

**How To Be A Good
Italian Daughter
*(in Spite of Myself)***

*By
Antoinette LaVecchia*

HOW TO BE A GOOD ITALIAN DAUGHTER (in Spite of Myself)

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HOW TO BE A GOOD ITALIAN DAUGHTER (in Spite of Myself)

A note from the playwright:

First and foremost, this piece has always been a celebration of the imagination and the freedom it brings. Through the process of creating and collaborating with others on “...Good Italian Daughter...” over the years, I have found a way to express my deep love for the act of creation, for my mother and for my heritage as an Italian-American woman. I was two years old when I flew to the States from a small mountain village in the province of Salerno, with my older brother and our terrified mother.

When I was growing up, my imagination was my saving grace. It alleviated my loneliness and soothed me from always being misunderstood: the kids in school called me “the Italian girl” and my relatives in Italy called me “l’Americana.” Not to mention my mother’s surprise in how different her daughter was from anything she had known in Italy. I spent my teens and 20’s trying to be anything BUT Italian, including a stab at trying to change my name to something more British: Antonia Laurie (which, thankfully, never made it past a handful of emails). Of course, the moment I embraced every bend and curve of my Southern Italian personality, life became infinitely easier and more fun.

I have been fortunate to work with extraordinary collaborators on this piece and am forever grateful. “How To Be A Good Italian Daughter...” is my magic show of sorts. I love magic and I love to make people laugh. It fuels me. I look for it in the simplest of things. And, ultimately it brings me great joy to share what I’ve found.

Viva l’immaginazione! Enjoy!

**This piece is theatrical and highly physical in performance. It requires a performer who can move and transform between characters easily and effortlessly. The Demon character was inspired by Bouffon work with Philippe Gaulier.*

HOW TO BE A GOOD ITALIAN DAUGHTER (in Spite of Myself)

How To Be A Good Italian Daughter (in Spite of Myself) was originally produced by Urban Stages in New York, NY, directed by Jesse Berger, featuring the following cast:

All characters.....Antoinette LaVecchia

How To Be A Good Italian Daughter (in Spite of Myself) received its 2nd production in the Midtown International Theater Festival in New York, NY, directed by Ludovica Villar-Hauser, featuring the following cast:

All characters.....Antoinette LaVecchia

How To Be A Good Italian Daughter (in Spite of Myself) received its 3rd production at The Cherry Lane Studio Theater, produced by Jones Street Productions, Arje & Esther Shaw, directed by Ted Sod, featuring the following cast:

All characters.....Antoinette LaVecchia

CAST: 1 Woman or multiple performers

MA 60s-80s, Italian immigrant mother; Old World views
WOMAN 30s-50s, her daughter, First generation

TIME: Circa 1999: before cell phones, when everyone had answering machines.

PLACE: An empty apartment with moving boxes around the periphery.

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SCENE 1

Spotlight up on a woman sitting on a red folding chair. She is rubbing her tummy.

WOMAN. *(She has a thick Italian accent.)* Oooh, Hello. *(Takes in the audience.)* Oh my God...look how many people, oh...so nice....*(Referring to her tummy.)* Hey, issa time. Eh? Issa time. *(She physically transforms into the Baby inside of her, and continues to physically transform between being the mother and being the baby throughout the scene.)*

BABY. *(Looking at the audience.)* No, mommy, no, uh-oh.

WOMAN. *(To the audience.)* Oh, excuse me. *(Referring to the baby in her tummy.)* The people they come. You gotta come out now, okay. *(She laughs nervously.)* Come out.

BABY. *(Determined.)* I don't want to, I don't want to Mommy.

WOMAN. Oh, the people they nice, they no bite you — PLEASE!

BABY. *(Terror-filled.)* No, No, I don't want to, I don't want to, I don't want to. *(The baby holds her breath as if this will keep her from coming out of her Mother.)*

WOMAN. Eh, I no feel you no more.

BABY. *(Still holding her breath, she finally releases air, as she can't hold it in any longer. She kicks and punches.)* No, mommy, no, no.

WOMAN. Okay, I gotta push you out now, issa time.

BABY. *(The baby is being moved by forces bigger than herself.)* No mommy, no, no mommy, no *(She finds herself facing the birth canal.)* NO MOMMY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! *(She begins to go through the canal. She presses her hand against her face to mimic the uncomfortable, distorting process of being born.)*

WOMAN. *(In distress.)* Oooh, go back in, go back in, turn around!!!

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BABY. *(Still moving through the birth canal.)*

WOMAN. *(Still in distress.)* Turn around, please, no come out no more.
(Screams.)

BABY. *(Moves through canal and onto the floor. Her hand appears and she slaps herself on the rump.)* WAH! WAH! WAH!

WOMAN. *(Discovering the baby.)* Que bella bimba! *(Translation: “what a beautiful baby!”* She mimes taking the baby into her arms.) Non piangi bella. *(Translation: “Don’t cry beautiful.”* She sings an Italian lullabye.)

FA LA NINNA, FA LA NONNA, BIMBA BELLA DELLA MAMMA,
DELLA MAMMA, DEL PAPÀ, FA LA NINNA SE LA VOI FA.

(Translation: “Do the ninna, do the nonna, you are mamma’s beautiful baby, you are mamma’s, you are papa’s, do the ninna if you would like.”)

No cry bella, ci sono io vicino a te. *(Translation: “I’m right next to you.)*
Nobody hurt you. Mamma is always close by.

SCENE 2

Phone rings. Lights up, revealing an empty apartment, with moving boxes scattered around the periphery. There is a landline telephone with an answering machine sitting on one of the boxes. Only one box is opened. Antoinette, hereby referred to as Ant, has just moved into this apartment. Throughout the time frame of the play, Ant is actively creating new theatrical material, but her mother, hereby referred to as Ma, interrupts her creative flow by calling her continually. Ant takes out pieces of clothing from the opened box, per each character she creates from this point on.

ANT. *(She answers the landline phone.)* Hello.

MA. Hi Antoneh.

ANT. Hi Ma. I’m in the middle of working on something.

MA. Listen, Antoneh. *(This is Ma’s way of saying “Antoinette.”)* I have idea for you apartment. I think you like.

ANT. Ma, I haven’t even unpacked yet. I’ll call you later.

MA. No forget, Antoneh, please. Issa very important

ANT. I won’t. Bye Ma. *(She finds a blanket in the opened box.)*

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SCENE 3

Lights change. She becomes a “Little Girl” at a door.

LITTLE GIRL. *(Scared. She knocks on the door.)* Mommy, Mommy.

MA. Antoneh, what’s the matter? Issa late.

LITTLE GIRL. Ma, I’m scared. There’s a monster behind my curtain.

MA. Antoneh, there’s no monster behind you curtain. Please go back to bed.

LITTLE GIRL. Ma, can I sleep in there with you?

MA. Antoneh, shhhh, you wake up you father. You gotta pray. Pray to the Madonnina, everything be okay.

LITTLE GIRL. But, Ma, I don’t know how.

MA. *(Sternly.)* Antoneh, go back to bed right now. *(Beat.)* I no say twice.

LITTLE GIRL. *(Defeated and terrified.)* Okay. I’m going. *(“Little Girl” walks to the chair center stage. She picks it up in frustration with her mother. She stops, has an idea. She lifts the chair, so that her head peeks through. This is her “Samurai Dream.”)*

LITTLE GIRL. I have a secret. I’ve never told anybody this. My mother flies through my window at night and she tries to kill me. She’s dressed like a Samurai soldier and she carries a big, curved sword and when she lifts it over my bed, I pass out. And in the morning when I wake up, she pretends like it didn’t happen. It’s scary. Sometimes, I have this fantasy that one night when she comes in through my window like a Samurai soldier, with her beady, red eyes — instead of hiding under my covers, *(She steps on chair.)* I start to float above the bed. And when my mom throws her sword at me, I go like this. *(A series of karate kicks.)* And this. *(More karate kicks.)* And then I start to fly. *(She acts this out while standing on the chair.)* Ooh, this is fun. And I fly right out my bedroom window, and my mother flies after me. But even if she comes near me, I can still do this. *(She performs a side kick.)* And we fly to this HUGE forest with giant trees that have bouncy branches and my mom and I land on one of these branches, and we start to sword fight. *(She acts out three separate hits.)* And because my mom is 200 lbs., and wearing Samurai armor, she falls. *(Uses her hand to show Ma falling, and says in Ma’s*

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voice, “aaaaaaaah, managia mia.”) And I fly down to see her. (*Turns the chair around, and kneels on it.*) But she doesn’t die. She turns into this big, beautiful bird. And I feed her bread crumbs that magically appear in my pocket. And then she takes me on her wings and we fly all over the world and we have these cool adventures. It’s awesome. (*Beat.*) I guess I have to go to sleep now.

SCENE 4

Phone rings. Lights up.

ANT. Hello.

MA. Hi, Antoneh.

ANT. Ma, I told you I’d call you back.

MA. What you working on?

ANT. Nothing, Ma.

MA. What you mean nothing?

ANT. You wouldn’t understand.

MA. No I tink I understand. Antoneh, when you grow up and start be like other daughters — they have normal job, they no get divorce, and they call their mother EVERY DAY.

ANT. You know what, Ma? I can’t talk right now.

MA. Okay, Antoneh, do me a favor. Please measure the window in you living room.

ANT. Alright, Ma. Bye. (*Hangs up the phone and feels pain in her stomach. Speaking to the phone, exasperated.*) You’re making me allergic to being Italian. Literally allergic. I can’t eat pasta anymore — no tomatoes, cheese, garlic or basil. Things I’ve been eating my entire life — since the womb! I don’t understand. How can my body reject its own heritage? (*Growing more frustrated.*) As if getting divorced and moving isn’t stressful enough. (*She puts on a red blazer and grabs her stomach in pain.*) Oh my God, she’s killing me.

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SCENE 5

Ant puts on a headband, transforming into “Donna DiPippio.” Lights up.

DONNA DiPIPPIO. (*Addressing the audience.*) Hello! And how are you? Oh, my God, look at this turnout! Fantastic! Welcome to “How To Be A Good Italian Daughter 101.” (*A projection appears behind her: “A Good Italian Daughter.”*) Look at this! I see men, women, people of different cultural backgrounds, maybe even different sexual orientations? Terrific! Cause I can teach you ALL how to be a good Italian daughter. Believe it or not? BELIEVE IT! My name is Professor Donna DiPippio. (*Responding to audience.*) Exactly. And that’s why I want you to never call me by that name. There’s a lot of pain involved with that, and this is a happy class. Happy! We don’t want to go to the pain. SO, you can call me Professor Donna, Professor Donna D, Professor DP, whatever, just not “DiPippio” alright? Now we cannot begin the semester without learning the essential word —the essential word that will lead us to our destination of being a good Italian daughter. I need only one thing from you. (*She mouths the word “one” silently.*) And that is to utilize all the muscles right around here. (*She outlines her ear with her finger.*) Okay you ready, the word is: “Ma.” I’ll say it again, “Ma.” I’d like you to try it, okay? (*Projection of the word “Ma” behind her.*) Follow the bouncing finger, one, two, three (*Audience repeats “Ma.”*) Ooh, so tender like a nice veal carbonata. Guess what? I know what you’re thinking. You’re thinking this class is an “Easy A.” Well, not so easy. Cause sometimes you gotta project. What if she’s upstairs, you’re downstairs, the phone rings and it’s for her? It’s gonna be different, right? (*She acts this out.*) Here we go — phone rings, she’s upstairs, you’re downstairs, you pick up the phone, “Oh, it’s for her.” (*She looks up and screams.*) Ma!!! Did you hear the difference? One more time. (*She repeats this faster.*) Phone rings, she’s upstairs, you’re downstairs, you pick up the phone, “Oh, it’s for her.” (*She looks up and screams.*) Ma!!! You try! Phone rings, she’s upstairs, you’re downstairs, you pick up the phone, “Oh, it’s for her.” One, two, three. (*Audience repeats “Ma!”*) Oh, you sent me right up against the wall. Fantastic! You are so advanced, I’m gonna give you another

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one. This was a summoning, now it's a warning. *(She uses her hand as her "mother" during this demonstration.)* You are in a room alone with your mother. Now, she is talking bad, bad, bad about your Aunt Carmela. You see your Aunt Carmela coming into the room. *(Using her finger from her other hand to demonstrate Aunt Carmela entering the room.)* And... "Ma". Very sensitive. One more time. She's talking bad, bad, VERY bad about your Aunt Carmela. You see her coming in the room. And, "Ma." You try. *(Her hand now talks directly to the audience.)* Bad, bad, very, very bad about your Aunt Carmela. You see your aunt coming in the room, and, one, two, three. *(Audience says "Ma.")* Ooh, you gave me goosebumps. Okay, last one. The compliment: Your mother has just made her famous meatballs. Now, imagine that you've just taken a bite out of one of these delicious meatballs. *(She says "Ma" in a murderous way.)* "Maaaaa." This one's tricky cause it sounds like you wanna kill her, but it's actually the opposite. Let's do it together. You take a bite of her juicy meatball — and, one, two, three. *(Audience repeats "Maaaaa.")* GENIUS!!!! Now, what do we do with words, people? Huh? Can they exist by themselves. NO! The law of nature says nothing can survive alone. So, we put them into sentences. You ready? "You're right, Ma." "I'm listening, Ma." "Ma, let me do it." And the piece de resistance: "I'd love to go shopping with you, Ma." Now what is the trap? The trap that Americans fall into and people who are disconnected from the Italian-American experience? What do they do? Everything's with a smile right? *(In a mocking tone.)* "Yes, mother. Alright, mother. Whatever you say, mother." NO! Not for Italian-Americans. The more forceful, the better. *(Very forceful.)* "You're right, Ma!" "Let ME make the espresso, Ma." I don't know why, that's just the way it is. Now...we have to exercise these good, Italian daughter muscles. So make a list of everything you've ever felt guilty about...in your entire life. Thoughts count. And, start going to church — every day. And it wouldn't hurt to make friends with a nun, *(Phone rings.)* cause priests right now, we don't know.

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SCENE 6

ANT. Hello? *(She still speaks like “Donna DiPippio.”)*

MA. Hi Antoneh.

ANT. Hi, Ma. *(She drops out of character.)*

MA. Why you no call me back?

ANT. Ma, I’m still busy. *(She takes off headband.)*

MA. I know, you busy, busy, busy. ALL the time, you busy.

ANT. What do you want Ma? *(She takes off red blazer.)*

MA. Listen. You take the measurements for the window in the living room because I wanna make the curtain for you?

ANT. Ma, I don’t want curtains in my living room.

MA. What?

ANT. The window looks fine the way it is.

MA. Why, Antoneh? Why? Really, why?

ANT. Because, it’s my apartment.

MA. Oh, Antoneh, ma why can’t you be like other NORMAL people? They have curtain in the living room.

ANT. Ma.

MA. Why I gotta have a daughter who no appreciate the thing I wanna do?

ANT. I do appreciate.

MA. Why God gotta punish me?

ANT. JESUS, Ma!

MA. *(Pause.)* What do you say?

ANT. *(Shamefully.)* I said Jesus.

MA. Oh, my God, I can’t believe the daughter I give birth to say the name a’ God like that. You go to church?

ANT. *(Pause.)* No.

MA. Oh, my God, I can’t believe I have a daughter who no go to church. Please tell me, you still believe in God?

ANT. Yes, I believe in God.

MA. Oh, really? È you think you can believe in God and no go to church?

ANT. Yes, Ma, I do.

MA. No, Antoneh. I no think so. I no think you can believe in God and no go to church, no. I think maybe you believe in something else. I think

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maybe you believe in the Devil.

ANT. Oh, my God, Ma!!

MA. (*Scared.*) Listen to me, Antoneh, please. Maybe somebody do something to you, maybe you have the malocchio?

ANT. (*Laughing.*) Ma, I do not have the Evil Eye!

MA. No laugh, Antoneh, please. You still have the holy water of Padre Pio I give you?

ANT. Yes.

MA. You have the statue of Sant'Antonio and Santa Maria?

ANT. Yes.

MA. You have the snakeskin I put in the plastic for you?

ANT. YES, Ma!

MA. Antoneh, you gotta pray. Because, if you keep going like this, one day you look in the mirror, and you see the Devil.

ANT. Okay, Ma, I'm getting off the phone, BYE!! (*She hangs up, and speaks to the phone.*) I am NOT the devil!

SCENE 7

Spotlight on Ant. She transforms into the "Demon," a character inspired by the Bouffon tradition. She is silent. The "Demon" offends while making the audience laugh. The gestures build in their debauchery.

SCENE 8

Phone rings. Lights up. She snaps out of the "Demon" character after "giving the finger" to the audience with both hands.

ANT. (*Answers the phone, in a rant.*) Ma, you have to stop calling me. How many times do I...I have so much to do: work, unpack, laundry. And I can't get anything done if you keep calling me. I mean, you don't even give me a chance to breathe. I'm suffocating. (*Responds to caller.*) Excuse me? (*Sheepishly.*) I'm sorry you have the wrong number (*Phone rings. She answers with hesitation.*) Hello?

MA. Hi Antoneh.

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ANT. Ma, we just got off the phone.

MA. No get upset, Antoneh. I just wanna ask you something.

ANT. What?

MA. This THING you workin' on? Issa a play, yeah? I wanna see.

ANT. No, Ma, you can't. It's not even finished yet.

MA. Why you no want me to see. You talk about me in this play.

ANT. NO, Ma! It's not ready. That's all.

MA. Why you always gotta say "no" to me?

ANT. I don't always say no.

MA. You think maybe one time you say "yes" to your mother?

ANT. Ma, I've got work to do, okay?

MA. Okay.

SCENE 9

Ant hangs up the phone. She reaches for a button-up cobbler apron and puts it on. She finds a harmonica in the pocket of the apron, and transforms into "Maria sings the Blues." Lights change. Ma starts playing blues riffs with the harmonica. After a few riffs, Ma abandons the harmonica and vocalizes her own blues riff. This is spoken/sung in the traditional blues style.

blues riff

Hello.

blues riff

My name is Maria.

blues riff

AN' I'M GONNA SING YOU THE ITALIAN WOMAN WHO COME
TO THIS COUNTRY WITH MY CHILDREN AND A HUSBAND WHO
DRIVE HER CRAZY BLUES

big blues riff

I come to this country 30 years ago.

blues riff

It take me 30 years to learn the language. Issa difficult language this
language.

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blues riff

My daughter she wanna be an actress. I no like. I think issa shit job!

blues riff

My husband, he come home from work, he lie on the couch, he watch the tv. What kind-a life is that, huh?

blues riff

My sons, they both married, have children, good job — è they drive me crazy too!

big blues riff

OH, I'M THE ITALIAN WOMAN, I NO LIKE WHAT MY HUSBAND AN' MY CHILDREN DO, È NOBODY LISTEN TO ME ANYWAYS
BLUES

blues riff

I work inna factory all my life in America.

blues riff

The other ladies, they Italiani too. They say “Ciao, ciao Maria, come stai, come stai?” (*Translation: “Hi Maria, how are you? how are you?”*) I no trust nobody!

blues riff

I work all day. I come home. I cook. I clean. I take care of everybody, but who take care of me, huh?

big blues riff

OH, I'M THE ITALIAN WOMAN, I MARRY TOO YOUNG, I WORK TOO HARD, I TAKE CARE OF EVERYBODY AND NOBODY TAKE CARE OF ME AN' I'M SO TIRED
BLUES

blues riff

My daughter, she get marry. She marry somebody. (*Disapprovingly.*) He nice. But I no understand these people: the apartment this big, (*She indicates “tiny” with her fingers.*) two dogs an' they make no money.

blues riff

I call maybe...every day. I just wanna see what they do — if they stop foolin' around an' start working for something!!

big blues riff

OH, I'M THE ITALIAN WOMAN, I JUST WANT MY DAUGHTER TO HAVE A RICH HUSBAND, LOTSA CHILDREN, SO I NO HAVE TO

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WORRY AN' BE SCARE ALL THE TIME BLUES

blues riff

So, I call Antoneh's mother-in-law. I say "Barbara, you tell them: buy a house, make more money." Like that. She say *(In a sickly sweet voice.)* "Oh, Maria, you know, we Americani, we no do that kind of stuff, we stay back." I say, "Oh, Barbara, you know, we Italiani, we different, DO SOMETHING!!"

big blues riff

OH, I'M THE ITALIAN WOMAN, NOBODY WANNA HELP ME FIX MY DAUGHTER LIFE, SO I GOTTA DO ALL BY MYSELF BLUES

blues riff

Now my daughter, she get a divorce. I tell her, why you no go to the priest è pray? Maybe now you still together. *(Exasperated sigh.)* One day, I wanna sit down with Antoneh's ex-husband è his mother. I no wanna fight, I just wanna say, "Thank you. Thank you for ruining my life."

blues riff

OH, I'M THE ITALIAN WOMAN, MY DAUGHTER NEVER LISTEN TO ME È DAT'S WHY SHE GET A DIVORCE È NOW HER LIFE IS RUINED BLUES

blues riff

I go through the change a life...right now. Hot, cold, hot, cold, hot, cold. You think I was nervous before! *(She snorts.)* I have so many beautiful grandchildren. But they drive me crazy too. They run around, they make a mess, an' they no eat nothing. I say to the mother, "Feed more pasta, more vegetali. No juicy, juicy, juice all the time." She say, "Oh, Maria. They gotta eat when they hungry." *(Confused look.)* So when nobody look, I give a little pasta over here, vegetali *(Translation: vegetables.)* over there, è they say I push too much.

big blues riff

OH, I'M THE ITALIAN WOMAN, NOBODY UNDERSTAND I NO WANNA SEE MY GRANDCHILDREN STARVE AN' DIE SKINNY BLUES

blues riff

Someday I go back to my country. È maybe somebody over there understand what I talk about. An' if my daughter ever have the children,

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maybe she finally say, “Thank you, Mommy, thank YOU! Now I know you were right all the time.”

big blues riff

OH, I’M THE ITALIAN WOMAN, I JUST WANT MY FAMILY, BUT ESPECIALLY MY DAUGHTER, TO APPRECIATE EVERYTHING I DO, AND MAYBE SAY “THANK YOU,” BUT I NO HOLD MY BREATH BLUES

SCENE 10

Phone rings. Lights up.

ANT. Hello? (*Ant takes off Ma’s apron.*)

MA. Hi, Antoneh.

ANT. Ma, I’m running out the door.

MA. È where you go?

ANT. I’m going on a date.

MA. With who?

ANT. You don’t know him.

MA. È what happen to the other boy?

ANT. It didn’t work out. Look, Ma, I just got divorced. I need to get out and meet different people.

MA. Antoneh you can’t try on the men like you try on the shoes, you understand?

ANT. Ma, I’m not.

MA. Listen to me, Antoneh. The men they want one thing.

ANT. Ma.

MA. È das it! Issa part a the body — they need, if they no have, they die.

ANT. Ugh.

MA. Issa true, Antoneh! The women, they no need.

ANT. Oh, really. Well, what if I said, women DO need it. That maybe I need it.

MA. Oh, Antoneh. Disgusting, disgusting è disgusting. Listen, Antoneh — no bring scandal a my house. Because then you make you father have a heart attack and die. And then you gotta go to the cemetery and say “I so

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sorry, Daddy, I kill you.”

ANT. Alright Ma, I’m getting off the phone.

MA. Wait, wait, wait.

ANT. WHAT?!

MA. You measure the window for the curtain?

ANT. BYE Ma!

SCENE 11

She turns the phone unit upside down and turns off ringer. She screams, walks to the red chair and sits. The scream transforms into singing. Ant uses her hands to become “Puppet Vagina.” Spotlight on “Vagina Dialogue.”

VAGINA. *(Sings to tune of “Mercedes Benz.”)* OH, LORD, SET ME FREE LORD, SET ME FREE, WHY CAN’T I HAVE SEX WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY? Whatcha lookin’ at? Haven’t you ever seen a singin’ pussy before? *(Cackles)*

ANT. Stop it! *(To audience.)* I am so sorry *(Struggles with “Puppet Vagina.”)* My vagina and I aren’t communicating right now.

VAGINA. Pussy, pussy! I’m called a pussy.

ANT. STOP! *(Traps “Puppet V” between thighs. To audience.)* She’s...um... getting bigger every day, I don’t know what to do.

VAGINA. Let me out, let me out!!! *(“Puppet V.” gets free.)* Oh, free at last, free at last, thank God almighty I’m free at last!

ANT. Enough!! *(Ant brings “Puppet V.” down to her side. To audience.)* This all started happening right after my divorce. I was watching the bobsled competition during the Winter Olympics.

VAGINA. Ooh, how I loved that. Going down those icy-cold trails. *(Acts this out.)* Aaaah, feelin’ the cool breeze blowing through my hair.

ANT. Would you stop!! *(To audience.)* And then there was that appointment with my massage therapist.

VAGINA. Ooh, I wanted to eat that boy. Yes, indeed! *(Acts out chomping.)* But she wouldn’t let me, Goddamnit!! When he was rubbing

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those thighs, he was so close, and I was sooo thirsty. (*Abruptly.*) Let me ask you something? How can you be thirsty and wet at the same time? (*Cackles.*)

ANT. Would you let me talk for one second. PLEASE!

VAGINA. (*Acts out waiting.*)

ANT. (*Whispers to audience.*) I'm thinking about taking her very far away. Maybe to my Nonna's house in Italy — where she can't hurt anybody.

VAGINA. What?! You can't take me away. (*To audience.*) Don't you feel bad for me? I'm so hungry and she wants to see me wither up and die. (*To Ant.*) If you take me away, I'll do something rash.

ANT. Oh yeah. Like what?

VAGINA. You'll see, Missy. (*Acts out thinking and comes up with an idea. "Puppet V." becomes enormous and tries to consume Ant.*)

ANT. What are you doing? Oh, my God! Get off me!! (*"Puppet V." releases Ant.*) Okay, you win, you win.

VAGINA. Ain't pussy grand? (*Cackles.*)

ANT. (*Defeated.*) I can't fight anymore.

VAGINA. Aw, don't cry, you want me to sing you a song?

ANT. (*Silent.*)

VAGINA. Hit it boys! (*Spotlight. Music cue. Sings "All of Me."*)

ALL OF ME, WHY NOT TAKE ALL OF ME,
CAN'T YOU SEE, YOU'RE NO GOOD WITHOUT ME
TAKE MY LIPS, I WANT TO LOSE THEM
TAKE MY ARMS, I'LL NEVER USE THEM
YOUR GOODBYES LEFT ME WITH EYES THAT CRY "BOO HOO"
CANT' YOU SEE THAT I, I'M NO GOOD WITHOUT YOU
YOU TOOK THAT PART THAT ONCE WAS MY HEART
SO COME ON, COME ON, COME ON, COME ON, TAKE ALL OF
(*Mimicking sound of hi-hat cymbals, then whispers "me."*) Ha-cha-cha-
chaaaaaaa.

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SCENE 12

Sound cue: long beep. Ant hears Ma leaving a message on the answering machine.

MA. Hello Antoneh, you home? Please pick up the phone if you home. *(Pause.)* I no think she home. Okay, listen to me, Antoneh. I go to my friend house yesterday è she have the living room the same like you, è she have the window in the living room the same like you, è she have the curtain sooo beautiful, è very easy to make. I can make for you, an' I wanna do. I think you like. An' then, just to see, I go to the fabric store an' I find fabric sooo beautiful, Antoneh. Green with purple stripes, really beautiful. An' the lady she say issa the best. The best. But you gotta call me because the sale end tomorrow an' I wanna go buy. So please, call me back. Please.

ANT. *(Sees mother's apron and grabs it.)* No, no, no! Stop telling me what to do!

SCENE 13

Ant transforms into Ma.

MA. *(To audience.)* You wanna know what my daughter do? You wanna know? She try to sell the wedding dress at a TAG SALE. The wedding dress I pay so much money for at a TAG SALE. I no believe this woman. I work so hard my whole life. I work like a ciuccio. A donkey. My arm and my leg they hurt me all the time — the sacrifice I make for the money. And she wanna sell the wedding dress at a tag sale. Please. But that's really no the problem. No, the first problem is she get a divorce. That's the first problem. Because where I come from, we no do that kind of stuff. NO! You marry one time an' that's it. You STUCK.

ANT. *(Talking at the phone.)* Ma, I just wanna be happy, I wanna be happy.

MA. You can't be happy in this life, Antoneh. You gotta suffer. Maybe you happy five minute over here, ten minute over there — but the life is

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shit.

ANT. No, Ma, I'm happier now.

MA. You no happy, Antoneh. You miserable. You life issa disaster!

SCENE 14

Ant slowly drops to her knees. Ant and Ma in "The Praying Duet."

ANT. *(Her prayer is sung in the improvised style of a spiritual.)* OH, LORD, OH, LORD, MY MOTHER DRIVES ME CRAZY.

MA. *(Crossing herself.)* Oh, Santa Maria, why my daughter no call me on the phone? Why?

ANT. *(Sings.)* OH, LORD, OH, LORD, WHY WON'T SHE EVER LISTEN TO ME?

MA. Oh, Santa Maria, why can't we be like other mother è daughter: go shopping together, talk nice. The daughter listen to everything the mother say.

ANT. *(Sings.)* OH, LORD, OH, LORD, I DON'T WANT CURTAINS IN MY LIVING ROOM!

MA. Oh, Santa Maria, I need a miracolo *(Translation: miracle.)* Please Santa Maria, I pray to you all the time. I go to church. I think maybe you help me this one time, huh? Please let my daughter call me on the phone with the measurement for the curtain. Please. I know it look good, but she's cappotosta! *(Translation: hardheaded!)*

ANT. *(Sung.)* OH, LORD, OH, LORD, PLEASE HELP ME TO BE FREE!

SCENE 15

Ant returns her mother's apron to the cardboard box. She takes out a scarf and shoes from the opened box and transforms into "La Diva," a famous Italian actress.

LA DIVA. Hello, my darlings! Hello! Antonietta La Diva has arrived!! *(Sound cue: applause. Sings following to tune of famous song.)* I LOVE

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NEW YORK! Oh, my darling New York people. Thank you for inviting me here to show my movie. It make Antonietta La Diva so happy. You know, where I come from – Salerno - I win a very big award, VERY big — THE GRANDE LEONE di Salerno. (*Sound cue: applause.*) My very good friend, Sofia Loren, she present it to me. We become famose (*Translation: famous.*) at the same time. Of course, she more famosa than me, but Sofia, she marry the world-famous producer/director Carlo Ponti. Antonietta La Diva, she marry Giuseppe So-What. (*Laughs at her own joke.*) Oh my darlings, tonight I play for you the last scene of the movie I win the award for — I think maybe you like to see, yes??!!! (*Sound cue: applause.*) So, in this movie, Antonietta La Diva is very poor, she no have Fredericks of Hollywood shoes, no! Antonietta La Diva, she wear rags in this movie, but she still look very sexy. And in the last scene, my darlings, I go look for my long lost mother. I was raised by someone who say she my mother, but she was very mean. And she steal me from my good mother, but my real mother, she don't know I'm the daughter. It's a long story, no worry about it. (*Acts the scene out.*) So I come out of my house, an' I look for my mother. An' it start to rain. It rain on the street of Salerno. An' the rain make my clothes more tight. An' more sexy. An' I run. An' I run, looking for my mother. "Where is my mother? Where is my mother?" And because, my darling, Antonietta La Diva is so beautiful, the camera do a close up. (*She frames her face to mimic a close-up.*) And I run, and I run, an' finally I get to the seaside. (*Gasps.*) An' I see my mother. An' Antonietta La Diva, she get so emozionata, she fall down to her knees. And then, my darling New York people, the music — it start to come up from behind me, because you see, this movie is a musical. My cousin, Rodolfo, he do the music, an' my husband, Giuseppe, do the film. (*Sings in Italian, translating immediately into English for the audience. Sound cue: intro Music to "Dicitencello vuje."*)

DICITENCELLO A'STA CUMPAGNA VOSTA

She's about to find out I'm her long-lost daughter, but no yet.

CH'AGGIO PERDUTO'O SUONNO E'A FANTASIA

I can't eat. I can't sleep, nothing!

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CH' 'A PENZO SEMPE, CH'È TUTT'A VITA MIA

I think about her all the time, she's my life.

I'NCE'O VULESSE DICERE, MA NUN CE'O SSACCIO DÍ!

I want to tell her, but I don't know how!

'A VOGLIO BENE, A' VOGLIO BENE ASSAJE

I love her, I love her so much.

DICITENNELLO, VUJE, CA NUN MM'A SCORDO MAJE!

I will never forget her!

E'NA PASSIONE, CCHIÙ FORTE 'E NA CATENA

It is a love that is stronger than a chain, but not the chain you wear around the neck. No! More like the chain you tie to the boat!

LEVÁMMOCE 'STA MASCHERA, DICIMMO 'A VERITÀ

Let us take off these masks and tell the truth.

(La Diva gasps.) My mother she start to cry. And she run into my arms. And then all the small actors of Salerno, they come around me.

(Reacts to audience.) Why you laugh? They short people. And then my darlings, this is the moment I win the award for: with my mother in my arms, Antonietta la Diva, she look over the Mediterraneo, *(Translation: Mediterranean.)* and I see my whole life pass before my eyes. *(Acts out her life story with her eyes. Ends with "Mamma.")* Thank you very much! Thank you! *(Blows kisses to the audience.)* Thank you very much!

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