

## LIBRETTO

### ACT I

Scene: A Kitchen

*Jane is bustling about the kitchen preparing breakfast. Her eye catches the bracelet on her wrist as she is setting the table. Her gaze lingers—no too long, but enough to suggest. There is a giant crucifix attached to the bracelet.*

[Enter Gregor, rubbing his eyes. He sits down and yawns.]

J: Did you say something dear?  
G: No.  
J: Well good morning then Gregor.  
G: Good morning Jane.  
J: Did you sleep well?  
G: Fine. But I feel different this morning... somehow less human.  
J: [Preoccupied] More than usual?  
G: Yes...  
J: Some breakfast dear? [He waves his hand at her dismissively, indicating yes.] Do you know what today is?  
G: A Wednesday. [He continues eating]  
J: HaHaHa. Of course, but it is not just any Wednesday, you rogue. It will be a day to celebrate and rejoice, a day we shall never forget! You know well that today is our wedding day!  
G: [Eating] Oh yes, we are getting married, aren't we...  
J: Oh, I cannot wait! Today is the first day of the rest of our lives together! [She looks at him expectantly.]  
G: [He does not look up from his meal.] This is a good omelet.  
J: [Now slightly hurt from his lack of attention] Yes, well, I'm glad you like it... [overly-dramatic] I had to break all the eggs to make it.... [She returns to her cleaning. Silence fall between them, until suddenly something catches Gregor's eye.]  
G: Where did you get you that?  
J: What dear?  
G: That bracelet.  
J: [Slightly nervous] Oh this bracelet? It's just a trifling...  
G: [Determined] But where did you get it?  
J: [Searching for an answer] Mother willed it to me.  
G: [He stares at her for a moment] Your mother is tragically alive.  
J: [She pauses, secretly frantic for an answer.] I meant... metaphysically. [Silence. Slowly, she returns to her work, and he continues eating.]  
G: Was it a gift?  
J: Was what?  
G: [Quickly] The bracelet!  
J: In a matter of speaking. You might say it was a token of affection, a gift of the heart... [She stares off dreamily before snapping to her senses] ...between a mother and her daughter.  
G: Yes, well, I suppose we should be grateful that her other organs do not give gifts as well. [Still suspicious, he gets up from the table] I must go now to the monastery to see the Priest... [She looks at him questioningly; he fumbles for a reason] to see if all is ready for the service.  
J: [Brightening up] I hear they have a new monk at the monastery.  
G: It's funny how that works, isn't it?  
J: He seems so young, so pure...so full of life's joys...so very heterosexual! [Matter-of-factly] Hardly the sort you would pick for the priesthood.  
G: Yes, well perhaps he is just very... convicted. [He starts to leave.]  
J: Gregor, don't forget to call home before you return!  
G: And why should I do that?  
J: [Lying] So... you don't see my in my wedding dress! Mother says it is bad luck. [Gregor dismissively agrees.] I shall count the moments until you return!  
G: You may run out of hands. [He leaves.]  
J: [She watches him leave for a moment.] Somehow, I don't think I will. [She looks lovingly at the bracelet.]

[Enter the neophyte from other door. They embrace madly. Lights dim.]

END ACT I

## ACT II

Scene: A Monastery (or the closest approximation)

[Enter Priest and Gregor together. The Priest is wearing a bracelet similar to the one Jane wore in Act I.]

- G: Father, is everything ready for service?  
P: Yes, my son, I have been working on the font all afternoon. But are *you* ready? You must be very excited.  
G: [unconvincingly] Of course...why shouldn't a man be on his wedding day? This is the first day of the *rest of my life*... Father, I must confess, I did not come here to check upon the service.  
P: But what about my font? Care you not for the font?  
G: What is such a vessel when compared to the emptiness in my heart! Father, sadly I have no love for this day!  
P: My son, what troubles you on this morn that should be joyous? For today you should be made one with the woman you love – what sorrow then should befall you?  
G: Such joy belongs to he who loves, but I am to be wed to doubt and fear. And as the hours grow so do my fears, that marriage should prove a grave mistake.  
P: Now would be the time to give your fears voice, my son.  
G: [Slowly, as if searching for the words.] I'm afraid the vow of marriage would weigh heavy upon my tongue. Heavy upon my tongue sits the thought of the vow. I mouth them, the words, but I cannot...I cannot speak them. Thus is the weight of the words that are vows of marriage upon my tongue!  
P: [Pondering for a moment] Your inane babble has touched me. For 'tis true - marriage is a thing not lightly done. To vow is not to say but to become, for in the beginning there was the word and the word was a promise.  
[Dramatically] As Scripture says, Love and language united is joy's domain. One without the other, and you split yourself in twain!  
G: Father, my tongue is blinded by your brilliance, but sadly my heart still despairs.

[Enter neophyte hurriedly, as he buttons his cassocks.]

- P: Ah, Gregor, perhaps my young neophyte, Kurt, can then lighten your heart, for he too is no stranger to vows. Like myself, he has taken a vow of celibacy and of silence. [Both Gregor and neophyte stare at Priest confused]. Of course, one of us must do some talking... [He hedges] ...occasionally... so I do all the talking and he stays silent twice as much. [Gregor nods understandingly. Suddenly, the priest now notices Kurt's hand] Kurt! Where is your holy bracelet? Explain yourself!  
K: [shrugs] [Gregor is nodding in disapproval, but fails to make a connection.]  
P: Such is the holy writ of our order that every brother shall be adorned with a ridiculously large crucifix at all time! Have you now no shame? Were you not so young, so pure, so full of life's joys, I should think you gave it to a woman! [Gregor scoffs derisively; still no connection.] Away with you Kurt, vile Kurt, to do penance in your cell! [Kurt leaves, hangdog] Ah, Kurt, so innocent and yet so convicted.

[The priest watches him go. Meanwhile, Gregor begins to put two and two together. The realization is painfully slow and physically elaborate. It should also be misguided somewhat – perhaps he points to the font at one point. Suddenly he is eager to return home to confirm his suspicion.]

- G: Father, I must take my leave now!  
P: But do you not wish to see the font before you leave?  
G: There is not time, for I must see my *bride-to-be*.  
P: Then go in peace my son, until we meet this afternoon.

[Gregor runs out, and priest leaves through other door.]

## END ACT II

## ACT III

Scene: The Kitchen again

[Jane continues to tidy up, but she is clearly a little disheveled from her tryst. Enter Gregor, who is poised to start a scene]

- G: This room smells like incense!  
J: [anxious now by Gregor's demeanor and his question] I have some buns in the oven... They may be burning... So, how are you, my love? You look concerned.  
G: And you look fatigued.  
J [turning her back to him.] Funny how that works, isn't it...

G: Have you not the shame to remove his bracelet? The mark of your deceit cuffs you, and so shall I! [he slaps her.]  
Whore! [he slaps her] Hussy! [slaps her.] Traitoress! [he says the last in a truly injured voice and does not slap her.  
There is a pause as they look at each other]  
J: I feel like I've been slapped...  
G: [with deep sorrow] ...You, judas queen...[he sinks to his knees.] How cruel...that only now, in the wake of your scorn,  
do I realize how much I love you. Life is so difficult for peasants such as we.  
J: [She stares off into the distance] What a tangled semiotic net that we have entwined ourselves in! [Pause]

[Enter Kurt hurriedly]

K: What ho! I have come to claim my love!  
G: You! Begone from my home!  
K: I am not in your home, for I dwell in the house of Love!...or the Lord, I'm not sure yet. Either way, I am only here  
temporarily to claim what is mine!  
J: Kurt....[she approaches him slowly, trying to understand] Kurt.....you've broken your vow of silence!  
K: How can words be restrained when my heart is so verbose! Come my dear, come, let us fly this place together –  
me, Kurt, and you [he extends his hand.]...Jane?  
J: [Truly distressed now] But what about your vow? Oh, how I loved you for your silence. You were the most intelligent  
man I had ever met. [She considers it.]. I desired you because you had what I did not – something you held true to.  
But now even that is gone, and you no better than I. The time has ended for broken vows, Kurt. And now I must  
return this to you. [she removes the bracelet and places it in his hand, closing it with her other.] I'm sorry Kurt, .  
K: [Kurt stares at the bracelet. His face turns with rage and breaks the bracelet.]

[Enter Priest]

P: What ho! I have come to claim my neophyte!  
J: [gathering the pieces of the bracelet, she offers them to the Priest] Father, we present you with the shards of our  
deepest vows.  
P: [taking the fragments, he turns and smiles at each of them.] My children, I must let know a secret of the heart.  
Only through errors of love, failures of language, in the ruins of our sacred vows, do we find the human in us all.  
And therein lies forgiveness, the grace we grant each other. Kurt, come. [he extends his hands] Protest not, but  
renew your vow of silence and let us marry these young two. You shall start anew, [Kurt takes his hand and comes  
by his side.] And you, Gregor and Jane, let these trials only cement your love, as a blade is hardened in a fire. And  
so shall we all live lives of unmitigated bliss, as the Good Book says.  
G: [he takes Jane's hand and looks into her eyes, center stage] Unmitigated bliss...  
J: [staring into Gregor's eyes] Unmitigated bliss...  
K: [Addressing the audience] *Silencio*.

[Lights dim. All exit.]

**END OF ACT III**