

Play 2

CAST:

GINNY: A young woman in her early twenties. She dresses informally.

VINCENT: A young man of matching age. Snappy dresser.

FRANCISCO:

LUCETTA: An actress who plays the parts of Isabella and Colombina when she is not being herself.

PANCHINO: An actor who plays the parts of Pulcinella and Arlecchino when he is not being himself.

IN THE IMPROVISATIONS:

MAGNIFICO: A floppy hat with a broad rim, a wand and a mask.

COLOMBINA: A mask. She is a serving wench.

ARLECCHINO: A mask and a slapstick.

ISOBELLA: A mask and a tiara.

PULCINELLA: A mask.

NOTES: 1) The shopping bag trick can be easily achieved.

2) The intention of the two improvisations is to demonstrate to Ginny and Vincent how foolish they have been by portraying people in love acting foolishly. I have set these playlets in the Commedia dell' Arte tradition and have attached some notes of explanation scavenged from the internet. In accordance with Commedia methods I have provided just a scenario and asked the actors to improvise the lines, however the scenario can also be improvised.

3) Francisco has a 'light' Italian accent. Lucetta and Panchino have little or no accents. They speak well but as though English is their second language. There are pronounced Italian accents in the improvisations.

Commedia dell'Arte

"Commedia dell'Arte" was a type of theatre which came into being in Italy in the middle of the 16th century. The name translates to "The Art of Comedy". Plays were performed by troupes of professional actors who travelled from town to town and performed in market places. There were no scripts for the plays, just a rough framework (called a "scenario") jotted down on a piece of paper and destroyed after the performance. The action was completely improvised by stock characters who had standard costumes and masks. This type of theatre was also called "Maschere" (masks) because the actors performed in masks. As far as Hall of Mirrors is concerned it is preferable if the actors are given new scenarios just before each performance in order to maintain freshness of presentation. These could be written by the director or stage manager, or a local playwright. (Or perhaps Francisco could just write a new scenario each time.)

Stock characters used in play:

Magnifico

The origins of Magnifico's character can be traced back to the Roman comedy dramatists of 200 BC, Plautus and Terence. Magnifico came to full force in the early 1500's alongside Arlecchino. Little is known of him, though it is certain that he came to develop the distinct characteristics of a magician and man of wisdom. As with most men of wisdom, Magnifico is shrouded in mysteries. It is thought that his brief appearances throughout the history of Commedia dell' Arte reflect his elusive appearances through history as Merlin, or the Tarot Magician, or possibly even Mandrake. So it was that Magnifico came to possess the powers to traverse time, to construct worlds anew and to offer solace to those in need. Created to represent the symbolic nature of his influence, Magnifico's garments and setting were researched from the Tarot, scant etchings and artists' impressions of the 16th century. His inner purity and equilibrium, and the fire of his purposeful activity are reflected in the colours of his garments. The staff represents his flaming will with which he controls the four elements symbolised by the sword (*air*), the cup (*water*), the wand (*fire*) and the coin (*earth*). Using these tools and his timeless wisdom, Magnifico can conjure powerful magic to transform fear and ignorance into laughter and compassion. This is Magnifico's eternal quest.

Arlecchino - (*Harlequin*)

Arlecchino was one of the first characters of the Commedia dell' Arte. His family history stretches back to the original devil masks, as shown by the shape of a carbuncle on his forehead. The French adopted Arlecchino and changed his name to the more familiar Harlequin. Arlecchino is the numbskull clown/slave who gave the world the comedy of slapstick. He is either completely stupid, or has the wit and cunning of a seven year old brat. He is a master of disguises, extremely agile and acrobatic. He always enjoys what he sees- for him everything is a game. He does not think of the future and quickly forgets what is out of sight. He acts first and then thinks, if he thinks at all. Flinching is idiosyncratic of Arlecchino, he is always on the look out for hits. His movements are jerky and defensive. He travels in a zigzag skip, almost like a dance. Arlecchino's costume was originally breeches and a long jacket laced in front, covered with random patches of tatters in different colours to denote poverty. It wasn't until the 17th Century that the patches took the form of blue, red and green triangles arranged in a symmetrical pattern. At the end of the 17th Century, the French transformed the triangles into diamonds, and the jacket was shortened. In his belt was the slapstick that he proudly wore like a sword. His black half-mask has demoniac or feline features, often accompanied by bristling eyebrows, a moustache a snub nose. A large bump on his forehead provides the finishing touch. He speaks the archaic dialect of Bergamo with some other slang dialect expressions thrown in. Harlequin is acrobatic, particularly complex in his gestures and with a gait that is almost a dance.

Colombina (*Columbine*)

Originating as a pre-show dancer, Colombina became so popular that she was given a role among the renowned zanni of the commedia. She is a feisty serving wench, who knows how to control men's desires (even if she isn't always in control of her own) . Men swarm around her and she sets them against each other. She springs from the same kind of popular world as her faithful companion in adventure and, on occasion, her disconsolate lover, Harlequin. On stage she is recognisable for her nimbleness, flirting and her typically feminine sharp-wittedness. Her costume is simple. Sometimes it has multicoloured patches like Harlequin's, and a white apron and cap and on other occasions it is exactly that of an eighteenth century maid. She is very rarely seen in a mask and various dialects are possible, the most common ones being Tuscan and Venetian.

Isabella Isabella Andreini was the world's first female to be an international star. She was the wife of Francesco Andreini (the originator of the Capitano Spavento role) and she ran the Gelosi company with her husband. Isabella was recognized as the premiere lover in Europe. Her influence over the commedia was so great that she had a character created around her performance. Actresses took the name of Isabella for years after Signor Anredini departed the stage. Isabella is the female lover of the commedia. The combination of her graceful charm and biting wit make her a wonderful foil to the bawdy humour of the masters and zanni. She shines like a beacon of grace in the barbarous surrounding of overambitious masters and stealthy zanni.

Pulcinella

Pulcinella is a selfish, schizoid rascal who combines empty-headed folly with cruelty. Without any morals or scruples, Pulcinella will concoct outrageous schemes to satisfy his animal-like lust and gluttony. As Pulcinella is the direct descendant of two characters from the Roman theatre, Bucco and Maccus, he has a dual personality and constantly changes to suit one or the other of his fathers. On occasion, several Pulcinella's will perform on stage together, indicating the extent of his schizophrenia. In spite of the confusion of identity, Pulcinella is self-sufficient, quick and witty, yet he is also coarse, vulgar, obscene, dishonest and debauched. Pulcinella is very easily recognisable. His physical appearance began with a broad hump on his shoulder and a pot-belly. As his character evolved so did the hump, until he was doubly humped, with an extended belly to balance his carriage. Pulcinella is well-known for his bizarrely-paced, bent, cock-like gait and hen-like voice. Pulcinella's costume is typical of the Zanni set: loose-fitting white shirt and trousers with a conical hat. The only exception being that his sleeves cover his hands, symbolising his hatred of physical labour.

Another source: This is the Napolitan Commedia dell'Arte costume par excellence. It originates, despite opinions to the contrary, in Campania, the region whose capital is Naples, and which has a long comic tradition. It was there, at Atella, in Roman times, that the farces with the earliest fixed character types were born, and it is from these, Maccus, Pappus, Bucco, and Dossenus, that Pulcinella derives his character. He is often hunch-backed like Dossenus, with a beaked nose like Maccus, a gigantic mouth like Bucco and insatiably hungry like Pappus. These physical traits combine to make him look rather like a rooster. Pulcinella was not only popular in his birth place of Naples, but also very much so in England, where they used his influence to create Punch, in Punch and Judy.

Ginny enters and sits at the coffee table. She has her shopping with her. A flannelette nightgown, a packet of cocoa and a bottle of vinegar. She takes them from her shopping bag (her bag, not a plastic shop bag) , puts them back, puts the bag down on the floor. The audience must get a good sight of the items and the bag should be in full view throughout the play. Francisco enters.

FRANCISCO: Coffee Signorina?

GINNY: When my boyfriend comes.

FRANCISCO: Ah, a rendezvous. That is romantic Signorina.

GINNY: Are you Italian?

FRANCISCO: I come from... somewhere. It could well be Italy.

GINNY: What's your name then?

FRANCISCO: My name is Francisco, Signorina.

GINNY: Francisco. That's Italian.

FRANCISCO: Yes, of course Signorina.

GINNY: Ah. *(Pause)* The last time I was here they had an exhibition. Is it over?

FRANCISCO: Possibly. A new one opened yesterday.

GINNY: Oh, I don't see any paintings.

FRANCISCO: There are two works on the wall, there, behind curtains.

GINNY: Behind curtains? Why is that?

FRANCISCO: It is explained in the catalogue Signorina. *(He gives her one)* When the viewer opens the curtain he or she will see a personal illusion which is unique to their own viewpoint and that of no-one else.

GINNY: A personal illusion? What sort of art is that?

FRANCISCO: The Art of the True Reality Signorina.

GINNY: I never heard of that school. I'll have to have a look. *(She goes to the first mirror and draws back the curtain. Lucetta is behind mimicking her movements in a slightly exaggerated way.)* I think I've lost a little weight. *(Or '...gained a little weight'.)* It's not a good mirror. Makes you look older and uglier. *(Lucetta reacts)*

FRANCISCO: But how can a work of art be a copy of reality? A mere photograph? You must distort the external ornamentation in order to see the source of truth more clearly.

GINNY: Yes there are some flaws in the glass. Who is the artist?

FRANCISCO: It is I Signorina.

GINNY: Oh, a waiter who's a painter. It's Cubist isn't it? It's a Cubist mirror.

FRANCISCO: The mind of a person is a Cubist mirror because it distorts the vision. And what you call 'real' is merely an illusion, created by your imagination. The truth that is discovered by Art is the true reality.

GINNY: *(with irony)* Very profound. You are a philosopher?

FRANCISCO: No, just a magician.

GINNY: *(closes the curtain)* I can believe that too. *(Goes back to seat. Vincent enters.)* Here is my friend.

VINCENT: Am I late?

GINNY: *(amiably)* As usual.

VINCENT: Are you having something?

GINNY: Cappuccino and a piece of chocolate gateau.

VINCENT: *(to Francisco)* I'll have a small black.

FRANCISCO: Certainly signor. *(Goes)*

GINNY: He's Italian.

VINCENT: Some sort of dago. Did you do your shopping?

GINNY: Yes. A bottle of Italian Champagne, Earl Grey tea and a frilly black nightie.

VINCENT: I wouldn't mind seeing that.

GINNY: The nightie? I bought it for Percival.

VINCENT: Percival? Who is Percival!?

GINNY: My cat. He's Egyptian.

VINCENT: A cat? I can't imagine an Egyptian cat being called Percival.

GINNY: He wouldn't tell me his real name, I had to give him one.

VINCENT: A talking cat?!

GINNY: I can understand him. He's five thousand years old and he was once owned by a Pharaoh's daughter.

VINCENT: Oh, one of those cats.

GINNY: *(Pause)* You remember when we first met? It was here about a month ago.

VINCENT: A month ago? That's long...

GINNY: What do you mean?

VINCENT: Well nothing's happened.

GINNY: So. A month's too long is it? I mean before something has to happen?

VINCENT: We are just meeting occasionally aren't we. I mean it's just a casual friendship.

GINNY: Casual? Why do we always kiss so passionately when we are alone?

VINCENT: The odd kiss? That's all we do.

GINNY: What do you mean 'that's all'? *(He doesn't reply)* It's a passionate kiss. And you keep telling me I'm the finest woman you've ever met.

VINCENT: Well you are.

GINNY: You tell that to all your girls.

VINCENT: I don't have a lot of girls.

GINNY: Just a few. *(He shrugs)* You tell them all they're great. It's your line. And it usually works within a week or two doesn't it?

VINCENT: What makes you say things like that?

GINNY: I hear stories.

VINCENT: You're silly to listen to stories. Anyway you can't expect to be the first woman I've ever met. *(Looks about)* Isn't this place having exhibitions? *(She passes him the catalogue)* What's this? *(reading catalogue.)* Illusion One and Illusion Two. *(Looking around)* Where are they?

GINNY: On the wall. Behind curtains.

VINCENT: You've had a look? Why are they behind curtains?

GINNY: Oh, dreadfully obscene. You wouldn't want children coming in and viewing them.

VINCENT: Ah, nothing like a bit of obscenity. *(He goes to the mirror that Ginny went to and opens the curtains. There is nothing in it. He does not draw the curtain. He goes back to the table.)* A plain sheet of silver paper. Modern Art is it?

GINNY: It's a mirror.

VINCENT: Of course it isn't a mirror.

GINNY: Well I saw my reflection when I looked in it.

VINCENT: I didn't see mine.

GINNY: I can understand that Vincent. Vampires don't have reflections.

Francisco enters with coffee and cake. He serves them.

FRANCISCO: Will there be anything else signor?

VINCENT: Do you know about this exhibition?

GINNY: He's the artist Vincent.

VINCENT: Oh, the artiste. I looked at one of your 'works' and I didn't see a thing.

FRANCISCO: *(looks back to the mirror)* Ah, you did not draw the curtains. But if you looked into that portal of course you would see nothing. That is signorina's mirror.

VINCENT: Her mirror? What are you talking about?

FRANCISCO: It is our magic. The mirror is constructed so that it only reflects the image of a woman. If you knew how we do it you would say 'so obvious'. But there is the other mirror...

VINCENT: What other mirror?

FRANCISCO: For men...

VINCENT: I don't believe this.

FRANCISCO: It is so.

VINCENT: Well, I'll have to have a look at the man's mirror. *(He goes to the other mirror and opens the curtains. Both Panchino and Lucetta are in it, crowding into the frame.)* It's very distorted. Makes me look like I'm broken into two. Is this one of those fairground mirrors?

FRANCISCO: It adapts to the circumstances.

VINCENT: How do you do it then?

FRANCISCO: Sleight of hand. The quickness deceives the eye.

VINCENT: You're a clown.

FRANCISCO: Certainly signor, a magician and a clown.

Vincent goes back to the table leaving the curtains open. A lighting change. Down on the real side, up on the mirror side. Lucetta goes back to her mirror.

FRANCISCO: That young man, he expects others to clear up after him. *(To Panchino)* Come down into the play signor. *(Panchino steps down through the mirror.)* And you also signora. *(Lucetta steps down.)* We shall present a charade, an interesting divertissement for the entertainment of the fine people here. *(A gesture towards the young couple, which also includes the audience. He draws the curtains)*

PANCHINO: There was a bit of a foul up over the mirrors Francisco.

FRANCISCO: I'm sorry about that. It seems we have a fickle audience for this performance. It's the young crowd.

LUCETTA: Last week we had the business crowd and a cell phone went beep beep in the middle my long speech.

FRANCISCO: You have to accept things like that in our situation.

PANCHINO: I thought you did very well in the circumstances Lucetta.

LUCETTA: Well Panchino I always try to do my best if it's in a good cause. But you'll have to admit, some of these people are completely lost.

FRANCISCO: But capable of salvation.

LUCETTA: Perhaps.

PANCHINO: *(to Francisco)* And what parts are we to play?

FRANCISCO: Well I shall play Magnifico as usual and I thought we might have a scene in the lives and loves of Colombina and Arlecchino and another scene in the lives and loves of Isabella and Pulcinella.

PANCHINO: You've written the scenarios?

FRANCISCO: We'll talk to the patrons first and then I'll jot something down.

LUCETTA: I love Isabella, she's a woman of class, but that Colombina, she's so common, so flirtatious.

PANCHINO: And I get to play the fool as usual?

FRANCISCO: There is no-one so wise as a fool. If you improvise upon your foolishness you will see what delightful flower of insight might unfold. Hold a seed in the palm of your hand. *(Gestures and a sunflower seed appears in the palm of his hand)* A sunflower seed will always grow into a sunflower. You see the seeds sitting at that table, just let them grow.

PANCHINO: It's simple enough.

LUCETTA: Yes. Not hard for old stagers like us.

PANCHINO: You've put our names in the program? Panchino and Lucetta?

FRANCISCO: There is no program. Now settle down in your seats and wait for your cue.

They sit. A lighting cross.

GINNY: You said you had something you wanted to discuss?

VINCENT: Yes Virginia, I do. *(She waits expectantly)* I want to... I want to, you know...

GINNY: You want a relationship.

VINCENT: Well...

GINNY: Say it then.

VINCENT: I want... Well I want to get to know you better.

GINNY: Yes. You want a relationship.

VINCENT: I mean it's ridiculous for a woman of your age to still be a virgin.

GINNY: Some people value their bodies...

VINCENT: Value? Hah. What's the value of a letterbox if you don't put letters in it?

GINNY: Trust you to be crude. *(Pause)* What I really think is that you need to grow up.

VINCENT: I could marry you. I'm serious. You are the most fascinating women I've ever met.

GINNY: Fascinating. And I suppose you think I find you fascinating?

VINCENT: Well I usually am... I mean...

GINNY: Yes, and you take it for granted. *(He says nothing)* And when you don't get it where are you?

VINCENT: I don't understand you sometimes.

GINNY: No. You expect me to fawn all over you.

VINCENT: Of course I don't. *(Pause)* I am serious. I bought a ring.

GINNY: What ring?

Vincent takes a ring box from his pocket and puts it on the table. She opens the box. There is a diamond ring. She takes it, looks at it, puts it back, closes the box. Pushes it back across the table. Vincent takes back.

GINNY: You're not very good at this Vincent, are you?

VINCENT: What do you mean?

GINNY: You've been around women long enough. You should know they like to be wooed in style. Roses, red wine, nice food, candles. Instead you just start up some lewd conversation and then push a ring across a table in a coffee lounge without a word.

VINCENT: I've never done this sort of thing before.

GINNY: Why did you buy it? You can have no confidence that I would accept it.

VINCENT: I am serious. Do you think I don't know...

GINNY: Are you sure you haven't used it before. I mean to say isn't it one of your methods of worming your way into the affections of a woman?

VINCENT: How can you say something like that? I can't understand why you are you so...

GINNY: So, difficult? *(He says nothing)* You are on trial. We have to see if you are going to match up. Keep your ring in your pocket for now.

VINCENT: We should be together.

GINNY: Why?

VINCENT: We're two of a kind. We both know the games and how to play them.

GINNY: Oh no, you haven't learned my game yet. We'll have to see how smart you are in catching on. One day you might make the grade, you never know.

VINCENT: I don't know what you're talking about.

GINNY: No. *(Pause)* A ring doesn't mean anything. I knew a man once. He was attracted to a shy girl. He gave her a ring because he wanted to go to bed with her, not because he wanted to marry. She fell for it. When they broke up he asked for the ring back. He didn't get it.

VINCENT: You know what that makes her?

GINNY: Men! You're just like the rest. No wonder you couldn't see your reflection in a mirror. *(He says nothing)* I think I'll have to go to my mirror and see if you really have ruined it for women. *(She goes to the mirror)* Francisco?

FRANCISCO: Si Signorina.

GINNY: I can't see anything here now.

FRANCISCO: But a man has looked into it.

GINNY: You mean to say he's spoilt it for me?

FRANCISCO: Of course.

GINNY: Don't be silly. It's a trick. How do you do it?

FRANCISCO: I have an assistant behind the set who rotates the frames from time to time. He noted your friend go to the wrong mirror and hey presto.

(GESTURES)

GINNY: You expect me to believe that?

FRANCISCO: Sometimes you are believed and sometimes you are not. How else would we do it?

GINNY: There's a multitude of ways of producing an illusion.

FRANCISCO: Certainly. It is a studied léger de main is it not? And hasn't it been said, by various philosophers, that the whole universe is illusion? Hasn't it been said that it is the thaumaturgy of God?

GINNY: I don't know if anyone ever said that. The next thing you'll be telling me is that God will wave his wand and make everything disappear?

FRANCISCO: Who knows the thought of God? I think if He made the universe disappear then the people in it might object. But come I would like to introduce you to two good friends.

He gestures to Panchino and Lucetta who rise.

GINNY: Oh, I didn't see you before.

LUCETTA: We've been here all the time deary.

PANCHINO: It's a strange fact but sometimes you don't see things that are right before your eyes.

FRANCISCO: They are my actors. May I introduce Lucetta and Panchino.

LUCETTA: How do you do my dear?

PANCHINO: Pleased to meet you.

GINNY: You may call me Ginny.

FRANCISCO: You see we present all art forms in this arena. We have painting, and we have acting, and sometimes we have music. *(Ghostly baroque string music is heard and quickly fades away.)*

GINNY: Did you say you were actors?

PANCHINO: Oh very fine tedious fantastical actors. The very best in all qualities.

LUCETTA: I do all the romantic parts. Sometimes I'm a lady of so much elegance, or I might be a flirting wench.

PANCHINO: And I always play the fool. A sad and happy fool. Or is it a happy and sad fool? Or is it both?

FRANCISCO: We would like to perform a play for you right now.

GINNY: A real play? For me? Have you learnt your lines?

PANCHINO: We don't really have lines, we have a rough and ready plot.

LUCETTA: It's an improvisation.

PANCHINO: An invention.

FRANCISCO: An extemporization.

LUCETTA: An origination.

PANCHINO: A concoction.

FRANCISCO: A creation.

LUCETTA: A hatching.

PANCHINO: A fabrication.

FRANCISCO: Impromptu.

LUCETTA: Unpremeditated.

PANCHINO: Impulsive.

FRANCISCO: Extempore.

LUCETTA: Unstudied.

PANCHINO: Rough and ready.

FRANCISCO: Intuitive.

LUCETTA: Instinctive.

PANCHINO: On the spur of the moment.

FRANCISCO: Ad libitum.

LUCETTA: Uncalculated.

PANCHINO: Dyonysiac.

FRANCISCO: Fantastical.

LUCETTA: Whimsical.

PANCHINO: Capricious. (*Ends*)

FRANCISCO: It's the art of comedy, or the comedy of art, whatever you prefer. We wear masks and we play stock characters.

GINNY: What's the theme then?

PANCHINO: (*takes a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket - reads*) "A hecatomb of beef and a farthing's worth of flour."

LUCETTA: That's our shopping dear.

PANCHINO: (*reads other side of paper*) "A monstrous strange farce depicting... depicting..." I can't read this.

FRANCISCO: I'll have to write a new one. You ask the questions and I'll take notes. (*Comes down. The others freeze*) When you pass through the mirror things change. Left becomes right and right becomes left. Lies become the truth, reality becomes dreams and our hearts are laid bare. (*Sits amongst the audience (perhaps)*)

LUCETTA: Tell me my dear, do you have a young man?

GINNY: Yes I do, he's sitting over there.

LUCETTA: Strange, I can't see him.

GINNY: No, he probably went to the toilet. (*Vincent is still on stage but the lights are down.*)

LUCETTA: Tell me how you feel about him.

PANCHINO: Yes, that's right, tell us and then we'll know.

GINNY: You want me to tell you about Vincent? He's well presented and very wise to the world. He's going to go places. Likes money, fast cars, beautiful women, he's made a study of these things. Anyone would say he was a good catch.

PANCHINO: A good catch. Like a fish in the sea. I like that. Is he a marlin or a pike?

GINNY: I don't know what you mean.

PANCHINO: It sounds like you have as much regard for him as you would for a bag of potatoes.

LUCETTA: Panchino, you don't tell people how they feel.

PANCHINO: Sometimes you have to because they don't know.

LUCETTA: *(to Ginny)* Do you love this man?

GINNY: I really am not sure.

PANCHINO: Not sure!?

LUCETTA: That's sad. You should know by now.

GINNY: What's love got to do with it? You don't talk about love now-a-days, you talk about a meaningful relationship.

PANCHINO: I don't think she knows about true love Lucetta.

LUCETTA: They don't tell them about it in this world.

PANCHINO: The modern way.

LUCETTA: We are old fashioned dear. Just a romantic couple. But it's very hard to live here and now. People have to be so practical.

PANCHINO: Yes, it's the Market Economy, and the Political Efficiency. Or possibly it could be the Global Warming or the Genetic Engineering, or even the Sex and the Violence.

LUCETTA: *(to Ginny)* Tell me, what do you want from this young man of yours?

GINNY: I want him to be mine. I want him to adore me, I want him to fawn over me. I want him to shower me with expensive gifts, pour me wine, give me roses and show me the stars.

PANCHINO: Ah, I think she really does want to be in love.

LUCETTA: Of course she does.

PANCHINO: Make a note Francisco. *(to Ginny)* Do you want him to scratch you between the shoulders?

GINNY: That's a silly question.

LUCETTA: I wouldn't mind a bit of a scratch Panchino. *(He rubs her between the shoulder blades)* That's nice. Did you say he was attracted to other women?

GINNY: Like all men. But they are attracted to him also. They swarm around like bees at a honey pot.

PANCHINO: I remember when I was young. The ladies swarmed around me like flies at a cesspit, and then I met my Lucetta.

LUCETTA: You were lucky to meet someone who understood the virtue of folly. But I can see it. If your young man is very attractive to women you have to make a special effort.

GINNY: Yes. Special..

LUCETTA: What is it that you do my dear?

PANCHINO: Yes, give us the method. Francisco will write it down and make it into a play.

LUCETTA: Just behave yourself Panchino.

GINNY: I play hard to get of course. When I met him I soon became aware of his influence over women. If I'd made myself, available, that would have been the end of it. Perhaps a night or two together and then good-bye. Instead I told him I was a virgin.

LUCETTA: And are you?

GINNY: Of course not.

LUCETTA: Do you think he knows?

GINNY: Maybe. I find it quite amusing to tell him lies and see him fall for them.

PANCHINO: Amusing? She tells him lies. Is that right? It might be. What's right for the fool is wrong for the clown.

LUCETTA: Why do you do that deary?

GINNY: So I can keep him dangling on the string.

PANCHINO: She wants to keep him in suspense.

GINNY: If I told him the truth all the time he would remain on balance. But if he is unsure about what I say he will know there's more to me than meets the eye. He will have to investigate the facts of the matter with more diligence and that will maintain his interest.

PANCHINO: Oh yes, there's more to Everyman than meets the eye.

LUCETTA: But why is it deary?

GINNY: It's a game that maintains his interest.

LUCETTA: A game?

Francisco comes on stage

PANCHINO: Ping pong.

LUCETTA: Tennis.

FRANCISCO: Badminton.

PANCHINO: Croquet.

LUCETTA: Backgammon.

FRANCISCO: Dungeons and dragons.

PANCHINO: Acey deucey.

LUCETTA: Mah-jong.

FRANCISCO: Mumble the peg.

PANCHINO: Monopoly.

LUCETTA: Tic tac toe.

FRANCISCO: Postman's knock.

PANCHINO: Beggar my neighbour.

LUCETTA: Hunt the weasel.

FRANCISCO: Musical chairs.

PANCHINO: Pin the tail on the donkey.

LUCETTA: Hop scotch.

FRANCISCO: Blind man's buff.

PANCHINO: Dominoes.

LUCETTA: Hide and go seek.

FRANCISCO: Poker.

PANCHINO: Black jack.

LUCETTA: Snakes and ladders.

FRANCISCO: Theatre sports.

PANCHINO: Pooh sticks.

LUCETTA: Rounders.

PANCHINO: That's all.

FRANCISCO: Are we not serious about our games? Are they not more important than destiny? Do you wish to turn your life into a boring duty? Games are the important things. They have rules which are obstacles to be overcome in

order that a victory might be achieved. But then life is also a game because it has these same attributes. *(HE GOES)*

LUCETTA: So you are playing games with this man?

GINNY: There's a way of doing things. You might call it a game, or a ritual.

PANCHINO: A ceremony. A song of praise. Hail Mary full of grace. Rugby and racing and beer.

GINNY: You can have a relationship based on compatibility.

PANCHINO: I remember when I courted you my dear, my heart did somersaults. It was so romantic.

LUCETTA: This is the age of reason Panchino.

GINNY: He's the only man I want to be with.

LUCETTA: And you don't call that love?

GINNY: Compatibility.

PANCHINO: Compatibility. It's a rose by another name. It's a four letter word beginning with "L".

LUCETTA: Were you thinking of marrying him?

GINNY: *(Pause)* Of course.

LUCETTA: Would it concern you if he was unfaithful?

GINNY: Absolutely. *(Pause)* Why are you asking me all these questions?

LUCETTA: So you might find the answers.

PANCHINO: You have to know the questions before you can find the answers.

It is possible at this stage for Francisco to obtain from the audience details of what the scenarios might be.

FRANCISCO: *(comes back on stage)* Now we shall perform a little play for you.

GINNY: A play? I'd like that.

PANCHINO: Sit there my dear, and be an audience.

GINNY: I often sit and dream about what might be.

FRANCISCO: Dreams, you know, are sometimes more certain than that which we call reality.

PANCHINO: Have you the scenario?

FRANCISCO: Right here. *(Gestures and the scenario appears magically in his hand (perhaps) . Panchino takes it and shares it with Lucetta.)*

PANCHINO: Ah, I'm to play the part of Arlecchino.

LUCETTA: *(SADLY)* And I Colombina.

FRANCISCO: And I, Magestico.

Francisco obtains the costumes and masks (hopefully) by some magical device and distributes them. They improvise the play.

playlet 1 - Magnifico, Colombina, Arlecchino.

example scenario. Arlecchino is in love with Colombina. Colombina flirts with other men. Arlecchino threatens to jump off a cliff. Colombina continues to flirt. Arlecchino dies of a broken heart. Colombina expresses her grief to Magnifico. Magnifico tells Colombina she must mend Arlecchino's broken heart. She does so with her tears. He returns to life and the lovers are united.

they take of their masks. Polite applause from Ginny. They take their bows.

PANCHINO: A nice little piece wasn't it. Had a good feeling about it.

LUCETTA: I thought it flowed quite well.

PANCHINO: What did you think Francisco? Was the character OK?

FRANCISCO: Not bad. Could do with a bit of work perhaps.

LUCETTA: And what about you my dear, what did you think of our little piece?

GINNY: (*DUBIOUSLY*) It was a bit funny wasn't it?

PANCHINO: Well we did play it for laughs.

GINNY: I mean strange.

PANCHINO: Oh, well, that's just another type of theatre. Last week we did 'Waiting for...', 'Waiting For...', oh waiting for someone who never comes, now that was mighty tedious strange.

GINNY: Godot?

PANCHINO: Him too.

LUCETTA: No, it wasn't 'Waiting for Godot' my dear, it was 'Waiting for Fred'.

GINNY: I've never heard of that one.

PANCHINO: It's 'Waiting for Godot' with laughs.

FRANCISCO: Yes laughs, that's what we need.

PANCHINO: Shall I dance with a bear like the clowns do? That's usually good for a laugh.

FRANCISCO: We haven't got a bear.

PANCHINO: Haven't got a bear? Is there a bear in the house?

FRANCISCO: Don't be mighty tedious strange.

Lucetta and Panchino go to the table and sit down. Ginny and Francisco walk aside.

GINNY: Even so those two were really in love weren't they, in spite of the difficulties?

FRANCISCO: They were true lovers. And they act out their play over and over, for the pleasure of the audience.

GINNY: What are true lovers? Are they some cardboard cut-outs garnished with tinsel and put on stage for an hour of idle amusement, or do they exist in real life?

FRANCISCO: That is what you have to find out.

GINNY: It was funny and sad.

FRANCISCO: But all of life is funny and sad.

GINNY: I thought life was meant to be happy, and successful. Isn't that what we wish to achieve?

FRANCISCO: Perhaps. But why is it sad sometimes?

GINNY: It teaches us, what we are meant to be?

FRANCISCO: Laughter and sadness. That is how you learn.

GINNY: I'm beginning to wonder if I really want Vincent after all. Perhaps I have been playing games just like Colombina did.

FRANCISCO: What do you mean?

GINNY: Perhaps Vincent is an apple on a tree and I wanted him because he was the most delicious apple.

FRANCISCO: The most desirable possession.

GINNY: Do you think we could really fall in love, Vincent and I? Would there be natural affection between us? Or are we just seeking points in a game called lust and possession?

FRANCISCO: Now you are asking questions.

GINNY: But you have to. That's what Panchino said.

FRANCISCO: He's a wise clown.

GINNY: You see I've learnt from a fool.

FRANCISCO: You certainly have.

GINNY: So I'll trust the fool in future. Thank you. Yes, we could fall in love, if the dew of understanding settles on the flower.

A lighting change. Ginny goes back to Vincent.

VINCENT: Well? Did you see yourself in the mirror?

GINNY: I saw a reflection. Quite distorted. If you see things from a different viewpoint then...

VINCENT: What?

GINNY: You learn.

VINCENT: There's something weird about those mirrors.

GINNY: They seem perfectly natural to me.

VINCENT: You can't have a mirror that doesn't reflect what's in front of it.

GINNY: Oh he told me how they did it. They just rotate the frame. I imagine it has a silver backing.

VINCENT: I don't believe that. How did they know to turn it when I went to look?

GINNY: A peephole I suppose. All magic tricks are so simple Vince, once you see how they are done. Francisco explained it to me.

VINCENT: Who?

GINNY: Francisco. The waiter. He introduced me to a couple of friends of his and they acted out a play.

VINCENT: I didn't see anything.

GINNY: But you went away.

VINCENT: No, I didn't. I didn't see you for a while. I thought you'd gone through the mirror frame. Where were you?

GINNY: Over there. *(indicates mirror side)* Oh, they seem to have gone. *(They are still on stage but the lights are down.)*

VINCENT: *(aside)* Well that is mighty tedious strange. *(Pause)* Are you doing anything this Saturday?

GINNY: I'll have to consult my diary.

VINCENT: I thought we might go out.

GINNY: Where do you think?

VINCENT: A surprise.

GINNY: We'll see.

VINCENT: Am I still on trial?

GINNY: We are both on trial. We have to see if we can make something out of it.

VINCENT: What do I have to do then?

GINNY: Why don't you look into your mirror, then you might see what the truth is.

VINCENT: That mirror was only a jumble of confusion.

GINNY: Well maybe you should look at that. Maybe if you look at a jungle of confusion you'll find out what you are.

VINCENT: All right. To please you. *(He goes to his mirror)* Waiter.

FRANCISCO: Si signor?

VINCENT: This mirror is blank now.

FRANCISCO: Si signor.

VINCENT: How can it be blank, I certainly saw a reflection in it before.

FRANCISCO: Well you see, it is of a unique construction. It has a special surface which changes its shape according to the amount of ambient light and heat. Sometimes it does not even reflect at all. Look at it later in the day and you might see yourself in it quite clearly.

VINCENT: What special surface? *(Vincent reaches forward with his fingers to touch the mirror.)*

FRANCISCO: Oh please signor do not touch the surface, you will break the illusion.

VINCENT: I have to say... what's your name... Francisco? I have to say Francisco I find this whole thing very irritating. Can't we have something sensible here?

FRANCISCO: Oh no signor, that would be a break with tradition. But tell me, are you interested in theatre?

VINCENT: Would I be here if I wasn't?

FRANCISCO: Of course. Come I will introduce you to our poor players. *(Guides him to the other table)* Panchino and Lucetta.

LUCETTA: Charmed I am sure.

PANCHINO: So it's your turn now young chap, should be able to do something quite enlightening here.

VINCENT: What's this all about?

FRANCISCO: We are rehearsing a play. We would like your opinion.

VINCENT: I don't think I've got a lot of time to see a play.

PANCHINO: Only five minutes my dear boy. It's a very short tedious scene.

VINCENT: Well I would like my friend to see it as well.

PANCHINO: You mean that lovely young lady we just spoke to? Most appreciative audience we've had for some time.

VINCENT: Oh she's gone. *(Ginny is still actually on stage)* I'll have to catch her.

FRANCISCO: Never mind signor, her shopping bag is still there, she probably went to the counter for more coffee.

VINCENT: She did say something about a play. What's it about then?

LUCETTA: That's a good question Panchino, what is it about?

PANCHINO: I haven't been able to fathom that out yet. But let us ask him some questions so we'll know.

VINCENT: So that you will know what?

PANCHINO: What sort of play you might like.

FRANCISCO: They will ask the questions and I will write the play.

(Goes aside or into audience - as before)

VINCENT: I like plays about waiting.

PANCHINO: Waiting? Waiting? I think it's been done. Fact is everyone is waiting. One day the moment will arrive.

VINCENT: What happens then?

PANCHINO: It will last for just a moment, and then it will be over.

VINCENT: The moment?

PANCHINO: Yes.

VINCENT: Hardly worth waiting for.

PANCHINO: But we all do. *(Pause)* Lucetta has the questions.

LUCETTA: What do you see when you look into a mirror?

VINCENT: I never look into one.

PANCHINO: He never looks into a mirror.

LUCETTA: You never look in a mirror? Why is that?

VINCENT: Because I know what I look like.

LUCETTA: But you have to shave. Remove black-heads.

VINCENT: I don't need a mirror to shave, and I don't get black-heads.

PANCHINO: No joy on mirrors dear.

LUCETTA: Perhaps I should ask you about your emotional attachment to the young lady.

VINCENT: I don't have emotional attachments.

PANCHINO: How extraordinary. He doesn't have emotional attachments. Is he a clockwork man?

VINCENT: Well tell me what's the point in getting involved. If a woman gets too passionate I tend to drop her pretty quick. If you follow your emotions you're certain to make a mistake. I admire Virginia for her initiative but I don't like her lies. You have to weigh up her good points and her bad points, and that will lead you to the correct decision.

LUCETTA: You amaze me young man.

VINCENT: If you can't go into it logically...

LUCETTA: Pragmatically?

PANCHINO: Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock *(etc)* .

VINCENT: One would hope so.

Francisco comes back on stage.

PANCHINO: Weighing up the pros and cons.

LUCETTA: Working out the possibilities.

FRANCISCO: Analysing all factors.

PANCHINO: Doing a regression analysis.

LUCETTA: Solving the polynomial.

FRANCISCO: Reducing the equation.

PANCHINO: Squaring the cube.

LUCETTA: Thinking outside the square.

FRANCISCO: Taking it from zero to infinity.

PANCHINO: Calculating the square of the hypotenuse.

LUCETTA: Integrating the function.

FRANCISCO: Differentiating the expression.

PANCHINO: Co-ordinating the Cartesians.

LUCETTA: Solving the equation.

FRANCISCO: Resolving the syllogism.

PANCHINO: Taking it to the limit.

LUCETTA: Using multi-valued logic.

FRANCISCO: Beating the odds.

PANCHINO: Summing the factorial.

LUCETTA: Looking before you leap.

FRANCISCO: Taking a conservative attitude.

PANCHINO: Dissecting the specimen.

LUCETTA: Conducting the autopsy.

FRANCISCO: Materialising the Dialectic.

PANCHINO: Reaching the a poster conclusion.

LUCETTA: Ad infinitum.

FRANCISCO: Words without end. For our intellectual devices map out the face of the world and lead us to various conclusions. But what devices do we have to map the country of the heart? All I can suggest is an image in a mirror. (*GOES*)

VINCENT: Is that all?

PANCHINO: That's some of it. We could go on for ages if you wished. It's all in Roget.

LUCETTA: Tell me dear, what is it that you really want from Virginia?

VINCENT: I want to go to bed with her of course. What else do you think?

PANCHINO: He wants her scalp to hang on his belt, that's all.

LUCETTA: Is that correct?

VINCENT: You don't have to put it like that.

PANCHINO: Beat the tom tom, swing the tomahawk. (*War whoops by slapping the lips with the fingers.*)

VINCENT: In the case of Ginny it's more fun because there's a challenge. I get bored when they just jump into bed with me, there's no game.

PANCHINO: Badminton...

LUCETTA: We've already had games Panchino.

VINCENT: Did you have 'hide the sausage'?

LUCETTA: Oh, you are a naughty boy. But what I really wanted to know is how you feel about her, in your heart.

VINCENT: Admiration?

LUCETTA: Is that all?

VINCENT: She's fascinating.

LUCETTA: You tell her.

VINCENT: Flattery, it's one of the... she's smart, she's cottoned on to it.

PANCHINO: When I met my Lucetta I told her she was like a pumpkin flower. So romantic. She was butter in my arms.

LUCETTA: But do you feel something special for her?

VINCENT: I'd put her among the top ten, that's all.

LUCETTA: You don't want to marry her?

VINCENT: Good god no.

PANCHINO: But he gave her a ring. Why did he give her a ring?

VINCENT: It sometimes works, if all else fails.

LUCETTA: A trick!

PANCHINO: What a tricky Vickey!

VINCENT: She cottoned on to it though. You have to admire her.

PANCHINO: *(ASIDE)* What do you think Lucetta? I believe he's in love with her and doesn't know it.

LUCETTA: *(ASIDE)* That could very well be the case dear.

PANCHINO: Do you have enough Francisco? (*Francisco may wish to consult the audience at this stage.*)

FRANCISCO: *(comes back on stage)* Indeed I have a scenario. *(It appears magically in his hand. Lucetta takes it.)*

LUCETTA: Ah, I have the part of Isabella, the Queen of the stage.

PANCHINO: And I am to be Pulcinella. Cluck, cluck, cluck.

The masks and costumes are distributed as before.

playlet 2 - Magnifico, Isabella, Pulcinella.

scenario:

Pulcinella sees the austere and beautiful Isabella and falls in love with her. She ignores him. He protects her from imaginary thieves and bandits. She ignores him. He fights an imaginary battle for her. She still ignores him. He asks Magnifico for advice and is told he must find his true self. Pulcinella picks his true self up off the floor and offers it to her. She takes his hand. He understands that they can never become lovers.

they take off their masks. Polite applause from Vincent. They take their bows.

LUCETTA: I thought it went all right didn't you.

PANCHINO: What did you think Francisco? Was it OK?

FRANCISCO: Good. Needs a little more energy perhaps.

LUCETTA: And what about you my dear young man, what did you think?

VINCENT: Left me cold. Wasn't much variety.

LUCETTA: But we had to make our point. We had to be simple and consistent.

PANCHINO: I think it really impressed him, my dear, I think he's too proud to admit it.

LUCETTA: Don't talk about people like that Panchino.

VINCENT: Love stories are two a penny.

LUCETTA: We thought of doing King Lear but we haven't got the cast.

VINCENT: Too long and boring anyway.

PANCHINO: A most tedious strange play. A deluded man, but his fool knew the truth all along. No-one listens to fools.

LUCETTA: Except those who are wise.

VINCENT: Only fools listen to fools.

PANCHINO: How can you be wise without first being foolish?

FRANCISCO: *(Francisco and Vincent walk apart)* You see my young lad our clown, he asks the most mysterious questions.

VINCENT: It seems like stupidity to me. I can't understand it.

FRANCISCO: But it's not what you understand, it's what you know.

VINCENT: I just don't know what you're all on about.

FRANCISCO: As the mirror, clouded with dust, shines brightly when cleaned, so the deluded soul sees the truth when confronted with folly.

VINCENT: What I didn't like was the soppy love scene. I can't believe a couple would act like that.

FRANCISCO: They were true lovers. And they act out their play over and over, for the pleasure of the audience. Love has a gesture which must be displayed.

VINCENT: Apart from the love scene it was funny and sad. Perhaps there were aspects...

FRANCISCO: But all of life is funny and sad. Do you not understand?

VINCENT: I'm beginning to wonder if I really want Virginia after all. Perhaps I have been playing games just like Pulcinella did.

FRANCISCO: But he did so because he loved her.

VINCENT: He made a fool of himself for love?

FRANCISCO: Don't we all?

VINCENT: *(Pause)* That's something different you know.

FRANCISCO: What is that?

VINCENT: What love is. We are given definitions, but they mean nothing. I am on an eternal quest for, sex...

FRANCISCO: Did you find love?

VINCENT: They talk about love in sentimental magazines. I don't know what love is. I wouldn't recognise it if I saw it.

FRANCISCO: But you will look out for it? Yes?

VINCENT: You're a good chap Francisco. I'll look out for it, just for you.

FRANCISCO: Where will you look?

VINCENT: It's got to be here. *(Puts his hand over his heart.)*

FRANCISCO: Do you think you will find it with Virginia?

VINCENT: I really don't know. She's different. A pool of mystery.

FRANCISCO: Perhaps you should look into that pool.

VINCENT: But she's always telling me lies Francisco.

FRANCISCO: Then put her to the test. Maybe she will change that game.

VINCENT: The test, yes, a good idea. Thank you. If she tells me the truth then... who knows what... *(He goes across the stage to Ginny)*

GINNY: There you are. Where did you go?

VINCENT: Go? I went through the looking glass of course.

GINNY: *(musing)* The place where night is day.

VINCENT: I met the actors. They did a strange play.

GINNY: Tedious strange?

VINCENT: Something like that.

GINNY: What was it about?

VINCENT: Truth and lies.

GINNY: Did that teach you something?

VINCENT: Perhaps. May I ask you a question?

GINNY: Of course.

VINCENT: Who did you really buy that black nightgown for?

GINNY: I bought it for you of course.

VINCENT: Why did you say it was for Percival?

GINNY: To make you jealous. It was a game.

VINCENT: And it was a black nightgown you bought?

GINNY: Yes. Don't you believe me?

VINCENT: I really don't know.

GINNY: Well that's a confidence booster. *(Pause)* I have to go. Ring me on Saturday if you like.

VINCENT: You didn't eat your cake.

She goes leaving shopping behind. Vincent nibbles on her cake. Lighting change to Francisco on the other side of the stage.

FRANCISCO: Come on my children. Time to go back into your frames. *(He escorts Lucetta and Panchino into the mirrors, draws the curtains.)* Until it's time for another show. *(He goes across to Vincent)* Everything satisfactory signor?

VINCENT: I'm not sure. Virginia went without eating her cake.

FRANCISCO: Perhaps she had other things on her mind.

VINCENT: *(Pause)* Do you really put those plays of yours on here Francisco?

FRANCISCO: Of course. We have special occasions on Saturday nights. There is a string quartet and between the symphonies there are dramatic interludes. We serve a four course meal. It is a very romantic occasion and it is enjoyed very much by couples who are in love, both young and old. Candles, a single red rose in a vase and a bottle of the best Chianti are included in the overall charge, which is most reasonable.

VINCENT: Sounds interesting.

FRANCISCO: Perhaps Signorina and yourself might wish to come.

VINCENT: I don't know if we are going to continue with our little affair Francisco.

FRANCISCO: I am sorry to hear that signor. I believed you to be, a quite compatible couple. Did we fail you?

VINCENT: No, not you. She failed the test.

FRANCISCO: She told you a lie signor?

VINCENT: Yes, she did.

FRANCISCO: But you never know. What is truth to one person is illusion to another. What did she say that was untrue?

VINCENT: She told me she'd bought a black nightdress. I don't believe she would wear such a thing. Her flatmates hate Earl Grey tea and champagne gives her wind. I asked her about the nightgown and she didn't wish to correct the lie.

FRANCISCO: You think so? Ah but Signorina has left her shopping bag behind.

VINCENT: There I'll show you. *(He picks up the shopping bag and puts it on the table. He takes out the contents. A bottle of Italian champagne, a packet of earl grey tea, a black nightie).* Francisco?

FRANCISCO: Si signor?

VINCENT: I'd like to book a table for Saturday night.

BLACKOUT

FAST CURTAIN