

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

11. Last Monologue.

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Last Monologue

(Eleanora Duse in Pittsburgh)

Many people tried to see the famous patient at the Shenley Hotel in Pittsburgh. But only Mademoiselle Desirée and Maria Avogadro, both faithful and experienced companions of the Italian vedette, were admitted. Dr. Charles J. Barone issued bulletins to the press; his diagnoses wavered from hour to hour. In the morning there was a slight improvement; he feared the worst in the night; dawn found him optimistic again. In a few days, however, it was obvious that Signora Eleonora Duse was in a very bad way indeed.

...In the room, the shades were drawn, and there was a sharp, sweet smell of medicine. Desirée, tip-toeing in from the antechambre, whispered: "Is she asleep?" And Maria Avogadro, almost without using her voice: "No...but she is out of her head - her temperature is up. Look at her...she keeps on talking..."

They looked at her. The harassed head tossed restlessly on the pillows. There it was, the face that was the idol of two continents; ugly and human, an old, suffering face; the tormented mask on which we trace the signature of encroaching death. The white, wiry hair lay heavily on the damp forehead - the fine, arched forehead which D'Annunzio had praised as "the wonderful forehead of a very intelligent man." The eyelids were half-closed over "the dark, living firmament of her eyes," and ~~the~~ her hands - the famous hands of Eleonora Duse, so much admired, so often described - were clenched on the covers; gaunt, fragile, almost luminous in the ~~confused~~ twilight. ~~There was a deep furrow between the dark, wide sweep of the eyebrows, and her lips, which had remained childish and firm and voluptuous, were drawn back over the teeth.~~

Signorita Maria looked terrified. She wanted to escape the whisper,

the touch, the evil taste of death. But ~~madame~~ shame made her hesitate ^{at} ~~now~~ the door. "Do you think she's in pain?" she asked anxiously. "Do you think she suffers?"

The woman in the bed heard the word and repeated it querulously, in a self-pitying old woman's voice; ~~repeating it with a kind of~~ ~~present its familiarity, with a new apprehension.~~ "Suffer... I am suffering, ~~you know~~... Oh Desirée, I can't breathe... I can't... There is so much dust in the air... Pittsburgh is full of dust... I am suffocating..."

"No, Madame... Soyez tranquille, Madame..." She stared helplessly at the bed. "You must rest. There isn't any dust in the air..."

"There's lots of dust, I can feel it... From the coalmines, from the factories... Pittsburgh is black with dust..." She sat up suddenly; her voice grew shrill and hysterical. "I don't like Pittsburgh... I don't want to die in Pittsburgh. ~~It's a dirty place, a dangerous~~ ~~city~~... I want to go home. I want to be in my little house, in Asolo. The air is so fresh in Asolo; the wind that comes from the mountains ^{has} ~~is~~ such a wonderful smell... Oh, the mountains... We must pack our things! Is the luggage ready? The boat in New York is waiting. We've got to make it. Hurry, Desirée! Call the maid, the chauffeur! The car is waiting... the boat... Italy... there's no time to lose... Andiamo, andiamo..."

"Yes, Madame... Everything's ready. We leave in the morning. The night is almost over. Try to sleep."

"Almost morning..." She sank back, and Desirée quietly straightened the pillows. "Asolo...", Duse said, shutting her eyes to the unreal room... "Monte Grappa... my beloved Monte Grappa..." There, there in that green valley, life was peaceful, ~~unhappy~~ From Casa dell' Arco, her lovely, ancient house, one could see Monte Grappa, magnificent

every minute ~~of~~ the day, every season of the year.

'I must keep very quiet,' she thought with a sort of desperate slyness. 'As long as I don't move, as long as I don't open my eyes, I remain in Asolo, I am home... There, on the wall, the portraits of Shelley and Beethoven.... and the bookshelves... Such lovely books!... The French classics, and there is Dante, and the beautiful works of Carducci, and Ibsen... Oh, and here, next to Shakespeare, the religious books... The Confessions of St. Augustine... I should confess too, should confess all my sins... ~~Oh Lord, I promise you this - to end my life in prayer... if I only could breathe... if I could be in Asolo, once more... Jesus, save me from Pittsburgh!... My dusty purgatory - Pittsburgh, City of Steel...~~

~~Jesus, have mercy on a wretched old woman choking to death in an impersonal room, a heartless city, an alien country. I wanted to be pure, and I was shameless. I wanted everybody to know how fine I was, how delicately attuned, how much I suffered. And people believed me, I succeeded in fooling them, they considered me a Saint - :oh. all those women who worshiped me! - oh, the hysteria, the embarrassing ecstasy of their admiration!... No no, I wouldn't be interviewed, I always refused it, firmly though politely. Off the stage I was a private person... Only my art... I despised publicity... It was very clever: who thought of it? It was my own little idea... How shy I was, how bashful, modest, reserved... It was genius, and it worked very well... Oh my Lord, forgive me!... I'll choke to death... Why didn't I have the courage to admit openly my ambitions? Sarah never was ashamed of herself, never concealed her greed and vanity... Was she stronger than I am? ~~She belonged to another period. She was more naive. That's why she dared to come out, almost shamelessly, as what she really was/~~ She wasn't tormented by remorse. She had a good conscience. For she was terribly strong. Sarah - oh, she never sought solitude, was never longing for a quiet, contemplative life. But I did: I swear you it was true, I hated journa-~~

lists, I loathed publicity, I wanted to be alone...

I wanted to be alone, and I am alone. If I should die before I wake... I am afraid... I am alone, quite alone in this enormous foreign country - and I'm dying. All over the world the newspapers will be full of it. I despise publicity. They'll say more than they ever said about my affair with Gabriele... Did I love him? Gabriele... Gabriele D'Annunzio... It was so long ago... I'll be mourned, all the world will grieve over me, people who never saw me, girls who have never known love... There will be headlines in all the papers, in the American papers, the Italian, the French, the Japanese papers... Duse is dead... The Highest Priestess of the Drama passed away... Duse is dead, Duse is dead, Duse is dead... it's like the rhythm of the wheels of a running train... Duse is dead... I don't want to die, not in Pittsburgh, not even in Asolo... It's spring in Asolo, green and lush... Why did I come? I loathe the theatre!

(No paragraph!!) →

~~I detest the theatre as I have always been avid for life, always hankering for its cruel, sweet reality... Art! - what a stale compensation for life! - ~~authentic and painful~~ Who is it, that fanatic of expression? That heartless maniac of Beauty? - Expression, that is the necessity. The greatest vision has no value unless it be manifested and condensed in living forms.... My whole work is an invention; I cannot and will not obey other than my own instinct and the genius of my race...~~

What pretentious nonsense! You are of very poor race, Gabriele, to tell the truth; of a mongrel and mediocre race, indeed... You are the actor, my friend, and I am the poet. For I have suffered as poets do, as human beings do. But you are the clown, the Pulcinella...

~~I~~ Never took the theatre quite seriously, never never never... always
have despised it, at the bottom of my heart... Yes, that's why I re-
tired. I meant it when I said that the theatre ought to be destroyed,
razed to the ground. In Rome, when the audience went crazy yelling and
fighting over Francesca da Rimini, ~~if only for a moment I could have~~
~~had the strength of Samson - I would have pulled down the theatre,~~
~~sent it crashing over the heads of the Philistines. Cruel, they called~~
~~it, vicious, decadent - it was beautiful, and something else it shouldn't~~
~~be... I can't remember. I'm a tired old woman; a sad, sick,~~
old woman... The twelve years I didn't act, 1909 to 1921, they were
peaceful. The war, the young men who died... No no, I won't think of that
now... I won't remember. I was myself, in that time, not an actress.
Not Camille ~~Marguerite Gautier, la dame aux Camélias~~; not Magda, not Nora
~~not~~ Hedda Gabler or the Lady from the Sea. I was Signora Duse, a
middle-class lady of Asolo; plump, commonplace, fairly cultured -
I might have been a retired school-teacher... I hardly recognize my
~~pictures of that time.... Duse in the role of~~
~~own face whenever I look at the photos showing me at that period...~~
~~a provincial matron...~~
~~My features had become so soft, without any tension, any character...~~
I detest the theatre, I despise it!

I'm lying. I don't know how to tell the truth anymore. Those
twelve years! They were so stupid, so empty, so boring! Nothing to get
up for in the morning, nothing to look forward to. The lights, the
sudden hush when the curtain went up, the dark, mysterious, crowded
theatre! It was my life, all the life I ever knew... I am proud of
~~having been a "Figlio dell'Arte" - "un enfant de la balle",~~
~~a theatrical child, Did I ever change? The~~
~~theatre was my home, my school, my church...~~ The varied
~~tragedies of the parts I played~~ ~~became my own, personal tragedy.~~ I can't lie to the jour-

realists when ~~now~~ I told them that I ~~wasn't~~ ^{ed} suffer with the beings I represent. I didn't play the Lady from the Sea; ~~now~~ I was Ellida - dear, beloved Ellida, my favourite part... They say it's one of Henrik Ibsen's weakest plays, but they are mistaken... Ellida is an excellent rôle... How still the theatre is, not even a cough... They like me, I can feel it, they are crazy about me... They'll send me flowers, lots of them... People know that I am ~~flown~~ ^{ed} fond of flowers; that I need them, I'm dependent on them... Roses, carnations, orchids... When Gabriele came - where was it? when? - I had the long lobby of the hotel strewn with roses...

So many!... When my poor mother died there were no flowers. I couldn't even buy mourning. I ~~wasn't~~ ^{ed} with her. I couldn't be. I was acting - and my poor mother choked to death in the hospital among strangers. My daughter Enrichetta, where is she? I don't ^{know} her very well - does she hate me? I can remember, although somewhat vaguely, that Enrichetta sometimes had an odd expression in her eyes when she looked at me - ~~unhappy~~ sad and quite severe, ~~unhappy~~ ^{ed} ~~why...~~ ~~Oh, I am afraid it was the withering expression of hatred.~~ ~~Did I ever sit in my mother's lap? Did she ever sing me ~~into~~ ^{ed} asleep when I was a child? Did she hate me as she lay dying on that unfamiliar cot with no ~~human~~ face near her that she ~~knew~~ ^{ed} Enrichetta was sweet when she was little; frail, nervous, shy... so resentful ~~to~~ of my leaving her. When she was four...~~

I was four when I played Cosette in Les Misérables, sixty years ago... sixty years... It seems like yesterday... I stood shuddering in the wings, too scared to go on, not even daring to cry, when father gave me a little spank and push.... He was not a bad comedian himself, my poor father; grandfather was somewhat better though, and uncle Frederigo, and aunt Cecelia, all of them had a certain talent,

but I am the successful member of the tribe, I'm the star, I'm famous
...There I was at last, poor ^{little} ~~unhappy~~ Cosette, in my own shoddy,
lovely world; the lights, - the only stars I ever knew...the audience,
like a monster and like a lover...I tried to speak- but it was like
calling for help in a nightmare. My voice was strangled somewhere
inside of me, and I broke out in ^a/cold sweat...I was suffocating...
Oh, I am suffocating...I can't breathe, there is dust in the air...
Then before I knew it, it came, loud and shrill as a shout...~~Cosette~~
~~Cosette screamed, the cute little girl, like a creature that is~~
~~haunted by evil ghosts~~ - and the whole house shrieked with laughter.

I remember theatres all over Italy, all over Europe, all over
the world...I remember trains, and filthy dressing rooms, and I
remember audiences, all over the world; laughing audiences, shouting
audiences, audiences that were enthusiastic or hostile or politely
cool...I was Juliet at fourteen...and for thy name which is no part
of thee...take all myself... Dear God, I couldn't help it...it
was the way I was...You have created me, gracious Lord, you have
created my sinful heart, my sinful flesh, and my thoughts, full of
sin...You are responsible, gracious Father...I couldn't help it.

I wanted to. I hated myself for it. But I couldn't. Mary, Mother
of God, forgive me. Our merciful Father, your benign Son, the Father
of your Son, He has created me as a sinful creature...I couldn't
sleep at night thinking of it. On a train, on a ship, always going
somewhere - it was like a fever. ~~Forgive a lustful old woman.~~ My
poor Gabriele, will I ever see him again? I loved him so. It was no
fun to love him - to love him that way, with so much frenzy, so much
disgust, so much humiliation...It wasn't happiness - believe me, Mary,
Mother of the Saviour! But what is happiness? I don't know what it
means, I couldn't even imagine what happiness really is...~~But that~~
~~madness I went through didn't deserve the name of happiness;~~
~~that agony and certainly did not deserve it such a name.~~

It wasn't easy, Mary Mother of God! Believe me - oh, you must believe me! - it is a horrible thing, ~~a fierce affair~~ to be in love with an ambitious clown, ^a heartless monster. My life with Gabriele D'Annunzio - sometimes it was like life in ~~the~~ bedlam; ~~sometimes it was like life in a brothel~~; sometimes it was like heaven... Oh, Gabriele, Prince of Poets, you elderly comedian, you worn-out prima donna - my grotesque, appalling, unfortunate old love. I can think your name now - I can even say it. If you were to walk into this room, at this moment, I could look at you quite calmly; my hands wouldn't sweat nor my mouth go dry. I could speak to you with neither apprehension nor hostility. I don't even want to humiliate you any more. I would just watch you - I would watch your funny, excited gestures, your pretentious, ever-changing airs - as one may watch an actor on the stage...

~~For this is an era of bad actors, my darling; ^{of} my tenth-rate actors, who write their own tenth-rate plays. Even a very poor comedy might be amusing - provided that neither the actors nor the audience ^{took} it seriously. ~~It would become boring, even embarrassing unless it has the light spirit, the weightless hilarity. Your colorful, dramatic life was a force my ambitious sweetheart; you should be bright and cynical enough to grasp these essential facts.~~~~

.... You and I acted our little tragi-comedy wilfully. If the play was too long, if our ~~unrealistic~~ romance seemed stuffy to a ^{new} generation ~~we did not know had grown up till we saw our own grey hair~~ - it was all very well. Nothing was changed, nobody got hurt; our audience could go home and go on with their lives. And we two old fools who had played so many rôles - we could ring down the curtain. ~~if we went on making futile little gestures after the theatre was dark - that was our own affair.~~

But now you have gone too far, Gabriele. You are confused, you are losing your ^{values} sense of ~~balance~~. Those ignorant boys in the street whom you've

hired to be the screaming members of a mob - for a few liras, for a flask of wine - ,do they realize this is only a game? Do they know this is an insane play, that the sword lunging at the breast will be a real sword, that the blood glutting the gutters will flow from real wounds? You've always liked blood in the streets; the background of your melodramas could never be sinister and bloody enough.

...I remember - oh, I remember so very distinctly the last time I listened to you... You harangued the Italian youth, in Milano, from the balcony of a public building. I hadn't seen you for eighteen years... eighteen years without you!... Yes, you have somewhat changed in the meantime; but your well-trained eloquence was as captivating as ever - an artificial thunderstorm, brilliant fireworks - I was thrilled, I was moved: I'm afraid I even cried a little... How very silly: to allow oneself being bluffed by a lot of bunk. For I didn't believe a single word you said. Patriotism... Italy's historical Mission!...: what a cynical old swindler you are! ~~The simple truth is that Italy's fame and power doesn't interest you in the least, as it is exclusively your own fame and power you care for...~~

You used to be more honest, my Gabriele. Why do you speak now of patriotism when you really mean your own glory? Who taught you this cunning new trick? Could it be that dubious fellow whom you've picked up? That other clown and brassy adventurer, Benito Mussolini? You're a charming couple indeed, sham-poet and sham-tyrant - il Commendatore of Fiume and a papier-maché Napoleon! For he gave you a title, if am not mistaken. It's not exactly the sort of title you wished for when I used to know you. At that time, you wanted to become poeta laureatus - can you still remember? You have dreamed of laurels - "those Latin Laurels, cut from the shrubs of the hills where, in the days of remote antiquity, the eagles descended with their prophecies..." Will you earn the Latin Laurels, mon pauvre ami, with your recent political escapades?

Will you ^{become} ~~not~~ immortal as Il Duce is popularizing the impressive slogans you offered him? La Fiamma é bella... I know, I know... But this ^{is} ~~unpleasant~~ real fire, can't you see? It burns, it hurts, it destroys - can't you feel it? The smoke... the heat... I'm suffocating... Italy is burning, our homes are in flames... Oh, Gabriele, what have you done?...

I didn't like his face. I disliked his tremendous jaws, the silly arrogance of his gestures. He is an unpleasant man, Benito Mussolini. I'm ashamed I ever wrote ^{him} that letter ~~asking~~, asking for his help, before I left Italy. But what else could I do? There wasn't any choice. I needed money... It was ~~unpleasant~~ an enormous honor, I guess - that he ~~would~~ ^{ed} pay a visit to me, and even kissed my hand, very chivalrously, and smilingly remarked: "The celebrated hands of la Duse..." What a dirty smile! No, I don't like his face... What an oily voice when he said: "Madame, I ^{have} ~~am~~ decided to do for you whatever you may desire..." But when I said, "I'm in trouble, your Excellency! Would you kindly pay the salaries ^{of} ~~my~~ my troupe?" - then he seemed to be ~~shocked~~ ^{key and} showed a solemn, ~~sad~~ disappointed face, and gravely said: "I thank you for your frankness, Eleonora Duse!" And this was the last word I ever heard from him. I didn't get a centesimo... not a single penny... How very funny! How utterly ridiculous...'

She laughed. It
~~Desirée was frightened. In~~ Signora was laughing it was a gruesome sort of laughter, weak, wicked, almost obscene. She was a witch lying there in the half-light, the enormous, feverish black eyes gleaming in the haggard face, the stringy white hair scattered on the pillow. Desirée ~~felt this monstrous laughter to be much more dreadful than any scream or lament.~~ She whispered: "Signora, Signora Duse... what's the matter?"

was frightened.

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of her mistress

The distorted face became human again. The eyes searched out the room, recognised it, acknowledged Desirée. "He is exceedingly funny. Don't you think so?"

"Qui donc, Madame?"

The sick woman

~~Her mistress~~ ~~from~~ had a remote and tender smile, ~~unusually~~ ~~known~~. Finally she said: "He was wonderful, you know. He used to be very sweet, sweeter than anyone else. He had the most charming voice, somewhat nasal though, but this didn't make any difference, on the contrary, I was extremely fond of his nasal accent, his voice was a balm to me... ~~when he read his poetry to me~~... Yes, we had lovely hours... He wrote all those brilliant plays for me... perhaps a little dated now; some critics have called them old-fashioned... Well, the world moves on, but there are magnificent scenes in all of them..."

"Yes, Signora. But you must try to sleep."

"...He was blond - too blond, perhaps, for a man, anyway, for an Italian... It was fun to travel with him. We used to travel together, did you know?"

She turned untroubled, lucid ^e yes at Desirée. "Of course you know. Everybody knows... We were an enormous scandal, Gabriele and myself... We went to Mykenda ^a, so he could write La Città Morta... Excellent scenes in it... He was a trifle too literary, maybe. ~~Never~~ ^{Never} would let you just look at a landscape. He had to describe it to you - your own private Baedecker.... Funny, this mixture of enthusiasm and pedantry... very funny..."

~~She giggled, sympathetically, happily. She suddenly looked much younger. This seemed the hilarious giggle of a very young girl.~~

~~Her words tumbled out, faster and faster, not to Desirée anymore...~~

She suddenly looked much younger - almost like a young girl, as she lay there, with closed eyes, smiling lips; dreaming...

(we've been happy¹² together - exquisitely happy)
'Oh, my darling - ~~greedy, ruthless, unscrupulous...~~ *in spite of everything* How could you
betray me? I knew you so well. I wasn't blind. I wasn't hypnotised.
You couldn't help yourself - I know, I know, I know everything about
you. Treachery was in your blood, and I knew it, and I liked you for it
...No no, I wasn't betrayed, of course not. I was the ready victim, the
willing sacrifice. So you were tired of me... I bored you; an elderly
woman, without any dignity running after a young genius. But you, my
darling - weren't you doomed to fall in love ^{with} ~~or to accept the love~~
~~from~~ an older woman? A young girl wouldn't have tolerated you. Let's
face it - with all your genius, with all your ^{sensibility} ~~sensibility~~,
your erratic charm - you were by nature, a pimp... Don't be offended,
my love! I don't mean to hurt you; I ^{must} ~~must~~ try to be honest, ^{I am} ~~now~~ I ^{am}
sick and tired of lies... The truth is that you even looked like a
pimp - your suave, furtive, fascinating face; your flashy, vulgar elegance;
always a little over-dressed, always somewhat conspicuous... I am
not blaming you - how could I? There must have been something in my
own heart, a taint, a core of corruption - that responded to just that.
A poet and a goddess of tragedy! Do you remember how we quarreled,
loudly, bitterly, endlessly, over money? You would buy expensive clothes,
flowers, perfumes: "The bill is for Madame Duse," ~~you would say in your~~
~~nasal, haughty voice~~ Oh, I resented it. I was sick with shame at loving
you. ~~a pimp and an whore...~~ How could I bear it? How could I ~~enjoy~~
~~it~~... It was all mixed up in my heart - squalor, and pity, and shame,
and a savage terror of losing you... Love was a word to say on the
stage - with dignity, with just the right pathos... But the reality
of love is so much more involved, so much more mysterious. I never
quite succeeded in understanding it. My love... my love...

I'm so cold... it's dark here... where am I.... It must be very
painful to freeze to death, ~~although~~ ^{but} they say one has enchanting
dreams, before dying... But I don't want any dreams. I ^{we} ~~had~~ enough of

~~in fact~~
them...too many ~~much too many~~ of them...Dreams and sleep in so many different rooms, so many different countries...Do you still remember, my Gabriele, all the strange roofs that covered us, the inns, the hotels, the palazzos, the sleeping cars? Do you remember, Paris, Venice, Rome... I'm alone and lost. I'll never find my way back. Where are you? I'm frightened...Pittsburgh...I'm very ill. Would you be sorry for me? Would you comfort me? Where is it, the balm of your voice? ~~What are you doing now - this very instant?~~ Will you cry when they tell you... Of course not...You couldn't...For you don't have any tears. ~~You're~~ You're like someone in a fairy-tale I once read...You look like a man, you talk like one - you understand - you reason - but you can't feel. It's a very sad thing, my darling, to be an outcast from humanity.

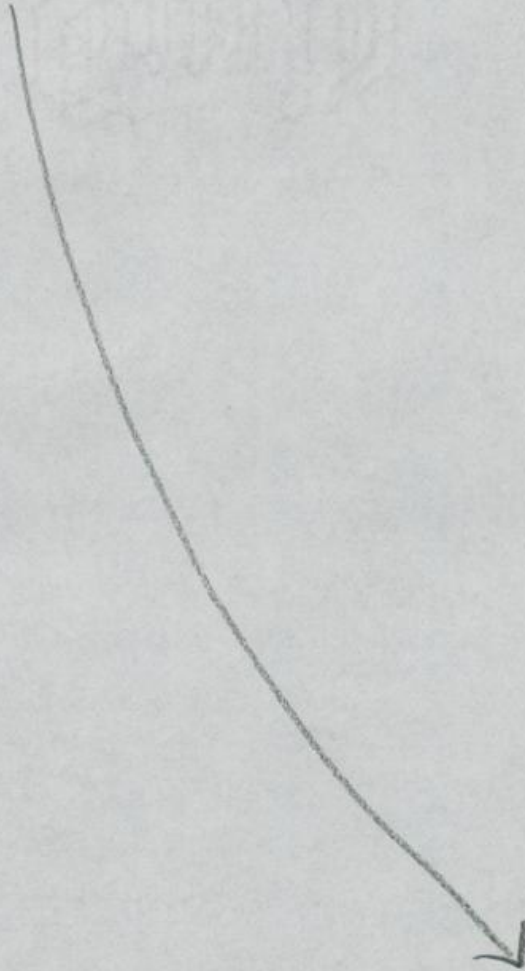
Do you remember when you were writing Il Fuoco? I knew there was something in the wind. How could I help it? That sudden ~~inordinate~~ interest in everything that had ever happened to me...How did you feel when you did this? When you kept ~~on~~ ^{asking} ~~inquiring~~ me?... "Why?... Where?... Tell me everything! Don't be ashamed, Eleonora! Cry, sweetheart, ^{if} it makes you feel better..." And your kisses. And ~~that delicious balance~~ your voice: "The truth now! Come, come, darling! I like to imagine you when you were twenty...just the way it was..."

You listened, you who never listened to anyone. ~~Shame~~ ^{but} and sweet, ~~What~~ what a relief it was to tell everything...I wept as you stood staring at me, your eyes avid and curious...When you brought me your manuscript I couldn't believe it. It was indecent, Gabriele, but that is a word you can never understand. I couldn't believe you would publish it.

"But I must, my dear," you said. "It's a masterpiece. Besides I've accepted an advance from my publisher, 25000 lira, ^{but} you know I'm not a rich man."

~~I don't hate you anymore, Gabriele...if I ever did. It was black-~~
~~mail, and paying you / - paying you in cash / made me your~~ ~~enemy~~

I gave you the money you asked for:so you could pay it back to your publisher. 25,000 lira - a nice,round little sum...And you kept it, of course you did - what else ~~could~~^{did} I expect? Didn't I know you,my darling thief? You were not the man who would miss such a chance... Now you actually had an advance of 50,000 for your masterpiece - 25,000 from the publisher,25,000 from the victim...



~~accomplice: you and I sharing an ugly secret, partners in treacherous~~
game. Once I admitted the danger of what you knew, it was merely a
question of waiting: how long before the blow fell - a day, a week, a
month... ~~Somehow it bound us even more closely together~~

Wasn't it a scandalous success, my darling, ~~translated into almost~~
~~every living tongue? Wasn't it~~ ^a thrilling story for the newspapers? ~~...
an aging actress, a young poet~~ I took to my bed: I threatened to
kill you. It was what we needed to complete the pattern ~~the betrayed
whore, the murdered pimp~~... "He has stolen my love and sold it. I will
kill him..." ~~It was the climax of the great melodrama~~

You were challenged to a duel. Like a gentleman you denied that
I was the woman you had portrayed. Bravely, honestly, I admitted it.
When the wild scandal grew stale, we renewed ^{it} by reconciliations. I
acted in your plays again...

Can God forgive me? Can He forgive you, my poor Gabriele? We have
so much to regret, both of us. I suffered, really horribly, so ~~much~~
much, that it was hard to live to the end of every day. And you, Gabriele?
Did you suffer too? Do you know what it actually means - to suffer?

I'm suffering... There is a pain in my throat, there are pains
in my head, in my feet, in my heart... And my hands are freezing...

...Did I really want to keep ^{You} ~~him~~ from publishing Il Fuoco?
^{You} ~~they~~ couldn't betray me without betraying ^{Your} ~~him~~self, and didn't I want
everyone to know how helplessly, how sordidly in love I was?... and with
a man like you?... I suffered, and the world wept with me.... But now,
at this moment, I'm suffering much more, much more cruelly, and nobody
weeps, nobody feels sorry for me... My hands are icy, and my forehead
burns... Isn't there anyone who feels sorry?

...Dear Lord, have mercy on me! I'm crying now - I don't know
why, exactly... I'm ^{bitterly} crying about Gabriele and about myself,

about our mistakes, our sins, the misunderstandings, the crimes... the ~~wasted~~ wasted life... oh, our wasted lives... Strange, the way he's just come into my mind, the little son I had in a peasant's hut when I was a silly young girl. He died in a few days, and I carried him to a cemetery. He was a lovely ^{child} ~~man~~, I still ~~man~~ remember his tiny little hands, and the funny, thin hair he had... Oh, the wasted life; all those things I ~~possessed~~ ^{lost} possessed and lost - or ~~lost~~ ^{lost} without ever having possessed ~~them~~... It's years since I've thought of my little son. Who was his father? Let me think... it will come back to me... the first man. ... There, there... if I lie calmly and concentrate... The beach of Naples, the little fishing boats, the strong smell of the sea, and those unclouded skies of a blue that was almost purple... I knew I'd remember - Martino Cafliero... Martino, that's it... I wrote him dozens of letters, full of anguish... Did I bore him as I used to bore Gabriele? ~~Yes I do, I was doomed to bore all the men I have loved since...~~ But I forgot you, Signor Cafliero!... Doesn't that make you turn over in your grave? Did you ever regret... when I was a star? You're dead now, you've been dead a long time, like that little son of ours you never saw... Will I see you again, both of you - on the other side? ~~Is there anything like an "other side"? I don't know. I don't know if there is heaven and hell, where are you, Martino Cafliero, or if there is a sign... a word... let me know!... I'm scared... oh, I'm scared...~~ ~~I'm a wicked woman. Yes, there must be a hell!...~~ I've forgotten my husband too. Not his name, I can say it without hesitation... Tebaldo Checci... but it doesn't mean anything... I can keep on pronouncing his name, and my mind's blank, my heart's blank... empty... It was long ago, and I'm very tired... ~~the truth is, even when I was living with him I couldn't remember him~~ I wonder what he was like. Probably very nice, just ^{not} enough of a rascal for me. I shouldn't have

married him but I was frightened, ~~I was so wild...~~ I was terrified of what I ^{might} turn out to be. So I married him. Poor Tebaldo. I wasn't faithful, and I should have been more discreet. It was too bad he had to find it out when I didn't want to hurt his feelings. He must have been a very kind man to forgive me and leave me a legacy - a very nice, fat little legacy, indeed... Why can't I feel anything about him? I wish I hadn't lied. I wish I ~~hadn't~~ told the reporters that he was so cruel to me, that I had to beg him for money for the barest necessities, money I had earned myself. Dear God, try to understand! Mary, Mother of ^{God,} ~~him~~ please explain to our Allmighty Father the confused position of an earthly woman. ~~You still should remember what we are like, Oh my Benign Mother...~~ After all, I was an actress, a very famous one too. Reporters found out that I had an husband, and ^{my} had to explain why he wasn't with me. I couldn't tell them the truth, could I? Besides, I was travelling with Signor Ando, very attractive he was, too... and my leading man ~~maybe there was something else to it... I was a wicked woman... Tebaldo was admitted in heaven, I was sure... Heaven must be a pretty dull place... Oh, what a blasphemy! What an abhorrent thought...~~ In fact, I've always had a great respect for virtue. Whenever I couldn't stand what I was doing, I always found a convincing reason for it. I think I almost believed it myself when I blamed Tebaldo. ~~it gave me an easy conscience... but how could I presume that I ever would succeed in fooling God?~~

...Perhaps Tebaldo was a little stingy. But I wasn't so very generous myself. Jesus, I confess it... Holy Mary, try to make it clear to the Trinity how earthly folks behave, especially the women...

I paid my company very poor salaries. I'd never even let one of them ^{have} this own little triumph. I was a star... I fought for it, I suffered for it... I couldn't bear other good actors.

Have mercy on me! I was mean, I was jealous, ~~I pretended to be so~~

~~modest, so pure, and I was a whore...~~ I was a bad, selfish mother...

Enrichetta had weak lungs, like my mother's, like mine... Oh, this cough! I'm freezing... She was too delicate to travel with me, all those dreary, dangerous roads I had to go... But it also would have been inconvenient and embarrassing to have her around - a grown-up daughter... Where are you now, Enrichetta, with your solemn, lovely face...

I am guilty, guilty, laden with crime. The heart is restless until it rests in Thee, oh my Lord.

Life is nothing but a preparation for death. I am badly prepared.

I will be punished, severely punished.

Oh, Madonna, Madonna...

I'm suffocating... Gabriele, you predicted my death in America... on a foggy day, in a foreign city, crushed under the wheels of a train, you said. The fog is thick - so much dust in the air! -, it's freezing cold, and this is a foreign city... La Città Morta... The City of Death, the City of Steel... And there is the train, it keeps coming, I'm suffocating... What do I want in the City of Steel? I'm too old... I was a failure in Italy and all over Europe. Nobody wants to see those old-fashioned plays anymore, Magda and Camille - that was all right before the war, but the war has changed so many things... ~~Now, who cares about one woman's problems? There's been too much blood spilled in Europe...~~ ~~...a deluge of blood... floods of blood and tears... they wash away all the minor problems, the delicate little riddles...~~

I am old. I am old and hideous. I'm ashamed of my old, ugly face. Why did I refuse to use any make-up? Because I wanted to prove to myself and to the others that I was not ashamed... But I actually was... I wanted to play Jeanne d'Arc, the hero girl from Orléans... I thought I could appear in an helmet, and the helmet would hide my face... And then I thought of showing my face in its shameless nakedness to

the public...I wanted to cut my hair - my white, hideous hair - and to play King Lear, the royal martyr...Yes, I intended to wander through the countries and the continents, screaming out the great lament, the tremendous indictment of all creatures that have ever suffered...Sarah was Hamlet with a wooden leg; I wanted to be King Lear with a broken heart. It would certainly have stirred up a sensation. But those agents, those narrow-minded managers didn't believe in it...of course not...Oh, those impresarios! Those idiots! Always hunting me, cheating me, exploiting me! They never gave enough money - never, never, never...That Parisian producer who leered at me: "Really, you still believe in art, Madame?" It was a withering glance I gave him - a deadly glance, I'm sure... "Monstre!" I said, "Monstre - vous me dégoûtez!"

It's different here. People still believe in art - some of them, at least...There is a certain enthusiasm, a certain youthfulness...In Italy everyone is broke...And the French Franc goes down: it's inflation, they say...Perhaps Europe really is in decline, a doomed continent, worn-out, exhausted - but so beautiful...I feel myself as an emissary of European sadness, European splendor when I receive the homages of American youth...I've had a triumph here - nobody had a greater triumph, not even Sarah...Jammed houses in New York and Chicago and San Francisco...what a consolation after all the humiliations at home!... Enorme, enorme consolazione... ^{my} You men, sending flowers; girls, waiting for me at the stage door; following me after the show - sometimes from city to city... Young faces, everywhere; radiant, faithful faces...But my face is old, faded, flabby. I have no strength anymore. I wanted to be the ~~go-between~~ interpreter between our ancient, ~~over-ripe~~ culture and this effulgent, ~~impressionable~~ youth...But I have no strength.

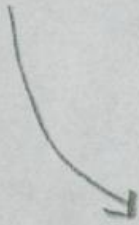
Messengers should be young and alert. An elderly go-between - what a dreary figure! There will be young people, at home in two worlds, citizens of both the Old and the New World...speaking a language in-

telligible everywhere; carrying a message welcome everywhere... Their language - the ~~reasonable and~~ inspired Esperanto of youth; their message - Peace, and a fair, enthusiastic contest; a new simplicity, a new pride, a new love... oh, a new love! For our love has become stale and ~~spoiled~~ and tainted... We have spoiled our love, my poor Gabriele: our days are over ~~we are old~~...

People ought to grow old together. Everything would be easier if you were close to me, my old friend. The world wouldn't be so empty, so frightening...

I'll be better tomorrow... The doctor told me so ~~Of course, Madame~~
~~tomorrow - you will be much better - much better...~~ I must work...
I'll be able to work... If I pull myself ~~very strongly~~ together - if I make a tremendous effort, ~~I might be able, once more, to act as a~~
~~go-between and inspiring messenger, between the two worlds...~~ But I forgot all my lines while I was sick... I must have been sick for ages. I'm afraid I'll have to memorize everything again - La Porta Chiusa... I can't remember a word... La Porta Chiusa - an effective play, very cleverly made - but what was it all about? I have completely forgotten... I'm forgetting - forgetting - forgetting...

The Greeks believed there was a dark, mysterious wine, and once ^{that} you had drunk it, or ~~had~~ just tasted it, you forgot everything - pain and ambition, the mistakes you made, and the triumphs, love and hatred - everything, the whole play... One must feel very light, once one has forgotten... very detached, like a bird, like an angel...



...But I still can remember, although somehow vaguely...I still must recall things, and faces, and images...although they ^{are} ~~was~~ somewhat blurred...

La Porta Chiusa ... La Porte Fermée... The Closed Door...What is behind the door? There must be something behind... ^{Perhaps} ~~maybe~~ my cute little son who ^{memory,} ~~was~~ was born and died...just was born and died...He didn't have any ~~memory~~ ^{memory} ~~but~~ he didn't need any dark wine to forget... ~~light and detached like an~~ angel... But this is the stage door of the theatre...how was its name? ...The Syria Mosque Theatre - :funny I ^{can} remember ^{it} ~~myself~~ - and what a silly name, The Syria Mosque Theatre in Pittsburgh...The door was locked when I came...it was freezing cold...I had to wait in the rain - icy rain! - , for hours, or it seemed ^{to me} ~~like~~ ^{hours}...The concierge told me the key was lost - he couldn't find the key...But probably he was hiding something behind that door - something which I was not supposed to see...Desirée gave me her coat but it didn't help ~~very much~~...I went on freezing...The whole scene was probably arranged in order to kill me ...There are so many people ^{who} ~~that~~ loathe me and are only too eager to ruin me - critics, and agents, and actresses...It must have been a murderous plot...And they succeeded - oh, how successful they were! ~~for it was at that hour, while I had to sit wait and to freeze at the stage door, that I caught~~ ^{caught} that pneumonia ~~which is going to kill me...~~

...Or wasn't there any conspiracy? Perhaps there wasn't really any ~~conspiracy~~ ^{only} ~~conspiracy~~...All there actually was, ^{was} the mystery behind the door - the hidden beauty which I was not allowed to see...The concierge, then, had received his orders from ^{someone} ~~in~~ higher ~~instance~~ - from the highest, ~~instance~~ indeed - :the decisive order not to open the door - not to let me see...

But ~~this trial was not taken back~~ finally...what a relief! The door opens...finally, finally...Oh, the light...the burst of lights...the tremendous shine...it is blinding me... ~~it is~~ deafening me...it's

A pneumonia - that's what they wanted to give me, my good, helpful colleagues.
A nice, deadly pneumonia....

a splendor as I have never seen before....a noise as I have never heard...It's like the opera but so much more overwhelming...It's like fire...

La Fiamma é bella... I know, I know...

I know, my Gabriele. I've expected you. Here you are. There is your voice. There are your eyes. There are your hands. No flames any longer...No music - only your voice...the familiar spectacle of your gestures, the winged elegance of your steps...How young you look, Gabriele, my ageing love...So do I - is it this that you tried to say? Younger than ever, more attractive than ever?...Thank you, my dear, for your exquisite politeness...It's rather odd though that you only whisper and are making mysterious signs instead of pronouncing regular words - you who used to be the Prince of Eloquence...Oh, how touching this is! You move your lips, clumsily as someone who is dumb ~~and~~ deaf...I must guess your words, but I love to guess them...

What a sublime ~~new~~ gift your silence is, my darling - after so many words. Your mute eloquence - what a gorgeous surprise! For I'm fed up with words - they've lost their sense, their meaning, their mystery. They are senseless, worn-out - we have used them too much, you and I, - we have played with them, ~~we~~ have distorted, falsified, tainted them ~~There are new words, I'm sure - there must be a new word! But we ignore it...~~ Should we repeat like a couple of parrots the old lines - for ever? Oh no, darling, no...Finally we are allowed ~~finally~~ we are obliged to be ^{still} silent...

Come closer to me...yes, like this, thanks...still a little closer ...How long it took, my Gabriele! How much wasted time! How many detours, before - we reached - this goal...We recited our monologues, separated from one another...Now, let's be silent, together...

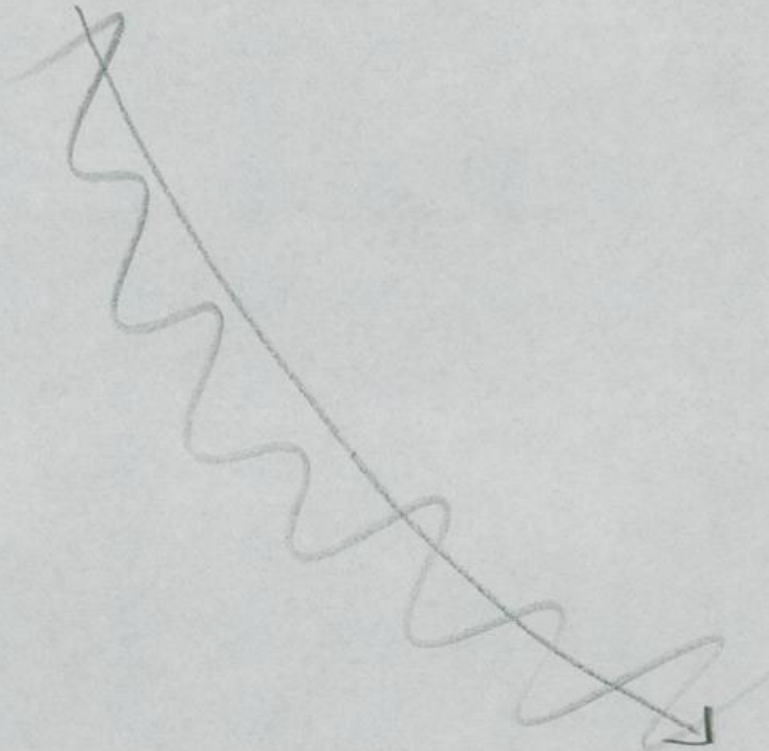
I'm freezing...Cover me...'

[Blank line!]

Through the window, between the curtains, one could already see the dawn; the gloomy, chilly morning of April 10, 1924, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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~~Thirty five minues later, three men arrived with a bier. They had orders to take the body of Eleonora Duse to the morgue. The three fellows, in their dark, shabby coats, found the room full of crying women. Mademoiselle Desirée, sitting next to the bed, kept on mumbling:~~



CHORD BOND

1924

Last Monologue.

(Eleonora Duse in Pittsburgh.)

MACADAM BOND

WAG CONTIN

(Pittsburgh, Pa. 1891)

Many people tried to see the famous patient at the Shenley Hotel in Pittsburgh. But only Mademoiselle Desirée and Maria Avogadro, both faithful and experienced companions of the Italian vedette, were admitted. Dr. Charles J. Barone issued bulletins to the press; his diagnoses wavered from hour to hour. In the morning there was a slight improvement; he feared the worst in the night; dawn found him optimistic again. In a few days, however, it was obvious that Signora Eleonora Duse was in a very bad way indeed.

...In the room, the shades were drawn, and there was a sharp, sweet smell of medicine. Desirée, tip-toeing in from the antechambre, whispered: "Is she asleep?" And Maria Avogadro, almost without using her voice: "No...but she is out of her head - her temperature is up. Look at her...she keeps on talking..."

They looked at her. The harassed head tossed restlessly on the pillows. There it was, the face that was the idol of two continents; ugly and human, an old, suffering face; the tormented mask on which we trace the signature of encroaching death. The white, wiry hair lay heavily on the damp forehead - the fine, arched forehead which D'Annunzio had praised as "the wonderful forehead of a very intelligent man." The eyelids were half-closed over "the dark, living firmament of her eyes," and ~~the~~ her hands - the famous hands of Eleonora Duse, so much admired, so often described - were clenched on the covers, gaunt, fragile, almost luminous in the confused twilight. There was a deep furrow between the dark, wide sweep of the eyebrows, and her lips, which had remained childish and firm and voluptuous, were drawn back over the teeth.

Signorita Maria looked terrified. She wanted to escape the whisper,

the touch, the evil taste of death. But ~~a sense of~~ shame made her hesitate ^{at} ~~near~~ the door. "Do you think she's in pain?" she asked anxiously. "Do you think she suffers?"

The woman in the bed heard the word and repeated it querulously, in a self-pitying old woman's voice, repeated it with a kind of surprise at its familiarity, with a new apprehension: "Suffer... I am suffering, ~~yes, indeed~~... Oh Desirée, I can't breathe... I can't... There is so much dust in the air... Pittsburgh is full of dust... I am suffocating..."

"No, Madame... Soyez tranquille, Madame..." She stared helplessly at the bed. "You must rest. There isn't any dust in the air..."

"There's lots of dust, I can feel it... From the coalmines, from the factories... Pittsburgh is black with dust..." She sat up suddenly; her voice grew shrill and hysterical. "I don't like Pittsburgh... I don't want to die in Pittsburgh. It's a dirty place, a dangerous city... I want to go home. I want to be in my little house, in Asolo. The air is so fresh in Asolo; the wind that comes from the mountains ^{has} ~~bring~~ such a wonderful smell... Oh, the mountains... We must pack our things! Is the luggage ready? The boat in New York is waiting. We've got to make it. Hurry, Desirée! Call the maid, the chauffeur! The car is waiting... the boat... Italy... there's no time to lose... Andiamo, andiamo..."

"Yes, Madame... Everything's ready. We leave in the morning. The night is almost over. Try to sleep."

"Almost morning..." She sank back, and Desirée quietly straightened the pillows. "Asolo...", Duse said, shutting her eyes to the unreal room... "Monte Grappa... my beloved Monte Grappa..." There, there in that green valley, life was peaceful, ~~was good~~. From Casa dell' Arco, her lovely, ancient house, one could see Monte Grappa, magnificent

every minute ~~of~~ the day, every season of the year.

'I must keep very quiet,' she thought with a sort of desperate slyness. 'As long as I don't move, as long as I don't open my eyes, I remain in Asolo, I am home.... There, on the wall, the portraits of Shelley and Beethoven.... and the bookshelves.... Such lovely books!... The French classics, and there is Dante, and the beautiful works of Carducci, and Ibsen.... Oh, and here, next to Shakespeare, the religious books... The Confessions of St. Augustine... I should confess too, should confess all my sins.... Oh Lord, I promise you this - to end my life in prayer... if I only could breathe... if I could be in Asolo, once more... Jesus, save me from Pittsburgh!... My dusty purgatory - Pittsburgh, City of Steel...

Jesus, have mercy on a wretched old woman choking to death in an impersonal room, a heartless city, an alien country. I wanted to be pure, and I was shameless. I wanted everybody to know how fine I was, how delicately attuned, how much I suffered. And people believed me, I succeeded in fooling them, they considered me a Saint - oh, all those women who worshiped me! - oh, the hysteria, the embarrassing ecstasy of their admiration!... No no, I wouldn't be interviewed, I always refused it, firmly though politely. Off the stage I was a private person... Only my art... I despised publicity... It was very clever: who thought of it? It was my own little idea... How shy I was, how bashful, modest, reserved... It was genius, and it worked very well... Oh my Lord, forgive me!... I'll choke to death... Why didn't I have the courage to admit openly my ambitions? Sarah never was ashamed of herself, never concealed her greed and vanity... Was she stronger than I am? She belonged to another period. She was more naive. That's why she dared to come out, almost shamelessly, as what she really was. She wasn't tormented by remorse. She had a good conscience. For she was terribly strong. Sarah - oh, she never sought solitude, was never longing for a quiet, contemplative life. But I did: I swear you it was true, I hated journa-

lists, I loathed publicity, I wanted to be alone...

I wanted to be alone, and I am alone. If I should die before I wake... I am afraid... I am alone, quite alone in this enormous foreign country - and I'm dying. All over the world the newspapers will be full of it. I despise publicity. They'll say more than they ever said about my affair with Gabriele... Did I love him? Gabriele... Gabriele D'Annunzio... It was so long ago... I'll be mourned, all the world will grieve over me, people who never saw me, girls who have never known love... There will be headlines in all the papers, in the American papers, the Italian, the French, the Japanese papers... Duse is dead... The Highest Priestess of the Drama passed away... Duse is dead, Duse is dead, Duse is dead... it's like the rhythm of the wheels of a running train... Duse is dead... I don't want to die, not in Pittsburgh, not even in Asolo... It's spring in Asolo, green and lush... Why did I come? I loathe the theatre!

I detest the theatre as I have always been avid for life, always hankering for its cruel, sweet reality... Art! - what a stale compensation for life! - ~~authentic and painful~~ Who is it, that fanatic of expression? That heartless maniac of Beauty? - Expression, that is the necessity. The greatest vision has no value unless it be manifested and condensed in living forms.... My whole work is an invention; I cannot and will not obey other than my own instinct and the genius of my race...

What pretentious nonsense! You are of very poor race, Gabriele, to tell the truth; of a mongrel and mediocre race, indeed... You are the actor, my friend, and I am the poet. For I have suffered as poets do, as human beings do. But you are the clown, the Pulcinella...

I never took the theatre quite seriously, never never never... ^{always} ~~always~~
have despised it, at the bottom of my heart... Yes, that's why I re-
tired. I meant it when I said that the theatre ought to be destroyed,
razed to the ground. In Rome, when the audience went crazy, yelling and
fighting over Francesca da Rimini, if only for a moment I could have
had the strength of Samson - I would have pulled down the theatre,
sent it crashing over the heads of the Philistines. Cruel, they called
it, vicious, decadent - it was beautiful, and something else it shouldn't
be... ~~By the way, I don't care; perhaps it really was a rather poor~~
~~piece of work...~~ I can't remember. I'm a tired old woman, a sad, sick,
old woman... The twelve years I didn't act, 1909 to 1921, they were
peaceful. The war, the young men who died... No no, I won't think of that
now... I won't remember. I was myself, ^{then} ~~in that time~~, not an actress.
Not ^{Camille} ~~Marguerite Gautier, la dame aux Camélias~~; not Magda, not Nora,
^{not} ~~or~~ Hedda Gabler or the Lady from the Sea. I was Signora Duse, a
middle-class lady of Asolo; plump, commonplace, fairly cultured -
I might have been a retired school-teacher... I hardly recognize my
~~pictures of that time -~~
~~own face whenever I look at the photos showing me at that period...~~
My features had become so soft, without any tension, any character...
I detest the theatre, I despise it!

I'm lying. I don't know how to tell the truth anymore. Those
twelve years! They were so stupid, so empty, so boring! Nothing to get
up for in the morning, nothing to look forward to. The lights, the
sudden hush when the curtain went up, the dark, mysterious, crowded
theatre! It was my life, all the life I ever knew... I am proud of
having been a "Figlio dell' Arte" - "un enfant de la balle",
a theatrical child, ~~that's it what I was~~. Did I ever change? The
theatre ^{was} ~~used to be~~ my home, ~~and~~ my school, ~~and~~ my church... The ~~various~~
tragedies of the ~~immense~~ parts I ^{played} ~~had to represent~~, by a ruthless
~~miracle~~ became my own, personal tragedy. I didn't lie to the jour-

nalists whenever I told them that I ~~was forced~~^{ed} to suffer with the beings I represent. I didn't play the Lady from the Sea, ~~for~~^{ed} I was Ellida - dear, beloved Ellida, my favourite part... They say it's one of Henrik Ibsen's weakest plays, but they are mistaken... Ellida is an excellent rôle... How still the theatre is, not even a cough... They like me, I can feel it, they are crazy about me... They'll send me flowers, lots of them... People know that I am ~~pleased~~ fond of flowers; that I need them, I'm dependent on them... Roses, carnations, orchids... When Gabriele came - where was it? when? - I had the long lobby of the hotel strewn with roses...

So many!... When my poor mother died there were no flowers. I couldn't even buy mourning. I wasn't with her. I couldn't be. I was acting - and my poor mother choked to death in the hospital among strangers. My daughter Enrichetta, where is she? I don't ^{know} her very well - does she hate me? I can remember, although somewhat vaguely, that Enrichetta sometimes had an odd expression in her eyes when she looked at me - ~~a rather~~ sad, and quite severe, ~~expres-~~
~~sion... Oh, I am afraid it was the withering expression of hatred...~~
Did I ever sit in my mother's lap? Did she ever sing me ~~into~~ sleep when I was a child? Did she hate me as she lay dying on that unfamiliar cot with no ~~human~~ face near her that she knew? Enrichetta was sweet when she was little; frail, nervous, shy... so resentful ~~to~~ of my leaving her. When she was four...

I was four when I played Cosette in Les Misérables, sixty years ago... sixty years... It seems like yesterday... I stood shuddering in the wings, too scared to go on, not even daring to cry, when father gave me a little spank and push.... He was not a bad comedian him-
~~self~~, my poor father; grandfather was somewhat better though, and uncle Frederigo, and aunt Cecelia, all of them had a certain talent,

but I am ~~the~~ successful member of the tribe, I'm the star, I'm famous.
...There I was at last, poor ^{little} trembling Cosette, in my own shoddy,
lovely world; the lights, - the only stars I ever knew... the audience,
like a monster and like a lover... I tried to speak- but it was like
calling for help in a nightmare. My voice was strangled somewhere
inside of me, and I broke out in ^a cold sweat... I was suffocating...
Oh, I am suffocating... I can't breathe, there is dust in the air...
Then before I knew it, it came, loud and shrill as a shout... ~~little~~
~~Cosette screamed, the cute little girl yelled like a creature that is~~
~~haunted by evil ghosts/-~~ and the whole house shrieked with laughter.

I remember theatres all over Italy, all over Europe, all over
the world... I remember trains, and filthy dressing rooms, and I
remember audiences, all over the world; laughing audiences, shouting
audiences, audiences that were enthusiastic or hostile or politely
cool... I was Juliet at fourteen... and for thy name which is no part
of thee... take all myself... Dear God, I couldn't help it... it
was the way I was... You have created me, gracious Lord, you have
created my sinful heart, my sinful flesh, and my thoughts, full of
sin... You are responsible, gracious Father... I couldn't help it.

I wanted to. I hated myself for it. But I couldn't. Mary, Mother
of God, forgive me. Our merciful Father, your benign Son, the Father
of your Son, He has created me as a sinful creature... I couldn't
sleep at night thinking of it. On a train, on a ship, always going
somewhere - it was like a fever. Forgive a lustful old woman! My
poor Gabriele, will I ever see him again? I loved him so. It was no
fun to love him - to love him that way, with so much frenzy, so much
disgust, so much humiliation... It wasn't happiness - believe me, Mary,
Mother of the Saviour! But what is happiness? I don't know what it
means, I couldn't even imagine what happiness really is... ~~but that~~
~~madness I went through didn't deserve the name of happiness;~~
~~that agony~~ ^{constant} ~~that agony~~ ~~and certainly did not deserve it. Just a name.~~

It wasn't easy, Mary Mother of God! Believe me - oh, you must believe me! - it is a horrible thing, ~~a fierce effort~~ ^a to be in love with an ambitious clown, ^a heartless monster. My life with Gabriele D'Annunzio - sometimes it was like life in a bedlam; sometimes it was like life in a brothel; sometimes it was like heaven... Oh, Gabriele, Prince of Poets, you elderly comedian, you worn-out prima donna - my grotesque, appalling, unfortunate old love. I can think your name now - I can even say it. If you were to walk into this room, at this moment, I could look at you quite calmly; my hands wouldn't sweat nor my mouth go dry. I could speak to you with neither apprehension nor hostility. I don't even want to humiliate you any more. I would just watch you - I would watch your funny, excited gestures, your pretentious, ever-changing airs - as one may watch an actor on the stage...

For this is an era of bad actors, my darling; ^{of} ~~for~~ tenth-rate actors - who write their own ~~tenth-rate~~ plays. Even a very poor comedy might be amusing - provided that neither the actors ~~not~~ the audience ^{took} ~~take~~ it seriously. ~~harmless, becomes boring, even embarrassing unless it has the light spirit, the weightless hilarity... Your colourful, dramatic life was a farce, my ambitious sweetheart: you should be bright and cynical enough to grasp this essential fact...~~

↓ You and I acted our little tragi-comedy wilfully. If the play was too long, if our ~~mad~~ ^{mad} romance seemed stuffy to a generation we did not know had grown up till we saw our own grey hair - it was all very well. Nothing was changed, nobody got hurt; our audience could go home and go on with their lives. And we two old fools who had played so many rôles - we could ring down the curtain. If we went on making futile little gestures after the theatre was dark - that was our own affair.

But now you have gone too far, Gabriele. You are confused, you are losing your sense of ^{values} ~~balance~~. Those ignorant boys in the street whom you've

hired to be the screaming members of a mob - for a few liras, for a flask of wine - ,do they realize this is only a game? Do they know this is an insane play, that the sword lunging at the breast will be a real sword, that the blood glutting the gutters will flow from real wounds? You've always liked blood in the streets; the background of your melodramas could never be sinister and bloody enough.

...I remember - oh, I remember so very distinctly the last time I listened to you... You harangued the Italian youth, in Milano, from the balcony of a public building. I hadn't seen you for eighteen years... eighteen years without you!... Yes, you have somewhat changed in the meantime; but your well-trained eloquence was as captivating as ever - an artificial thunderstorm, brilliant fireworks - I was thrilled, I was moved: I'm afraid I even cried a little... how very silly: to allow oneself being bluffed by a lot of bunk. For I didn't believe a single word you said. Patriotism... Italy's historical Mission!...: what a cynical old swindler you are! The simple truth is that Italy's fame and power doesn't interest you in the least, as it is exclusively your own fame and power you care for...

You used to be more honest, my Gabriele. Why do you speak now of patriotism when you really mean your own glory? Who taught you this cunning new trick? Could it be that dubious fellow whom you've picked up? That other clown and brassy adventurer, Benito Mussolini? You're a charming couple indeed, sham-poet and sham-tyrant - il Commendatore of Fiume and a papier-maché Napoleon! For he gave you a title, if am not mistaken. It's not exactly the sort of title you wished for when I used to know you. At that time, you wanted to become poeta laureatus - can you still remember? You have dreamed of laurels - "those Latin Laurels, cut from the shrubs of the hills where, in the days of remote antiquity, the eagles descended with their prophecies..." Will you earn the Latin Laurels, mon pauvre ami, with your recent political escapades?

Will you ~~get~~ ^{become} immortal as Il Duce is popularizing the impressive slogans you offered him? La Fiamma é bella... I know, I know... ~~But~~ But this ~~happens to be~~ ^{is} real fire, can't you see? It burns, it hurts, it destroys - can't you feel it?... Italy is burning, our homes are in flames... Oh, Gabriele, what have you done?...

I didn't like his face. I disliked his tremendous jaws, the silly arrogance of his gestures. He is an unpleasant man, Benito Mussolini. I'm ashamed I ever wrote ^{him} that letter ~~to him~~, asking for ~~his~~ help, before I left Italy. But what else could I do? There wasn't any choice. I needed money... It was ~~supposed to be~~ ^{ed} an enormous honor, I guess - that he ~~authored to~~ pay a visit to me, and even kissed my hand, very chivalrously, and smilingly remarked: "The celebrated hands of la Duse..." What a dirty smile! No, I don't like his face, ^{nor his voice.} ... What an oily voice! ~~When he said:~~ "Madame, I ^{have} ~~am~~ decided to do for you whatever you may desire..." But when I said, "I'm in trouble, your Excellency! Would you kindly pay the salaries ^{of} ~~for~~ my troupe" - then he seemed to be ~~kind of~~ ^{he} shocked, and showed a solemn, ~~somewhat~~ disappointed face, and gravely said: "I thank you for your frankness, Eleonora Duse!" And this was the last word I ever heard from him. I didn't get a centesimo... not a single penny... How very funny! How utterly ridiculous...'

Desirée was frightened. The Signora was laughing - it was a grue= some sort of laughter, weak, wicked, almost obscene. She was a witch lying there in the half-light, the enormous, feverish black eyes glesming in the haggard face, the stringy white hair scattered on the pillow. Desirée felt this monstrous laughter to be much more dreadful than any scream or lament. She whispered: "Signora, Signora Duse... what's the matter?"

The distorted face became human again. The eyes searched out the room, recognised it, acknowledged Desirée. "He is exceedingly funny. Don't you think so?"

"Qui donc, Madame?"

Her mistress ~~only~~ had a remote and tender smile, ~~instead of an~~
~~answer~~ Finally she said: "He was wonderful, you know. He used to be very sweet, sweeter than anyone else. He had the most charming voice, somewhat nasal though, but this didn't make any difference, on the contrary, I was extremely fond of his nasal accent, his voice was a balm to me... When he read his poetry to me... Yes, we had lovely hours... He wrote all those brilliant plays for me... perhaps a little dated now; some critics have called them old-fashioned... Well the world moves on, but there are magnificent scenes in all of them..."

"Yes, Signora. But you must try to sleep."

"...He was blond - too blond, perhaps, for a man, anyway, for an Italian... It was fun to travel with him. We used to travel together, did you know?"

She turned untroubled, lucid ^eyes at Desirée. "Of course you know. Everybody knows... We were an enormous scandal, Gabriele and myself... We went to Mykenae ^c so he could write La Città Morta... Excellent scenes in it... He was a trifle too literary, maybe. He never would let you just look at a landscape. He had to describe it to you - your own private Baedecker.... Funny, this mixture of enthusiasm and pedantry... very funny..."

She giggled, sympathetically, happily. She suddenly looked much younger. This seemed the hilarious giggle of a very young girl. The words tumbled out, faster and faster, not to Desirée anymore. . . .

#

'Oh, my darling - greedy, ruthless, unscrupulous... how could you betray me? I knew you so well. I wasn't blind. I wasn't hypnotised. ~~You~~ You couldn't help yourself - I know, I know, I know everything about you. Treachery was in your blood, and I knew it, and I liked you for it... No no, I wasn't betrayed, of course not. I was the ready victim, the willing sacrifice. So you were tired of me... I bored you; an elderly woman, without any dignity running after a young genius. But you, my darling - weren't you doomed to fall in love, ^{with} ~~or to accept the love~~ ~~from~~ an older woman? A young girl wouldn't have tolerated you. Let's face it - with all your genius, with all your sensibility, with all your erratic charm - you were by nature, a pimp... Don't be offended, my love! I don't mean to hurt you; I ^{must} ~~just~~ try to be honest, ~~for~~ I ~~am~~ sick and tired of lies... The truth is that you even looked like a pimp - your suave, furtive, fascinating face; your flashy, vulgar elegance; always a little over-dressed, always somewhat conspicuous... I am not blaming you - how could I? There must have been something in my own heart, a taint, a core of corruption - that responded to just that. A poet and a goddess of tragedy! Do you remember how we quarreled, loudly, bitterly, endlessly, over money? You would buy expensive clothes, flowers, perfumes. "The bill is for Madame Duse," you would say in your nasal, haughty voice. Oh, I resented it. I was sick with shame at loving you. A pimp and a ~~a~~ whore... How could I bear it? How could I enjoy it?... It was all mixed up in my heart - squalor, and pity, and shame, and a savage terror of losing you... Love was a word to say on the stage - with dignity, with just the right pathos... But the reality of love is so much more involved, so much more mysterious. I never quite succeeded in understanding it. My love... my love...

I'm so cold... it's dark here... where am I.... It must be ~~very~~ painful to freeze to death ~~although~~ they say one has enchanting dreams, before dying... But I don't want any dreams. I ^{ne} had enough of

them...too many, ~~much too many~~ of them...Dreams and sleep in so many different rooms, so many different countries...Do you still remember, my Gabriele, all the strange roofs that covered us, the inns, the hotels, the palazzos, the sleeping cars? Do you remember, Paris, Venice, Rome?... I'm alone and lost. I'll never find my way back. Where are you? I'm frightened...Pittsburgh...I'm very ill. Would you be sorry for me? Would you comfort me? Where is it, the balm of your voice? What are you doing - now - this very ~~instant~~ instant? Will you cry when they tell you... Of course not...You couldn't...For you don't have any tears. ~~You're~~ You're like someone in a fairy-tale I once read...You look like a man, you talk like one - you understand - you reason - but you can't feel. It's a very sad thing, my darling, to be an outcast from humanity.

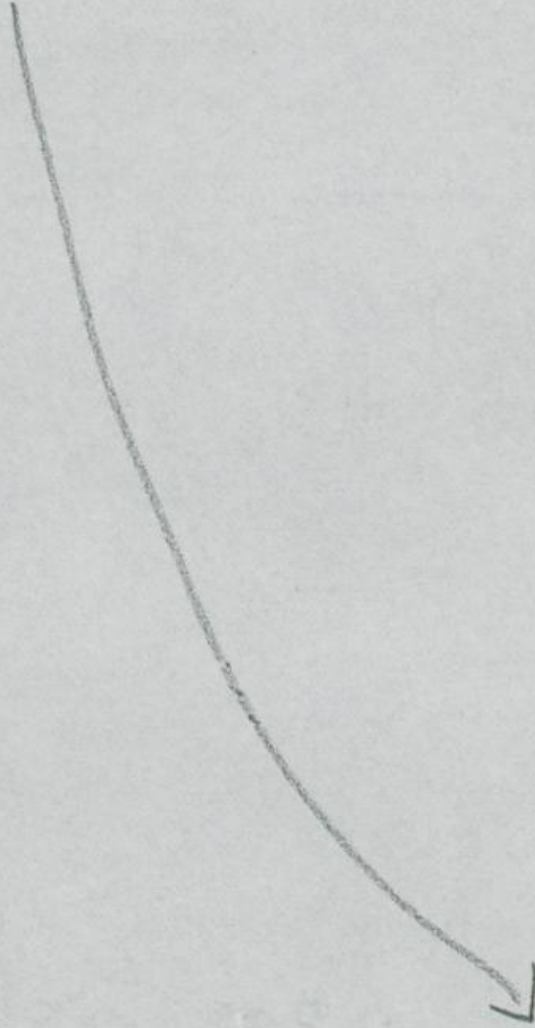
Do you remember when you were writing Il Fuoco? I knew there was something in the wind. How could I help it? That sudden inordinate interest in everything that had ever happened to me...How did you feel when you did this? When you kept on ~~inquiring~~ ^{asking} me?... "Why?... Where?... Tell me everything! Don't be ashamed, Eleonora! Cry, sweetheart, if it makes you feel better..." And your kisses. And ~~that dubious bliss~~ your voice: "The truth now! Come, come, darling! I like to imagine you when you were twenty...just the way it was..."

You listened, you who never listened to anyone. Shame ^{ful} and sweet, what a relief it was to tell everything...I wept as you stood staring at me, your eyes avid and curious...When you brought me your manuscript I couldn't believe it. It was indecent, Gabriele, but that is a word you can never understand. I couldn't believe you would publish it.

"But I must, my dear," you said. "It's a masterpiece. Besides I've accepted an advance from my publisher, 25000 lire. You know I'm not a rich man."

~~I don't hate you anymore, Gabriele...if I ever did. It was blackmail, and paying you / paying you in cash / made me your companion.~~

I gave you the money you asked for: so you could pay it back to your publisher. 25,000 lira - a nice, round little sum... And you kept it, of course you did - what else ~~could~~^{did} I expect? Didn't I know you, my darling thief? You were not the man who would miss such a chance... Now you actually had an advance of 50,000 for your masterpiece - 25,000 from the publisher, 25,000 from the victim...



~~accomplice: you and I sharing an ugly secret, partners in ^a treacherous game. Once I admitted the danger of what you knew, it was merely a question of waiting: how long before the blow fell - a day, a week, a month... Somehow it bound us even more closely together.~~

Wasn't it a scandalous success, my darling, translated into almost every living tongue? Wasn't it a thrilling story for the newspapers, - an aging actress, a young poet? I took to my bed: I threatened to kill you. It was what we needed to complete the pattern - the betrayed whore, the murdered pimp... "He has stolen my love and sold it. I will kill him..." ~~It was the climax of the great melodrama.~~

You were challenged to a duel. Like a gentleman you denied that I was the woman you had portrayed. Bravely, honestly, I admitted it. When the wild scandal grew stale, we renewed ^{it} by reconciliations. I acted in your plays again...

Can God forgive me? Can He forgive you, my poor Gabriele? We have so much to regret, both of us. I suffered, really horribly, so ~~much~~ much, that it was hard to live to the end of every day. And you, Gabriele? Did you suffer too? Do you know what it actually means - to suffer?

I'm suffering... There is a pain in my throat, there are pains in my head, in my feet, in my heart... And my hands are freezing...

...Did I really want to keep ~~him~~ ^{you} from publishing Il Fuoco? ^{you} He couldn't betray me without betraying ^{your} himself, and didn't I want everyone to know how helplessly, how sordidly in love I ~~was~~? ...and with a man like you? ...I suffered, and the world wept with me.... But now, at this moment, I'm suffering much more, much more cruelly, and nobody weeps, nobody feels sorry for me... My hands are icy, and my forehead burns... Isn't there anyone who feels sorry?

...Dear Lord, have mercy on me! I'm crying now - I don't know why, exactly... I'm bitterly crying about Gabriele and about myself,

about our mistakes, our sins, the misunderstandings, the crimes...the
~~wasted~~ wasted life...oh, our wasted lives...Strange, the way he's just
come into my mind, the little son I had in a peasant's hut when I was
a silly young girl. He died in a few days, and I carried him to a
cemetery. He was a lovely ^{child} ~~kid~~, I still ~~can~~ remember his tiny little
hands, and the funny, thin hair he had...Oh, the wasted life; all those
things I ~~have~~ possessed and lost - or ~~lost~~ ~~them~~ without ever having pos=
sessed ~~them~~...It's years since I've thought of my little son. Who was
his father? Let me think...it will come back to me...the first man.
...There, there...if I lie calmly and concentrate...The beach of
Naples, the little fishing boats, the strong smell of the sea, and
~~the~~ ~~these~~ unclouded skies of ~~blue~~ blue that was almost purple...I knew
I'd remember - Martino Cafliero...Martino, that's it...I wrote him
dozens of letters, full of anguish...Did I bore him as I used to bore
Gabriele? Was I doomed to bore all the men I ~~was in~~ love ~~with~~?...
But I forgot you, Signor Cafliero!...Doesn't that make you turn
over in your grave? Did you ever regret...when I was a star? You're
dead now, you've been dead a long time, like that little son of ours
you never saw...Will I see you again, both of you - on the other side?
~~...Is there anything like an "other side"? Are the preachers right?~~
~~Is there heaven and hell? Where are you, Martino Cafliero? Give me a~~
~~sign...a word...let me know!...I'm scared...oh, I'm scared...!~~
~~I'm a wicked woman. Yes, there must be a hell.~~ I've forgotten
my husband too. Not his name, I can say it without hesitation...
Tebaldo Checchi...but it doesn't mean anything....I can keep on
pronouncing his name, and my mind's blank, my heart's blank...empty...
It was long ago, and I'm very tired...The truth is, even when I was
living with him I couldn't remember him. I wonder what he was like.
Probably very nice, just enough of a rascal for me. I ~~shouldn't~~ have

married him but I was frightened. I was so wild... I was terrified of what I ^{might} turn out to be. So I married him. Poor Tebaldo. I wasn't faithful, and I should have been more discreet. It was too bad he had to find it out when I didn't want to hurt his feelings. He must have been a very kind man to forgive me and leave me a legacy - a very nice, fat little legacy, indeed... Why can't I feel anything about him? I wish I hadn't lied. I wish I ~~hadn't~~ told the reporters that he was so cruel to me, that I had to beg him for money for the barest necessities, money I had earned myself. Dear God, try to understand! Mary, Mother of ^{God} ~~the~~ Lord, please explain to our Almighty Father the confused position of an earthly woman. ~~You still should remember what we are like, oh my benign mother!~~... After all, I was an actress, a very famous one too. Reporters found out that I had an husband, and ^{3/} had to explain why he wasn't with me. I couldn't tell them the truth, could I? Besides, I was travelling with Signor Ando, very attractive he was, too... and my leading man. Maybe there was something else to it... ~~I'm a wicked woman...~~ Tebaldo ~~was~~ admitted in heaven, I'm sure... Heaven must be a pretty dull place... ~~Oh, what a blasphemy! what an abhorrent thought!~~... In fact, I've always had a great respect for virtue. Whenever I couldn't stand what I was doing, I always found a convincing reason for it. I think I almost believed it myself when I blamed Tebaldo. It gave me an easy conscience... But how could I presume that I ever would succeed in fooling God?

...Perhaps Tebaldo was a little stingy. But I wasn't so very generous myself. Jesus, I confess it... Holy Mary, try to make it clear to the Trinity how earthly folks behave, especially the women...

^{have} I paid my company very poor salaries. I'd never even let one of them ^{have} his own little triumph. I was a star... I fought for it, I suffered for it... I couldn't bear other good actors.

Have mercy on me! I was mean, I was jealous, I pretended to be so

modest, so pure, and I was a whore...I was a bad, selfish mother...
Enrichetta had weak lungs, like my mother's, like mine...Oh, this cough!
I'm freezing...She was too delicate to travel with me, all those dreary,
dangerous roads I had to go...But it also would have been inconvenient
and embarrassing to have her around - a grown-up daughter...Where are
you now, Enrichetta, with your solemn, lovely face...

I am guilty, guilty, laden with crime. The heart is restless until it
rests in Thee, oh my Lord.

Life is nothing but a preparation for death. I am badly prepared.

I will be punished, severely punished.

Oh, Madonna, Madonna...

I'm suffocating...Gabriele, you predicted ~~my~~ death in America...
on a foggy day, in a foreign city, crushed under the wheels of a train,
you said. The fog is thick - so much dust in the air! -, it's freezing
cold, and this is a foreign city...La Città Morta...The City of Death,
the City of Steel...And there is the train, it keeps coming, I'm suf-
focating...What do I want in the City of Steel? I'm too old...I was
a failure in Italy and all over Europe. Nobody wants to see those old-
fashioned plays anymore, Magda and Camille - that was all right before
the war, but the war has changed so many things...now, who cares about
one woman's problems? There's been too much blood spilled in Europe.
...s deluge of blood...floods of blood and tears...they wash away
all the minor problems, the delicate little riddles...

I am old. I am old and hideous. I'm ashamed of my old, ugly face.
Why did I refuse to use any make-up? Because I wanted to prove to myself
and to the others that I was not ashamed...But I actually was...
I wanted to play Jeanne d'Arc, the hero girl from Orléans...I thought
I could appear in an helmet, and the helmet would hide my face...
And then I thought of showing my face in its shameless nakedness to

the public....I wanted to cut my hair - my white, hideous hair - and to play King Lear, the royal martyr...Yes, I intended to wander through the countries and the continents, screaming out the great lament, the tremendous indictment of all creatures that have ever suffered...Sarah was Hamlet with a wooden leg; I wanted to be King Lear with a broken heart. It would certainly have stirred up a sensation. But those agents, those narrow-minded managers didn't believe in it...of course not...Oh, those impresarios! Those idiots! Always hunting me, cheating me, exploiting me! They never gave enough money - never, never, never...That Parisian producer who leered at me: "Really, you still believe in art, Madame?" It was a withering glance I gave him - a deadly glance, I'm sure... "Monstre!" I said, "Monstre - vous me dégoûtez!"

It's different here. People still believe in art - some of them, at least...There is a certain enthusiasm, a certain youthfulness...In Italy everyone is broke...And the French Franc goes down: it's inflation, they say...Perhaps Europe really is in decline, a doomed continent, worn-out, exhausted - but so beautiful...I feel myself as an emissary of European sadness, European splendor when I receive the homages of American youth...I've had a triumph here - nobody had a greater triumph, not even Sarah...Jammed houses in New York and Chicago and San Francisco...what a consolation after all the humiliations at home!... Enorme, enorme consolazione... You ^{my} men, sending flowers; girls, waiting for me at the stage door; following me after the show - sometimes from city to city... Young faces, everywhere; radiant, faithful faces...But my face is old, faded, flabby. I have no strength anymore. I wanted to be the ~~go-between~~ interpreter between our ancient, over-ripe culture and this effulgent, impressionable youth...But I have no strength.

Messengers should be young and alert. An elderly go-between - what a dreary figure! There will be young people, at home in two worlds, citizens of both the Old and the New World...speaking a language in=

telligible everywhere; carrying a message welcome everywhere... Their language - the reasonable and inspired Esperanto of youth; their message - Peace, and a fair, enthusiastic contest; a new simplicity, a new pride, a new love... oh, a new love! For our love has become stale and ~~is~~ spoiled and tainted... We have spoiled our love, my poor Gabriele: our days are over - we are old...

People ought to grow old together. Everything would be easier if you were close to me, my old friend. The world wouldn't be so empty, so frightening...

I'll be better tomorrow... The doctor told me so: "Of course, Madame - tomorrow - you will be much better - much better..." I must work... I'll be able to work... If I pull myself very strongly together - if I make a tremendous effort, I might be able, once more, to act as a go-between and inspiring messenger, between the two worlds... But I forgot all my lines while I was sick... I must have been sick for ages. I'm afraid I'll have to memorize everything again - La Porte Chiusa... I can't remember a word... La Porta Chiusa - an effective play, very cleverly made - but what was it all about? I have completely forgotten... I'm forgetting - forgetting - forgetting...

The Greeks believed there was a dark, mysterious wine, and once you had drunk it, or had just tested it, you forgot everything - pain and ambition, the mistakes you made, and the triumphs, love and hatred - everything, the whole play... One must feel very light, once one has forgotten... very detached, like a bird, like an angel...



...But I still can remember, although somehow vaguely...I still must recall things, and faces, and images...although they ^{are} somewhat blurred...

La Porta Chiusa ... La Porte Fermée... The Closed Door... What is behind the door? There must be something behind... ^(Perhaps) ~~my~~ ^{my} little son who was born and died... just was born and died... He didn't have any ^{memory,} ~~remembrance~~ ^{as} ~~see,~~ he didn't need ^a ~~any~~ dark wine to forget... Light and detached ~~like~~ an angel... But this is the stage door of the theatre... ^{what} ~~how~~ was its name? ... The Syria Mosque Theatre - : funny I ^{can} remember ^{it} ~~why~~ - and what a silly name, The Syria Mosque Theatre in Pittsburgh... The door was locked when I came... it was freezing cold... I had to wait in the rain - icy rain! - , for hours, ~~it~~ it seemed to me ~~like~~ hours... The concierge told me the key was lost - he couldn't find the key... But probably he was hiding something behind that door - something ~~which~~ I was not supposed to see... Desirée gave me her coat but it didn't help very much... I went on freezing... The whole scene was probably arranged in order to kill me ... There are so many people ^{who} ~~that~~ loathe me and are only too eager to ruin me - critics, and agents, and actresses... It must have been a murderous plot... And they succeeded - oh, how successful they were! For it was at that hour, while I had to ~~not~~ wait and to freeze ^{at} ~~the~~ the stage door, that I ^{caught} ~~contracted~~ pneumonia / ~~which is going to kill me...~~

...Or wasn't there any conspiracy? Perhaps there wasn't really any ^{conspiracy} ~~thing of this kind~~... All there actually was, ^{was} ~~the~~ the mystery behind the door - the hidden beauty ~~which~~ I was not allowed to see... The concierge, then, had received his orders from ^{someone} ~~a higher instance~~ - from the highest ~~instance~~, indeed - : the decisive order not to open the door - not to let me see...

But ~~the door opened and I was taken back~~ - finally... what a relief! The door opens... finally, finally... Oh, the light... the burst of lights... the tremendous shine... it is blinding me... it is deafening me... it's

a splendor as I have never seen before...a noise as I have never heard...It's like the opera but so much more overwhelming...It's like fire...

La Fiamma é bella... I know, I know...

I know, my Gabriele. I've expected you. Here you are. There is your voice. There are your eyes. There are your hands. No flames any longer...No music - only your voice...the familiar spectacle of your gestures, the winged elegance of your steps...How young you look, Gabriele, my ageing love...So do I - is it this that you tried to say? Younger than ever, more attractive than ever?...Thank you, my dear, for your exquisite politeness...It's rather odd though that if you only whisper and are making mysterious signs instead of pronouncing regular words - you who used to be the Prince of Eloquence...Oh, how touching this is! You move your lips, clumsily as someone who is dumb and ~~deaf~~ deaf...I must guess your words, but I love to guess them...

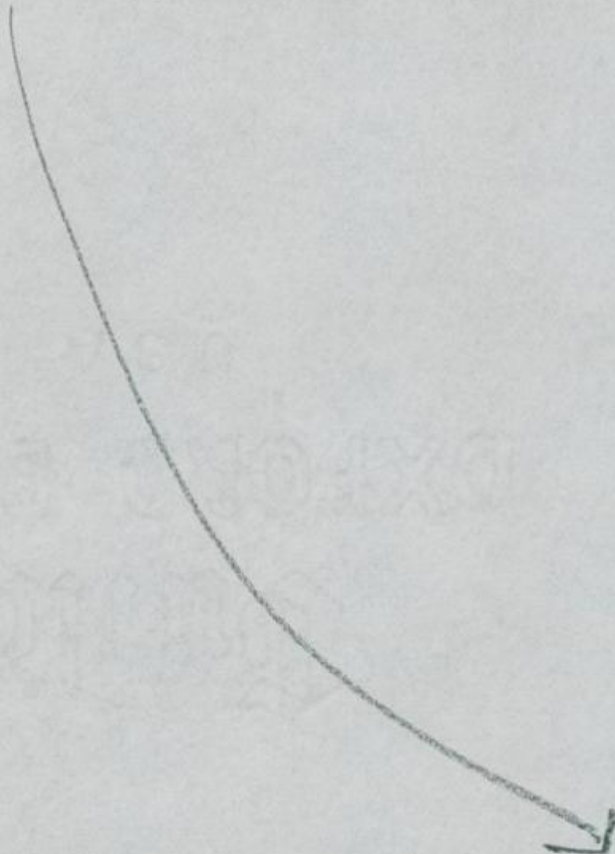
What a sublime ~~you~~ gift your silence is, my darling - after so many words. Your mute eloquence - what a gorgeous surprise! For I'm fed up with words - they've lost their sense, their meaning, their mystery. They are senseless, worn out - we have used them too much, you and I - we have played with them, we have distorted, falsified, tainted them....There are new words, I'm sure - there must be a new word; but we ignore it...Should we repeat like a couple of parrots the old lines - for ever? Oh no, darling, no...Finally we are allowed - finally we are obliged to be silent...

Come closer to me...yes, like this, thanks...still a little closer...How long it took, my Gabriele! How much wasted time! How many detours, before - we reached - this goal...We recited our monologues, separated from one another...Now, let's be silent, together...

I'm freezing...Cover me...'

Through the window, between the curtains, one could already see the dawn; the gloomy, chilly morning of April 10, 1924, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Thirty five minutes later, three men arrived with a bier. They had orders to take the body of Eleonora Duse to the morgue. The three fellows, in their dark, shabby coats, found the room full of crying women. Mademoiselle Desirée, sitting next to the bed, kept on mumbling:



"Mon dieu, mon dieu... quel malheur, quelle tragédie... oh, mon dieu..." -

~~while~~ Another lady rushed through the room, ~~senselessly~~ exclaiming:

"It can't be true... I don't believe it! It simply can't be..."

There were ~~plenty of~~ other women, ~~and~~ all of them sobbing and chattering. In the next room somebody answered the telephone. "Yes, she died at five o'clock in the morning... No, there wasn't any member of her family... Of course, she will be buried in Italy... Her last will, that's correct... Thank you, no... Yes, yes, Signor D'Annunzio is informed... No, he didn't send any message... not yet... No, thanks... yes, yes, yes..."

"The New York Times," remarked Maria Avogadro, ~~while she went on~~ crying bitterly.

The three men from the morgue did not like the whole business. "Too much fuss about a dead woman," ~~they felt~~. It was a dreary morning, and the job they had to do was no fun. They did not want to lose any time. One of them said, with a deep, hoarse voice: "Beg your pardon, ladies...," and all three of them, one behind the other like soldiers, marched to the bed where Eleonora Duse ^{lay} ~~reposed~~.

But they were startled when they saw her face and her hands which were folded on the white cover. They had seen ~~plenty of~~ dead faces and folded, waxen hands, those three fellows from the Pittsburgh morgue. They had seen ugly corpses, and dignified corpses, and the miserable corpses of the poor, and the corpses of children that are ^{pretty} ~~usually~~ in a horrifying way - pale little dolls, bedizened, tiny angels, terribly light, in fact without any weight... But they had never seen hands like this, and never such a face. It was very beautiful. They hesitated before they lifted the body.

The tragically lovely figure that rested among the sobbing women, was no longer the pathetic, elderly creature who had suffered and screamed in this very room, only some hours ago. ~~Death had performed a gracious~~

~~miracle~~. She was transformed into her own statue, her own legend, her own monument. What had been petty and miserable had vanished. What remained was perfect; perfect - her hands, her lips, her forehead, the delicate shape of her temples. She was not the actress any longer; for the first time she actually was Eleonora Duse, with no tricks, with no false gestures of simplicity; Eleonora Duse, a woman who had known passion and suffering, who had endeavoured and erred, and ^{her} atoned. With all ~~the~~ ambitions gone, the pretensions and pains left behind ~~her~~, she had finally gained an authentic nobleness which no transient triumph had ever given ~~to~~ her.

"Don't you see," whispered one of the spellbound women. "Around her forehead... a glory... the shining sign of immortality..."

For we ignorant human beings like to talk about "immortality" whenever one of our mortal kind has thoroughly fulfilled his confused and mysterious earthly mission.

Last Monologue

Many people tried to see the famous patient at the Shenley Hotel in Pittsburgh. But only Mademoiselle Desirée and Maria Avagadro, both faithful and experienced companions of the Italian vedette, were admitted. Dr. Charles J. Barone issued bulletins to the press; his diagnoses wavered from hour to hour. In the morning there was a slight improvement; he feared the worst in the night; dawn found him optimistic again. In a few days, however, it was obvious that Signora Eleonora Duse was in a very bad way indeed.

. . .In the room, the shades were drawn, and there was a sharp, sweet smell of medicine. Desirée, tip-toeing in from the antechambre, whispered: "Is she asleep?" And Maria Avagadro, almost without using her voice: "No. . .but she is out of her head - her temperature is up. Look at her...she keeps on talking..."

They looked at her, the harassed head tossed restlessly on the pillows. There it was, the face that was the idol of two continents; ugly and human, an old, suffering face; the tormented mask on which we trace the signature of encroaching death. The white, wiry hair lay heavily on the damp forehead - the fine, arched forehead which D'Annunzio had praised as "the wonderful forehead of a very intelligent man." The eyelids were half-closed over "the dark, living firmament of her eyes," and her hands - the famous hands of Eleonora Duse, so much admired, so often described - were clenched on the covers; gaunt, fragile, almost luminous in the twilight.

Signorita Maria looked terrified. She wanted to escape the whisper, the touch, the evil taste of death. But shame made her hesitate at the door. "Do you think she's in pain?" she asked anxiously. "Do you think she suffers?"

The woman in the bed heard the word and repeated it querulously in a self-pitying old woman's voice: "Suffer...I am suffering..Oh, Desirée, I can't breathe...I can't. There is so much dust in the air..Pittsburgh is full of dust...I am suffocating..."

"No Madame...Soyez tranquille, Madame... "She stared helplessly at the bed. "You must rest. There isn't any dust in the air..."

There's lots of dust, I can feel it...From the coalmines, from the factories...Pittsburgh is black with dust..." She sat up suddenly; her voice grew shrill and hysterical. "I don't like Pittsburgh...I don't want to die in Pittsburgh.. I want to go home. I want to be in my little house in Asolo. The air is so fresh in Asolo; the wind that comes from the mountains has such a wonderful smell...Oh, the mountains...We must pack our things! Is the luggage ready? The boat in New York is waiting. We've got to make it. Hurry Desiree! Call the maid, the chauffeur! The car is waiting..the boat...Italy...there's no time to lose...Andiamo, andiamo... "

"Yes Madame...Everything's ready. We leave in the morning. The night is almost over. Try to sleep."

"Almost morning..." She sank back, and Desiree quietly straightened the pillows. "Asolo..." Duse said, shutting her eyes to the unreal room..." Monte Grappa... my beloved Monte Grappa...There, there in that green valley, life was peaceful. From Casa dell' Arco, her lovely, ancient house, one could see Monte Grappa, magnificent every minute of the day, every season of the year.

"I must keep very quiet," she thought with a sort of desperate elyness. 'As long as I don't move, as long as I don't open my eyes, I remain in Asolo, I am home. There on the wall the portraits of Shelley and Beethoven...and the bookshelves.. Such lovely books! ...The French classics, and there is Dante, and the beautiful works of Carducci, and Ibsen...Oh, and here, next to Shakespeare, the religious books...The Confessions of St. Augustine...I should confess too, should confess all my sins. I wanted to be pure and I was shameless. I wanted everybody to know how fine I was, how delicately attuned, how much I suffered. And people believed me, I succeeded in fooling them, they considered me a Saint - : Oh, all those women who worshipped me! - Oh the hysteria, the embarrassing ecstasy of their admiration! ...No, No, I wouldn't be interviewed, I always refused it, did it firmly though politely. Off the stage I was a private person...Only my art... I despised publicity...It was very clever: who thought of it? It was my own little idea. How shy I was, how bashful, modest, reserved...It was genius, and it worked very well.

Oh my Lord, forgive me!...I'll choke to death...Why didn't I have the courage to admit openly my ambitions? Sarah never was ashamed of herself, never concealed her greed and vanity...Was she stronger than I am? She wasn't tormented by remorse. She had a good conscience. For she was terribly strong. Sarah - Oh, she never sought solitude, was never longing for a quiet, contemplative life. But I did: I swear it was true, I hated journalism and journalists, I loathed publicity, I wanted to be alone...

I wanted to be alone, and I am alone. If I should die before I wake.. I am afraid.. I am alone, quite alone in this enormous foreign country. And I am dying. All over the world the newspapers will be full of it. I despise publicity. They'll say more than they ever said about my affair with Gabriele...Did I love him? Gabriele... Gabriele D'Annunzio...It was so long ago...I'll be mourned, all the world will grieve over me, people who never saw me, girls who have never known love...There will be headlines in all the papers, in the American papers, the Italian, The French, the Japanese papers...Duse is Dead...The Highest Priestess of the Drama passed away...Duse is dead, Duse is dead, Duse is dead...: it's like the rhythm of the wheels of a running train.. Duse is dead...I don't want to die, not in Pittsburgh, not even in Asolo...It's spring in Asolo, green and lush...Why did I come? I loathe the theatre! ^y Never took ~~the theatre~~ ^{it} quite seriously, never never never. I always have despised it, at the bottom of my heart... Yes, that's why I retired. I meant it when I said that the ^a theatre ought to be destroyed, razed to the ground.. In Rome, when the audience went crazy yelling and fighting over Francesca da Rimini... I can't remember. I'm a tired old woman; a sad, sick, old woman.. The twelve years I didn't act, 1909 to 1921, they were peaceful. The war, the young men who died...No, no, I won't think of that now...I won't remember. I was myself in that time not an actress. Not Camille, not Magda, not Nora, not Hedda Gabler or the Lady from the Sea. I was Signora Duse, a middle-class lady of Asolo; plump, commonplace, fairly cultured. I might have been a retired school-teacher...I hardly recognize ~~my~~ my pictures of that time. Duse in the rold of a provincial matron!... I detest the theatre, I despise it!

I'm lying. I don't know how to tell the truth anymore. Those twelve years! They were so stupid, so empty, so boring! Nothing to get up for in the morning nothing to look forward to. The lights, the sudden hush when the curtain went up, the dark, mysterious, crowded theatre! It was my life, all the life I ever knew... I didn't play the Lady from the Sea; I was Ellida - dear, beloved Ellida, my favourite part... They say it's one of Henrik Ibsen's weakest plays, but they are mistaken... Ellida is an excellent role... How still the theatre is, not even a cough... They like me, I can feel it, they are crazy about me... They'll send me flowers, lots of them... People know that I am fond of flowers; that I need them, I'm dependent on them... Roses, carnations, orchids... When Gabriele came - where was it? when? - I had the long lobby of the hotel strewn with roses...

So many! ...When my poor mother died there were no flowers. I couldn't even buy mourning. I wasn't with her. I couldn't be. I was acting - and my poor mother choked to death in the hospital among strangers. My daughter, Enrichetta, where is she? I don't know her very well - does she hate me? I can remember, although somewhat vaguely, that Enrichetta sometimes had an odd expression in her eyes when she looked at me - sad and quite severe. Enrichetta was sweet when she was little; frail, nervous, shy... so resentful of my leaving her. When she was four...

I was four when I played Cosette in Les Misérables, sixty years ago... sixty years... It seems like yesterday... I stood shuddering in the wings, too scared to go on, not even daring to cry, when father gave me a little spank and push... He was not a bad comedian himself, my poor father; grandfather was somewhat better though, and Uncle Frederigo, and Aunt Cecelia, all of them had a certain talent, but I am the successful member of the tribe, I'm the star, I'm famous... There I was at last, poor little Cosette, in my own shoddy, lovely world; the lights, - the only stars I ever knew... the audience, like a monster and like a lover... I tried to speak - but it was like calling for help in a nightmare. My voice was strangled somewhere inside of me, and I broke out in a cold sweat... I was suffocating.. OH, I am suffocating.. I can't breathe, there is dust in the air... Then before I knew it, it came, loud and shrill as a shout - and the whole house shrieked with laughter.

I remember theatres all over Italy, all over Europe, all over the world.. I remember trains, and filthy dressing rooms, and I remember audiences, all over the world; laughing audiences, shouting audiences, audiences that were enthusiastic or hostile or politely cool... I was Juliet at fourteen...and for thy name which is no part of thee... take all myself... Dear God, I couldn't help it...it was the way I was...You have ordered and created my sinful heart, my sinful flesh, and my thoughts, full of sin...You are responsible, gracious Father...I couldn't help it.

I wanted to. I hated myself for it. But I couldn't. Mary, Mother of God, forgive me. Our merciful Father, your benign Son, the Father of your Son, He has created me as a sinful creature...I couldn't sleep at night thinking of it. On a train on a ship, always going somewhere - it was like a fever. My poor Gabriele, will I ever see him again? I loved him so. It was no fun to love him - to love that way, with so much frenzy, so much disgust so much humiliation...It wasn't happiness - believe me Mary, Mother of the Saviour! But what is happiness? I don't know what it means, I couldn't even imagine what happiness really is...

It wasn't easy, Mary Mother of God! Believe me - oh, you must believe me! It was a horrible thing to be in love with an ambitious clown, a heartless monster. My life with Gabriele D'Annunzio - sometimes it was like life in bedlam; sometimes it was like heaven...Oh, Gabriele, Prince of Poets, you elderly comedian, you worn-out prima donna - my grotesque, appalling, unfortunate old love. I can think your name now - I can even say it, If you^x were to walk into this room, at this moment, I could look at you quite calmly; my hands wouldn't sweat nor my mouth go dry. I could speak to you with neither apprehension nor hostility. I don't even want to humiliate you any more. I would just watch you - I would watch your funny, excited gestures, your pretentions, ever-changing airs - as one may watch an actor on the stage... You and I acted our little tragi-comedy wilfully. If the play was too long, if our romance seemed stuffy to a new generation - it was all very well. Nothing was changed, nobody got hurt: our audience could go home and go on with their lives. And we two old fools who had played so many roles - we could ring down the curtain.

But now you have gone too far, Gabriele. You are confused, you are losing your sense of values. Those ignorant boys in the street whom you've hired to be the screaming members of a mob - for a few liras, for a flask of wine - do they realize this is only a game? Do they know this is an insane play, that the sword lunging at the breast will be a real sword, that the blood in the streets; the background of your melodramas could never be sinister and bloody enough.

...I remember - oh, I remember so very distinctly the last time I listened to you...You harangued the Italian youth, in Milano, from the balcony of a public building. I hadn't seen you for eighteen years ...eighteen years without you! Yes, you have somewhat changed in the meantime; but your well-trained eloquence was as captivating as ever - an artificial thunderstorm, brilliant fireworks - I was thrilled, I was moved; I'm afraid I even cried a little...How very silly: to allow oneself being bluffed by a lot of bunk. For I didn't believe a single word you said. Patriotism...Italy's historical Mission!...: what a cynical old swindler you are!

You used to be more honest, my Gabriele. Why do you speak now of patriotism when you really mean your own glory? Who taught you this cunning new trick? Could it be that dubious fellow whom you've picked up? That other clown and brassy adventurer, Benito Mussolini? You're ^acharming couple, indeed, sham-poet and sham-tyrant - il Commendatore of Fiume and a papier-mache Napoleon! For he gave you a title, if I am not mistaken. It's not exactly the sort of title you wished for when I used to know you. At that time, you wanted to become poeta Laureatus - can you still remember? You have dreamed of laurels - "those Latin Laurels, cut from the shrubs of the hills where, in the days of remote antiquity, the eagles descended with their prophecies..." Will you earn the Latin Laurels, mon pauvre ami, with your recent political escapades? Will you become immortal as Il Duce is popularizing the impressive slogans you offered him? La Fiamma e bella...I know, I know... But this is real fire, can't you see? It burns, it hurts, it destroys, can't you feel it? The smoke, the heat...I'm suffocating. Italy is burning, our homes are in flames...Oh, Gabriele, what have you done?

He is an unpleasant man, Benito Mussolini. I didn't like his face. I disliked his tremendous jaws, the silly arrogance of his gestures. I'm ashamed I ever wrote him that letter asking for his help before I left Italy. But what else could I do? There wasn't any choice. I needed money...It was an enormous honor, I guess that he paid a visit to me, and even kissed my hand, very chivalrously, and smilingly remarked: "The celebrated hands of la Duse..." What a dirty smile! No, I don't like his face...What an oily voice when he said: "Madame, I have decided to do for you whatever you may desire..." But, when I said "I'm in trouble, your Excellency! Would you kindly pay the salaries of my troupe?" - then he seemed to be shocked and showed a solemn disappointed face, and gravely said: "I thank you for your frankness, Eleonora Duse!" And this was the last word I ever heard from him. I didn't get a centesimo .. not a single penny... How very funny! How utterly ridiculous..."

She laughed. It was a gruesome sort of laughter - weak, wicked, almost obscene. She was a witch lying there in the half-light, the enormous, feverish black eyes gleaming in the haggard face, the stringy white hair scattered on the pillow. Desiree was frightened.
She whispered: "Signora, Signora Duse ...what's the matter?"

The distorted face of her mistress became human again. The eyes searched out the room, recognized it, acknowledged Desiree. "He is exceedingly funny. Don't you think so?"

"Qui donc, Madame?"

The sick woman had a remote and tender smile. Finally she said: "He was wonderful, you know. He used to/^{be} very sweet, sweeter than anyone else. He had the most charming voice. Somewhat nasal though, but this didn't make any difference, on the contrary, I was extremely fond of his nasal accent, his voice was a balm to me...Yes, we had lovely hours...He wrote all those brilliant plays for me...perhaps a little dated now; some critics have called them old-fashioned...Well, the world moves on, but there are magnificent scenes in all of them..."

"Yes, Signora. But you must try to sleep."

"...He was blond - too blond, perhaps, for a man, anyway, for an Italian... It was fun to travel with him. We used to travel together ~~to~~, did you know?"

She turned untroubled, lucid eyes at Desirée. "Of course you know. Everybody knows...We were an enormous scandal, Gabriele and myself...We went to Mykenae, so he could write La Gitta Morta...Excellent scenes in it...He was a trifle too literary maybe. Never would let you just look at a landscape. He had to describe it to you -- your own private Baedecker...Funny, this mixture of enthusiasm and pedantry...very funny..."

She suddenly looked much younger--almost like a young girl - as she lay there, with closed eyes, smiling lips, dreaming...

"Oh my darling, we've been happy together -- exquisitely happy, in spite of everything. How could you betray me? I knew you so well. I wasn't blind. I wasn't hypnotised. You couldn't help yourself. I know, I know, I know everything about you. Treachery was in your blood, and I knew it, and I liked you for it...No, no I wasn't betrayed, of course not. I was the ready victim, the willing sacrifice. So you were tired of me...I bored you; an elderly woman, without any dignity running after a young genius. But you, my darling -- weren't you doomed to fall in love with an older woman? A young girl wouldn't have tolerated you. Let's face it -- with all your genius with all your sensibility, your erratic charm -- you were by nature, a pimp...Don't be offended my love ! I don't mean to hurt you; I must try to be honest. I am sick and tired of lies... The truth is that you even looked like a pimp -- your suave, furtive, fascinating face; your flashy, vulgar elegance; always a little over-dressed always somewhat conspicuous... I am not blaming you - how could I? Yes, there must have been something in my own heart, a taint, a core of corruption - that responded to just that. A poet and a goddess of tragedy! Do you remember how we quarreled - loudly, bitterly, endlessly, over money? You would buy expensive clothes, flowers, perfumes: "The bill is for Madame Duse". Oh I resented it. I was sick with shame at loving you. It was all mixed up in my heart - squalor and pity and shame and a savage terror of losing you ... Love was a word to say on the stage - with dignity, with just the right pathos ...But the reality of love is so much more mysterious. I never quite succeeded in understanding it. My love...my love...

I'm so cold...It's dark here...Where am I...It must be very painful to

freeze to death - 'Though they say one has enchanting dreams, before dying.. But I don't want any dreams. I've had enough of them...too many of them...Dreams and sleep in so many different rooms, so many different countries... Do you still remember my Gabriele, all the strange roofs that covered us, the inns, the hotels, the palazzos, the sleeping cars? Do you remember, Paris, Venice, Rome...I'm alone and lost. I'll never find my way back. Where are you? I'm frightened...Pittsburgh...I'm very ill. Would you be sorry for me? Would you comfort me? Where is it, the balm of your voice? Will you cry when they tell you...Of course not...You couldn't... For you haven't any tears. You're like someone in a fairy-tale I once read...You look like a man, you talk like one - you understand - you reason - but you can't feel. It's a very sad thing, my darling, to be an outcast from humanity.

Do you remember when you were writing Il Fuoco? I knew there was something in the wind. How could I help it? That sudden interest in everything that had ever happened to me...How did you feel when you did this? When you kept asking me?... Why?...Where?...Tell me everything! Don't be ashamed, Eleonora! Cry, sweetheart, if it makes you feel better..." And your kisses. And your voice: "The truth now! Come, come darling! I like to imagine you when you were twenty...just the way it was..."

You listened, you who never listened to anyone. What a relief it was to tell everything...I wept as you stood staring at me, your eyes avid and curious.. When you brought me your manuscript. I couldn't believe it. It was indecent, Gabriele, but that is a word you can never understand. I couldn't believe you would publish it.

"But I must, my dear," you said. "It's a masterpiece. Besides, I've accepted an advance from my publisher, 25000 lira, you know I'm not a rich man."

I gave you the money you asked for: so you could pay it back to your publisher. 25,000 lira - a nice round little sum...And you kept it, of course you did. What else did I expect? Didn't I know you, my darling thief? You were not the man who would miss such a chance...Now you actually had an advance of 50,000 for your masterpiece - 25,000 from the publisher, 25,000 from the victim...

Wasn't it a scandalous success, my darling? A thrilling story for the newspapers?... I took to my bed: I threatened to kill you. It was what we needed to complete the pattern. .. "He has stolen my love and wold it. I will kill him..."

You were challenged to a duel. Like a gentleman you denied that I was the woman you had portrayed. Bravely, honestly, I admitted it. When the wild scandal grew stale, we renewed it by reconciliations. I acted in your plays again...

Can God forgive me? Can He forgive you, my poor Gabriele? We have so much to regret, both of us. I suffered, really horribly, so much, that it was hard to live to the end of the day. And you Gabriele? Did you suffer too? Do you know what it actually means - to suffer?

I'm suffering...There is a pain in my throat, there are pains in my head, in my feet, in my heart...And my hands are freezing...

...Did I really want to keep you from publishing Il Fuoco? You couldn't betray me without betraying yourself, and didn't I want everyone to know how helplessly, how sordidly in love I was?...and with a man like you? I suffered, and the world wept with me... But now, at this moment, I'm suffering much more, much more cruelly, and nobody weeps, nobody feels sorry for me...My hands are icy, and my forehead burns... Isn't there anyone who feels sorry?

...Dear Lord, have mercy on me! I'm crying now - I don't know why, exactly...I'm crying bitterly about Gabriele and about myself, about our mistakes, our sins, the misunderstandings, the crimes...the wasted life...Oh, our wasted lives... Strange the way he's just come into my mind, the little son I had ina peasant's hut when I was a silly young girl. He died in a few short days, and I carried him to a cemetery. He was a darling, lovely, child. I still remember his tiny little hands, and the funny, thin hair he had...Oh, the wasted life; all those things I possessed and lost - or lost without ever having possessed...It's years since I've thought of my little son. Who was his father? Let me think...it will come back to me...the first man... There, there...if I lie calmly and concentrate...The beach of Naples, the little fishing boats, the strong smell of the sea, and those unclouded skies of a blue that was almost purple...I knew I'd remember - Martino Cafliero...Martino, that's it...I wrote him

dozens of letters, full of anguish...Did I bore him as I used to bore Gabriele? You're dead now, you've been dead a long time like that little son of ours you never saw...Will I see you again, both of you - on the other side?

I've forgotten my husband too. Not his name, I can say it without hesitation...Tebaldo Checchi...but it doesn't mean anything...I can keep on pronouncing his name, and my mind's blank, my heart's blank...empty...It was long ago, and I'm tired... I wonder what he was like. Probably very nice, just not enough of a rascal for me. I shouldn't have married him but I was frightened, terrified of what I might turn out to be. So I married him. Poor Tebaldo. I wasn't faithful, and I should have been more discreet. It was too bad he had to find it out when I didn't want to hurt his feelings. He must have been a very kind man to forgive me and leave me a legacy - a very nice, fat little legacy, indeed...Why can't I feel anything about him? I wish I hadn't lied. I wish I hadn't told the reporters that he was so cruel to me, that I had to beg him for money for the barest necessities, money I had earned myself. Dear God, try to understand! Mary, Mother of God, please explain to our Almighty Father the confused position of an earthly woman...After all, I was an actress, a very famous one too. Reporters found out that I had a husband, and I had to explain why he wasn't with me. I couldn't tell them the truth, could I? Besides, I was traveling with Signor Ando, very attractive he was, too...and my leading man...

...Perhaps Tebaldo was a little stingy. But I wasn't so very generous myself. Jesus, I confess it...Holy Mary, try to make it clear to the Trinity how earthly folks behave, especially the women...I paid my company very poor salaries. I'd never even let one of them have his own little triumph. I was a star...I fought for it, I suffered for it...I couldn't bear other good actors.

Have mercy on me! I was mean, I was jealous. I was a bad, selfish mother... Enrichetta had weak lungs, like my mother's, like mine...Oh, this cough! I'm freezing... She was too delicate to travel with me, all those dreary dangerous roads I had to go... But it also would have been inconvenient and embarrassing to have her around - a grown-up daughter...Where are you now, Enrichetta, with your solemn, lovely face...

I am guilty, guilty, laden with crime. The heart is restless until it rests in Thee, oh my Lord.

Life is nothing but a préparation for death. I am badly prepared. I will be punished, severely punished. Oh, Madonna, Madonna...

I'm suffocating...Gabriele, you predicted my death in America...on a foggy day, in a foreign city, crushed under the wheels of a train you said. The fog is thick - so much dust in the air! It's freezing cold, and this is a foreign city... La Citta Morta...The city of death, the city of steel...And there is the train, it keeps coming, I'm suffering and suffocating...What do I want in the City of Steel? I'm too old...I was a failure in Italy and all over Europe. Nobody wants to see those old-fashioned plays anymore, Magda, Camille - that was alright before the war, but the war has changed so many things...

I am old. I am old and hideous. I'm ashamed of my old, ugly face. Why did I refuse to use any make-up? Because I wanted to prove to myself and to the others that I was not ashamed... But I actually was...I wanted to play Jeanne d' Arc, the hero girl from Orleans...I thought I could appear in a helmet, and the helmet would hide my face...And then I thought of showing my face in its shameless nakedness to the public... I wanted to cut my hair - my white, hideous hair - to play King Lear, the royal martyre... Yes, I intended to wander through the countries, and the continents, screaming out the great lament, the tremendous indictment of all creatures that have ever suffered...Sarah was Hamlet with a wooden leg; I wanted to be King Lear with a broken heart. It would certainly have stired up a sensation. But those agents, those narrow-minded managers didn't believe in it...Of course not...Oh, those impresarios! Those idiots! Always hunting me, cheating me, exploiting me! They never gave enough money - never, never, never... That Parisian producer who leered at me: "Really, you still believe in art, Madame?" It was a withering glance I gave him - a deadly glance, I'm sure..."Monstre!" I said, "Monstre - vous me dégoûtez!"

It's different here. People still believe in art. Some of them, at least... There is a certain enthusiasm, a certain youthfulness..In Italy everyone is broke...And

the French Franc goes down: it's inflation, they say...Perhaps Europe really is in decline, a doomed continent, worn-out, exhausted - but so beautiful...I feel myself as an emissary of European sadness, European splendor when I receive the homages of American youth. I've had a triumph here - nobody had a greater triumph, not even Sarah...Jammed houses in New York and Chicago and San Francisco...What a consolation, after all the humiliation at home!...

Enorme, enorme consolazioni,... Young men sending flowers; girls waiting for me at the stage door; following me after the show - sometimes from city to city... Young faces, everywhere; radiant, faithful faces...But my face is old, faded, flabby. I have no strength anymore. I wanted to be the interpreter between our ancient culture and this effulgent youth... But I have no strength.

Messengers should be young and alert. An elderly go-between - what a dreary figure! There will be young people, at home in two worlds, citizens of both the Old and the New World...speaking a language intelligible everywhere; carrying a message of welcome everywhere...Their language - the inspired Esperanto of Youth; their message - Peace, and a fair, enthusiastic contest; a new simplicity, a new pride, a new love...Oh a new love! For our love has become stale and spoiled and tainted...We have spoiled our love, my poor Gabriele; our days are over...

People ought to grow old together. Everything would be easier if you were close to me, my old friend. The world wouldn't be so empty, so frightening...

I'll be better tomorrow...The doctor told me so...I must work...I'll be able to work..If I pull myself together - if I make a tremendous effort...But I forgot all my lines while I was sick...I must have been sick for ages...I'm afraid I'll have to memorize everything again - La Porta Chiusa... I can't remember a word...La Porta Chiusa - an effective play, very cleverly made - but what was it all about? I have completely forgotten...I'm forgetting - forgetting - forgetting...

The Greeks believed there was a dark, mysterious wine, and once that you had drunk it, or just tasted it, you forgot everything - pain and ambition, the mistakes you made, and the triumphs, love and hatred - everything, the whole play...One must feel very light, once one has forgotten...very detached, like a bird, like an angel...

...But I still can remember, although somehow vaguely...I still must recall things, and faces, and images...although they are somewhat blurred...

La Porta Chiusa...La Porta Chiusa...La Porta Fermée...The closed door... What is behind the door? There must be something behind...Perhaps my cute little son who was born and died...just was born and died. ..He didn't have any memory, he didn't need any dark wine to forget...But this is the stage door of the theatre...how was its name? The Syria Mosque Theatre - funny I can remember it - and what a silly name, the Syria Mosque Theatre in Pittsburgh...The door was locked when I came...it was freezing cold...I had to wait in the rain - icy rain! for hours, or it seemed hours to me...The concierge told me the key was lost - he couldn't find the key...But probably he was hiding something behind that door - something which I was not supposed to see... Desiree gave me her coat but it didn't help...I went on freezing...The whole scene was probably arranged in order to kill me...There are so many people who loathe me and are only too eager to ruin me - critics, and agents, and actresses...It must have been a murderous plot...And they succeeded - Oh, how successful they were! A pneumonia - that's what they wanted to give me, my good helpful colleagues. A nice deadly pneumonia...

...Or wasn't there any conspiracy? Perhaps there wasn't really any conspiracy. Only the mystery behind the door - the hidden beauty which I was not allowed to see...The concierge, then, had received his orders from someone higher - from the highest, indeed - : the decisive order not to open the door - not to let me see...

But, finally ...What a relief! The door opens...finally, finally...Oh, the light...the burst of lights...the tremendous shine... it is blinding me...deafening me... it's a splendor as I have never seen before...a noise as I have never heard...It's like the opera but so much more overwhelming...It's like fire...

La Fiamma e bella... I know, I know...

I know, my Gabriele. I've expected you. Here you are, there is your voice. There are your eyes . There are your hands. No flames any longer...No music.. only your voice... the familiar spectacle of your gestures, the winged elegance of your steps...How young you look, Gabriele, my ageing love...So do I...is it this that you tried to say? Younger than ever, more attractive than ever? Thank you, my dear, for your ex-

quisite politeness...It's rather odd though that you only whisper and are making mysterious sounds instead of pronouncing regular words - you who used to be the Prince of Eloquence...Oh, how touching this is! You move your lips, clumsily as someone who is dumb...I must guess your words, but I love to guess them... What a sublime gift your silence is, my darling - after so many words. Your mute eloquence - what a gorgeous surprise! For I'm fed up with words - they've lost their sense, their meaning, their mystery. They are senseless, worn-out - we have used them too much you and I - we have played with them have distorted, falsified, tainted them. Should we repeat like a couple of parrots the old lines - for ever? Oh no, darling, no...Finally we are allowed to be still...

Come closer to me ...yes, like this, thanks...still a little closer... How long it took, my Gabriele! How much wasted time! How many detours, before - we reached - this goal...We recited our monologues, separated from one another...Now let's be silent, together...

"I'm freezing...Cover me..."

Through the window, between the curtains, one could already see the dawn; the gloomy, chilly morning of April, 10, 1924, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.