

Cosmas and Damian

A Historical Comedy

by
Dana Hammer

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

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COSMAS AND DAMIAN

CAST OF CHARACTERS

COSMAS - Manic-bro doctor. Kind hearted. Christian. Spattered in blood in every single scene.

DAMIAN - Cosmas's twin. The more serious brother. Spattered in blood in every single scene.

ANNIE THE LEPER - A leper. Everyone is mean to her.

DR. UMAR - A conservative village doctor.

WALLADA - Toothache sufferer. Would-be gouging champion.

YAZID - Leg transplant receiver. Has a good attitude!

FATIMA - headache sufferer.

QARIBA - rabies sufferer

EMPEROR DIOCLETIAN - Christian-hating emperor.

SETTING:

3rd Century, Arabia. A small village.

DOUBLING, possible combinations:

Yazid-Emperor Diocletian

Fatima-Qariba

NOTE: Feel free to cast actors of any race/ethnicity. Annie, Qariba and Fatima can be any gender.

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

Cosmas and Damian's workshop. It's a merrily messy space with all kinds of dubious looking medical instruments. Blood is spattered everywhere, including on Cosmas and Damian. COSMAS and DAMIAN are twins, and they are very busy messing with a hunk of meat.

COSMAS. See? What I was thinking is, maybe it made everyone sick because there are demons in it. *(Damian examines the meat.)*

DAMIAN. It's possible. Should we pray?

COSMAS. Of course we should pray, bro! *(Together they bow their heads.)* Dear God. We ask that you cast out any demons that are hiding in our village's mutton supplies. The sickness is more than our people can bear, and the stench is unrelenting.

DAMIAN. If it be your will to curse us with stomach plagues, we understand. But if it not be your will, please just get rid of the meat demons. Ok?

COSMAS. We ask this in Jesus' name.

DAMIAN AND COSMAS. Amen. *(Damian and Cosmas high five.)*

COSMAS. What should we do with the meat?

DAMIAN. I have an idea about that actually.

COSMAS. You do? Go on!

DAMIAN. I was thinking, maybe the meat made us sick because it was left out in the sun for so long, before we ate it.

COSMAS. Well of course. If you leave food in the sun, it gives demons an opportunity to sneak into the meat.

DAMIAN. Right. But I was thinking, what if it wasn't demons at all?

COSMAS. What else could it be?

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DAMIAN. Maybe like, tiny insects that inhabit the meat, and multiply when exposed to the heat of the sun. And then when we eat them, they make us sick. *(Cosmas looks at Damian like he's insane.)*

COSMAS. Ok, bro? I like your outside the box thinking? But there were no insects on the meat. No one would eat maggoty meat.

DAMIAN. Maybe the insects are so small you can't see them?

COSMAS. You can't see them. So they're like the demons.

DAMIAN. Kind of.

COSMAS. So how is your idea different than the demon idea?

DAMIAN. I guess it's not. *(Fatima enters. She is clutching her head and walking slowly. The brothers are eager to help.)*

COSMAS. Hello! How can we help you today? *(Fatima flinches at Cosmas' loud voice.)*

FATIMA. Shhh. Could you keep it down please? *(Fatima sits on the ground, closing her eyes.)* It's so bright. *(Damian begins examining Fatima, looking in her ears, sifting through her hair, etc.)*

COSMAS. What seems to be the problem? Hangover?

FATIMA. No. I just get these terrible headaches. The slightest sound makes me feel like my head's gonna explode. I see these flashing lights. I get so sick. I feel like dying. *(Cosmas and Damian look at each other, interested.)*

DAMIAN. And when did this start?

FATIMA. I don't know. It's happened for years, but it's getting worse now.

COSMAS. Have you eaten any mutton recently?

FATIMA. No.

COSMAS. Hmm. So not related to the tainted mutton.

FATIMA. I just want to be in a dark room somewhere, where no light can get me.

COSMAS. You say...you crave the darkness? *(Cosmas and Damian exchange a look again.)*

FATIMA. I do.

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COSMAS. Well, I think we know the problem.

FATIMA. You do?

DAMIAN AND COSMAS. Demons.

FATIMA. Demons?!

COSMAS. Yes. Sometimes demons get inside the human body and wreak havoc on a person's constitution. *(Damian gets up in Fatima's face.)*

DAMIAN. Have you been consorting with demons?

FATIMA. I...no!

DAMIAN. Are you sure?

FATIMA. Pretty sure. Though I mean, how would I know? Aren't demons invisible?

DAMIAN. Yes. Unless you summon them in corporeal form. *(Damian is not backing away from Fatima. He is trying to be as intimidating as possible. Cosmas pulls Damian back from their patient.)*

COSMAS. It's alright Damian. The important thing is, we can help this woman.

FATIMA. You can?

COSMAS. Of course, we can! *(Damian grabs Cosmas and drags him downstage for a consult.)*

DAMIAN. What are you talking about? She's possessed by a demon!

COSMAS. Her head is possessed by a demon. We just have to let the demon out.

DAMIAN. No, Cosmas!

COSMAS. Yes, Damian!

DAMIAN. It's too dangerous.

COSMAS. It's dangerous to leave that demon rattling around in that lady's head!

DAMIAN. So, we drill a hole in her skull to let it out? It sounds crazy.

COSMAS. But it's not crazy. How else can we get the demon out?

DAMIAN. Prayer?

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COSMAS. No. We need to drill a hole in her skull.

DAMIAN. But Cosmas- *(Cosmas puts a hand on Damian's shoulder, silencing him.)*

COSMAS. Damian. What does Paul say?

DAMIAN. *(Mumbles)*

COSMAS. I can do ALL THINGS through Christ who strengthens me.

DAMIAN. Yeah.

COSMAS. All things, Damian. Not just “easy things” or “traditional things” or “medically safe” things. All things.

DAMIAN. You know what? You're absolutely right. I'm sorry for my lack of faith, Bro.

COSMAS. It's ok, Bro. I forgive you. And more important, God forgives you. *(They hug.)*

DAMIAN. Ok. Let's do this! *(The brothers jump and do a high five as they shout-)*

DAMIAN AND COSMAS. FOR JESUS! *(Fatima has been watching this with a suspicious look. Now she straightens up as they approach her.)*

FATIMA. So. Can you fix me?

DAMIAN. Yes!

COSMAS. Through Christ who strengthens us! *(Cosmas and Damian prepare to do a trepanation. They gather frightening tools, and silently bicker over which drilling tool to use. Fatima talks, facing the audience, not noticing their preparations.)*

FATIMA. Oh good. You know, people said I shouldn't go to you, because you were loony. They said, yeah, they don't charge money, but they have some real wacky ideas about medicine. And also, there's the whole Christian thing. You know, people really frown on that around here, but I said, hey, give 'em a chance, you know? *(Cosmas grabs Fatima's head and holds it firmly. She stops talking, alarmed.)* Um. What are you doing? *(Damian stands behind Fatima, holding a drilling tool.)*

COSMAS. Fixing your problem.

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FATIMA. What are you gonna do?

COSMAS. Shhh. Don't you fret. It'll all be over soon. *(Fatima tries to turn and look, but Cosmas holds her head steady.)*

Don't worry about anything else that might be happening. Just hold still. It's very important that you be perfectly still. No matter what.

FATIMA. But-

DR. UMAR. WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING? *(DR. UMAR has rushed onstage. He is the conservative village doctor, and he is outraged. Cosmas and Damian roll their eyes, exasperated. But Damian sets down his drilling tool.)*

DAMIAN AND COSMAS. Hello Dr. Umar.

Dr. Umar rushes to Fatima's side, and looks her over.

DR. UMAR. What did they do to you? Are you alright?

FATIMA. They didn't do anything, yet. *(Dr. Umar leaves the patient and confronts the twins.)*

DR. UMAR. Were you about to stab this person in the head?

DAMIAN AND COSMAS. No, Doctor Umar.

DR. UMAR. Then what in the hell were you doing?

COSMAS. Look, you wouldn't understand.

DR. UMAR. No, I probably wouldn't. But as a real doctor, and someone who is trying to keep this village safe and healthy, I demand an explanation.

COSMAS. We're real doctors too.

DAMIAN. Yeah.

DR. UMAR. Were you, or were you not, going to stab this patient in the head?

COSMAS. No! *(Damian grabs his drilling tool and brandishes it.)*

DAMIAN. Does this look like a stabbing tool to you? No. It's a drilling tool. We were gonna drill a tiny little hole in her skull. Nothing to worry about.

DR. UMAR. Nothing to worry about. *(Dr. Umar is flabbergasted and appalled. He paces, fuming, as he talks.)* You two have been trying my patience for far too long. When you first

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started practicing your “medicine” I thought, hey, maybe it’ll be fine. But it wasn’t fine. You know Petra, the well-watcher? She came to me saying that you refused to give her poppy syrup for her monthly pains.

DAMIAN. She’s a woman, Dr. Umar. It’s her lot in life to feel pain.

COSMAS. It’s God’s will.

DR. UMAR. As doctors, it’s your job to stop pain! Not ignore it! Not cause it by drilling into skulls! What the actual fuck is the matter with you? *(Fatima has been cringing this whole time. The shouting is making her head hurt. Dr. Umar notices.)* Oh. *(He approaches Fatima, quiet and calm now.)* I’m sorry. The noise hurts your head, doesn’t it?

FATIMA. It does.

DR. UMAR. My mother suffered from these types of head problems. Have you tried poppy syrup?

FATIMA. What’s that? *(Dr. Umar laughs, delighted.)*

DR. UMAR. Oh my dear! You’re in for a treat. Come with me. I’ll get you set up. *(Dr. Umar grabs Fatima and gently takes her arm, leading her offstage. He turns to face the brothers as he leaves, shaking his head, disgusted, letting them know just how disgusted he is. Then he exits.)*

COSMAS. Jesus said not to hate anyone.

DAMIAN. He did.

COSMAS. But if I were to hate someone? It would be that dude.

DAMIAN. I would hate him so much, if I could.

COSMAS. Like, if I could hate him? I would paint a big giant marquee over the village that says ‘I hate Dr. Umar’.

DAMIAN. If I could hate him? I’d tie him up and ship him to Iran on the back of a farting camel.

COSMAS. If I could hate him? I’d pour salt all over his crops and ruin his harvest.

DAMIAN. If I could hate him? I’d drill a hole in his head. Not for medicine. Just for fun.

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COSMAS. It's lucky for him that we can't hate him.

DAMIAN. Jesus wouldn't like it.

COSMAS. Instead we should pray for him.

DAMIAN. We should.

COSMAS. But not yet.

DAMIAN. I don't feel like it right now.

COSMAS. I won't feel like it later, either.

DAMIAN. Probably not.

COSMAS. We might not ever feel like praying for him.

DAMIAN. But we don't hate him, and that's the important thing.

COSMAS. Right. *(They both glare at the exit, where Dr. Umar used to be.)* Anyway. You know that woman whose tongue got cut out, because she was nagging her husband?

DAMIAN. Yeah.

COSMAS. Let's go find her. Maybe we can use the tainted mutton to fashion a new tongue for her. Like, cut it into a tongue shape and sew it in her mouth.

DAMIAN. That's a genius idea!

COSMAS. Thank you!

DAMIAN. Let's do it. *(They high five again.)*

DAMIAN AND COSMAS. FOR JESUS! *(They exit, high energy. Cosmas rushes back onstage and grabs the meat, then exits again. Lights dim.)*

SCENE 2

Lights up on the workshop. Cosmas and Damian enter, exhausted.

COSMAS. Well, that didn't go well.

DAMIAN. She was really unreasonable.

COSMAS. I mean, we were just trying to help.

DAMIAN. Do you think she's a witch?

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COSMAS. Probably. That's probably why she was nagging her husband so much too.

DAMIAN. It explains everything.

COSMAS. It does.

DAMIAN. Witches, man.

COSMAS. Witches be crazy. *(YAZID enters. He is crawling, dragging his badly damaged leg. He grunts unpleasantly. His progress is slow, but determined. Cosmas and Damian stop talking and look at Yazid. They watch him for several beats before anyone speaks.)* Hey there, Yazid. You ok?

YAZID. It's this leg. *(Damian goes to Yazid and helps him lay down.)*

DAMIAN. Stop moving. Let us examine you.

YAZID. I don't have any money.

COSMAS. Not a problem. We don't charge for our services. You know that.

YAZID. That's very kind of you. Thank you.

COSMAS. Don't thank us. Thank Jesus.

YAZID. Oh. Ok. Anyway, my leg is all messed up. Can you fix it?

DAMIAN. Let's check it out. *(Cosmas and Damian lift Yazid's robe and recoil in horror.)*

COSMAS. What the hell have you done to yourself?

DAMIAN. It's the worst case of gangrene I've ever seen.

COSMAS. Dude, your leg is rotten down to the bone.

YAZID. I know! I tried everything! I applied a sheep shit poultice.

COSMAS. Of course.

YAZID. I cleansed it with the spittle of a newborn.

DAMIAN. As one does.

YAZID. I smeared it with ashes from a burnt pigeon corpse.

COSMAS. And that didn't work?

YAZID. No! Nothing worked! *(Cosmas and Damian shake their heads sadly.)*

DAMIAN. I'm sorry Yazid. This leg has to come off.

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YAZID. NO! (*Yazid tries to crawl away, but he moves slowly, due to the gangrene. His escape attempt is comical, but very real.*)

DAMIAN. Should we stop him?

COSMAS. He won't make it far. Listen, I have an idea.

DAMIAN. What is it?

COSMAS. You know that dead Ethiopian?

DAMIAN. Which dead Ethiopian?

COSMAS. The one we treated yesterday for bloody shitting? And then he died?

DAMIAN. Oh right. Yes.

COSMAS. You know...he has two perfectly good legs.

DAMIAN. He's dead, so they're not perfectly good.

COSMAS. I mean, there's nothing structurally wrong with them.

DAMIAN. No, I guess there isn't.

COSMAS. What if we cut one of the Ethiopian's legs off and sewed it onto Yazid?

DAMIAN. Oooh. Huh.

COSMAS. You see what I mean? Look at him. (*Cosmas points at Yazid, who is still making slow, painful progress across the stage.*) Poor guy.

DAMIAN. He does seem like he's in a lot of pain.

COSMAS. And he needs to have two legs, dude. Come on.

DAMIAN. Two legs are better than one.

COSMAS. So, what do you say? Wanna give it a try?

DAMIAN. I mean...isn't it kind of against the natural order of things? I mean, putting dead stuff on a living person?

COSMAS. I don't know. But think of what will happen if it works! Word of our skill will spread all around the world.

DAMIAN. It will.

COSMAS. And it will all be to the glory of God!

DAMIAN. It will?

COSMAS. Of course! God is the one who sent us the Ethiopian, right? And God is the one who gave us healing

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powers. And God is the one who send Yazid here, with his disgusting leg. And God is the one who gave me my brilliant brain that came up with the brilliant idea to sew a dead leg on a living stump! And after we do the surgery, we'll make sure everyone knows that.

DAMIAN. I see. *(Damian looks at Yazid and shrugs.)* You know what? Why not? *(The brothers high five.)*

DAMIAN AND COSMAS. FOR JESUS!

COSMAS. Hey, Yazid? *(Yazid is almost offstage.)*

YAZID. You'll never take my leg! *(Cosmas and Damian roll their eyes at each other. They go grab Yazid and drag him back to center stage. Damian sits on him to keep him in place. Yazid struggles to free himself.)*

YAZID. No! You can't take my leg! Please!

COSMAS. Just calm down and listen. We're gonna cut your leg off, ok?

YAZID. NO!

COSMAS. Shut up. Listen. But after we cut your leg off, we're gonna sew a new one. *(Yazid stops struggling.)*

YAZID. What? How?

COSMAS. We've got a perfectly good Ethiopian leg out back.

DAMIAN. You're lucky you came before burial day.

YAZID. The...you're gonna sew a dead guy's leg on me?

COSMAS. Yes.

DAMIAN. Don't worry. He's not using it anymore.

YAZID. Sure, but...does that sound like kind of a weird plan to you?

COSMAS. No.

DAMIAN. Yes. But we believe it will work. And then you'll have two legs again, and no gangrene. Won't that be nice?

YAZID. I mean, yeah. Of course, that'd be nice.

COSMAS. Great, then it's settled. Damian, administer the anesthesia.

YAZID. Wait- *(Damian punches Yazid in the head, hard, making him pass out.)*

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COSMAS. Great. Let's get started. *(Damian gets a large saw and kneels down next to Yazid, and gets to work. Lights out.)*

SCENE 3

Lights up on the village street. Dr. Umar walks onstage, followed by ANNIE THE LEPER. Annie is dressed in rags, and has sores all over her skin, and messy hair.

ANNIE. Can I please have some of your poppy syrup? I need it for the pain. *(Dr. Umar picks up a rock and throws it at her.)*

DR. UMAR. LEPER! Get away! Get away, Leper!

ANNIE. I just need-

DR. UMAR. *(Throws another rock)* GET AWAY! Back to your hovel! *(Annie cowers. Yazid comes onstage. He is standing! But his new leg is not working out well. He drags it uncomfortably. Annie stands when she sees him, curious.)*

ANNIE. Yazid! Are you ok?

YAZID. Annie the Leper! Of course I'm ok! Why are you in the village?

ANNIE. It's just...you got a little hitch in your giddyup there.

YAZID. This? No, it's just my new leg!

DR. UMAR. New leg? What nonsense is this?

YAZID. It's not nonsense! I had the leg rot, and Cosmas and Damian removed it and sewed this new one on.

DR. UMAR. That's...impossible!

ANNIE. Let me see. *(Annie goes to Yazid and tries to lift his robe. Yazid screams and backs away.)*

YAZID. LEPER!

ANNIE. Yeah, yeah. *(She backs away, offended.)*

DR. UMAR. The leper is right. It must be examined.

YAZID. Suit yourself. *(Yazid lifts his robe and reveals a leg. The skin tone does not match his own. Dr. Umar recoils.)*

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DR. UMAR. Oh my god. Yazid. That leg is rotten.

YAZID. No, no. The doctors said that it might smell a bit funny until it takes.

DR. UMAR. Until it takes.

YAZID. Yeah. Until it grows into my body.

DR. UMAR. Grows into your body.

YAZID. Yeah, why do you keep repeating me?

DR. UMAR. I'm...I... *(Dr. Umar is breathing heavily, trying to keep calm.)*

ANNIE. Say, Yazid. You know. I'm familiar with ailments that rot the skin. And if I may be so bold- *(Yazid picks up a rock and throws it at Annie.)*

YAZID. GO BACK TO YOUR HOVEL, LEPER! *(Annie runs offstage.)*

DR. UMAR. Yazid. You aren't gonna like what I have to say, but I have to say it. That leg has to come off.

YAZID. NO!

DR. UMAR. It's not healthy tissue. Any REAL doctor can see that. If you leave it on, it'll give you an infection. You could die. Best case scenario, it falls off on its own. That's best case scenario.

YAZID. You aren't a real doctor. You only do it for the money. Cosmas and Damian are working for their God, out of the goodness of their hearts. They don't charge fees like you, because they're not greedy!

DR. UMAR. You ever heard about getting what you pay for?

YAZID. No. But I heard about evil rich men like you, who take advantage of the poor.

DR. UMAR. I'm not taking advantage of anyone! I'm trying to help you you fucking idiot!

YAZID. Wow. Nice language.

DR. UMAR. I'm sorry. I just...it's very frustrating to me to see this sort of thing. Please. Let me help you.

YAZID. No thank you. I'll keep my new leg. Which is perfect in every way.

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DR. UMAR. It's not perfect in any way! (*Yazid makes his way offstage, limping badly, dragging his awful new leg along the ground.*)

YAZID. Look. See how I prance about!

DR. UMAR. (*Calls after him*) You're delusional. Probably due to infection and fever.

YAZID. (*Calls over his shoulder*) Nope. I'm high on life! Healthy and vigorous. (*Yazid exits. Dr. Umar sighs, and hunches. WALLADA comes onstage. She is pretty and kind looking. She is holding a poultice on her cheek, trying to soothe a toothache.*)

WALLADA. Dr. Umar? There's another rabid boy in the town square.

DR. UMAR. Again?

WALLADA. Yeah. I told all the boys to leave the coyotes alone, but they don't listen.

DR. UMAR. No, they don't. (*Dr. Umar takes out a large machete.*) I'll go cut his head off. Thanks for letting me know.

WALLADA. Are you alright doctor? You seem a little down.

DR. UMAR. It's just...I don't know. Those doctors, Cosmas and Damian. Their medicine is against all common sense, but the people don't see it. All they care about is the fact that they work for free.

WALLADA. Free? What? Free, you say?

DR. UMAR. Yeah. They don't charge for their services. But their treatments are usually useless and often downright dangerous. I don't know how to convince the town to stop seeing them.

WALLADA. Yeah, right.

DR. UMAR. Say. What's that you're putting on your face? Is something hurting you? (*Wallada removes the poultice quickly, hiding it behind her back.*)

WALLADA. No! Nope. Totally fine. (*Offstage, there is a feral growling, and screams.*)

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DR. UMAR. Ah. That'll be rabies boy. I guess I'd better go decapitate him before he hurts someone.

WALLADA. Yeah, you go do that. *(Wallada shoos him offstage. Dr. Umar wearily exits. Wallada puts her poultice back on her face and looks around. Annie creeps back onstage. Wallada throws the poultice at her.)*

WALLADA. LEPER! AWAY!

ANNIE. Calm down. I overheard you talking to the doctor. You want some of that free, sketchy medicine, dontcha?

WALLADA. You know I do.

ANNIE. Come on. I'll show you the way.

WALLADA. Thanks! *(Together, the ladies exit. Lights dim.)*

SCENE 4

Lights up on the village street. Wallada and Annie walk together.

ANNIE. It's near here. They're real nice guys. You'll like 'em.

WALLADA. Good. *(Cosmas and Damian walk by, busy talking.)*

ANNIE. Oh! There they are!

COSMAS. So I was thinking, maybe we do something with bees.

DAMIAN. Bees?

COSMAS. Yeah. Maybe bee stings could be good for- *(He stops when he sees Annie.)* Hey! Annie the Leper! How's it going?

DAMIAN. Oh, hey! I thought you weren't allowed in the village anymore.

COSMAS. Because of the leprosy.

ANNIE. I'm not. I came to see about getting some of Dr. Umar's poppy syrup.

COSMAS. Ah.

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ANNIE. Do you happen to have any poppy syrup?

COSMAS. No.

DAMIAN. We don't approve of it.

ANNIE. Really? Why not?

COSMAS. Well, pain is a gift from God. It tells us that something is wrong with our bodies.

DAMIAN. Also, I'm pretty sure that stuff is addictive.

ANNIE. Addictive?

DAMIAN. Yeah. Have you seen Dr. Umar's patients? They all want poppy syrup. And the more they get the more they want.

COSMAS. It's sort of alarming, when you think about it.

DAMIAN. It is. Poor Dr. Umar isn't even really a doctor anymore. He just deals in poppy syrup.

COSMAS. Yeah. He's a poppy syrup dealer now.

ANNIE. I would still like to have some.

COSMAS. I'm sure you would. But we can't help you.

(Wallada clears her throat.)

ANNIE. Oh! Right. This is Wallada. She has a toothache.

(Wallada waves a hand, still holding her face. Cosmas sees her properly and is enchanted. He moves closer. He takes her free hand.)

COSMAS. Pleased to meet you, Wallada. *(Damian grabs the poultice from her and throws it away.)*

DAMIAN. This is garbage.

WALLADA. Hey!

COSMAS. My brother is rude, but correct. A poultice won't help with dental problems.

WALLADA. What will? *(Damian grabs Wallada, pushes her to the ground and sits on her.)* HEY! HEY! *(Damian holds his hand up.)*

DAMIAN. Pliers! *(Cosmas quickly hands Damian the pliers. Wallada wails. Damian plugs Wallada's nose so her mouth opens. Then he quickly sticks the pliers in her mouth and extracts a tooth. He stands, triumphant, holding the tooth above, like a trophy.)* Got it! *(Damian and Cosmas high five.)*

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Wallada gets to her feet, unsteady. Her mouth is bleeding, but she's smiling.)

WALLADA. Wow. It feels better already.

DAMIAN. All in a day's work. *(Annie grabs the poultice and brings it to Wallada, holding it out helpfully.)*

ANNIE. Here. It'll absorb the blood.

WALLADA. LEPER! *(Wallada screams and kicks Annie repeatedly. Annie runs offstage. Cosmas grabs Wallada's shoulders, speaking calmly.)*

COSMAS. Hey. Calm down.

WALLADA. But the leper-

COSMAS. She meant no harm.

WALLADA. She tried to touch me.

COSMAS. She was trying to help.

WALLADA. I could have been tainted with leper juice!

COSMAS. I understand your fear. But Annie the Leper is a human being. Made in the image of God. And though her face is disgusting, and her body is rotting, we should still try to be nice to her. It's what Jesus would want. *(Wallada gasps.)*

WALLADA. Oh...are you a Christian?

COSMAS. Yep.

DAMIAN. We both are.

WALLADA. But...Christianity's a cult. A dangerous cult.

COSMAS. Says who?

WALLADA. Everyone.

DAMIAN. It's not a cult. It's a religion. You'll see, soon it'll all seem normal, once it spreads some more.

WALLADA. I very much doubt it'll spread. It's too weird.

COSMAS. Well, agree to disagree. Now. Tell me about yourself.

WALLADA. What do you want to know?

COSMAS. Tell me about your family. How you spend your time. Your hopes and dreams. Do you like sourdough bread? *(Cosmas takes Wallada's hand and leads her downstage.)*

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

He gives Damian a “get out of here” look. Damian nods, understanding. He exits. Alone, Cosmas and Wallada sit.)

WALLADA. There’s not much to tell. I live with my seventeen siblings, and my mother. She’s getting old, so I have to help her around the house a lot.

COSMAS. I admire that.

WALLADA. Thank you.

COSMAS. So, you’re not married.

WALLADA. No.

COSMAS. Do you want to be?

WALLADA. Are you proposing?

COSMAS. Not yet. *(Wallada laughs, not sure if he’s kidding.)*

WALLADA. No. I actually have some things I want to accomplish before I get married.

COSMAS. Accomplish? What is there for an unmarried woman to accomplish aside from marriage?

WALLADA. Oh, I see.

COSMAS. Are you annoyed?

WALLADA. Yes. I’m annoyed.

COSMAS. Why?

WALLADA. Because you’re just like all the other guys in this village. I thought maybe since you’re in this love and acceptance cult-

COSMAS. Not a cult.

WALLADA. Whatever. I thought that since you have these...beliefs, maybe you’d be different. Maybe you’d think it’s ok for a woman to have goals, like men do. But I guess your cult is no different than any other.

COSMAS. No! Wait. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to offend you.

WALLADA. Well, you did.

COSMAS. I’m sorry. Sit. Tell me your goals. I really do want to know. *(Wallada sits, sighing.)*

WALLADA. I don’t think you’ll approve.

COSMAS. Do you care?

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

WALLADA. You know what? No. I don't care. *(She takes a deep breath, preparing to tell her secret.)* My goal is to be the village gouging champion. *(Cosmas blinks.)*

COSMAS. I'm sorry? *(Wallada stands, flustered.)*

WALLADA. See? You think it's stupid. You- *(Cosmas grabs her and stops her from leaving.)*

COSMAS. Hey. I was just surprised. That's not what I was expecting you to say, that's all. Please. Sit. Stay. *(He pats the ground next to him. She sits again, reluctantly.)*

COSMAS. So. The village gouging champion.

WALLADA. The village gouging champion.

COSMAS. When you say gouging. You mean the sport where men try to rip each other's eyeballs out of their heads?

WALLADA. That's the one.

COSMAS. And you want to do that.

WALLADA. I do.

COSMAS. Why? I'm not asking you as a woman. I'm asking you as one human being to another. Why do you want to do that?

WALLADA. Well. Have you ever squished a grape in your hands? You know that satisfying 'POP'? *(Wallada mimics squishing a grape.)*

COSMAS. Oh wow.

WALLADA. Also, I have a lot of unresolved anger toward my father? That probably contributes to my violent urges.

COSMAS. I see.

WALLADA. So...do you have anything to say?

COSMAS. I... I don't know.

WALLADA. Go ahead. I can see you want to say something.

COSMAS. I don't want you to get mad at me.

WALLADA. Say it. Don't be a pussy.

COSMAS. It's just...your eyes.

WALLADA. What about them?

COSMAS. They're so beautiful...I mean. What if you lose, and someone rips them out of your face?

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

WALLADA. I guess I'd better not lose, huh?

COSMAS. I guess not. *(Wallada looks at Cosmas, takes in his horrified face. She sighs.)*

WALLADA. Well, I'd better be going. Thank your brother for fixing my tooth. *(She stands, getting ready to go.)*

COSMAS. Sure. *(He stands as well.)* Try not to swallow too much blood. It'll make you puke.

WALLADA. Noted.

COSMAS. And Wallada-

WALLADA. Yes?

COSMAS. It was a real pleasure meeting you. *(Wallada smiles a little, waves and exits. Damian comes back onstage.)*

DAMIAN. So, she's nuts.

COSMAS. She's not nuts. She's just...different. Different than any woman I've ever met.

DAMIAN. I heard everything, Cosmas. She wants to rip out eyeballs. That's some sick shit.

COSMAS. It's odd.

DAMIAN. It's crazy.

COSMAS. I don't think she's crazy. But I do think she needs help.

DAMIAN. Help?

COSMAS. Yeah. I think we need to help her.

DAMIAN. Help her what? Train for the gouging tournament?

COSMAS. No, you idiot! We need to train her to be a lady. A regular, healthy lady.

DAMIAN. That...doesn't sound like medicine.

COSMAS. Of course it is. *(Dr. Umar comes onstage.)*

DR. UMAR. I couldn't help overhearing. *(Damian and Cosmas roll their eyes at each other.)*

DAMIAN AND COSMAS. Hi Dr. Umar.

DR. UMAR. So, you've met Wallada, the would-be-gouging-champion.

COSMAS. You know her? How?

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

DR. UMAR. I treat her father for assorted ailments. He requires poppy syrup at all hours of the day. (*Damian and Cosmas exchange a look.*) Anyway, I just want to warn you. You can't fix Wallada.

COSMAS. Says who?

DR. UMAR. Says me. She has a wandering womb. It makes her mannish and odd. Worse, she's headstrong, and can't be reasoned with. Stronger men than you have tried.

DAMIAN. But have stronger men than our God tried?

DR. UMAR. I don't understand your question.

DAMIAN. It means we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. (*Damian and Cosmas fist bump.*)

DR. UMAR. Ah. The cult stuff.

COSMAS. It's not a cult. And we can cure Wallada of her violent, mannish tendencies. We can get that wandering womb to stay put, and all will be well with her.

DR. UMAR. No, you can't.

COSMAS. Yes, we can. In fact, let's make a wager.

DR. UMAR. I'm listening.

COSMAS. If we cure Wallada, you leave town, forever.

DR. UMAR. Leave town?

DAMIAN. Forever.

DR. UMAR. Well, since there's no way you'll win, I'll take that bet. And what if I win?

COSMAS. If you win - which you won't - we'll quit practicing medicine.

DR. UMAR. Seriously? (*Cosmas and Damian both cross their arms over their chests and nod, agreed.*) Hell yes, I take that bet! (*The doctors all shake.*)

DAMIAN. Then it's settled.

COSMAS. Let the best doctors win.

DR. UMAR. Indeed. (*Lights fade.*)

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

SCENE 5

Lights up on the village street. Wallada stands next to a sign that says: gouging practice.

WALLADA. Gouging practice! Gouging practice! Come practice for the upcoming gouging tournament! *(Wallada makes goug-y motions with her hands/thumbs .Yazid comes onstage, with QARIBA. Yazid is not doing well. He is sick and sweaty. He still has to drag his dead leg as he walks. Still, he's doing better than Qariba. Qariba is on a leash, foaming at the mouth, swaying weirdly.)* Yazid! Hello!

YAZID. Hey, Wallada. I heard you were looking to practice for the gouging tournament.

WALLADA. Yeah. But no takers so far.

YAZID. Well, here. *(He hands the leash to Wallada.)* My sister. Just came down with rabies a few days ago. I figure she's gonna die anyway, so, I don't know. Maybe you can make use of her.

WALLADA. Thank you Yazid! A rabid girl is a perfect practice partner. So vicious! So scary! *(She looks at Qariba fondly. Qariba lunges at Wallada, trying to bite her. Wallada steps back quickly and laughs.)* Ooh, you're a feisty one, aren't you? *(She talks to Qariba like a dog.)* I'm gonna gouge your eyes out. Yes, I am! Yes, I am!

YAZID. Yeah. Watch out that she doesn't bite you though.

WALLADA. Of course. *(She stands and ties the leash to something.)* So, hey, how's your leg? You know the whole village is talking about it. The twin doctors sewed an Ethiopian one on you, right?

YAZID. Yep! I owe those men my life.

WALLADA. So, it's working out ok?

YAZID. Sure is. *(Yazid does some slow, painful movements to show how fine he is.)*

WALLADA. Wow. Ok.

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

YAZID. They're saints, those boys.

WALLADA. Huh. And that one brother, Cosmas? Do you know-

DR. UMAR. Why is that rabid person tied up like a dog? *(Dr. Umar stomps onstage.)* Seriously. What are you thinking?

WALLADA. Oh. Hi Dr Umar.

YAZID. Hello.

DR. UMAR. Hi. What's happening here? *(He points at Qariba.)*

WALLADA. Oh. I'm gonna use her for gouging practice.

DR. UMAR. WHAT?

YAZID. Oh, it's ok, Dr. Umar. She's got the rabies. So, you know.

DR. UMAR. No, I don't know. So because she has the misfortune to contract a disease, you think you can tie her up and torture her?

YAZID. I mean, yeah.

WALLADA. What else is she good for now?

YAZID. She can't cook.

WALLADA. Or help around the farm.

YAZID. She might as well be of use to the lovely Wallada here.

DR. UMAR. Oh my god I hate this village. *(Dr. Umar takes out his rabies knife and stabs Qariba in the head. Qariba collapses, dead.)*

WALLADA. Hey!

YAZID. That's my sister, you know. I gave her as a gift to Wallada.

DR. UMAR. You can't give a person as a gift.

YAZID. Sure you can.

DR. UMAR. It's just...I'm sorry. I can't with you today.

YAZID. Alright. Bye, Dr. Umar.

Dr. Umar starts to leave, but then thinks better of it.

DR. UMAR. Yazid.

YAZID. Yeah?

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

DR. UMAR. How's your leg?

YAZID. Perfect. Why do you ask?

DR. UMAR. No reason. Just...you look a little feverish. Like maybe you're in pain.

YAZID. Nope. Just fine and dandy.

DR. UMAR. Ok. Because if you need some poppy syrup, I'd be happy to give you some.

YAZID. You mean you'd be happy to sell me some.

DR. UMAR. Well, yes.

WALLADA. Don't do it Yazid! My dad bought that syrup and now he can't live without it. It's shameful the way he grovels for that poison.

DR. UMAR. It's not poison. It's medicine. And it helps with pain.

WALLADA. Sure it does.

YAZID. Yeah, well, I don't need it anyway.

DR. UMAR. You know, I'm not the bad guy here. I'm trying to help.

WALLADA. You're trying to make money.

DR. UMAR. A man has to eat. That doesn't make me a villain.

YAZID. Cosmas and Damian have to eat. But they don't extort money from their patients.

DR. UMAR. Extort? Extort? *(Dr. Umar is furious. He takes a moment to calm himself.)* You know, I have a feeling your friends won't be around much longer. So maybe it's time to start thinking of different ways to get medical care.

WALLADA. What are you talking about?

DR. UMAR. Nothing. Just, you know. People in high places don't really like that cult they belong to.

YAZID. So?

DR. UMAR. Well, a wrong word to the wrong people and they might get arrested. You know the Emperor? Diocletian? He hates Christians.

WALLADA. Are you threatening to turn them in or something? Why would you do that?

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

DR. UMAR. I wouldn't. But someone should. Because they're a menace to this village. Look at that man! *(He points to Yazid.)* Look at his goddamn rotting leg! And half the village thinks it's some kind of miracle. And now they're all gonna go to Cosmas and Damian and ask for miracle cures, and *THEY ARE NOT MIRACLE CURES.* *(A few beats.)*

YAZID. This is for sure a miracle cure. *(He shakes his dead leg. He does a very awkward dance.)*

YAZID. See?

DR. UMAR. Whatever. Just... don't fucking tie up any more rabid people. Ok? Just... *(Dr. Umar is too disgusted to speak. He exits. Yazid and Wallada look at the dead person.)*

YAZID. Well, I mean...the eyeballs are still there.

WALLADA. Doesn't exactly present a challenge though.

YAZID. No.

WALLADA. Still. Don't want her to go to waste.

YAZID. No. She wouldn't want that. I think. Alright. I've got some things to do, so I'll leave you to it. Have fun, and I'll come collect the body on my way back.

WALLADA. Thanks Yazid! *(Yazid exits, painfully. Wallada unties the leash, getting ready to do her thing. Cosmas and Damian enter.)*

COSMAS. Wallada! *(Wallada turns and sees the brothers and smiles.)*

WALLADA. Oh, hi guys.

DAMIAN. Whatcha doin' there?

WALLADA. Uh, this is a dead person. I was just gonna practice my gouging on the body.

COSMAS. Of course.

DAMIAN. That's all totally fine.

COSMAS. So listen. We wanted to talk to you.

WALLADA. About?

COSMAS. About, you know. Your condition.

DAMIAN. Your wandering womb.

WALLADA. My wandering womb.

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

DAMIAN. Yeah.

WALLADA. You're idiots.

COSMAS. It's perfectly natural to be defensive. We understand. But we think we can help you.

WALLADA. I don't want your help.

DAMIAN. But you need it.

WALLADA. No I don't.

DAMIAN. You're about to gouge a dead person's eyeball out of her head, and you think you don't need help.

WALLADA. I'm practicing for a sport. A legitimate sport.

DAMIAN. Yes, a legitimate sport. For MEN.

WALLADA. See? That kind of backwards, sexist- *(Cosmas slaps Damian. It silences Wallada, who is shocked. Damian is also shocked.)*

DAMIAN. Dude. *(Cosmas is shocked by his own actions, but tries to act normal. He stage whispers to Damian.)*

COSMAS. Dude. Just be cool. I'm handling it. *(Loud, bad acting)* Darn it, Damian! You can't talk to a lady like that! Show some respect!

DAMIAN. Not cool, man.

COSMAS. *(Turns to Wallada)* Listen. I'm gonna be honest with you. It's Dr. Umar.

WALLADA. You mean poppy dealer Umar.

COSMAS. Yeah. He seems to think we're not very good doctors. *(Damian stands, getting himself together.)*

DAMIAN. But he's wrong. We are very good doctors.

COSMAS. Right. And he thinks your wandering womb can't be cured. We aim to prove him wrong. *(Wallada is listening now.)*

WALLADA. So... this would be a way to get back at Dr. Umar.

COSMAS. Well, 'get back' isn't how I'd put it.

DAMIAN. Yes.

WALLADA. You know I hate that guy. *(Damian and Cosmas flinch.)*

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

COSMAS. Oooh. Yeah. We wouldn't say 'hate'.

DAMIAN. We're not allowed.

WALLADA. Well, I'm not in your cult, and I'm allowed to hate whoever I want. And I hate that guy. He turned my dad into a poppy-addled zombie.

COSMAS. I see. Well. If we win the bet, he has to leave town.

DAMIAN. Forever.

WALLADA. What?!

COSMAS. That's right. All you have to do is let us treat you. And then Dr. Umar will be gone.

DAMIAN. Forever.

WALLADA. My dad wouldn't have access to poppy syrup anymore.

COSMAS. No, he wouldn't.

WALLADA. He'd get better! And I wouldn't have to help out around the house so much! I could leave, start my own life.
(Cosmas grabs her hand.)

COSMAS. Maybe get married, start your own family.
(Wallada barely notices Cosmas. She jerks her hand free.)

WALLADA. I could be the gouging champion of the whole empire, not just the village! I could travel! See the world! In a balloon that flies through the air! *(Cosmas and Damian share a weirded-out look. Cosmas chuckles.)*

COSMAS. There's that wandering womb talking. But don't you worry. We'll have you fixed up in no time. *(Wallada stops fantasizing and pays attention to the brothers.)*

WALLADA. So, this treatment. What would it involve?

COSMAS. Well, we'll take a detailed medical history and come up with a tailored treatment plan to meet your needs.

WALLADA. Will it be painful?

COSMAS. No.

DAMIAN. Probably not.

WALLADA. Will it be humiliating?

COSMAS. Of course not!

DAMIAN. I mean, what do you consider humiliating?

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

WALLADA. You know what? It doesn't matter. I have to do this. For my family. I accept your proposal.

COSMAS. You do? (*Wallada nods. Cosmas and Damian high five. Cosmas takes Wallada's hands and looks deeply into her eyes.*) Yes! Thank you Wallada. (*They have a moment for a few beats. Damian pulls Cosmas away.*)

DAMIAN. (*To Wallada*) Meet us at our workshop tomorrow morning.

WALLADA. Ok. (*Damian and Cosmas exit, excited, chattering to each other. Wallada looks at the dead body and shrugs. She kneels down to gouge out the eye. Lights go out before we see any gore. Blackout.*)

SCENE 6

Lights up on the workshop. Wallada squats over something on the ground. Her skirts cover it up so we can't see what she's squatting over. She fans herself. She's hot. Damian and Cosmas are there. Damian examines her eyes, her ears, etc., while Cosmas pontificates.

COSMAS. The purpose of the vaginal fumigation is to lure your wandering womb back into place. The strong scents of the garlic and mugwort will sort of lure the little guy back where it should be.

WALLADA. Are you sure it'll work? It seems...odd.

COSMAS. All the best physicians recommend it.

WALLADA. How can you be sure though? I mean, what if my womb isn't wandering at all?

COSMAS. It is.

WALLADA. But where could it wander to? I mean, my body's an enclosed space. There's only so many places it could go.

DAMIAN. How do you feel? Any dizziness? Nausea?

WALLADA. No. I'm just hot. And the smell is...powerful.

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

DAMIAN. It's supposed to be.

WALLADA. Am I gonna smell like this all the time? How many of these treatments are you gonna do?

COSMAS. We'll need to perform the procedure daily, until we see results.

WALLADA. I don't even understand what the results are supposed to be.

COSMAS. Well. You'll be less...violent.

WALLADA. I'm not violent.

DAMIAN. You wanna gouge men's eyes out.

WALLADA. It's a sport. I'm an athlete.

DAMIAN. You're a ghoul.

WALLADA. Hey! *(Cosmas puts a hand on Damian's shoulder, to shut him up.)*

COSMAS. Wallada. My brother sometimes lacks sensitivity when he talks. Sorry about that. *(He turns his attention to Wallada.)* You're not a ghoul. You're a lovely, interesting, strong woman. Our hope in treating you is to allow you to become your best self. Does that make sense?

WALLADA. I guess.

DAMIAN. I'm sorry I called you a ghoul.

WALLADA. It's ok.

DAMIAN. I can see how you'd take that as an insult. If it makes you feel better, people call me and Cosmas ghouls all the time.

WALLADA. Really? Why?

DAMIAN. Probably because of the blood spatters and the organs and whatnot. And that time we saved all those dead bodies from that shipwreck. We had them all in the workshop, and- *(Cosmas puts a hand over Damian's mouth.)*

COSMAS. What Damian means to say is that we understand what it's like to be called hurtful names. And that he should keep his mouth shut better. *(Cosmas glares at Damian.)*

DAMIAN. Yes. That's what I meant to say.

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

COSMAS. And now he has important business to do. Elsewhere. (*Damian throws his arms up, exasperated. But he exits. Cosmas sits next to Wallada.*) So. How's it goin'?

WALLADA. You know. Squatting over a bunch of burning garlic and mugwort. So.

COSMAS. Yeah. I mean, are you comfortable? Can I get you some water? Or like, a fig?

WALLADA. No thank you. I don't have much appetite, at the moment.

COSMAS. Fair enough.

WALLADA. Listen. I'm gonna be honest with you. I think this wandering womb stuff is nonsense. I don't think there's anything wrong with my insides. I'm only doing this because I want that poppy dealer to leave town. So how about this? You tell me what symptoms I'm supposed to be cured of, and I'll act like I'm cured of them. We tell the poppy dealer, he loses the bet, and he leaves town. Cool?

COSMAS. So... you don't want to be cured. You'd just...pretend to be cured?

WALLADA. Exactly.

COSMAS. But that's dishonest.

WALLADA. So?

COSMAS. Wallada. I know you think my religion's a cult-

WALLADA. It is.

COSMAS. But it's important to me. It's important that I try to live a morally upright life. Which means, not telling lies.

WALLADA. But Umar's a bad doctor. He needs to go. It would be for the good of the village, if we told this one lie.

COSMAS. But it wouldn't be good for our souls. My soul, my brother's soul, and your soul too, Wallada.

WALLADA. Wow. You really mean this don't you?

COSMAS. I do. (*Wallada turns away, hiding her hurt feelings.*)

WALLADA. You really think there's something wrong with me, then? Something that needs to be fixed?

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

COSMAS. No! I mean, yes. But it's not your fault!

WALLADA. Oh, well then.

COSMAS. I'm sorry. This isn't coming out right. It's just...there's a certain way that women are supposed to be. Just like there's a way men are supposed to be. It's not that you're a bad person. In fact, I think you're a wonderful person! Really. It's just- *(Annie the Leper enters. She is bleeding from the head, crying. Cosmas stands and goes to Annie. Wallada watches this exchange with wide eyes.)*

COSMAS. Annie the Leper! What happened to you?

ANNIE. Oh you know. Rock throwing. The usual. *(Cosmas takes a rag and a bottle of something and sets them down next to Annie's feet.)* Thank you so much Cosmas.

COSMAS. It's no trouble. And here. *(Cosmas gets some food and sets it down next to her feet as well.)* I'm sure you must be hungry. *(Annie gathers up the food, grateful.)*

ANNIE. Oh Cosmas! You're so kind.

COSMAS. It's nothing.

ANNIE. No. It is. It's something. This is the only place where anyone treats me like a human being. It...it means the world to me. *(Annie gathers the stuff Cosmas gave her and ambles offstage. Cosmas sits next to Wallada.)*

COSMAS. So. Like I was saying. *(Wallada kisses him. Cosmas is shocked for a moment, then kisses her back. She pulls back, shocked at herself. She stands, and moves away from him.)*

WALLADA. I can't believe I just did that.

COSMAS. Why can't you believe it?

WALLADA. Because! You think there's something wrong with me! You're trying to change me!

COSMAS. I don't wanna change you.

WALLADA. Then why was I squatting over a pile of burning garlic for the past hour?

COSMAS. To fix your wandering womb.

WALLADA. I have to get out of here. *(Cosmas jumps up and takes her hands.)*

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

COSMAS. Wait, don't go.

WALLADA. Cosmas-

COSMAS. Why did you kiss me?

WALLADA. Because... because you were kind to that leper. No one else is kind to lepers. You're different. You make me think different.

COSMAS. You're different too.

WALLADA. And you hate it.

COSMAS. I don't hate it. I don't hate anything about you.

WALLADA. Do you think there's something wrong with me?

COSMAS. I... I don't know. You act different.

WALLADA. So do you!

COSMAS. You aren't married, and don't seem to want to be. You want to do sports, like a man. You talk back and argue. You're the most enchanting, interesting woman I've ever met.

WALLADA. But then why-

COSMAS. I don't know. I guess...

WALLADA. What?

COSMAS. I guess I was hoping that if we could make your womb stay in place you might be more open to... certain things.

WALLADA. Like what?

COSMAS. Like-

WALLADA. Like what?!

COSMAS. Like marriage.

WALLADA. Oh.

COSMAS. I mean. Not now. Not necessarily. I just mean. Yeah.

WALLADA. Oh.

COSMAS. I just made things weird.

WALLADA. No.

COSMAS. I did. It's weird now.

WALLADA. It's a little weird.

COSMAS. How about I go get Damian? I think maybe I should get Damian. He can-

WALLADA. Shut up. You're an exasperating man.

COSMAS AND DAMIAN

COSMAS. I am?

WALLADA. You are.

COSMAS. That's not a good thing, is it?

WALLADA. No. But you know what? Fuck it. (*Wallada kisses Cosmas again. Lights out.*)

END OF ACT ONE

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