

# SIX PASSIONATE WOMEN

By Mario Fratti © 1978

## First Performance Actor's Studio Theatre

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### THE PERSONS

NINO: in his late thirties—, a successful Italian filmmaker: he wears a Fellini hat everywhere; even in bed

WILLIAM : in his early thirties; Nino's screenwriter

MARIANNA: Nino's wife

ANNA: her best friend

VALIA: a beautiful actress; a mother figure

SONIA — another beautiful actress; younger

Mrs. GUNMORE: in her early fifties; an American producer

FRANCA: Nino's young secretary

TIME: THE PRESENT

PLACE: In ITALY, where men and women still enjoy the game of lying.

SET: Three beds (A-B-C) surrounded by heart-shaped colored bulbs; intermittent lights; one circuit is red and blue; the other one is white, red and green (sometimes one bed with different blankets can be used.)

### Outline

Nino, a successful film-maker has been stealing ideas all his life. William, his screenwriter, has been stealing Nino's women for years. Six "passionate" women plan a bizarre plot to outsmart and punish the two men. They succeed.

*"A fast-moving parody in the Billy Wilder tradition."*

*N. P (American News - New York)*

### ACT I

A slide in the background: Venice (Italy)

UPSTAGE: three large curtains (green, white in the middle, red; like the Italian flag.)

THREE BEDROOMS.

One: UPSTAGE RIGHT.

The other one: UPSTAGE LEFT.

The third one: DOWNSTAGE.

DOWNSTAGE. There is a love-seat, a coffee-table, a typewriter, two phones and a TV set.

MUSIC. An insistent ringing at the door.

A spotlight, upstage right. Sonia is watching TV.

Sonia—flustered—decides to open the door.

Nino enters slowly, bored.

SONIA (*surprised*): You're supposed to be at the Festival.

NINO: I hate that place.

SONIA I was watching it on TV. They were just announcing your arrival.

NINO: They can announce all they want. (*Sits on the bed*)

SONIA: It's your "opening night". Everybody is there.

NINO: So what?

SONIA: They're expecting you. You have to —

NINO: No more you have to. No more obligations. (*he takes off his shoes*)

SONIA: They'll be asking —

NINO: Let them ask.

SONIA (*Puzzled*): You work for years on a project and when it's time for the glory

NINO: It's an old story. I'm bored with my films.

SONIA: How can you say that? It's your life, your feelings —

NINO: Finished. Over and done with. Forgotten.

(*He lies down*)

SONIA: The guy on Channel Two said it's your masterpiece.

NINO: They can say anything they want. My masterpiece is still in me.

SONIA: That's what you said two years ago, when you started this.

NINO: I failed. It's still in my blood.

SONIA (*intrigued*): You've another idea, already?

NINO (*groping tiredly for her behind*): I have.

SONIA: As usual.

(*They look at each other; they burst into laughing*)

NINO: Come here. I want to be with you.

SONIA: "Be"?

NINO: Relax. Talk. Hold your hand.

(*Sonia is flattered; slowly goes to lie near him; he does not move; he does not touch her hand*)

SONIA (*after a silence*): I didn't go to the "opening" only because —

NINO: (*interrupting*) — because you knew I would come here, to you.

SONIA: (*angry*) — because it's damn embarrassing to be among those hypocrites, all wondering — in their "innocent" manner — where my big scene is!

NINO: I had to cut it. I had to. Sorry.

SONIA: It's the third time you've done this to me.

NINO: The last time.

SONIA: I've heard that before.

NINO (*closing his eyes and starting to caress her hand*): What's your dream, Sonia?

SONIA: I won't tell you.

NINO: Women always dream. Bizarre visions of impossible worlds. I don't see what you see.

SONIA: That's your problem.

NINO: Maybe. What's yours?

SONIA: I want to be real — in a role I really feel.

NINO: What would you like to be in my next film?

SONIA (*excited*): You mean ... anything I want?

NINO: Anything.

SONIA: You mean ... I can choose?

NINO: Choose.

SONIA (*happy and excited*): Eleonora Duse!

NINO: No. *(He shakes his head)*  
 SONIA: The Divine ... Sara!  
 NINO: No. *(He shakes his head)*  
 SONIA: Maria Malibran!  
*(Nino shakes his head)*  
 Maria Callas! *(tries to sing)* A A A A A Ahhhh!  
 NINO *(shaking his head)*: NO O O O O OHHH!  
 SONIA: Catherine the Great!  
 NINO *(shaking his head)*: Niet. Niet. Niet.  
 SONIA: La Pasionaria!  
 NINO *(reflecting, vaguely interested)*: What do you remember about her?  
 SONIA *(taken aback)*: The old lady who fought in Spain... When she was young, of course!  
 NINO: On whose side?  
 SONIA *(confused)*: Against ... the Government, I think. In Madrid, Costa Del Sol, wherever you...  
*(Nino shakes his head; she does not remember; it means it is not a good "commercial" property)*  
 NINO: No. They wouldn't understand, they couldn't.  
 SONIA: Who the hell do you want? Jacqueline Kennedy?  
 NINO *(shaking his head)*: Boring.  
 SONIA *(angry)*: Myself then! Can I be myself? Like this, the way I am!  
*(Nino finally opens his eyes; a new idea has struck him)*  
 Is that all right? What are you thinking about?  
 NINO: Let's go together. Now. I want to see my wife's face when we walk in.  
*(He gets up, picks up his shoes and — without putting them on — walks out like a sleep-walker)*  
 SONIA: Just a second! Give me a second!  
*(Gets ready in a hurry; William, who was hidden behind a curtain, appears; Sonia ignores him)*  
 WILLIAM *(indicating the door)*: And so, he went! Stealing again.  
 SONIA *(opening her arms, resigned)*: Stealing again! *(Sonia rushes out.)*

**Blackout.**  
**Brief musical bridge.**

Spotlight downstage on Marianna, Nino's wife, and Anna, her best friend. They are sitting in a love-seat. We are in Nino's bedroom-studio-office.  
 MARIANNA *(reading from some clippings)* : The aspects of stylization and character conception are closely linked, Three stars for a great film."  
 "The structural approach is astounding; the chiseled beauty of its images, the simplicity and rigor of its narration and its unbending concern with human realities."  
 ANNA *(sarcastic)*:... "unbending concern"... They really know him!  
 MARIANNA *(still reading)*: . . . Most economical treatment of the central theme... a demi reality amenable to detached and corrosive judgment from outside..."  
 ANNA: What does it mean?  
 MARIANNA: I don't know. But it sounds good and it will sell tickets.  
 ANNA: It will sell tickets.  
 MARIANNA: And listen to this.—"The action is bounded by an extended metaphor, linking past, present and future..."  
 ANNA *(sarcastic)*: One bold stroke! Past, present and future!  
 MARIANNA *(still reading)* : I particularly admired the importance of the non-thematic subject-matter and of the sub-stylistic features of the visual treatment."  
 ANNA *(to a smiling Marianna; they are both amused)*:... "non-thematic. sub-stylistic"... It makes you wonder...  
 MARIANNA *(exaggerating)*. "I'd have focused more on elucidating the underlying structures of his metaphysical levels..."

ANNA: Metaphysical?  
 MARIANNA: He'll be furious at this. He denies having the tiniest metaphysical bone in his whole body!  
 ANNA: That's what he thinks!  
 MARIANNA: And this. "Brutal indifference to burning issues of actuality."  
 ANNA *(amused)*: The Communist paper.  
 MARIANNA: The very one. And this is the Catholic point of view . . .  
 "Honest, clean, dreamy; a key point of reference for new moral values..."  
 ANNA *(surprised and outraged)*: "New moral values"? I don't believe it!  
 MARIANNA: I do. Here it is.  
*(Marianna shows her the paper; Anna ignores it.)*  
 ANNA: They are so desperate for "morality" they see it even in Hell. Damn hypocrites! Like him!  
*(A silence. They study each other.)*  
 They all saw him coming in late with that slut.  
*(A silence. Marianna ignores her.)*  
 They all saw he didn't come to us.  
*(A silence. Marianna ignores her.)*  
 To you—his wife.  
*(A silence. Marianna ignores her)*  
 ANNA: He has never done anything like this before... Why now? *(A silence)* Is he trying to tell you it's over? Really over?  
 MARIANNA: I don't think so.  
 ANNA: What's wrong then? What's bothering him?  
 MARIANNA: He loves reactions, he needs reactions. He was trying to provoke me.  
 ANNA: And you keep taking it! How long? Why? Are you some kind of masochist?  
 MARIANNA: I'm not.  
 ANNA: What's wrong with you?  
 MARIANNA: Nothing.  
*(A brief silence; Marianna tries to avoid her eyes.)*  
 ANNA: Is he that good in bed?  
*(Marianna does not want to discuss this subject; she is embarrassed.)*  
 Does he still sleep with you? Does he make love to you?  
 MARIANNA: You know I don't like to discuss my love life.  
 ANNA: I'm talking about sex. Do you screw?  
 MARIANNA *(uneasy)*: Let's change the subject.  
 ANNA: Let's talk about it. It may wake you up.  
 MARIANNA: I'm wide awake.  
 ANNA *(sarcastic)*: Are you? We should talk more often about "that".

[the play continues]