

# Henry IV.

(*Enrico Quarto*)

[1922]

A TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS

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## CHARACTERS.

- "HENRY IV."
- THE MARCHIONESS MATILDA SPINA.
- HER DAUGHTER FRIDA.
- THE YOUNG MARQUIS CHARLES DI NOLLI.
- BARON TITO BELCREDI.
- DOCTOR DIONYSIUS GENONI.
- THE FOUR PRIVATE COUNSELLORS:  
(The names in brackets are nicknames).
  - HAROLD (FRANK),
  - LANDOLPH (LOLO),
  - ORDULPH (MOMO),
  - BERTHOLD (FINO).
- JOHN, THE OLD WAITER.
- THE TWO VALETS IN COSTUME.

*A SOLITARY VILLA IN ITALY IN OUR OWN TIME.*

# ACT I

*Salon in the villa, furnished and decorated so as to look exactly like the throne room of Henry IV. in the royal residence at Goslar. Among the antique decorations there are two modern life-size portraits in oil painting. They are placed against the back wall, and mounted in a wooden stand that runs the whole length of the wall. (It is wide and protrudes, so that it is like a large bench). One of the paintings is on the right; the other on the left of the throne, which is in the middle of the wall and divides the stand.*

*The Imperial chair and Baldachin.*

*The two portraits represent a lady and a gentleman, both young, dressed up in carnival costumes: one as "Henry IV.," the other as the "Marchioness Matilda of Tuscany." Exits to Right and Left.*

*(When the curtain goes up, the two valets jump down, as if surprised, from the stand on which they have been lying, and go and take their positions, as rigid as statues, on either side below the throne with their halberds in their hands. Soon after, from the second exit, right, enter Harold, Landolph, Ordulph and Berthold, young men employed by the Marquis Charles Di Nolli to play the part of "Secret Counsellors" at the court of "Henry IV." They are, therefore, dressed like German knights of the XIth century. Berthold, nicknamed Fino, is just entering on his duties for the first time. His companions are telling him what he has to do and amusing themselves at his expense. The scene is to be played rapidly and vivaciously).*

LANDOLPH (*to Berthold as if explaining*). And this is the throne room.

HAROLD. At Goslar.

ORDULPH. Or at the castle in the Hartz, if you prefer.

HAROLD. Or at Wurms.

LANDOLPH. According as to what's doing, it jumps about with us, now here, now there.

ORDULPH. In Saxony.

HAROLD. In Lombardy.

LANDOLPH. On the Rhine.

ONE OF THE VALETS (*without moving, just opening his lips*). I say . . .

HAROLD (*turning round*). What is it?

FIRST VALET (*like a statue*). Is he coming in or not? (*He alludes to Henry IV.*)

ORDULPH. No, no, he's asleep. You needn't worry.

SECOND VALET (*releasing his pose, taking a long breath and going to lie down again on the stand*). You might have told us at once.

FIRST VALET (*going over to Harold*). Have you got a match, please?

LANDOLPH. What? You can't smoke a pipe here, you know.

FIRST VALET (*while Harold offers him a light*). No; a cigarette. (*Lights his cigarette and lies down again on the stand*).

BERTHOLD (*who has been looking on in amazement, walking round the room, regarding the costumes of the others*). I say . . . this room . . . these costumes . . . Which Henry IV. is it? I don't quite get it. Is he Henry IV. of France or not? (*At this Landolph, Harold, and Ordulph, burst out laughing*).

LANDOLPH (*still laughing; and pointing to Berth old as if inviting the others to make fun of him*). Henry of France he says: ha! ha! ORDULPH. He thought it was the king of France!

HAROLD. Henry IV. of Germany, my boy: the Salian dynasty!

ORDULPH. The great and tragic Emperor!

LANDOLPH. He of Canossa. Every day we carry on here the terrible war between Church and State, by Jove.

ORDULPH. The Empire against the Papacy!

HAROLD. Antipopes against the Pope!

LANDOLPH. Kings against antikings!

ORDULPH. War on the Saxons!

HAROLD. And all the rebels Princes!

LANDOLPH. Against the Emperor's own sons!

BERTHOLD (*covering his head with his hands to protect himself against this avalanche of information*). I understand! I understand! Naturally, I didn't get the idea at first. I'm right then: these aren't costumes of the XVIth century?

HAROLD. XVIth century be hanged!

ORDULPH. We're somewhere between a thousand and eleven hundred.

LANDOLPH. Work it out for yourself: if we are before Canossa on the 25th of January, 1071 . . .

BERTHOLD (*more confused than ever*). Oh my God! What a mess I've made of it!

ORDULPH. Well, just slightly, if you supposed you were at the French court.

BERTHOLD. All that historical stuff I've swatted up!

LANDOLPH. My dear boy, it's four hundred years earlier.

BERTHOLD (*getting angry*). Good Heavens! You ought to have told me it was Germany and not France. I can't tell you how many books I've read in the last fifteen days.

HAROLD. But I say, surely you knew that poor Tito was Adalbert of Bremen, here?

BERTHOLD. Not a damned bit!

LANDOLPH. Well, don't you see how it is? When Tito died, the Marquis Di Nolli . . .

BERTHOLD. Oh, it was he, was it? He might have told me.

HAROLD. Perhaps he thought you knew.

LANDOLPH. He didn't want to engage anyone else in substitution. He thought the remaining three of us would do. But he began to cry out: "With Adalbert driven away . . . ": because, you see, he didn't imagine poor Tito was dead; but that, as Bishop Adalbert, the rival bishops of Cologne and Mayence had driven him off . . .

BERTHOLD (*taking his head in his hand*). But I don't know a word of what you're talking about.

ORDULPH. So much the worse for you, my boy!

HAROLD. But the trouble is that not even we know who you are.

BERTHOLD. What? Not even you? You don't know who I'm supposed to be?

ORDULPH. Hum! "Berthold."

BERTHOLD. But which Berthold? And why Berthold

LANDOLPH (*solemnly imitating Henry IV.*). "They've driven Adalbert away from me. Well then, I want Berthold! I want Berthold !" That's what he said.

HAROLD. We three looked one another in the eyes: who's got to be Berthold?

ORDULPH. And so here you are, "Berthold," my dear fellow!

LANDOLPH. I'm afraid you will make a bit of a mess of it.

BERTHOLD (*indignant, getting ready to go*). Ah, no! Thanks very much, but I'm off! I'm out of this!

HAROLD (*restraining him with the other two, amid laughter*). Steady now! Don't get excited!

LANDOLPH. Cheer up, my dear fellow! We don't any of us know who we are really. He's Harold; he's Ordulph; I'm Landolph! That's the way he calls us. We've got used to it. But who are we? Names of the period! Yours, too, is a name of the period: Berthold! Only one of us, poor Tito, had got a really decent part, as you can read in history: that of the Bishop of Bremen. He was just like a real bishop. Tito did it awfully well, poor chap!

HAROLD. Look at the study he put into it!

LANDOLPH. Why, he even ordered his Majesty about, opposed his views, guided and counselled him. We're "secret counsellors" -- in a manner of speaking only; because it is written in history that Henry IV. was hated by the upper aristocracy for surrounding himself at court with young men of the bourgeoisie.

ORDULPH. Us, that is.

LANDOLPH. Yes, small devoted vassals, a bit dissolute and very gay . . .

BERTHOLD. So I've got to be gay as well?

HAROLD. I should say so! Same as we are!

ORDULPH. And it isn't too easy, you know.

LANDOLPH. It's a pity; because the way we're got up, we could do a fine historical reconstruction. There's any amount of material in the story of Henry IV. But, as a matter of fact, we do nothing. We've have the form without the content. We're worse than the real secret counsellors of Henry IV.; because certainly no one had given them a part to play -- at any rate, they didn't feel they had a part to play. It was their life. They looked after their own interests at the expense of others, sold investitures and -- what not! We stop here in this magnificent court -- for what? -- Just doing nothing. We're like so many puppets hung on the wall, waiting for some one to come and move us or make us talk.

HAROLD. Ah no, old sport, not quite that! We've got to give the proper answer, you know. There's trouble if he asks you something and you don't chip in with the cue.

LANDOLPH. Yes, that's true.

BERTHOLD. Don't rub it in too hard! How the devil am I to give him the proper answer, if I've swatted up Henry IV. of France, and now he turns out to be Henry IV. of Germany? (*The other three laugh*).

HAROLD. You'd better start and prepare yourself at once.

ORDULPH. We'll help you out.

HAROLD. We've got any amount of books on the subject. A brief run through the main points will do to begin with.

ORDULPH. At any rate, you must have got some sort of general idea.

HAROLD. Look here! (*Turns him around and shows him the portrait of the March ioness Matilda on the wall*). Who's that?

BERTHOLD (*looking at it*). That? Well, the thing seems to me somewhat out of place, anyway: two modern paintings in the midst of all this respectable antiquity!

HAROLD. You're right! They weren't there in the beginning. There are two niches there behind the pictures. They were going to put up two statues in the style of the period. Then the places were covered with those canvasses there.

LANDOLPH (*interrupting and continuing*). They would certainly be out of place if they really were paintings!

BERTHOLD. What are they, if they aren't paintings?

LANDOLPH. Go and touch them! Pictures all right . . . but for him! (*Makes a mysterious gesture to the right, alluding to Henry IV.*). . . who never touches them! . . .

BERTHOLD. No? What are they for him?

LANDOLPH. Well, I'm only supposing, you know; but I imagine I'm about right. They're images such as . . . well -- such as a mirror might throw back. Do you understand? That one there represents himself, as he is in this throne room, which is all in the style of the period. V/hat's there to marvel at? If we put you before a mirror, won't you see yourself, alive, but dressed up in ancient costume? Well, it's as if there were two mirrors there, which cast back living images in the midst of a world which, as you will see, when you have lived with us, comes to life too.

BERTHOLD. I say, look here . . . I've no particular desire to go mad here.

HAROLD. Go mad, be hanged! You'll have a fine time! BERTHOLD. Tell me this: how have you all managed to become so learned?

LANDOLPH. My dear fellow, you can't go back over 800 years of history without picking up a bit of experience.

HAROLD. Come on! Come on! You'll see how quickly you get into it!

ORDULPH. You'll learn wisdom, too, at this school.

BERTHOLD. Well, for Heaven's sake, help me a bit! Give me the main lines, anyway.

HAROLD. Leave it to us. We'll do it all between us.

LANDOLPH. We'll put your wires on you and fix you up like a first class marionette. Come along! (*They take him by the arm to lead him away.*)

BERTHOLD (*stopping and looking at the portrait on the wall*). Wait a minute! You haven't told me who that is. The Emperor's wife?

HAROLD. No! The Emperor's wife is Bertha of Susa, the sister of Amadeus II. of Savoy.

ORDULPH. And the Emperor, who wants to be young with us, can't stand her, and wants to put her away.

LANDOLPH. That is his most ferocious enemy: Matilda, Marchioness of Tuscany.

BERTHOLD. Ab, I've got it: the one who gave hospitality to the Pope!

LANDOLPH. Exactly: at Canossa!

ORDULPH. Pope Gregory VII.!

HAROLD. Our *bête noir*! Come on! come on! (*All four move toward the right to go out, when, from the left, the old servant John enters in evening dress.*)

JOHN (*quickly, anxiously*). Hss! Hss! Frank! Lolo!

HAROLD (*turning round*). What is it?

BERTHOLD (*marvelling at seeing a man in modern clothes enter the throne room*). Oh! I say, this is a bit too much, this chap here!

LANDOLPH. A man of the XXth century, here! Oh, go away! (*They run over to him, pretending to menace him and throw him out*).

ORDULPH (*heroically*). Messenger of Gregory VII., away!

HAROLD. Away! Away!

JOHN (*annoyed, defending himself*). Oh, stop it! Stop it, I tell you!

ORDULPH. No, you can't set foot here!

HAROLD. Out with him!

LANDOLPH (*to Berthold*). Magic, you know! He's a demon conjured up by the Wizard of Rome! Out with your swords! (*Makes as if to draw a sword*).

JOHN (*shouting*). Stop it, will you? Don't play the fool with me! The Marquis has arrived with some friends . . .

LANDOLPH. Good! Good! Are there ladies too?

ORDULPH. Old or young?

JOHN. There are two gentlemen.

HAROLD. But the ladies, the ladies, who are they?

JOHN. The Marchioness and her daughter.

LANDOLPH (*surprised*). What do you say?

ORDULPH. The Marchioness?

JOHN. The Marchioness! The Marchioness!

HAROLD. Who are the gentlemen?

JOHN. I don't know.

HAROLD (*to Berthold*). They're coming to bring us a message from the Pope, do you see?

ORDULPH. All messengers of Gregory VII.! What fun!

JOHN. Will you let me speak, or not?

HAROLD. Go on, then!

JOHN. One of the two gentlemen is a doctor, I fancy.

LANDOLPH. Oh, I see, one of the usual doctors.

HAROLD. Bravo Berthold, you'll bring us luck!

LANDOLPH. You wait and see how we'll manage this doctor!

BERTHOLD. It looks as if I were going to get into a nice mess right away.

JOHN. If the gentlemen would allow me to speak . . . they want to come here into the throne room.

LANDOLPH (*surprised*). What? She? The Marchioness here?

HAROLD. Then this is something quite different! No play-acting this time!

LANDOLPH. We'll have a real tragedy: that's what!

BERTHOLD (*curious*). Why? Why?

ORDULPH (*pointing to the portrait*). She is that person there, don't you understand?

LANDOLPH. The daughter is the fiancée of the Marquis. But what have they come for, I should like to know?

ORDULPH. If he sees her, there'll be trouble.

LANDOLPH. Perhaps he won't recognize her any more.

JOHN. You must keep him there, if he should wake up . . .

ORDULPH. Easier said than done, by Jove!

HAROLD. You know what he's like!

JOHN. -- even by force, if necessary! Those are my orders. Go on! Go on!

HAROLD. Yes, because who knows if he hasn't already wakened up?

ORDULPH. Come on then!

LANDOLPH (*going towards John with the others*). You'll tell us later what it all means.

JOHN (*shouting after them*). Close the door there, and hide the key! That other door too. (*Pointing to the other door on right*).

JOHN (*to the two valets*). Be off, you two! There (*pointing to exit right*)! Close the door after you, and hide the key!

(*The two valets go out by the first door on right. John moves over to the left to show in: Donna Matilda Spina, the young Marchioness Frida, Dr. Dionysius Genoni, the Baron Tito Belcredi and the young Marquis Charles Di Nollì, who, as master of the house, enters last.*)



*DONNA MATILDA SPINA is about 45, still handsome, although there are too patent signs of her attempts to remedy the ravages of time with make-up. Her head is thus rather like a Valkyrie. This facial make-up contrasts with her beautiful sad mouth. A widow for many years, she now has as her friend the Baron Tito Belcredi, whom neither she nor anyone else takes seriously -- at least so it would appear.*

*What TITO BELCREDI really is for her at bottom, he alone knows; and he is, therefore, entitled to laugh, if his friend feels the need of pretending not to know. He can always laugh at the jests which the beautiful Marchioness makes with the others at his expense. He is slim, prematurely gray, and younger than she is. His head is bird-like in shape. He would be a very vivacious person, if his ductile agility (which among other things makes him a redoubtable swordsman) were not enclosed in a sheath of Arab-like laziness, which is revealed in his strange, nasal drawn-out voice.*

*FRIDA, the daughter of the Marchioness is 19. She is sad; because her imperious and too beautiful mother puts her in the shade, and provokes facile gossip against her daughter as well as against herself. Fortunately for her, she is engaged to the Marquis Charles Di Nolli.*

*CHARLES DI NOLLI is a stiff young man, very indulgent towards others, but sure of himself for what he amounts to in the world. He is worried about all the responsibilities which he believes weigh on him. He is dressed in deep mourning for the recent death of his mother.*

*Dr. DIONYSIUS GENONI has a bold rubicund Satyr-like face, prominent eyes, a pointed beard (which is silvery and shiny) and elegant manners. He is nearly bald. All enter in a state of perturbation, almost as if afraid, and all (except Di Nolli) looking curiously about the room. At first, they speak sotto voce.*

DI NOLLI (to John). Have you given the orders properly?

JOHN. Yes, my Lord; don't be anxious about that.

BELCREDI. Ah, magnificent! magnificent!

DOCTOR. How extremely interesting! Even in the surroundings his raving madness -- is perfectly taken into account!

DONNA MATILDA (*glancing round for her portrait, discovers it, and goes up close to it*). Ah! Here it is! (*Going back to admire it, while mixed emotions stir within her*). Yes . . . yes . . . (*Calls her daughter Frida*).

FRIDA. Ah, your portrait!

DONNA MATILDA. No, no . . . look again; it's you, not I, there!

DI NOLLI. Yes, it's quite true. I told you so, I . . . DONNA MATILDA. But I would never have believed it! (*Shaking as if with a chill*). What a strange feeling it gives one! (*Then looking at her daughter*). Frida, what's the matter? (*She pulls her to her side, and slips an arm round her waist*). Come: don't you see yourself in me there?

FRIDA. Well, I really . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Don't you think so? Don't you, really? (*Turning to Belcredi*). . . Look at it, Tito! Speak up, man!

BELCREDI (*without looking*). Ah, no! I shan't look at it. For me, a priori, certainly not!

DONNA MATILDA. Stupid! You think you are paying me a compliment! (*Turing to Doctor Genoni*). What do you say, Doctor? Do say something, please!

DOCTOR (*makes a movement to go near to the picture*).

BELCREDI (*with his back turned, pretending to attract his attention secretly*) . . . Hss! No, doctor! For the love of Heaven, have nothing to do with it!

DOCTOR (*getting bewildered and smiling*). And why shouldn't I?

DONNA MATILDA. Don't listen to him! Come here! He's insufferable!

FRIDA. He acts the fool by profession, didn't you know that?

BELCREDI (*to the Doctor, seeing him go over*). Look at your feet, doctor! Mind where you're going!

DOCTOR. Why?

BELCREDI. Be careful you don't put your foot in it!

DOCTOR (*laughing feebly*). No, no. After all, it seems to me there's no reason to be astonished at the fact that a daughter should resemble her mother!

BELCREDI. Hullo! Hullo! He's done it now; he's said it.

DONNA MATILDA (*with exaggerated anger, advancing towards Belcredi*). What's the matter? What has he said? What has he done?

DOCTOR (*candidly*). Well, isn't it so?

BELCREDI (*answering the Marchioness*). I said there was nothing to be astounded at -- and you are astounded! And why so, then, if the thing is so simple and natural for you now?

DONNA MATILDA (*still more angry*). Fool! fool! It's just because it is so natural! Just because it isn't my daughter who is there. (*Pointing to the canvass*). That is my portrait; and to find my daughter there instead of me fills me with astonishment, an astonishment which, I beg you to believe, is sincere. I forbid you to cast doubts on it.

FRIDA (*slowly and wearily*). My God! It's always like this . . . rows over nothing. . .

BELCREDI (*also slowly, looking dejected, in accents of apology*). I cast no doubt on anything! I noticed from the beginning that you haven't shared your mother's astonishment; or, if something did astonish you, it was because the likeness between you and the portrait seemed so strong.

DONNA MATILDA. Naturally! She cannot recognize herself in me as I was at her age; while I, there, can very well recognize myself in her as she is now!

DOCTOR. Quite right! Because a portrait is always there fixed in the twinkling of an eye: for the young lady something far away and without memories, while, for the Marchioness, it can bring back everything: movements, gestures, looks, smiles, a whole heap of things . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Exactly!

DOCTOR (*continuing, turning towards her*). Naturally enough, you can live all these old sensations again in your daughter.

DONNA MATILDA. He always spoils every innocent pleasure for me, every touch I have of spontaneous sentiment! He does it merely to annoy me.

DOCTOR (*frightened at the disturbance he has caused, adopts a professorial tone*). Likeness, dear Baron, is often the result of imponderable things. So one explains that . . .

BELCREDI (*interrupting the discourse*). Somebody will soon be finding a likeness between you and me, my dear professor!

DI NOLLI. Oh! let's finish with this, please! (*Points to the two doors on the Right, as a warning that there is someone there who may be listening*). We've wasted too much time as it is!

FRIDA. As one might expect when he's present (*alludes to Belcredi*).

DI NOLLI. Enough! The doctor is here; and we have come for a very serious purpose which you all know is important for me.

DOCTOR. Yes, that is so! But now, first of all, let's try to get some points down exactly. Excuse me, Marchioness will you tell me why your portrait is here? Did you present it to him then?

DONNA MATILDA. No, not at all. How could I have given it to him? I was just like Frida then -- and not even engaged. I gave it to him three or four years after the accident. I gave it to him because his mother wished it so much (*points to Di Nollì*) . . .

DOCTOR. She was his sister (*alludes to Henry IV.*)?

DI NOLLI. Yes, doctor; and our coming here is a debt we pay to my mother who has been dead for more than a month. Instead of being here, she and I (*indicating Frida*) ought to be traveling together . . .

DOCTOR. . . . taking a cure of quite a different kind!

DI NOLLI. -- Hum! Mother died in the firm conviction that her adored brother was just about to be cured.

DOCTOR. And can't you tell me, if you please, how she inferred this?

DI NOLLI. The conviction would appear to have derived from certain strange remarks which he made, a little before mother died.

DOCTOR. Oh, remarks! . . . Ah! . . . It would be extremely useful for me to have those remarks, word for word, if possible.

DI NOLLI. I can't remember them. I know that mother returned awfully upset from her last visit with him. On her death-bed, she made me promise that I would never neglect him, that I would have doctors see him, and examine him.

DOCTOR. Um! Um! Let me see! let me see! Sometimes very small reasons determine . . . and this portrait here then? . . .

DONNA MATILDA. For Heaven's sake, doctor, don't attach excessive importance to this. It made an impression on me because I had not seen it for so many years!

DOCTOR. If you please, quietly, quietly . . .

DI NOLLI. -- Well, yes, it must be about fifteen years ago.

DONNA MATILDA. More, more: eighteen!

DOCTOR. Forgive me, but you don't quite know what I'm trying to get at. I attach a very great importance to these two portraits . . . They were painted, naturally, prior to the famous -- and most regrettable pageant, weren't they?

DONNA MATILDA. Of course!

DOCTOR. That is . . . when he was quite in his right mind -- that's what I've been trying to say. Was it his suggestion that they should be painted?

DONNA MATILDA. Lots of the people who took part in the pageant had theirs done as a souvenir . . .

BELCREDI. I had mine done -- as "Charles of Anjou !"

DONNA MATILDA. . . . as soon as the costumes were ready.

BELCREDI. As a matter of fact, it was proposed that the whole lot of us should be hung together in a gallery of the villa where the pageant took place. But in the end, everybody wanted to keep his own portrait.

DONNA MATILDA. And I gave him this portrait of me without very much regret . . . since his mother . . . (*indicates Di Nollì*).

DOCTOR. You don't remember if it was he who asked for it?

DONNA MATILDA. Ah, that I don't remember . . . Maybe it was his sister, wanting to help out . . .

DOCTOR. One other thing: was it his idea, this pageant?

BELCREDI (*at once*). No, no, it was mine!

DOCTOR. If you please . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Don't listen to him! It was poor Belassi's idea.

BELCREDI. Belassi! What had he got to do with it?

DONNA MATILDA. Count Belassi, who died, poor fellow, two or three months after . . .

BELCREDI. But if Belassi wasn't there when . . .

DI NOLLI. Excuse me, doctor; but is it really necessary to establish whose the original idea was?

DOCTOR. It would help me, certainly!

BELCREDI. I tell you the idea was mine! There's nothing to be proud of in it, seeing what the result's been. Look here, doctor, it was like this. One evening, in the first days of November, I was looking at an illustrated German review in the club. I was merely glancing at the pictures, because I can't read German. There was a picture of the Kaiser, at some University town where he had been a student . . . I don't remember which.

DOCTOR. Bonn, Bonn!

BELCREDI. -- You are right: Bonn! He was on horseback, dressed up in one of those ancient German student guild-costumes, followed by a procession of noble students, also in costume. The picture gave me the idea. Already some one at the club had spoken of a pageant for the forthcoming carnival. So I had the notion that each of us should choose for this Tower of Babel pageant to represent some character: a king, an emperor, a prince, with his queen, empress, or lady, alongside of him -- and all on horseback. The suggestion was at once accepted.

DONNA MATILDA. I had my invitation from Belassi.

BELCREDI. Well, he wasn't speaking the truth! That's all I can say, if he told you the idea was his. He wasn't even at the club the evening I made the suggestion, just as he (*meaning Henry IV.*) wasn't there either.

DOCTOR. So he chose the character of Henry IV.?

DONNA MATILDA. Because I . . . thinking of my name, and not giving the choice any importance, said I would be the Marchioness Matilda of Tuscany.

DOCTOR. I . . . don't understand the relation between the two.

DONNA MATILDA. -- Neither did I, to begin with, when he said that in that case he would be at my feet like Henry IV. at Canossa. I had heard of Canossa of course; but to tell the truth, I'd forgotten most of the story; and I remember I received a curious impression when I had to get up my part, and found that I was the faithful and zealous friend of Pope Gregory VII. in deadly enmity with the Emperor of Germany. Then I understood why, since I had chosen to represent his implacable enemy, he wanted to be near me in the pageant as Henry IV.

DOCTOR. Ah, perhaps because . . .

BELCREDI. -- Good Heavens, doctor, because he was then paying furious court to her (*indicates the Marchioness*)! And she, naturally . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Naturally? Not naturally at all . . .

BELCREDI (*pointing to her*). She couldn't stand him . . .

DONNA MATILDA. -- No, that isn't true! I didn't dislike him. Not at all! But for me, when a man begins to want to be taken seriously, well . . .

BELCREDI (*continuing for her*). He gives you the clearest proof of his stupidity.

DONNA MATILDA. No dear; not in this case; because he was never a fool like you.

BELCREDI. Anyway, I've never asked you to take me seriously.

DONNA MATILDA. Yes, I know. But with him one couldn't joke (*changing her tone and speaking to the Doctor*). One of the many misfortunes which happen to us women, Doctor, is to see before us every now and again a pair of eyes glaring at us with a contained intense promise of eternal devotion. (*Bursts out laughing*). There is nothing quite so funny. If men could only see themselves with that eternal fidelity look in their faces! I've always thought it comic; then more even than now. But I want to make a confession -- I can do so after twenty years or more. When I laughed at him then, it was partly out of fear. One might have almost believed a promise from those eyes of his. But it would have been very dangerous.

DOCTOR (*with lively interest*). Ah! ah! This is most interesting! Very dangerous, you say?

DONNA MATILDA. Yes, because he was very different from the others. And then, I am . . . well . . . what shall I say? . . . a little impatient of all that is pondered, or tedious. But I was too young then, and a woman. I had the bit between my teeth. It would have required more courage than I felt I possessed. So I laughed at him too -- with remorse, to spite myself, indeed; since I saw that my own laugh mingled with those of all the others -- the other fools -- who made fun of him.

BELCREDI. My own case, more or less!

DONNA MATILDA. You make people laugh at you, my dear, with your trick of always humiliating yourself. It was quite a different affair with him. There's a vast difference. And you -- you know -- people laugh in your face!

BELCREDI. Well, that's better than behind one's back!

DOCTOR. Let's get to the facts. He was then already somewhat exalted, if I understand rightly.

BELCREDI. Yes, but in a curious fashion, doctor.

DOCTOR. How?

BELCREDI. Well, cold-bloodedly so to speak.

DONNA MATILDA. Not at all! It was like this, doctor! He was a bit strange, certainly; but only because he was fond of life: eccentric, there!

BELCREDI. I don't say he simulated exaltation. On the contrary, he was often genuinely exalted. But I could swear, doctor, that he saw himself at once in his own exaltation. Moreover, I'm certain it made him suffer. Sometimes he had the most comical fits of rage against himself.

DOCTOR. Yes?

DONNA MATILDA. That is true.

BELCREDI (*to Donna Matilda*). And why? (*To the doctor*). Evidently, because that immediate lucidity that comes from acting, assuming a part, at once put him out of key with his own feelings, which seemed to him not exactly false, but like something he was obliged to valorize there and then as -- what shall I say -- as an act of intelligence, to make up for that sincere cordial warmth he

felt lacking. So he improvised, exaggerated, let himself go, so as to distract and forget himself. He appeared inconstant, fatuous, and -- yes -- even ridiculous, sometimes.

DOCTOR. And may we say unsociable?

BELCREDI. No, not at all. He was famous for getting up things: tableaux vivants, dances, theatrical performances for charity: all for the fun of the thing, of course. He was a jolly good actor, you know!

DI NOLLI. Madness has made a superb actor of him.

BELCREDI. -- Why, so he was even in the old days. When the accident happened, after the horse fell . . .

DOCTOR. Hit the back of his head, didn't he?

DONNA MATILDA. Oh, it was horrible! He was beside me! I saw him between the horse's hoofs! It was rearing!

BELCREDI. None of us thought it was anything serious at first. There was a stop in the pageant, a bit of disorder. People wanted to know what had happened. But they'd already taken him off to the villa.

DONNA MATILDA. There wasn't the least sign of a wound, not a drop of blood.

BELCREDI. We thought he had merely fainted.

DONNA MATILDA. But two hours afterwards . . .

BELCREDI. He reappeared in the drawing-room of the villa . . . that is what I wanted to say . . .

DONNA MATILDA. My God! What a face he had. I saw the whole thing at once!

BELCREDI. No, no! that isn't true. Nobody saw it, doctor, believe me!

DONNA MATILDA. Doubtless, because you were all like mad folk.

BELCREDI. Everybody was pretending to act his part for a joke. It was a regular Babel.

DONNA MATILDA. And you can imagine, doctor, what terror struck into us when we understood that he, on the contrary, was playing his part in deadly earnest . . .

DOCTOR. Oh, he was there too, was he?

BELCREDI. Of course! He came straight into the midst of us. We thought he'd quite recovered, and was pretending, fooling, like all the rest of us . . . only doing it rather better; because, as I say, he knew how to act.

DONNA MATILDA. Some of them began to hit him with their whips and fans and sticks.

BELCREDI. And then -- as a king, he was armed, of course -- he drew out his sword and menaced two or three of us . . . It was a terrible moment, I can assure you!

DONNA MATILDA. I shall never forget that scene -- all our masked faces hideous and terrified gazing at him, at that terrible mask of his face, which was no longer a mask, but madness, madness personified.

BELCREDI. He was Henry IV., Henry IV. in person, in a moment of fury.

DONNA MATILDA. He'd got into it all the detail and minute preparation of a month's careful study. And it all burned and blazed there in the terrible obsession which lit his face.

DOCTOR. Yes, that is quite natural, of course. The momentary obsession of a dilettante became fixed, owing to the fall and the damage to the brain.

BELCREDI (*to Frida and Di Nollis*). You see the kind of jokes life can play on us. (*To Di Nollis*): You were four or five years old. (*To Frida*) Your mother imagines you've taken her place there in that portrait; when, at the time, she had not the remotest idea that she would bring you into the world. My hair is already grey; and he -- look at him -- (*points to portrait*) -- ha! A smack on the head, and he never moves again: Henry IV. for ever!

DOCTOR (*seeking to draw the attention of the others, looking learned and imposing*). -- Well, well, then it comes, we may say, to this . . .

(*Suddenly the first exit to right, the one nearest footlights, opens, and Berthold enters all excited*).

BERTHOLD (*rushing in*). I say! I say! (*Stops for a moment, arrested by the astonishment which his appearance has caused in the others*).

FRIDA (*running away terrified*). Oh dear! oh dear! it's he, it's . . .

DONNA MATILDA (*covering her face with her hands so as not to see*). Is it, is it he?

DI NOLLI. No, no, what are you talking about? Be calm!

DOCTOR. Who is it then?

BELCREDI. One of our masqueraders.

DI NOLLI. He is one of the four youths we keep here to help him out in his madness . . .

BERTHOLD. I beg your pardon, Marquis . . .

DI NOLLI. Pardon be damned! I gave orders that the doors were to be closed, and that nobody should be allowed to enter.

BERTHOLD. Yes, sir, but I can't stand it any longer, and I ask you to let me go away this very minute.

DI NOLLI. Oh, you're the new valet, are you? You were supposed to begin this morning, weren't you?

BERTHOLD. Yes, sir, and I can't stand it, I can't bear it.

DONNA MATILDA (*to Di Nollis excitedly*). What? Then he's not so calm as you said?



BERTHOLD (*quickly*). -- No, no, my lady, it isn't he; it's my companions. You say "help him out with his madness," Marquis; but they don't do anything of the kind. They're the real madmen. I come here for the first time, and instead of helping me . . .

(*Landolph and Harold come in from the same door, but hesitate on the threshold*).

LANDOLPH. Excuse me?

HAROLD. May I come in, my Lord?

DI NOLLI. Come in! What's the matter? What are you all doing?

FRIDA. Oh God! I'm frightened! I'm going to run away. (*Makes towards exit at Left*).

DI NOLLI (*restraining her at once*). No, no, Frida!

LANDOLPH. My Lord, this fool here . . . (*indicates Berthold*).

BERTHOLD (*protesting*). Ah, no thanks, my friends, no thanks! I'm not stopping here! I'm off!

LANDOLPH. What do you mean -- you're not stopping here?

HAROLD. He's ruined everything, my Lord, running away in here!

LANDOLPH. He's made him quite mad. We can't keep him in there any longer. He's given orders that he's to be arrested; and he wants to "judge" him at once from the throne: What is to be done?

DI NOLLI. Shut the door, man! Shut the door! Go and close that door! (*Landolph goes over to close it*).

HAROLD. Ordulph, alone, won't be able to keep him there.

LANDOLPH. -- My Lord, perhaps if we could announce the visitors at once, it would turn his thoughts. Have the gentlemen thought under what pretext they will present themselves to him?

DI NOLLI. -- It's all been arranged! (*To the Doctor*) If you, doctor, think it well to see him at once. . . .

FRIDA. I'm not coming! I'm not coming! I'll keep out of this. You too, mother, for Heaven's sake, come away with me!

DOCTOR. -- I say . . . I suppose he's not armed, is he?

DI NOLLI. -- Nonsense! Of course not. (*To Frida*): Frida, you know this is childish of you. You wanted to come!

FRIDA. I didn't at all. It was mother's idea.

DONNA MATILDA. And I'm quite ready to see him. What are we going to do?

BELCREDI. Must we absolutely dress up in some fashion or other?

LANDOLPH. -- Absolutely essential, indispensable, sir. Alas! as you see . . . (*shows his costume*), there'd be awful trouble if he saw you gentlemen in modern dress.

HAROLD. He would think it was some diabolical masquerade.

DI NOLLI. As these men seem to be in costume to you, so we appear to be in costume to him, in these modern clothes of ours.

LANDOLPH. It wouldn't matter so much if he wouldn't suppose it to be the work of his mortal enemy.

BELCREDI. Pope Gregory VII.?

LANDOLPH. Precisely. He calls him "a pagan."

BELCREDI. The Pope a pagan? Not bad that!

LANDOLPH. -- Yes, sir, -- and a man who calls up the dead! He accuses him of all the diabolical arts. He's terribly afraid of him.

DOCTOR. Persecution mania!

HAROLD. He'd be simply furious.

DI NOLLI (*to Belcredi*). But there's no need for you to be there, you know. It's sufficient for the doctor to see him.

DOCTOR. -- What do you mean? . . . I? Alone?

DI NOLLI. -- But they are there (*indicates the three young men*).

DOCTOR. I don't mean that . . . I mean if the Marchioness . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Of course. I mean to see him too, naturally. I want to see him again.

FRIDA. Oh, why, mother, why? Do come away with me, I implore you!

DONNA MATILDA (*imperiously*). Let me do as I wish! I came here for this purpose! (*To Landolph*): I shall be "Adelaide," the mother.

LANDOLPH. Excellent! The mother of the Empress Bertha. Good! It will be enough if her Ladyship wears the ducal crown and puts on a mantle that will hide her other clothes entirely. (*To Harold*): Off you go, Harold!

HAROLD. Wait a moment! And this gentleman here (*alludes to the Doctor*)? . . .

DOCTOR. -- Ah yes . . . we decided I was to be . . . the Bishop of Cluny, Hugh of Cluny!

HAROLD. The gentleman means the Abbot. Very good! Hugh of Cluny.

LANDOLPH. -- He's often been here before!

DOCTOR (*amazed*). -- What? Been here before?

LANDOLPH. -- Don't be alarmed! I mean that it's an easily prepared disguise . . .

HAROLD. We've made use of it on other occasions, you see!

DOCTOR. But . . .

LANDOLPH. Oh no, there's no risk of his remembering. He pays more attention to the dress than to the person.

DONNA MATILDA. That's fortunate for me too then.

DI NOLLI. Frida, you and I'll get along. Come on Tito!

BELCREDI. Ah no. If she (*indicates the Marchioness*) stops here, so do I!

DONNA MATILDA. But I don't need you at all.

BELCREDI. You may not need me, but I should like to see him again myself. Mayn't I?

LANDOLPH. Well, perhaps it would be better if there were three.

HAROLD. How is the gentleman to be dressed then?

BELCREDI. Oh, try and find some easy costume for me.

LANDOLPH (*to Harold*). Hum! Yes . . . he'd better be from Cluny too.

BELCREDI. What do you mean -- from Cluny?

LANDOLPH. A Benedictine's habit of the Abbey of Cluny. He can be in attendance on Monsignor. (*To Harold*): Off you go! (*To Berthold*). And you too get away and keep out of sight all today. No, wait a bit! (*To Berthold*): You bring here the costumes he will give you. (*To Harold*): You go at once and announce the visit of the "Duchess Adelaide" and "Monsignor Hugh of Cluny." Do you understand? (*Harold and Berthold go off by the first door on the Right*).

DI NOLLI. We'll retire now. (*Goes off with Frida, left*).

DOCTOR. Shall I be a persona grata to him, as Hugh of Cluny?

LANDOLPH. Oh, rather! Don't worry about that! Monsignor has always been received here with great respect. You too, my Lady, he will be glad to see. He never forgets that it was owing to the intercession of you two that he was admitted to the Castle of Canossa and the presence of Gregory VII., who didn't want to receive him.

BELCREDI. And what do I do?

LANDOLPH. You stand a little apart, respectfully: that's all.

DONNA MATILDA (*irritated, nervous*). You would do well to go away, you know.

BELCREDI (*slowly, spitefully*). How upset you seem! . . .

DONNA MATILDA (*proudly*). I am as I am. Leave me alone!

(*Berthold comes in with the costumes*).

LANDOLPH (*seeing him enter*). Ah, the costumes: here they are. This mantle is for the Marchioness . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Wait a minute! I'll take off my hat. (*Does so and gives it to Berthold*).

LANDOLPH. Put it down there! (*Then to the Marchioness, while he offers to put the ducal crown on her head*). Allow me!

DONNA MATILDA. Dear, dear! Isn't there a mirror here?

LANDOLPH. Yes, there's one there (*points to the door on the Left*). If the Marchioness would rather put it on herself . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Yes, yes, that will be better. Give it to me! (*Takes up her hat and goes off with Berthold, who carries the cloak and the crown*).

BELCREDI. Well, I must say, I never thought I should be a Benedictine monk! By the way, this business must cost an awful lot of money.

THE DOCTOR. Like any other fantasy, naturally!

BELCREDI. Well, there's a fortune to go upon.

LANDOLPH. We have got there a whole wardrobe of costumes of the period, copied to perfection from old models. This is my special job. I get them from the best theatrical costumers. They cost lots of money. (*Donna Matilda re-enters, wearing mantle and crown*).

BELCREDI (*at once, in admiration*). Oh magnificent! Oh, truly regal!

DONNA MATILDA (*looking at Belcredi and bursting out into laughter*). Oh no, no! Take it off! You're impossible. You look like an ostrich dressed up as a monk.

BELCREDI. Well, how about the doctor?

THE DOCTOR. I don't think I look so bad, do I?

DONNA MATILDA. No; the doctor's all right . . . but you are too funny for words.

THE DOCTOR. Do you have many receptions here then

LANDOLPH. It depends. He often gives orders that such and such a person appear before him. Then we have to find someone who will take the part. Women too . . .

DONNA MATILDA (*hurt, but trying to hide the fact*). Ah, women too?

LANDOLPH. Oh, yes; many at first.

BELCREDI (*laughing*). Oh, that's great! In costume, like the Marchioness?

LANDOLPH. Oh well, you know, women of the kind that lend themselves to . . .

BELCREDI. Ah, I see! (*Perfidiously to the Marchioness*) Look out, you know he's becoming dangerous for you.

(*The second door on the right opens, and Harold appears making first of all a discreet sign that all conversation should cease*).

HAROLD. His Majesty, the Emperor!

(*The two valets enter first, and go and stand on either side of the throne. Then Henry IV. comes in between Ordulph and Harold, who keep a little in the rear respectfully*).

*HENRY IV. is about 50 and very pale. The hair on the back of his head is already grey; over the temples and forehead it appears blond, owing to its having been tinted in an evident and puerile fashion. On his cheek bones he has two small, doll-like dabs of colour, that stand out prominently against the rest of his tragic pallor. He is wearing a penitent's sack over his regal habit, as at Canossa. His eyes have a fixed look which is dreadful to see, and this expression is in strained contrast with the sackcloth. Ordulph carries the Imperial crown; Harold, the sceptre with the eagle, and the globe with the cross*).

HENRY IV. (*bowing first to Donna Matilda and afterwards to the doctor*). My lady . . . Monsignor . . . (*Then he looks at Belcredi and seems about to greet him too; when, suddenly, he turns to Landolph, who has approached him, and asks him sotto voce and with diffidence*): Is that Peter Damiani?

LANDOLPH. No, Sire. He is a monk from Cluny who is accompanying the Abbot.

HENRY IV. (*looks again at Belcredi with increasing mistrust, and then noticing that he appears embarrassed and keeps glancing at Donna Matilda and the doctor, stands upright and cries out*). No, it's Peter Damiani! It's no use, father, your looking at the Duchess. (*Then turning quickly to Donna Matilda and the doctor as though to ward off a danger*): I swear it! I swear that my heart is changed towards your daughter. I confess that if he (*indicates Belcredi*) hadn't come to forbid it in the name of Pope Alexander, I'd have repudiated her. Yes, yes, there were people ready to favour the repudiation: the Bishop of Mayence would have done it for a matter of one hundred and twenty farms. (*Looks at Landolph a little perplexed and adds*): But I mustn't speak ill of the bishops at this moment! (*More humbly to Belcredi*): I am grateful to you, believe me, I am grateful to you for the hindrance you put in my way! -- God knows, my life's been all made of humiliations: my mother, Adalbert, Tribur, Goslar! And now this sackcloth you see me wearing! (*Changes tone suddenly and speaks like one who goes over his part in a parenthesis of astuteness*). It doesn't matter: clarity of ideas, perspicacity, firmness and patience under adversity that's the thing. (*Then turning to all and speaking solemnly*). I know how to make amend for the mistakes I have made; and I can humiliate myself even before you, Peter Damiani. (*Bows profoundly to him and remains curved. Then a suspicion is born in him which he is obliged to utter in menacing tones, almost against his will*). Was it not perhaps you who started that obscene rumour that my holy mother had illicit relations with the Bishop of Augusta?

BELCREDI (*since Henry IV. has his finger pointed at him*). No, no, it wasn't I . . .

HENRY IV. (*straightening up*). Not true, not true? Infamy! (*Looks at him and then adds*): I didn't think you capable of it! (*Goes to the doctor and plucks his sleeve, while winking at him knowingly*):

Always the same, Monsignor, those bishops, always the same!

HAROLD (*softly, whispering as if to help out the doctor*). Yes, yes, the rapacious bishops!

THE DOCTOR (*to Harold, trying to keep it up*). Ah, yes, those fellows . . . ah yes . . .

HENRY IV. Nothing satisfies them! I was a little boy, Monsignor . . . One passes the time, playing even, when, without knowing it, one is a king. -- I was six years old; and they tore me away from my mother, and made use of me against her without my knowing anything about it . . . always profaning, always stealing, stealing! . . . One greedier than the other . . . Hanno worse than Stephen! Stephen worse than Hanno!

LANDOLPH (*sotto voce, persuasively, to call his attention*). Majesty!

HENRY IV. (*turning round quickly*). Ah yes . . . this isn't the moment to speak ill of the bishops. But this infamy against my mother, Monsignor, is too much. (*Looks at the Marchioness and grows tender*). And I can't even weep for her, Lady . . . I appeal to you who have a mother's heart! She came here to see me from her convent a month ago . . . They had told me she was dead! (*Sustained pause full of feeling. Then smiling sadly*): I can't weep for her; because if you are here now, and I am like this (*shows the sackcloth he is wearing*), it means I am twenty-six years old!

HAROLD. And that she is therefore alive, Majesty! . . .

ORDULPH. Still in her convent!

HENRY IV. (*looking at them*). Ah yes! And I can postpone my grief to another time. (*Shows the Marchioness almost with coquetry the tint he has given to his hair*). Look! I am still fair . . . (*Then slowly as if in confidence*). For you . . . there's no need! But little exterior details do help! A matter of time, Monsignor, do you understand me? (*Turns to the Marchioness and notices her hair*). Ah, but I see that you too, Duchess . . . Italian, eh (*as much as to say "false"; but without any indignation, indeed rather with malicious admiration*)? Heaven forbid that I should show disgust or surprise! Nobody cares to recognize that obscure and fatal power which sets limits to our will. But I say, if one is born and one dies . . . Did you want to be born, Monsignor? I didn't! And in both cases, independently of our wills, so many things happen we would wish didn't happen, and to which we resign ourselves as best we can! . . .

DOCTOR (*merely to make a remark, while studying Henry IV. carefully*). Alas! Yes, alas!

HENRY IV. It's like this: When we are not resigned, out come our desires. A woman wants to be a man . . . an old man would be young again. Desires, ridiculous fixed ideas of course -- But reflect! Monsignor, those other desires are not less ridiculous: I mean, those desires where the will is kept within the limits of the possible. Not one of us can lie or pretend. We're all fixed in good faith in a certain concept of ourselves. However, Monsignor, while you keep yourself in order, holding on with both your hands to your holy habit, there slips down from your sleeves, there peels off from you like . . . like a serpent . . . something you don't notice: life, Monsignor! (*Turns to the Marchioness*) Has it never happened to you, my Lady, to find a different self in yourself? Have you always been the same? My God! One day . . . how was it, how was it you were able to commit this or that action? (*Fixes her so intently in the eyes as almost to make her blanch*): Yes, that particular action, that very one: we understand each other! But don't be afraid: I shall reveal it to none. And you, Peter Damiani, how could you be a friend of that man? . . .

LANDOLPH. Majesty!

HENRY IV. (*at once*). No, I won't name him! (*Turning to Belcredi*): What did you think of him? But we all of us cling tight to our conceptions of ourselves, just as he who is growing old dyes his hair. What does it matter that this dyed hair of mine isn't a reality for you, if it is, to some extent, for me? -- you, you, my Lady, certainly don't dye your hair to deceive the others, nor even yourself; but only to cheat your own image a little before the looking-glass. I do it for a joke! You do it seriously! But I assure you that you too, Madam, are in masquerade, though it be in all seriousness; and I am not speaking of the venerable crown on your brows or the ducal mantle. I am speaking only of the memory you wish to fix in yourself of your fair complexion one day when it pleased you -- or of your dark complexion, if you were dark: the fading image of your youth! For you, Peter Damiani, on the contrary, the memory of what you have been, of what you have done, seems to you a recognition of past realities that remain within you like a dream. I'm in the same case too: with so many inexplicable memories -- like dreams! Ah! . . . There's nothing to marvel at in it, Peter Damiani! Tomorrow it will be the same thing with our life of today! (*Suddenly getting excited and taking hold of his sackcloth*). This sackcloth here . . . (*Beginning to take it off with a gesture of almost ferocious joy while the three valets run over to him, frightened, as if to prevent his doing so*)! Ah, my God! (*Draws back and throws off sackcloth*). Tomorrow, at Bressanone, twenty-seven German and Lombard bishops will sign with me the act of deposition of Gregory VII.! No Pope at all! Just a false monk!

ORDULPH (*with the other three*). Majesty! Majesty! In God's name! . . .

HAROLD (*inviting him to put on the sackcloth again*). Listen to what he says, Majesty!

LANDOLPH. Monsignor is here with the Duchess to intercede in your favor. (*Makes secret signs to the Doctor to say something at once*).

DOCTOR (*foolishly*). Ah yes . . . yes . . . we are here to intercede . . .

HENRY IV. (*repeating at once, almost terrified, allowing the three to put on the sackcloth again, and pulling it down over him with his own hands*). Pardon . . . yes . . . yes . . . pardon, Monsignor: forgive me, my Lady . . . I swear to you I feel the whole weight of the anathema. (*Bends himself, takes his face between his hands, as though waiting for something to crush him. Then changing tone, but without moving, says softly to Landolph, Harold and Ordulph*): But I don't know why I cannot be humble before that man there! (*indicates Belcredi*).

LANDOLPH (*sottovoce*). But why, Majesty, do you insist on believing he is Peter Damiani, when he isn't, at all?

HENRY IV. (*looking at him timorously*). He isn't Peter Damiani?

HAROLD. No, no, he is a poor monk, Majesty.

HENRY IV. (*sadly with a touch of exasperation*). Ah! None of us can estimate what we do when we do it from instinct . . . You perhaps, Madam, can understand me better than the others, since you are a woman and a Duchess. This is a solemn and decisive moment. I could, you know, accept the assistance of the Lombard bishops, arrest the Pope, lock him up here in the castle, run to Rome and elect an anti-Pope; offer alliance to Robert Guiscard -- and Gregory VII. would be lost! I resist the temptation; and, believe me, I am wise in doing so. I feel the atmosphere of our times and the majesty of one who knows how to be what he ought to be! a Pope! Do you feel inclined to laugh at me, seeing me like this? You would be foolish to do so; for you don't understand the political wisdom which makes this penitent's sack advisable. The parts may be changed tomorrow. What would you do then? Would you laugh to see the Pope a prisoner? No! It would come to the same thing: I dressed as a penitent, today; he, as prisoner tomorrow! But woe to him who doesn't know

how to wear his mask, be he king or Pope ! -- Perhaps he is a bit too cruel! No! Yes, yes, maybe ! -- You remember, my Lady, how your daughter Bertha, for whom, I repeat, my feelings have changed (*turns to Belcredi and shouts to his face as if he were being contradicted by him*) -- yes, changed on account of the affection and devotion she showed me in that terrible moment . . . (*then once again to the Marchioness*) . . . you remember how she came with me, my Lady, followed me like a beggar and passed two nights out in the open, in the snow? You are her mother! Doesn't this touch your mother's heart? Doesn't this urge you to pity, so that you will beg His Holiness for pardon, beg him to receive us?

DONNA MATILDA (*trembling, with feeble voice*). Yes, yes, at once . . .

DOCTOR. It shall be done!

HENRY IV. And one thing more! (*Draws them in to listen to him*). It isn't enough that he should receive me! You know he can do everything -- everything I tell you! He can even call up the dead. (*Touches his chest*): Behold me! Do you see me? There is no magic art unknown to him. Well, Monsignor, my Lady, my torment is really this: that whether here or there (*pointing to his portrait almost in fear*) I can't free myself from this magic. I am a penitent now, you see; and I swear to you I shall remain so until he receives me. But you two, when the excommunication is taken off, must ask the Pope to do this thing he can so easily do: to take me away from that (*indicating the portrait again*); and let me live wholly and freely my miserable life. A man can't always be twenty-six, my Lady. I ask this of you for your daughter's sake too; that I may love her as she deserves to be loved, well disposed as I am now, all tender towards her for her pity. There: it's all there! I am in your hands! (*Bows*). My Lady! Monsignor!

(*He goes off, bowing grandly, through the door by which he entered, leaving everyone stupefied, and the Marchioness so profoundly touched, that no sooner has he gone than she breaks out into sobs and sits down almost fainting*).

## ACT II

(*Another room of the villa, adjoining the throne room. Its furniture is antique and severe. Principal exit at rear in the background. To the left, two windows looking on the garden. To the right, a door opening into the throne room.*)

*Late afternoon of the same day.*

*Donna Matilda, the doctor and Belcredi are on the stage engaged in conversation; but Donna Matilda stands to one side, evidently annoyed at what the other two are saying; although she cannot help listening, because, in her agitated state, everything interests her in spite of herself. The talk of the other two attracts her attention, because she instinctively feels the need for calm at the moment.*

BELCREDI. It may be as you say, doctor, but that was my impression.

DOCTOR. I won't contradict you; but, believe me, it is only . . . an impression.

BELCREDI. Pardon me, but he even said so, and quite clearly (*turning to the Marchioness*). Didn't



he, Marchioness?

DONNA MATILDA (*turning round*). What did he say? . . . (*Then not agreeing*). Oh yes . . . but not for the reason you think!

DOCTOR. He was alluding to the costumes we had slipped on . . . Your cloak (*indicating the Marchioness*), our Benedictine habits . . . But all this is childish!

DONNA MATILDA (*turning quickly, indignant*). Childish? What do you mean, doctor?

DOCTOR. From one point of view, it is -- I beg you to let me say so, Marchioness! Yet, on the other hand, it is much more complicated than you can imagine.

DONNA MATILDA. To me, on the contrary, it is perfectly clear!

DOCTOR (*with a smile of pity of the competent person towards those who do not understand*). We must take into account the peculiar psychology of madmen; which, you must know, enables us to be certain that they observe things and can, for instance, easily detect people who are disguised; can in fact recognize the disguise and yet believe in it; just as children do, for whom disguise is both play and reality. That is why I used the word childish. But the thing is extremely complicated, inasmuch as he must be perfectly aware of being an image to himself and for himself -- that image there, in fact (*alluding to the portrait in the throne room, and pointing to the left*)!

BELCREDI. That's what he said!

DOCTOR. Very well then -- An image before which other images, ours, have appeared: understand? Now he, in his acute and perfectly lucid delirium, was able to detect at once a difference between his image and ours: that is, he saw that ours were make-believes. So he suspected us; because all madmen are armed with a special diffidence. But that's all there is to it! Our make-believe, built up all round his, did not seem pitiful to him. While his seemed all the more tragic to us, in that he, as if in defiance -- understand? -- and induced by his suspicion, wanted to show us up merely as a joke. That was also partly the case with him, in coming before us with painted cheeks and hair, and saying he had done it on purpose for a jest.

DONNA MATILDA (*impatiently*). No, it's not that, doctor. It's not like that! It's not like that!

DOCTOR. Why isn't it, may I ask?

DONNA MATILDA (*with decision but trembling*). I am perfectly certain he recognized me!

DOCTOR. It's not possible . . . it's not possible!

BELCREDI (*at the same time*). Of course not!

DONNA MATILDA (*more than ever determined, almost convulsively*). I tell you, he recognized me! When he came close up to speak to me -- looking in my eyes, right into my eyes -- he recognized me!

BELCREDI. But he was talking of your daughter!

DONNA MATILDA. That's not true! He was talking of me! Of me!

BELCREDI. Yes, perhaps, when he said . . .

DONNA MATILDA (*letting herself go*). About my dyed hair! But didn't you notice that he added at once: "or the memory of your dark hair, if you were dark"? He remembered perfectly well that I was dark -- then!

BELCREDI. Nonsense! nonsense!

DONNA MATILDA (*not listening to him, turning to the doctor*). My hair, doctor, is really dark -- like my daughter's! That's why he spoke of her.

BELCREDI. But he doesn't even know your daughter! He's never seen her!

DONNA MATILDA. Exactly! Oh, you never understand anything! By my daughter, stupid, he meant me -- as I was then!

BELCREDI. Oh, this is catching! This is catching, this madness!

DONNA MATILDA (*softly, with contempt*). Fool!

BELCREDI. Excuse me, were you ever his wife? Your daughter is his wife -- in his delirium: Bertha of Susa.

DONNA MATILDA. Exactly! Because I, no longer dark -- as he remembered me -- but fair, introduced myself as "Adelaide," the mother. My daughter doesn't exist for him: he's never seen her -- you said so yourself! So how can he know whether she's fair or dark?

BELCREDI. But he said dark, speaking generally, just as anyone who wants to recall, whether fair or dark, a memory of youth in the color of the hair! And you, as usual, begin to imagine things! Doctor, you said I ought not to have come! It's she who ought not to have come!

DONNA MATILDA (*upset for a moment by Belcredi's remark, recovers herself. Then with a touch of anger, because doubtful*). No, no . . . he spoke of me . . . He spoke all the time to me, with me, of me . . .

BELCREDI. That's not bad! He didn't leave me a moment's breathing space; and you say he was talking all the time to you? Unless you think he was alluding to you too, when he was talking to Peter Damiani!

DONNA MATILDA (*defiantly, almost exceeding the limits of courteous discussion*). Who knows? Can you tell me why, from the outset, he showed a strong dislike for you, for you alone? (*From the tone of the question, the expected answer must almost explicitly be: "because he understands you are my lover." Belcredi feels this so well that he remains silent and can say nothing*).

DOCTOR. The reason may also be found in the fact that only the visit of the Duchess Adelaide and the abbot of Cluny was announced to him. Finding a third person present, who had not been announced, at once his suspicions . . .

BELCREDI. Yes, exactly! His suspicion made him see an enemy in me: Peter Damiani! But she's got it into her head, that he recognized her . . .

DONNA MATILDA. There's no doubt about it! I could see it from his eyes, doctor. You know,

there's a way of looking that leaves no doubt whatever . . . Perhaps it was only for an instant, but I am sure!

DOCTOR. It is not impossible: a lucid moment . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Yes, perhaps . . . And then his speech seemed to me full of regret for his and my youth -- for the horrible thing that happened to him, that has held him in that disguise from which he has never been able to free himself, and from which he longs to be free -- he said so himself!

BELCREDI. Yes, so as to be able to make love to your daughter, or you, as you believe -- having been touched by your pity.

DONNA MATILDA. Which is very great, I would ask you to believe.

BELCREDI. As one can see, Marchioness; so much so that a miracle-worker might expect a miracle from it!

DOCTOR. Will you let me speak? I don't work miracles, because I am a doctor and not a miracle-worker. I listened very intently to all he said; and I repeat that that certain analogical elasticity, common to all symptomatised delirium, is evidently with him much . . . what shall I say? -- much relaxed! The elements, that is, of his delirium no longer hold together. It seems to me he has lost the equilibrium of his second personality and sudden recollections drag him -- and this is very comforting -- not from a state of incipient apathy, but rather from a morbid inclination to reflective melancholy, which shows a . . . a very considerable cerebral activity. Very comforting, I repeat! Now if, by this violent trick we've planned . . .

DONNA MATILDA (*turning to the window, in the tone of a sick person complaining*). But how is it that the motor has not returned? It's three hours and a half since . . .

DOCTOR. What do you say?

DONNA MATILDA. The motor, doctor! It's more than three hours and a half . . .

DOCTOR (*taking out his watch and looking at it*). Yes, more than four hours, by this!

DONNA MATILDA. It could have reached here an hour ago at least! But, as usual . . .

BELCREDI. Perhaps they can't find the dress . . .

DONNA MATILDA. But I explained exactly where it was! (*impatiently*). And Frida . . . where is Frida?

BELCREDI (*looking out of the window*). Perhaps she is in the garden with Charles . . .

DOCTOR. He'll talk her out of her fright.

BELCREDI. She's not afraid, doctor; don't you believe it: the thing bores her rather . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Just don't ask anything of her! I know what she's like.

DOCTOR. Let's wait patiently. Anyhow, it will soon be over, and it has to be in the evening . . . It

will only be the matter of a moment! If we can succeed in rousing him, as I was saying, and in breaking at one go the threads -- already slack -- which still bind him to this fiction of his, giving him back what he himself asks for -- you remember, he said: "one cannot always be twenty-six years old, madam!" if we can give him freedom from this torment, which even he feels is a torment, then if he is able to recover at one bound the sensation of the distance of time . . .

BELCREDI (*quickly*). He'll be cured! (*then emphatically with irony*). We'll pull him out of it all!

DOCTOR. Yes, we may hope to set him going again, like a watch which has stopped at a certain hour . . . just as if we had our watches in our hands and were waiting for that other watch to go again. -- A shake -- so -- -- and let's hope it'll tell the time again after its long stop. (*At this point the Marquis Charles Di Nollì enters from the principal entrance*). DONNA MATILDA. Oh, Charles! . . . And Frida? Where is she?

DI NOLLI. She'll be here in a moment.

DOCTOR. Has the motor arrived?

DI NOLLI. Yes.

DONNA MATILDA. Yes? Has the dress come?

DI NOLLI. It's been here some time.

DOCTOR. Good! Good!

DONNA MATILDA (*trembling*). Where is she? Where's Frida?

DI NOLLI (*shrugging his shoulders and smiling sadly, like one lending himself unwillingly to an untimely joke*). You'll see, you'll see! . . . (*pointing towards the hall*). Here she is! . . . (*Berthold appears at the threshold of the hall, and announces with solemnity*).

BERTHOLD. Her Highness the Countess Matilda of Canossa! (*Frida enters, magnificent and beautiful, arrayed in the robes of her mother as "Countess Matilda of Tuscany," so that she is a living copy of the portrait in the throne room*).

FRIDA (*passing Berthold, who is bowing, says to him with disdain*). Of Tuscany, of Tuscany! Canossa is just one of my castles!

BELCREDI (*in admiration*). Look! Look! She seems another person . . .

DONNA MATILDA. One would say it were !! Look! -- Why, Frida, look! She's exactly my portrait, alive!

DOCTOR. Yes, yes . . . Perfect! Perfect! The portrait, to the life.

BELCREDI. Yes, there's no question about it. She is the portrait! Magnificent!

FRIDA. Don't make me laugh, or I shall burst! I say, mother, what a tiny waist you had? I had to squeeze so to get into this!

DONNA MATILDA (*arranging her dress a little*). Wait! . . . Keep still! . . . These pleats . . . is it really

so tight?

FRIDA. I'm suffocating! I implore you, to be quick! . . .

DOCTOR. But we must wait till it's evening!

FRIDA. No, no, I can't hold out till evening! DONNA MATILDA. Why did you put it on so soon?

FRIDA. The moment I saw it, the temptation was irresistible . . .

DONNA MATILDA. At least you could have called me, or have had someone help you! It's still all crumpled.

FRIDA. So I saw, mother; but they are old creases; they won't come out.

DOCTOR. It doesn't matter, Marchioness! The illusion is perfect. (*Then coming nearer and asking her to come in front of her daughter, without hiding her*). If you please, stay there, there . . . at a certain distance . . . now a little more forward . . .

BELCREDI. For the feeling of the distance of time . . .

DONNA MATILDA (*slightly turning to him*). Twenty years after! A disaster! A tragedy!

BELCREDI. Now don't let's exaggerate!

DOCTOR (*embarrassed, trying to save the situation*). No, no! I meant the dress . . . so as to see . . . You know . . .

BELCREDI (*laughing*). Oh, as for the dress, doctor, it isn't a matter of twenty years! It's eight hundred! An abyss! Do you really want to shove him across it (*pointing first to Frida and then to Marchioness*) from there to here? But you'll have to pick him up in pieces with a basket! Just think now: for us it is a matter of twenty years, a couple of dresses, and a masquerade. But, if, as you say, doctor, time has stopped for and around him: if he lives there (*pointing to Frida*) with her, eight hundred years ago . . . I repeat: the giddiness of the jump will be such, that finding himself suddenly among us . . . (*The doctor shakes his head in dissent*). You don't think so?

DOCTOR. No, because life, my dear baron, can take up its rhythms. This -- our life -- will at once become real also to him; and will pull him up directly, wresting from him suddenly the illusion, and showing him that the eight hundred years, as you say, are only twenty! It will be like one of those tricks, such as the leap into space, for instance, of the Masonic rite, which appears to be heaven knows how far, and is only a step down the stairs.

BELCREDI. Ah! An idea! Yes! Look at Frida and the Marchioness, doctor! Which is more advanced in time? We old people, doctor! The young ones think they are more ahead; but it isn't true: we are more ahead, because time belongs to us more than to them.

DOCTOR. If the past didn't alienate us . . .

BELCREDI. It doesn't matter at all! How does it alienate us? They (*pointing to Frida and Di Nollì*) have still to do what we have accomplished, doctor: to grow old, doing the same foolish things, more or less, as we did . . . This is the illusion: that one comes forward through a door to life. It isn't so! As soon as one is born, one starts dying; therefore, he who started first is the most advanced of

all. The youngest of us is father Adam! Look there: (*pointing to Frida*) eight hundred years younger than all of us -- the Countess Matilda of Tuscany. (*He makes her a deep bow*).

DI NOLLI. I say, Tito, don't start joking.

BELCREDI. Oh, you think I am joking? . . .

DI NOLLI. Of course, of course . . . all the time.

BELCREDI. Impossible! I've even dressed up as a Benedictine . . .

DI NOLLI. Yes, but for a serious purpose.

BELCREDI. Well, exactly. If it has been serious for the others . . . for Frida, now, for instance. (*Then turning to the doctor*) : I swear, doctor, I don't yet understand what you want to do.

DOCTOR (*annoyed*). You'll see! Let me do as I wish . . . At present you see the Marchioness still dressed as . . .

BELCREDI. Oh, she also . . . has to masquerade?

DOCTOR. Of course! of course! In another dress that's in there ready to be used when it comes into his head he sees the Countess Matilda of Canossa before him.

FRIDA (*while talking quietly to Di Nolli notices the doctor's mistake*). Of Tuscany, of Tuscany!

DOCTOR. It's all the same!

BELCREDI. Oh, I see! He'll be faced by two of them . . .

DOCTOR. Two, precisely! And then . . .

FRIDA (*calling him aside*). Come here, doctor! Listen!

DOCTOR. Here I am! (*Goes near the two young people and pretends to give some explanations to them*).

BELCREDI (*softly to Donna Matilda*). I say, this is getting rather strong, you know!

DONNA MATILDA (*looking him firmly in the face*). What?

BELCREDI. Does it really interest you as much as all that -- to make you willing to take part in . . . ? For a woman this is simply enormous! . . .

DONNA MATILDA. Yes, for an ordinary woman.

BELCREDI. Oh, no, my dear, for all women, -- in a question like this! It's an abnegation.

DONNA MATILDA. I owe it to him.

BELCREDI. Don't lie! You know well enough it's not hurting you!

DONNA MATILDA. Well then, where does the abnegation come in?

BELCREDI. Just enough to prevent you losing caste in other people's eyes -- and just enough to offend me! . . .

DONNA MATILDA. But who is worrying about you now?

DI NOLLI (*coming forward*). It's all right. It's all right. That's what we'll do! (*Turning towards Berthold*): Here you, go and call one of those fellows!

BERTHOLD. At once! (*Exit*).

DONNA MATILDA. But first of all we've got to pretend that we are going away.

DI NOLLI. Exactly! I'll see to that . . . (*to Belcredi*) you don't mind staying here?

BELCREDI (*ironically*). Oh, no, I don't mind, I don't mind! . . .

DI NOLLI. We must look out not to make him suspicious again, you know. BELCREDI. Oh, Lord! He doesn't amount to anything!

DOCTOR. He must believe absolutely that we've gone away. (*Landolph followed by Berthold enters from the right*).

LANDOLPH. May I come in?

DI NOLLI. Come in! Come in! I say -- your name's Lolo, isn't it?

LANDOLPH. Lolo, or Landolph, just as you like!

DI NOLLI. Well, look here: the doctor and the Marchioness are leaving, at once.

LANDOLPH. Very well. All we've got to say is that they have been able to obtain the permission for the reception from His Holiness. He's in there in his own apartments repenting of all he said -- and in an awful state to have the pardon! Would you mind coming a minute? . . . If you would, just for a minute . . . put on the dress again . . .

DOCTOR. Why, of course, with pleasure . . .

LANDOLPH. Might I be allowed to make a suggestion? Why not add that the Marchioness of Tuscany has interceded with the Pope that he should be received?

DONNA MATILDA. You see, he has recognized me!

LANDOLPH. Forgive me . . . I don't know my history very well. I am sure you gentlemen know it much better! But I thought it was believed that Henry IV. had a secret passion for the Marchioness of Tuscany.

DONNA MATILDA (*at once*). Nothing of the kind! Nothing of the kind!

LANDOLPH. That's what I thought! But he says he's loved her . . . he's always saying it . . . And now he fears that her indignation for this secret love of his will work him harm with the Pope.

BELCREDI. We must let him understand that this aversion no longer exists. LANDOLPH. Exactly! Of course!

DONNA MATILDA (*to Belcredi*). History says -- I don't know whether you know it or not -- that the Pope gave way to the supplications of the Marchioness Matilda and the Abbot of Cluny. And I may say, my dear Belcredi, that I intended to take advantage of this fact -- at the time of the pageant -- to show him my feelings were not so hostile to him as he supposed.

BELCREDI. You are most faithful to history, Marchioness . . .

LANDOLPH. Well then, the Marchioness could spare herself a double disguise and present herself with Monsignor (*indicating the doctor*) as the Marchioness of Tuscany.

DOCTOR (*quickly, energetically*). No, no! That won't do at all. It would ruin everything. The impression from the confrontation must be a sudden one, give a shock! No, no, Marchioness, you will appear again as the Duchess Adelaide, the mother of the Empress. And then we'll go away. This is most necessary: that he should know we've gone away. Come on! Don't let's waste any more time! There's a lot to prepare.

(*Exeunt the doctor, Donna Matilda, and Landolph, right*).

FRIDA. I am beginning to feel afraid again.

DI NOLLI. Again, Frida?

FRIDA. It would have been better if I had seen him before.

DI NOLLI. There's nothing to be frightened of, really.

FRIDA. He isn't furious, is he?

DI NOLLI. Of course not! he's quite calm.

BELCREDI (*with ironic sentimental affectation*). Melancholy! Didn't you hear that he loves you?

FRIDA. Thanks! That's just why I am afraid.

BELCREDI. He won't do you any harm.

DI NOLLI. It'll only last a minute . . .

FRIDA. Yes, but there in the dark with him . . .

DI NOLLI. Only for a moment; and I will be near you, and all the others behind the door ready to run in. As soon as you see your mother, your part will be finished . . .

BELCREDI. I'm afraid of a different thing: that we're wasting our time . . .

DI NOLLI. Don't begin again! The remedy seems a sound one to me.

FRIDA. I think so too! I feel it! I'm all trembling!



BELCREDI. But, mad people, my dear friends -- though they don't know it, alas -- have this felicity which we don't take into account . . .

DI NOLLI (*interrupting, annoyed*). What felicity? Nonsense!

BELCREDI (*forcefully*). They don't reason!

DI NOLLI. What's reasoning got to do with it, anyway?

BELCREDI. Don't you call it reasoning that he will have to do -- according to us -- -when he sees her (*indicates Frida*) and her mother? We've reasoned it all out, surely!

DI NOLLI. Nothing of the kind: no reasoning at all We put before him a double image of his own fantasy, or fiction, as the doctor says.

BELCREDI (*suddenly*). I say, I've never understood why they take degrees in medicine.

DI NOLLI (*amazed*). Who?

BELCREDI. The alienists!

DI NOLLI. What ought they to take degrees in, then?

FRIDA. If they are alienists, in what else should they take degrees?

BELCREDI. In law, of course! All a matter of talk! The more they talk, the more highly they are considered. "Analogous elasticity," "the sensation of distance in time !" And the first thing they tell you is that they don't work miracles -- when a miracle's just what is wanted! But they know that the more they say they are not miracle-workers, the more folk believe in their seriousness!

BERTHOLD (*who has been looking through the keyhole of the door on right*). There they are! There they are! They're coming in here.

DI NOLLI. Are they?

BERTHOLD. He wants to come with them . . . Yes! . . . He's coming too!

DI NOLLI. Let's get away, then! Let's get away, at once! (*To Berthold*) : You stop here!

BERTHOLD. Must I?

(*Without answering him, Di Nolli, Frida, and Belcredi go out by the main exit, leaving Berth old surprised. The door on the right opens, and Landolph enters first, bowing. Then Donna Matilda comes in, with mantle and ducal crown as in the first act; also the doctor as the abbot of Cluny. Henry IV. is among them in royal dress. Ordulph and Harold enter last of all*).

HENRY IV. (*following up what he has been saying in the other room*). And now I will ask you a question: how can I be astute, if you think me obstinate?

DOCTOR. No, no, not obstinate!

HENRY IV. (*smiling, pleased*). Then you think me really astute?

DOCTOR. No, no, neither obstinate, nor astute.

HENRY IV. (*with benevolent irony*). Monsignor, if obstinacy is not a vice which can go with astuteness, I hoped that in denying me the former, you would at least allow me a little of the latter. I can assure you I have great need of it. But if you want to keep it all for yourself . . .

DOCTOR. I? I? Do I seem astute to you?

HENRY IV. No. Monsignor! What do you say? Not in the least! Perhaps in this case, I may seem a little obstinate to you (*cutting short to speak to Donna Matilda*). With your permission: a word in confidence to the Duchess. (*Leads her aside and asks her very earnestly*): Is your daughter really dear to you?

DONNA MATILDA (*dismayed*). Why, yes, certainly . . .

HENRY IV. Do you wish me to compensate her with all my love, with all my devotion, for the grave wrongs I have done her -- though you must not believe all the stories my enemies tell about my dissoluteness!

DONNA MATILDA. No, no, I don't believe them. I never have believed such stories.

HENRY IV. Well, then are you willing?

DONNA MATILDA (*confused*). What?

HENRY IV. That I return to love your daughter again? (*Looks at her and adds, in a mysterious tone of warning*). You mustn't be a friend of the Marchioness of Tuscany!

DONNA MATILDA. I tell you again that she has begged and tried not less than ourselves to obtain your pardon . . .

HENRY IV. (*softly, but excitedly*). Don't tell me that! Don't say that to me! Don't you see the effect it has on me, my Lady?

DONNA MATILDA (*looks at him; then very softly as if in confidence*). You love her still?

HENRY IV. (*puzzled*). Still? Still, you say? You know, then? But nobody knows! Nobody must know!

DONNA MATILDA. But perhaps she knows, if she has begged so hard for you!

HENRY IV. (*looks at her and says*): And you love your daughter? (*Brief pause. He turns to the doctor with laughing accents*). Ah, Monsignor, it's strange how little I think of my wife! It may be a sin, but I swear to you that I hardly feel her at all in my heart. What is stranger is that her own mother scarcely feels her in her heart. Confess, my Lady, that she amounts to very little for you. (*Turning to Doctor*) : She talks to me of that other woman, insistently, insistently, I don't know why! . . .

LANDOLPH (*humbly*). Maybe, Majesty, it is to disabuse you of some ideas you have had about the Marchioness of Tuscany. (*Then, dismayed at having allowed himself this observation, adds*) : I mean just now, of course . . .

HENRY IV. You too maintain that she has been friendly to me?

LANDOLPH. Yes, at the moment, Majesty.

DONNA MATILDA. Exactly! Exactly! . . .

HENRY IV. I understand. That is to say, you don't believe I love her. I see! I see! Nobody's ever believed it, nobody's ever thought it. Better so, then! But enough, enough! (*Turns to the doctor with changed expression*): Monsignor, you see? The reasons the Pope has had for revoking the excommunication have got nothing at all to do with the reasons for which he excommunicated me originally. Tell Pope Gregory we shall meet again at Brixen. And you, Madame, should you chance to meet your daughter in the courtyard of the castle of your friend the Marchioness, ask her to visit me. We shall see if I succeed in keeping her close beside me as wife and Empress. Many women have presented themselves here already assuring me that they were she. But they all, even while they told me they came from Susa -- I don't know why -- began to laugh! And then in the bedroom . . . Well a man is a man, and a woman is a woman. Undressed, we don't bother much about who we are. And one's dress is like a phantom that hovers always near one. Oh, Monsignor, phantoms in general are nothing more than trifling disorders of the spirit: images we cannot contain within the bounds of sleep. They reveal themselves even when we are awake, and they frighten us. I . . . ah . . . I am always afraid when, at night time, I see disordered images before me. Sometimes I am even afraid of my own blood pulsing loudly in my arteries in the silence of night, like the sound of a distant step in a lonely corridor! . . . But, forgive me! I have kept you standing too long already. I thank you, my Lady, I thank you, Monsignor. (*Donna Matilda and the Doctor go off bowing. As soon as they have gone, Henry IV. suddenly changes his tone*). Buffoons, buffoons! One can play any tune on them! And that other fellow . . . Pietro Damiani! . . . Caught him out perfectly! He's afraid to appear before me again. (*Moves up and down excitedly while saying this; then sees Berthold, and points him out to the other three valets*). Oh, look at this imbecile watching me with his mouth wide open! (*Shakes him*). Don't you understand? Don't you see, idiot, how I treat them, how I play the fool with them, make them appear before me just as I wish? Miserable, frightened clowns that they are! And you (*addressing the valets*) are amazed that I tear off their ridiculous masks now, just as if it wasn't I who had made them mask themselves to satisfy this taste of mine for playing the madman!

LANDOLPH -- HAROLD -- ORDULPH (*bewildered, looking at one another*). What? What does he say? What?

HENRY IV. (*answers them imperiously*). Enough! enough! Let's stop it. I'm tired of it. (*Then as if the thought left him no peace*): By God! The impudence! To come here along with her lover! . . . And pretending to do it out of pity! So as not to infuriate a poor devil already out of the world, out of time, out of life! If it hadn't been supposed to be done out of pity, one can well imagine that fellow wouldn't have allowed it. Those people expect others to behave as they wish all the time. And, of course, there's nothing arrogant in that! Oh, no! Oh, no! It's merely their way of thinking, of feeling, of seeing. Everybody has his own way of thinking; you fellows, too. Yours is that of a flock of sheep -- miserable, feeble, uncertain . . . But those others take advantage of this and make you accept their way of thinking; or, at least, they suppose they do; Because, after all, what do they succeed in imposing on you? Words, words which anyone can interpret in his own manner! That's the way public opinion is formed! And it's a bad look out for a man who finds himself labelled one day with one of these words which everyone repeats; for example "madman," or "imbecile." Don't you think is rather hard for a man to keep quiet, when he knows that there is a fellow going about trying to persuade everybody that he is as he sees him, trying to fix him in other people's opinion as a "madman" -- according to him? Now I am talking seriously! Before I hurt my head, falling from my horse . . . (*stops suddenly, noticing the dismay of the four young men*). What's the matter with you? (*Imitates their amazed looks*). What? Am I, or am I not, mad? Oh, yes! I'm mad all right! (*He*

*becomes terrible*). Well, then, by God, down on your knees, down on your knees! (*Makes them go down on their knees one by one*). I order you to go down on your knees before me! And touch the ground three times with your foreheads! Down, down! That's the way you've got to be before madmen! (*Then annoyed with their facile humiliation*): Get up, sheep! You obeyed me, didn't you? You might have put the straight jacket on me! . . . Crush a man with the weight of a word -- it's nothing -- a fly! all our life is crushed by the weight of words: the weight of the dead. Look at me here: can you really suppose that Henry IV. is still alive? All the same, I speak, and order you live men about! Do you think it's a joke that the dead continue to live? -- Yes, here it's a joke! But get out into the live world ! -- Ah, you say: what a beautiful sunrise -- for us! All time is before us! -- Dawn! We will do what we like with this day -- . Ah, yes! To Hell with tradition, the old conventions! Well, go on! You will do nothing but repeat the old, old words, while you imagine you are living! (*Goes up to Berthold who has now become quite stupid*). You don't understand a word of this, do you? What's your name?

BERTHOLD. I? . . . What? . . . Berthold . . .

HENRY IV. Poor Berthold! What's your name here?

BERTHOLD. I . . . I . . . my name in Fino.

HENRY IV. (*feeling the warning and critical glances of the others, turns to them to reduce them to silence*). Fino?

BERTHOLD. Fino Pagliuca, sire.

HENRY IV. (*turning to Lan dolph*). I've heard you call each other by your nick-names often enough! Your name is Lolo, isn't it?

LANDOLPH. Yes, sire . . . (*then with a sense of immense joy*). Oh, Lord! Oh Lord! Then he is not mad. . .

HENRY IV. (*brusquely*). What?

LANDOLPH (*hesitating*). No . . . I said . . .

HENRY IV. Not mad, eh? We're having a joke on those that think I am mad! (*To Harold*) -- I say, boy, your name's Franco . . . (*to Ordulph*) And yours . . .

ORDULPH. Momo.

HENRY IV. Momo, Momo . . . A nice name that!

LANDOLPH. So he isn't . . .

HENRY IV. What are you talking about? Of course not! Let's have a jolly, good laugh! . . . (*Laughs*): Ah!

LANDOLPH -- HAROLD -- ORDULPH (*looking at each other half happy and half dismayed*). Then he's cured! . . . he's all right! . . .

HENRY IV. Silence! Silence! . . . (*To Berthold*): Why don't you laugh? Are you offended? I didn't mean it especially for you. It's convenient for everybody to insist that certain people are mad, so

they can be shut up. Do you know why? Because it's impossible to hear them speak! What shall I say of these people who've just gone away? That one is a whore, another a libertine, another a swindler . . . don't you think so? You can't believe a word he says . . . don't you think so? -- By the way, they all listen to me terrified. And why are they terrified, if what I say isn't true? Of course, you can't believe what madmen say -- yet, at the same time, they stand there with their eyes wide open with terror ! -- Why? Tell me, tell me, why ? -- You see I'm quite calm now!

BERTHOLD. But, perhaps, they think that . . .

HENRY IV. No, no, my dear fellow! Look me well in the eyes! . . . I don't say that it's true -- nothing is true, Berthold! But . . . look me in the eyes!

BERTHOLD. Well . . .

HENRY IV. You see? You see? . . . You have terror in your own eyes now because I seem mad to you! There's the proof of it ( *laughs* )!

LANDOLPH (*coming forward in the name of the others, exasperated*). What proof?

HENRY IV. Your being so dismayed because now I seem again mad to you. You have thought me mad up to now, haven't you? You feel that this dismay of yours can become terror too -- something to dash away the ground from under your feet and deprive you of the air you breathe! Do you know what it means to find yourselves face to face with a madman -- with one who shakes the foundations of all you have built up in yourselves, your logic, the logic of all your constructions? Madmen, lucky folk! construct without logic, or rather with a logic that flies like a feather. Voluble! Voluble! Today like this and tomorrow -- who knows? You say: "This cannot be"; but for them everything can be. You say: "This isn't true!" And why? Because it doesn't seem true to you, or you, or you . . . (*indicates the three of them in succession*) . . . and to a hundred thousand others! One must see what seems true to these hundred thousand others who are not supposed to be mad! What a magnificent spectacle they afford, when they reason! What flowers of logic they scatter! I know that when I was a child, I thought the moon in the pond was real. How many things I thought real! I believed everything I was told -- and I was happy! Because it's a terrible thing if you don't hold on to that which seems true to you today -- to that which will seem true to you tomorrow, even if it is the opposite of that which seemed true to you yesterday. I would never wish you to think, as I have done, on this horrible thing which really drives one mad: that if you were beside another and looking into his eyes -- as I one day looked into somebody's eyes -- you might as well be a beggar before a door never to be opened to you; for he who does enter there will never be you, but someone unknown to you with his own different and impenetrable world . . . (*Long pause. Darkness gathers in the room, increasing the sense of strangeness and consternation in which the four young men are involved. Henry IV remains aloof, pondering on the misery which is not only his, but everybody's. Then he pulls himself up, and says in an ordinary tone*): It's getting dark here . . .

ORDULPH. Shall I go for a lamp?

HENRY IV. (*Ironically*). The lamp, yes the lamp! . . . Do you suppose I don't know that as soon as I turn my back with my oil lamp to go to bed, you turn on the electric light for yourselves, here, and even there, in the throne room? I pretend not to see it!

ORDULPH. Well, then, shall I turn it on now?

HENRY IV. No, it would blind me! I want my lamp!

ORDULPH. It's ready here behind the door. (*Goes to the main exit, opens the door, goes out for a moment, and returns with an ancient lamp which is held by a ring at the top*).

HENRY IV. Ah, a little light! Sit there around the table, no, not like that; in an elegant, easy, manner! . . . (*To Harold*) : Yes, you, like that (*poses him*) ! (*Then to Berthold*) : You, so! . . . and I, here (*sits opposite them*) ! We could do with a little decorative moonlight. It's very useful for us, the moonlight. I feel a real necessity for it, and pass a lot of time looking up at the moon from my window. Who would think, to look at her that she knows that eight hundred years have passed, and that I, seated at the window, cannot really be Henry IV gazing at the moon like any poor devil? But, look, look! See what a magnificent night scene we have here: the emperor surrounded by his faithful counsellors! . . . How do you. like it?

LANDOLPH (*softly to Harold, so as not to break the en chantment*). And to think it wasn't true! . . .

HENRY IV. True? What wasn't true?

LANDOLPH (*timidly as if to excuse himself*). No . . . I mean . . . I was saying this morning to him (*indicates Berthold*) -- he has just entered on service here -- I was, saying: what a pity that dressed like this and with so many beautiful costumes in the wardrobe . . . and with a room like that (*indicates the throne room*) . . .

HENRY IV. Well? what's the pity?

LANDOLPH. Well . . . that we didn't know . . .

HENRY IV. That it was all done in jest, this comedy?

LANDOLPH. Because we thought that . . .

HAROLD (*coming to his assistance*). Yes . . . that it was done seriously!

HENRY IV. What do you say? Doesn't it seem serious to you?

LANDOLPH. But if you say that . . .

HENRY IV. I say that -- you are fools! You ought to have known how to create a fantasy for yourselves, not to act it for me, or anyone coming to see me; but naturally, simply, day by day, before nobody, feeling yourselves alive in the history of the eleventh century, here at the court of your emperor, Henry IV! You Ordulph (*taking him by the arm*), alive in the castle of Goslar, waking up in the morning, getting out of bed, and entering straightway into the dream, clothing yourself in the dream that would be no more a dream, because you would have lived it, felt it all alive in you. You would have drunk it in with the air you breathed; yet knowing all the time that it was a dream, so you could better enjoy the privilege afforded you of having to do nothing else but live this dream, this far off and yet actual dream! And to think that at a distance of eight centuries from this remote age of ours, so coloured and so sepulchral, the men of the twentieth century are torturing themselves in ceaseless anxiety to know how their fates and fortunes will work out! Whereas you are already in history with me . . .

LANDOLPH. Yes, yes, very good!

HENRY IV. . . . Everything determined, everything settled!

ORDULPH. Yes, yes!

HENRY IV. And sad as is my lot, hideous as some of the events are, bitter the struggles and troublous the time -- still all history! All history that cannot change, understand? All fixed for ever! And you could have admired at your ease how every effect followed obediently its cause with perfect logic, how every event took place precisely and coherently in each minute particular! The pleasure, the pleasure of history, in fact, which is so great, was yours.

LANDOLPH. Beautiful, beautiful!

HENRY IV. Beautiful, but it's finished! Now that you know, I could not do it any more! (*Takes his lamp to go to bed*). Neither could you, if up to now you haven't understood the reason of it! I am sick of it now. (*Almost to himself with violent contained rage*): By God, I'll make her sorry she came here! Dressed herself up as a mother-in-law for me . . . ! And he as an abbot . . . ! And they bring a doctor with them to study me . . . ! Who knows if they don't hope to cure me? . . . Clowns . . . ! I'd like to smack one of them at least in the face: yes, that one -- a famous swordsman, they say! . . . He'll kill me . . . Well, we'll see, we'll see! . . . (*A knock at the door*). Who is it?

THE VOICE OF JOHN. Deo Gratias!

HAROLD (*very pleased at the chance for another joke*). Oh, it's John, it's old John, who comes every night to play the monk.

ORDULPH (*rubbing his hands*). Yes, yes! Let's make him do it!

HENRY IV. (*at once, severely*). Fool, why? Just to play a joke on a poor old man who does it for love of me?

LANDOLPH (*to Ordulph*). It has to be as if it were true.

HENRY IV. Exactly, as if true! Because, only so, truth is not a jest (*opens the door and admits John dressed as a humble friar with a roll of parchment under his arm*). Come in, come in, father! (*Then assuming a tone of tragic gravity and deep resentment*): All the documents of my life and reign favorable to me were destroyed deliberately by my enemies. One only has escaped destruction, this, my life, written by a humble monk who is devoted to me. And you would laugh at him! (*Turns affectionately to John, and invites him to sit down at the table*). Sit down, father, sit down! Have the lamp near you (*puts the lamp near him*)! Write! Write!

JOHN (*opens the parchment and prepares to write from dictation*). I am ready, your Majesty!

HENRY IV. (*dictating*). "The decree of peace proclaimed at Mayence helped the poor and humble, while it damaged the weak and the powerful (*curtain begins to fall*): It brought wealth to the former, hunger and misery to the latter . . .

Curtain.

## ACT III

*The throne room so dark that the wall at the bottom is hardly seen. The canvasses of the two portraits have been taken away; and, within their frames, Frida, dressed as the "Marchioness of Tuscany" and Charles Di Nolli, as "Henry IV.," have taken the exact positions of the portraits.*

*For a moment, after the raising of curtain, the stage is empty. Then the door on the left opens; and Henry IV., holding the lamp by the ring on top of it, enters. He looks back to speak to the four young men who, with John, are presumedly in the adjoining hall, as at the end of the second act.*

HENRY IV. No: stay where you are, stay where you are. I shall manage all right by myself. Good night! *(Closes the door and walks, very sad and tired, across the hall towards the second door on the right, which leads into his apartments).* FRIDA *(as soon as she sees that he has just passed the throne, whispers from the niche like one who is on the point of fainting away with fright).* Henry . . .

HENRY IV. *(stopping at the voice, as if someone had stabbed him traitorously in the back, turns a terror-stricken face towards the wall at the bottom of the room; raising an arm instinctively, as if to defend himself and ward off a blow).* Who is calling me? *(It is not a question, but an exclamation vibrating with terror, which does not expect a reply from the darkness and the terrible silence of the hall, which suddenly fills him with the suspicion that he is really mad).*

FRIDA *(at his shudder of terror, is herself not less frightened at the part she is playing, and repeats a little more loudly).* Henry! . . . *(But, although she wishes to act the part as they have given it to her, she stretches her head a little out of the frame towards the other frame).*

HENRY IV. *(Gives a dreadful cry; lets the lamp fall from his hands to cover his head with his arms, and makes a movement as if to run away).*

FRIDA *(jumping from the frame on to the stand and shouting like a mad woman).* Henry! . . . Henry! . . . I'm afraid! . . . I'm terrified! . . .

*(And while Di Nolli jumps in turn on to the stand and thence to the floor and runs to Frida who, on the verge of fainting, continues to cry out, the Doctor, Donna Matilda, also dressed as "Matilda of Tuscany," Tito Belcredi, Landolph, Berthold and John enter the hall from the doors on the right and on the left. One of them turns on the light: a strange light coming from lamps hidden in the ceiling so that only the upper part of the stage is well lighted. The others without taking notice of Henry IV, who looks on astonished by the unexpected inrush, after the moment of terror which still causes him to tremble, run anxiously to support and comfort the still shaking Frida, who is moaning in the arms of her fiancé. All are speaking at the same time.)*

DI NOLLI. No, no, Frida . . . Here I am . . . I am beside you!

DOCTOR *(coming with the others).* Enough! Enough! There's nothing more to be done! . . .

DONNA MATILDA. He is cured, Frida. Look! He is cured! Don't you see?

DI NOLLI *(astonished).* Cured?

BELCREDI. It was only for fun! Be calm!

FRIDA. No! I am afraid! I am afraid!



DONNA MATILDA. Afraid of what? Look at him! He was never mad at all! . . .

DI NOLLI. That isn't true! What are you saying? Cured?

DOCTOR. It appears so. I should say so . . .

BELCREDI. Yes, yes! They have told us so (*pointing to the four young men*).

DONNA MATILDA. Yes, for a long time! He has confided in them, told them the truth!

DI NOLLI (*now in ore indignant than astonished*). But what does it mean? If, up to a short time ago . . .

BELCREDI. Hum! He was acting, to take you in and also us, who in good faith . . .

DI NOLLI. Is it possible? To deceive his sister, also, right up to the time of her death?

HENRY IV. (*Remains apart, peering at one and now at the other under the accusation and the mockery of what all believe to be a cruel joke of his, which is now revealed. He has shown by the flashing of his eyes that he is meditating a revenge, which his violent contempt prevents him from defining clearly, as yet. Stung to the quick and with a clear idea of accepting the fiction they have insidiously worked up as true, he bursts forth at this point*) : Go on, I say! Go on!

DI NOLLI (*astonished at the cry*). Go on! What do you mean?

HENRY IV. It isn't your sister only that is dead!

DI NOLLI. My sister? Yours, I say, whom you compelled up to the last moment, to present herself here as your mother Agnes!

HENRY IV. And was she not your mother?

DI NOLLI. My mother? Certainly my mother!

HENRY IV. But your mother is dead for me, old and far away! You have just got down now from there (*pointing to the frame from which he jumped down*). And how do you know whether I have not wept her long in secret, dressed even as I am?

DONNA MATILDA (*dismayed, looking at the others*). What does he say? (*Much impressed, observing him*). Quietly! quietly, for Heaven's sake!

HENRY IV. What do I say? I ask all of you if Agnes was not the mother of Henry IV? (*Turns to Frida as if she were really the Marchioness of Tuscany*) : You, Marchioness, it seems to me, ought to know.

FRIDA (*still frightened, draws closer to Di Nollis*). No, no, I don't know. Not !!

DOCTOR. It's the madness returning. . . . Quiet now, everybody!

BELCREDI (*indignant*). Madness indeed, doctor! He's acting again! . . .

HENRY IV. (*suddenly*). I? You have emptied those two frames over there, and he stands before

my eyes as Henry IV. . . .

BELCREDI. We've had enough of this joke now. HENRY IV. Who said joke?

DOCTOR (*loudly to Belcredi*). Don't excite him, for the love of God!

BELCREDI (*without lending an ear to him, but speaking louder*). But they have said so (*pointing again to the four young men*), they, they!

HENRY IV. (*turning round and looking at them*). You? Did you say it was all a joke?

LANDOLPH (*timid and embarrassed*). No . . . really we said that you were cured.

BELCREDI. Look here! Enough of this! (*To Donna Matilda*) : Doesn't it seem to you that the sight of him (*pointing to Di Nollì*), Marchioness and that of your daughter dressed so, is becoming an intolerable puerility?

DONNA MATILDA. Oh, be quiet! What does the dress matter, if he is cured?

HENRY IV. Cured, yes! I am cured! (*To Belcredi*) ah. but not to let it end this way all at once, as you suppose! (*Attacks him*). Do you know that for twenty years nobody has ever dared to appear before me here like you and that gentleman (*pointing to the doctor*)?

BELCREDI. Of course I know it. As a matter of fact, I too appeared before you this morning dressed . . .

HENRY IV. As a monk, yes!

BELCREDI. And you took me for Peter Damiani! And I didn't even laugh, believing, in fact, that . . .

HENRY IV. That I was mad! Does it make you laugh seeing her like that, now that I am cured? And yet you might have remembered that in my eyes her appearance now . . . (*interrupts himself with a gesture of contempt*) Ah! (*Suddenly turns to the doctor*) : You are a doctor, aren't you?

DOCTOR. Yes.

HENRY IV. And you also took part in dressing her up as the Marchioness of Tuscany? To prepare a counter-joke for me here, eh?

DONNA MATILDA (*impetuously*). No, no! What do you say? It was done for you! I did it for your sake.

DOCTOR (*quickly*). To attempt, to try, not knowing . . .

HENRY IV. (*cutting him short*). I understand. I say counter-joke, in his case (*indicates Belcredi*), because he believes that I have been carrying on a jest . . .

BELCREDI. But excuse me, what do you mean? You say yourself you are cured.

HENRY IV. Let me speak! (*To the doctor*): Do you know, doctor, that for a moment you ran the risk of making me mad again? By God, to make the portraits speak; to make them jump alive out of their frames . . .

DOCTOR. But you saw that all of us ran in at once, as soon as they told us . . .

HENRY IV. Certainly! (*Contemplates Frida and Di Nolti, and then looks at the Marchioness, and finally at his own costume*). The combination is very beautiful . . . Two couples . . . Very good, very good, doctor! For a madman, not bad! . . . (*With a slight wave of his hand to Belcredi*) It seems to him now to be a carnival out of season, eh? (*Turns to look at him*). We'll get rid now of this masquerade costume of mine, so that I may come away with you. What do you say?

BELCREDI. With me? With us?

HENRY IV. Where shall we go? To the Club? In dress coats and with white ties? Or shall both of us go to the Marchioness' house?

BELCREDI. Wherever you like! Do you want to remain here still, to continue -- alone -- what was nothing but the unfortunate joke of a day of carnival? It is really incredible, incredible how you have been able to do all this, freed from the disaster that befell you!

HENRY IV. Yes, you see how it was! The fact is that falling from my horse and striking my head as I did, I was really mad for I know not how long . . .

DOCTOR. Ah! Did it last long?

HENRY IV. (*very quickly to the doctor*). Yes, doctor, a long time! I think it must have been about twelve years. (*Then suddenly turning to speak to Belcredi*): Thus I saw nothing, my dear fellow, of all that, after that day of carnival, happened for you but not for me: how things changed, how my friends deceived me, how my place was taken by another, and all the rest of it! And suppose my place had been taken in the heart of the woman I loved? . . . And how should I know who was dead or who had disappeared? . . . All this, you know, wasn't exactly a jest for me, as it seems to you . . .

BELCREDI. No, no! I don't mean that if you please. I mean after . . .

HENRY IV. Ah, yes? After? One day (*stops and addresses the doctor*) -- A most interesting case, doctor! Study me well! Study me carefully (*trembles while speaking*)! All by itself, who knows how, one day the trouble here (*touches his forehead*) mended. Little by little, I open my eyes, and at first I don't know whether I am asleep or awake. Then I know I am awake. I touch this thing and that; I see clearly again . . . Ah! -- then, as he says (*alludes to Belcredi*) away, away with this masquerade, this incubus! Let's open the windows, breathe life once again! Away! Away! Let's run out! (*Suddenly pulling himself up*). But where? And to do what? To show myself to all, secretly, as Henry IV., not like this, but arm in arm with you, among my dear friends?

BELCREDI. What are you saying?

DONNA MATILDA. Who could think it? It's not to be imagined. It was an accident.

HENRY IV. They all said I was mad before. (*To Belcredi*): And you know it! You were more ferocious than any one against those who tried to defend me.

BELCREDI. Oh, that was only a joke!

HENRY IV. Look at my hair! (*Shows him the hair on the nape of his neck*).

BELCREDI. But mine is grey too!

HENRY IV. Yes, with this difference: that mine went grey here, as Henry IV., do you understand? And I never knew it! I perceived it all of a sudden, one day, when I opened my eyes; and I was terrified because I understood at once that not only had my hair gone grey, but that I was all grey, inside; that everything had fallen to pieces, that everything was finished; and I was going to arrive, hungry as a wolf, at a banquet which had already been cleared away . . .

BELCREDI. Yes, but, what about the others? . . .

HENRY IV. (*quickly*). Ah, yes, I know! They couldn't wait until I was cured, not even those, who, behind my back, pricked my saddled horse till it bled. . . .

DI NOLLI (*agitated*). What, what?

HENRY IV. Yes, treacherously, to make it rear and cause me to fall.

DONNA MATILDA (*quickly, in horror*). This is the first time I knew that.

HENRY IV. That was also a joke, probably!

DONNA MATILDA. But who did it? Who was behind us, then?

HENRY IV. It doesn't matter who it was. All those that went on feasting and were ready to leave me their scrapings, Marchioness, of miserable pity, or some dirty remnant of remorse in the filthy plate! Thanks! (*Turning quickly to the doctor*) : Now doctor, the case must be absolutely new in the history of madness; I preferred to remain mad -- since I found everything ready and at my disposal for this new exquisite fantasy. I would live it -- this madness of mine -- with the most lucid consciousness; and thus revenge myself on the brutality of a stone which had dented my head. The solitude -- this solitude -- squalid and empty as it appeared to me when I opened my eyes again -- I determined to deck it out with all the colours and splendors of that far off day of carnival, when you (*looks at Donna Matilda and points Frida out to her*) when you, Marchioness, triumphed. So I would oblige all those who were around me to follow, by God, at my orders that famous pageant which had been -- for you and not for me -- the jest of a day. I would make it become -- for ever -- no more a joke but a reality, the reality of a real madness: here, all in masquerade, with throne room, and these my four secret counsellors: secret and, of course, traitors. (*He turns quickly towards them*). I should like to know what you have gained by revealing the fact that I was cured! If I am cured, there's no longer any need of you, and you will be discharged! To give anyone one's confidence . . . that is really the act of a madman. But now I accuse you in my turn (*turning to the others*)! Do you know? They thought (*alludes to the valets*) they could make fun of me too with you (*bursts out laughing. The others laugh, but shamefacedly, except Donna Matilda*).

BELCREDI (*to Di Nolli*). Well, imagine that . . . That's not bad . . .

DI NOLLI (*to the four young men*). You?

HENRY IV. We must pardon them. This dress (*plucking his dress*) which is for me the evident, involuntary caricature of that other continuous, everlasting masquerade, of which we are the involuntary puppets (*indicates Belcredi*), when, without knowing it, we mask ourselves with that which we appear to be . . . ah, that dress of theirs, this masquerade of theirs, of course, we must forgive it them, since they do not yet see it is identical with themselves . . . (*Turning again to Belcredi*) : You know, it is quite easy to get accustomed to it. One walks about as a tragic character, just as if it were nothing . . . (*Imitates the tragic manner*) in a room like this . . . Look here, doctor! I remember a priest, certainly Irish, a nice-looking priest, who was sleeping in the sun one November day, with his arm on the corner of the bench of a public garden. He was lost in the

golden delight of the mild sunny air which must have seemed for him almost summery. One may be sure that in that moment he did not know any more that he was a priest, or even where he was. He was dreaming . . . A little boy passed with a flower in his hand. He touched the priest with it here on the neck. I saw him open his laughing eyes, while all his mouth smiled with the beauty of his dream. He was forgetful of everything . . . But all at once, he pulled himself together, and stretched out his priest's cassock; and there came back to his eyes the same seriousness which you have seen in mine; because the Irish priests defend the seriousness of their Catholic faith with the same zeal with which I defend the secret rights of hereditary monarchy! I am cured, gentlemen: because I can act the mad man to perfection, here; and I do it very quietly, I'm only sorry for you that have to live your madness so agitatedly, without knowing it or seeing it.

BELCREDI. It comes to this, then, that it is we who are mad. That's what it is!

HENRY IV. (*containing his irritation*). But if you weren't mad, both you and she (*indicating the Marchioness*) would you have come here to see me?

BELCREDI. To tell the truth, I came here believing that you were the madman.

HENRY IV. (*suddenly indicating the Marchioness*). And she?

BELCREDI. Ah, as for her . . . I can't say. I see she is all fascinated by your words, by this conscious madness of yours. (*Turns to her*). Dressed as you are (*speaking to her*), you could even remain here to live it out, Marchioness.

DONNA MATILDA. You are insolent!

HENRY IV. (*conciliatingly*). No, Marchioness, what he means to say is that the miracle would be complete, according to him, with you here, who -- as the Marchioness of Tuscany, you well know, -- could not be my friend, save, as at Canossa, to give me a little pity . . .

BELCREDI. Or even more than a little! She said so herself!

HENRY IV. (*to the Marchioness, continuing*). And even, shall we say, a little remorse! . . .

BELCREDI. Yes, that too she has admitted.

DONNA MATILDA (*angry*). Now look here . . .

HENRY IV. (*quickly, to placate her*). Don't bother about him! Don't mind him! Let him go on infuriating me -- though the doctor's told him not to. (*Turns to Belcredi*): But do you suppose I am going to trouble myself any more about what happened between us -- the share you had in my misfortune with her (*indicates the Marchioness to him and, pointing Belcredi out to her*): the part he has now in your life? This is my life! Quite a different thing from your life! Your life, the life in which you have grown old -- I have not lived that life (*to Donna Matilda*). Was this what you wanted to show me with this sacrifice of yours, dressing yourself up like this, according to the Doctor's idea? Excellently done, doctor! Oh, an excellent idea: -- "As we were then, eh? and as we are now?" But I am not a madman according to your way of thinking, doctor. I know very well that that man there (*indicates Di Nollì*) cannot be me; because I am Henry IV., and have been, these twenty years, cast in this eternal masquerade. She has lived these years (*indicates the Marchioness*)! She has enjoyed them and has become -- look at her! -- a woman I can no longer recognize. It is so that I knew her (*points to Frida and draws near her*)! This is the Marchioness I know, always this one! . . . You seem a lot of children to be so easily frightened by me . . . (*To Frida*): And you're

frightened too, little girl, aren't you, by the jest that they made you take part in -- though they didn't understand it wouldn't be the jest they meant it to be, for me? Oh miracle of miracles! Prodigy of prodigies! The dream alive in you! More than alive in you! It was an image that wavered there and they've made you come to life! Oh, mine! You're mine, mine, mine, in my own right! (*He holds her in his arms, laughing like a madman, while all stand still terrified. Then as they advance to tear Frida from his arms, he becomes furious, terrible and cries imperiously to his valets*) : Hold them! Hold them! I order you to hold them!

(*The four young men amazed, yet fascinated, move to execute his orders, automatically, and seize Di Nolli, the doctor, and Belcredi.*)

BELCREDI (*freeing himself*). Leave her alone! Leave her alone! You're no madman!

HENRY IV. (*In a flash draws the sword from the side of Landolph, who is close to him*). I'm not mad, eh! Take that, you! . . . (*Drives sword into him. A cry of horror goes up. All rush over to assist Belcredi, crying out together*)

DI NOLLI. Has he wounded you?

BERTHOLD. Yes, yes, seriously!

DOCTOR. I told you so!

FRIDA. Oh God, oh God!

DI NOLLI. Frida, come here!

DONNA MATILDA. He's mad, mad!

DI NOLLI. Hold him!

BELCREDI (*while they take him away by the left exit, he protests as he is borne out*). No, no, you're not mad! You're not mad. He's not mad!

(*They go out by the left amid cries and excitement. After a moment, one hears a still sharper, more piercing cry from Donna Matilda, and then, silence*).

HENRY IV. (*who has remained on the stage between Landolph, Harold and Ordulph, with his eyes almost starting out of his head, terrified by the life of his own masquerade which has driven him to crime*). Ah now . . . yes now . . . inevitably (*calls his valets around him as if to protect him*) here together . . . here together . . . for ever . . . for ever.

Curtain.