

DONATA'S GIFT

(EXCERPT: Character List and Act I, Sc. 5)

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Book and Lyrics by Christine Kallman

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Northfield Arts Guild Theater, Northfield, Minnesota

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Cast of Characters

DONATA	old woman, an outcast
LUCIA	orphan girl, age 10, confident, outgoing
NICCOLO	Lucia's younger brother, age 7
SIGNOR ALFREDO	headmaster of the orphanage
ANTONIO	older son of Alfredo, age 12, a bully
LINO	Antonio's brother, age 10, imitates his brother
THE CONSTABLE	fair-minded keeper of the peace
SISTER ROMA	nun, well-meaning but very forgetful
SISTER VALERIA	nun

ORPHANS:

Girls: GIULIANA, MARIANNA, CONSTANZA, CHRISTINA, MADDALENA
Boys: ANGELO, CARLO, FRANCESCO, GIOVANNI, ALESSANDRO

VILLAGE VENDORS:

BOSCO, BERNARDO, MARCO
MARCELLINA, BETTINA, ALTEA, SOFIA

OTHER VILLAGERS:

PAOLO, GIACOMO, GIUSEPPE, ANNA, MARIA

MAGI 1

MAGI 2

MAGI 3

YOUNG SHEPHERD

Time

16th century

Place

A small city in northern Italy.

(Scene 5: That evening. In front of Donata's house. Dark, with spot on DONATA'S house and cooking pot. ALFREDO, ANTONIO and LINO enter.)

S. ALFREDO

She's been teaching them to read? What's wrong with that?

ANTONIO

They're complaining of sore eyes.

S. ALFREDO

Then it must stop! We can't afford to send them all to the doctor!

LINO

Don't worry. We took care of it.

ANTONIO

We let them weed the gardens. Now their eyes are fine.

ALFREDO

Good work! What do I know about children? Now where is she?

(They see DONATA, who enters and tends to something she's brewing in her pot.)

Ah! Let the dove go and snare the turkey. The Constable doesn't believe me, but she's got to be the one. Who else? Look, she's concocting some magic brew.

LINO

What's she putting in there?

ANTONIO

Eye of newt, tongue of cat, thistle root, wing of--

S. ALFREDO

Shhh!

ANTONIO

Holy joy! Look at all that money!

S. ALFREDO

She must have sold the candlesticks!

DONATA

(counting her money) Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty . . . one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight.

(DONATA puts the money into two small money bags then sits down to sip the brew.)

LINO

I have a tickle in my nose.

S. ALFREDO

Shh! Look, she's falling asleep. It must be her dream potion.

DONATA

Oh-oh-oh!

ANTONIO AND LINO

Huh!

S. ALFREDO

Shh!

DONATA

(as if in a trance) Oh--oh--oh Oh--oh--oh What--what's this? An old, old house. It may crumble apart and fall. Fall . . . fall . . . oh-oh-oh!

LINO

I have to sneeze.

S. ALFREDO

You will do no such thing.

DONATA

But wait--a growing thing! A vine is growing up out of the fallen bricks. And it's growing--it's growing roses. How strange! *(pause; sudden gasp)* Oh no, not again! *(another gasp)* No! No!

S. ALFREDO

(loudly) What?! What?!

DONATA

(still in a trance) Who--who are you? *(pause)* Are you still there?

LINO

Ah-choo!

S. ALFREDO

Be quiet!

DONATA

There are more than one of you! Who are you?

S. ALFREDO

We are. . . we are . . . (*improvising*) We are three spirits. We come to you from the spirit world.

(S. ALFREDO begins to moan on “ooo”, and motions to ANTONIO and LINO to join him.)

DONATA

Are you good or evil?

S. ALFREDO

Good . . .
good!
good!!

ANTONIO

Good. . . I mean
evil, uh,
good!

LINO

Evil . . . I mean
good, uh, um,
good!

DONATA

How can I believe you?

S. ALFREDO

Trust me. Do I sound like someone who would deceive you?

DONATA

Yes. (*beat*) And those others sound . . . so young. Tell me young spirits--how did you meet such untimely deaths?

ANTONIO

Our cruel father drove dear Mother away.

LINO

We died of a broken heart.

S. ALFREDO

Nonsense. They had a loving father, a perfectly doting father. He loved them so very much. But, we did not come to chat.

DONATA

Why have you come?

(ALFREDO indicates to ANTONIO and LINO to join him in “ooing” again; ANTONIO and LINO continue “ooing” except for their echo-like interjections.)

S. ALFREDO

We are the spirits of San Justino the Divino.

ANTONIO AND LINO

(*echo-like*) --vino, --vino, --vino.

DONATA

Ah, you protect the cathedral, then?

S. ALFREDO

Yes, yes. And I weep over the loss, the frightful desecration of the altar. I am sick.

ANTONIO AND LINO

Sick, sick, sick!

DONATA

Oh, dear spirit. It is too much. First the candlesticks and now the chalice.

S. ALFREDO

(with interest) The chalice?

ANTONIO AND LINO

Chalice, -lice, -lice, -lice?

S. ALFREDO

(whispering) She says the chalice is missing, too!

DONATA

Why, all-knowing spirit, the silver chalice--the cup--with gold inlay, alas, now also missing! Surely you know this? *(pause)* Spirit, are you there?

S. ALFREDO

Of course. I am only dumb with grief.

ANTONIO AND LINO

Dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb!

S. ALFREDO

Oh Signora, you have been blessed with the gift of sight.

DONATA

Si, si.

S. ALFREDO

Therefore, I appoint you messenger.

DONATA

Messenger?

S. ALFREDO

Of course. You are a very special person. You have many gifts.

DONATA

Tell me what to do.

S. ALFREDO

You must go to the Constable. Tell him all you know.

DONATA

The Constable? He will never believe my visions.

S. ALFREDO

Have faith. Go to the Constable. Tell him all you know. An arrest will be made and you will have served your beloved community!

DONATA

Beloved! Paw! I am dirt to them! They grind me under their heels!

S. ALFREDO

Oh, no, you are badly mistaken! They care much more than you realize! Look to your friends. Trust them.

DONATA

I would like to believe what you say. But--

S. ALFREDO

Look to Signor Alfredo, for instance. A fine, warmhearted man.

DONATA

Signor Alfredo? You must mean someone else. Who are y--?

S. ALFREDO

He is your friend. You can trust him.

DONATA

I find it hard--

LINO

Ah-choo!

DONATA

(beat) Yes, yes, I see now. I see very well. I must trust Signor Alfredo.

S. ALFREDO

Yes! Yes!

DONATA

He is a fine, fine man.

S. ALFREDO

Yes!

DONATA

Not much for looks, but . . .

S. ALFREDO

Well, I don't know . . .

DONATA

Wait, wait! I'm receiving a message from another spirit! Oh-oh-oh!

(DONATA continues a moaning sound as she pretends to be getting a message from the spirit-world.)

A message! A message! S. ALFREDO

DONATA
It is a message for Signor Alfredo.

S. ALFREDO
Signor Alfredo?

DONATA
Are you a friend of Signor Alfredo?

S. ALFREDO
Y-yes!

DONATA
Then you must give him this message.

S. ALFREDO
What is the message? Who is it from?

DONATA
Wait a minute. It's coming clear . . . It's from . . . Signor Alfredo's grandmother--

S. ALFREDO
Which one?

DONATA
Uh . . . which one? Uh . . . the one he loves.

S. ALFREDO
Grandmama Rosa!

DONATA
You know her?

S. ALFREDO
Well . . . I was a close friend. She was like a grandmother to me. What does she say?

(short pause)

DONATA
Little poopsie.

S. ALFREDO
What?

DONATA
Little poopsie.

S. ALFREDO
That's all?

DONATA
She says she misses her little poopsie Freddie-baby.

S. ALFREDO
O-Oh.

DONATA
She's waiting for Freddie to come to her.

S. ALFREDO
Grandmama Rosa, not yet!

DONATA
She wants little Freddie to scratch her feet like he used to.

S. ALFREDO
Oh, Grandmama.

DONATA
(*gasp*) Oh, no! How tragic! And such a fine man!

S. ALFREDO
What! What!

DONATA
She does not think her little poopsie will pass through the golden gates.

S. ALFREDO
What! Why not! Grandmama! Grandmama Rosa!

DONATA
Sorry, She's so faint now. I can barely . . .

S. ALFREDO
Don't lose her! I must know--

DONATA
No, spirit! Forgive us, please!

(DONATA begins moving as if buffeted by a great wind or powerful force.)

I think we offended her--this pestering with questions. No spirit, no!

LINO
Let's get out of here, papa!

DONATA
No, spirit! Have mercy on Signor Alfredo! Don't seek to punish him! Ahh! Flee! Flee! Flee!

S. ALFREDO
Fly, boys, fly!!

Ahh-ahh-ahh!

ALFREDO, ANTONIO AND LINO

(SIGNOR ALFREDO, ANTONIO, and LINO exit
as DONATA collapses in laughter. Scene ends.)