

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this play is subject to royalty. It is fully protected by Original Works Publishing, and the copyright laws of the United States. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

The performance rights to this play are controlled by Original Works Publishing and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Royalties are payable with negotiation from Original Works Publishing.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured from Original Works Publishing through direct contact.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play:

**“Produced by special arrangement with  
Original Works Publishing.”**

**[www.originalworksonline.com](http://www.originalworksonline.com)**

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

*Vile Affections*  
First Printing, 2008  
Printed in U.S.A.  
ISBN 978-1-934962-03-9

**More Great Plays Available**  
**From OWP**

**Deadheading Roses**

**by Chris Cragin**

3 Females, 1 Male

**Synopsis:** This play is about a rose gardener named JOHNNY who has been tragically discarded by the only man she ever loved. As she searches for healing and renewal, it is her love of nature which she rediscovers in the beauty of the desert, in her beloved animals, and finally through the earth's blessing of rain that gives her the strength to allow the inescapable and painful changes in her life to take their course. The set should be very minimal, the more that can be communicated through lights and sound the better. The location on stage shifts between a desert in Arizona, where JOHNNY and WILL lived for the first part of their marriage, a rose garden and home in Nashville, Tennessee, where they have lived since, and a small town in Arkansas, where JOHNNY was raised and where her mother still lives. Time is the present.

**IceSPEAK**

**by Jeanette D. Farr**

2 Males, 1 Female

**Synopsis:** Bee-Bee will do anything to be a rockstar. While walking across a frozen lake to meet the man who will lead her to success, she falls through the ice and struggles to survive. For the time she is trapped, she sees moments of her past, her dreams, and what may come of her life if she lives. A story asking how and why we speak, how smart we could be, and what happens when we lose it. For Bee-Bee, choosing between the one she loves and the one who will make her a star lies just beneath the surface.

VILE  
AFFECTIONS

by

Vanda

### Acknowledgements

I began the preliminary work for VILE AFFECTIONS while sitting at a picnic table outside “The Barn” on a warm September morning during my Edward Albee Fellowship. Thank you, Edward for the opportunity to be alone with my work.

I am a member of Emerging Artists Theatre (EAT), Paul Adams, Artistic Director. EAT provided me with numerous developmental readings and a workshop production directed by Tom Wojtunik. Without this type of support finishing the play would have been very difficult.

Ultimately, VILE AFFECTIONS was produced at the New York City International Fringe Festival in August 2006. Raising money to participate in this festival was no easy matter. Luckily, I received generous support from numerous sources which I want to publicly thank. First, finding the necessary funding would not have been possible if it had not been for Karen L. Sands. Other generous folk were: The Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation, The Puffin Foundation, The faculty of Metropolitan College of New York, and Frederick and Lois Wark & Lori Wark.

I also want to thank Dixon Place and Leslie Strongwater, Artistic Associate, for producing the last scene of this play in their HOT! Festival. It was wonderful to be included with so many supportive and talented people.

I need to give a big thank you to Judith C. Brown who translated an obscure manuscript that gave us the story of Benedetta Carlini. Anyone wishing to further pursue the fascinating story of Benedetta should definitely read Dr. Brown’s IMMODEST ACTS, published in 1986 by Oxford University Press. Actors preparing to play these roles will find this book especially helpful.

Playwright's Note:  
A Few Words on the Historical Context of the Play

Audience members are often horrified by the play's portrayal of the nuns. It is felt that the nuns are supposed to act "more holy." I believe contemporary nuns are far more devout than nuns in centuries passed. In the Renaissance women were often forced into convents by fathers fearful of losing their fortunes to another family through marriage. During the time of this play as many as one-third to one-half of all women were housed in convents. These nuns are from the upper and the newly emerging middle class; women from the poorer classes could only become servants to the nuns.

The men in this play are genuinely upset when they witness the affair between Benedetta and Bartolomea. They do not consider hearing about two women having sex with each other sexually stimulating as a modern heterosexual man might. They are aware that heterosexual activities often occur between priests and nuns and they are also aware that homosexual activities occur between monks in monasteries, but homosexuality between nuns is difficult for their imaginations to grasp. Bartolomea's revelation is so shocking to them that they are completely at a loss as to what to say or do. The scribe who was recording the proceedings at the actual investigation had impeccable handwriting up until the lesbian sexuality was brought out. Then, Brown (1985) notes the man's penmanship became almost illegible.

The use of "material instruments" or "illicit devices (which) supplied the defects of their sex," noted Crompton in his article, "The Myth of Lesbian Impunity," was a more serious offence than that which Benedetta and Bartolomea committed. Not using "instruments" may have been what saved the women from being hanged or burned. Wearing the clothes of the opposite sex was even more serious than lesbian sex with instruments and definitely led to being burned at the stake (Remember Joan). This held true for either sex. The reasoning behind this was that cross-dressing seriously undermined the family and hence the social order. The social order (as well as obedience as stated by Caterina in *Vile Affections*) protected their society from dissolving into chaos. One truly disturbing punishment for both men and women was enacted in the town of Treviso (near Venice). Those who were found guilty of homosexuality had their clothes removed; they were then fastened "to a stake in the Street of the Locusts with a nail or rivet driven through" their sex organs. They remained fastened to the stake all day. The next day they would be taken outside the city to be burned.

### **Cast of Characters**

Multi-cultural casting in all roles is strongly encouraged

BENDETTA CARLINI: passionate, dramatic, in her 20s throughout the bulk of the play. In the very beginning and in the end in her 70s.

BARTOLOMEA CRIVELLI: innocent, shy, fearful, 18 years through the bulk of the play. In the very beginning and end, in her late 60's.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATTI: sincere, compassionate, keeping a secret from others and from himself; elderly.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI (pronounced Chehkee): powerful, analytical, efficient, doesn't like being challenged. 35-45 years throughout the bulk of the play, in the end in his 70s or 80s.

SISTER FIORA: gossipy, an inner sensitivity that can lead her to take vengeance when she is hurt, during the bulk of play she is in her 30s. At the very beginning and end she is in her 70s.

SISTER CATERINA: sexy, says what she thinks. During the bulk of play she is in 30s. At the very beginning and end she is in her 70s.

ANTONIO FABRICI: young, macho, run by testosterone, recent graduate of Padua University, probably not a great student.

Young Nun

VILE AFFECTIONS by Vanda, directed by Franka Fiala, lighting by Jason Sturm was presented during the New York International Fringe Festival, August, 2006 with the following cast:

(in order of appearance)

Benedetta Carlini .....Osa Wallander  
Sister Caterina.....Carol Mennie  
Bartolomea.....Kate Hettesheimer  
Young Nun.....Stephanie Iannarino  
Sister Fiora.....Jacqueline Sydney  
Father Paolo Ricordati.....Gene Ruffini  
Provost Stefano Cecchi.....Scott Mitchell Kelly  
Antonio Fabrici.....Merrit Reid

The last scene of VILE AFFECTIONS by Vanda, directed by Rolando Ramos, lighting by Casey McLain was presented at the Dixon Place (NYC) Hot! Festival with the following cast:

(in order of appearance)

Provost Stefano Cecchi.....Lennard Ridsdale  
Father Paolo Ricordati.....Richard Kass  
Antonio Fabrici.....Nick Fleming  
Bartolomea.....Blair Baker  
Benedetta Carlini.....Sara Michelle Bickweat  
Caterina.....Sandy Ziviani  
Fiora.....Selena Ambush

## VILE AFFECTIONS

### ACT I, SCENE 1

*Setting:* Sometime in July, 1660. Pescia, Italy, a short distance from Florence. The stage is dimly lit so that it has a cave-like appearance. The only set is a few rough benches, a table, a mattress, one blanket and a crucifix that hangs crookedly on the wall. The sound of women singing Gregorian chants can be heard. After a few moments an old woman wearing a black shroud with a hood that covers much of her face crawls toward the center of the stage. Her feet are bare. A moment later three old nuns, dressed in the same manner, enter. A young nun follows behind them. The palms of their hands are pressed together in prayer, the fingers pointing toward the ceiling. As they enter heading toward the table, each steps over the woman on the floor. SISTER FIORA kicks her. After stepping over the old nun on the floor they stop, turn toward the back of the stage and genuflect to the crucifix. The old woman bows her head and crosses herself. The NUNS seat themselves at the table.

SISTER FIORA: Sisters. Bread. (SISTER FIORA breaks off a piece of bread and passes the loaf to the other sisters. They bow their heads in a silent grace, cross themselves, eat).

SISTER CATERINA: This all? I remember a time when we had plenty.

YOUNG NUN: When, Sister? Tell me.

FIORA: Shsh. She doesn't need to know.

CATERINA: (To YOUNG NUN) It was a long time ago. Before the plague, even. We don't think of it now. (To FIORA) But she did warn us. She told us there would be plague if we didn't listen to her.

FIORA: (Admonishing) Caterina.

CATERINA: Yes, Sister.

YOUNG NUN: What happened?

FIORA: It's nothing. Water under a very long bridge. You're too young to even remember the plague.

YOUNG NUN: But my parents told me about it. How the people of Pescia suffered.

CATERINA: Sisters. Shouldn't we, at least...? Well, just a bit of bread. Shouldn't we....? *(Sister Caterina nods at the old woman on the floor.)*

SISTER FIORA: I guess she best have some. *(Sister Fiora throws a piece of breads a distance away from the old woman.)* Hey, you! Catch.

*(The old woman stands to chase the bread)*

SISTER FIORA: Hey! *(FIORA snaps her fingers)*

*(The old woman looks over at FIORA, then shrinks back down to the floor. She grabs the bread and begins eating. She is ravenous, her teeth tearing into the bread as if she hadn't eaten in a very long time.)*

SISTER FIORA: Look at her, the way she eats. No more than a mere animal.

*(FIORA and the YOUNG NUN laugh and point, while the woman gnashes at the food.)*

SISTER CATERINA: When will it be enough, Fiora?

FIORA: Enough? Ask God, not me. It was not I who decreed this.

*(She continues to laugh and to encourage the YOUNG NUN to laugh by imitating the OLD WOMAN. SISTER BARTOLOMEA rises. She pours water from a pitcher into a bowl. She limps, slowly with difficulty, trying not to spill the water, toward the OLD WOMAN on the floor.)*

SISTER FIORA: Sister Bartolomea. You can't.

SISTER BARTOLOMEA: I'm not going to speak to her. I'm simply giving her a bit of water for her thirst.

SISTER CATERINA: Let me help you with that.

*(SISTER BARTOLOMEA moves away from SISTER CATERINA's extended hand. CATERINA somewhat fearful does not follow. BARTOLOMEA kneels down and places the water in front of the OLD WOMAN. The OLD WOMAN grabs BARTOLOMEA's sleeve.)*

OLD WOMAN: Please.

*(SISTER BARTOLOMEA hesitates a moment looking into the OLD WOMAN's eyes, then gently takes the OLD WOMAN's hand from her. She returns to sit with the others. After a long moment the OLD WOMAN starts to raise herself and as she does the light grows strong. It is as if she were bringing light into that darkened room. She throws off the shroud. Underneath she wears a nun's habit and a veil upon her head. She is young. She moves toward a bench. The others pay no attention to her. She moves with great dignity and stature as if she were royalty. There is something strong and warrior-like about her. THE NUNS stand ready to leave. BARTOLOMEA watches BENEDETTA with intensity. All the NUNS except BARTOLOMEA exit. BARTOLOMEA removes the hood of the shroud to reveal a young woman dressed in a nun's habit and veil).*

BARTOLOMEA: Benedetta, you won't tell, will you? There's really no need. Just confess the rest, that it's all been a lie and they won't be so terribly hard on you. *(Pause)* Benedetta?

*(BARTOLOMEA waits for response. BENEDETTA stands firm, silent with a far away, trance-like look. BARTOLOMEA replaces the hood, exits as an old woman. FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI enters. He stops, standing at a distance from BENEDETTA.)*

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Benedetta, it's almost time. *(He pauses hoping for a response from her. There is none. She sits and goes into a deep in trance. He moves toward her, hesitantly, but still not too close.)* Benedetta? *(Pause)* Are you ready? They're at the door. Should I let them in? *(Pause, waiting)* It won't go well with you if you're like this with them. They're powerful men. The most powerful in Pescia. Men of government. *(Pause)* Please, Benedetta. *(Pause)* The Provost will have none of your moods. *(Pause)* I can't keep them waiting longer. *(BENEDETTA continues to look far away and beyond. FATHER PAOLO sighs and goes to the door).* Come in, Gentlemen.

*(Two men enter. FIORA, CATERINA and BARTOLOMEA, all young now, enter and standing at a distance pretend to pray. Actually they are trying to hear the words of the men.)*

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: So that's the one, Father.

FATHER PAOLO: That is Mother Benedetta.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Mother? She's little more than a girl. And as long as this investigation goes on she is relieved of her duties as Abbess.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Is that really necessary, Stefano?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Quite. I had hoped you would've put a stop to all this nonsense years ago when it first started, Father, but I see you need me to do it. All these convents running amok nowadays. Monks and Nuns bedding each other and you Father Confessors doing nothing to stop it. Not that I care but the holy Nuncio keeps making me interrupt my own duties to investigate. And now this Benedetta Carlini. I didn't care what she was doing before. But calling down a plague on *my* town?

PROVOST and FATHER: *(Quickly crossing themselves)* May God forbid.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Oh, no. She will not.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: To be fair she never said that.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: She came close. Too close. There is fear under every rock and bush that the plague that rages now in Palermo will spread to us. One never knows where God's wrath might strike next. *(Quietly, eyes heavenward, as if fearful he will rouse God's wrath)* And nothing to be done about it.

FATHER PAOLO CECCHI: There is still prayer, Stefano.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: *(doubtful)* Yes. *(Beat)* You remember, my Scribe, Antonio Fabrici, son of Girodano Fabrici, recent graduate of the University of Padua.

*(ANTONIO and FATHER PAOLO shake hands.)*

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Yes. Yes, I do. Fabrici, a good old Tuscan family. You were at Benedetta's wedding.

ANTONIO: Your most humble servant, Father.

FATHER PAOLO CECCHI: *(To BENEDETTA. Almost afraid to disturb her)* Benedetta, this is Provost Cecchi who has come to...

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Girl, do you know what this investigation is about?

*(BENEDETTA continues her meditation.)*

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Do you know how serious this is? Well?! *(Beat)* Very well. Antonio read out the charge.

ANTONIO: Yes, sire. *(Antonio takes out a rolled piece of paper and unrolls it)* Benedetta Carlini, you have been charged with the crime of false mysticism. You are to be investigated for said crime by Stefano Cecchi, Provost of Pescia. If you are found guilty, depending on the cause, you will suffer the punishment of life imprisonment or death by burning. This has been so ordered by the holy Nuncio, Alfonso Giglioli.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Now, do you understand the seriousness of this investigation?

*(BENEDETTA continues her meditation)*

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Benedetta, you must answer the Provost when he speaks to you. *(To PROVOST)* She doesn't mean anything by these silences.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: *(To BENEDETTA)* I've come to examine you. Stand.

*(BENEDETTA continues her meditation.)*

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: I said stand and let yourself be examined. *(Beat)* Very well. If that is how it must be. *(The PROVOST nods at Antonio, who comes over.)*

ANTONIO: Sire? (*The PROVOST gestures toward BENEDETTA and ANTONIO understands. ANTONIO grabs BENEDETTA from behind and with his hands on her breasts he pulls her to her feet.*) She has a nice feel to her.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Mind where you put your hands, Antonio.

ANTONIO: Oh. Sorry, sire.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Stefano, surely this treatment isn't necessary. Let me talk to her and...

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: You have had eight years to 'talk' to this woman. And yet you have accomplished nothing. (*PROVOST grabs BENEDETTA's hand. HE studies it, then the next one*) Bring me a bowl of water and a towel.

(*FATHER PAOLO signals to the NUNS. CATERINA goes for water and towels. THE PROVOST leans over BENEDETTA studying her feet. FATHER PAOLO stands near by like a concerned protector.*)

BENEDETTA: Is it not as our Lord Jesus said it would be?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: (*To all*) She speaks. (*To BENEDETTA*) Quiet!

ANTONIO: Do you see anything, Monsignor? The people in town say she's quite a wonder and they're afraid if you alienate her she'll release a horrible plague.

(*The MEN hurriedly cross themselves*)

ANTONIO: May God forbid. And they say....

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Silence! Stop prattling on. I am well acquainted with what she said. Why do you think I am here?

(*CATERINA lays the towels and bowl of water near PROVOST and retreats. The PROVOST wipes one of BENEDETTA's feet with water and a towel. He shows the towel to ANTONIO.*)

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: What does that look like to you?

ANTONIO: I'm not sure. It does look a little red, doesn't it?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: *(To BENEDETTA)* Take off your veil. Let me see your forehead.

*(She looks to FATHER PAOLO for direction)*

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: She cannot! It is a shame for a nun to appear in public with her head uncovered.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: This is not public.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Please Stefano, remember yourself and your lessons as a boy at my knee.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: A lifetime ago, Father, but very well. Move your veil back from your forehead only a little. So I may see. Surely, no one can object to that.

*(PROVOST looks directly at FATHER PAOLO as if daring him. FATHER PAOLO nods his ascent. The PROVOST pokes at her forehead. She winces. He runs the towel across her forehead. HE stares at the towel in his hand, shows the towel to ANTONIO.)*

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Well?

ANTONIO: It could be blood, sire. It *is* red.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: It's dry and scaly. It's hard to tell, but it could be. *(To BENEDETTA)* How did these marks come to be on your body?

BENEDETTA: *(As she speaks she becomes gradually more dramatic, possessing center stage)* Jesus, our Lord God, came to my cell while I lay abed and all the house and town slept. His body, wounded, pierced by a star, he moved toward me. The rays of that star glowed in Him. It illumined my room, setting it ablaze with a mighty fire. And through that fire our Lord appeared, coming to me as the bridegroom comes, filled with a burning compassion. And the fire ripped through my hands and feet as he blessed me with his very own holy wounds and I was brought upward into his breast as I...

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: How many rays were on the star?

BENEDETTA: What?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Rays? How many were there?  
Come, come. *(To ANTONIO)* Get this down.

ANTONIO: Yes, sire.

BENEDETTA: *(Guessing)* Five?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: What color was the Lord's gown?

BENEDETTA: Color?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Yes, color! What color? If the Lord truly appeared to you, you must have seen the color of his gown.

BENEDETTA: But it wasn't like that. It wasn't like numbers and colors of gowns. It was a sense of...

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Were you lying down or sitting up when he arrived?

BENEDETTA: I was asleep. Until he woke me. In a blaze of light the heavens opened. My legs became parted one from the other as I, too, was opening. Opening as the morning glory's petals open to greet the new day. Opening as Mother Mary was open to receive. I became that open vessel and was opened by He who has no sunset. I was opening to all that...

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: How long did he stay?

BENEDETTA: *(Trying to contain her irritation at his foolish question)* A little longer than never, a little shorter than forever.

ANTONIO: How do I write that down, sire?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Skip it for now. It seems our would-be mystic is playing with us. You best watch yourself, girl.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: How were your feet placed?  
Beside each other?

BENEDETTA: No. They were on top of each other much in the manner of our Lord during His passion, but I do not remember how they got that way.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Ah! But just before you said they were parted.

BENEDETTA: *After* they were parted they were on top of each other.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: I see (*Beat*) Are you in pain from those markings?

BENEDETTA: I have no pain on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays, but I have much pain on the other days. Fridays are the worst.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: I see. Then today being Monday you are not in pain.

BENEDETTA: No, Monsignor.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Good. Good. And your side. Is it similarly affected?

BENEDETTA: Yes, Monsignor.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Open your tunic. I will examine it.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Stefano, I must object. The rules of modesty forbid it.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: This woman has been claiming to get messages from Jesus and his angels, working up the whole town for years. We must be allowed to investigate the evidence. Open your tunic.

*(BENEDETTA, demurely, turns her back to the audience and opens her tunic. Only the PROVOST moves to look at her side.)*

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: *(Very uncomfortable)* You won't be long, Stefano. Don't take too long with that.

*(BENEDETTA opens her tunic more. ANTONIO tries to sneak a peak, but a look from the PROVOST stops him from proceeding)*

ANTONIO: Pardon, Monsignor.

*(The PROVOST gets the bowl and towel. HE dips the towel in, rubs BENEDETTA's side roughly. She moans in pain.)*

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Stefano, be careful!

*(The PROVOST looks at the towel. ANTONIO moves to look.)*

ANTONIO: Blood.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Mother, close your tunic.

BENEDETTA: Did you expect it to be otherwise when the Son of God, Himself, has proclaimed it to be so?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Silence! *I* will ask the questions. When was your first vision?

*(BENEDETTA has gone back into a trance.)*

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: How can she be like this? Does she not know who I am? The power I have?

BENEDETTA *(From a deep meditative place)* You have no more power than Christ has given you.

*(The PROVOST slaps her across the face.)*

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Stefano!

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Just as surely as the earth is planted firmly in the center of this universe and the sun revolves around it you will cooperate with this investigation, girl.

BENEDETTA: *(Unflinching)* It was during morning prayers.

*(BENEDETTA joins The NUNS as the sound of morning prayers being sung is heard in the background. The men retreat to the side.)*

NUNS: *(In unison)* Hail Mary, Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Hail Mary, Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus.

*(BENEDETTA stops saying the prayer as she seems to see something. She steps away from the group and stares upward. The other women look at each other as they continue the prayer. Joy and ecstasy overtakes BENEDETTA's face.)*

BENEDETTA: Lord.

*(The other women stop praying and watch. BENEDETTA slowly moves to her knees, never taking her eyes and ears off the something that is there for her.)*

BENEDETTA: Jesus. Jesus, yes. *(With arms outstretched, reaching upward)* Jesus. Take me. I am wholly and completely yours.

*(She collapses face forward with her arms outstretched like she was nailed to a cross. All the NUNS except BARTOLOMEA kneel, cross themselves, fearful of going too close. There is a gradual changing of the lights as BARTOLOMEA approaches BENEDETTA's prostrate body).*

BARTOLOMEA: Benedetta? *(beat)* Benedetta are you still with us?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: *(To BARTOLOMEA)* How often did you witness something like this?

BARTOLOMEA: Many times, Provost.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: And how long did she stay like that, generally speaking?

BARTOLOMEA: Hours or days. Sometimes she would appear to be merely sleeping and other times she seemed to be quite awake, but only staring. Like she could see you, but she also couldn't. I think it was those times that her spirit walked with Jesus and his angels.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Well, rouse her now. I have more questions.

BARTOLOMEA: I cannot, Monsignor. Only Jesus can say when she will return to us.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Benedetta, get up. Get up, I tell you! *(BENEDETTA does not move)* Father, can't you do something?

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: I'm sorry, Stefano.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Sorry? You're sorry? I am a busy man and the church has charged me with...*(BENEDETTA begins to writhe on the floor and make strange sounds. Her body whips in and out and knocks into the PROVOST's legs. He jumps back)*. What's wrong with her? Is she ill?

BARTOLOMEA: She makes the writhing movements of the Saints of yore.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Well, make her stop it.

BARTOLOMEA: I cannot.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: *(BENEDETTA's body continues to thrash as she makes odd, almost animal-like sounds. She keeps bumping into the PROVOST. He hops up and down trying to avoid her, but she keeps knocking into him.)* Do something! Somebody help! Make her stop! She's mad! She's a witch! A witch! Don't come near me, witch, demon!

*(ANTONIO moves out of her way, also frightened, but he keeps writing in his book. FATHER PAOLO and the NUNS, calmly watch the scene. They've seen this before.)*

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: *(The PROVOST jumps onto a chair, looking like a woman afraid of a mouse)* Lord, help me! Help me.

*(BENEDETTA's body gradually slows its movement until she lies quietly. The PROVOST gets down from the chair and cautiously approaches her, trying not to look as fearful as he feels.)*

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: She's a witch.

*(BENEDETTA slowly rises. Everyone watches. As she moves to leave everyone parts to let her pass. She exits with serenity.)*

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: *(After a moment)* Antonio, did you get all that down? What that little witch did?

ANTONIO: Yes, Monsignor.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Even the part where Benedetta made the Monsignor hop about like a little girl?

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: Let me see that. *(The PROVOST snatches the notebook from ANTONIO's hand and tears a page from the book, throws it away)* Careful, Father. I have the power to keep your girl locked up where she will never have any influence over my town.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Perhaps that would be for the best.

*(The lights change. BENEDETTA enters)*

BENEDETTA: Father Confessor, how can you say that?

*(Lights focus on FATHER PAOLO and BENEDETTA).*

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Benedetta, we must be certain that your visions are not from the devil. You must put them to a test. Only to be sure they are from God. Remember the devil and his demons make a pleasing presence so that they might capture the devout. Women are most vulnerable to the devil because they are weak so you must be careful.

PROVOST STEFANO CECCHI: What did she say to that?

BENEDETTA: *(To FATHER PAOLO)* I will do whatever you would have me do. You are my Father Confessor sent to me by Christ. He has taught me that obedience is the most important virtue. What must I do?

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Pray that God send you travails and much pain. Not ecstasies. Though this may seem harsh it will prove your visions are from He who loves us wisely and not from the trickster.

BENEDETTA: Yes, Father, if you think this is best.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: And when the spirit comes to you snap your fingers in its face like this (*He demonstrates.*) That will make any demon hesitate to possess your soul.

BENEDETTA: Yes, Father.

FATHER PAOLO RICORDATI: Remember, Benedetta. Like this. (*He demonstrates again and exits.*)

BENEDETTA: (*BENEDETTA kneels*) Oh, Father of Heavenly Hosts, look down upon me, your lowly servant and bless me with pain and agony. Domine Iesu, dimitte nobis debita nostra, salva nos ab igne inferiori, perduc in caelum animas, praesertim eas, quae misericordiae tuae maxime indigent. Oh my Jesus forgive us of our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead souls into heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy. Domine Iesu, dimitte.... (*As she prays, the lights grow dim. BENEDETTA sees something or someone. She addresses it.*) No. You must not touch me. I belong to Christ. (*She backs away.*) No. You mustn't do this. (*She snaps her fingers at the "thing" that she sees*) I have no desire, but for Christ. (*The "thing" keeps coming at her, she keeps snapping at it and backing up. The "thing" starts to caress her body.*) No, please, you mustn't. I can resist you. I can. You mustn't do this. I belong only to Christ. (*She writhes against the caresses of the thing, but at times it appears that her body may give into the pleasure this "thing" gives. Her breathing becomes labored as she struggles with her own desires*) No, you are not Him. Don't do this. You are not my beloved Jesus. Don't—don't make me. I will not do this sin. (*Her arms and legs are thrown open as if she were tied spread eagled. She is growing more helpless against the sexual feelings this "thing" is making her feel.*) I WILL NOT DO THIS SIN! IN—IN THE NAME OF, THE NAME OF THE FATHER-- THE FATHER, THE SON, THE, THE—HOLY GHOST. (*She collapses onto the floor. The demon is gone.*)

(*THE NUNS run in, holding candles. The lights get brighter as they enter.*)