friedrich begins to unlace and take off his shoes.*

He's done this before. She's just part of a larger pattern. He'll be in bed all the next week. You've no idea how dull, reckless and destructive you're being. My brother has a romantic and delicate soul.

PAUL

His soul is made of sandpaper.

ELISABETH

And what are you, but a Jew and a pervert?

LU

Must we destroy each other then, because a man of genius wills it so?

PAUL

Don't, Lu. Let it be.

LU

This is war. A gay fresh holy war. I'm ready for it.

ELISABETH

Neither of you are worthy of washing the dirt off my brother's feet.

*Friedrich throws one of his shoes out the window.  
He becomes his own best self again.*

NENE

Worthy? Shut up, you sow. I prize her above all. She is my only selfless thought on this earth. But you refuse to use the glorious power you have to do me good.

*Elisabeth lets out a strange sound. She takes his other shoe and throws it out the window.*

*She stares out the window.*

ELISABETH

We can't afford to lose good shoes.

*Elisabeth exits to retrieve the shoes.  
As she does so, she passes Lu and mutters:*

Godless abomination.

*Elisabeth exits.*

NENE

Thus spoke my little chickadee.

LU

I'm your only selfless thought on this earth?

*Paul observes Lu and Friedrich. He silently takes them by the hand and stages Lu and Friedrich in the positions Lu had the men take during her ritual circle in act one.*

PAUL

I'll leave you two alone.

LU

Paul.

NENE

Let him go. He's not necessary.

*Paul kisses Friedrich on both cheeks.  
He kisses Lu's on both cheeks.  
He steps out of the circle.*

PAUL

We were never three.

*Paul exits with a hint of violence.*

LU

Why are you mean to him? Your only friend.

NENE

Why is causing me pain your highest pleasure? Is it your compensation for being brought into the world without a man's ability to think thoughts of his own. You are godless.

LU

There's no evil in being godless, if you're truly rid of God.

NENE

What use are aphorisms to me? You refuse to use the glorious power you have to do me good...

LU

I never meant to cause you pain, you must believe me...



NENE

Whoever has witnessed the ideal of a human being can only experience her failure as a caricature, an awful comedy of what once had promised to be sublime. An abomination. Rid of me? I will remain inside you, me.

LU

I can think you out of my life.

NENE

I CANNOT. I'M TOO WEAK.

LU

OUT. OUT. OUT.

*Friedrich laughs. He has a laughing fit. His body seizes up. He twists and bangs the floor. Lu cannot allow herself to go to his aid. Lu stands in horror of him and herself.*

*Elisabeth returns with his shoes in her hands. She immediately goes into nurse mode – clears away furniture, keeps him from swallowing his tongue.*

ELISABETH

Run and get a carriage. He needs a doctor.

*Lu remains in horror and amazement. She cannot move.*

NeNe, dear god, not again. NeNe, please. Why are you still standing here? Where's Paul? PAUL. PAUL.

LU

I...I...I...

ELISABETH

Don't touch him. Get help. Get someone. PAUL.

LU

...PAUL!

ELISABETH

Be still, NeNe. YOU. GO.

*Lu exits.*

LU and ELISABETH

PAUL.

## INTERLUDE

*In his fit, Friedrich is stripped and taken to bed.  
Is Wagner played in the distance?  
Perhaps from a sacred mountain top.*

## SCENE TEN

*Friedrich sits in the dark.*

*He is in hospital pajamas, but is sitting in his chair by the writing desk in the house. He has an opened letter in his lap. Elisabeth stands behind him.*

ELISABETH

I'll bring you your soup.

*She exits to the kitchen in silence .*

NENE

If I was filthy and course, well, I'm not to blame. A woman should do her best for a man. She should give him his bath! Where did you go?

*He waits.*

*Doors opening and shutting are heard.*

*He waits.*

Am I to die alone?

*He sits alone.*

*Lu enters with a bowl of soup.*

LU

Soup.

*He stares at her.*

Your favorite. Blow on it, it's still hot.

*He does.*

NENE

Who sent for you? Am I dying?

LU

No.

NENE

Did you come to give me my bath?

LU

No.

NENE

What then?

*She doesn't answer.*

You're a strange one. You value men over women, but you never believe we can feel the emotions you can. Men...we, I...feel such things that you have yet to imagine. What do you want? My destruction? It's yours.

LU

You have to take some responsibility.

NENE

You won. I went a little mad after you left. It's all very sad. Ha. She put me away. For my own good. Good. Poor Elspeth, she was devastated. I'm not. No. I have my hate to keep me going. Make me strong again. Without that, what would I do? But it isn't hatred I want to live in. No. It isn't hatred I prize. Tell me, was I ever in love with you?

LU

You must not stop loving me.

NENE

You turned me into your mirror.

LU

Women are expected to be a man's mirror. Why can't you be the same for us?

NENE

Men need to correct whatever they see, even when they see only themselves.

LU

Is that what made you go a little mad?

NENE

Blue flowers. Mount Sacro. Ecstasy. To feel another soul dreaming you. Her soul enters you and removes yours all at the same time. A virginal girl. I wanted to turn you into my mirror. Listen to all my ideas through chaste ears. The thought thrilled me. Thrilled me.

LU

And me. I came back...to thank you.

NENE

You? Am I dreaming?

LU

Your doctors must find you difficult.

NENE

My doctors? They're afraid.

LU

What are they afraid of? Elisabeth?

NENE

Infection. That I'll infect them. That I'll infect the whole next century.

LU

Shhh.

*He studies her. She lets him.*

NENE

Did you ever love me?

LU

Yes.

NENE

And now?

LU

Yes.

NENE

Like this? Even now? Seeing me now?

LU

Yes.

NENE

Women lie. They should be whipped.

LU

Eat your soup.

NENE

Men too. Men most of all. I should have known you would destroy me. That is a kind of love too. A great love. Don't listen to me. I belong in an asylum for the insane.

*Elisabeth enters.*

ELISABETH

NeNe? Shall we take our daily constitutional?

NENE

You remember Lu, don't you, Elspeth? I remember when Lu was a little girl. She sat very pretty and played jacks at my knee.

ELISABETH

No, NeNe. You met Lu a year ago.

NENE

Yes. We were little girls together.

ELISABETH

No, NeNe. We were little together. You and I. But you weren't a little girl. You were a little boy.

NENE

Will you visit me when I go away?

LU

Where are you going?

NENE

I always forget. Where am I going?

ELISABETH

Our afternoon stroll.

NENE

She thinks I can't take care of myself. Because I've stopped. Doing all one does when one cares about things getting done.

ELISABETH

There's a beautiful bite to the air. Cold air on a quick walk always does you good.

NENE

The genius, yes, but never the man. You never loved the man. I love my sister. I can love. Look at her. She was so afraid of you. Afraid I'd be taken away.

ELISABETH

Quiet, NeNe.

NENE

It's true, Elspeth. You shook. But see, we can all be friends? Our jealousies end. You know, Elspeth, Lu was afraid as well. But look, here she is. Safe and sound. Poof, everything we were afraid of – gone. No trace. No more awful laughing or screaming trying to scare our fears away. We didn't know if we feared each other or loved each other.

LU

I always knew.

NENE

I have notes to give you on your next lecture. You're a smart woman. And you're a good woman. I love a lecture. Does a body good.

*He searches his pockets. The women wait.*

I've gone over your writings as you asked me to do and I have a few things to say to you. I trust you want my honest and best criticism. Here.

*He pulls out scraps of paper.*

"Every sentence you write is compounded with feminine frippery. You seem incapable of writing an intelligent sentence or a true one. You will never write past the horror of your own biology." Forgive me. This is rot. You must forgive me. I can't be helped. Why did women stop wearing corsets? Why, Elspeth? It's the only invention that gave shape to their mammoth stupidity. I'm in pain. I have a canker in my mouth. I was determined we'd marry. Did you know that? I wanted to marry you to me.

*Lu takes and kisses his hand.*

So what's left me now, now that my beautiful pain is taken from me?

LU

Soup.

*They look at the bowl of soup.*

*They laugh.*

NENE

Soup. Why is there no one to love me?

*Elisabeth drops Friedrich's coat on a chair and exits.*

LU

O, NeNe. What a painful pair we make. I never refused you love.

*She takes a piece of bread, sops soup with it, and eats.  
He does the same.*

NENE

You refused me. I'm still amazed.

LU

I refused you only one thing...my stupidity. That is the only thing I kept to myself. And it was the only thing you ever truly wanted from me.

NENE

What do you think is my most attractive attribute?

*She stares at him.*

LU

Your silence.

NENE

Were you ever happy with me?

LU

Yes.

NENE

When were you the happiest?

LU

Now. And you?

NENE

I was never happy. Why must women...

LU

I won't have my sex blamed.

NENE

Yes, yes, you're right.

*He looks at her.*

Will you spoon me soup the morning I die?

LU

Will that be your happiest moment?

NENE

Yes.

*She lifts up a spoon of soup, but eats it herself.*

I lied.

LU

You?

NENE

Mount Sacro is my happiest moment. I did so believe. I had great faith...

*She puts her fingers on his lips.*

*He is silent. He may be crying into his soup.*

*She picks up the spoon and feeds him soup.  
She wipes his mouth and chin with a napkin.*

NENE

You kissed me once.

LU

Yes. I kissed you on the mountain and I heard a child's voice shout out: I'm saved.

NENE

I remember the quiet. It was so quiet. Absolute quiet.

LU

Yes. I remember.

*They sit in the memory of the quiet.*

*End of play.*