

LOVE AT WORK

(A three act tragic comedy, written 2019/-20)

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Introduction: Diana was working as a grocery-manager at a big department-store when her sister Ann who is unemployed goes there. Ann steals some food for her six year old son and herself. At the same time she is occupied writing her first novel. Ann is caught stealing and brought to her sister Diana, who has no knowledge of her desperate poverty or even her presence at the store that day. Diana takes the blame for Ann's theft but gets fired from work. Then she is convicted at court only because she falsely confesses to the crime. At the female prison she meets Richard, a law student about to graduate soon, working as a part time guard. When Ann visits Diana he instantly falls in love with her. Their feelings grow so strong that they plan to get married. Diana has concealed her romantic feelings for Richard all the time, and the truth about her sentence...

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Actors

Diana

is a slim single woman in her early thirties, working as a department-executive at a big wear-house. She has a discreet personal style, but could be described as handsome. She is well educated and holds a degree in economics from university, and has a three year older sister

Ann

who is unemployed, living as a single mother with her six year old son. Her husband was killed in a car-crash. Ann's and Diana's parents are also dead. She has no education after high-school, but has written her first novel and is trying to get it published. She is a normally built, but good-looking woman, about as tall as her sister. Her simple clothing signals limited economy.

Richard

is 35 years old and has finished his studies at law-school, and is waiting for his degree to be confirmed. He is working part-time as a prison-guard, and is a well-built, somewhat thought-full person, a little bit uneasy in his uniform.

+ Women at the female prison, and Ann's 6 year old son.

Act 1 scen1

(A bus arrives at the nicely embedded big house where female inmates are doing their time. The sun is shining. It's a Monday in July. Flowers and trees and bushes surround the main building, which is remotely located and doesn't look like a prison. Women on the bus have sung the tune "Freedom" and some continue to do so with damped voices when leaving it. Richard stands in a guard's uniform outside the bus-door. Diana is the last one debarking, wearing jeans and a sweater, carrying a big bag. She is a bit behind the marching women.)

RICHARD

Hurry up, please!

DIANA

I have plenty of time to catch up here, I'm not going anywhere. (She stops and faces Richard.)

RICHARD

You are not catching anything when I'm responsible! I promise you.

DIANA

(She speaks with irony.) That was very wisely said! Even thought-full, and to the point!

RICHARD

Watch your thong! You are being corrected here, not me.

DIANA

I'm so sorry if I hurt your feelings, or perhaps your self-esteem?

RICHARD

Don't mistake me for a guardian angel when I'm trying to do my job. (He looks pleased with his words, but doesn't smile.)

DIANA

Then you may carry my bag up to the house? So I can catch up with the others... (She puts down her bag on the ground in front of Richard.)

RICHARD

I'm sorry, but that is no part of my duties. I work here, doing other things!

DIANA

Excuse me! I forgot the importance of being on speaking terms with the guards at prison. My name is Diana. (She stretches out her hand, Richard takes it reluctantly.) And what is your name?

RICHARD

Richard. (He stiffens a little bit.) You must hurry now! You are behind the others... Diana. They have already gone into the house.

DIANA

Then we have all the time in the world to get acquainted!

RICHARD

I beg your pardon... Diana! There is a difference between my working-hours and doing your time here.

DIANA

Another well-put comment! You must be an educated man? You ought to meet Ann, my sister! She is trying to be a writer.

RICHARD

(He is suddenly soft-spoken, almost shy.) As a matter of fact, this is not a permanent work for me. I'm just waiting for my exam to be confirmed at the university.

DIANA

You must be joking! Don't tell me that we have studied at the same university?! (She approaches him quickly, whispers in his ear.)

RICHARD

I've studied law at the same place!

DIANA

Well, well, what do you know...

RICHARD

I've learned things here... and there, and tried to use them in my paper to get my exam.

DIANA

I just picked up some tricks in economy when I studied for my degree, and later applied them at work to boost my career.

RICHARD

(He speaks with light contempt.) Very successfully I guess, but you are as welcome as anybody else.

DIANA

Don't be rude, Richard! I just fought the law. And the law won... as they say.

RICHARD

Pick up your bag! (His voice softens.) Please... Diana.

DIANA

(She walks comfortably towards the house. Richard follows. She stops and turns around.) Richard, can my sister Ann visit me?

RICHARD

Two times a week. The schedule is on the board inside the front-door.

DIANA

I was thinking... can she come when it suits her conditions? She has a six year old son to take care of. It's not easy for her to adapt to a scheme.

RICHARD

She must follow the rules as everyone else! (He disappears into the house behind Diana.)

Act 1 scen2

(Diana is sitting alone at a table in the nicely furnished cafeteria, among other female inmates. A cup of coffee is standing on a table in front of her, beside a plate with a small cookie. Ann enters with her six year old son, they hold hands. The boy takes a seat after hugging Diana and starts reading a comic-book, concealing his face.)

ANN

Hi there Diana! (She looks around the cafeteria.) What a nice cafeteria this is!

DIANA

Better than expected, I guess. I'll get you a soda and some cookies, and coffee. (She rises, then leaves and returns with a tray after a short while.) There you are. Be my guests! (The boy reaches out his hand and grabs the soda and a cookie. He drinks and eats without looking at anything else but his comic-book.)

ANN

How are you, Diana? You are looking good, but a little bit tired. Do you sleep all-right here? How is your bed? You must miss your own at home!

DIANA

It's hard to accept new living-conditions. (She smiles.) I've been forced to do so.

ANN

I don't understand... Why did you end up here? (She turns to her occupied son.) Have another cookie! Take a chair over there! The light is better and more comfortable for reading. (She points, the boy rises, still holding his comic-book in front of him.) Don't forget your soda! (The boy leaves for an armchair at the wall with a window above.)

DIANA

Since our parents passed away I've always felt responsible for you.

ANN

But you are younger than me!

DIANA

Age has nothing to do with hours and years...

ANN

(She hesitates but smiles.) So you are superior to me?!

DIANA

Age is about how you handle the years. You have a son to take care of, I don't. You are vulnerable, I am not. You had a husband who died in a car-accident! I have not even been married.

ANN

(She speaks thoughtfully.) Is that why you took the blame for me? I was just out of money for the moment! We needed something to eat that day.

DIANA

You are writing a novel, I'm not. I think I understand your hunger.

ANN

I have finished it now! I've heard good words about a publisher. I'm going to send it to them. But you must be the first one to read it... if you're interested?

DIANA

I will be happy to do so!

ANN

I haven't thought about it... the title I picked long ago: Love at work... The story is about a woman and a man working at the same place. They are frying hamburgers, serving them and have done so for a year. Their feelings grow from shy love at first sight, but none of them dares to show it. Then late one night love suddenly explodes when they get robbed at work, and he is hurt in the arm by a bullet. It's a detective-story!

DIANA

Please don't tell me how your book ends! Let me stay curious. (She strokes Ann's arm.) You sound like a genuine writer already. Analyzing everything... and coming to conclusions.

ANN

(She stands up and gives Diana a hug.) Diana, you are the biggest little sister anyone could ask for! (She takes her seat at the table again.)

(Richard enters the cafeteria. He glances at Diana and Ann sitting at their table, but then discovers Ann's son. He approaches him slowly and takes a seat beside the boy. It seems like he asks what he is doing there alone. The boy points at Ann and Diana. Richard and the boy continue to speak, and it looks like they are becoming friends.)

ANN

I was stupid when I stole food at your work. But you were crazy when you took the blame at the trial! You didn't know what I was doing in your department. You didn't even know I was there!

DIANA

Mother used to tell me to take care of you. She always said that you would become something important in the future.

ANN

But the future is here now, isn't it? And I have become a writer!

DIANA

Ann, I believe that the future has no end. Someone said it's the only eternal thing!

ANN

Now we are both out of work. I feel guilty!

DIANA

I had plenty of time to consider what to say at the trial. I'm responsible for every word I said! You're not to blame for anything because of me.

ANN

(She stands up again and gives Diana a hug.) I trust you to be the first one to read my novel!

Act 1 scen 3

(Ann leaves Diana at the table and goes to her son, sitting beside Richard. They have a lively conversation reading the boys comic-book together, laughing and pointing at the pictures. Ann caresses her son, speaks a few words, then Richard raises and takes a few steps away to talk privately with Ann.)

ANN

Thank you for looking after my son, while I was talking to my sister Diana.

RICHARD

He is a funny kid. I was swept away with comic-books at his age. And now you're sweeping me off my feet! (He looks at Ann from top to toe without changing his neutral expression.)

ANN

I guess you have to stand much at work as a prison-guard! So you take every chance to sit down... By the way, I'm Ann. (She smiles, gives Richard her hand when he rises.)

RICHARD

Call me Richard, please! For once I think I lost my breath, and really need a seat. (He stares intensely at Ann's face, obviously beginning to fall in love.)

ANN

(She says jokingly.) I think I can stand you! I prefer when you're on your feet.

RICHARD

You are as witty as your sister! She told me about you. Now you know I am Richard for you. (He shakes Ann's hand gently, but formally.)

ANN

I must ask you something. Can we go somewhere else? (Richard guides her out of the house by pointing at the door. Ann's son is occupied with his comic-book and doesn't notice. Diana gives them a glance while sitting at her table, but then stares thoughtfully in front of herself.)

ANN

The air in your cafeteria... I don't complain, but I breathe more easily outdoors!

RICHARD

Nothing is better to inhale than freedom! Even for those who don't think about it. Guilt has a certain smell. Look at the flowers and trees around you! They also breathe.

ANN

Do you really think guilt has a smell? I feel so sorry for my sister!

RICHARD

She will be out of here soon. Then she can return to her normal life. She told me she has a degree in economics.

ANN

Yes, and I'm just a working-girl without any education and a job.

RICHARD

Why? It must be easy for you to find something. You can even be a model! Your clothes can't hide that.

ANN

You're too kind Richard, you look through me.

RICHARD

I'm just looking at you. And that's enough for me!

ANN

(She smiles.) Watch out Richard, I'm a writer! Perhaps I will quote you on that!

RICHARD

What have you done? I mean... tell me about your writing!

ANN

I've done less than you can imagine. (She suddenly throws herself at Richard, arms around his neck and kisses him. Richard is stunned at first but quickly enjoys the response of his previously hidden wishes.)

RICHARD

(He is standing intimately close to Ann, but neither of them holds on to the other.) How many books have you published?

ANN

This is my first novel. I finished it last week. So I haven't had the time to be published yet. My sister Diana will read it, I value her opinion.

RICHARD

You know her better than I do. Then it must be a good choice.

Act 1 scen 4

(In Ann's poorly decorated three-room apartment. Her son is running around the living-room holding a plastic model of an airplane, absorbed in his own world. Richard and Ann are sitting comfortably in a simple couch. The small flat television-set on a wall is turned on. They are having a glass of red wine after dinner.)

ANN

You are spoiling my son. You don't have to buy him things all the time!

RICHARD

That's why I didn't give him anything today. But I bought some comic-books like those he read when we first met. You can hide them somewhere when I have left. Kids like to discover surprises. Don't tell him I bought them!

ANN

(She gives Richard a kiss.) He is so calm and happy when you are around. Don't leave tonight! We don't mind your working-hours.

RICHARD

I have to get up early. I don't want to disturb you. But don't worry: I have all the time in the world to kiss you good-night. (Ann pushes him gently in his chest.)

ANN

Please Richard, do me a favor and give Diana my script. She promised to read it at once, and I want her reactions. (She quickly gets up from the coach, finds her manuscript and returns to her place beside him.)

RICHARD

Your working-hours as a writer are more comfortable than mine. Why do you trust your sister's opinion?

ANN

She has always been fair to me since we were kids. My opinion about her is better than what the court showed when they sentenced her!

RICHARD

The only thing I know about Diana is that she was shop-lifting. She will be released soon on parole.

ANN

Even her lawyer was shocked when she suddenly confessed!

RICHARD

The law is just printed letters on a paper. (He continues thoughtfully.) It's a good start for lawyers to follow them, but not enough for a humane judge's interpretation. (He lays his arm around Ann.) What law made me fall in love with you? (Ann hugs him.)

ANN

Love and law... Love is a fight for the perfect life. Is it possible then to overcome obstacles made by law? In the end the struggle is worth the trouble! Am I right?

(In Ann's apartment at the dining-table the following day: Richard is sitting with Ann's son in his knee after dinner. He is reading a comic-book with amusement in his voice and laughing together with the boy. Ann clears the table and returns after finishing hand-washing the dishes. Her son leaves to watch a television-program.)

ANN

I listened to both of you from the kitchen. You're so childish sometimes...

RICHARD

Comic-books are very bleak today. I managed to find some classics reprinted. They have the strong feelings I remember. Right or wrong, they are alive.

ANN

It's very difficult for me to play seriously with words. They are too real! It takes time to make them work when I'm writing. (She takes a seat at the table.)

RICHARD

I gave Diana your script. She started reading it at once, and was gone like your son.

ANN

I hope you didn't hear her laugh!

RICHARD

(He gives Ann a quick kiss on her mouth.) I searched for Diana's sentence from court and found it. What a pity she didn't appeal! (He shakes his head.) I studied all the laws at my university and found nothing against her. There is no evidence of her wrongdoing, beside her confession!

ANN

(She speaks nervously.) Do you think Diana has something to blame herself for? And that's why she said she was guilty...

RICHARD

Psychology is none of my strengths. (Ann's son rushes in, grabs his forgotten comic-book and disappears without a word.)

ANN

Did you find anything else? About me for instance...

RICHARD

No, Diana was the only one who told the court what happened. The notes from a trial are often very brief, especially when someone confesses.

ANN

I got her into this situation! Do you think she can forgive me?

RICHARD

Don't be ridiculous! Just because you are her big sister you are not responsible for her doings!

(It is late one night in Ann's bedroom. Richard is sleeping beside her, but she is awake and finally kisses him on his cheek so he wakes up. Richard slowly hugs Ann and starts kissing her more and more passionately.)

ANN

(She interrupts Richard.) Richard, you know I love you. That's not why I can't sleep.

RICHARD

(He has been intimately close to her, but is now relaxed, lying on his back eager to listen.) What is it then? Have I done something wrong? I just want you to be happy...

ANN

I think I have some kind of life-crises!

RICHARD

(He is surprised.) We are still young, you and me. We love each other! Your first novel is ready, and you have food on the table. Is there more to ask for?

ANN

I am a lousy writer... What am I going to do?

RICHARD

Who says so, your sister?

ANN

No, but it's not what people say that is important. It's what they don't say.

RICHARD

Try me! I'm not sentenced to anything but love for you. (Ann ignores his words.)

ANN

Diana said nothing about my written language then there is something wrong with it. She didn't tell me anything about my story... Then it's not interesting enough.

RICHARD

But what did she say then?

ANN

The usual: That I will be famous and rich someday, and that she was proud of me.

RICHARD

What a terrific supporter she is!

ANN

No, I was mad and told her I enjoyed that she was imprisoned, because she doesn't understand literature!

RICHARD

Wasn't that mean without an honest meaning? I will talk to Diana in the morning. And get your book and read it myself, if I may. Let's have some sleep now! I have to be an early bird in the morning.

(Ann is sitting at the kitchen-table having a big cup of tea in the evening, reading a book. Richard enters. Ann rises and pours out tea for him. He takes a seat and puts sugar and milk into his cup. Ann returns to her chair.)

ANN

Is he sleeping?

RICHARD

Yes, I wonder what he's dreaming about. I've read the same story for him so many times now that I know it by heart.

ANN

(She laughs.) Not every small boy grows up to be a big man.

RICHARD

Your sister Diana sends her best wishes, and longs for your next novel. She wonders when you're coming to visit her again.

ANN

(Her voice gets serious.) The worst thing is that no woman has ever been allowed to be seen as grown up. Look at men, they write every history-book!

RICHARD

Ann, why don't you prove them wrong?

ANN

Who am I to take arms against a sea of troubles, in this overflowing world?

RICHARD

Don't dive and hide beneath the waves then! I will not watch you drown!

ANN

You should know me, but you don't know why...

Act 1 scen 5

(Diana is planting flowers that will have different colors when they grow up in front of the building where she is an inmate. She is trying to arrange them tastefully. Ann comes strolling on the lawn to see her, dressed in a simple but tidy gown. Diana wears blue jeans and a t-skirt. It's a grey but hot day.)

ANN

(She shouts and waves.) Hi there Diana! This is what I call being imprisoned.

DIANA

Time well spent is from heaven sent. (She smiles, looking up at the sky.) Nice to see you Ann!

ANN

Why don't you write a book? You have a way with words!

DIANA

My sister has done that, and I can't possibly reach her level!

ANN

Are you criticizing me? Or is it only irony? (She embraces Diana.)

DIANA

I'm always serious even when I amuse myself with a joke! (She points with a tiny spade in her hand.) Look at the flowers over there! I planted them last week and they are thriving. Their silent beauty will give a signal with their coming colors. It's magic without words!

ANN

(She is watching Diana who stands on her knees, planting the last flowers in the soil.) Diana... you must let me apologize for what I said about you being here. I didn't mean to be rude... You certainly don't deserve this. (She makes a vivid gesture around the environment.)

DIANA

You could have asked me for money instead of stealing food. I was working hard, and forgot to speak with you for weeks.

ANN

I did it for my son! We had nothing to eat. You knew I had no job.

DIANA

So you forgot about him too, sitting at your desk writing your novel?

ANN

Perhaps... but you had no idea about what I was doing! And my son was hungry! (Her mobile signals, she answers.) I'm here, where are you? Ok. (She puts back her telephone into her pocket.)

DIANA

Are you meeting someone? Was that Richard?

ANN

He is coming soon with the bus.

DIANA

(She has finished planting flowers, rises, studies them and adjusts some of their positions.) Is it ok for you to wait here? I have to wash my hands. (She leaves with a bucket and some gardening-tools.)

(Richard, dressed in uniform, arrives with the bus and a few women. Ann strolls around, studying the flowers and frequently look at him, but he seems to ignore her when he's at work. Richard finally comes out of the house and stands rather formally in front of Ann.)

ANN

(She says affectionately.) I love to watch men at work!

RICHARD

You're welcome here anytime. Not as a client I hope. (He smiles faintly.) I will see you at home in the evening.

ANN

Look at those beautiful roses! Diana planted them a few weeks ago: A glimpse of red and pink and yellow among the buds, with dark green leaves beneath. What a sweet combination!

RICHARD

(He looks briefly, then affectionately at Ann.) I don't know much about flowers, but I recognize a rose when I see it.

ANN

Perhaps you were hurt as a kid by the thorn when you tried to pick one?

RICHARD

Ann, you know what I mean! Don't pretend that you're deaf and can't take a compliment. (He discretely symbolizes a kiss with his lips towards Ann.)

ANN

Most men are boring, but you're not! Love and law... does love always have to fight the law? Or is it the other way around?

RICHARD

Diana apparently didn't fight the law!

ANN

(She speaks with a twist in her voice.) And you may fall in love with her for that?

RICHARD

I have just one heart and you know it has already been taken.

ANN

(She laughs confidently, then seriously.) Finders keep it!

RICHARD

I have to get back to work indoors. (He leaves Ann standing with her arms passively stretched out along her body's sides.)

DIANA

(She comes out of the shed where all the gardening-equipment is kept. She meets Richard briefly, talks, and he finally points at Ann from a distance. Diana walks away to Ann and Richard disappears.) Why did you let Richard go away?

ANN

He has got work to do.

DIANA

Have you sent your script to the publisher yet? What did they say?

ANN

I signed the contract yesterday! When my book is published this autumn I'll give you a copy. I was surprised because they gave me some money in advance! So I don't have to steal food for a while. (She smiles with both guilt and joy.)

DIANA

I don't want you to feel bad about that!

ANN

Why should I?

DIANA

That's better! You show a personality worthy of a successful career.

ANN

I'm very sorry Diana... But it's too late for me to take the blame for what I did and you did not. You will be out of here in a couple of weeks! So there's no use for us... or me if I confess and get my punishment!

DIANA

You are such a wise big sister, Ann!

ANN

Don't make me look like a self-centered fool!

DIANA

I've always believed that it's hard to handle the truth if you don't use it regularly. It's like gardening! Look how difficult it is for me! (She points at the flowers.)

ANN

You treat the flowers beautifully. It seems like you have been working with growing things forever! (She is a little bit embarrassed.) I have to leave now and do some shopping. It's not easy being a single mum. Richard comes home to us for dinner.

Act 1 scen 6

(Ann is sitting in her living-room beside Richard who has her son in his knee. The boy is occupied with his comic-book, while the grownups watch a news-channel, having a glass of red wine after dinner. The boy rise staring at the pages he holds in front of him and then leaves the room almost sleep-walking.)

RICHARD

(He uses a loud voice to the boy.) You don't have to go to bed yet! It's not that late. (The boy doesn't answer.)

ANN

This wine is delicious. Where did you buy it?

RICHARD

(He smiles.) Not at your sisters store in any case. (He notices that Ann reacts.) I'm sorry. I didn't intend to be un-polite.

ANN

Are you trying to be rude? You talk about Diana as soon as you have an opportunity!

RICHARD

Do you really believe that? I just pity her because she is unjustly sentenced. Forgive me if you think I'm childish. (He hesitates.) As a law-student waiting for my exam I have some illusions left about justice and how the law is applied.

ANN

You're so dry! Have some more of this nice wine! (She holds up her glass, Richard does so too, and they sip wine.)

RICHARD

One good thinker once said that everything is relative. I have my own version about relativity: Your truth is yours if you honestly believe in it. Mine is mine. But how can opposites unite? Is that a democratic question?

ANN

Have some more wine! Then you can forget that you love me!

RICHARD

I love your jokes, Ann. By the way, I spoke with Diana about your novel. She said she admires you and what you've achieved. Do you think she is honest?

ANN

Life is a novel written for people that love illusions! Everyone is an actor in his or her life. (She laughs softly.) But only the best get paid for it on stage.

RICHARD

Ann, don't mock me! I understand that you've worked hard as hell with your writing, but the effort is a reward in itself. When you are satisfied with the result nothing more adds greater value for you. Perhaps your finished work becomes a gift to the rest of us... By the way, has Diana told you more about your writing?

ANN

Not a word! I didn't expect that. Before a road is paved, they use gravel and sand beneath, and then cover them with a smooth surface. There is always a need for gravel and sand, but nobody ever sees or thinks about them!

RICHARD

(Ann's son enters, still holding a comic-book in front of him. He grabs Richard by the hand and drags him away without a word. Richard says over his shoulder to Ann.) This is going to be easy. (He smiles.) Give us ten minutes!

ANN

(Richard and Ann's son are sitting in the coach playing a soccer-game onscreen with remote-controls, in front of the flat television-set. It is early in the afternoon. Ann dressed in a summer-frock enters the apartment with her key.) Why are you sitting here? It's so hot outside! Why haven't you gone swimming?

RICHARD

(He answers Ann without turning his head from the television-screen.) I suggested that when I picked him up after pre-school, but as we got here he wanted to play.

ANN

It's your day off! How can you spend time doing this?

RICHARD

Kids are kids, it's better to follow them as long as they don't hurt themselves... or anyone else.

ANN

Get your things! We are going for a swim. I'll be ready in five seconds.

RICHARD

You're the boss. I'm losing this game anyway. (He rises from the coach, turns off the screen, then stretches out his hand to the boy, now standing.) Thanks for the game! Next time I will beat you. (The boy happily shakes his hand, then runs away to get his swimming-pants.)

ANN

(She and Richard are lying on a grassy hillside close to a swimming-pool filled with noisy kids playing, and some grownups among them trying to swim. The afternoon sun is shining and it's very hot. She is wearing a bikini and Richard has bathing-shorts. Ann's son is far away in the pool with newfound comrades.) I'd rather be at the seaside without all these people. But this swimming-pool is the closest to home...

RICHARD

It's really nice here! What a perfect roundup of my workless day!

ANN

You played soccer-games indoors with my son, but don't waste any balls on me!

RICHARD

(He laughs.) Seriously Ann, I'm getting used to you as a writer. I have never dreamt of us playing anything but softball. I'm a good catcher!

ANN

Richard, you are so easily played with! Try to kiss me if you can! But be discreet, otherwise I will yell.

RICHARD

(He gives Ann a long-lasting kiss, then returns to reading a magazine. Ann lies in the sun beside him with closed eyes.) By the way, you were long gone yesterday. I'm not a cat, so don't kill me, but what did you do?

ANN

(She is lying flat on the blanket with closed eyes.) We were looking at houses for sale. By the way, my way: You are curious, but that will not kill you or any cat. You are pardoned from such a sentence. (Then she says thoughtfully.) I guess it's my fault to have awakened the wittiness in you.

RICHARD

Did you discover anything suitable?

ANN

We found a new home for you and me! I'm the proud house-owner from Monday next month!

RICHARD

Curiosity killed the cat, but kindness is more effective! It may be a slow working poison and takes time to have effect, but it's not breaking any law, not yet...

ANN

(She laughs.) I'm sure you will write a novel someday soon, Richard! Every truth that has never been heard of before is a bestseller.

Act 2 scen 1

RICHARD

(Richard steps out of the bus with a few new female inmates. He follows them up to the house. It's a sunny day. Diana is planting flowers outdoors.) Hello Diana, I didn't see you at first. You are melting in among the flowers.

DIANA

Save your compliments for my sister, please!

RICHARD

Did I give you a compliment? Anyway, your vacation here ends next week. (To the women he is escorting.) If you behave like Diana, there are few limits here. You can read the schedule for visits on the board inside the house. (He stays beside Diana while the women enter the house.)

DIANA

(She says with irony.) You are a qualified salesman, Richard. Ann told me that you left the buying of a new home to her. Are you going to live in whatever she choose and purchase?

RICHARD

(He smiles.) I hope that you don't visit us too often. Relatives can be a menace.

DIANA

(She answers gravely.) With my record from this institution I know my place.

RICHARD

(He seems disturbed.) If you repeat a lie it has the same effect as any truth. After a while no one listens, but quietly believes that silence means no objection.

DIANA

You talk like a lawyer already Richard! You must learn to bend the rules if you want success.

RICHARD

Thanks for your advice, Diana. I will remember that when I get my exam. You should have done the same and ducked all accusations.

DIANA

Have you heard that old pop-song: (She sings softly.) There are men and men, and women for them. But every God laugh at their choices...

RICHARD

(He reacts impatiently.) I must hurry now and take care of our new inmates, (He leaves while Diana laughs.)

Act 2 scen 2

(Richard follows Diana out of the building carrying her bag. She stops at the flowers she planted during her weeks of imprisonment, and gives them a critical look.)

RICHARD

Come on Diana!

DIANA

You must have someone to take care of these flowers I planted.

RICHARD

Come on now! I'm driving you home for your release-party.

DIANA

(She bends down adjusting a few flowers here and there.) There is nothing like watching flowers grow in the right combination. They hide their colors from birth and then blossom for anyone who knows what's coming up from the soil.

RICHARD

Diana, I'm waiting!

DIANA

Do you know why some flowers make a difference combined with others? Their individual beauty is often overlooked, but in the right company they sparkle!

RICHARD

Why don't you want to leave this place as soon as possible? You're free to go now!

DIANA

I guess I'm a burden to you. (She looks at her bag carried by Richard and starts singing in a low voice.) Please release me let me go... (She suddenly stops.)

RICHARD

If you are trying to impersonate a lunatic, then this place isn't the right one for you. Please Diana, follow me! (He turns around and walks towards the parking-lot. He pauses and speaks to Diana behind him.) You make me feel sorry because you're too healthy.

DIANA

(They stop by a car. Richard opens the trunk and puts her bag there.) Is this your car?

RICHARD

(He explodes.) It's your freedom-vehicle for God's sake! You've done your time here, but mine is running out. I'm in a hurry! (He gives his wrist-watch a glance.)

RICHARD

(After driving very fast, he and Diana steps out of the car in front of her house.) Excuse me for shouting at you.

DIANA

I had more difficulties with your brutal driving.

RICHARD

(He laughs.) Apparently I'm more tied to my work than you are to your freedom.

DIANA

(She gives him a tender look.) Ann and you are the perfect couple. Limited conscience is the best way to survive without getting hurt.

RICHARD

Society has formed laws for how everybody must live!

DIANA

No objection, no exception and most important of all, no regrets.

RICHARD

What are you trying to tell me, Diana?

DIANA

I'm sure you have heard that bad things happen to good people. Well, when good people confront bad people and are given a sentence, there is relevant doubt about how courts interpret the law. Is it because their hidden prejudices are exposed?

RICHARD

(He looks puzzled.) I'm no racist! I don't see any question in black or white.

DIANA

Tell the politicians that! They play chess with our living-conditions on black and white squares.

DIANA

(Richard unloads her bag from the car's trunk and puts it on the ground. Suddenly she says.) How did you know where I live? Has Ann told you?

RICHARD

(He confirms Diana's words with a nod.) I have to get back to work. Good luck with your freedom! (He drives away from Diana in his car.)

Act 2 scen 3

DIANA

(She enters her three room apartment, high up in the 19th century building with large rooms and four meters from floor to ceiling. She is surprised to find Ann there, who hands over a vas full of fresh flowers. She swiftly places it on a table in the living-room.) Thank you very much! But what are you doing here?

ANN

Welcome home! I wanted to clean your apartment before you came back. So I used your spare-key. Have some cake and a cup of coffee! We are celebrating!

DIANA

(She looks around the neatly furnished and well cleaned room. A cake and coffee-cups stand ready on the table.) Don't expect me to say: Home sweet home!

ANN

Diana, you have been so kind to me. (She hesitates.) You are welcome for lunch in my new house next Sunday. (She pours out coffee and hands Diana the knife to cut a slice of the big, beautifully decorated cake on the table. They both sit down.)

DIANA

You're joking! Where did you get that money from? And where is your son?

ANN

Richard promised to pick him up after work. (She gives Diana a big smile.) Playing successfully with words... I used the money from my publisher to find a house... (She hesitates then leans forward across the table towards Diana, who is sitting in a armchair.) I must tell you a secret: My publisher is negotiating! They want to make a film from my book! But nothing is signed yet.

DIANA

So Richard is going to live with you two? Then I understand why you need some more space.

ANN

Exactly! But your lovely apartment gives you enough room now when you're free!

DIANA

(She sighs.) Is that going to help me getting a new job?

ANN

There are turning-points in life, Diana! I've read many books for the sake of art and literature. It's interesting to discover how upbringing and experiences influence talented women. Many of us don't recognize a turning-point and just let it pass by!

DIANA

I don't believe in books telling me how to live today. History gives lessons, but the future must be explored anyhow.

ANN

You are so negative, Diana! You're just looking backwards in a mirror, not seeing beside or above the frame.

DIANA

(She eats and zips some coffee.) Delicious cake you bought! When Richard moves in... I guess the next step is that you're going to marry him?

ANN

Yes, that's our intention. How did you guess? My son and I, we both love him!

DIANA

I wish you the very best! Every person in the world should get what they deserve. That's a worthy goal.

ANN

How could your short time in prison make you bitter? Why aren't you happy for me?

DIANA

I'm happy that Richard chose to be with you. Are you sure your love will work out?

ANN

(She explodes.) You are ungrateful and envious! I was a fool to let you read my novel! I'm so pleased with it, even the title "Love at work", and now you're mocking me!

DIANA

Absolutely not! I had no such intention!

ANN

You are ungrateful! I got over here to your apartment, cleaned it up and bought you a cake, so you would feel welcome back to freedom.

DIANA

What can I do more than to thank you properly? Have you looked into my soul and seen the depth of my feelings? Is that what writing is about?

ANN

You know nothing about it, you're just a bystander!

DIANA

And a passive one I guess... That must be the worst kind!

ANN

My publisher is printing my novel this autumn, you know that! But he has already sold the rights to make a movie-script of it. I will do it myself. Someone believes so much in me that I could buy a house!

DIANA

It's wonderful that my biggest sister has become that great.

***** Intermission *****

Act 2 scen 4

ANN

(It's Saturday and a warm evening in Ann's new house. Richard is sitting beside her son in the shabby old coach. She watches a news-channel in her recently bought antic armchair. The boy is reading a comic-book, sometimes holding it up in front of him, and Richard is glancing over his shoulder. Most of the living-room is furnished with Ann's old coach, television-set etcetera.) Please Richard, grow up and be a man!

RICHARD

(He smiles.) I'm older than anyone but younger than the rest...

ANN

Come on, Richard, you and Diana have changed your behavior. Just because I became a writer! Don't compete with me using words and phrases I never do!

RICHARD

(He talks to the boy beside him.) Have you noticed that it's not enough to say "I love you" to your mother? (The boy nods and continues to read his comic-book. He turns to Ann.) I have such difficulties to be my old self when I am with you. Is that love-inflicted?

ANN

Love without reasonable doubt is seldom complicated!

RICHARD

So you hate me because I have sympathies for your sister Diana?

ANN

(She laughs.) You fell for her because she is weak. Don't forget to appreciate those who are strong!

RICHARD

I'm just a man, and guys like me take care of the wounded.

ANN

I am wounded! What would you do to make me happy? (She says to her son.) It's bedtime. You can finish reading in your room! (The boy leaves, reading on his way out. Ann takes his place beside Richard.) Now I'm your guardian in this house. Understood? (She smiles.)

RICHARD

If you treat me well, I can't give you hell!

ANN

Richard!

RICHARD

You are provoking me, not just with your hidden beauty... I'm sorry, but your writing is behind all this.

ANN

Is talent provocative? I mean in general...

RICHARD

Everybody has got talent, sometimes hidden somewhere. The lucky ones give birth to it, and are fortunate enough to see it grow and mature.

ANN

Remember that you are my prisoner in this house!

RICHARD

(He smiles.) Just like Diana in my "house"?

ANN

I'm not going to ask what she has said to you. I have my integrity!

RICHARD

(He speaks gravely.) I've heard nothing from her, but read more in the papers from court, that gave Diana her sentence.

ANN

I'm so ashamed of her being a criminal. But now Diana is coming back to life. And she will have dinner with us tomorrow!

RICHARD

Diana said that she put the stolen food into your bag and didn't blame you for anything! At the trial she showed that she can separate right from wrong and confessed. Let's move on and forget about it!

ANN

(She says in a dubious voice.) You are so understanding, Richard! You have got all the right feelings for her doings.

RICHARD

(He's holding his arm around Ann in the coach.) But you have to tell me why Diana met you at her work and then stole food at her department and put it in your bag... I'm just curious!

ANN

I wanted to surprise her, that's why I didn't tell her I was coming. I was going to shop some food for my son, he was hungry. And I had practically no money those days. Perhaps I was confused or up in the blue, writing the last chapter of my novel. I was walking around the store looking for some meat... or anything... and then I met Diana in her office.

RICHARD

(He sighs, then smiles.) Well, I haven't grown up with a sibling so I know nothing about the fighting and loyalty that can occur.

ANN

When I went out of the store to get back home they stopped me! I had forgotten to pay for the food I carried in my bag. How embarrassed I was when the security-guards brought me to my sister! Then she told them she had given me the food, and later she offered her manger to pay for it. But she was fired! And then prosecuted for theft! Please Richard, now you've heard the story! I'll never write it down, I hope we can forget and leave this behind us. (She kisses him tenderly.)

RICHARD

I love you for not letting the law interfere with love!

Act 2 scen 5

(In Ann's two-story house, with a view over the landscape. The sun is shining, it's a late summers day in August before lunch. A dining table is decorated with flowers and plates, glasses etcetera, ready for lunch to be served. Ann, Diana and Richard enter from a balcony-door with glasses in their hands after a tour around the house, and takes seats at the table.)

DIANA

Where is your son? Isn't he coming for lunch?

ANN

Kids focus on things you and I ignore. (She takes and holds Diana's hand firmly.) They have other priorities in their world. I'm so glad he found new friends to play with the first day we moved in! I will save food for him, so he can eat later.

RICHARD

Sisters in arms, may we join each other at the table now? (Ann and Diana smiles, then they all serve themselves things from the table.)

ANN

(She says to Diana.) I made a stew, Richard helped me. I hope it's not too hot. (She starts handing out goulash from a carrot.) Don't forget the salad!

RICHARD

Apparently you are talking to me!

ANN

Richard! I'm no vegetable. (She gives Richard a quick angry glance, he smiles back.)

RICHARD

I know juicy meat when I see it. But I have nothing against colored vegetables. I'm no racist you know!

ANN

Richard, does mineral-water before lunch make you crazy?

RICHARD

(He smiles, then jokingly.) I am not sure what you poured into my glass. But why did Diana get orange-juice? Is this some kind of plot?

DIANA

That is an intriguing question! (She pauses briefly, raises her glass of juice.) Thank you for inviting me to this beautiful house! Ann, I'm so happy for you. You deserve this lovely environment!

RICHARD

(He says glancing at Ann.) I thought I was your only significant environment.

ANN

Life is like a book you have to write for yourself. It has to trigger readers hunger when looking at the cover, but not everybody is satisfied after chewing the content. Let's eat now! Bon appetite! (They all start eating. Richard takes a lot of vegetables.)

DIANA

You are my biggest big sister, Ann!

RICHARD

That's a great sentence for her! (He continues to eat with good appetite, so does Ann and Diana. Without being heard by the audience they small-talk.)

RICHARD

(He is leaning forward on his forearms over the balcony-rail outside the dining-room. Diana stands beside him. Ann is occupied, cleaning up after lunch.) Why did you confess to something you've never done? I've studied your case!

DIANA

My words flew up...

RICHARD

In my world words never fly up or by. They are pinned down on a piece of paper to stand a chance to be valid in court. Evidence beyond reasonable doubt is what matters!

DIANA

(She strokes his arm.) Law and love... You had never met my sister and made her happy if I was declared innocent.

RICHARD

(He takes a firm grip around Diana's waist and kisses her eagerly. Diana tries violently to push him away, but surrenders.) Excuse me Diana. The laws of love haven't been written yet.

DIANA

Your imagination is powerful... (She looks at Richard tenderly.) Write it down!

RICHARD

(He says desperately.) I remember who I'm living with, but not what I'm living for.

DIANA

That will change when you get married to my sister.

ANN

(She joins Diana and Richard on the balcony.) What are you two up to?

RICHARD

We have been waiting for you. Why didn't you let us help washing up after lunch?

ANN

Some needed things take less time to do alone! This house is new, but routines come quickly. I'm absolutely not punished with dish-washing! You were relieved instead and could relax together.

DIANA

We were just talking about how necessary it is for destiny to have a schedule. Have you and Richard set the date for your wedding?

ANN

(She puts her arm around Richard's waist.) We haven't decided yet. So much has happened the last months, it's just a formality... but a happy one! (She turns to Richard.) Have you told Diana that you got your exam? With the highest marks!

RICHARD

(He shakes his head embarrassed.) Diana isn't interested in law.

ANN

(She stares in his eyes.) Would you give anyone of your convicts the same message?

RICHARD

Please Ann, law is a dependable skeleton, but we humans are mostly flesh, for better and worse...

ANN

Are you suggesting that human judgment stands above the law?

RICHARD

It's the other way around, most of the time. But there might complications.

ANN

Richard, don't be shy! Explain yourself!

RICHARD

I'm no lawyer, and I have no desire to become one. I'm ending my part time work at the female prison this month... I don't need the extra money any more. I've got a full time job at a real estate agency now.

DIANA

I'm so happy for you! Everything is well that ends well, don't they say so?

RICHARD

A bumpy road has been smoothly paved for me the last few months.

DIANA

(She laughs gently.) A long way still lies ahead of you, Richard!

ANN

(She is still holding her arm around Richard's waist.) Diana, we can't understand what you're saying...

DIANA

Then I leave the interpretation to you, as a writer!

RICHARD

(He smiles at Ann.) I think I understand. I'm no singer but I did it my way!

ANN

(She releases her arm around Richard.) Why are you joking about serious things?

DIANA

Perhaps he is just trying to stand alone sometimes in your company. (All three of them laugh.)

Act 2 scen 6

(At the dining-table in Diana's apartment lunch is ready for Ann, Diana and Richard. It's a grey Sunday with some rain pounding on the windows. They serve each other sitting down and start eating sole with mashed potatoes.)

ANN

You're lucky today, Diana, without a balcony. I really hate this weather!

RICHARD

I look at the flowers Diana planted every day at work. They will enjoy some rain.

DIANA

(She turns to Ann and Richard, with a slight touch of irony.) The food is on the table, please go ahead! You have been served.

ANN

(Richard laughs softly.) Why are you laughing, Richard?

RICHARD

I'm sorry. I understood Diana's point in my way.

DIANA

Law and love, it's a perfect combination for you two! (She raises her glass of mineral water.) I'm very excited about your wedding. Ann, you must let me be your bridesmaid.

ANN

No one else can replace you! You're the only one I lean on. (She smiles, then gravely.) I wish our father was alive so he could give me away!

RICHARD

(He is eating.) Please Ann, I appreciate wishful thoughts, but...

DIANA

Our parents are dead. Let's give them a tribute when you get married!

ANN

(She explodes.) I hate your thoughts! I hate consideration! I hate being grateful!

RICHARD

Ann! Please calm down! No one of us wants to do you any harm. You're just hurting yourself.

ANN

I hate life! Why has it been so cruel and random to me? My son lost his father in a car accident no one could foresee. I lost my waitress-job because my company sunk into financial trouble. And now suddenly I'm rich and have bought a house, just because I wrote something others found useful... Diana, forgive me, sometimes I even hate you!

RICHARD

Now your road is paved! That is what matters.

DIANA

Where is your son today? Why isn't he here?

ANN

We asked him, but Richard has poisoned him with comic-books! So he insisted on staying at home, and it's raining outside. I don't know why he refuses reading real books instead...

RICHARD

Sometime in the future he is going to read his mother's novel, I'm sure of that.

DIANA

Yes, your story is very fascinating, so he will!

ANN

But what if he despises me for writing, and thinks I did it for money? Our house...

DIANA

Ann, you've got a talent for survival!

ANN

(She explodes again.) I hate you both! Don't try to make me feel guilty...

RICHARD

Many people would envy you for what you have done!

DIANA

(She completes Ann's sentence.) ... coming up from nowhere like a rattle-snake in a basket, and biting dust-clad bystanders. They have to remember you! (Richard laughs.)

ANN

(She is choked and exclaims.) What? What do you mean?

RICHARD

I think Diana meant that a writer has to have a memorable sting. (He says kindly to Ann.) You have got it!

ANN

(She shakes her head.) I don't bother. I own no words that will fly. There is no reason to be remembered after-words...

DIANA

Many serious writers care about their aftermath.

ANN

(She hesitates.) I don't, as long as I can live comfortably.

RICHARD

Ann, remember that Diana is out of work for the moment. Despite that she made us this delicious fish! Sole for our souls...

ANN

(She starts crying gently, then to Diana.) I'm sorry, I know I'm self-centered. This sole is marvelous. I love fish, especially this! I wasn't aware that I am spoiled until now. I always took the best from you for granted.

DIANA

Grants are for the poor. Now you have your economy!

RICHARD

Come on sisters! Do I have to listen to this?

ANN

(She sobs gently.) Diana is my biggest little sister...

RICHARD

Ann, my love, I know these poetic facts. Don't write them down!

DIANA

(She turns to Richard while chewing.) Don't blame her! She has all the rights in the world to be a writer.

ANN

(She can't help smiling.) Why are you so witty, both of you? There is no moral in wittiness!

DIANA

I think there is a simple explanation: Ann, your influence has been like opening a bird-cage! Everything that has been sleeping inside of us woke up and got wings, and started flying away.

ANN

(Her body gets stiff.) You are not poetic, Diana! And Richard is just ironic and mean. Your fact-focused view of life spills over into not so witty comments! (She sweeps away her tears with a hanker-chief.) I will tell you a secret: I've been writing poems for ten years now and have hundreds of them. I'm going to show them to my publisher!

RICHARD

(He stares surprised at Ann.) We have all got concealed talents, some more fruitful than others. I am so happy for you!

(The same evening at Ann's house, it has stopped raining. She and Richard are undressing in the bedroom, preparing to go to bed.)

ANN

Why do you always support Diana?

RICHARD

I pity her. She is unfairly judged and without a decent job.

ANN

It was her own fault when she confessed to a crime and was correctly treated by law.

RICHARD

I've studied the sentence, it's very brief. (He pauses, then slightly stuttering.) You met your sister, then left her department-store, and outside you were caught with unpaid food in your bag. Diana confessed that she had put it there without you knowing about it. She had never before understood that you were so desperately poor.

ANN

That summary is all-right, but the devil is in the details. And I thank God that the law has nothing to do with them!

RICHARD

(He laughs silently.) There is no poetry in a brief verdict! (He pauses, then thoughtfully.) I heard somewhere that there is no truth until someone has put words on it...

ANN

There is no lie until someone calls it so! Forgotten things are forgiven!

RICHARD

Oh, I see! That's why you feel new to me every-time we join in bed!

ANN

I hate you but I love you at the same time!

RICHARD

Don't make a success of it in your next novel...

ANN

I will give you some poetry to chew on: I went to Diana's store, not to visit her. I walked around all the food in there. My hunger burned for me and my son. I didn't meet Diana until the security-man brought me to her. She told him she would pay for the food I had in my bag, Diana said that I must have forgotten to tell the cashier when I left. Then she was fired from work!

RICHARD

(He is stunned, then slowly.) Before that, when was the last time you met your sister?

ANN

I hadn't seen her for months! I was occupied with my writing.

RICHARD

Well, I guess a good life depends on rewarding circumstances.

ANN

Your arrows have no moral that hits me! Everyone should fight for their life, as I did!

RICHARD

(He tries to seem grave and hide that he is joking.) I have to arrest you for hiding vital evidence. I'm sorry Ann. Wait here! I will get my hand-cuffs downstairs and then call the police.

ANN

(She speaks with a tremble in her voice.) Is that what love is about?

RICHARD

Love is an illusion in your mind that is interfered by reality. (He leaves the bedroom.)

ANN

(She shouts when Richard leaves.) Why don't you help me instead? (She throws herself on the bed, her face down on the pillow, and hands crossed on her back, as if she was waiting to be handcuffed.)

RICHARD

(Hidden outside the open door to the bedroom Richard picks up his mobile and pretends making a call to the police.) I have a convict here. No, she's not violent. But please send a car as soon as possible. (He re-enters the bedroom.)

ANN

What was that about, Richard?

RICHARD

I reported to the police so they could come and pick you up.

ANN

(She stutters.) I thought you were joking! What have I done?

RICHARD

That remains to be seen. A proper investigation will dig up all relevant facts.

ANN

How could you do this to me? Don't you love me?

RICHARD

Yes I do. That's why I made this thing up. Just to witness your reactions.

Act 3 scen 1

(In Diana's apartment late one working-day afternoon. Richard has used the doorbell, enters when she opens and hands her a document.)

RICHARD

Here is the paper stating that you have done your time at our "hotel".

DIANA

(She quickly looks at the document then folds it in two halves.) Thank you. Now I'm officially rid of my vacation and can leave all memories behind.

RICHARD

It's very strong of you to forgive and forget. I would never have left such a thing behind me that easily.

DIANA

You just don't know what it's like to have a sister!

RICHARD

I guess not. But don't accuse my dead parents for protecting me as their only child!

DIANA

I don't know you from childhood, but I see no remaining signs of bad manners nowadays. It seems like you're spoiled today instead: Getting married to the woman you love, and living in a fancy house...

RICHARD

Sometimes a person stumbles into irresistible circumstances...

DIANA

(She says with irony.) Your work as a prison-guard... isn't it about making people avoid stumbling?

RICHARD

(He sighs.) Yes, but I myself don't mind stumbling into good things.

DIANA

(She turns around and is about to leave for the kitchen-door.) Thanks for delivering my release-paper.

RICHARD

Would you like me to leave?

DIANA

Your body-language signaled so. Did I misread it?

RICHARD

I was hoping for a cup of tea... or coffee.

DIANA

You are welcome to a cup of tea. Have a seat, and I will be right back. (She goes into the kitchen. Richard walks around, looking at various things in the living-room.)

Act 3 scen 2

(Diana enters carrying a tray. She and Richard sit down in chairs opposite each other with the table between them. Diana is serving tea from a pot.)

RICHARD

Diana... I want to apologize for treating you so badly when we met.

DIANA

You acted upon presumptions as any person would do, especially at your work. (She hands him a plate with small biscuits.) Try one of these! They are homemade.

RICHARD

(He picks up a biscuit and tastes it.) This is delicious! I like to improvise in the kitchen too. (He takes another bite.) What ingredients did you use?

DIANA

I will give you the recipe when you leave. I've made some adjustments to boost the flavor. Then we have completed our exchange of papers. (She smiles with a hidden meaning.)

RICHARD

I can't understand why you seem to be so angry with me!

DIANA

Are you a true believer?

RICHARD

I'm not a philosopher anyhow...

DIANA

Please answer my question!

RICHARD

I believe in the law to give people rules for their behavior against each other.

DIANA

And you are going to work at a real-estate agency?

RICHARD

(He looks puzzled then says.) Law and love has not many positive connections.

DIANA

Would you describe yourself as a romantic person?

RICHARD

No, never! There are too many illusions swirling around in this world, so I rest my case. (He smiles.)

DIANA

Law before love in other words, in your world!

RICHARD

Diana, what are you trying to prove? (He hesitates.) May I have another one of those lovely biscuits?

DIANA

Of course, help yourself!

RICHARD

(He bends forward and pics up one biscuit.) You don't have to blame yourself for being a perfect sister to Ann!

DIANA

What do you think Richard? One ancient writer wrote: "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

RICHARD

Old truths are often buried as time goes by, but you have dug them up...

DIANA

Are you finished now? (She raises and puts everything from the table on her tray and is about to leave for the kitchen.)

RICHARD

There are so many biscuits left. Can I have another one, please?

DIANA

(She replies over her shoulder.) They are all yours. I'll be back with a paper-bag.

RICHARD

(He shouts.) Do you want some help in the kitchen?

DIANA

(She answers from the kitchen.) No thanks, I handle everything myself as usual.

RICHARD

(He shouts back.) What about Ann then?

DIANA

(After a while she returns with a small paper-bag that contains biscuits, while Richard has been waiting silently.) There you are. (She puts the bag on the table in front of him, and a piece of paper with the recipe.) Have you seen the picture of me and Ann on that shelf? (She points and takes her seat.) We were eleven and eight!

RICHARD

I had a look at it earlier. It's funny that you tried to carry your older sister. It looks like both of you were on a playground, and you seem to be... well, not very successful in your ambition. (He smiles.)

DIANA

Love sometimes overrides the laws of gravity, isn't that so Richard? (She stares straight into Richard's eyes and then returns his smile.)

RICHARD

You were wrongly sentenced for Ann's mistake. But you took the blame for her and served your time. No one can question your responsibility for a confession in court. But who am I to judge you?

DIANA

(She speaks silently.) Richard, for God's sake have another biscuit!

RICHARD

(He quickly stretches out for the bag, but suddenly moans.) Wow, that hurts. My back! It has happened before. Do you mind if I lay down on your floor? I must do it quickly! What have I done this time to deserve it?

DIANA

(She stands up in a hurry to help Richard when he is stretching out on the floor.) Does it help? How do you feel?

RICHARD

I felt it like a sudden knife in my back! But I will get over it soon. Just let me rest and relax for a moment.

Act 3 scen 3

(Richard lies on Diana's living-room floor. She is sitting beside him in a chair. A small paper-bag with the biscuits she promised him stands on the table.)

DIANA

How does your back feel now?

RICHARD

(He shows some pain.) Broken, but my resurrection will come soon.

DIANA

(She smiles at Richard.) Pain always prepares a fertile soil for growing seeds.

RICHARD

Don't dance on my grave, Diana! Tell me about your plans for the future instead!

DIANA

(She looks chocked.) I've recently applied for a job as secretary, at a real estate agency like you... Then I will see what the future brings.

RICHARD

I don't believe you!

DIANA

I'm always as serious as the situation demands.

RICHARD

In other words, you have no plans?

DIANA

I didn't say so.

RICHARD

(He gets up slowly from the floor and takes a seat beside Diana.) Just ask me and I will help you if I can.

DIANA

Thank you, but no thanks.

RICHARD

No man can stand alone forever, and no woman... (He hesitates.) I don't know who I am... Suddenly it occurred to me that my values have been shaken but not stirred. And I've studied law!

DIANA

(She pats Richard gently.) You're a secret agent in life: The one who loves changing from nothing to one!

RICHARD

(He is embarrassed.) Don't remind me of your sister's word-juggling business and make me feel like a fool! It's not going from worse to better, rather the other way around.

DIANA

(She laughs softly.) No, you will go from good to God! You are a believer after all!

RICHARD

Absolutely not! Perhaps that's a part of my problem? Do you think love is law-bound, Diana?

DIANA

(She speaks firmly.) If I hadn't taken the punishment, you had never met my sister. You know that. And see how it ended: In pure happiness for you!

RICHARD

(He stands up, tries to walk a bit in the room and stretches his body to check it out.) Well, well, well, I think I got rid of my body's troubles... That was fast!

DIANA

Have another biscuit! It will strengthen you. (She hands him the paper-bag from the table.)

RICHARD

(He looks down into the bag and then picks one biscuit.) I've heard that the same recipe handled by two people often give a totally different result. No matter how carefully both follow it. And you have added some suitable ingredients too. Fantastic!

DIANA

You treated me well at your "hotel", so I gladly give you a treat.

RICHARD

Please Diana, stop playing with words! I bet you have never regretted any of your sins.

DIANA

(Diana gives him a glance.) My conscience is impossible to reach with any law. Is there something... or nothing at all?

RICHARD

(He swallows the last piece of his biscuit,) You are crazy! Everyone watching from outside think otherwise about how you practice your conscience! They understand that it led you wrong! Doing good things that hurt yourself is a sin!

DIANA

(She says with temper.) No one has the right to judge my conscience!

RICHARD

Take it easy, Diana! Even good deeds originate from good thinking that went wrong...

DIANA

You don't respect my values!

RICHARD

I do, but you haven't respected Ann when you took the blame for her!

DIANA

(She suddenly bursts out into tears.) You can't judge a person's good intentions!

RICHARD

That is exactly what the law does!

DIANA

I care about my sister. I love her!

RICHARD

I know but the law doesn't. Love and law are two different things!

DIANA

(She sobs between tears.) Richard, you're perfect for my sister!

RICHARD

Diana, calm down, stretch out on your bed and get away from all this! (He takes her by the hand and they leave for the bedroom.)

Act 3 scen 4

(Richard is sitting in Diana's living-room an hour later chewing on a biscuit. Diana enters from the bedroom in a thin morning-gown,)

RICHARD

Are you able to handle things better now?

DIANA

Yes, I'm thankful for your help cleaning my laundry. (She gives Richard a determined look.)

RICHARD

Love isn't wrong if it's handled right!

DIANA

As an educated man you ought to know: Your words fly up, like my sisters. But your thoughts remain below.

RICHARD

Please don't make me feel like a fool, Diana. Even a lawyer has feelings, but I will never be one of them. I'm stuck with real-estate as I've told you.

DIANA

Are you that conventional, without any conscience?

RICHARD

I'm a human.

DIANA

So falling from a tower is a nice flight until you hit the ground? And you enjoyed being unfaithful to my sister until you landed a moment ago?

RICHARD

Diana, many of us makes mistakes, especially when judging other people's judgment. But I'm a turn-around candidate!

DIANA

I guess it has nothing to do with a speculative life-economy?

RICHARD

Don't be unfair!

DIANA

You deceived my sister with pleasure! Right now in my bedroom!

RICHARD

No! But you shouldn't have spoiled my admiration for you!

DIANA

You are engaged to be married to Ann! Don't you have any restrictions for your behavior? There are differences between law and love!

RICHARD

Of course there is, just like feelings and logic...

DIANA

(She interrupts Richard.) Now you sound like a lawyer defending an impossible case!

RICHARD

I have feelings...

DIANA

(She interrupts Richard again.) So you go with the flow? That is excellent!

RICHARD

Did I rape you? No! Were you happy? I think so. And I was...I was happily confused with a mix of guilt and joy.

DIANA

(She says in a brutal voice.) Do you know why I love planting flowers and watch them grow? When they blossom it's so easy to break their neck and put them into a vas and watch their beauty fade away as quickly as possible.

RICHARD

(He is stunned.) Diana!

DIANA

You judge people from what you imagine behind their looks!

RICHARD

(He smiles reluctantly, then calmly.) I judge people from their actions. Or if they don't take action when they should...

DIANA

(She says with a touch of despair.) That sounds cruel... like a butcher.

RICHARD

I'm no executioner I just walk away from it all.

DIANA

And now you want to walk away from me: Leaving everything behind in the shadows, hoping for time to darken memories and cover it up!

RICHARD

Why did you take the blame for Ann, and got that unfair sentence? Why do you forget it now?

DIANA

I have left it behind me!

RICHARD

So when you were unfaithful to Ann right now it's just a matter of time until you have forgotten it!

DIANA

(She hesitates.) Life is unforgettable... and so unforgiving.

RICHARD

Don't give me that crap, Diana! I deserve something from another level.

DIANA

(She sobs gently.) My sister... she has changed you so you use her way of putting words together.

RICHARD

I'm no writer, I'm no lawyer! Would you just listen to the content in my human words and not react on their surface!

DIANA

(She shakes her head mildly.) I can't see anything in the dark abyss I've fallen into.

RICHARD

On the way down you have done some admirable things without knowing how to fly!

DIANA

To show human signs is signaling failure...

RICHARD

Hide it then! How many people don't do that?

DIANA

You are one of them! Turn around!

RICHARD

At last you have fallen down and landed softly on my dark core without knowing it! (He stands up.) I hope it's all right if I take the rest of your lovely biscuits with me? (He grabs the paper-bag without waiting for an answer. Diana stares through the window when he leaves.)

Act 3 scen 5

(It is late the following Friday-afternoon. Richard is sitting on Ann's balcony reading loud for her son from a book. Now and then they eat biscuits from a plate. Ann enters with lemonade and serves them.)

ANN

(She says to her son.) You really love Diana's biscuits! Let Richard have the last one! (The boy nods then gives Richard a glance, Richard shakes his head, and continues reading while the boy happily grabs the last biscuit. When she sees that her son has eaten the biscuit she says to him.) It's bedtime now. Leave Richard to me! You can finish reading in your room. (Her son leaves the balcony holding the book he was given by Richard in front of him.)

RICHARD

You didn't have to chase him away!

ANN

(She says happily.) I just wanted to be alone with you as soon as possible.

RICHARD

I hope something new has happened.

ANN

(She sits down in Richard's knee with her arm around his neck.) Love happened... but it was a long time ago for us.

RICHARD

I have something to confess Ann... (He continues reluctantly.) I have been too close to Diana... in her bedroom. (He speaks more steadily.) I visited Diana just to give her the paper that confirm her release from our "hotel".

ANN

(She is astonished, then thoughtful.) I hope you gave her what she deserves.

RICHARD

I'm sorry if I disappoint you, but I have to be honest.

ANN

There is no need to deny a man's needs...

RICHARD

Ann, now you are being conventional!

ANN

... we are getting married anyhow. So your adventure stays in the family.

RICHARD

I feel like a criminal!

ANN

(She laughs then strokes his hair gently.) Rubbish! You're just a modern man.

RICHARD

(He stutters.) Don't you have any expectations?

ANN

Of course I have! You are supposed to marry me. I believe in that.

RICHARD

But, but ... what about our future?

ANN

No one has ever experienced a rock-solid future. There will be climate-changes for instance! The future is nothing but a dream which scares you if you wake up before death. (She raises and starts dancing.) You have to rock the living moment, Richard!

RICHARD

(He gets up from his chair and grabs Ann's wrists firmly, while she holds her arms in the air when dancing without music.) I don't understand. Is this how you handle my mistake?

ANN

(She sings calmly, waving her and Richard's arms.) No no no, but it is true, I love you. It's true it's true, I love you.

RICHARD

Pull yourself together, Ann! This is not helping me.

ANN

(She throws herself in a chair with hands behind her neck.) Why do you need help? I'm happy, you should be so too.

RICHARD

(He takes a seat beside Ann.) I have abandoned you, and I feel guilty!

ANN

You don't have to sacrifice anything for my sake. Forget it, move on! You just punish yourself.

RICHARD

You're too good for me. I can't marry you!

ANN

We are in love, we are definitely getting married. It's as simple as that. Don't worry!

RICHARD

(He covers his face with his palms then says slowly.) Ann, to be frank I have been unfair to your sister.

ANN

What has she got to do with anything... with us?

RICHARD

I treated her wrong when we first met. I judged her for being sentenced!

ANN

I know Diana, I'm certain she has never lied to you. Facts are true, but they are always selected by someone, sometimes with a purpose. That's Diana's charm!

RICHARD

(He says after a thoughtful moment.) I don't think she felt helpful...

ANN

Richard, I have never denied that I was desperately out of money and stole food for my son and me at Diana's store. Without her knowing it! And then she took the blame for me. I never ask her to do that!

RICHARD

Guilt is a bad decisions best friend...

ANN

I hate it when you compete with my way of storytelling, and use that language against me! (She suddenly starts crying.)

RICHARD

You are a success Ann! Look at this house, feel your economy as the bright side of your life! You're living a writers dream.

ANN

You don't have feelings for me anymore!

RICHARD

Yes I have, but perhaps they were an inner illusion built up by myself...

ANN

What shall we do now? What are you going to do?

RICHARD

I'm sure that if I told you that love for the sake of love is a hoax, then you would abandon me!

ANN

(She stands up and drags Richard to his feet from his chair, holding him tight.) I would never, never do that!

RICHARD

You love me because I loved you! That's your only reason.

ANN

Your words are so cruel. They have nothing to do with my feelings.

RICHARD

Exactly, they don't! No brain no gain, that's how the saying should go.

ANN

You're insulting me! Not every writer suffers from brain-drain.

RICHARD

(He laughs out loud.) It's both obvious and impossible that you and Diana are sisters.

ANN

It was a disaster when you fell in bed with her!

RICHARD

Men are fragile, at least these days...

ANN

Don't you understand that my feelings for you are under attack?

RICHARD

(He stutters.) I have laid down my armor in front of your feet...

ANN

Love for the sake of love is an eternal truth! You don't love me anymore! I have to finish my love for you. Let's get some sleep now. (She leaves for the bedroom. Richard follows her after a moment.)

Act 3 scen 6

(It's a sunny Saturday morning around eleven o'clock. Ann, her son and Richard are having brunch in her house. The boy is occupied reading a book while she and Richard are eating, small-talking.)

ANN

(She says to her son.) Can't you stop reading and eat instead? (The boy shakes his head.)

RICHARD

(He smiles.) A boy has got to do what a boy has to do.

ANN

That's not funny! There were times when we had nothing to eat. (Her son quickly makes a double sandwich with both ham and cheese almost blindly, when continuing to read. Then he silently gets up and leaves, carrying his book.)

RICHARD

Ann, you're chasing him away again!

ANN

(She smiles.) I'm not doing that to you. (She pauses.) The sun is shining we have to go for a swim. One never knows about this weather, it might be the last chance for a taste of summer.

RICHARD

If you don't mind I would rather stay in town. I have to look after things in my apartment.

ANN

(She pats Richard's hand.) You are mine no matter what you do. (Suddenly the doorbell is heard. She gets up from her chair.) I hope it's not the boys from the neighborhood wanting to play. We are going to the sea, no company. (She leaves to open the house's entrance-door.)

ANN

(She returns chatting intensely with Diana. Richard greets Diana by waving his hand. She says to Diana.) Would you like some tea and something to eat? We are in the middle between breakfast and lunch. Then we're going to the sea for a swim.

DIANA

Just some tea please, I can use your cup if it's empty. (Ann and Diana sit down at the table. Ann pours out a cup of tea.) I'm sorry to disturb you, because I've lost my keys.

RICHARD

Ann, I can't come with you. I haven't been home for days. I have to check my mail.

ANN

Everything will get better when you move in here permanently.

DIANA

Have you decided the date for your wedding yet?

ANN

Richard knows how occupied I've been with the release of my novel and the film-contract negotiations. But this autumn we will... at least before Christmas...

RICHARD

As I'm just a gentle-man, not a gentleman, I adapt to the circumstances...

ANN

(She sighs.) No one believes in your jokes. Marriage is a joint venture! (She turns to Diana.) Your spare keys... I will get them for you. (She rises from the table then leaves the room.)

RICHARD

Was that the key to your sudden visit?

DIANA

I understand why Ann gets tired of your words now and then, but they have no impact on me. I was out for a sunny walk in the morning. When I got back home I discovered that I couldn't open the door. I had forgotten my keys in the hall.

RICHARD

I see, and you adapted to the situation and went here.

DIANA

Yes! I didn't want to interfere with your family-life, but had not much of a choice.

RICHARD

That was a very considerate thought!

DIANA

(Furiously, then with a calm tone,) I wish I was in love with you! Then I'd show you what a prison is like.

ANN

(She returns and hands over two keys to Diana. Her son stands waiting ready for a swim with snorkel-gears on his head. She says to Richard.) Are you sure you don't want to come? (Her son takes Richards hand and tries to drag him up from his chair without succeeding.)

RICHARD

No, I have to get my papers in order, and see if I've got the mail I'm expecting. I will clear the table and wash up here before I leave.

ANN

Don't forget to lock the door, and your own keys! (She says to her son, holding his hand.) Come on let's have a swimming-party! (They leave.)

DIANA

(She silently drinks her tea and finally puts down the cup with care.) So you are a decent husband-to-be and clear the table?

RICHARD

Don't be ridiculous Diana! You're envious about your sister's wellbeing. Of course I will take care of everything in due cause.

DIANA

Have you noticed that you use words very differently since you met Ann? It's a good sign of genuine love, picking up the manors from the loved one.

RICHARD

Influence and emotions are twins with two different genders.

DIANA

(She laughs gently.) Don't prove yourself guilty when accused, Richard! Just clear the table! That is a manageable effort! I will do my best to give you a hand. (She and Richard rise and start carrying out cups etcetera to the kitchen. Richard intently sweeps close to her when they meet, sometimes touching her discretely and apologizes every time. She smiles stiffly in return.)

RICHARD

(He and Diana have placed plates and everything in the dish-washer and there is a sound from the machine in the kitchen. Both of them are about to leave, standing in the living-room. He says suddenly.) May I have a kiss?

DIANA

You're welcome, but then you're on your own. (They kiss intensely, He has his hands on her hips afterwards and they stare at each other for a long time.)

RICHARD

So this was the beginning of our end?

DIANA

(She gives Richard a gentle blow in his stomach with her fist.) Words are for hire, look at Ann! They have never worked for me.

******* The End *******