

A DIALOGUE IN THE NIGHT

feature film screenplay pre-operational

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

The film is starred, in the presence, by one person: she is an actress, Lucrezia, who won a very important film award and who speaks on the phone with a journalist very intuitive and intelligent, alternated by the phone calls of a friend who shows all its self-centeredness.

Everything happens in the short but long night before the delivery of the coveted prize. The actress seems almost intent on taking her own life.

In the film the existential events, told little by little by the three women, are intertwined with brief talks with the producer, cynical entrepreneur himself, and with a man much loved by Lucrezia, but now lost. Short but intense phone call finally with a lighting technician, who wants to compliment but will be able to say things, to Lucrezia, of the utmost importance.

Since everything happens on the phone, the story of the characters will have to be imagined by the viewer, which will not be granted images other than those of a house and the face of the protagonist. Only very few short flashback images will be present during the course of the story.

Lucrezia will be able to manifest all her own intimate resignation, on the verge of real despair, in the face of a reality that seems to have lost for her every authentic sense. In this, she will tell of her work that has deeply and negatively marked her, with repeated connections to her entire life and to the relational and existential dramas that hurt her deeply.

The actress declares to the two women that she will not go to receive the prize; but still listen to the unfolding of the story of the journalist, who finally confesses to having been raped, and his deep loneliness. In speaking with her, Lucrezia will discover that, once again, she is still taking an interest in living, in the very difficult art of deep listening. Finally, it will be the journalist, young and inexperienced of her work, but very similar to Lucrezia in the soul, to make the protagonist understand that all the disappointments of her life do not have to continually deal with a past that, however, it has also been for her a source of intimate wealth, nor will she have to constantly confront that certain world of entertainment that is built on a tangle of vulgar lies.

Instead, she must consider his own life as an authentic "act of love", given, and by someone, surely, received.

At the dawn of the long night, Lucrezia will receive a cathartic and final message from the journalist:

"You are not that audience that, perhaps distracted, perhaps superficial, will leave your room immediately returning to the banality of its survival: you must imagine that only one person, without true face or history, she cried for what you gave her with your talent and your passion. In those tears, you will be one.

*A flower that, in the solitude of its field,
looks towards that small part of the sky, which is reserved for him".*

Stylistic notes

- a) There will be no filming "shoulder", because it is my belief that they are only welcome in action films; the camera must not "be seen" with its own movement: the action is reserved for acting actors. As movements, god machine there will be rare, very short lateral or vertical movements, as well as very few zoom approaches, very slow. With the choice of mostly fixed shots, the attention of the spectator will not be induced to "exit" from the contents of the recitation.
- b) The film will be shot with two cameras positioned in order to allow the actress protagonist to almost never interrupt the flow of their own acting (choice used successfully in my film "Write about a love"). This technique will allow you to make changes to the frame chosen only during assembly. In this, I repeat the search for the perception of a total "absence" of the rooms, which refer to the fiction that, inevitably, would overlap with the contents.
- c) The timing of the scenes must follow the development of the emotions of both the protagonist and the voices with which he speaks, so the breaks will depend on the sensitivity of the protagonists.
- d) Each interview will be recorded live: the external voices of the interlocutors will have to be heard by the protagonist on their phone (and vice versa), just like in a real telephone conversation.
- e) The lights are those of a stem lamp with warm light, and an additional side light, designed to draw the face of the protagonist, in a long night out.
- f) The musical pieces will be inserted during the editing phase. There is a repetitive song, which will appear in the "passing" clips between a scene and the other (shots of objects in the room, and those in which the protagonist is not talking on the phone. This piece are comparable to the "promenades" in *Pictures for an exhibition* by Mussorgsky.
- g) Director's style of reference: Ingmar Bergman.

Characters

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Lucrezia | Actress in existential crisis |
| Barbara | Novice journalist |
| Silvia | Friend of Lucrezia |
| man | ex Lucrezia's lover |
| producer | |
| Giuseppe | Light technician |

SCENE OF PROLOGUE

(Twilight)

IMAGES + VOICE OVER FIELD

The camera lingers on some objects, photographs, corners of the ^{room 1 of Lucrezia}, before each appearance. In this, it will act as an indiscreet "eye" that wanders around the room, with the aim not only to show the environment in which the story will take place, but also with the aim of showing objects that, later, will acquire special meaning in the plot.

The voiceover, which starts almost immediately, will end before the camera continues on scene 1, without interruption.

Voiceover on the images: "The room is modern and tidy. It's coming down at night. It's a May night.

From the window enters a distant noise, of traffic and things, but especially that air scented, and light that only the month can give undecided of a summer that, yet, cannot be born, when it will cancel things in an insistent light.

Lucrezia. Thirty years. Actress. Beautiful. However, life seems to have painted a thin layer on her face, a mask that is not an actor because it floats beside her, and so, even when she laughs there is no joy that can then explode, a joy that, that transparent veil, knows how to pierce. Only a few have been able instead to pierce its luminous beauty - and they have done it not without a deliberate disenchantment - and they were finally able to scroll on her face the design of an evident soul, of something that really, among things, exists with force".

-----continues on scene one, with the camera entering the bathroom

SCENE 1

Lucrezia appears in the camera as she enters the bathtub. On a shelf rests a container of pills.

(pending)

Lucrezia looks into the void; empty a handful of pills in his hand, close his eyes and make the gesture of swallowing them; but he doesn't swallow them. He closes his eyes by placing the messy pills on the shelf. He opens his eyes again looking into the void. She brings water on her face, and her makeup drips. The phone is ringing in the other room. She is not going anywhere. After a few seconds the phone rings, and she still does not move.

¹ The photo of a man in small frame, on the shelf - a photo of the grandparents, ancient in small frame (next) - two large photos of Lucrezia, theater style - a cell phone thrown on the sofa - an open window - an average photo hanging of her friend Silvia, treated watercolor style - a chair - a large bouquet of flowers still in cellophane - an open bottle of whiskey - a series of books on a shelf - a modern floor lamp, diffused light and yellow - a snout clock that resonates the seconds and marks the hours with gong...

SCENE 2

Detail of the telephone on the sofa in the living room. You can hear and see the clock that marks nine at night.

The image remains fixed. The phone is still ringing.

As the phone continues to play, Lucrezia enters the scene with a towel wrapped around her body. Now he answers, standing up.

"Hello!" (almost screams)

Women voice (a bit intimidated, uncertain): - Hello... Sorry to bother you. I am Barbara from New Cinema International Magazine. From the United States.

- (rude) Yes, she bothers me!
- Excuse me... I didn't mean...
- Ah... and you speak Italian?
- Yes, I'm the correspondent from Italy...
- Well! What do you want?
- (uncertain) I'd like to talk to you a little bit... about your new award...
- I don't feel like it. I really don't want to!
- Nevertheless,... it is a very important prize...! That all actresses would like to receive...
- Of course. Nevertheless, I don't care.
- You don't care about the award or my interview?
- Both of those things!
- So, um...
- ...and then, if you want, call my agent!
- Excuse me... I did... but he gave me your number...

(pause)

- Ah! Of course! In addition, who gave him permission?
- Don't...
- All right! Listen: call me as much as you want, if you find me again...! (hang up)

Throw your phone on the couch. She is agitated, almost hysterical. You pour a hard liquor. He drinks it. He grabs a pillow and throws it down violently. Now he covers his eyes with his hands. Zoom in on the face.

-----fading to black-----

SCENE 3

The phone is ringing. Lucrezia now wears a long sweater over her tights. He sees the number and has a little grimace. Even by surprise. He answers, weak one:

- Hello?

Voice of man (it is that of the photo in the frame on the shelf):

- It is me...How are you?

(silence)

Man: - Are you there?

- I am all right.
- I'm calling about your award...

(silence)

- Yes.
- Are you busy?
- No.
- Is there something wrong?
- No.
- Aren't you happy? (waiting) Your award?
- I don't know..

(silence)

- Well... maybe I should not have...
- You shouldn't have what? Leave me on the road?

(silence)

- No... I don't know...
- Exactly! What do you want now?

(silence)

- Nothing.

(silence)

- So hello! (hangs up)

She stands still, looking at the phone in her hand. She is tense, in pain. Then, among themselves:

- The prize is! Here! The PRIZE!!!

-----cut to black-----

SCENE 4

Some of the images are repeated in sequence in the prologue, but now we'll find a music:

The music stops, cut clean, when we see Lucrezia at the window, first from behind, then from outside in the middle of the floor. He is looking into the void. We go back to her from behind: she turns, moves and impales the target.

SCENE 5

The phone indicates an audio message received. She opens it and we hear the voice of the journalist who reads it: - *I am Barbara. I must first apologize, I realized I was probably really bothering you. I don't know what to do... you know? I'm actually a rookie in my line of work and... and they gave me this responsibility... to talk to you, I mean. Excuse me again and... if you feel like it, call me. Maybe, just to have a chat, where my interview has nothing to do with it... (pause) Good night, then...*

Lucrezia smiles a bit when she hears the word "rookie". Think, and then get the reporter's number and call her.

- Hello? Lucrezia?
- Yeah. I was very rude before!
- Oh, don't worry... (pause) Do you know that, in the meantime, I called your director?
- Did you? And what did he say?
- (laughs a bit) Well... he told me about his work, how good he was... But about you... forgive me if I tell you... not a word!
- I had no doubt.
- So, in the end, you think it's normal, a guy like that?
- Normal.
- And yet... if it were not for his grand prize...
- Exactly!
- Is everyone like that? In the cinema?
- (pause) No, not all. Let's say... (pause) ... that there is a lot of selfishness around...
- Is there a fame hunt?
- (thinks) Yes. But not only that: they all go looking for something to be able to say... of themselves...
- What do you mean?
- Every opportunity is good to shout "I was there!", I was there, I was there! You want to grab them by the collar and say, "We know you were there! We have seen you!"
- I think I understand... actually, although I've only recently been doing this job, I've found very few people who know...
- ...who are able to recognize when the merit, the real one, the irreplaceable one, is someone else's.
- Yes. (pause) In your opinion, therefore, it is not a question of money. Not in the first place?

(pause)

- We all need the money. But no! Mostly, I think it's a matter of self-esteem. Do you understand me?
- Yeah, I get it now. Every opportunity is good to be able to shout "Look how good I was!". Is that so?
- Yes. It is. It is... suffocating! No. More than that. It's painful! (long break) Anyway, never write what I said. I would certainly be misunderstood. Moreover, it's not worth it, really!

- I'm not gonna write that down. Besides, we said we were going to talk free, do you remember?
- Yeah. It's all clear.

(pause)

- Can I ask you a question?
- Of course.
- From the first phone call, I was very surprised. Let me explain: I would have expected an actress to be full of joy. But instead of that...
- Oh look... it's a long story... very long...
- (hesitates again) Wouldn't you like to tell me?

(silence)

- I don't know if... it's worth it. Not for you, believe me, because I feel like I'm talking to a very smart person with you, but... I'm not working... no more.

(silence)

(Lucrezia): - Is it still there?

- Yes... Lucrezia... I'm still here...

(silence)

Lucrezia: - You work with the cinema, so...

- Yes. At least I try... recently... as I wrote her.
- Then, if it is new, it will not be a slave to prejudices.
- What kind of prejudices?
- Oh, well... if a person is famous, then they must also be good. For example.
- Well, I think it's a very common prejudice. (pause) It's stupid.
- In fact. (pause) Do you know? Now that I'm famous I should be happy: now I'll always be good, necessarily! (pause) But do you know that, perhaps - so someone told me - I was good even before?
- It seems obvious to me. If she had not been good, how could she have become famous?
- (laughs sarcastically) Oh, you're very young here. Are you very young, by the way?
- 24 years.
- Here. It's not a fault, of course. I just wanted to say that you don't have much experience yet...
- I agree with you. What am I supposed to know, about what he was telling me?
- (pause) I don't remember anymore. What I was telling you.
- About becoming famous...
- Ah already! You don't have to be good to be famous.
- You mean there are other ways to become one?
- A thousand!

(silence, then Lucrezia resumes))

- What do you think of me?
- It's like I see her!
- Really? Why did you see my photographs?
- More. I have been watching some previews of the movie, some scenes. You know you are really good?
- You say? (pause) At this point I should pretend the usual modesty, and say the usual things... "... I did only my best..." "... All credit to the director..." or some shit like that.
- Yes, many people use this technique... *here in English we call it under statement.*
- (smiles) Yes, I remember, even from acting classes, quite a few years ago...
- Really? Did they teach you that, too?
- Well, it's just that sometimes you have to act it, this part...
- But why do you think you practice this under *statement*? It would not be easier... to answer "Yes, I think I'm really good!"
- A friend of mine, a psychologist, told me it's a way to get attention. He is right.
- Yeah, maybe it's so...
- Of course it is so: in the end, those who pull back seemingly belittling their own talents do nothing but entice the other to contradict him, to tell him that it is not true, that he is a genius! Do you understand me?
- Oh, of course I understand! (pause) It reminds me of a man I dated, and he kept saying, as soon as he had the chance, that he certainly wasn't as handsome as the others were!
- ...and you told him he was the most handsome of them all, right?
- Yes. (pause) Only until I got tired.
- (pause) In the end, this man was just talking about himself. Always. Right?
- Very true!
- He pretended to be small, to be told he was big.

(silence)

- Well, without wanting to, maybe we are talking about something you could publish... but I don't know, we'll decide later, maybe.
- Really?
- Yes. Write about my tiredness.
- What does that mean?
- (thinks) I'm tired of all these lies! Of all these half-wits.
- Please explain to me.
- The littleness of everyone who doesn't have... had the courage to become someone, to grow inside, and then do not miss half an opportunity to put themselves in the window. (pause) In addition, there, in the window, they pass in front of you so passers-by see them in the front row...
- What a world...!
- Shit. Believe me.

(silence)

- Barbara: - You must have had a lot of trouble, right?
- To become an actress?
- Yes.
- No. To become one, he did what so many people did. I think he is abnormal. No, my effort was to... become a person who maybe can look himself in the face when he's in the mirror. All my flaws, of course.
- He is right. I figured that out, you know?
- (jokey) I told you, you're a smart person!
- (laughs) Maybe... I don't know, if I was really smart maybe I wouldn't be here...
- Don't you like your job?
- I don't know. I wish I could talk to people the way I'm talking to her!
- Thank you very much. (long break)
- I'm beginning to understand why you're such a great actress...!
- (laughs) Do you mean you're starting to realize how much I can lie?
- Noooo. No. An actor... it's true... in the end he always lies because he has to represent what he is not: another. However, this is his gift, his greatness, that of which so many of my colleagues speak. No. I meant that you can... dig behind appearances. She really knows how to look at things the way they are. That's what I think. Is that true?
- That's a compliment no one gave me. I will remember it. (silence)
- Ma. She just told me she was sick of all these lies. Do they really make her suffer like this?
- (think long) Maybe so. I don't understand anything anymore, believe me.
- Of the others?
- Yes, but also, and perhaps above all, of myself.
- (long break) Are you tired of yourself, Lucrezia?
- I am tired... of living... maybe...

(long silence)

- To live? Does he really say that?
- Yes.

(long silence)

- Lucrezia. You don't want to...
- It has been a long time, you know? That everything seems to me... a trivial repetition, very boring.
The things we say to each other. Well, I've known for a long time what they'll tell me before they open their mouths, and what they won't tell me. In addition, behind this saying and not saying is always that vein of the most shameless lie. It's like a river that travels under things.
- Have you heard many lies about yourself?
- Well, like everyone else, I guess. The lies that bother me the most are the ones we tell ourselves.
- (thinks) You mean we're all here... playing our part?

- Yes. He understood me perfectly.
- ...and that this part of the play does not belong to us? Not all the way?
- Yes. What doesn't belong to us is our biggest lie (pause) and then, I'm tired of listening. Here!
- (pause) To feel that others always talk, and first of all about themselves'?
- Yes (pause) my director is just an example, he could experience it. I'm not saying he's not good. It is. But what does he think he's doing when he sticks to someone's neck and sucks their blood... like a vampire?
- How do I know!
- Even you (let's face it, which is easier...), even you then live my feeling... of... to be like a vase, where others just come to piss in it their anguish, their ambitions, their frustrations and who knows what else?
- Yes.
You know... you know how many times I thought, "Barbara! Stop listening to them! Fuck!".
- I will tell you my relationships, now all the same: I meet a person, a friend maybe, and we say goodbye. I immediately get the question "How are you?". That's the wrong first step. I have tried, many times, not to ask this fateful question but, immediately, the person began to disband a whole series of very long things that concern him: almost a whole life. Every goddamn time, man!
- This makes me think... that for them others are just a tool...
- ... yes, an instrument. A violin, for example. They take it in their hands, and when they played it right, they put it back in the suitcase. And then I... It happens very often that, after a very long time in which I have been listening, the person asks me, as if it were a marginal topic: "And you, how are you doing?". Here: If I just try to say something about myself, the other at most makes a brief comment, almost annoyed. (pause) Not to mention that from what I'm trying to say about myself, these guys always get the chance to come back to their own mind. You know what I'm saying?
- Much.
- You know that "you know, I too...". If you say you had a cold they immediately tell you that "I knew, I pneumonia...".
- We really should stop. To listen. Yeah, I've had enough of that, too!
- So young? (pause) Don't you have dreams?
- (pause) Many. But I'm beginning to doubt...
- I'm sorry, what does age have to do with it? Age is what we bring in, isn't it?
- Yeah. Maybe it is...
- I told you these things because - yes, maybe I am talking about myself now - but because... I don't know... I feel like you can understand, because maybe you're in my position...
- We're a lot alike, and you knew right away.
- A very good listener, then! (laughs)
- (laughs) Yeah.
- (pause)
- You said it was all a lie...
- In fact. In addition, I'm tired of myself. What's the point of pretending you're happy to listen to their complaints; What balls then to hear you say "Well... let's go on..."

maybe tomorrow I'll call you back..." to tell you more and more about themselves.

What balls! I can't take it anymore!

- (thinks) You thought of a solution? Did you find a way to... defend yourself?
- Yeah. I tried that. But nothing was of any use. Only one thing happened...
- ...that you were more and more alone. Inside of the...
- (pause) Yes. (long pause) Does that happen to you?
- Yeah, it happens to me. I... maybe I'm more and more alone.

(Ring a call notice for Lucrezia)

Lucrezia: - Look, I'm sorry, but I'll have to answer my producer's call.

- Imagine. I've taken up so much of your time...!
- (thinks) No. You didn't take my time. You listened to me! And I want to call you back if you want to, so you can tell me about yourself. OK?
- (laughs) And no, I don't want to put you in this position again, by bloody listening!
- (think) I want to listen to you, because I want you to tell me about your loneliness. (pause) Maybe it will do me good. Listen to you. This time. Maybe you can save me. (long break) You know that before, in the bathtub...
- What?
- No. Nothing at all. Hello. See you later.
- Bye, see you later.

SCENE 6

Lucrezia calls the producer.

Producer: - Hello beauty! Are you ready?

- (pretends to be cheerful) And of course...!
- I'm told we're gonna have an incredible press park!
- Really?
- And of course! Where would they ever see a girl like you?
- (pause, then joke) You mean good, like me?
- Yes, of course. Besides, such a good pussy is not easily found...!
- (pause, then, with slight sarcasm) Then you chose me well...
- Of course, I chose you well! You know I have an eye for these things...!
- Yeah, I know. I'm... I'm sorry, but I'm in the bathtub now. Maybe after...
- No, no... I'll leave you to it. Or you'll come with dark circles! Besides, I have to get ready for the big day!
- In fact! (laughs).
- I salute you.
- Hello.

Lucrezia throws the phone on the table: - How painful! You cocksucker of shit!

She goes to the window, leans on the windowsill, and we see her from the outside. She closes his eyes, because she wants hear the distant traffic noise. She tightens his eyes, but she also has a faint smile. She is breathing warm air.

We see her turning to the room and looking at two photo carriers on a shelf. He has an ambiguous smile, and Lucrezia's hands fold the two photo carriers to hide the image. Slow zoom on the inverted photographs. Then the hands fall into the frame, grab one of the frames and throw it to the ground, breaking the glass into many fragments, on the floor.

-----cut to black-----

SCENE 7

Lucrezia is sitting at the table, her head resting on her hands. Eyes closed. Only a weak mouth movement.

The phone is ringing again. With her eyes closed, Lucrezia finds him wearily on the table and answers:

- Ready.

- (weak, distant) Hello Silvia...

- (with a vein of ill-concealed indifference) So... tomorrow is the big day?

- (very tired) Yes. It's the big day, Silvia.

- Were you asleep at all?

- No. No, no...

- Sorry. Maybe it wasn't the right time... right?

- Why?

- Because you seem... distant... if... if you don't want to talk to me, I'll leave you right now...

- No. Nothing at all. I'm just... I'm really tired.

- (incredulous, a bit of a song) What, are you tired? Are you tired of your success already?

- (long break) To live!

(silence)

- You're kidding, right? It's... or maybe it's one of your plays, when you make me believe everything you want? Or is success hurting you?

- No.

(silence)

- I shouldn't have called you, I felt it (pause). Oh, I'm sorry, I have another phone call...

Lucrezia gets up suddenly, nervous, and walks by the table. He cuts his foot with a piece of glass from the frame and shouts, cursing.

Silvia: - What's going on?

- I cut myself off!

- What do you mean, cut?

- It does not matter. I'll take care of it. I'll call you later, okay?

- (a bit hesitant) Ok. See you later.

- Fuck these glasses...! (but Silvia has already hung up).

She sits down, and looks at the blood coming out of her injured foot. He crushes it as if he wants to see it come out better. He gets up and enters the bathroom, oblivious to the

traces of blood left on the floor. The camera stays at the bathroom entrance where she disappeared. She then leaves the bathroom with a towel wrapped around her foot. He goes to sit down and drops himself on the back of the sofa, closing his eyes, and seems to utter words that are not heard. Many words.

-----cross-fading

SCENE 8

Lucrezia is in the kitchen, and she pours herself a drink, standing in front of the table where the remains of a poor frugal dinner are still scattered. She looks away, and then she sits down. Between herself he says in her teeth: - I, I, I! They cannot say more, fuck! Then they go away...! You have to talk, talk, and talk. Always of them, otherwise you are useless!

Put the glass down and continue, rising: - I, I, I! They are all the same! They can't invent anything else! (hitting a palm on the table)

In that while the phone rings, and Lucrezia starts opening the communication: - What more do you want?!?

After a few seconds she hung up without saying anything.

SCENE 9

Lucrezia is in front of the bathroom mirror. She's cleaning his makeup. Cell phone rings three times. She's not answering her phone.

She sees his own face. You touch him, you pain. Then turn off the light in front of you. In the dark, the light of the next room traces a narrow blade on the floor. It goes slowly.

SCENE 10

Now Lucrezia is returning to the living room. The window is open and a gust of wind messes up her hair.

She gets a book off a shelf. She opens it and slips out a piece of paper. She slowly unfolds it and seems to read, sitting on a chair.

VOICEOVER OF THE MAN WHO HAD TELEPHONED: - *We met, by chance. It was a May day. Perhaps. I remember the light breath. We might not have seen each other, as sometimes we do not see things. But we could also see ourselves without even looking: a sudden noise, a distraction of the eye, an insistent thought. Yes, maybe everything could have been different but now, we, here are still saying words on our lips finally mute, consumed by a time that seems long to us, even if it was short, anyway. We met and one summer he consumed, perhaps on mountains still flaring, stretched of light, our passion of love; now rests, that endless drawn passion, more like a shadow without rancor. We*

loved each other. That is so true.

And when, as the years have passed, we think back then - and perhaps we hear a melancholy, like a song, like the voice of night crickets - there, I would like to meet you, again, to tell you something and you, perhaps even you in silence, in the faint footsteps of the night you will hold a kind of smile. The drawing of a sound that says a lot, of having experienced things.

Lucrezia is about to cry, but then she takes her head in her hands, she suddenly gets up and shouts: - That's enough!

Now he's gonna cry. But then she turns around, and leans over to collect the photograph on the ground, one of the two thrown between the broken glasses. It is a picture of a man. Slowly put it back in the book, next to the paper.

-----crossfading on... -----

SCENE 11

Public park. It's raining like crazy. Images of the desert park, then of stone statues, on which water flows in streams. Lucrezia and a man are squeezed under an umbrella. They wear long raincoats. Close-up of three-quarters of the posterior face of Lucrezia who, leaning against the shoulder of the man, impales his face, which therefore is not recognized. Total floor of a statue, and the two re-enter the scene from behind the camera, walking slowly. Now they're standing still. While the voice of Lucrezia starts out of the field, while a very slow zoom goes and passes over the heads of the two.

LUCRETIA VOICE OUTSIDE FIELD:

"I wish a rain
slipping equal
on intact ferns,
on your mouth it told me of a luminary
transparent. A sketch.

I wish I did not have you,
you unknown
like water to the stone,
unknown

that I know you
only
in the breath."

SCENE 12

Lucrezia calls Barbara:

- It is I.
- Yeah. That's nice!
- Tell me something!
- I... I don't know... and besides, I'm not used to talking about myself...
- I guess, you know?
- Is that a plus?
- For beasts, it's presumption, arrogance, or I don't know what else...
- What about for you?
- For me it's...it's your cross. (pause) When you don't talk about yourself, others think you don't need anything. Therefore, begin their tales. Is that not true?
- They start their stories...! Yes, it's true.
- Their fairy tales... do you have any luck with men?
- Not much (laughs a bit). Yet, they tell me that I am so... pretty...!
- If you are as beautiful as your voice, then you are very beautiful!
- Thank you!
- If you're beautiful, there's no truth to hide. You are beautiful. Point.
- I never told anyone.
- Therefore, you did not tell lies...!
- However, the men, in the end, find me a little too... complicated...
- Men?
- Yes. (and since Lucrezia does not continue...) Ah, I understand. You mean "real" men?
- Yeah. I mean real men. Have you met any?
- (he thinks) Someone...
- I... one. Perhaps. At least that is how I thought... it finally made me bleed!
- Did he get violent?
- No. No. I just destroyed her photo carrier, and I cut my foot off at the end.
- (laughs a little) Fuck! Why would you do that?
- (Silence) To get it out of my head. Perhaps.
- Did you break up?
- (pause) I don't know who did it. Maybe it just happened. You know, sometimes it happens...
- And... there's no more hope?
- He just called me. But I did... I told him to go to hell. (pause) Here is the idiot who preaches and then does the most amazing things.

(silence)

- Do you still love him?
- (pause) Maybe. However, who can really say what it is to love, or not to love?
- (pause) Maybe, no one.
- Are you in love?
- No.
- However, are you seeing someone?

- Yeah, occasionally. But... you know? ... Thinking back to what you said before, maybe I realize I've become quiet, really. Out and in. It's like I'm scared...
- (Silence) Do you fear love?
- (smiles) How can I be afraid of something that I don't know what it is?
- Yeah.
- Nevertheless, we live it. Maybe, Lucrezia, love is there when you don't think you can prove it.
- ...And isn't there when you think you have it?
- Perhaps.

(silence)

- However, any love is bound to end!
- Don't you think there are eternal loves?
- It is life, which is not eternal!
- Yeah.

(silence)

Barbara: - There is something I keep thinking.

- Tell me.
- Here is to your pills. Is it true you thought about taking them?
- ... I don't know. When I got into the bathtub, I almost decided, but... but then... I got scared. It's a squalid fear!

(silence)

Barbara: - Someone, I think a philosopher, had written that when everything seems useless to us, then it is useless even to die. Or something like that...

- Wise. (long pause) Or... is it another lie we tell ourselves, just because we are afraid?
- Perhaps.
- Do you love life?
- I love some things.
- For example?
- (think long) For example, this evening. Outside... it is now late, the noises seem to have escaped around the corners of the houses, and finally, if I open the window, I can even hear the sound of the wind: it is strong but delicate, it is lukewarm, and it carries some perfume, sometimes. In the darkness we see it better, this wind of May. In the dark, perhaps, you can see all things better. Doesn't that happen to you with people? In silence, when silence happens, we are told things never said.
- Continue. Please! (she's going to be moved).
- Well... I love the night and the silence. And its life stuff. I love unsaid things, because maybe they are the truest ones. I love men who, when they meet me, say few things. I love their smile, when it appears so unexpected that it seems like a light to you. Breve.
...I love tonight, in May, because I know she is whispering to you that you do not have to leave.

(silence)

Lucrezia: - Do you really think so?

- Yes.

(silence)

- Lucrezia: - Will you forgive me?
- What of what, Lucrezia?
- If I hang up your phone now?
- Yes.
- You know? I'm going to cry.
- Tears, perhaps, are the most beautiful part of a heart.

Lucrezia closes the conversation, and is now free to cry.

SCENE 13

Lucrezia: - Is it over? ... Has he left you?

- No. It was me!
- And why? Silvia?
- N... I don't know... more...
- (pause) You don't know?
- (animated) Yes, yes, I know! He betrayed me. Do you understand?
- Ah! Long time no see?
- Well... he says it was one time. That jerk, that idiot!
- What do you think?
- Well... maybe it's true. Do I get it?
- Of what?
- How about what?! He slept with this slut!

(silence)

- Maybe it was just a chance...
- Ah, of course. So you agree with him?
- No... no. Calm down. I didn't mean that. (pause) It's just... sometimes, it happens...
- Yeah. And so, if I do, he will continue to do it! That is for sure.

(silence)

- Is it that important to you?
- What?
- What happened to you...
- Of course! Wouldn't it be for you?
- Perhaps. Or maybe not at all.
- How can you be so insensitive?
- (pause) I don't think I'm insensitive. You know how things are, right? An atmosphere, a provocation... and then it happens, right?

- And who is this man who gets lost in front of an elongated thigh? Who would that be, huh?

(silence)

- Do you love him?
- I loved him.
- And he?
- What the fuck do I care if he loves me? If he really loved me, he wouldn't have. Point!
- Yeah. Maybe you're right about that. But, um...
- There are no maybes! Do you understand?

(silence)

- Silvia, I ask you a question: why did you call me?
- (calmer) ... because I needed to talk about it. Here.
- (pause) And that's getting better now?
- No. I don't know. Maybe you're right, I should have talked about you, your award... but what can I do?

(silence)

- Well, maybe everything works out, don't you think? Maybe... it will be even better than before...
- Impossible!
- How can you say "impossible"? What do you know... what do we know about living in the end?
- (long break) I get it.
- What do you get?
- That I shouldn't have bothered you.
- You are not bothering me, Silvia.
- But yeah! Clearly, tonight is... special to you? Or what? What the fuck do you give a shit about a friend who's out of his mind?
- Why do you say that? You know, in all these years, I've always been there for you...

(silence)

- You know what I'm gonna do? No, you don't know that. I'll make him dead to me!
- Do you say?
- Of course I say it! You can't offend me like that in my soul.

(silence)

- Soul, isn't that a big word?

Lucrezia awaits the answer, but Silvia has already reopened.

Lucrezia remains motionless, her arms stiff along her body. She grabs an ornament and hurls it against the photo of Silvia hanging on the wall. The camera stays fixed on the devastated frame. The wall clock beats 11 (23 of the night).

-----cut to black-----

SCENE 14

Lucrezia is sitting at the table. She's got some blank papers and he's writing. He seems to have difficulty finding the words to put on the paper. At the end, it crumples everything up and throws it in the trash bin.

-----cut to black-----

SCENE 15

The phone rings twice. Lucrezia neither answers nor looks at the number. Go sit on the windowsill. She grabs the door and leans out. Twice. Then she goes out and across the room.

SCENE 16

Now she's got his phone in her hand and she's calling.

- Barbara. Tell me more about yourself.
- What a strange thing: thousands of miles away, on the phone...
- Yeah. (pause) Tell me, do I look crazy to you?
- (pause) No.
- (pause) Well, I'll tell you instead that I'm really crazy... maybe... because I don't want to collect my award. I don't want it!
- Yeah, maybe a little. But I understand you...(silence, waiting) Hello. Are you still there?
- (silence) Yes. (pause) Now, you see? I'm still talking about myself! That sucks!
- I care about you. Not for the interview. I'm interested in your life.
- By now, I...
- (Try to joke) Well... that's how long we talk on the phone you won't kill yourself. Okay?
- (smiles) Okay. That's it. (long break) How are you, there in New York?
- B.... All right...
- Tell me about yourself. I need to imagine different things.
- Different from what? (awaits) From the things of your life?
- Yes. (long silence) Maybe I don't want to die. No. I feel like it so I don't have to repeat myself.
- (wait, then) Does it scare you?
- What? The death?
- Yes.
- Yeah. - But it also... disgusts me.

(silence)

- More than your life?
- (pause) Maybe... that's what I should decide...

- Look, do you really think we can really decide that?
- What?
- (pause) What is the worst evil?
- (silence, then) Do you love life?
- Maybe you already asked me...
- I don't remember. Do you love her?
- (long pause) In the end, I don't love her. But... it's the only thing we really have. Don't you think so?
- Yeah. (pause) You know? Sometimes I wonder how we can love something that has been imposed on us. That we didn't get to choose...
- I think so too. Often.
- Do you repeat yourself all the time?
- I think it's inevitable: things to do, commitments, appointments... But maybe I understand what
You mean, you mean, whatever you do, it's nothing more than a repetition...
- Yes, you have understood me very well! (long break) Living is... rediscovering every day that we are here to desire many things... maybe even love... And then, if we read between the lines, we find it's impossible. In the end.
- Maybe it's up to us, too.
- Of course. It also depends on us. (Silence) You know, sometimes I wish something big happened to me: maybe even more grade pain. To measure me up...
- To see if you would really have the guts to end it?
- (thinks) Yes. (silence) And then I realize that I am shitting myself. That even this fear seems... a script, a part that someone wrote to me, almost to have fun seeing how worthless I am.

(silence)

- Lucrezia. What if you stop thinking?
- Maybe!
- What if you compares the bad with the good?
- Yeah. I can't do it anymore. Can you do it?
- (thinks) Sometimes. Yeah, occasionally.
- And what's the worst thing that ever happened to you? If you want to tell me...
(very long break, where Barbara does not answer, then) Sorry! I have no right...
- No. No. It's that this thing... that happened to me... I never told anyone. (Silence)
Moreover, maybe I hurt.
- You kept it inside?
- Yes.
- How did you do that?
- (think long) Maybe, I'm just afraid to remember her too well, if I told her...
- Yes. There are monsters that are better left to sleep... there in their caves where...
Where they seem to sleep. They seem.
- So, let's let that memory of yours go to sleep, too. Sorry. I didn't have to...
- No. No. Maybe... you know what I think? I think coincidences don't exist, and maybe these phone calls of ours are telling me that it's time to talk. (pause) But I

don't want to take advantage of you. You're already there thinking about ending it, and what do I expect? To be listened to?

- I'm just a shit-hole! That's what I am!
- Do not say that to me! I saw you in front of the camera! You are worth it! Fuck!

(silence)

Lucrezia's second cell phone rings.

Barbara: - They are calling you. Go and answer it.

- Nooooo.
- Go! You need to... breathe. You have to get through this shitty night!
- (silence, then) Yes. You are right... I'll call you later?
- Of course!
- Barbara.
- Yes.
- You're a beautiful woman.
- Not as much as you.
- You are. (pause) See you later.
- See you later.

Lucrezia goes to hang the second cell phone. Look at the number and smile weakly. Call the number again.

Man voice: - Hello?

Hello Giuseppe: - Did you just call me?

- Oh... yes, Lucrezia, yes. Did I bother you?
- No Giuseppe. You never bother me.
- What do you think? Of the award...
- Maybe what you think...
- I don't want it!
- I understand you.
- It's a good thing there's someone who actually understands me.
- No, I don't think I'm the only person...
- Really?
- Yes. (pause) I'll tell you something: you saw me there on the set with my spotlights, my panels, my cables scattered everywhere. Well. Something happened during a scene that was... incredible. But then it wasn't amazing, I should have seen it coming sooner or later.
- What happened to you?
- What happened was I had to squeeze a little light at some point. You know, in that scene where you used to write, saying your written words... those about your love. Remember?
- Of course, I remember.
- Well. He was getting close to the spotlight and Roberto, you know that little boy who helps me, stopped me, and signaled that he would take care of it; and in my ear, and he said, "Master, you can't miss this Lucrezia thing. You can't do that!
- Is it true, Giuseppe?
- Yes. He went to the spotlight, and I got carried away by you. You took me far away. By hand, little by little... A wonderful thing...!

- Joseph...
- No. Do not say anything. Do you know I have a tear right now?
- (moved) Giuseppe...
- I am ashamed.
- Of what?
- That I'm crying.

(silence)

- You know what, man? One person told me that tears are the most beautiful part of a soul.

(silence)

- I need you to collect the fucking prize. You deserve to be. The world didn't give it to you. You did it. Your rate is worth a lot more than their words. You must.

(silence)

- I... thank you Giuseppe. I needed you, and you came.

(silence)

- See you tomorrow, then?
- (cries) Yes. Maybe.
- Of course.

-----cut to black-----

SCENE 17

Lucrezia is on the sofa, her head leaning against the back, her eyes closed. She seems to be asleep, but she's probably remembering.

Rehearsal room. The director's PPP talking. Deforming wide angle.

Director: - Do you understand? You have to be convincing. Okay?

Lucrezia (not seen): - Yes. So that's it?

- All right, all right.

Detail of Lucrezia's skirt that flutters as she gets up and walks away.

Director: - Eh... remember. Don't miss the jokes, huh?

Lucrezia's voice-over: - Don't worry...!

Let's go back to the director's PPP, who follows Lucrezia with his eyes as she goes out. Then he turns to someone (unseen) who is next to him and says: - Bah! These actors! You have to take them in the day, otherwise...!

Voice-over of the other: - Oh, yeah.

Director: - Then this... pussy as it is... who knows what she's always thinking...!

(laughing)

SCENE 18

The phone is ringing. Lucrezia opens her eyes and looks at the number. Responds.

- Hi, it's Barbara!
- Hi Barbara.
- If you want, I'll tell you.
- About your worst thing?
- Yes.
- (pause) Here it is. One day I was raped...!
- Fuck!
- Yes... fuck.
- (wait, then) How did it happen?
- I don't... I don't know... I know what happened.
- Where?
- There, in Rome.
- On the street? You want to tell me?
- Yeah, I'll tell you. You're the first one.
- And I'm certainly not going to mention it to anyone.
- I know. (pause) Well, we were at home, among friends. You know?

Here begin the images corresponding to the text, voice of Barbara out of range.

- *A night of merriment. There were also two I had never met. All right... and... actually, we've had enough! Anyway, I wasn't drunk. Around two o'clock... but I can't remember the time... we all got up and went out. On the front door the usual greetings.*
We all went our separate ways. I went to my car, not far away. A little bit of fear got me, because there was no soul around. (pause) Looking back, now, I think I've been anxious. It's like I'm expecting something... bad. Anyway, I got in the car, but it wasn't going. I tried it again and again. I was a little panicked. I got out of the car and I was about to look up the taxi number, when a brief honking hit caught my eye. It was one of the two guys from the party. He rolled down the window and asked me if I had any problems. All right, he finally offered me a ride. I went up. We chatted a bit about the evening, but I was seeing that he was not heading to my house. Anyway, at one point he stopped, in front of a house I did not, and he told me laughing "Oh shit... the habit... We were talking and I came back to my house...! We both laughed. Then he asked me to come up for one last drink. I didn't have any problems, you know? After all, we met, and he seemed like a nice guy.
His house was very nice. He asked me what I wanted to drink, and he disappeared into another room. He soon returned, but he was wearing a bathrobe. He said, - You know, when I'm home, I always like to be very comfortable.
I smiled, although I was a bit... amazed. We drank, and he got up to put on some music. Back he sat very close to me. Too much, it was obvious. But I... I didn't move. I could have stood up with an excuse, and everything would have been clear, right? It was like it was... hypnotizing me.
Here, and there's one thing that amazes me: I don't really remember what happened after that, but one thing I remember very well: I didn't like her smell. It sounded like it came out of the shower, but I didn't like the smell of it... animal.

Here the images blur into ---fade cross-on--Lucrezia on the phone.

Lucrezia: - How do I understand you! We always underestimate the importance of a person's smell...

Barbara: - Yes. It's not that I remember the most, of this one, it was his smell. An animal odor he carried on himself.

- And then?
- And then, in the end, I don't know how long it's been, but not much... I finally got up and asked him to take me home. In fact, no, I asked him for his cab number. He, just a moment, changed his face completely: he had come to an unspeakable expression... perhaps the whole of a smile with violence. I'll never forget: a violent smile. (pause)

Here the images fade into ----fade cross-fade on the scenes before.

È That's when he snapped up, grabbed me by the hips and started kissing my neck. It's a mess, Lucrezia. A real piece of shit. His saliva was... I thought it was a slimy glue that smelled like him even more. I told him no. I got free. But he gave me a terrible slap. At that point... I get a sense of emptiness inside, to say it, ... at that point the real paralysis started. And here the memories become confused. The time that has passed has become... evanescent. Some kind of fog. And he dragged me to the bed, and he kept saying I'd finally get what I wanted, calling myself a whore. He literally ripped my clothes off... and the rest... the rest is just... a dream.

Here the images blur into ---fade cross-on--Lucrezia on the phone.

(silence. Lucrezia feels that Barbara is perhaps crying)

- Lucrezia:- Did you report him?
- You know what I did? Do you know?
- You didn't do anything.
- More. When I was getting dressed, I realized that it had destroyed my skirt zipper, and I... and I asked him please if he had a hairpin... Do you think about it?
(pause) I asked him if "kindly" had a hairpin. Do you believe him? He brought it to me from the bathroom.
- And after that, Barbara?
- And then he took a piss. And I packed up my things and ran up the stairs. I called a cab outside.
- And he didn't run after you?
- That's probably the grossest thing. He didn't say a word. Just from the ladder, looking down at him, I saw his smile again. This time, it was a real smile. Not the old one. Isn't that... incredible?
- (pause) It's not incredible. It's sick, Barbara, it's sick.

(silence)

Lucrezia: - You carry it inside, right?

- Everything.
- What about his smile?
- Yeah. That smile ruined my life for a long time, you know?

- Of course I know. There are things that... hurt inside... They're like deep wounds that no surgeon will ever try to close forever. (pause) That's right, isn't it?

(silence)

- Yes Lucrezia. It is so.

(silence)

- You never talked to anyone about it. You told me that...
- No.
- Were you afraid of being... misunderstood?
- (long break) I was ashamed.
- Shame?
- (long break) Yes. Let the others call me an idiot. Told me I could get away sooner. And maybe to think I finally liked it. Do you understand?
- Yeah. I get it.

(silence) Barbara: - I don't know why I told you...

- You did the right thing. You should have told someone. Long time, I think.
- Yes. It's good to tell ourselves. Things get better after that...
- Yes. (long break) Sometimes the night helps us to live.
- (she's about to cry) The night. Yes

(silence)

Lucrezia: - What are you thinking?

- To your night. (pause) Because this, whether you want it or not, is your night, don't you think?
- (think long, then) Yes. Everyone tells me that!
- All minus one person. Tu.
- Yeah, minus one person.

(silence)

Barbara: - Maybe, you know? I told you all these things because... sometimes, looking at the door in the dark... maybe you can see a light. A distant light.

- Like on the sea?
- Yes, like on the sea. (very long break) That's where you have to look.
- (think long) Yes. (pause) You're helping me...
- You helped me too. Now I know that at least one person in the world knows about me exists.
- A person. Yes. That's an important word.

- Lucrezia, you know that in the world, in any place, certainly there is one person, at least one who, remembering the soul of your acting will make a smile. A real one?

(silence)

- Do you really believe that?

- I am sure of it.

(silence)

- Then (she cries) ... then thank you, my friend!
- Thanks to you. To exist.

Lucrezia slowly hung up.

SCENE 19

.....continues.....