COSTANZA

fill them with flowers.
ROSE. If there *are* flowers.
LOTTY. There will be. There must be. *(They look out, lost. Train sounds steadily increase.)*
ROSE. What is the Italian for "help"?
LOTTY. Oh, Rose.
ROSE. Please, Lotty. Look it up. *(Lotty does so. Rose stands, panicking.)* How do we stop the train?
LOTTY. We can't stop the train, Rose.
ROSE. *(Dressing.)* I'm sure if we simply explain that there has been a dreadful mistake.
LOTTY. This is not a mistake!
ROSE. *(Forcefully irate.)* I told you that I was a happy individual. And I was. I am. Happy! But you spoke of peace. And … and of sisters. And … and cinnamon! And you got my head quite turned around. You're not a hummingbird at all, Lotty Wilton. You're a hawk! Clear-eyed and … and … Why aren't you dressing?! *(Lotty holds up the book.)*
LOTTY. *"Aiuto."*
ROSE. What?
LOTTY. The Italian for "help." *"Aiuto." (Rose crumbles, sitting.)*
ROSE. *(Adrift.) Aiuto. (The ladies fall silent, lost in thought.)*
LOTTY. It isn't fair, Rose. To think that we ought to be so happy now, and we're not. *(Sighs.)* Husbands.
ROSE. *(Sighs.)* Husbands. *(Train sounds rise. Rose begins to pray.) Aiuto. Mi sono smarrita.*
LOTTY. It's going to be lovely, Rose.
ROSE. *Mi scusi!*
LOTTY. It's going to be heaven.
ROSE. *(Dropping to her knees.) Perdonna me!*
LOTTY. Sunshine!
ROSE. *Aiuto!*
LOTTY. Wisteria!
ROSE. *Aiuto! (Another tunnel. Lotty drops to her knees in fright, begins praying.)*
LOTTY. *Aiuto!*
ROSE. What have we done, Lotty? What have we done?!
LOTTY. I don't know, Rose. But whatever it is … *(Lotty and Rose look at each other, lost.)* … we've done it! *(The train whistle screams as darkness envelops them.)*

End of Act One

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Lights up on the terrace at San Salvatore, the following morning. A table and chairs, a chaise. Exits from the terrace into the villa and into the garden. The impression of beautiful garden surroundings, sunshine. Costanza sits at the table, singing to herself, snapping beans and placing them in a large bowl. She is dressed in simple, comfortable clothing and sandals. Caroline reclines on the chaise in a thin summer ensemble, reading a book. Mrs. Graves enters from the villa, carrying a small pitcher. She walks with her stick and is dressed much too warmly for the weather, from high-buttoned shoes to a rather imposing hat. She holds out the pitcher.

MRS. GRAVES. What is this?! *(Caroline and Costanza shiver, their patience already waning.)*
COSTANZA. *(Looking heavenward.)* Santa Maria! *(Sighs, resigned.) Cosa ho fatto adesso, Signora? Qual'è il problema adesso? ("What have I done now, Madame? What problem have you found now?")*
MRS. GRAVES. You may rattle on and on all you wish, my friend, and I still will not understand you. I speak only the Italian of Dante.
COSTANZA. *Cosa c'è? Qual'è l'argomento? ("What is it? What is the matter?")*
MRS. GRAVES. Lady Caroline, would you please determine from Costanza the origin of this milk. *(Costanza gets up to look at the contents of the pitcher.)*
CAROLINE. The "origin," Mrs. Graves?
MRS. GRAVES. Yes. *(Costanza takes the pitcher.)*
CAROLINE. You mean the vendor?
MRS. GRAVES. I mean the animal. *(Mrs. Graves goes to the table, pulls playing cards and a large bell from her pockets, staking her claim.)*
COSTANZA. *(To Caroline.) Il latte è buono, Donna Carolina. ("The milk is good.")*

CAROLINE. *Sì, sì. La Signora vorrebbe sapere che tipo di latte è questo, Costanza. ("The lady would like to know what kind of milk this is.")*
COSTANZA. *Che tipo di latte, Signorina? Non capisco. È latte! ("What kind of milk, Miss? I don't understand. It's milk!")*
CAROLINE. *La signora vorrebbe sapere … l'animale. ("The lady would like to know the animal.")*
COSTANZA. *L'animale? ("The animal?" She eyes Mrs. Graves.)* Eh! *Una mucca, naturalmente, Donna Carolina. ("A cow, of course.")*
CAROLINE. *Sì, grazie, Costanza. Sono spiacente per il problema. ("I'm sorry for the problem.")*
COSTANZA. *(Already charmed by Caroline.) Il problema non è con voi, Signorina. ("The problem is not with you, Miss." She eyes Mrs. Graves. Under her breath.) Animale! (She retrieves the bowl and exits into the villa.)*
MRS. GRAVES. *(Sitting.)* What was she saying?
CAROLINE. Nothing of concern. Cow.
MRS. GRAVES. What?!
CAROLINE. It is cow's milk. It seems Italian milk also comes from cows. *(She rises to retrieve another pillow, returns to the chaise.)*
MRS. GRAVES. You look as if you had nothing on underneath.
CAROLINE. I haven't.
MRS. GRAVES. How very imprudent. And how highly improper.
CAROLINE. But there are no men here, so how can it be improper? Have you noticed how difficult it is to be improper without men?
MRS. GRAVES. God, Lady Caroline, we have been assured, is a man. *(Lotty rushes from the villa in a white nightgown, barefooted and wide-eyed. She looks out at the gardens and sea, but then sees Caroline and Mrs. Graves.)*
LOTTY. Oh!
CAROLINE. Good morning.
LOTTY. Lady Caroline!
MRS. GRAVES. *(Disapprovingly.)* You've arrived.
LOTTY. Mrs. Graves. Yes, late last night. But …
MRS. GRAVES. Without clothing, apparently. *(Rose rushes in, also in a white nightgown, also barefooted and wide-eyed, clutching her Italian phrase book. She sees Caroline and Mrs. Graves and is embarrassed.)*
ROSE. Oh! Ladies! Excuse me!
LOTTY. Yes, excuse us, Mrs. Graves, Lady Caroline. We hadn't thought you'd arrived.

CAROLINE. Here we are!
LOTTY. Yes. Not that we're not happy to see you. It's just a great disappointment. *(Caroline and Mrs. Graves glance at each other, questioning.)*
ROSE. What Lotty means is that we'd planned to give you such a welcome. We were going to choose the nicest rooms for you.
CAROLINE. We've done that.
ROSE. And we meant to make them pretty for you with flowers.
MRS. GRAVES. Costanza has seen to everything. In her way.
CAROLINE. Mrs. Graves and I arrived yesterday morning. *(Wincing.)* Together.
LOTTY. *(Looking out, entranced.)* Look at this place, Rose. When I woke this morning, I prepared myself to accept whatever I found. But I couldn't have imagined. The flowers! Snapdragons and periwinkles! Daphnes and iris! And lavender! And cherry trees! And wisteria, Mrs. Graves, simply tumbling over itself!
MRS. GRAVES. *(Disappointed.)* Yes.
LOTTY. And sunshine! *(She raises her face to the sun.)* Heaven! Look up "heaven," Rose. *(Rose opens the phrase book, does so. A distant church bell rings. Lotty drinks it in.)* Listen! Their church bell sounds so light and inviting! Our church bell never sounded like that. *(Mrs. Graves rings her bell furiously. The ladies jump.)*
MRS. GRAVES. *(Bellowing.)* Costanza!
ROSE. It appears you two have everything under control.
MRS. GRAVES. It does save time.
LOTTY. Rose! Remember Mr. Wilding said that there was an upstairs sitting room with a view. Let's go first thing after breakfast. I suddenly want to write to everyone I know!
MRS. GRAVES. That is *my* sitting room, Mrs. Wilton.
LOTTY. *Your* sitting room?
MRS. GRAVES. I am an old woman. I need a place to myself.
ROSE. But it is a sitting room, Mrs. Graves.
MRS. GRAVES. There is another room you and Mrs. Wilton may use downstairs at the back next to Costanza's room. I must have quiet. *(She rings the bell.)* Your bedrooms were acceptable?
LOTTY. Oh …
ROSE. Cozy.
MRS. GRAVES. There were two beds in my room, filling it up unnecessarily, so I had one taken out. It has made it much more agreeable.
LOTTY. That's why I have two beds in my room.