

Queen of Hearts

Saying: *you can't lose what you don't put on the table*

Characters

Antonio, aged 35

Angela, aged 30

Donna Carmela, aged 60

Ettore, aged 60

Alessandro, aged 16

Baby, aged 9 months

Footnotes

The text contains dialogue in the Neapolitan dialect. Some footnotes have been added to aid comprehension.

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SCENE 1

Inside an apartment.

A living room.

The home is sparsely furnished with just an armchair, a few cooking utensils and a small cooker for cooking the essentials and making coffee. There is a little camping table and two folding chairs. The lowered blind allows very little daylight into the room. The window looks onto a walkway leading to an entrance with a door always open. A lamp near the armchair is kept permanently switched on so it could be any time of day or night.

A tiny box room to the left contains a cot over which hangs a light at head height.

Morning.

Angela is sitting in the armchair a cloth on her head holding sliced potatoes, a traditional remedy for headaches.

Classical music is playing in the background.

The baby is crying in the box room.

Donna Carmela enters.

CARMELA Hey Angela can't you hear the little one he's crying in there? Angela? What are you up to, did you nod off?

ANGELA Hi Mum ... I just sat down in the chair for a bit, I've had this headache since yesterday, I went to bed with a headache and felt even worse when I woke up, it's like there's a hammering in my head...

CARMELA Alright, stay where you are, don't worry, I'll have a look at the little one.

Donna Carmela goes into the box room to check the baby. She tucks him up in the bedclothes, switches the light off.

ANGELA Thanks, anyway I'm getting up, just give me 5 minutes.

Donna Carmela comes back in.

CARMELA Angela... Angela, Angela!

ANGELA (*irritated*) Whatever is it Mum? Stop yelling at me.

CARMELA Angela he was all uncovered. That's why he was crying, he must have been freezing.

ANGELA No way. He's always kicking the bedclothes off ... I reckon he was feeling hot.

CARMELA So why was he crying then? Maybe he's hungry? When did you last feed him?

ANGELA Don't worry Mum, I've fed him.

CARMELA Well maybe he's got a temperature. Angela? Angela?

ANGELA What?!

CARMELA I said maybe he's got a temperature ...

ANGELA No Mum, he hasn't got a temperature.

CARMELA So why's he crying then?

ANGELA Because he's a baby, all babies cry, it's quite normal.

CARMELA It's normal is it?

ANGELA Yes, it's normal. It's their way of talking, they can't talk properly yet, so they cry.

CARMELA (*to herself, but letting Angela hear*) God only knows how you're bringing up this baby...

ANGELA (*sighs*)

Pause.

CARMELA Angela, what about that music, can the little one hear it in there?

ANGELA Yes Mum.

CARMELA So this music thing works then?

ANGELA Yes, it does.

CARMELA Well that doctor we saw was really good, a real genius! Isn't he, Angela?

ANGELA Yes, he is.

CARMELA What did he say again? If you listen to classical music in the dark it gets rid of your headache.

ANGELA And then he said "just music, no other noises or annoying sounds".

Pause.

CARMELA But it's not easy with that baby crying nonstop.

ANGELA So now it's the baby's fault ...

CARMELA For God's sake, don't say that!

ANGELA Actually I was saying that the baby -

CARMELA Well it's true that you've been like that ever since the kid was born.

ANGELA (*upset*) Something must have happened. All I know is that at first I only got one every now and then, but now it's getting more often.

CARMELA Alright, but it's nothing serious, it's just a hormone trouble. It'll sort itself out, not to worry.

ANGELA Let's hope so.

CARMELA Well, I must say I can't eat any longer with these teeth, not like I ought to. (*She starts moaning*) 'The dentist wants to charge me a fortune but I haven't got a bean. That father of yours left me nothing and everything I had I spent on bringing you up. I made a load of sacrifices. When you were little I used to take you to primary school and I used to beg and plead with the teachers not to fail you because you didn't want to do your homework. Then at home there was all that cooking and cleaning, cleaning all day long. Look at my hands, they're all dried up and wrinkled, I need some cream, I can you buy me some?

ANGELA But you helped yourself to mine two weeks ago.

CARMELA What little was left! There was only a bit left in the bottom.

ANGELA What do you mean? That was a new jar.

CARMELA Oh come on Angela!

ANGELA No, you come on!

CARMELA I'm telling you that I remember it and I remember it was nearly finished.

ANGELA Well I remember that I'd only used it once.

CARMELA Well you don't remember it very well.

ANGELA Yes, I do, so there.

CARMELA Well anyway, no one cares about me here. (*carrying on*) I've made all those sacrifices, and that's all the thanks I get -

ANGELA Bloody hell Mum! Don't start again. How many times have I got to tell you, I've got a headache -

CARMELA E And I was telling you that my teeth are rotting away in my mouth. (*she's got pyorrhoea*)

ANGELA So what are we supposed to do then?

CARMELA What do you think we're supposed to do?

ANGELA (*giving in*) Alright, I know you need some new dentures.

CARMELA No-

ANGELA Sorry, you're right, you don't want dentures but -

CARMELA Implants are what I needed.

ANGELA Implants, of course that's obvious. Why is that then?

CARMELA This is what the dentists said "unless you have implants your jaw movement problem won't be solved because-

ANGELA Because they cost more so they must be better.

CARMELA No young lady, this dentist is an expert, a specialist trained in the US, he'll solve my problem.

ANGELA Alright then, but I'll have to talk to Antonio.

CARMELA I know and he'll be back soon.

ANGELA I know he'll be back soon.

CARMELA I know that too. he always finishes his physiotherapy around this time.

ANGELA Exactly.

Pause.

CARMELA Why does he have to do it so early in the morning?

ANGELA Because that's what the doctor said.

CARMELA Oh well, he's a very good doctor, a -

ANGELA He's a genius too, I know.

CARMELA Well it's true isn't it? He's brilliant. Antonio's a lucky man. Anyway, know what I'm going to do? I'm going to make some coffee, as soon as he comes it'll be ready and he'll have it lovely and hot.

ANGELA Great Mum, go on then, make some coffee.

Donna Carmela can't find a spoon to measure out the coffee.

CARMELA Angela haven't you got a spoon?

ANGELA They're right there.

CARMELA There aren't any here.

ANGELA Have a look in the sink, or in the drawers.

CARMELA You can't find anything here.

ANGELA What do you mean? Have a good look.

CARMELA You can't get anything done here.

ANGELA Oh Mum don't start off again.

CARMELA Honestly, it's a mess in here, a real mess. How on earth do you think you can run a family here? With that little one you've got now and then there's poor Antonio who's got some bad problems ... Don't you realise you've got to cook him a meal every day? You've got to give him clean clothes... Then when the little one gets a bit bigger and wants even more looking after, how will you manage then? When I was young, I -

ANGELA OK Mum, I get it, I'll get up now. It's not a good day today. Leave the coffee, I'll make it.

CARMELA No young lady, I can make the coffee. When that man comes home, is he going to get a cup of coffee or not?

ANGELA Yes, I'll make sure he gets one.

CARMELA The least a man can expect from his wife is a cup of coffee.

ANGELA I get it. Don't worry about Antonio, I'll make him some coffee.

CARMELA Alright, seeing that you're getting up now, you can make the coffee as I still haven't managed to find a spoon.

ANGELA The spoon's right there, there was need to start a treasure hunt to find it.

CARMELA It might look easy to you. But after all, everyone creates their own mess.

ANGELA What mess are you talking about? It's just that I didn't manage to tidy up yesterday as I wasn't feeling well.

SCENE 2

Antonio comes in, limping heavily.

Angela is making the coffee.

CARMELA Here he is! Hello there ...

ANTONIO Hello Carmela, hi Angela.

ANGELA Hi Anto'.

Pause.

CARMELA Well then Anto' how are you? How did the physio go?

ANTONIO Fine ... fine.

CARMELA But how are you feeling?

ANTONIO Better ... better.

CARMELA Do you feel like you're getting better?

ANTONIO Yes ... yes.

CARMELA Just as well ... the doctor said it would take time. It's already a miracle you can walk without a stick.

ANGELA A walking stick Mum, who uses a stick these days, at least a crutch ...

CARMELA You're right, it's just that I'm old. In my day they used a stick. Anyway, whether it's a stick or a crutch, it's still a miracle.

ANTONIO Yes of course.

CARMELA Angela is Antonio's coffee ready? Antonio we've been making some coffee for you.

ANGELA It's nearly ready, it always takes time in that pot.

ANTONIO Thanks.

CARMELA Have you had breakfast? Have you had something to eat?

ANTONIO No.

CARMELA Don't you want something? Angela have you got something for him? Some biscuits, something for a snack ...

ANTONIO No thanks, I never eat in the morning, I'm not used to it.

ANGELA Just coffee, like me.

CARMELA You've got nothing to do with it, he's a man and he needs plenty to eat. Do you see Antonio? You must eat something. You look a bit run down to me. Are you eating properly? Angela are you cooking for him?

ANGELA But doesn't want to eat! And he doesn't get much sleep, he's always rushing around. Now there's the insurance people who're wasting so much of his time.

CARMELA They're such a load of crooks. Anyway Antonio you've got to force yourself to eat, if you don't force it down you just get weaker. Don't you see?

ANTONIO Yes, I see, don't worry, I'm fine.

CARMELA On top of that leg, there's the baby, Angela. You get better more slowly if you're stressed out.

ANTONIO Come on, as if my own child would stress me out...

CARMELA I know, I was just saying it. But you have to take care, relax and feel comfortable at home. Now things are settling down at home. But you must relax, I'll come and give Angela a hand if she needs it, with the housework and specially with the baby. The first one is always the most difficult because it's all new, Angela isn't used to it.

ANTONIO Thanks Carmela.

ANGELA There's really no need -

CARMELA There's no need is there? Well I say there is. It's not easy when you're not well, when you're not fit. I know only too well. After all Antonio I've got this problem with my teeth and it's killing me. I can't eat, I can't sleep at night for the pain. And that's not all. It gives me headaches, it makes me throw up, I get these stabbing pains, here in my face, can you see Anto'? It's like pins were being hammered into my flesh -

ANTONIO I know Carmela, you've told me about it.

CARMELA I've already told you?

ANTONIO A couple of times.

CARMELA Yes, but it's getting worse, you've no idea.

ANTONIO Sorry, no.

CARMELA And then I'm on my own. There's no one to help me. At first I could eat soft things but now I can't even eat those. The dentist told me straight out that if I couldn't have implants, the problem couldn't be solved. He's asked me for loads of money. How can I manage that on my own? 7,000 euro is quite a lot but they tell me that isn't expensive for a problem that's so serious it needs the latest treatment, don't you see? What can we do? My dear departed husband left me nothing, but it wasn't his fault of course. The only thing I had left was Angela... and I did God's will and gave her to you. What's left for me? One day my home will be yours, all yours.

Pause.

CARMELA Antonio?

ANTONIO Yes Carmela. I told you last time that as soon as the insurance company pays out that 30,000 euro, I'll be able to sort it out, I'll get you some dentures good enough for you to eat the chewiest things.

CARMELA It's implants, not dentures.

ANTONIO Right, implants!

CARMELA Thank you Anto'.

ANTONIO That's alright.

Pause.

CARMELA But when are you going to hear from them?

ANGELA (*meanwhile she's given Antonio his coffee*) Well, it takes a bit of time. Antonio goes there every day, he keeps calling them. Last time they we should get paid in about 15 days, didn't they Anto'?

ANTONIO Yes.

CARMELA OK then, we'll just have to wait. But you must keep calling them Anto', you know what they're like, they always take their time to pay out.

ANTONIO Don't I know it.

CARMELA Alright then, I'll stop bothering you. I don't feel too good at the moment, I'm off to have a little rest. 'Bye Antonio.

ANTONIO 'Bye Carmela.

CARMELA (*aside*) Listen Angela, make sure you make him go to the insurance company every day, otherwise they'll keep us waiting another month. Understand?

ANGELA Of course, don't worry about it. Didn't you hear him? Antonio'll make sure you get the implants.

CARMELA Well, to me it's the least he can do, seeing as I'm his mother-in-law. I'm off them, take care and give the little one a kiss for me.

ANGELA Ok, then and maybe you could come round every now and then and take him out for a walk, as I can't stand the strong sunlight.

CARMELA Of course, as soon as I'm having less trouble with these teeth I'll come and take him out. Take care.

Donna Carmela leaves.

SCENE 3

Angela and Antonio are alone. Antonio is lost in thought. Angela looks at Antonio, then looks at the cooker, then again at Antonio, then silence descends on the home.

Pause.

ANGELA Anto' do you fancy something special to eat today?

Antonio No thanks, anything's fine by me Angela.

ANGELA OK then, I'll start cooking in a minute. Do you mind if I put some music on?

ANTONIO Still got that headache?

ANGELA Yes, since yesterday evening.

ANTONIO Put the music on then. Who'd have thought we'd become big fans of classical music.

If this carries on that little one could become a great conductor one day.

ANGELA If it carries on like this.

ANTONIO He'll be waving that bloody stick about, camp as you come.

Angela puts the music on and the baby immediately starts crying.

ANTONIO See, he can feel it already.

Angela leaves the music on and goes into the baby's room. She switches on the light and starts cuddling him desperately.

SCENE 4

Antonio, now alone, gets a scratch card out of his pocket. He starts scratching it.

ANTONIO *(scratching madly, as if in a trance)* I've got to make some money. I've got to make some money. You've got to make me some money. This is how it goes: there's some guy making sacrifices, living a shit life, then something happens, fucking hell, he wins the lottery and feels great. Now no one looks down on him. Next he gets hold of a Ferrari, the one that does 200k and hour and stops in 14 seconds, but you wouldn't do 200k, you go slowly, as everyone's looking at you, they're eaten up with jealousy, drooling with it. Come on, make me some money. What do you want to do when you grow up? "I want to work a petrol pump!". Why's that then? "How you seen how much money they get, a huge wad of notes, 100,000 lire notes, not bad. "Nice picture of Caravaggio, as you say Dad, who was Caravaggio then? ". He was a painter, an important person. "And I want you to be important". And you have to make a lot of money. If you make money you can get a posh house above Posillipo with all those posh people and no rubbish on the streets. "you're right Dad and how can I make all that money?". You have to wait for the right moment to come along, you need to know how to recognise it when it comes along and not let it get away. You have play the ball, you mustn't be scared, that's the difference between a winner and a dirt-poor loser, playing the ball! "I see Dad, I want to play the ball, I want to, I want to be important..."

(finished scratching) What a wanker. That arsehole must have given me out of date scratch cards, losers. I haven't won a thing. *(he looks around, makes a phone call)* Hi, it's Antonio. Well? Didn't you say you'd let me know today, it's been two weeks ... oh, and were you going to tell me? OK, OK... So how much are we talking about? 40 thousand? ... no, no, that's fine ... but what am I supposed to do? Where? Nepal? What ... to Nepal... where's that? You're taking the piss...

Angela puts the baby down in his cot, switches off the light and comes back in.

Yes, anyway we'll talk later ... I'll see ... I don't know ... OK then ... Bye. *(hangs up)*

ANGELA Everything's fine!

ANTONIO What's fine?

ANGELA 'The little one. He soon settled down, I've put him down to sleep on his tummy.

ANTONIO Good, you did well. That kid should have a good rest.

Pause.

ANGELA Listen, I thought it would be better to have something quick for lunch, some pasta with tomato sauce.

ANTONIO OK, Angela don't worry that's great. But has the baby been fed?

ANGELA Yes, he's been fed.

ANTONIO He seems to have quietened down a bit lately, that's good.

ANGELA What about after the pasta?

ANTONIO Don't know. Anyway, guess what, the other night I threw a ball into the cot and I kid you not Angela he kicked it so hard it flew through the door, I reckon he's going to be a great striker, play for Napoli, even Italy.

ANGELA OK, but what about after the pasta?

ANTONIO Nothing.

ANGELA What do you mean nothing?

ANTONIO Or with all that music he could turn into a great musician, a singer, a great tenor.

ANGELA Yes, of course. Not even a bit of ham or cheese?

ANTONIO Why is there some?

ANGELA No, you'll have to go out and buy a few things, the fridge is nearly empty.

ANTONIO But I think a footballer's better, all that dosh, all those women, a shirt with my surname on the back.

ANGELA Fantastic. Will you go out then?

ANTONIO No, sorry, my leg's giving me a bit of trouble.

ANGELA I'll just make you an omelette then?

ANTONIO Angela, whatever you want, anything's fine.

ANGELA Alright then, I'll see what we've got.

ANTONIO Anyway, as soon as he can walk I'll sign him up for the football school.

SCENE 5

Ettore enters with his son Alessandro, while Antonio carries on fantasising on his own and Angela starts making lunch very slowly.

ETTORE Hello my dear young friends!

ANTONIO Hi Ettore, come on in, I was expecting you.

ETTORE If you don't mind Anto' I'd like to introduce you to my son Alessandro, I bring him with me now the school year is finished rather than leaving him at home on his own, that's the last thing a teenager needs.

ANTONIO How do you do Alessa'? Have you had breakfast? Like a coffee...

ETTORE No thanks. Unfortunately the lad hasn't got the coffee habit yet, these days they gets started late, all these kids who've grown up with advertising.

ANTONIO So, what can we offer you? Angela what can we offer Alessandro?

ANGELA I don't know Antonio, hello Ettore!

ETTORE Hello Angela. Such a polite girl, always smiling. If I may say so Antonio, I think you've won the lottery of love. Alessandro would you like something?

Alessandro shakes his head.

ANTONIO What's up? Can't speak Alessà, cat got your tongue?

ANGELA Leave him alone Antò, maybe he's shy...

ANTONIO You're shy of me? We're both about the same age, if you act like that you make me feel like an old man.

ANGELA So, you reckon you're the same age as him do you? Alessà if you'd like something, just ask, don't stand on ceremony.

ALESS.RO OK, thanks.

ANGELA See?

ANTONIO What?

ANGELA He answered me.

ANTONIO Are you hinting at something?

ANGELA He's not that old! He looks a lot younger to me.

ANTONIO Oh belt up. Alessà am I right?

ETTORE (*amused*) Of course not Antonio my friend, the lad often finds it hard to wake up in the mornings, apart from the fact that he's always been shy, ever since he was born, especially with new people.

ANTONIO Hear that Angela? The lad's shy.

ANGELA As you like.... you're older so you must be right.

Alessandro laughs.

ALESS.RO Could I have a glass of water?

ANGELA Of course, I'll get you one right away, and a snack.

ALESS.RO OK.

ETTORE Al right then while the lad is enjoying Angela's generosity and hospitality, no doubt with a tasty snack, you and I Antonio, shall we sort out that little problem you called me about?

ANTONIO Come on then, let's go. Angela we're off to sort things out. Alessandro can stay with you, OK?

ANGELA Yes, off you go. We'll stay here.

ETTORE Alessandro behave like a gentleman with Angela.

ALESS.RO OK.

Ettore and Antonio go out.

SCENE 6

Angela and Alessandro are alone.

Alessandro sits down at the table. Angela brings him a glass of water and a snack and sits down.

ANGELA So then Alessa', how's it going at school?

ALESS.RO Fine, I failed one subject but got good marks in all the rest.

ANGELA Well done. What subject did you fail?

ALESS.RO English.

ANGELA Don't you like it or don't you understand it?

ALESS.RO I can't get my head round it, I've tried but I can't cope with the grammar, all those irregular verbs, I can't see the sense in them. You have to learn them by heart. And when I don't understand something, even if I learn it by heart, I forget it right away. Then that teacher, she's a real cow...

ANGELA Is she strict?

ALESS.RO No, she's horrible, mental. She makes us do things that are too difficult, endless poems we don't understand a word of. Then she sets homework that's far too difficult, she's off her head.

ANGELA Anyway if it's only English, that's alright. What's important is that you've passed all the rest, you've got your whole life to learn English. All you need is to go there and you'll soon pick it up.

ALESS.RO That's right. Actually my Mum wanted me to do an exchange visit, I'd go there and an English boy would come here this summer. But then...

ANGELA Aren't you going to do it now?

ALESS.RO No, it's just that Dad couldn't stand having a foreign kid in his house, he's even worse than me, doesn't speak a word of English.

Pause.

ANGELA Have you got a girlfriend?

ALESS.RO I dropped her a month ago.

ANGELA Why? Didn't you fancy her anymore?

ALESS.RO She was unfaithful to me.

ANGELA (*trying not to laugh*) What do you mean she was unfaithful?

ALESS.RO Don't worry, it's OK to laugh, I don't give a damn.

ANGELA (*laughing*) Sorry, it was how you put it. Who was she unfaithful with?

ALESS.RO With a friend of mine, who's always pulling girls.

ANGELA If he was really your friend he shouldn't have done it with her.

ALESS.RO Sure, I suppose so. But I couldn't care less about him, because that's just what he's like, he's good looking and he always gets the girls. But he's an idiot. She was the one who shouldn't have betrayed me. She let herself be pulled because he was someone new. She's a halfwit, my mum said so the first time she saw her.

ANGELA OK, but at that age all young girls are a bit like that, they change their mind every other day.

ALESS.RO I know, but I felt bad because at first because I couldn't stand not being with her. I really liked her.

ANGELA Was she good looking?

ALESS.RO Yes, she was one of the best lookers at school. A bit like you. Well not quite, not as pretty as you, but nearly.

Pause.

ANGELA So I'm pretty then?

ALESS.RO Sure. Didn't you go to the same school as me?

ANGELA Yes, 10 or 15 years ago.

ALESS.RO It's still written on the washroom wall "Angela you're the most beautiful girl in the world", "Angela Form IIIA you're gorgeous", and there are some other things I'd better not tell you...

ANGELA Really?

ALESS.RO Yes. I knew it was you, they all remember you.

Pause.

ANGELA Well anyway Alessa', you'll see you'll find an even lovelier girl, I'm sure about that.

ALESS.RO If only.

ANGELA Whatever you want, I'll bet on it.

Pause.

ALESS.RO Your voice is a lot like hers.

ANGELA Like that girl who was unfaithful to you?

ALESS.RO No, like my mum. It's really odd. Recently I've found it really hard to remember her voice, when I think about her I can see her face but I can't seem to hear her voice. I thought I was starting to forget her. Then I heard you and she starting coming back to me, now I remember her clearly, her voice is similar to yours, but a bit rougher.

Pause.

ANGELA Are you pleased about that?

ALESS.RO Yes.

ANGELA You can come round any time you like.

ALESS.RO Thanks.

Pause.

ALESS.RO Honestly, it's also a bit your hair, the length, the colour, the way you wear it, in a ponytail...

ANGELA Really? Mind you I don't always wear it like this, I usually like to curl it, but that takes time and you have to want to do it and at the moment I haven't got the time or the will.

ALESS.RO You're not feeling well then? You look tired...

ANGELA Oh I've had this headache ever since the baby was born, it must be all the stress.

ALESS.RO I'm sorry, headaches are really rotten.

Pause.

ANGELA It's Ok but we can still keep chatting, don't worry, I've got used to it by now. Chatting take my mind off it.

ALESS.RO She liked talking too when she wasn't feeling well, although as time when on she couldn't answer, she was too tired. She was fighting for air. Once she told me that every breath was too precious for her to waste on talk, she'd rather use it to listen, to listen to my voice. Then in the end I was the only one talking. I used to tell her everything, what I'd been doing, what had happened at school, about my dreams. Sometimes I wasn't sure if she could actually hear me but I carried on talking to her ... and so I seem to have caught the habit, I start talking and never know when to stop...

ANGELA Oh come on, I love listening to you, do carry on...

SCENE 7

Ettore and Antonio enter.

ANGELA Hi, back already?

ANTONIO We got it sorted straight away. Has Alessandro had a snack?

ALESS.RO Yes thanks.

ANTONIO Ah, now he's talking to me. I've had a bit of fresh air and I feel much better.

ANGELA Thanks Ettore, now we can sort things out as soon as they give us that damn money.

ETTORE Angela, my dear, I'm always here to help. This little love nest needs looking after. Your love comforts me. Alessandro say good bye to our dear friends, we'll get out of their way.

ALESS.RO OK. Good evening Antonio.

ANTONIO So formal! Where did that come from? And only 10 in the morning. Sounds like you're talking to some old man, like the porter Vincenzo.

ALESS.RO I know, I wasn't thinking.

ANTONIO Don't do it again then.

ALESS.RO OK. Bye Antonio, bye Angela.

ANTONIO That's better! Bye Alessà.

ANGELA Come and see us whenever you want, I'll let you get to know that little one too.

ETTORE Oh yes, that lovely little creature, God bless him. We'd love to get to know him. Now we're a bit busy and in a hurry and you need time to do something like that. But we'll be back soon and I'll definitely bring Alessandro too.

ALESS.RO Yes, the next time with Dad.

The baby starts crying in his room.

ANGELA See, he heard us talking about him. I'll go and check on him. See you soon.

ALESS.RO Yes, bye.

Angela goes into the baby's room. He starts cuddling him.

ETTORE Antonio my old friend, see you soon. Don't forget to call me as soon as the money comes through. You're young and the young tend to be a bit thoughtless and I'd hate you to have to pay a sum you couldn't manage just because of your own forgetfulness. The sooner you pay what is owed the less interest mounts up. I'm saying this for your own good.

ANTONIO Yes, Ettore you can be sure of that, we need some money, then we can start saving up. Now with the little one, you see...

ETTORE Of course I see my dear friend. These days ordinary young people with a new baby have to pay out some 700 euro a month, every month, that's for sure.

ANTONIO At least. I just want the best for him, he a real champ, and no one's going to stop me. Now I need to take him to a good doctor because he's always crying.

ETTORE Well I'm no expert but I could hazard a guess, it's only to be expected it's quite normal for a new-born baby.

ANTONIO Yes, I know. But his crying is awful, there was a time when he didn't sleep a wink even at night and I couldn't sleep either. Now he's calmed down a bit but I've got so used to it I still can't sleep at night.

ETTORE Antonio my friend, I can claim to be an expert on the subject of sleep. I never sleep.

Numbers are always going round in my head. And so to stop myself spending all night staring at the ceiling, I've recently taken to going to the club in Vomero, where, as luck would have it, I've never seen you, not least because the stakes are a bit out of your reach.

ANTONIO That's true.

Pause.

ANTONIO Are they still all going up there to Vomero?

ETTORE Now this is where all the real players get together, all of them. I can safely say that it's the only, if not the last place where you can really have game worthy of the name.

ANTONIO Do they play with cash?

ETTORE Yes, 2-5 euro.

ANTONIO What's the minimum stake for a game?

ETTORE 300 euro, but you have to play two games at the minimum stake. The table stakes are high usually with a huge pot. We've turned up hands worth 1500, 2000 euro. But they keep the rake low, they take 5% a pot.

ANTONIO What about the dealer? Does he nick any chips?

ETTORE My dear Antonio, you do make some assumptions. No such ticks are allowed at the table, these are real players, expert calculators, difficult to cheat.

ANTONIO I've never been there. I used to go to a place down in Arenaccia, but they closed it down.

ETTORE I knew of it, but I never went there. A down-market gambling den, no respect shown at the table, too many words and not enough money. At Vomero it's all there: good food served at the table, a well-stocked bar, masseuses. You feel good there.

Pause.

ALESS.RO Dad are we going?

ETTORE Oh yes, we were just chatting. Bye Antò.

ANTONIO Bye Ettore.

Ettore and Alessandro leave.

SCENE 8

Antonio gets a football pools coupon out of his pocket. He starts looking at it.

ANTONIO Angela.

Pause.

ANTONIO Angela... Angela! Angela! ANGELA!

Angela comes back from the box room after calming the baby.

ANGELA Antò, why do you keep yelling at me.

ANTONIO Angela I've got to ask you something.

ANGELA Go on then.

ANTONIO It's something important Angela.

ANGELA OK, when you act like that it's usually something daft.

ANTONIO If you really loved me you wouldn't talk like that.

ANGELA If you found someone else who loved you as much as me...

ANTONIO So you're saying that I really won the lottery of love when I found you?

ANGELA Are you really asking? You know I was the best looking girl in my school?

ANTONIO So you were Miss ITIS then?

ANGELA Apart from the fact that I didn't go to that school, if you don't believe me you can go and see what's still written on the washroom wall.

ANTONIO Well my love, you're Miss World, so why do you think I married you?

ANGELA Oh so you married me just because I was good looking?

ANTONIO Now you're being pig-headed, you take everything I say the wrong way.

ANGELA Come on, hurry up and ask me what you want.

ANTONIO No Angela, I won't hurry up, this is serious.

ANGELA Go on then.

ANTONIO Ready?

ANGELA Yes.

ANTONIO Well then... Angela and pay attention.

ANGELA Who's not paying attention?

ANTONIO You. You're looking around, you keep fidgeting.

ANGELA I'm here Antonio I'm listening.

ANTONIO No, you've got to look at me too.

ANGELA I'm looking at you.

ANTONIO OK, but you've got to keep still.

ANGELA Antò in a minute I'll smash something over your head.

ANTONIO Great, that's the spirit, be aggressive.

ANGELA Antò my headache only went away a minute while ago, now you're bringing it back.

ANTONIO No I'm not, let's get on with it then.

ANGELA At long last!

ANTONIO Will Inter-Sampdoria get more or less than 2 goals?

ANGELA You have to ask me that?

ANTONIO Yes, it's really important. Well then?

ANGELA Antò, how the hell do I know?

ANTONIO You don't have to know, you just have to say what you feel, what comes into your head...

ANGELA I don't know.

ANTONIO Come on... more or less than 2 goals?

ANGELA What are the teams again?

ANTONIO Inter and Sampdoria.

ANGELA More or less than two goals? Between them?

ANTONIO Yes.

ANGELA And if they score just two goals?

ANTONIO That means under.

ANGELA How can it be under two goals if it's two goals?

ANTONIO Because under is under 2.5.

ANGELA What's this "under"?

ANTONIO Bloody hell Angela... what does it matter to you? Just tell me more or less than two goals.

ANGELA What do you mean, it doesn't matter to me? Am I stupid or something?

ANTONIO The under and over game is played on the goals two teams score in one match. The cut-off is 2.5 goals. So...

ANGELA If they score three goals it's over, if they get 0, 1 or 2 goals it's under.

ANTONIO Right. Even if they score 4, 5 or 10 it's still over.

ANGELA Yes, I would have guessed that.

ANTONIO Well done. So?

ANGELA Over.

ANTONIO OK. Palermo-Genova?

ANGELA Under.

ANTONIO That's good. Atalanta-Udinese who will win?

ANGELA Draw.

ANTONIO Cagliari-Fiorentina?

ANGELA Still who's going to win?

ANTONIO No, under or over.

ANGELA Over. Have we finished?

ANTONIO No, wait, just one more. We haven't got enough yet. Listen, if we bet 20 euro on this coupon we scoop 3000. If it wins, I swear I'll book a flight to Ibiza. We'll get a chalet, but not one for poor sods without a penny. It'll be in an all-inclusive holiday village with 3 Michelin stars. We'll take the little one too, we can leave him with the girls at the kids' club, where he'll get friendly with some little Spanish girl, she'll be his girlfriend, as if he takes after me he's an early starter. You my

love can have all the spa treatments you fancy so you can relax, not just for the headache, on Ibiza headaches disappear in 10 minutes, I'm telling you. Then, while we're there we'll get a great tan, take lots of pictures that we'll upload to Facebook. We'll share them with all our friends. We'll take 50 pictures a day, I'll put them in an album "Antonio and Angela on Ibiza" it'll be too big even for Facebook. But that's not all. We'll do something else. We'll bring our friends back a little present, a souvenir of Spain, maybe a magnet that they can put on their fridge to remind them every day that we went to Ibiza, flaunting it in the face of people who don't like us. Every time they grab something to eat they'll see that souvenir and think about one of those photos when we were eating lobster, seafood, sophisticated stuff like you see on TV. If they're watching, they'll remember that we've eaten stuff like that..... Come on then think hard, give me the last one, Torino-Parma who's going to win?

ANGELA Torino. Torino will win Anto', I can feel it.

ANTONIO Listen, if we put 50 euro on it, we can do 2 or even 3 weeks in Ibiza.

ANGELA But isn't 50 euro a bit much Antò?

ANTONIO Don't worry love, it's already won...we can even book the flight. We're already there.

In the morning we'll be on the beach and then when we're all tanned I'll take you dancing in the evening, just like this....

ANGELA No, Antò let me be... that makes me feel bad

ANTONIO Come on, I know you're as good as any professional dancer.

ANGELA Careful, Antò careful, you're tickling me... you'll make me fall over...

ANTONIO Have you ever seen a guy with a limp dance like this?

ANGELA Never.

ANTONIO Tell me the truth, what's my style?

ANGELA Your very own.

ANTONIO Come here...

They're dancing. They look like they're in love.

SCENE 9

Night time. Despite the late hour the lamp near the armchair creates the same atmosphere, dark and silent. In the box room Angela is sitting next to the cot with the usual cloth on her head, the light is switched on.

Antonio enters.

ANTONIO *(on the phone)* Hi, it's Antonio. You didn't explain a thing to me this morning. The first thing I want to know is how much time will it take to arrange this? The second is whether it's safe? If I go there will they put me under with anaesthetic and then I'll wake up stone dead? No, the price is OK. But I'm telling you, I want half straight away and half right after... OK then. Now, I've got an important question... what's Nepal got to do with it? Where the hell is this Nepal? And most of all, how the hell am I going to get to Nepal?

Hearing Antonio's voice, Angela comes back into the living room.

ANGELA Antò is that you?

ANTONIO *(being evasive)* OK then, we'll talk about this business later. But let's see if we can get on with it things are a bit urgent. Bye.

ANGELA Who were you talking to?

ANTONIO Who else could I be talking to? The insurance people.

ANGELA At this time of night?

ANTONIO Now I've got an agent's private number, I've been there so often we've become mates. He says call whenever you want, I took him at his word. Why do you call him a bastard?

ANGELA He said it himself ... the whole lot of them are bastards making us wait so long.

Pause. Antonio sits down in the armchair.

ANTONIO What's up, weren't you sleeping?

ANGELA I was half asleep. This headache's killing me.

ANTONIO It'll go way soon don't worry, it'll just be for a while. And if it doesn't go away, as soon as the money turns up, I'll take you to a good doctor.

ANGELA We'll see... we need the money for other things, we're so behind with everything... we've still got to sort out the little one's room.

ANTONIO That's first on the list.

ANGELA We've got to put in a shower, buy a sofa, there's no light in our room, some furniture

ANTONIO I know Angela, I know... we'll get it all sorted out, all in good time.

ANGELA I was just saying it, I didn't want to make you worry.

ANTONIO I'm not worrying, just tired.

ANGELA I know, I know.

Pause.

ANGELA Can I get up close to you? Come on, give me a hug...

ANTONIO No, Angela please don't jump on me.

Pause.

ANTONIO My leg's hurting, don't say any more. You sit here, I'll go and sit with the little one, I've hardly seen him at all today, Angela here you are, sit yourself down.

ANGELA What's all this money?

ANTONIO Don't worry I won 500 euro on a scratch card.

ANGELA Really? See? Every now and then a bit of good luck comes our way.

ANTONIO Yes, it does.

Antonio goes into the baby's room. He turns off the light.

ANGELA Night-night Anto'.

SCENE 10

Morning. Angela is asleep in the armchair. Antonio switches the light on in the baby's room. He goes into the living room and starts making coffee.

Ettore and Alessandro come in.

Antonio asks them not to make a noise and to talk quietly so as not to wake up Angela.

ETTORE What's happened Antonio?

ANTONIO Ettore, I have to tell you... my head's full of shit.

ETTORE Well I have to say, you're not exactly rolling in it, haven't got a pot to piss in in, but did you really jump head first into the water with all those sharks, with all your clothes on?

ANTONIO All I wanted was a little game, but I lost a stake of 2000 euro, I couldn't help myself now I've got to get it back.

ETTORE But Antò when the gods aren't smiling on you the cards go back in the pack, making you burn money and all the while you're drowning.

ANTONIO But the cards were turning up, turning up well, I was getting the money back, I was even winning more. I had a mountain of chips, something like 7-8 thousand euro. I was relaxed. Nothing scared me. I could cope with anything. The guys raised and I raised even higher, they raised then I, with an air of silent concentration I said "all in!" and they folded. I was beating all of them, one by one, no one could touch me, I was the strongest, the luckiest one. I was thinking that by this morning they'd all be talking about how Antonio broke the bank of that club in Vomero... it was all going as predicted. But then Ettore, the most ridiculous hand in the whole history of poker showed up. I am frowning, two queens, they all pass. Some lucky bastard raises. They all pass. Only me and him left. I raise and that bastard just looks. FLOP: queen of spades, 10 of hearts, king of hearts. I'm holding a fantastic three queens. He could be holding anything. I'm scared of a flush or that he's holding the ace and jack and has a straight flush or two kings, anyway, I lay low and check. He checks. I'm thinking "that bastard must be holding something. TURN: 10 of spades. Now I've got a full house and honestly he can't have a better full house than mine and I'll come out with

a great stake of 500 euro. The bastard is looking at me. Well he must be holding something, but not two kings. I'm feeling strong. I'm feeling I've really scooped a good kitty and then, I swear to you Ettore, on the life of that little one, I say "I'll get up and go". River: queen of hearts. And you know what I thought? I was a bit upset because I thought I was holding a great hand and the stakes weren't that high. I bet another 500... he thought about it for a minute and then raised me 1500 euro... would you believe it? That bastard, don't you get? I was shaking, I couldn't believe it. "ALL IN" I said, hoping he would call me as I was about to scoop 14000 euro Ettore. Then that bastard calls me right away, he didn't even take the time to check how much money there was, he yells "CALL!!" and turns over the cards in my face. Ace and jack of hearts, "royal flush". How the hell? That bitch of a queen of hearts has dropped me right in it... a royal flush! Ettore, you realise what this means? A kitty of 14000 euro, enough to tie a rope your neck ... I'm done for ... that fucking queen of hearts.

ETTORE Just guessing... Angela doesn't know anything.

ANTONIO No and she mustn't know anything. All I had left was 500 euro which I gave to her. But all the rest is gone.

ETTORE Antonio my dear, if I give you another loan of 5 thousand that'll come to 15 thousand, 5 you had you when the baby was born and I let you have it because we must always be treasured, but you've acted so irresponsibly that it makes question your reliability.

ANTONIO No Ettore please, if you give me 5 thousand I've give it straight to Angela and I won't lay a finger on it.

ETTORE But Antonio, you must see that I have safeguard myself. I'm, concerned that it's not clear to you that this business with me isn't a game and so I have to make some major changes to our arrangement. You're putting me in a position to have to hurry you up.

ANTONIO Look Ettore the insurance money is on its way, I called them yesterday.

ETTORE OK Antonio. It comes to 15 thousand with the 50%, but because you're a good lad with a lovely family, you will owe me 23 thousand in 10 days, after that we'll have to put it up by 2500 a week.

ANTONIO OK, I have say I've got no other option.

ETTORE Today you've got nothing left. Yesterday you had it. We're going to get that money. Alessandro you wait here, we'll be back soon.

Antonio and Ettore leave.

Alessandro is alone in the living room waiting with Angela who is asleep in the armchair.

SCENE 11

Alessandro walks up to the armchair in which Angela is sleeping. He strokes her hair. Suddenly he bursts out crying. Angela wake up.

ANGELA Alessandro? What's wrong?

Pause.

Angela goes to him and hugs him.

ANGELA Come on Ale, let me give you a glass of water.

ALESS.RO I'm so sorry.

ANGELA Sorry for what?

ALESS.RO That I woke you up

ANGELA No problem... anyway, it's late and I've a heap of things to do. By the way, I slept well last night and my headaches' gone.

ALESS.RO Really?

ANGELA Yes, my head feels so light, like a balloon.

ALESS.RO *(smiling)* I hope you don't fly away

ANGELA Of course not, otherwise I'd bang my head on the ceiling and that headache would come back.

They both laugh.

ANGELA Feeling better?

ALESS.RO Yes, yes thanks. That's never happened before, it all came down on me and I couldn't help myself.

ANGELA That's normal, it would be strange if it wasn't like that. Whenever you really need to let yourself go for a bit, come here. You shouldn't be shy about it.

ALESS.RO OK.

SCENE 12

Donna Carmela, enters in a state and out of breath.

CARMELA Angela, for heaven's sake are you still here?

ANGELA Where should I be?

CARMELA You know nothing about what that wretched husband of yours has been up to then?

ANGELA No, what's he been up to?

CARMELA Mother of God, how come you know nothing about it? You must be sleepwalking, you've got no idea how to keep that husband of yours in order.

ANGELA Mum stop telling me off, just tell me what's happened.

CARMELA Holy Mary Mother of God, let me sit down, I'm feeling awful. I had a feeling you knew nothing about it. I've always told you, keep your eye on Antonio, he's a big kid, but it didn't work, you took no notice, it drove me mad.

ANGELA Have you finished? What's with all this slagging off? Just tell me, anything could have happened... has he betrayed me?

CARMELA Betrayed you? That bastard Antonio has done more than that. I heard that last night at the club in Vomero, he lost a fortune at cards.

ANGELA What do you mean?

CARMELA Everyone knows about it, he lost all the money he borrowed.

Pause.

ANGELA Alessà... what are you doing here?

ALESS.RO Angela don't get me involved.

ANGELA Alessa! I'm really fond of you, this is serious, I've got that little one to think about.

CARMELA Isn't this Ettore's son? Antonio must be getting in more trouble, it's obvious.

ANGELA Ale, please.

ALESS.RO They've gone to get another 5 thousand euro to give to you without telling you what's happened.

ANGELA Another 5 thousand? Bloody hell... Now with a debt of 10 thousand euro round our necks however much will the interest be?.

CARMELA Jesus, Mary and Joseph!

ALESS.RO 15 thousand.

ANGELA 15 thousand in interest?

ALESS.RO No, the loan is 15 thousand.

CARMELA By all that's holy help us. What are you saying young man?

ANGELA Why 15 thousand?

ALESS.RO There's the 5 thousand he lost, 5 thousand today and 5 thousand when the baby was born.

ANGELA When the baby was born?

CARMELA Angela! It makes my blood run cold.

ANGELA My blood's boiling like lava from Vesuvius, my guts are in knots. Listen Alessa', you haven't told me anything, OK?

ALESS.RO OK. I'm sorry. I'll have a word with Dad, I'll see if he can cut the interest.

ANGELA No, don't you get involved, it's got nothing to do with you.

ALESS.RO I'd be quite happy to help.

ANGELA Don't worry, and I'm sorry I got so angry just now, otherwise I'd have smashed everything up. Now that liar's bringing my headache back.

CARMELA Bloody liar! He promised me the implants too.

SCENE 13

Antonio enters.

ANTONIO Hi Angela, hello Carmela... Alessa' your dad's waiting for you, off you go.

Pause.

ANTONIO Oh, what's up? Did you lose the coupon with the winning thirteen?

ANGELA Where have you been?

ANTONIO Down there.

ANGELA Anto' don't be an idiot, what did Ettore come for this morning?

ANTONIO Nothing, to see the little one with Alessandro, that's right isn't it Alessa?

CARMELA 'What I liar, just look at him. He's got the cheek to pretend it's got nothing to do with him.

ANTONIO What? Have you been up to something Alessa? Maybe you misunderstood something?

ANGELA No, he didn't misunderstand at all, Alessandro don't worry, I understand and so does.

CARMELA You're the one playing the idiot who doesn't understand.

ANTONIO Really? And what do you all understand?

ANGELA Anto' did you really say?

CARMELA Listen young man, we aren't a pair of idiots, you'd better not go that route or you'll get lost in your lies, find yourself all alone, crying your eyes out.

ANGELA Come on then...

ANTONIO Alessa, you haven't learnt a thing from your father, you sang like a bird, couldn't wait.

ANGELA The lad's got nothing to do with it. Come on Anto' I've got to hear what you've got to say for yourself, I've got to hear it now or I'll scream the place down.

CARMELA And wake the little one up!

ANGELA Please Mum...

ANTONIO It's nothing Angela, I just asked Ettore for another thousand euro, alright?

ANGELA Ah, another thousand euro? Why Antonio... what for?

CARMELA What did he say? That he'd got his hands on another thousand euro?

ANGELA Yes, a thousand...

CARMELA Jesus Christ, what an asshole that man is, a real wanker.

ANTONIO I was in a hurry because I was getting a present for you.

CARMELA Has that man got shit for brains?

ANTONIO I know this isn't the time for presents but, but for God's sake, doesn't my wife deserve one?

CARMELA And while you were at it, didn't you get something for me?

ANGELA My love, you're always springing surprises, but what have you got in that head?

WHAT IS IT? I want to know.

ANTONIO Why are you yelling like that?

ANGELA Anto' come on, you've got to tell me the truth, if not I'll tear all my hair out and jump out of the window.

ANTONIO Angela why are you saying these things?

CARMELA Angela, for heaven's sake you're on the second floor, you'll hurt yourself...

ANGELA I'll hurt myself will I? I want to die.

ANTONIO Come on Alessa' what the fuck have you said to these two mad women?

ALESS.RO I'm sorry Anto'.

ANGELA Alessa' be quiet, don't let this bastard upset you

ANTONIO That's enough! What's up?

ANGELA Have you borrowed another 5 thousand euro?

ANTONIO How come? Alessandro knows nothing.

ANGELA Anto' please, why are you acting like that? It means you don't love me, that I mean nothing to you, nor does you son.

CARMELA Nor does your mother-in-law.

ANTONIO Angela... what do you mean, I don't love you?

Pause.

CARMELA Anto' everyone knows that last night you lost everything at cards in that club in Vomero. They saying you were a sitting duck. That it was all fixed and all they were looking for was some cretin to screw.

ANGELA Well Anto'?...

Pause.

ANTONIO Angela I know I did a stupid thing, but it's not as bad as it looks, I can get it back.

ANGELA What do want get back Anto'? What do you want to get back?

CARMELA What he has to get back. But all he'll do Angela is get in some other mess.

ANTONIO Not at all. What do you know about cards? These things happen.

ANGELA Anto' 5 thousand euro are just things that happen? We need money and all you do is gamble with the life of your family.

ANTONIO Angela, that's over the top

ANGELA It's not over the top... and is there anything else you've got to tell me Anto'?

ANTONIO No, Angela, I've told you everything, I'm sorry.

ANGELA I can't believe it.

ANTONIO Come on Angela, we'll sort everything out with the insurance money.

ANGELA Of course, how much is that? A debt of 10 thousand plus interest...

ANTONIO There'll still be plenty left.

ANGELA There would have been something left if it wasn't for that 5 thousand euro you borrowed when the baby was born.

ANTONIO Alessà I'll smash your head in. That clever bastard is trying to ruin me.

ANGELA Stop it Anto', if you lay a finger on that young man you'll show you're much worse than the guy you're after.

CARMELA Now you're showing your true face. When you came to ask to marry Angela you pretended to be a good boy, what a pack of lies, you cheated me out of my daughter.

ANGELA Alessa' go down to your dad, off you go.

ALESS.RO Alright... I'm sorry.

ANGELA of you go, don't worry, it's not your fault.

Alessandro leaves.

SCENE 14

Pause.

ANGELA You've had 5 thousand euro... but what I feel really bad about is that you didn't tell me, and I don't even want to know what you've had the cheek to spend it on, I'm scared to hear what's about to come out of that mouth of yours. What makes me feel worse is that when our baby was born we risked losing him because we didn't have so much as a euro to pay a private gynaecologist who would look after me and you made me give birth with the first halfwit we met in A&E. We didn't have the last scans, I didn't take any medicine to make me stronger, I felt rotten and I've still got this bloody headache that's killing me and you, YOU, my husband, who swore you'd take care of me, you treated me like clapped out old car which is OK while it's still running but when it breaks down it's off to the scrap yard, I only need it to move from here to there, am I right Antonio? When you had the accident it was what meant most to you, you couldn't move, you said you would never be a real man again, that now you were completely useless... do you remember? Or have you forgotten?

ANTONIO I remember.

ANGELA What are we going to do now? With all that money you've borrowed how much will we have left? And don't try to tell me a load of crap, or I'll kill you.

ANTONIO If I get the money by next week, we'll have 7 thousand euro left.

ANGELA And what can we do with 7 thousand euro?

CARMELA I'd rather not say, but it's urgent for me...

Pause.

ANTONIO Listen Angela, I know I've made a mistake, but I've found an answer. I can get my hands on another 40,000 euro and we that we can sort everything out.

ANGELA Oh really? And how are you going to get that? With one of those stupid bets of yours?

ANTONIO No, Angela leave the betting out of it... I'm going to Nepal.

ANGELA To do what?

ANTONIO I'm going to sell a kidney and they'll give me 40,000 euro.

Pause.

ANGELA Are you're kidding? Have you gone out of your head? Going to Nepal to sell a kidney... No, this time you've really lost the plot Anto'.

ANTONIO Angela look, it's nothing, it's quite simple.

ANGELA Anto' can you hear the rubbish you're talking? A kidney? You don't even know what kidneys are for... How will you manage if they take one of your kidneys? Have you any idea of the problems you'll have with only one kidney? Nepal, Anto'... have you any idea? You joking, right? You're joking?

ANTONIO No, Angela, I'm quite serious

ANGELA My God he's not joking, he's really serious. What about the little one? He thinks he can solve all our problems with a kidney? Now I'm feeling bad, that headache's coming back, I feel sick, I've got to go and lie down...

ANTONIO Angela...

ANGELA Anto' don't touch me, let me be, I can't fight with you any more, we'll talk about it later, I need a rest, I need to lie down.

Angela goes into the box room, she sits next to the cot. She switches the light off.

SCENE 15

Antonio lost in thought sinks into the armchair. Donna Carmela slowly takes a chair and sits down next to him.

CARMELA That Nepal thing, is not such a bad idea after all. The lady next door to me has a husband who's only one kidney for twenty years and he's fine. He goes out, he goes for a walk, does a bit of the shopping. He's quite normal. One is quite enough if you watch what you eat. If I were a bit younger I'd make the same sacrifice for all of you. But who wants an old woman's kidney? I've got a lot of pain in that area that I never tell you about. Now all of a sudden you've taken it into your head to pop off to Nepal, I'm a bit worried. You're young. You're a bit unreliable but you're a good lad. You could sort everything out with 40,000 euro, you could make everyone happy. What are you thinking Anto'?

ANTONIO Nothing... I've got to go out, I've got to sort out the situation. Will you stay here with Angela? I don't think she's feeling too good. And keep an eye on the little one will you.

CARMELA of course, I'll take care of him. But where are you off to now? Anto' don't get into any more trouble...

Antonio leaves.

CARMELA That one doesn't listen to a word, he's got the head of a donkey and he walk like a penguin with that limp.

SCENE 16

Night time. Donna Carmela is sitting in the armchair waiting for Antonio to come back.

Antonio enters.

CARMELA Hello there Anto', where have you been there?

Pause.

ANTONIO The little one?

CARMELA He's asleep. Where have you been?

ANTONIO Angela?

CARMELA She's only been asleep for a couple of hours? That poor girl has been crying her eyes out all evening, her eyes all swollen with crying. Where have you been?

ANTONIO Would you mind making me some coffee?

CARMELA Alright don't answer me then. I'll make us some coffee....

Donna Carmela starts making coffee. Antonio starts checking the results of his bets.

ANTONIO Multiple system, 4 fixed and 5 rotating, 100 euro over. Maximum win 5 thousand euro, I can get that, I can get that... fucking hell it's unbelievable, always against me! Scratch and win, 20 euro, Super Milionario, I'm scratching, I'm scratching, give me a number, give me a number... oh shit! Super Enalotto, Super Star system, 50 euro, this combination, this combination...bloody hell it's too difficult! Slot Machine, change 100 euro, here's the Super Jackpot, 15 thousand euro, give me a three, give me a three... fuck off! Win for Life, combination, big number, 50 euro, the pay-out, the pay-out for life, I'll sort it all out in time... why won't you give anything? 500 euro on Napoli's 1... a goal, score a goal... what the fuck are you doing 0-0 against the bottom club... Scratch and Win, 2 Scratch and Win, 3 Scratch and Win, 60 euro, I'm scratching, scratching, scratching, give a number ... Holy Mother of God... Super Enalotto, 10elotto, both, set of three and 4 on all the turns, 20 euro, 30 euro, 50 euro, 100 euro, nothing, missing a number, missing one... Slot Machine roll, roll, fruit, star, bar, change me 100 euro, roll,

roll, roll, fruit, star, bar, change me another 100 euro... another 100 euro... nothing, Win for Life...

I'll win for my whole life... nothing, I'll lose, lose for the whole of my life...

Exhausted, Antonio falls asleep in the armchair. Donna Carmela comes up to him with the coffee she's made.

CARMELA Anto'! Anto' ... are you asleep? And I've just made you a coffee, what a waste. At this time of night...now what am I supposed to do, chuck it out? Alright then, now I'll drink the coffee.

SCENE 17

Ettore comes in. Donna Carmela surprised, goes up to him.

CARMELA Good evening Ettore.

ETTORE Good evening my dear lady, I'm looking for Antonio, is he at home at the moment?

CAMELA Yes, would you like a coffee? Meanwhile I'll wait him up...

ETTORE No thank you, drinking coffee at this time makes me jumpy, I'd rather not. Don't you worry dear lady, just tell me where he is and I'll bring him round,

CARMELA He's right there, in the armchair.

ETTORE That's fine, thank you, is your daughter asleep too?

CARMELA Yes she is... she's had a terrible day, seemed like it would never end.

ETTORE I can imagine it my dear lady. Just do one thing for me please, pour me a cup of coffee after all, that lovely aroma has made me want one.

CARMELA Yes, of course, right away.

Donna Carmela goes to pour out a cup of coffee for Ettore. Ettore walks slowly up to the armchair.

He gets a lace out of his pocket and puts it round Antonio's neck, pulling it tight. Antonio can't breathe and wakes up gasping. Antonio tries to free himself but Ettore's grip is too strong.

Meanwhile Donna Carmela is approaching with the coffee.

CARMELA Ettore, whatever are you doing?

ETTORE What am I doing my dear? Justice. I'm getting my just deserts for the little faith that prick of a son in law of yours has shown in me. A young man I opened my heart to and he's repaid me with trickery and a pack of lies, he deserves to drown in the filth of his own arrogance. I'm right, aren't I? You know you deserve it.

CARMELA For heaven's sake, what are you doing? If you carry on like that you'll kill him... he's going to give you the money, why are you doing that?

ETTORE Because, my dear lady, Antonio has spun his web very well but he's forgotten that there's only one spider here, and that's me. You wanted to screw me? Well now I'm going to screw

you. I've heard the news, and it's true, I've found out that the insurance money arrived 3 months ago and our dear Antonio here has already spent it all. But no one knew about it because he went to do his dirty work a long way away, in another town, pretending he was getting treatment for his leg. That's right Antonio isn't it?

By now Antonio can't breathe, he's about to faint. Ettore suddenly loosens his grip.

ETTORE I'll tell you straight, am I, Ettore the only one who ends up getting screwed? I've skipped the bit about asking you how you're going to solve the problem and I've found the solution myself, all on my own, because, as the saying goes - God helps those who help themselves.

Ettore gets a hammer out of his jacket. Antonio is confused and aching. Donna Carmela is speechless.

ETTORE Well then, now I'm going to break the other leg. Then a very dear friend of mine, someone trusty and loyal, unlike you, will write a letter to the insurance company saying that he's run you over. And when the money turns up, this time I'll go and collect it. With the interest of course. Because you've made a basic mistake, thinking you can screw someone whose job it is to screw people, you've gone against the pecking order my dear friend and now you have to pay. Stretch out your leg my dear friend, let's get it over with, it's late.

Antonio is reluctant.

ETTORE Antonio, don't make me show you the consequences of your refusal. Give me the leg.

Antonio refuses. Ettore tries to grab the leg, Antonio pushes him back. A brief struggle breaks out. In a panic Donna Carmela tries to defend Antonio by pouring the boiling hot coffee all over Ettore's head and he lets out a cry of pain. To shut him up Donna Carmela hits him on the head with the coffee pot. Ettore crumbles to the floor, unconscious. Antonio pulls himself together.

Pause

ANTONIO What'll we do now?

CARMELA What do you want to do?

ANTONIO I don't know, what's do you think? I've really fucked up. As soon as Ettore comes round he'll kill me or at best put in a wheel chair and I'll need feeding through a tube.

CARMELA Anto', as I see it we can't sort this out by being good, we either drink or drown.

ANTONIO What does that mean?

CARMELA It means that man's got to disappear, you've got no money to give him. You'll be under Ettore's thumb unless you can pay it all back... if you get rid of him, you get rid of the debt.

ANTONIO What a shit situation.

CARMELA What do you want to do? Are you listening?

ANTONIO There's no other way?

CARMELA Oh sure! Grab that hammer and break your own leg, then smash your own head in, you do it first.

ANTONIO I don't know.

CARMELA Anto' you've got that little one, don't you want to take him to school? Don't you want to play football with him?

ANTONIO Of course I do.

CARMELA How will you do it with no legs?

ANTONIO I see, I've got to do it.

CARMELA Good boy.

ANTONIO I've got to do it for the little one.

CARMELA Do it for whoever you want, but get on with it.

ANTONIO What do I have to do?

CARMELA How should I now.

ANTONIO How about if I throw him off the balcony?

CARMELA Anto' are you mad?

ANTONIO Why not? It'll get noticed?

CARMELA You can be sure it will.

ANTONIO What about the hammer?

CARMELA What do you want to do?

ANTONIO I'll smash his head in with the hammer. Yes, that'll be easy.

Antonio picks up the hammer. Ready to smash it over Ettore's head.

ANTONIO No, I can't do it, I want to throw up.

CARMELA Come on Antonio, we can't wait till morning, smash his head with that hammer and the problem's sorted.

Antonio grabs the hammer. He raises his arm ready to make a lunge.

CARMELA Anto' wait!

ANTONIO *(jerking back)* Wat is it?

CARMELA I've just had a thought.

ANTONIO What is it? You scared the life out of me...

CARMELA That hammer will make his head explode, there'll be blood all over the floor, who's going to clean up after it?

ANTONIO What's the problem with cleaning up? I'll clean up...

Antonio gets ready to hit him.

CARMELA No Anto'!

ANTONIO Got God's sake woman, don't stop me! It's bad enough already. Shut up.

CARMELA It's not the cleaning up that's the problem, it's that as soon as he's dead you'll have to get rid of the body. It's got to disappear. If the blood goes everywhere there are bound to be traces left.

Pause.

ANTONIO You're quire right. So what the fuck do I do?

CARMELA You've got to kill him without making a mess.

ANTONIO I don't know how to do that, I'm not some serial killer.

CARMELA Drown him.

ANTONIO In water?

CARMELA Yes, go and fill up the bath tub... Anto' what's up, feeling dizzy?

ANTONIO No, just confused... I don't know... I'm about to kill a Christian.

CARMELA Him, a Christian? He's a bastard.

ANTONIO A bag!

CARMELA What bag?

ANTONIO Any bag. I'll use a plastic bag to suffocate him.

CARMELA That's not a bad idea.

Antonio gets a plastic bag, he puts it over Ettore's head and starts suffocating him. Ettore starts struggling.

SCENE 18

Alessandro enters, half asleep. Meanwhile Ettore dies still struggling.

ALESS.RO Sorry to trouble you, is Dad here?

Antonio and Donna Carmela jerk back. Antonio let's Ettore's body fall to the floor. Alessandro realises what has happened.

Pause.

Alessandro tries to run away, Antonio goes after him and stops him.

ANTONIO Where the fuck do you think you're going young man?

ALESS.RO Let me go Antonio, please let me go.

ANTONIO Shut up, shut up or I'll suffocate you too with a plastic bag.

ALESS.RO What have you done? Is he dead? Dad? Dad, let's go, come on, get up. Dad please.

ANTONIO I told you to shut up.

CARMELA Anto' the boy has seen everything.

ANTONIO I know, I know.

CARMELA I'm sorry, but we'll be in trouble.

Antonio looks at Alessandro.

ALESS.RO Please let me go Antonio, I want to go.

CARMELA Anto' do what you have to do.

ALESS.RO Why are you doing this to me? I've done nothing to you, come on Antonio, let me go.

ANTONIO Alessa' I'm sorry, but I can't let you go.

ALESS.RO What do you mean? What do you mean Antonio? I swear I won't breathe a word to anyone. But please let me go, Mrs Carmela I beg you.

CARMELA Anto' he's making too much noise.

ANTONIO I know, I'm thinking.

CARMELA What are you thinking about?

ALESS.RO Mummy help me, mummy please...

SCENE 19

Angela wakes up, switches the light on in the box room, looks at the baby and goes into the living room.

ANGELA Who's doing all this crying?

Alessandro runs into Angela's arms.

ALESS.RO Angela, help me, please, don't let him kill me, tell him not to kill me.

ANGELA Alessa' what are you talking about? What's going on Anto'? Mum?

Angela surveys the situation, she notices Ettore's lifeless body on the floor.

ANGELA What the fuck have you been doing?

ANTONIO Angela get out of here, go back to bed.

ANGELA Anto' what have you done? Mum what have you two done?

CARMELA Nothing Angela, the only thing we could have done.

ANGELA Now wait a minute, I don't understand, maybe I'm still asleep. Alessa'?

ALESS.RO Angela I was downstairs in the car, Dad told me to wait there. But then he was gone so long that I came up. Angela they've killed my Dad, they've killed him and they want to kill me too, but you won't let them kill me will you Angela? Will you?

ANTONIO We killed your father he was a shit. Angela he came here with this hammer, he was going to break my other leg with it and grab the insurance money.

ANGELA He needed to threaten you like that to get the money?

ANTONIO Not that money, other money. The bastard wanted to pull a con job with one of his friends using my leg.

ANGELA What money? He knew it hadn't come through.. so what the hell is this money you're talking about?

CARMELA Angela, the money won't be coming, there's none left.

ANGELA Why's there none left? Where's it gone?

CARMELA It's gone Angela, it's gone.

ANGELA What do you mean? Are we all going mad? There's a dead body over there on the floor, and I know nothing! Where the hell is the money Antonio?

ANTONIO I spent it Angela.

ANGELA When?

ANTONIO Three months ago.

Pause.

ANTONIO But that doesn't matter now Angela. I did it for you because that bloodsucker wanted to mess up our life.

ANGELA And you never told me Mum?

ANTONIO She was the one who told me to tell the truth.

CARMELA Angela wake up! You're living in fairyland. That bastard wanted to put your husband in a wheel chair, so what was I supposed to do? You're already in a big enough a mess, what would you do without that a crippled husband of yours? Antonio made a mistake but he couldn't destroy his whole life just to meet that bastard's demands. Let's get this straight, it's because he wanted to get his filthy hands on all your money. If Antonio decides to con the insurance with his other leg, at least we should get the money, right?

ANTONIO What con are you talking about? I don't want to con anyone.

ANGELA Listen to yourselves. The pair of you are nuts. All this just for money?

ANTONIO Not for money Angela, for freedom.

ANGELA Freedom from what Antonio?

ANTONIO Freedom from shame. The shame I feel when people look at me and they know I'm skint, that I haven't got the balls to make enough money, and that I have to be slapped around by an arsehole. It's the way people look at me Angela, freedom from people's looks.

ANGELA And so you thought you'd stop people looking at you by killing that young man's father?

CARMELA We killed him, all of us together.

ANGELA So, you want to drop me in it too?

ANTONIO We're not dropping you in it, you're already in it.

ANGELA Fuck off Anto'.

ANTONIO Angela, the kid's got to die too!

ALESS.RO No, Angela, please, say something.

ANGELA Don't worry Alessa'.

ANTONIO Angela don't interfere.

ANGELA Really? What are you going to do? Kill me too?

CARMELA Angela keep out of it, let him do what he's got to.

The baby starts crying in his room.

Pause.

SCENE 20

Alessandro pushes Angela away and runs into the box room with the baby in it, he grabs the baby and brings it in. The baby keeps on crying.

ALESS.RO Keep away from me!

ANGELA Alessa' what do you think you're doing?

ALESS.RO Angela keep away from me or I'll throw him on the floor. I swear I'll do it.

ANTONIO Alessà give me the baby.

ALESS.RO I want to get away Angela, I want to get away from here.

CARMELA Anto' the little one, he's you own blood. Do something.

ANTONIO Alessa' leave the little one alone or I'll really make you suffer.

ALESS.RO No Antonio, I'm not giving him to you. Keep away from me or I'll crush his skull with my own hands, I kick his skull in, I swear I'll do it.

ANGELA Alessandro calm down a minute, you've got to listen to me. I know you don't want to hurt the baby. I know it because you're like us, you're a good lad.

ANTONIO Angela make him put the little one down.

ANGELA For God's sake shut up Anto'.

ANTONIO No, I won't shut up. That's my son he's holding.

ANGELA What are you thinking, he's my son too.

ANTONIO If anything happens to that baby, I'll tear you to bits.

ANGELA (*ignoring Antonio*) Alessandro if you hurt him you'll be hurting me. If you kill him, I'll die too.

ALESS.RO I know Angela, but I'm so scared, all I want to do is go home.

ANGELA I know and I swear you can go home, I won't let Antonio lay a finger on you.

ALESS.RO I don't believe you Angela.

ANGELA You've got to believe me. I promise you.

Pause.

ANGELA I'll give you my life in exchange for the baby's life, my whole life, all my love, just for you. I'll be your mum, I'll take care of you and no one will ever take you away from me. But you've got to leave the baby alone. Leave the baby alone and you and I will go away from here, together, for ever.

ALESS.RO Do you swear Angela?

ANGELA I swear as Angela of Form IIIA..

ANTONIO Angela what the fuck are you saying? I want the baby!

ANGELA You want the baby? As for you, all you care about is the baby.

ANTONIO No Angela, I care about you.

ANGELA No you don't Antonio, if you really cared about us you wouldn't have got us into this mess.

ANTONIO What are you saying Angela?

ANGELA Look around you Antonio, does it look like you've been taking care of us? Look at me, does it seem there's anything inside or outside me that you really care about?

ANTONIO But Angela, I...

ANGELA You what Anto'? You don't even know what to say. You care about the baby, a good game to bet on to make your pathetic dreams come true. But I'm not going to play this game with you, this game of yours is a load of shit. Even if I lose everything, I won't sacrifice Alessandro for you. Because it'll fall to pieces if I have to stay and watch things go from bad to worse, unable to say a word, having to shut up, imprisoned in this shithole of a home. You want to play a game do you? Well then let's play, but I'll set the stakes. This is the bet: if you win, Alessandro will give you the baby and he and I will disappear for ever, you'll never see us again. I swear to you, on the life of my baby, that no one will ever know a thing about this business.

CARMELA Look Angela, that's not a good solution.

ANGELA Shut up Mum, you've already done too much. Don't you think I'm mad at you too? You who made me believe this would be my life, having kids and staying at home just waiting to get

old, taking medicine for my illnesses just to survive a bit longer than other people. You're a selfish bitch Mum.

CARMELA So, I'm a selfish bitch am I? What about you leaving your husband and child for that kid you hardly know.

ANGELA I do know him actually, because I've talked to him and he's listened to me and I've listened to him, like a mother and child. Do you know what that's like? Do you know this feeling?

CARMELA Angela, know what I'm going to say? Do whatever you want, I don't want to know anything about it.

ANGELA Wrong, you know all about it and since you're involved in it you have to play too. You have to promise to give Antonio a hand bringing up the baby. But properly, not just pretending to like you usually do. Promise me?

Pause.

ANGELA PROMISE ME!

CARMELA Yes, of course.

ANGELA But Anto', if I win, you get rid of the body, Alessandro will stay here and live with us and you will care for him like your own son. I don't give a damn how you do it, because you know what? If I win you're off to Nepal to sell your kidney and bring the 40,000 euro back here and give it to me. Otherwise I'll go to the police and tell everyone what you've done and then that little one, your precious son, who knows how the hell he'll end up. Well Antonio, what do you say, shall we play?

Pause.

ANTONIO What are we going to do then?

ANGELA You decide.

ANTONIO The odds are 50/50. I'd say heads or tails will sort it.

ANGELA Just as you like. Alessandro keep holding the baby.

Angela picks up a coin. She looks everyone in the eyes. She tosses the coin. The end.