

IF THE SHOE FITS

Or, The Five Men Imelda Marcos Meets in Heaven

A Full-length Play in English

Palanca Entry 2011

“IF THE SHOE FITS”

Synopsis

The colorful and theatrical former First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos – domineering, rhetorical, cunning, eloquent, smitten, and off her rocker, greedily takes the stage in this hypothetical play set in the “afterlife.”

The powerful figures of Ninoy Aquino, Cardinal Sin, Ferdinand Marcos, and her lovers become merely stick figures, almost theatrical props, against Imelda’s monstrous presence on stage as we closely watch history as a parade of actors, wannabes, and losers.

The drama builds up, not on ground level, but in every character’s personal heaven. But wait, there’s more: even in the “afterlife,” Imelda gets to have it her way – she flits from one man’s heaven to another, in a cathartic “apparition” of some sort to purge herself of guilt, or play cute and philosophize her way out of it.

This is Imelda who is halfway between remorse and disbelief, but is fully consumed by the latter in the end. She isn’t sorry for what had happened – never – because everything will never measure up to pure art anyway.

The play doesn’t fall short on what’s “real and what’s imagined” in Imelda’s mind. Dead or alive, she has no way of drawing the line between the two. But, the supreme irony is that, in this metaphysical play, the Imelda that conceived the CCP and dreamed up a vision of bringing “the true, the good and the beautiful” into a country that had mostly dreams for meals everyday, has done herself justice.

“If the Shoe Fits” is a character study, plus a sprinkling of gestalt and pop psychology, that generously adds on to the Imelda Marcos lore.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

IMELDA MARCOS.....former First Lady of the Philippines.

FERDINAND MARCOS.....Philippine dictator.

BENIGNO “Ninoy” AQUINO.....slain opposition leader to the Marcos regime.

JAIME CARDINAL SIN.....Catholic cardinal and key player of the People Power.

VICENTE ORESTES ROMUALDEZ.....Imelda’s father.

ARISTON NAKPIL.....Imelda’s lover.

THREE ANGELS, or just girls with cardboard wings.

SETTING

The afterlife in the present time, or a dream resembling it.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Prologue.....Imelda’s limbo.

Act One.....Ninoy Aquino’s heaven.

Act Two.....Cardinal Sin’s heaven.

Act Three.....Ariston Nakpil’s heaven.

Intr’acte / Second Prologue.....Imelda’s limbo.

Act Four.....Ferdinand Marcos’s heaven.

Act Five.....Orestes Romualdez’s heaven.

PROLOGUE

SETTING: *Imelda's limbo, or heaven, or the dream of it, is a snow-white place with endless racks of neatly arranged shoes all around. The whiteness speaks of a dead calmness, a neutrality, a coldness.*

AT RISE: *The set is completely BACKLIGHTED. The SHOES ON THE RACKS are clearly silhouetted. DOWNSTAGE is a WHITE DIVAN. Sleeping on it is a WOMAN dressed in a semi-bouffant overly EMBROIDERED SATIN TERNO in SOFT PINK that speaks of innocence.*

ANGEL 1 – a young girl in WHITE FULL PINAFORE DRESS with WHITE CARDBOARD WINGS – stealthily enters tiptoeing, and watching her back. She approaches and inspects the WOMAN. Recognizing her, ANGEL 1 covers her mouth to muffle her surprise. ANGEL 1 then signals for the others to come in. ANGELS 2 and 3, dressed pretty much the same, enter. The three hover around the WOMAN.

ANGEL 1

She is so beautiful.

ANGEL 2

The most beautiful woman in the world.

ANGEL 3

Helen of Troy?

ANGEL 1

No, silly. This one is influential. Powerful.

ANGEL 3

Ahh! I know! Angelina Jolie?

ANGEL 2

Imelda Marcos!

ANGEL 3

The shoe lady?

ANGEL 2

A Philippine First Lady.

ANGEL 3

Is she dead?

ANGEL 2

It looks to me like she's just sleeping.

ANGEL 1

Do you think I should sing to her now?

ANGEL 2

It wouldn't hurt you.

ANGEL 3

Go ahead, sing. If she's just sleeping, she'll wake up with some heavenly inspiration. If she's dead, she can very well consider it a nice welcome.

SPOTLIGHT on ANGEL 1.

ANGEL 1

(Clears her throat, and sings.)

ANG BUHAY, TULAD NG ISANG AWIT LAMANG
MAYRO'NG SIMULA AT MAY KATAPUSAN
ANG ARAW AT GABI'Y LUMULUNGKOT, HIRANG
SA MGA SULIRANIN PINAGLALABANAN
ANG AKING PAGKUKUNWARI SA BUHAY
PAGBABALAT-KAYO SA KATOTOHANAN
ANO MAN ANG AKING MAGING KAPALARAN
TANGING DIYOS LAMANG ANG NAKAKAALAM.

[Translation.

Life is like a song –

it begins and ends.

Day and night turn tragic, my dear

as we wrestle with the puzzle.

My pretensions in life

are a disguise for the truth;

whatever my destiny will be

God only knows.]

As the song ends, the sleeping WOMAN starts to rouse. The ANGELS exit hurriedly. SPOTLIGHT remains on the WOMAN as she awakes, and yawns to a stretch. She is IMELDA MARCOS, elegantly bejeweled, young, and beautiful in her brushed up 1960's chignon hairdo. IMELDA catches a glimpse of the ANGELS.

IMELDA

Wait!

(Gets up and tries to run after the ANGELS.)

Wait!

(Losing the ANGELS, she goes back to the divan, looks around, examines the shoes on display, and takes in the whole setting.)

Where am I? Why all these shoes? Am I in heaven?

(Addresses the balcony.)

God, are you there?

(Addresses the orchestra.)

Am I in heaven?

(Hollers.)

Hello! Is there anybody here with me?

Giggles and VOICES are heard from the racks of shoes. Cool, inviting, seductive, sea-nymph-like echoing sing-song VOICES.

VOICES

I-mel-da! I-mel-da!

MORE VOICES

Mel-dy! Mel-dy!

EVEN MORE VOICES

I-mel-da!

IMELDA

(Realizes it's the shoes.)

No! No! No!

(Covers her ears.)

Nooooo!

(Cries.)

No more shoes! No more shoes! Oh God!

VOICES

I-mel-da! I-mel-da!

MORE VOICES

Mel-dy! Mel-dy!

EVEN MORE VOICES

I-mel-da!

IMELDA breaks into tears. She takes off one of her shoes and throws it at the racks. The VOICES stop.

IMELDA

I'm lost. I'm lost in a world of shoes. Oh God, please find me. Please find me.

(Notices her dress.)

Pink? I'm wearing pink! I must be dead. I haven't worn pink in three hundred years. Oh

God, I must be dead. But... but I feel so alive, so young.

(Touches her face, pinches her arms.)

I am young! Oh God! I must be dreaming. Or dead.

BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE

SETTING: *Ninoy Aquino's heaven is a fluid expanse of caffeinated RED with a bridge-like structure. The color has such a visceral presence to the scene that the audience and the characters have no choice but to be reactive. In the scene, the changes in lighting, a dramatic spectacle in themselves, move from lusty reds to angry reds, from anxious reds to defiant reds.*

AT RISE: *The BACKGROUND, an evocation of a cloudy sky, showcases a dynamic play of VARIOUS SHADES OF RED. CENTER, there is an elevated BRIDGE. It has two SEVEN-STEP STAIRS WITH RAILS like the ones used to get on and off an airplane: one on the left end of the bridge, and the other, in the middle of it, jutting towards the audience. IMELDA, with only one shoe on, her back to the audience, is sitting on the bridge watching the dramatic light change spectacle of the background.*

Lights change until everything is bathed in a most vibrant RED.

NINOY, young, bespectacled, and dressed in the WHITE SAFARI SUIT he died in, enters.

He is holding a bouquet of eight RED

BALLOONS. He sees the SHOE that Imelda

threw in the Prologue, DOWNSTAGE.

(Although the shoe is the same prop, the location is different in this scene.) He picks it up, and brings it to her.

NINOY

(Climbs up the CENTER stairs.)

Good morning, Imelda. It's been a while. How are you?

IMELDA

(Turns, shocked.)

N-ninoy?

NINOY

Who did you expect... Prince Charming?

(Displays the shoe.)

I believe this is your shoe.

(Reads the label.)

Ferragamo.

(Smirks.)

Did you pretend to be Cinderella again? You like being lost and being found by your Prince Charming... through your shoe.

IMELDA

But you're dead. You were... slain.

NINOY

Yes. Felled with a bullet. In broad daylight.

IMELDA

It wasn't me. I didn't order it.

NINOY

(Shakes his head, reaches the top of the bridge.)

Meldy, Meldy, Meldy.

IMELDA

No, you must believe me. I didn't do it.

NINOY

(Sits on the RIGHT end of the bridge facing the audience, feet dangling.)

I don't know. It is up to you now, Imelda. Things have changed. There is no need to tell lies here now.

IMELDA

But I didn't do it. I had nothing to do with it.

*A subtle light change to a brighter red, more
luscious.*

NINOY

Nothing?

(Sighs.)

Everybody else thinks you did. Why are you trying to convince me otherwise now? I am dead. Do you think I care anymore? Like I said, it is up to you now. In here, you choose your eternity. Either you stay here with me forever trying to convince me of your innocence, or you go on to meet all your other four people.

IMELDA

(Gets the idea.)

In *here*? You mean, I'm in heaven? And you are the first of the five people I meet in heaven?

NINOY

(Laughs.)

Imelda. Poor, poor Imelda. Are you dead? I don't know. Maybe, you are only a dream. But whatever it is, you are in *my* heaven.

IMELDA

Why the hell am I in your dream? Or heaven?

NINOY

Because you have a lesson to learn. Something you did not understand before.

(Beat.)

You ask too many questions. You talk a lot. Maybe it's time you listened.

IMELDA

Are you mad with me?

NINOY

That's another question. Unfortunately, I am not here to answer your questions. As I said, there is a lesson to be learned, something you did not understand before. Learn it, and you move on to meet your four other people.

IMELDA

I'm sorry you died.

(Sits beside NINOY, dangling her feet, too.)

But I had nothing to do with it. I tried to warn you in New York. I warned you several times.

NINOY

You told my supporters and friends, "If Ninoy comes back, he is going to be killed." You knew of the plan. Why did you tip us off? Could it be that you have a conscience, after

all? Or did you think you could scare me into exile so that you could be president when Marcos died?

(Hands IMELDA her shoe.)

That was your plan, right? Too prolong the Marcos dynasty. After Marcos, you. Then your son, or your daughter. Marcos *pa rin*. Marcos forever. Everybody knew Marcos was sick in 1981, he could have been dying. His kidneys were failing him. The transplant was a failure – his immune system rejected the new organ. It was an extremely delicate point. I wanted him to give democracy a chance before he went. I went home to plead to him.

IMELDA

(Examines the shoe absent-mindedly.)

I'm sorry you died. I tried to warn you in New York.

NINOY

I remember you threatening me. I remember you taking my expired passport. You promised to help me renew it. But you never did. I had to resort to a fake passport to return to my country. To my own country! Your people assassinated Marcial Bonifacio and made Ninoy Aquino a martyr.

IMELDA

Marcial Bonifacio?

NINOY

Marcial from Martial Law; and Bonifacio, after the great revolutionary. But also a pun on Fort Bonifacio where I was imprisoned. That's the code name for the rebel-hero of your husband's Martial Law. That was me. But the immigration officials in Manila did not even have a chance to see my fake passport. I was shot even before I stepped on the tarmac. Was that planned because your soothsayer told you that once my feet touched the Philippine soil, the Marcos days would be numbered?

IMELDA

(Lays the SHOE beside her.)

You were stubborn. I warned you that you would be killed if you returned.

Lights change. Bloody red of violence.

NINOY

The Filipino is worth dying for.

IMELDA

(Takes off the OTHER SHOE she is wearing, and lays it near the other.)

You were stubborn. I warned you. I had no control over Marcos's men.

NINOY

(Stands up, and bursts one BALLOON.)

Who had control, then? Our fear was that if Marcos died, the palace would be left to you and General Ver. With Marcos very sick, maybe in a coma, who would have the control? Your conjugal dictatorship lorded it over our country for more than twenty years, and you say that you didn't have control? No, Imelda, you had absolute power. And it corrupted you absolutely.

IMELDA

Now, as it was then, you make me sound like I am a criminal, an evil person, a vampire, a werewolf, a prostitute, a professional thief, a very greedy person, a person who deserves to die, a person whose death will be good for the people, a person who deserves to go to hell for stealing from the dying and starving, a dangerous person, a killer, a power-hungry person, a usurper of authority and a person without conscience who should be condemned.

NINOY

Well?

IMELDA

Well, what?

NINOY

As they say, if the shoe fits...

IMELDA

I have been accused and acquitted. I have been maligned and humiliated. They made me the laughingstock of the world. They made my life a living hell. When do all these condemnations and embarrassments stop?

NINOY

I told you, it is not for me to answer your questions. But you should have considered these things before you plundered the country. Before you siphoned its wealth and sucked it dry. Before you made the lives of millions a living hell. Just because you have been acquitted doesn't mean you were innocent. It only means you were smart enough to hide and cover your tracks. But the people know.

Light changes to a lusty shade of red.

IMELDA

(Stands up.)

What did the people know? I gave them the greatest First Lady they ever had. The grandest. They dreamed of Camelot in the Orient and I gave them a queen to revere. Marcos and I have been called the Kennedys of Asia.

NINOY

But you did not know when to stop. Your ruthless ambition and insatiable hunger for power and money ruined the chances of what greatness you may have achieved. The dream became a nightmare. You craved to be the Kennedys of Asia. I was assassinated, and I became Asia's JFK.

(Beat.)

Marcos believed he was fated by destiny to be great. He could have been great.

(Beat.)

I thought fate was cruel to me and my family. Me, suffering under your Martial Law, and then in exile. But destiny has strange plans. Despite his fake war medals, despite his oratorical brilliance and excellent speeches, despite his clever manipulations, despite his hidden wealth and scandalous riches, Marcos was forever cast as an evil dictator, a thief. The greatest thief in the world. I died a martyr, and became our country's hero; and Cory, who had no inclination for politics, became the greatest icon of democracy in Philippine history.

IMELDA

Cory put us in exile, too. She wanted us out of the country. That night when the American choppers took us away from Malacañang, we asked permission to be allowed to stay in Marcos's home in Paoay. I begged. And she said no.

NINOY

(Starts to go down the LEFT stairs.)

Good for her. She had common sense. She was brilliant. That was her first major decision as the new President. She did it for our country. She knew that with you in the Philippines, and with your vast ill-gotten wealth, you could finance a civil war.

IMELDA

(Follows NINOY.)

In the spirit of reconciliation, I asked to be allowed to stay. And she said no.

NINOY

She did the right thing. Wasn't it proven that Marcos was on the telephone with his vice presidential running mate when Arturo Tolentino led a coup in July 1986 proclaiming himself "Acting President"? Tolentino took over the Manila Hotel for a few hours. It was a farcical mini-coup. But everybody knew that Marcos' money was still in Manila funding the coup and the loyalist rallies. Marcos was eager to create mischief for my widow's fledgling administration. Despite being reprimanded by the US State Department for destabilizing the government, Marcos continued to mastermind another coup attempt in January 1987.

IMELDA

Your widow was vindictive. She went after us. Accusing us of pillaging the country.

NINOY

(Stops in his steps.)

My widow, vindictive? Look who's talking. You call Cory vindictive? What's wrong with you? Did you not remember what you did to your own cousin Norberto Junior? What you did to *me*?

(Bursts another BALLOON.)

A FOG clouds over the set.

Lights change so that NINOY and IMELDA on the stairs are silhouetted against a BRIGHT RED background.

NINOY totters down a step as if recreating his assassination.

EVERYTHING freezes for a few seconds.

The FOG clears.

Tell me, Imelda, that which you did to me, was that for dumping you, or for helping Norberto get a decent burial?

IMELDA

Stop! Please stop.

NINOY

No!

IMELDA

Please stop.

NINOY

No. You listen, Imelda! Your uncle made the Romualdez name good in Manila. He established the same good name in Leyte so that you and your father could make use of it, too. Norberto Senior built a house in Leyte, a house he was gracious enough to share with you and your father. Norberto Senior died, and you thought you could claim the house for your own. But Norberto Junior returned to Leyte to nourish the good name his father had planted. You thought he did it just to grab the house from you, and the Romualdez stronghold from your father. You hated your cousin to his death.

IMELDA

Please stop.

NINOY

1965. Norberto Junior was governor of Leyte. But you had greater power by then. You were the First Lady. You asked your cousin to give up his post. You forced him out of it. You gave it to your brother Kokoy. What does that brute know? Your brother was a nincompoop! You promised to give Norberto an honorable job in Manila in exchange for giving up the governorship. But you never fulfilled it. In 1972, Norberto died a broken man. His widow Rosa came to me. It was Norberto's dying wish to be buried in Leyte, just like his father, and where he was once loved as governor. You wouldn't hear of it.

IMELDA

What was wrong with being buried in Manila?

NINOY

It's like Marcos being buried in Hawaii.

(IMELDA turns her face away.)

When I brought Norberto's remains back home to Leyte, I imagined how much you must have hated me. I, in my benevolence to Norberto and his family, frustrated your last act of revenge against your cousin.

(Beat.)

And you call my widow vindictive? What did you do to the people who disagreed with you? Shall we count the cases of human rights violations committed against those who opposed you? Cory didn't accuse you of anything. She may have echoed the people's

sentiments. She had to give speeches. But on her own, she would never accuse you of anything that you *did not* do.

(Starts his descent again.)

What did she have to gain?

IMELDA

(Follows NINOY.)

The public. The people's love!

NINOY

But Cory never aspired for the people's love. She never wanted a public life. She never cared for public acceptance like you did. She had me and our children. She had the Cojuangco family. She was content being a plain housewife. She was the genuine aristocrat you tried so hard to copy.

IMELDA

Cory, Cory, Cory! You dumped me for Cory! You elitist snob!

NINOY bursts another BALLOON.

Why do you keep bursting those damn balloons?

NINOY

Just to emphasize.

IMELDA

Emphasize what?

NINOY

Certain lines, certain lies. You know, for dramatic effect.

IMELDA

You dumped me for Cory!

NINOY

So, you didn't get over our brief romance after all.

(Snorts.)

Funny, funny, funny.

(Seriously.)

I didn't dump you because you were poor, Imelda. I didn't dump you because you were taller than me either. I courted you because you needed to be romanced at that time. You had just arrived in Manila from the province. We were young. We were restless. But in the couple of times that we went out, I also sensed you were looking for something greater than me. Something like Ariston Nakpil. Or Ferdinand Marcos.

(Snorts.)

Tell me honestly, did you ever love me, Imelda?

(IMELDA is silent.)

Shall I take your silence for a yes?

IMELDA

(Catches up with NINOY on the ground.)

No. I did not love you, Ninoy, but it did hurt me that you dumped me then. When I first came to Manila, you were among the wealthy playboys who ebbed and flowed around me. I seriously thought you took an interest in me. Then, you just snubbed me, and I hated you for it. You became the personification of the elite that had always rejected me. I really hated you. You gave up on me because I was poor.

NINOY

Oh, no, Imelda. I never loved you or any other woman as I loved my wife. I met you when we were young. When I was just looking around. As if I were shopping for shoes. I tried you on because I liked your color and design. You were beautiful. But the size didn't fit. You wouldn't buy shoes size 8 when you are size 8-1/2, would you?

(Dreamily.)

When I met Cory, it was a perfect fit. She was comfortable and elegant. She was the pair that complimented me. That's why I married her. I married her for love. Not for ambition.

(Beat.)

Tell me, Imelda. Did you marry Marcos for love, or for your ambition?

Lights change to a romantic red.

IMELDA

I loved Ferdinand even before I knew whether his real name was Edralin or Marcos. Yes, I set my eyes early on being married comfortably. When I met Ferdinand, I knew he was the one for me. He was a popular congressman, full of promise. I loved him.

NINOY

But you were still romancing the tall and dashing Ariston Nakpil, an excellent catch, as most people would say, when your whirlwind romance with Marcos ended with a marriage ceremony on the eleventh day.

IMELDA

Ariston was previously married and my family wouldn't allow it.

NINOY

But Marcos had someone before you, too. Carmen Ortega? They had three children: two boys and a girl.

IMELDA

I didn't know. I was swept off my feet. He promised me many things. Then, I realized that I loved him.

NINOY

Just like that?

IMELDA

Yes. Just like that. I loved Marcos. And don't you dare question that.

NINOY

You know what, Imelda? When I met you, I was attracted by your imagination. You were responsible and exciting. For the young woman that you were, your fantasies were cute. Then, when you married Marcos, I saw you change. You started to enjoy your power. You built edifices to hide your insecurities. You deluded yourself into trying to be someone other than yourself. You fashioned your life to be like Evita Peron. You nurtured a ruthless ambition and seemingly insatiable desire for wealth and power. You created charities that emptied money into your stash. I tried to warn you. I was vocal about my criticism because no one else could reach you. You surrounded yourself with sycophants, people who only fed your ego. I think that your hatred for me is...

Light changes to an angry red.

IMELDA

(Hysterical.)

You son of a bitch! Yes, I hate you. Even until now, I hate you. I hate you for thwarting all my plans. I hate you for helping Norberto. I hate you for likening me to Eva Peron. I am not a prostitute! I hate you for criticizing my building projects. I hate you for criticizing me. And I hate you most of all for buying the tape from that whore.

NINOY

What tape?

(Tries to remember.)

Oh...

(Bursts another BALLOON.)

Dovie Beams?

IMELDA

She ruined me! I loved Ferdinand. So when his infidelity with her was publicized, I was truly heartbroken. That bastard preferred that slut to me. She called him Fred. He sang to her in Ilocano, and told her he liked her better than me.

NINOY

All of which she secretly documented by placing a tape recorder under the bed. For a Hollywood B-movie actress, she was smart.

IMELDA

She was a whore! I had her arrested and ready for deportation. She appealed to the US embassy for help. The ambassador asked for her release.

NINOY

After all, she was an American citizen, and there were no actual criminal charges against her.

IMELDA

As soon as she was released, she called a press conference at which she played her tapes of her love scenes with the President. You offered to buy one of the tapes.

NINOY

It was a joke.

IMELDA

I didn't find it funny. It was a sick joke. You were sick!

NINOY

And you never forgave me for *that*?

IMELDA

You made fun of me! You played those tapes and you made fun of me. How can you humiliate me so? Why did you want to destroy me? I was just starting to get out of the rut, and you just crushed me. You deserved to die!

NINOY

And die I did. In an ugly death. Crudely done. In broad daylight.

(Starts to climb the CENTER stairs again.)

A man returns home, is taken off the plane by military escorts, and shot dead before he sets foot on his native ground. Then the body, pitched forward on the tarmac, is hauled and pushed into a military van, like a lump of meat.

IMELDA

I'm sorry you died. I tried to warn you in New York.

NINOY

Poor, poor Imelda.

IMELDA

I tried to warn you in New York.

NINOY

You have to forgive me, Imelda, for thwarting all your plans. I stood in your way. Forgive me for Norberto, for Dovie Beams, for criticizing your extravagance, for standing in your way of the presidency.

(Beat.)

In my youth, I was ostentatiously self-centered, a flamboyant young political showman. I attacked you not only to get under your skin, but also to get at Ferdinand. I knew I aggravated matters by being abrasive and cutting. I was a brash critic with the sharpest tongue. I was your most dangerous rival for the presidency. I paid dearly for those. You and your husband jailed me, and put me in exile. Those were the crucibles that matured me into a far more noble figure. You actually pushed me to my greatest potentials. You made me look great.

IMELDA

The Cultural Center was my private pet project. It was my first big project as First Lady. My sentiments were noble. I was familiar with the pain of abortive talent. I knew that many a Filipino artist died unheard of because he had none to hear him, and nowhere to be heard. I seriously believed that culture and art and a taste for the beautiful must lead to some goodness.

NINOY

(Stops in his step.)

As you were making culture your personal pork barrel and making yourself an image as patron of the arts, I was doing some Empire State Building of my own in the Senate, too. It was easy to pick on you. How you handled the Cultural Center was condemnable. From the original plan of 15 million pesos, it eventually cost a staggering 50 million. I did not condemn the idea of the Cultural Center, I deplored its ostentation. I asked why it had been undertaken at a time when so many Filipinos were starving or barely subsisting in squalid poverty, with tens of thousands in Manila alone living in packing crates and garbage dumps.

IMELDA

You said my projects were only necessary for my vanity.

NINOY

Your expensive Cultural Center was ludicrous in an impoverished country like the Philippines.

IMELDA

(Goes after NINOY.)

You went on to compare me with Evita Peron, that *puta* of the Argentine dictator. Your innuendo suggested that my determination to see the completion of the Center at any cost was traceable to an impoverished childhood similar to that of Eva Peron.

NINOY

I knew I got through to you then. I stepped onto sacred grounds. The attack added insult to injury.

IMELDA

You threw salt at a gaping wound.

NINOY

Because I represented the social elite to which you and your husband aspired.

IMELDA

You were a true blue blood. What's more, you were married to Cory, heiress to a fabulous sugar fortune. She represented the crème de la crème, at the top of Manila's 400.

NINOY

We were the archetypes of your ambition.

(Beat.)

I heard you dissolved into tears of rage when you heard my speech on the floor of Congress.

IMELDA

Ferdinand issued an angry statement: "Those who want to destroy me should fight like men and leave the women and children out of it."

NINOY

(Continues to climb until he reaches the top of the bridge.)

But despite editorials that attacked me for my lack of chivalry, the Evita issue did not go away.

Light changes to a warmer red, almost a burgundy of suffering.

IMELDA

It persisted like a bad cough of a tubercular man. People began to ask questions about my past and origins. Questions beget questions. They traced back everything as far as my tubercular grandfather and my grandmother who was born of a philandering Spanish priest.

NINOY bursts another BALLOON.

They asked about my mother, and how we lived in the garage while my father's first family lived in the house on Solano Street.

NINOY

They asked about the very things you tried so hard to hide and erase.

(Offers his hand to help IMELDA on the bridge.)

Forgive me, Imelda, for all that I've done to you. Forgive me for thwarting all your plans.

Forgive me for standing in the way of your ambition. I don't know where this journey will lead you. God's mind is greater than ours. Our plans are not God's plans. I cannot judge you. But on Judgment Day, I will be there. I'll be watching you. For old time's sake, I will attend your last judgment.

IMELDA breaks down. NINOY gives

IMELDA the remaining three BALLOONS.

IMELDA continues to cry.

(Kneels down to put IMELDA's SHOES on her.)

It is not over until it is over. You can still change the mind of God and the people's. You cannot just die in your sleep. You are too important a person for that. Perhaps, the Good Lord will wake you up from a dream to give you another chance. Or perhaps, you'll find your absolution through genuine contrition.

IMELDA

Do you forgive me, Ninoy?

Light change to a bright red.

A long awkward silence.

NINOY

I gave you three balloons, Imelda. Three... red... balloons! I cannot judge you. I told you, it is not over until it is over. But I will be watching you.

(Puts IMELDA's SHOES on her, and exits, as IMELDA continues to cry uncontrollably.)

*"Surrender" from Andrew Lloyd Webber's
Sunset Boulevard starts to play in the
background.*

NORMA DESMOND in CAST RECORDING

NO MORE WARS TO FIGHT
WHITE FLAGS FLY TONIGHT
YOU ARE OUT OF DANGER NOW
BATTLEFIELD IS STILL
WILD POPPIES ON THE HILL
PEACE CAN ONLY COME
WHEN YOU SURRENDER.

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO

SETTING: *Cardinal Sin's heaven is a stylized living room with a lively and continuous PURPLE lighting scheme that speaks of the enigmatic domain of the spiritual on the one hand; and the idea that "Life is a cabaret!" on the other hand. The lights fade in and out from various sources. The effect of the color purple on the audience should be a blurring of boundaries between truth and illusion, memories and dreams, perhaps between good and evil. The spectacular light changes reinforce the idea that things are not often what they appear to be.*

AT RISE: *"Surrender" from Andrew Lloyd Webber's Sunset Boulevard continues as the set turns PURPLE. The BACKGROUND, lighted purple, is like a mottled glass partition that obscures the boundaries between truth and illusions. VARIOUS SHAPES – a mixture of mundane and religious images – like shoes, tiaras, flute glasses, crosses, rosaries, crowns of thorns, chalices, and so on, are projected as silhouettes but they are distorted to confuse perceptions. DOWNSTAGE LEFT, there is a WHITE EGG CHAIR with its back turned to the audience. On one side of it is a rolling SERVICE CART with STRAWBERRIES, WINE GLASSES, a BUCKET containing chilled CHAMPAGNE, and a FRISBEE; on the other side, big square PILLOWS with intense purple and gold cases.*

NORMA DESMOND in CAST RECORDING

(Continues.)

HERE THE TRACERS FLY

LIGHTING UP THE SKY

BUT I'LL FIGHT ON TO THE END

LET THEM SEND THEIR ARMIES

I WILL NEVER BEND

I WON'T SEE YOU NOW 'TIL I SURRENDER.

The music goes on. The EGG CHAIR turns to reveal JAIME CARDINAL SIN, dressed in a deep scarlet silk SMOKING JACKET. He is genuinely engaged, listening to the music.

NORMA DESMOND in CAST RECORDING

(Continues.)

I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN WHEN I SURRENDER.

IMELDA, apparently lost, enters. She looks around, and sees SIN.

IMELDA

Cardinal Sin?

SIN

(Signals IMELDA to be quiet.)

Shhhh...

NORMA DESMOND and JOE GILLIS

in CAST RECORDING

Norma: NOW, DON'T YOU GIVE ME A FANCY PRICE
JUST BECAUSE I'M RICH.

Joe: LOOK, LADY, YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG MAN. I HAD
SOME TROUBLE WITH MY CAR, I JUST PULLED INTO
YOUR DRIVE WAY.

Norma: GET OUT!

Joe: O.K. AND I'M SORRY YOU LOST YOUR FRIEND.

Norma: GET OUT OF HERE.

Joe: HAVEN'T I SEEN YOU SOMEWHERE BEFORE?

Norma: OR SHALL I CALL MY SERVANT?

Joe: AREN'T YOU NORMA DESMOND? YOU USED TO BE
IN PICTURES. YOU USED TO BE BIG.

Norma: I AM BIG! IT'S THE PICTURES THAT GOT SMALL.

*SIN gets the REMOTE CONTROL from his
pocket, and cuts the music off.*

IMELDA

Your Imminence Jaime Cardinal Sin?

SIN

You seemed surprised to see me. You didn't expect to see me in heaven, did you?

IMELDA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it that way, Your Imminence.

SIN

Jaime. Just call me Jaime, Imelda. We do away with titles here.

(Offers Imelda some champagne.)

And why do you always interrupt my peace and relaxation?

IMELDA

I'm sorry if I bothered you.

(Takes the wine glass.)

Thank you.

SIN

Please don't be so polite, Imelda. I know you.

IMELDA

What was that you were listening to?

SIN

Sunset Boulevard by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Glenn Close is excellent as Norma Desmond, the aging star who is out of touch with reality. Do you like Broadway musicals?

IMELDA

Not really. I rather enjoy disco music.

SIN

That's what I heard.

(Beat.)

How are you? I was rather surprised to see you in my heaven. But I trust God's ways. And I've always believed in miracles.

IMELDA

Why am I in your heaven?

SIN

(Indicates the pillows for IMELDA to sit.)

I really don't know why you are *in* heaven, at all. I mean, I really don't know why you are in *my* heaven. But, it is as I said. I trust that God has a plan or something. Maybe you are someone I could teach...

IMELDA sits.

...or maybe there is something you can teach me. It all depends on how honestly you deal with me.

IMELDA

I have always been honest with you.

SIN

Honest? Oh, please, Imelda. You kiss my ring in public. But as soon as I turn my back, you address me as "that son of a bitch." You can lie for all I care, Imelda. You are but a guest in my heaven.

IMELDA

Cardinal Sin.

(Sighs.)

Jaime, do you remember that night?

SIN

You banged on my doors.

IMELDA

I was desperate. I needed you.

SIN

You barged into the house of Sin in the middle of the night.

IMELDA

You joked about it. I was desperate.

SIN

I was wearing this silk jacket.

IMELDA

I remember. You offered me a drink. I said no. But on my way I had some brandy to calm my nerves. Those were desperate times. I needed help. So I came to see you.

SIN

You were scared. You knew you were finished.

IMELDA

You wouldn't let me in. I begged and begged.

SIN

So, finally I got out of bed, put this silk jacket on, and greeted you.

IMELDA

I brought a solid gold crucifix to give to you.

SIN

You always thought everyone had a price. You thought you could buy me. I accepted the offering. After all, you were just returning to me something that you stole from the people.

IMELDA

Why are you so convinced that I am a thief?

SIN just looks at IMELDA.

Why are you so cruel to me? You were cruel to me before. And you are still cruel to me now.

SIN

Imelda, this is my heaven. I don't know why you are here. But I tell you, unless you are honest with yourself, you will never find your peace.

IMELDA

It was a dark night for me. I sought your help. I begged you to see me.

SIN

You felt threatened. You wanted my help. You barged into my house and disturbed my sleep.

IMELDA

I am a child of God, too. I deserved mercy.

SIN

You thought it was your privilege as a First Lady to barge into my house in the middle of the night and disturb my sleep.

IMELDA

You took the side of Cory. Then, the military defectors. You helped Enrile and Ramos.

SIN

I wouldn't let you in. I did not want to see you then. But you begged and begged. You wouldn't leave me in peace. So finally, I came out to see you. You gave me a golden crucifix. But I knew you didn't come to give me an offering. Not in the middle of the night when there were no photo opportunities to announce your generous contribution to the Church. You came because you wanted something. You wanted to buy me.

IMELDA

Then, you called the people to the streets. You supported the military defectors. I pleaded with you to reverse your position.

SIN

Yes, you pleaded. You even promised to mend your ways. But I was so sick of your arrogant and manipulative ways. You think you can buy, deceive, or win everyone and anyone with your cunning and money.

Slight light change to go back to the night of February 23, 1986. A blue buried in gray that lulls the audience into a place where passive restraint prevails. The controlling effect of the detached blue and mystical purple establishes that this is a war between

*the wise and the foolish, the calm and the
impetuous. A war of ideas, of beliefs.*

IMELDA

(Drops on her knee and kisses the hems of SIN's smoke jacket.)

Your Imminence, the Marcoses need your help. I need your help. I feel so lost. Please help me.

Lights change to original purple scheme.

SIN

You cried, and I could imagine how your theatrical talents conquered Fernando Lopez to accept the nomination and run as Marcos's vice presidential running mate under the Nacionalista Party in 1965. I also imagined how you burst into tears in 1952 to convince Mayor Arsenio Lacson to name you the Muse of Manila after you lost the title Miss Manila. It was difficult to say how much of your tears were theatrics and how much were real. Like Norma Desmond, you have used tears in the past to grasp your victims. There was no reason to doubt you would have used them with me if you thought that I was a vulnerable prey like Joe Gillis. But I was beyond tears, Imelda. I was so sick and tired of your conjugal dictatorship. For over twenty years, you milked the country until she was dry and weary. You and Marcos were a ruthless and insensitive couple, Imelda.

*Lights change to blue-and-purple to indicate
the past.*

IMELDA

Your Imminence, I need your help. Please help me.

SIN

Kneel and pray, Imelda, but not to me. You should pray to God with all your strength, with all your might, and with all your heart. It is a time for prayers. God will hear the prayers of His people. It is the greatest wish in my heart that the merciful Lord will grant you enlightenment and divine inspiration. May you realize what you have to do.

*Lights change back to the original purple
scheme.*

IMELDA

You said that I should pray. And so I prayed. I did.

SIN

You prayed very hard for the preservation of the regime.

IMELDA

I tried to pray for everyone. But I was so troubled I could not see clearly. I was lost. My soul was lost. I prayed very hard for things to go back to normal. But in the end, I could only pray for myself.

SIN

In the end, you could only pray for yourself... for the preservation of your dictatorial regime.

IMELDA

(Rises up.)

You took the side of Cory, and of Ramos and Enrile. You called the people to the streets. Over Radio Veritas, you called them.

SIN

I called on the nuns to fast and pray until the crisis was over.

*Slight light change to purple and gold to
indicate another time in the past.*

(In modulated voice, as if over the radio.)

We are in a battle and you are the powerhouses. The moment we do not win the battle, you will have to fast until the end of your life.

Lights change to the original purple scheme.

(Normal voice.)

I am a man of God, Imelda. I believed in the power of prayer to bring the miracle needed at EDSA. I am also a man of God's people. How can you expect me to take your side?

IMELDA

You are a man of the church. You should have not interfered with the matters of the state.

SIN

And yet, in the hours of darkness, you barge into my house, plead that I reverse my position and appease the crowd that wanted your heads to help preserve your regime? Now, isn't that convenient?

IMELDA

You never liked me, did you?

SIN

Frankly, my dear, I did not.

(Takes the FRISBEE, and throws it.)

I thought you were a poor social climber who married Marcos politically, then proceeded to bleed the country to death. How Evita Peron!

IMELDA

Why did you hate the Marcoses so much? You campaigned vigorously for Cory in the snap election.

(Goes to fetch the FRISBEE.)

However you denied church involvement, you were clearly for Cory and the opposition.

SIN

I was for an honest election in 1986. It was in Marcos's hands to assure that it was so.

IMELDA

You wanted Cory to win. In the first place, it was you who brought Cory and Doy Laurel together. You even convinced Doy to take second place and let Cory lead the ticket against Marcos. Why was that?

SIN

I believed Cory had the moral qualifications that would prove most effective against you and your husband's entrenched regime.

IMELDA

She was a simple woman. A crude soul, a woman without facial makeup or a manicure.

Her place was in the kitchen or the bedroom.

SIN

So said your husband. Marcos said women should confine their preaching to “inside the bedroom.” But wasn’t it a little strange that he said that, considering how he let you control the reins of government, too?

IMELDA

(Hands SIN the FRISBEE.)

What our people want is a woman of beauty. Cory had no interest in “love” and “beauty.” And these are the two things that should claim a Filipino woman’s sole attention. Why did people want her and not me?

SIN

You never really understood, Imelda. How can you be so superficial? You underrated the influence of Cory Aquino. You forgot that, in the country you oppressed and transgressed, she became a symbol of hope. A sacrament. She was the embodiment of everything good.

(Throws the FRISBEE again.)

Of everything that is *not* you.

IMELDA

She was a simple woman. A plain housewife.

SIN

Marcos chided Cory for her total lack of experience and for having the nerve to aspire to the presidency. Yes, Cory had no experience cheating elections and winning them with guns, gold, and goons. But Cory was not really without experience in politics. Remember when Marcos allowed Ninoy to campaign for a seat in the Assembly from his prison cell in 1978? It was Cory who carried her husband's message to the countryside. And Corazon Aquino is not as plain as you think. She speaks softly, but not hesitantly. She has a cool center. She is one of those alert, calm, and self-contained people who will listen to everyone, and then make up their own mind. After 1.2 million Filipinos signed a petition urging her candidacy in the snap election, I urged her to take up the challenge. Still, she insisted on making up her own mind. She went on a one-day retreat to pray alone with her God. That's the kind of leader that the Philippines needed.

IMELDA

(Goes to fetch the FRISBEE.)

You endorsed Cory in your pastoral letters. You preferred Cory over me. Your clergy campaigned for her during the snap elections. You spent money on her campaign.

SIN

Even if we wanted to, we did not have the money, Imelda. The Church cannot finance elections. But yes, the clergy preached that it was not a sin to accept the bribe money from you and still vote according to their conscience. You once said that you are like Robin Hood. That you rob the rich to make your projects come alive, and you do it with a

wink and a smile. Well, we knew that you were the new rich after 20 years of being in power. By accepting the bribe money, the poor did not do a Robin Hood, they just got back what was stolen from them.

IMELDA

Why are you so convinced that I am a thief?

SIN

If the shoe fits.

(Beat.)

Look, Imelda, if someone calls you a donkey once, you may ignore it. But when another calls you a donkey the second time, you really have to think twice. And the third time someone, or 80 million people call you a donkey, we have to really look back and check your tail.

IMELDA

(Hands the FRISBEE to SIN.)

I can't understand why you don't like me very much. I've always been good to the Church.

SIN

Really? How? For as long as the Church does your will?

IMELDA

You were mad at me for my population control program, I know.

SIN

I am a pro-lifer.

IMELDA

The Philippine poverty is caused by overpopulation. Our resources cannot support so many people, all 60 million of them.

SIN

Obviously not. Especially when the treasury is looted by you know who.

IMELDA

There are people who cannot eat.

SIN

And there are people who continue to steal from them.

(Throws the FRISBEE.)

IMELDA

(Goes to fetch the FRISBEE.)

I thought that the population control program, even if it went against the Church, was beneficial to our country. If children cannot be totally cared for, perhaps it is better that they were never born at all.

SIN

You wanted to play mother to the Filipinos.

IMELDA

Yes, Marcos said that as President, he would make the Philippines a strong house. That he would be a father to his people. And my role as First Lady was to be a good mother to the country.

SIN

You could not be a good mother with the example that you set.

IMELDA

That's debatable. You are a man, Jaime. A male. And a priest, at that. What do you know about motherhood?

SIN

I know for one thing, that you don't feed your children filth.

IMELDA

(Hands the FRISBEE to SIN.)

Are you still mad at me for the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines?

SIN

You allowed porn films to be shown. Where are your moral values?

IMELDA

Pornography is all in the mind, Jaime. The Crucified Lord is naked on the cross, for God's sake!

SIN

The Film Center...

IMELDA

Film Palace!

SIN

Huh?

IMELDA

You just called my Film Palace a "center".

SIN

The Film Center was a disaster. You wanted to create a Cannes Festival in Asia.

IMELDA

I wanted to put the Philippines on the map, and Manila as the center of international culture and arts. The Philippines is in a very strategic position. It bridges the east and the west. It is a perfect place for the meeting of various cultures.

SIN

You built the Film Center...

IMELDA

The Film Palace... to be a Parthenon of artful movies and films!

SIN

And when it failed to get the revenue that you aimed for, you showed porn films to recoup your investment. Sex sells. And in desperate times, everything is fair game to you.

(Throws the FRISBEE to the audience.)

IMELDA

Why are you so cruel and critical of me, Jaime? I'm not fetching that fucking Frisbee one more time!

SIN

Because you are so full of yourself! You think that the world revolves around you. You think that my Frisbee needs picking up. That it needs *you* to pick it up.

IMELDA

Well, you keep throwing it. Shouldn't I be fetching and giving it back to you?

SIN

I throw it because I don't want it. I'm trying to get rid of it. I don't understand why it is on the cart. I can't understand why you keep picking it up and giving it back to me.

IMELDA

I thought...

SIN

You see? I told you that you are so full of yourself. You think that the world revolves around you. You think that everyone should bow to you, and worship your ideas.

IMELDA

That's not true.

SIN

You cannot take criticism. You cannot accept refusals. Everything for you is personal.

It's all about you, you, you!

(Beat.)

Tell me, weren't you miffed when Pope John Paul II did not allow you to wear a white terno in an audience with him at the Vatican?

IMELDA

Must we go over this again? This is so trivial.

SIN

You knew that Vatican protocol only allowed Catholic queens like the Queen of Spain and the Queen of Belgium to wear white when received by the Pope. Even Princess Grace of Monaco had to wear black with long sleeves, since she was a princess and not a queen. And what did you do because of that? When His Holiness visited the country in 1981, you greeted him with your Blue Ladies all dressed in white. Every woman waiting at the airport to greet him was bare-armed and wearing a bare-throated white terno with butterfly sleeves.

IMELDA

(Pours herself a drink.)

It was a joke.

SIN

You thought it was a funny joke. We were not amused. It was a tasteless joke played on the Holy Father and flaunting his protocol.

IMELDA

It was a harmless prank. I've always been good to the Church.

SIN

No, Imelda. I know your modus operandi. You think you can buy the Church with your combination of piety, cajolery, and contributions. True, you may have managed to seduce a few lesser members of the Church, and God knows how hard you tried to befriend me. But you see, Imelda, you couldn't buy me. Your usual approach of buying anyone and everyone simply did not work with me. For us, Church people, money is not the primary consideration. And we seem to be blessed by the Holy Spirit in discerning real tears and genuine repentance.

IMELDA

You convinced Cory to run to oust us from power. You chose Cory over me!

SIN

You are like a broken record. You go back to that again and again. What is it about Cory that you are competing for? Why did you think it was between you and Cory? The electoral battle was between Marcos and Cory. But you took it as your own fight. Cory,

the political neophyte, versus Imelda, the seasoned campaigner. You reverted to your tried and tested tactics that have worked so well for you and Marcos in the past. But your magic couldn't work against Cory.

IMELDA

Cory was not beautiful. She should not have been president. She did not put on any make up. She did not even have her fingernails manicured.

SIN

That's how you explained why Marcos should win the gay vote. Because the gays are for beauty. And Filipinos who like beauty, love, and God are for Marcos.

IMELDA

It was election time. I had to say it.

SIN

In desperate times, everything is fair game, huh? Well, the people did not understand that. They thought you were crazy. Desperate. You clung hard to your notion that your once-formidable beauty would still stand you in good stead. But times were changing and you were a poor, pitiful figure drowning even while resisting the onrushing tide of change. There had been a time when your beauty mattered, Imelda. But 1986 was a different time from 1965. The adoring crowds of Marcos's first campaign had changed. And so had you.

IMELDA

I could not understand.

SIN

You will never understand until you see that you yourself had hardened and had come to symbolize the cruelty and corruption of the Marcos regime.

IMELDA

I did not understand.

SIN

With your conjugal dictatorship, you pushed the Filipino people a little too far so that when they started to ache for change, they focused their gaze on Cory, the grieving widow of the people's martyr. Their hearts and eyes saw her quiet charm, her intelligence, her simplicity. She was the real heiress, the woman born with a silver spoon in her mouth. If she did not show her wealth, it was because she did not need to. She could feel confident in clothes made by the neighborhood seamstress because there had never been a time when she was unwanted or rejected for lack of money. Her jewels were truly heirlooms, not recent purchases from Van Cleef or Tiffany's. Cory represented all that you had ever aspired to.

IMELDA

(Pours herself another glass.)

I hate her.

SIN

That's no secret. Everybody knows you hate Cory. Because she stood in your way of grabbing power and everything else. The two of you will be remembered as the most famous widows of Philippine politics. Cory is the face of good.

IMELDA

And Imelda will be forever cast as the face of evil.

SIN

Cory, though she had never been poor herself, exuded earnestness and sympathy for the poor. You, Imelda, who had suffered great poverty in your youth, showed poorly concealed disdain for those who reminded you of your true roots. Your rejection of your past made you a most hated figure.

IMELDA

Why do you hate me so much?

SIN

You'll think I'm bad for hating you. I wish I could say I hate the sin but not the sinner. Only, you have become the sin yourself. I hate you, Imelda, because of your prodigality and incapacity to show real compassion. You seem impervious to the suffering of others. You are cold, unfeeling, frivolous, and insensitive. You are a steel butterfly.

IMELDA

Steel butterfly! What an image! I am neither steel nor a butterfly. I am neither frivolous nor insensitive.

SIN

Why do you continue to delude yourself, Imelda?

(Beat.)

Is it possible that I hate you because you are delusional? You are a steel butterfly. Cold, unfeeling, frivolous, insensitive. You are also greedy and avaricious. Especially for the likes of you, Pope Benedict has updated the seven cardinal sins.

(Beat.)

But do you know what I hate most about you, Imelda? I hate how you blaspheme and use the name of God in vain. I don't know how you can do it. You justify your vanity, and in vain, mention the name of God in one breath. You even use the name of God in your lies!

IMELDA

Please, Jaime, stop.

SIN

No, Imelda. You need to hear yourself. Didn't you say this:

(Impersonates Imelda.)

They call me corrupt, frivolous. I am not at all privileged. Maybe the only privileged thing is my face. And corrupt? God! I would not look like this if I were corrupt. Some ugliness would settle down on my system.

Imelda serves herself the champagne.

(Normal voice.)

And didn't you say this, too:

(Impersonates Imelda.)

People say I am extravagant because I want to be surrounded by beauty. But tell me, who wants to be surrounded by garbage? Beauty is love made real and the spirit of love is God. Only a crazy man wants to be surrounded by garbage, and I'm not crazy just yet.

IMELDA

If you're a little presentable, you're called frivolous. Beauty is frivolity it seems, but beauty is love. You can never have an excess of what is democratic, just, and beautiful. You can't say a woman is overly beautiful but you can certainly say someone is overly ugly. It is against religiosity to be surrounded by ugliness. In a material world, where

everything is valued, when you commit yourself to God, beauty and love, it can be mistaken for extravagance. I hate ugliness. You know, I am allergic to ugliness.

SIN

I wish I could reach to you, Imelda, and talk some sense into you. But you are...

IMELDA

What am I? Nuts? You think I'm sick in the head?

(Pours herself another glass.)

Why do people only see the quirky Imelda?

SIN

I don't know. Sometimes, the multitude just has the uncanny wisdom of seeing the truth.

They see the reality that you deny *yourself* to see.

(Beat.)

You seem to be enjoying my champagne.

IMELDA

Yes, this is good champagne.

(Beat.)

People always paint me looking like an airhead. They say I am crazy. They say a lot of things about me. Bad things. They call me a prostitute. A criminal. A very greedy person. Dangerous. A murderer. A usurper of power. A person who deserves to die. A person

who deserves to go to hell for stealing from the dying and starving. A person without conscience who should be condemned.

SIN

The voice of the people is the voice of God.

IMELDA

They make me look ugly. They say I am crazy. Sick in the head.

SIN

You wrote a book. "Circles of Life," you called it. You caused the Filipino people too much suffering and you justified it with words about the Divine. How can I not hate you?

IMELDA

I have a different way of thinking. I think synergistically. I am not linear in thinking. I'm not very logical. Perhaps, that is what makes me so controversial. I am beyond logic and rationality.

SIN

You are insane. You came to see me on the night of February 23, 1986. You gave me a golden crucifix that night; solid gold, you said. But you've given the Filipino people a bigger cross to carry. Worse, you nailed them to the cross. You crucified them.

IMELDA

You've read my book.

(Modulated voice, as if reading a book.)

Why, then, should the cross be a burden? Pain heightens. Sorrow defines joy. Suffering ennobles happiness. And tears are also for laughter. Believe in this, as I have lived it in the most excruciating manner any human being can bear. We are whole, and no line between or across our world can ever fragment us. For we are whole with the universe, and there is nothing to fear if we hold sacred the fundamental fiber of life's goodness itself. In all that is good, we only need touch the hand of the Divine. We are one with it.

SIN

"Circles of Life."

IMELDA

Yes, that's from my book "Circles of Life."

SIN

What did you mean by that?

IMELDA

I meant what I said.

SIN

You are drunk.

IMELDA

No, I am not.

SIN

I bet my sweet ass even you cannot understand what you said.

IMELDA

(Scandalized.)

Cardinal Sin!

SIN

You were given to blabbering. Once you started enjoying power, Imelda, once you realized you could make people listen because you were powerful, you blabbered like a crazy woman. You can talk forever without getting tired.

IMELDA

I have a beautiful vision.

SIN

You can talk for hours on end even without being encouraged. Sometimes, you try to dazzle people with your philosophy about human order.

IMELDA

I am all for the true, the good, and the beautiful. For harmony of the human body, spirit, and intellect. I think that goodness comes from balance and harmony. I think that beauty and order take away the suffering and pain from our lives.

SIN

I think that you were a little presumptuous to write about pain and suffering. Or about the meaning of life. You have been so detached from reality. You have deluded yourself so much you could no longer distinguish dream from reality.

IMELDA

You know, Jaime, I'm sorry to disappoint you. But philosophy and spirituality are not the monopoly of the clergy like you, you know.

SIN

Do you believe in God, Imelda?

IMELDA

Of course.

SIN

What kind of God do you believe in? Do you think God can't see through you?

IMELDA

I believe in God.

SIN

Do you feel you are one with God?

IMELDA

God is love. I have loved. Therefore, I will go to heaven and be one with God.

SIN

That's what you said to Pope Paul VI, who responded, "Oh, how wonderful. How childlike."

IMELDA

I am *in heaven*, am I not?

SIN

Dream on!

IMELDA

People say Mrs. Marcos is a great dreamer. Oh yes! I was born on July 2, 1929. And July 2 people, people born on the day of the disconnected unconscious, have a very active fantasy life. I am very imaginative. I dream not only at night when there is the moon and the stars but I dream more so during the daytime without the moon and the stars. But I don't just dream. I do it. I am an activist.

(Beat.)

Oh, I am drunk! This is really good champagne.

SIN

Why did you do it, Imelda? The shoes, the jewelry, the New York properties, the hidden wealth?

IMELDA

What's wrong with the shoes? I collected them because it was like a symbol of thanksgiving and love. God, I was thankful that when they opened my closet, they found shoes instead of skeletons. I have no weakness for shoes. I wear very simple shoes which are pump shoes.

SIN

Ferragamo are hardly simple shoes, Imelda. I personally think that they are a little extravagant for the leader of a country with millions who are hungry. Salvatore Ferragamo is not called the "shoemaker of dreams" for nothing. Yet, Ferragamo designs

shoes especially for you. The Ferragamo House in Firenze does not make out special orders as a policy but they made exceptions for you. They are only glad to produce the styles that Mrs. Marcos will select, isn't that right?

IMELDA

Shoes were not one of my weaknesses.

SIN

2,700 pairs of shoes – high heels, boots, stilettos, sandals, pumps, sneakers, and some plastic disco sandals with three-inch high light-flashing battery operated heels – and you say shoes were never one of your weaknesses! Come on, Imelda. Here, let's do some math while we are at it. If you wore a different pair of shoes each day, you would have a supply to last you at least seven years! If Imelda Marcos changed her shoes three times a day, and never wore the same pair twice, wouldn't it take more than two years and five months to work through her shoe supply of 2,700 pairs? Since you undoubtedly would continue to buy new shoes while trying to do justice to the old supply, isn't it clear that you could never wear all your shoes in your lifetime? Now, let us, for a moment, meditate on that, Imelda.

IMELDA

I have never been a material girl.

SIN

Oh, please. Everybody knows you are into *mining*. This is mine, that is mine, that, too, is mine. Stores opened at night for you alone, your bodyguards paying with paper bags full of thousand dollar bills. One day, you and your elite friends went to Bloomingdale's in New York. You asked for the whole store to be shut down so you didn't have to worry about the nosy media. Then, you started shopping, and it was easy because you just pointed at whatever you fancied and told the assigned sales assistants, "Mine. Mine. Mine." You did that at Tiffany's, too, didn't you?

IMELDA reaches for the CHAMPAGNE

BOTTLE. But SIN grabs it away from her.

IMELDA

My father always told me never to love anything that could not love you back.

SIN

Sound advice. You should have listened to it. Your father also allowed you only one pair of shoes each year when you were little.

IMELDA

Give me another glass.

(Beat.)

I was no Marie Antoinette. I was not born to nobility but I have a human right to nobility. Then, I became the First Lady by accident. Some things were expected of me. I was not elected by the people but I was there.

SIN

And you made sure you stayed there for over twenty years. In fact, you wanted to be there forever. No more champagne for you. You are a bad drunk.

IMELDA

The problem with first ladies is that they have to set the standard. My job was to be both star and slave. In my position, the number one rule was never to dress down for the poor. They won't respect you for it. They want their First Lady to look like a million dollars.

SIN

I can't believe you thought of that.

IMELDA

I had to be a dazzling star for my people to look up to from their slums. It is terribly important to do certain things, such as wear over-embroidered dresses, and yes, Ferragamo shoes. After all, the mass follows class. Class never follows mass. I was my little people's star and slave. Give me another glass!

SIN

How Evita Peron!

(In mockery, sings "Rainbow High" from the Webber musical Evita.)

I CAME FROM THE PEOPLE
THEY NEED TO ADORE ME
SO CHRISTIAN DIOR ME
FROM MY HEAD TO MY TOES
I NEED TO BE DAZZLING
I WANT TO BE RAINBOW HIGH!
THEY MUST HAVE EXCITEMENT
AND SO MUST I

IMELDA

When I went out to the barrios, I got dressed because I knew my little people wanted to see a star. Other presidents' wives have gone to the barrios wearing housedresses and slippers. That's not what the people wanted to see. People want someone they can love, someone to set an example.

SIN

(Continues to sing.)

I'M THEIR PRODUCT
IT'S VITAL YOU SELL ME
SO MACHIAVELL-ME
MAKE AN ARGENTINE ROSE!
I NEED TO BE THRILLING
I WANT TO BE RAINBOW HIGH!
THEY NEED THEIR ESCAPE
AND SO DO I.

(Speaking.)

That's Evita Peron for you. From the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical.

IMELDA

When I married the President, I had only ever dreamed of a small house with a picket fence by the sea. But how could I stop what I was doing? My work became a romance, not only to the President and a husband, but a romance of principles and commitment. A romance for humanity! That perhaps was what made me so controversial. I am beyond logic and rationality. Give me another glass to drink, damn it.

SIN

And beyond help, if you continue deluding yourself. You know what? More than being like Evita, you are actually more like Norma Desmond. So out of touch with reality. Not only are you ostentatious, you are also delusional. You are drunk all your life. Intoxicated by too much power. But you are in *my* heaven for a purpose that God only knows. My role is to help you. You may sit down and listen. Or you may kneel and pray.

IMELDA sits down on the large pillows.

Pardon me if I cannot give a proper inventory of your impressive accumulation. You know better. I only read the papers. Then again, didn't you brag about it? Didn't you say,

(Impersonates Imelda.)

"If you know how rich you are, my dear, then you are not really rich. But me, I am not aware of the extent of my wealth. That's how rich we are. We practically own everything in the Philippines!"

(Normal voice.)

That's what you said, too, when you ran for president in 1998. You also promised to give \$800 million to the poor Filipinos if you became president. Of course, you lost. People have started to view your wealth with wonder and disgust. A billion here, 800 million there; an office tower in Manhattan; a waterfront estate on Long Island; dozens of country homes in the Philippines; and even a second palace in Ilocos Norte. All through these, a question kept arising. Why? Why, all these? Why, exactly, Imelda?

A person's view may cloud a little as he tries to peer into the shadows of Swiss bank vaults or into the double-bottomed luggage of your real estate deals. But we may focus the question by meditating upon the 2,700 pairs of shoes you left behind in Malacañang. You see, the image of 5,400 shoes makes the metaphysics vivid. The parable of your shoes has something to teach. You could never wear them all. Nor could your family manage to spend the billions of dollars you plundered from the country. Why accumulate so much if there is no use for all of them? How much gold is enough? How much Yamashita's treasure? Only a sane person would think to ask. But nature is filled with wild waste, unthinkable redundancies. Why does nature, for example, toss off a billion sperm when only one of them is necessary to fertilize a human egg? It seems your shoes, ecologically baffling, are part of the mystery of life.

IMELDA

You pick on my shoes. I did not have 2,700 pairs of shoes. I had one thousand and sixty. You think my shoes are a reckless extravagance. But consider my reckless extravagance in another way. What is the purpose of riches? To buy freedom, to purchase choices, immunities from the will of others, or of fate. If I kept a collection of 1,060 pairs of shoes, it was not because I should be expected to wear them all, and must be judged a wastrel if I did not, but because my shoe collection gave me options.

SIN

Pray tell me, Imelda, did your step grow lighter in the knowledge of such freedom? Or were your shoes, like the billions of stolen dollars, merely grotesque? It is comic and sad and awful. Aren't you like a queen of great wealth who owned amazing gardens but was too fat to walk in them? You had countless splendid bedrooms and suffered from insomnia. Poor Imelda, what now? What will you do next?

(Beat.)

Pray tell me, Imelda, if you were given a second chance at life, if you wake up and find that this heaven is all but a dream, what will you do?

IMELDA

I will come up with a project that will wipe out poverty in the Philippines in two years. I want to get the people out of economic crisis by using the Marcoses' wealth. Long after I am gone, people will remember me for building them homes and roads and hospitals and giving them food.

SIN

(Laughs.)

That's what you said when you ran for the presidency in 1998.

IMELDA

The people should stop laughing at this. They should stop thinking that I am a bit touched in the head.

SIN

Poor, poor Imelda. You had the chance and you did not do it.

IMELDA

(Impassioned.)

But I did. Where did the basic services come from – water, power, food, shelter? I conceptualized them as governor of Metro Manila for 11 years. And who reclaimed hundreds of hectares and built homes for the people in Tondo and gave them little pieces of land? Who built the housing projects, by the millions, for the poor? Who brought food to the Kadiwa centers and rolling stores to bring cheap food to the people? Mrs. Marcos – in every aspect, from womb to tomb! In Malacañang, you can maximize your giving, your loving, your serving. You maximize everything in Malacañang. That’s what I love about Malacañang. I could do things faster and in a bigger way, and I wanted to do it for everybody. Filipinos need a mother. They don’t need a president. They need a mother, somebody to care for them. And they are longing for a good president who cares for them and loves them. There I was, orphaned at eight, and the mother I keep giving to the people is the mother that I lost. You only see the evil face that the media painted of me. All they show is the quirky Imelda. I should tell you that I get more than appreciation from the little ones. In the rural areas, all I have to do is smile and they are happy. I

swear, if I am given the chance, I will do it again and again. Because even death will not diminish the power of a mother's love.

SIN

(Applauds sarcastically.)

Bravo, Imelda. What a performance! I wonder why I am not moved? Is it because you are singing a different and unfamiliar song?

IMELDA

I was questioned and threatened with imprisonment for the building of the Philippine General Hospital, the premier hospital of the Philippines, that I did in the spirit of a mother's love, in creativity and ingenuity beyond technicalities, in my passion to serve the sick and the poor. I will not say sorry and be pardoned for doing a godly act.

SIN

Poor Imelda, you are truly delusional. Children often have delusions of omnipotence, and perhaps adult megalomania derives from that, with a sinister admixture of the child's spirit of play and exhibitionism. Do you see your possessions as part of yourself?

IMELDA

I've always believed that life is not a matter of place, things, or comfort; rather, it concerns the basic human rights of family, country, justice, and human dignity. But my dreams have become puny with the reality my life has become.

SIN

Wretched excess comes in many forms. Theologians distinguish the excess called avarice – the sheer, mean taking and hoarding of things – from the excess called prodigality, which is a messier and more full-bloodied fault, a form of generosity, almost, but one that has come unhinged. Ideally, world-class plundering should try to pay its way as entertainment.

IMELDA

What are you getting at?

SIN

The Romans had a genius for transforming loot into colossally vulgar display, ostentation on an imperial scale. The Emperor Elagabalus, it is sad, ordered his slaves to bring him 10,000 pounds of cobwebs. When they finished the task, Elagabalus observed, “From this, one can understand how great a city is Rome.”

IMELDA

People say I am extravagant because I want to be surrounded by beauty. But tell me, who wants to be surrounded by garbage?

SIN

Unlike the Romans, your conjugal plundering seems ultimately a cheerless affair, covert though sometimes ostentatious, avaricious though often prodigal. Christ said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." You and your husband did not wish to wait. You turned Christianity upside down. You took nourishment from the mouths of the poor, and transformed it into your treasure on earth. Such venality is not a matter of either Freud or metaphysics. It is just brutal habit, the crocodile reflex of people too long in power. It is a subdivision of the banality of evil.

SOUND OF BELLS as in the Angelus.

IMELDA kneels and makes the sign of the cross.

I'm sorry that I cannot be of more help to you at this time, Imelda. You thought I wasn't much help when you came barging into my house on that fateful night in 1986. But you see, I am a man of prayers and I gave you the best advice I could. If you want real peace, Imelda, you have to be real and acknowledge your sins. If you continue to deceive yourself, you will forever be in limbo searching but not finding, falling but not landing. If you believe in God, do not lie to Him. He can see through you. God can only heal those who are willing to be healed. The first step to eternal happiness is acknowledging that we have sinned, and that we need the mercy of God. Pray, Imelda. As I pray for your sins.

(Prays “Our Father” in Latin, touches IMELDA’s bowed head for a moment, and continues to pray as he exits.)

PATER NOSTER QUI ES IN CEILIS;
SANCTIFICETUR NOMEN TUUM,
ADVENIAT REGNUM TUUM,
FIAT VOLUNTAS TUA,
SICUT EN CEILO ET IN TERRA.
PANEM NOSTRUM QUOTIDIANUM DA NOBIS HODIE.
ET DIMITTE NOBIS DEBITA NOSTRA
SICUT ET NOS DIMITTIMUS DEBITORIBUS NOSTRIS.
ET NE NOS INDUCAS IN TENTATIONEM,
SED LIBERA NOS A MALO. AMEN.
(QUONIAM TUAN EST REGNUM, ET POTENTIA,
ET GLORIA, IN SECLA.)

*IMELDA is left kneeling with bowed head as
if praying.*

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT TWO.

ACT THREE

SETTING: *Ariston Nakpil's heaven is a hill in a non-static dimension of BLUE, GREEN, and BLACK. The colors speak of a "living planet." At one point, it is like a tranquil pond of intense turquoise blue with an exotic presence that, because it is combined with green, visually warms the conservative forces of a blue heaven. It is the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the warm Pacific colors. The effect of blue in this dimension is an inspiration to openness and interaction, not a soft blanket of sadness, not quiet nor aloof, not passive nor introspective, not melancholy. At another point, Ariston's heaven becomes the sky on a magical night.*

AT RISE: *The BACKGROUND, in three equal panels with the middle one slightly indented, is the unsteady reflection of a calm sea or lake in a moonlit night. Then, it gains some brightness and continues to play with blue and green until everything is infused with a warm turquoise blue, and becomes a place with "no memory, no concept of time." UPSTAGE RIGHT is a patch of tall healthy GREEN GRASS, maybe rice about ready to bloom. DOWNSTAGE LEFT extending to the back is a white "hill" with an upward slope of about four feet. In front of this hill, IMELDA is kneeling. (Although the position is the same, this is not the same place as in the end of Act Two.)*

*ARISTON NAKPIL, in a tailored 1940's
SHARKSKIN SUIT and SUNGLASSES,
enters with several SHOPPING BAGS and a
PICNIC BASKET.*

ARISTON

Meldy!

(Places his SUNGLASSES over his head.)

What happened to you? Look at that gown. It's... pink.

IMELDA

Aris?

ARISTON

Yesiree! Ariston Nakpil, the one who got away. Mr. Dreamboy who treated you well.

The only one who acted like a real gentleman, according to you.

(Helps IMELDA up.)

You get up, and change.

IMELDA

Change?

ARISTON

(Hands IMELDA the shopping bags.)

I brought you clothes and a nice pair of shoes. You don't want to go around in my heaven wearing a gown.

IMELDA

So I am in *your* heaven. You are the third man I have met on this journey. I'm very glad to see you.

ARISTON

I'm pretty sure you will meet at least five men in heaven. That is, if the rules for men are the same for women. I've met four women whom I forgave, and who forgave me. I don't really understand why you are my fifth. Maybe I subconsciously wanted it. Maybe I was genuinely curious to see what happened to the sweet, provincial girl I wooed when I was younger.

(Raises the bags.)

Why don't you go and change?

IMELDA

Here? Now?

ARISTON

Don't be bashful. It's just me.

(Looks around for a covered spot.)

Oh, there... behind those racks of shoes. You can change there.

IMELDA

What racks of shoes are you talking about?

ARISTON

(Points the tall grass.)

Those. You can change behind those racks of shoes.

IMELDA

I only see a patch of tall grass.

ARISTON

Tall grass, racks of shoes, it doesn't matter. Just go and change.

IMELDA

(With tenderness.)

Thank you, Aris.

*IMELDA goes behind the tall grass to
change.*

*ARISTON lays down the blue, checkered
PICNIC BLANKET on the hill. He sets the
BASKET down, and sits on the blanket.*

ARISTON

You went to my funeral wake.

IMELDA

(Off.)

I did. And I told your children you were such a gentleman to me.

ARISTON

I wonder what they thought of that. They knew about us from a book. I knew you were livid when Carmen Navarro recounted our happy times together in a book.

IMELDA

(Off.)

Carmen, Carmen, Carmen! All these Carmen women cause me all the trouble in the world. Carmen Ortega, Carmen Pedrosa, Carmen Di-mautot.

ARISTON

I can't hear you.

IMELDA

(Off.)

Carmen Navarro Pedrosa, that's the author's name. It was an unauthorized biography of Imelda Marcos. I was already a married woman when the book came out. And not just an ordinary married woman. I was the country's First Lady.

ARISTON

(Reclines on the blanket.)

Is that a good reason to deny the fact that we were together?

IMELDA

I'm sorry, Aris. It's complicated.

ARISTON

Marcos pressured me to retract the things written about the times you spent with me in Batangas.

IMELDA

(Off.)

The book implied a lot of things. And Marcos was a jealous man. I could not make him think I was no longer a virgin when we were married.

ARISTON

So you both wanted me to deny that we were ever together. But it was ridiculous to deny that we spent weekends together in my family's farm in Batangas. Even if I denied it, the fact was known by a number of people.

IMELDA

(Off.)

That book destroyed my marriage. Marcos was affected by the revelations of my past. He could not accept what the book seemed to confirm – that I was no longer a virgin when he married me.

ARISTON

Typical Filipino macho. He was devastated by the thought that he had been fooled. Yet, he was not lily-white himself. The book came out when, 1970? After you were married more than what, 16 years? Moreover, after three children, it could hardly matter if you were a virgin or not when you married him.

*IMELDA emerges in a powder blue
COCKTAIL DRESS, complete with BLUE
SHOES and a SCARF around her neck, her
hair is let down freely.*

IMELDA

Marcos was devastated to think that he had been “had.” The president is supposed to be the supreme macho. You know how machismo is highly prized in our culture. If he was the supreme macho, and I was no longer a virgin when he married me, then he had been shortchanged.

ARISTON

M-meldy! Look at you. You look extremely beautiful.

IMELDA

(Joins ARISTON on the picnic blanket.)

Thank you. It is so refreshing to be wearing this kind of dress again. I got used to pantsuits and overly embroidered gowns when I became First Lady, and I’ve never let down my hair in years.

ARISTON

What’s with the scarf? I don’t remember bringing you one. Where did you get that?

IMELDA

Oh, I always have scarves handy.

ARISTON

I don't remember you wearing scarves before you became First Lady.

IMELDA

It's Marcos's little superstition. I was never superstitious as a child. But Marcos was a major influence. We consulted soothsayers and fortune-tellers for everything. One of them advised me to wear scarves. As First Lady, I had to be careful. The soothsayer said that the scarves would help ward off evil.

ARISTON

To prevent your head from rolling? Did you fantasize to be under the guillotine like Marie Antoinette, or some Russian czarina?

IMELDA

I could be beheaded by some even cruder instruments. You know how it is. I had to be careful. An assassination attempt was made on my life in 1972 just months after the Martial Law was declared. You saw it on TV. A man with a bolo – a bolo knife! Without even a ribbon to make it beautiful! – tried to hack me down.

ARISTON

And all the country thought it was just a show. One of Marcos's political ploys to justify Martial Law and deflect the major story of the day. At that time, he just had the sons of three powerful families arrested, one of whom he owed a political debt. By citing the assassination attempt on your life, he was able to get away with the arrest of Eugenio Lopez, Jr., son of the kingmaker who was Marcos's chief ally in the 1965 and 1969 presidential elections.

IMELDA

You thought it was just a show?

ARISTON

Who knows?

Imelda looks hurt.

Whatever the truth, we saw how you played the role of a consummate political partner. You very nearly sacrificed your life to prove your worth. You and Marcos had become one in purpose. As Marcos's successor to the throne, you occupied an equal place in his regime. The assassination attempt sealed your claim to half of the throne.

IMELDA

You think it was just a *palabas*? An act, a show? You really think I am a deceiver, Aris?

ARISTON

You were First Lady for so long. The mask you wore became your skin.

Imelda is silent, hurt.

But cheer up. You will always be Meldy to me. I always remember you as the young, naïve, playful, imaginative, provincial girl from Leyte.

IMELDA

Is that the reason why I am in your heaven?

ARISTON

Heaven, dream, paradise, limbo. What does it matter how you call it? You are here again with me.

*Light slowly changes. The greens
settle down, and the blues buoy up –
green earth and blue sky.*

IMELDA

The summer of 1953. Those were wonderful times, Aris.

ARISTON

Yes, they were. You made me sing.

IMELDA

“I’ll Get By, As Long As I Have You.”

ARISTON

It was a 30’s song. You sing it a lot.

IMELDA

Late 20’s.

ARISTON

You made me sing it, too.

IMELDA

And you were amazing!

ARISTON

(Sings.)

YES, THE WORLD WAS JUST AS SAD
A PLACE FOR ME AS COULD BE,
I WAS LONELY AND BLUE.
THEN, THE WORLD IS CHANGED
TO PARADISE FOR ME SUDDENLY;
WHY? BECAUSE I MET YOU.

*The ANGELS – with a ukulele, a violin, and
a xylophone – come out of the tall grass to
accompany the singing of Turk and Ahlert’s
“I’ll Get By, As Long As I Have You”.*

IMELDA

(Sings.)

ALTHOUGH WEALTH AND POWER
I MAY NEVER FIND,
STILL, AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU, DEAR
I WON’T MIND, FOR...

ARISTON and IMELDA

(Sing.)

I'LL GET BY, AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU.

NOR THERE'LL BE WHINE AND ATTITUDE,

I'LL NOT COMPLAIN

I'LL LAUGH IT THROUGH.

IMELDA

(Sings.)

POVERTY MAY COME TO ME, THAT'S TRUE

BUT WHAT CARE I?

HEY, I'LL GET BY, AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU.

*The ANGELS continue with the band's
instrumental solo.*

*IMELDA leans at ARISTON lovingly. She
touches his hair.*

ARISTON

(Sings.)

POVERTY MAY COME TO ME, THAT'S TRUE
BUT WHAT CARE I?
HEY, I'LL GET BY, AS LONG AS I HAVE YOU.

IMELDA and ARISTON

(Sing.)

AS LONG AS I... HAVE... YOU!

The ANGELS bow and exit.

IMELDA

When you said you loved me back then, did you mean you really loved me, Ariston?

ARISTON

Of course. I loved you, Meldy. More than you'll ever know. My story is not hidden from you. I was in the process of getting a divorce.

IMELDA

An annulment. There is no divorce in the Philippines.

ARISTON

It was a teenage marriage that failed immediately. I was drunk and I didn't know what I was doing. I married a complete stranger while dazed with alcohol. I never lived with that girl. I was seeking an annulment when I courted you. But we all know that it is a lengthy process in a Catholic country like ours. I wanted to marry you.

IMELDA

Oh, Aris! I knew. And I wanted to be your wife. I very much wanted to be your wife.

ARISTON

Of course, I entertained the thought that you were just using me to climb the social ladder. Like I was your key to social acceptance, the factor that would put you on par with your rich relatives and Manila's high society. You see, when we were together, I felt that you wanted so much to be accepted by Manila's rich and famous. You were not very happy just being a provincial girl. It did not matter to me that you lacked sophistication then, Meldy. It made no difference to me that you were provincial, or only a poor cousin of the rich Romualdezes.

IMELDA

You really loved me!

Suddenly, a total BLACKOUT.

ARISTON

Oh!

IMELDA

What happened? Was it because of something I said or did? Did we just have a brownout?

ARISTON

Nah! It's just an effect. My heaven, as you call it, has actually moments of total darkness. That's how I appreciate the light, and that's how I like it. But don't worry. You know what I always have with me.

IMELDA

(Naughtily.)

Oh, Aris! Something long and hard?

ARISTON

Something long... and useful.

IMELDA

(Excitedly.)

Oh, Aris. I know. It's your pen...

ARISTON turns a PENLIGHT on.

IMELDA

(Disappointedly.)

...light.

ARISTON

And I have one for you, too.

(Gives IMELDA the other PENLIGHT.)

I remembered how you liked playing with my penlight when we were together. I wanted to give you one after your trip to Baguio.

IMELDA

(Turns her PENLIGHT on.)

Thank you. You are such a Boy Scout.

ARISTON

(Aside.)

Did she just ignore my last statement?

(To IMELDA.)

I remember you always played with my penlight.

IMELDA

I don't know anyone else who carries a penlight all the time.

ARISTON

It's a security thing for me, like a security blanket? I don't know. Sometimes, I just like playing with it.

(Plays with the LIGHT in the darkness.)

It's very useful in emergencies, too.

*In the DARKNESS, they play with the
LIGHT from the PENLIGHTS.*

IMELDA

You are adorable. You're like a child. You just reminded me again why I wanted to marry you back then.

ARISTON

I must admit, like the many others who courted you, Meldy, I was first drawn to your beauty. The publicity generated by the Miss Manila controversy of 1952 put you in the limelight. It added to my curiosity about you. I found you as beautiful as I expected, if only a little bit raw. But beyond your lack of sophistication, I saw something that excited me. You impressed me as a person who would work hard to get yourself out of the rut. I

could see your strong willpower. And I loved that. I loved you. I thought you were the right woman for me. Did you really love me, Meldy?

IMELDA

I did. More than you'll ever know.

ARISTON

More than my good looks, respected name, and old wealth?

IMELDA

Yes, Aris, more than your dashing figure and money. You were wealthy, tall, handsome, and articulate. Educated abroad, you were also expressive, polished, and incisive, a real prize catch for any Filipina girl. But you also lived in an unstable emotional world, in which you periodically flipped from angelic to demonic. You were subject to dramatic mood swings and emotional fluctuations. You were difficult and temperamental. But more than that, I saw something in you that I liked. You seemed, to me, to live life more intensely than others. You were open to a wider variety of experiences than most people can handle. It was as if the colors in your palette were a little brighter, the highlights and shadows in your canvas more contrasted. I loved you. And I wanted to marry you!

ARISTON

You were so in love with me then, your eyes twinkled.

IMELDA

I adored you, Aris. You have a way of bringing out the best in others. You were kind and considerate.

ARISTON

You looked at me and you saw someone debonair, charming, and sophisticated. But inside, I was grappling with my personal demons. I was born on the day the astrologers call the day of heaven and hell. I can be so mutable. Others wonder how I can be so mutable, so adaptive to circumstances that in a short space of a few minutes, or even seconds, I can go from being logical and emotionally objective to being irrational and overwhelming to others with my intensity. You say I bring out the best in people. I bring out the worst in them, too. The problems arising in my personal life are not only stormy but sometimes destructive as well.

*Lights start to change slowly, like a sunrise;
only the colors are vibrant blues and
invigorating greens. Only the two side
panels reflect this. The center panel remains
black.*

IMELDA

You were temperamental. A Piscean, I am sure. I was born under the sign of Cancer. I was insecure. A shy crab on the beach searching for a hole to call home. I was always

assailed by personal doubts and a lack of self-confidence. But I felt safe with you. Like you were home to me. I was thinking you were the right one for me. You could have played an important role in my psychological work. You see, I had what you may call a disconnected unconscious. Early on, I knew that the key to my self-understanding was in recognizing the effect of unconscious fantasies on my emotional life and self-image. I knew I could do that with you. I trusted you. I should have paid more attention to self-examination. But it requires time and mental energy, and after marrying Marcos, he made me work until my life had been largely spent on daily concerns.

ARISTON

(Turns his PENLIGHT off.)

Since you married Marcos, you became more extroverted. You developed hysterical behaviors.

IMELDA

I wore myself down in expression of anxiety and nervous energy. Especially in the early part of our marriage. I began to have insomnia, and suffered migraines. You can't even begin to imagine how it is to be married to Ferdinand Edralin Marcos. I was a wife of a politician. Day in and day out, he kept pushing me to be other than what I was. Marcos wanted me to be sophisticated, well-read, a woman with worldly elan. He did not want a simple wife.

ARISTON

Turn your penlight off.

IMELDA

Huh?

ARISTON

The light is back.

IMELDA

(Turns her PENLIGHT off.)

It's beautiful.

ARISTON

It's always beautiful after the dark.

(Beat.)

Ferdinand took himself so seriously.

IMELDA

He was born on the day of dramatic choice, September 11. A Virgo who knew how to wield great power through the choices he made. He enjoyed shocking others. He prided himself on daring to risk, and also enjoyed recounting his exploits later.

ARISTON

And it seemed even recounting exploits not his own. Everyone believes his war medals were fraudulent. His stories about his war heroics do not hold water. Everyone is convinced he was a fake war hero.

IMELDA

Marcos was free-spirited and dramatic. He approached the status of legendary. He was imaginative and witty.

ARISTON

Like you, he hated snobbery. You hated us, the crème de la crème of society. You vowed to take revenge on our kind.

(Beat.)

Marcos was manipulative. He knew how to get his way, by whatever means. He courted and married you in eleven days.

IMELDA

I wanted to marry you, Aris. Very badly.

ARISTON

But you married Marcos instead.

IMELDA

You were not free to marry me.

ARISTON

I was working on my annulment.

IMELDA

Marcos wooed me in a whirlwind. I married him on the 11th day of our courtship. But I did call you before I decided. I called you at 2:00 in the morning, Holy Thursday of 1954.

ARISTON

I didn't see it coming. I had no clue. You said that you loved me.

IMELDA

Even on the night before I agreed to marry him, I would have rather married you, Aris. But my family was so against our relationship. Our love was doomed from the start. While carrying on with the affair with you, my family considered me as having an affair with a married man. A great shame to the family's name.

ARISTON

Your father was not only mad about our affair, he was furious.

IMELDA

The whole family was against the match. My father said that even if your marriage were annulled, I would never be more than your mistress to his sight. To my father, your Catholic marriage was a marriage even if it was annulled. Whatever followed was sequential polygamy.

ARISTON

And you were so devoted to your family that I didn't really think you would have gone with me if I asked you to.

IMELDA

You mean go away like elope?

ARISTON

I wanted to marry you, Imelda.

IMELDA

My family urged me to accept Marcos. "What else do you want?" they asked. "He's rich, still young, and a congressman as well. Accept him, Meldy," they said. Then, on Holy Thursday, while in Baguio, I placed a long distance call to you.

ARISTON

At two o'clock in the morning. From the Pines Hotel. The very same hotel where we stayed when I took you on your first trip to Baguio in the summer of 1953. What did you call me for? To get some encouragement?

IMELDA

(Starts to serve SANDWICHES from the PICNIC BASKET.)

I don't know what happened. Marcos's strategy to woo me in earnest worked. I wanted to talk to you before I answered him. But you just brushed me off.

ARISTON

(Opens COKE BOTTLES with a SWISS KNIFE.)

You never really talked to me. I sensed something was going awry but you gave no hint whatsoever that you were about to agree to marry him. I knew you went out with other men. I knew I could not and would not stop you from marrying someone else. But I expected you to be a little more straightforward with me.

IMELDA

Our future together looked uncertain. I had to take fate into my own hands. I accepted his marriage proposal. It was Good Friday, Marcos and I were driving along Burnham Park.

ARISTON

(Gives IMELDA one COKE.)

Marcos had the marriage documents in his pocket while he drove you around Burnham Park.

IMELDA

He presented the question quite bluntly, as if it were a business deal. He asked me if I didn't want to be the First Lady of the Philippines someday.

ARISTON

He was that confident.

IMELDA

I laughed nervously. I didn't know whether to take the matter seriously. But Marcos was serious. He said he meant me to be his wife. Then, he whipped the documents from his pocket, and asked if I would please sign on the dotted line.

ARISTON

(Starts to eat.)

Did you find that romantic? I thought you were the kind who would fantasize a man proposing on his knees with a diamond engagement ring.

IMELDA

I don't know what came over me. I signed the marriage contract just like that.

ARISTON

(Swallows hard.)

Just like that.

IMELDA

It's funny, but I didn't know we were already married.

(Starts to eat.)

The next day, we formalized our marriage before a judge in Trinidad Valley. The marriage contract was already in Ferdinand's pocket.

ARISTON

So the ceremony at the judge's home was merely a ritual?

IMELDA

(Swallows hard.)

What do you mean?

ARISTON

The marriage contract was already in his pocket. You signed the deal on Good Friday.

Why did you need the judge?

IMELDA

Before I could have second thoughts about the abrupt marriage, Marcos said to me, “Never mind how fast it happened. We have our whole lives to be happy together.”

*ARISTON stands up and starts to walk
away.*

IMELDA

(Goes after ARISTON.)

I found that I could not say no to him. I did not really know anything about him except that he was a brilliant congressman. But then, that is how marriage is, sometimes. It comes like death, sudden and unexpected.

ARISTON faces IMELDA.

He gave me a wedding band of white gold set with eleven diamonds, one for each day of the courtship.

ARISTON

Did you love Marcos?

IMELDA

I did.

ARISTON

Did you love Ferdinand Marcos?

IMELDA

I did.

ARISTON

Did you love Ferdinand Edralin Marcos?

IMELDA

I did! I did! I did!

(Breaks down.)

I know what you are thinking. You are thinking, if I really loved you, then why did I marry him instead. You are thinking, if Marcos can woo and marry me in eleven days, then maybe I wasn't just a poor country girl who was no match for the predatory skills of a hard-boiled politician determined to catch his prey. You are thinking, I was a willing, even active, prey, determined to be caught.

ARISTON

(Aside.)

If the shoe fits...

IMELDA

I loved Marcos in a way different from how I loved you, Aris. You and I, our love was different. Perhaps, ours could have been perfect. But fate was not on our side. I loved Marcos, and don't you dare question that. I bore him three children. I gave up my own personal dreams for him. All I ever wanted, all I ever dreamed for was a small house with a picket fence by the sea.

ARISTON

A small house with a picket fence by the sea. That's our dream. That's the dream you shared with me. You spoke of the sea in Tolosa, Leyte. After about a year of our courtship, somehow, I did design a house for us. A small house with a picket fence by the sea.

IMELDA

Aris...

ARISTON

I even made a miniature model. I was ready to show it to you when you came back from Baguio. Then, I learned from the newspapers about your marriage to Marcos. I was hurt. I burned the designs and model immediately. I had also bought a special penlight for you. I had it wrapped beautifully. When I learned of your whirlwind romance with Marcos, I said, "Well, you can dive for it in the Manila Bay."

IMELDA

Aris, I did not know. I'm sorry. I did not know.

ARISTON

Marrying Marcos changed you. For better, or for worse. You shared with him everything in sickness and in health, for richer and richer, until death did you part. That must have been love.

IMELDA

Yes, I loved him.

ARISTON

(Hesitates.)

Where you...

IMELDA

What?

ARISTON

Maybe I should not ask.

IMELDA

What is it that you wanted to know?

ARISTON

I am just curious.

IMELDA

What about?

ARISTON

About you and Marcos.

IMELDA

Ask.

ARISTON

I mean, Marcos was a womanizer. You were not the only woman in his life.

IMELDA

I know that.

ARISTON

Well, did you...

IMELDA

Did I what?

ARISTON

You know... I mean, he was a philandering husband. But did you... were you...?

IMELDA

You wanted to know if I was faithful to him?

ARISTON

He said that you had “virginites.” That’s how he justified his philandering. Still, there were rumors about you and your American friends.

IMELDA

About George and I?

ARISTON

Yes. After the People Power in EDSA, people played a pun to the Ninoy Aquino movement slogan “Hindi ka nag-iisa!”

IMELDA

Hindi ka nag-iisa. You are not alone. Yes, I think I saw those T-shirts. In front, they printed the face of Marcos and the slogan “Hindi ka nag-iisa!” Then, at the back, they printed the picture of George Hamilton.

ARISTON

But what was the real score?

IMELDA

I can't believe that you'd be curious about these things. Of all things!

ARISTON

As I said, it's just curiosity.

IMELDA

There was nothing between George and me. I just liked him. He reminded me so much of you. He was about your height, and you know how I admire tall men. And he dressed well like you did. He also lived life with a passion.

ARISTON

I can imagine.

IMELDA

You and George, you were fun to be with. I smoked pot with George, if you must know.

ARISTON

One of your maids squealed that she saw you and George in bed.

IMELDA

I told you, I smoked pot with George. Yes, once we were so wasted we just crashed on the same bed in my New York apartment.

ARISTON

So, you never had sexual relations with George Hamilton?

IMELDA

Never.

ARISTON

What about Qaddafi?

IMELDA

(Laughs.)

Qaddafi? He's gay!

ARISTON

You think so?

IMELDA

I think so.

ARISTON

What about you?

IMELDA

What about me?

ARISTON

Well, it seems that you are not having fun with men. I mean, Marcos was sick for a long time, and you even had separate bedrooms at Malacañang. Then, you and George, your most important friend, are just friends. And you think Qaddafi is gay. And there were rumors...

IMELDA

That I am a lesbian who carried on an affair with Christina Ford?

ARISTON

Yes. Rumors went around.

IMELDA

I was very fond of Christina. But we were just friends. I don't know how she felt about me. But I can assure you that I had no sexual interest, no sexual attraction to her. You know me better than that, Aris.

ARISTON

I had to ask. I was...

(Makes quotation marks in the air.)

...*dying* of curiosity.

IMELDA

Aren't we dead yet?

THEY both laugh.

I'm so glad you asked. That's one other thing that I missed most about you, Aris. You pretend to be shy asking about the most personal of things. And you ask them anyway. You make me feel that you are genuinely interested in knowing me.

ARISTON

I am.

IMELDA

That's why I have been most honest with you. I trusted you with my life's secrets even way back in 1953.

ARISTON

I felt that. I saw that.

IMELDA

I felt that I could really trust you.

ARISTON

Really?

IMELDA

Really.

ARISTON

In that case, will you tell me who really killed Ninoy Aquino?

IMELDA

Do you really want me to answer that?

ARISTON

(Thinks a little, then shakes his head.)

You know what, it doesn't really matter to me. I think that we have a wonderful connection, Meldy. You and I, we are kindred spirits. Kindred souls. We connect at a very deep level. So deep that I sort of know the answer to the question. I'm glad to have seen you again, Meldy. I'm so happy that I was able to talk to you again.

IMELDA

I feel the same way, Aris. Oh, how my life would have turned out so differently if I had married you!

ARISTON

(Puts his finger on her lips to quiet her.)

Shhhh... Let's not pollute my heaven with regrets. I want to remember you this way. I want our friendship to last for eternity. I now have my heavenly peace. I hope you will find yours, too.

(Beat.)

I have one final request.

IMELDA

What?

ARISTON

Sing me our song.

IMELDA

Our song?

ARISTON

(Nods.)

Our song. Our secret love song. The song you sang to me in Baguio when I was delirious with fever and couldn't sleep. The song that you whispered in my ear. The song of our romance in the summer of 1953 when you were 23 and I was 28, and we were so much in love.

IMELDA

I sang this song all my life, Aris. I sang it to the crowds. In political rallies, and in private parties. I sang it to Marcos. I even sang it on our final day in the Malacañang. Just before we boarded the American choppers that took us to Guam. But all the time, in my heart, I sang it to you. Because, secretly, I loved you most of all.

In the black middle panel, TINY BLUE

LIGHTS, like stars, begin to shine.

ARISTON

I loved you, too, Meldy.

IMELDA

This one's for you, Aris.

(Sings.)

DAHIL SA 'YO, NAIS KONG MABUHAY

DAHIL SA 'YO, HANGGANG MAMATAY

KUNG TUNAY MAN AKO AY ALIPININ MO

ANG LAHAT SA BUHAY KO'Y DAHIL SA 'YO

*TINY BLUE LIGHTS also start to twinkle in
the two side panels that begin to DARKEN.*

DAHIL SA 'YO, AKO'Y LUMIGAYA

PAGMAMAHAL AY ALAYAN KA

DAPAT MONG TANTUIN, WALA NG IBANG GILIW

PUSO KO'Y TANUNGIN, IKAW AT IKAW RIN

*In total DARKNESS now, only the BLUE
TINY LIGHTS sparkle and twinkle like a
million stars on a clear night sky.*

DAHIL SA 'YO, AKO'Y LUMIGAYA
PAGMAMAHAL AY ALAYAN KA
KUNG TUNAY MAN AKO AY ALIPININ MO
ANG LAHAT SA BUHAY KO'Y DAHIL SA 'YO.

[Translation.

Because of you, I want to live
Because of you, until I die
If it were true, you would enslave me
All of this is because of you
Because of you, I attained happiness
I offer you my love
You must know, I cherish no other
Quiz my heart, it's you and only you
Because of you, I attained happiness
I offer you my love
If it were true, you would enslave me
All of this is because of you.]

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT THREE.

INTRA'CTE / SECOND PROLOGUE

IMELDA under the SPOTLIGHT.

IMELDA

On my 77th birthday – look, that's Marcos's lucky number repeating itself – a Filipino playwright approached me and asked if he could write a play about me. I said no. Because all these stories and films about me further the myth that I am a crazy woman. They all paint me as ridiculous, a laughingstock for all the world to see. I guess how I will be remembered in history depends so much on who is asked. For sure, I will be remembered for my great beauty. Some actually called it legendary. And I have my own personal charm so that even my enemies, given some time with me, in the end, cannot hate me forever. I'm sure people will remember that I put the Philippines on the map. For better or for worse, I have put the country in the limelight.

And then, there are those who will remember me as the Steel Butterfly. The Dragon Lady. The half of the infamous conjugal dictatorship who looted the Philippines. They will blame me for everything. Even for Marcos. They forgot that the New York courts found me innocent of the looting charges against me in 1989. What they said was that if Marcos were alive in 1989, he would have been found guilty. But they could not pin anything down on me. They could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that I was, in any way, part of what my husband did. It is true, I am not an innocent woman. I have my own faults. But I wish people would remember me for the good things that I did. For the Cultural Center, at least. For the kidney center, the heart center, and the other medical

centers. For my years as Governor of Manila, and my work in the Ministry of Human Settlements. I did some good things for the poor. Even if some people dismiss my efforts as just some kind of Hollywood press release.

Of late, I have considered giving my permission to the Filipino playwright to write about my life. But I wonder, which actress would be able to play me with sensitivity? Which actress would portray me with true empathy and not just for laughs? I've been played by Gloria Romero before, but although she's a great actress, she's a little too old now.

Definitely, not Tessie Tomas. She is too much of a comedienne.

I am worried about who will play me because even as an octogenarian, I still have many self-doubts and an inferiority complex. Who am I really? Beyond the image of the First Lady? Beyond Steel Butterfly? Beyond the Shoe Lady? Beyond comparisons to Eva Peron, Jacqueline Kennedy, or Norma Desmond? I think I lost my heart somewhere. I looked for it everywhere. Under my bed, inside my closets, in my drawers. God, I hope my heart is in some cupboard, or some shoebox that I can open. I wish I could find my heart again.

Who am I really? Nobody knows me. How can anyone know me? I transform myself to suit the situation. I've done so to survive. I am a great actress. I've changed so much I don't know who I am anymore. Who am I? Nobody really knows me.

There's a reason why I'm tempted to give in to the playwright's offer. If a Filipino playwright can help me find my heart, then maybe, it will be worth it. If he can put my throbbing heart on the page for all the world to see, if he can throw my heart onstage and make it pulsate under the spotlight, then maybe everything would be worth it. Still, I worry who would play me. I mean, I have played myself for over eighty years now, and

still I am not sure what, or who, I am. So, good luck to the playwright, and to whomever plays the greatest actress of them all.

BLACKOUT.

ACT FOUR

SETTING: *Marcos's heaven is an abandoned street with an eternal sunset suffused with golden light and intense YELLOW that speak of decay. The yellow, like the yellow cabs of New York or the traffic light, are visually aggressive that come to us like a cautionary clue, a warning like the yellow of venomous reptiles and amphibians. Unlike light and de-saturated yellow associated with a sunny and cheerful disposition, Marcos's all-yellow environment is anxiety-producing because it is very hard on the eyes. It is stressful; and in its presence, one is more apt to lose one's temper.*

AT RISE: *The BACKGROUND is an evocation of a perpetual sunset with lots of obsessive and oppressive yellows. CENTERSTAGE, and extending towards the right, is a WHITE INCLINE, a "street to nowhere" – a dead end, reaching a height of about six feet. There is a MURAL on the side of the incline facing the audience; it depicts Imelda Marcos as the Minister of Human Settlements in the center, with the pictorial representations of the programs of the ministry radiating from her.*

There are STREETLIGHTS, on WHITE LAMPPOSTS, emitting a fierce poisonous YELLOW-GREEN LUMINOSITY along the incline. IMELDA, now dressed in a matching ORANGE BLOUSE and CAPRI PANTS, is cleaning up the PICNIC SET at DOWNSTAGE LEFT. (Although the props

are the same, this is not the same place as in the end of Act Three.) She puts back the BOTTLES and LEFT-OVERS in the BASKET and starts to fold the PICNIC BLANKET.

FERDINAND, young and healthy, in his characteristic pomaded and parted hairdo, dressed in a dark BLUE HAWIIAN SHIRT WITH ORANGE PRINTS, and matching pair of BLUE SURFING SHORTS, enters riding a YELLOW BICYCLE. He hits the brakes just inches from IMELDA.

IMELDA

Watch it! Are you trying to kill me?

FERDINAND

Meldy, at last! Oh, you don't know how glad I am to see you again.

IMELDA

I knew it was just a matter of time until I saw you again. I was quite sure I'd bump into you either in heaven or in hell.

FERDINAND

You sound piqued. Are you mad at me?

IMELDA

Damn right, I am mad at you!

FERDINAND

What's wrong? What did I do now?

IMELDA

Everything. Everything went wrong!

FERDINAND

What are you talking about? Didn't I give you enough power and money to fix anything that could possibly go wrong? You've got everything you needed.

*IMELDA gets up, and starts to walk away
from FERDINAND.*

IMELDA

The hell you did.

*FERDINAND follows her riding his
BICYCLE.*

FERDINAND

Don't I get a kiss?

IMELDA

You can kiss my ass!

FERDINAND

(Naughtily.)

Ohhh! I'd love that.

(Laughs.)

You know I would.

IMELDA

How can you be so flippant?

FERDINAND

What do you want me to be? You want me to be *dead* serious? I am in *my* heaven. And so are you! Guess what, you are just a guest here. A passing guest. I wouldn't want to be stuck with you for all eternity.

IMELDA

That's nice to know, Ferdinand. Because I don't want to be stuck with you for eternity either.

FERDINAND

Okay. Now, with that out of the way, may I know what's eating you? What are you mad at me about? Didn't I give everything that I promised you before we got married? I'd like to think I had given you more than what you've bargained for. More than ten times over. I gave you more than you ever dreamed of. Power. Fame. Wealth. Recognition. And everything that money could buy. Where did I go wrong?

IMELDA

You made me believe it would be forever.

FERDINAND

I bought you nobility and magnificence. I gave your little humdrum life some sense of purpose and direction.

IMELDA

(Paces around.)

I had a simple dream: a simple house on the beach, a husband who loves me, and a family to care for.

FERDINAND

(Gets off the BICYCLE and drags it along as he follows IMELDA.)

You dreamed of a house on the beach. I gave you at least three palaces: the whimsical Coconut Palace, the dreamy Palace in the Sky, and the proud 54-bedroom Malacañang Palace, all of which you refurbished and redesigned ostentatiously. I even built you your own shrine in Leyte. And that's not counting our palatial properties abroad which you decorated with mad opulence and ostentatious extravagance. Meldy, if the Taj Mahal wasn't the Taj Mahal, I would have built it for you.

IMELDA

You promised me it would be forever.

FERDINAND

Meldy, we had money we could not exhaust in five lifetimes. Isn't that forever enough for you?

IMELDA is silent.

Although humble in origins, we lived like royalty from Day One of my presidency.

Although the Philippines is a democracy, we lived like kings and queens. We rewrote our histories. We erased our shameful past. We were almost like gods. We just said the word, and it was created. You say, CCP, and it is built. You say, Tiffany, and it closes so you

can shop undisturbed. You say an enemy's name, and they disappear. That's what we were in power for.

IMELDA

You made me believe it would be forever.

FERDINAND

What are you complaining about? After all, you had a lot more fun with the money than I. I died rather too soon. Thanks to my kidneys failing me, and lupus eating me away.

IMELDA

You died and left me alone.

FERDINAND

It's not like I left you a poor widow. I left you *all* my money!

IMELDA

You left me lost and defeated. Defenseless. Humiliated and ridiculed by the world.

FERDINAND

You were not exactly an innocent provincial girl from Leyte when I left you, you know. You were your own woman. More powerful than anyone I knew. Perhaps even more powerful than me in the final analysis. I knew I was part of your strength. But in the end,

you were more part of my strength. You are a strong woman, Meldy. Stronger and tougher than most. You are a first-rate femme fatale. So tender and feminine, yet so strong and cunning.

IMELDA

You turned me into a monster!

FERDINAND

Did I?

(Smirks.)

You were not exactly an innocent provincial girl from Leyte when I met you, you know. Even in your youth, you were ever so ambitious, ever so cunning, so calculating. I tutored you, yes. I even groomed you to be my successor. I accept responsibility for transforming you into someone more sophisticated, more incisive, more world-wise. I was Pygmalion to your Galatea. Professor Higgins to your Eliza. But your strong will is yours. In everything I did, you were a willing participant. An ardent pupil eager to please her master.

IMELDA starts a slow ascent on the inclined street, FERDINAND follows.

I did not plant the seed of greed in you. It was something you nurtured. Perhaps because of your impoverished childhood. You hated your original poverty. You badly wanted to

get out of the rut. You swore that you would never go hungry again, even if you had to beg, lie, steal, or kill. For all my genius, it was not in my power to create a steel butterfly, Meldy. That was your own personal creation. It was a decision you made once you swore vengeance for your childhood poverty. You cannot blame that on me.

IMELDA

That's not true. I sacrificed for you, Ferdinand.

FERDINAND

And you were amply rewarded.

IMELDA

I sacrificed for you. In sharing your dream, I've forsaken mine. I only dreamed of a simple house on the beach, and a husband to anchor my life. Yes, I wanted someone who would give me some comfort and take me out of the rut. But you...

FERDINAND

Me! I gave you the Malacañang, and more! Now what part of the deal did you not understand? What did I do to you that you did not agree? What did I make you do that you did unknowingly or unwillingly?

IMELDA

You turned me into a machine. You called me your secret weapon. A political asset. You made me your major campaigner, your crowd drawer, your vote getter. You made me sing to solicit votes in the barrios. You made me shake dirty people's hands.

FERDINAND

What's wrong with that? You benefitted greatly once we were in power. You got more than just ample rewards. You shared the throne and more than half of the empire. You had power, fame, recognition, wealth, and everything that your heart desired. How can that be a bad thing?

IMELDA

There was nothing wrong with it except that it went against my very nature. I knew there were some demands for a wife of a congressman who dreams to be a president. But those early years, they wrecked my nerves. There were people coming and going in the house before the cocks crowed at dawn. From sunrise to sundown, there were strangers in the house. I was shy and you made me meet all those people. I was terrified of the crowds and you made me deal with your supporters. You made me work them up as if I were a prostitute – entertain them, woo them, seduce them, be nice to them.

FERDINAND

(Stops following IMELDA.)

You were a politician's wife!

(Lays his BICYCLE down, and sits on the sidewalk.)

And you, shy?

(Snorts.)

Come on, Meldy. You wasted no time grabbing the microphone to sing at the parties we hosted even if the guests had rather just had a good time. You so liked to show off your voice that our parties would end up with karaoke singing until four or five o'clock in the morning. In the campaign trails, you sang with gusto. You always sang that love song, "Dahil Sa 'Yo".

(Sings.)

DAHIL SA 'YO, NAIS KONG MABUHAY

DAHIL SA 'YO, HANGGANG MAMATAY

KUNG TUNAY MAN AKO AY ALIPININ MO

ANG LAHAT SA BUHAY KO'Y DAHIL SA 'YO.

IMELDA

(Realizes FERDINAND is not following her anymore.)

Are you mocking me?

FERDINAND

Of course not. I just wanted to sing. It's been a while since I heard my own voice singing. You'd think heaven would be an eternity of choir singing. It is not. Anyway, as you were saying?

IMELDA

(Joins FERDINAND on the sidewalk.)

True, I have some talent for singing. My teachers even thought I could have been a good soprano. But before you made me your political weapon, I was very shy and nervous around people.

FERDINAND

Oh, please, Meldy. You are anything but shy. Hello! Didn't you sing to American G.I.'s for chocolate bars and cans of Spam? Didn't you say you sang for MacArthur, too? You even bragged that Irving Berlin liked your voice so much in 1944 that he wrote a song especially for you to sing for the Liberation Day celebrations.

IMELDA

He did. It was called "Heaven Watch the Philippines".

(Sings in a faster tempo, like she's just trying to remember the lyrics.)

HEAVEN WATCH THE PHILIPPINES

KEEP HER SAFE FROM... *(Remembers the word.)* HARM

GUIDE HER SONS AND HER PRECIOUS ONES

IN THE CITY... (*Remembers the words.*) AND ON THE FARMS
FRIENDLY WITH AMERICA
AND WILL ALWAYS BE
HEAVEN WATCH THE PHILIPPINES
AND KEEP HER FOREVER FREE...
AND KEEP HER FOREVER FREE.

FERDINAND

(*Shakes his head.*)

If you were shy, Meldy, your shyness veered on boldness and daring. To cite another example, didn't you boldly go to Mayor Arsenio Lacson unescorted to plead your case regarding the Miss Manila title in 1952? Rumors abounded that you used more than just tears to convince that playboy mayor to get your way. People even questioned Imee's paternity because of that. They said our daughter had the mayor's pointed chin. Lacson was known to have a way with girls.

IMELDA

You know better than that.

FERDINAND

If the shoe fits... That's what they say.

(*Beat.*)

And what exactly do I know, Meldy?

(Beat.)

Anyway, Lacson couldn't overturn the judges' decision so he created a title especially for you. He appointed you, Imelda Romualdez, to be the first and only Muse of Manila.

Never before, and never since, has there been another Muse of Manila. I wonder what it takes to make a mayor do that.

IMELDA

Don't you dare use the Lacson argument against me!

(Stands up.)

You asked me to use the same strategy to convince Fernando Lopez to run as your vice president in 1965!

FERDINAND

I'm not saying that whatever you did was wrong, Meldy. I always believed that the end justifies the means. We both liked Scarlett O'Hara in "Gone with the Wind" when she said,

(Tries to do a Vivian Leigh.)

"If I have to beg, lie, steal, or kill, then, God be my witness, I will never go hungry again."

(Normal voice.)

I'm just saying that, frankly, my dear, you aren't shy at all. You may have some self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy – no doubt caused by your impoverished childhood, but

shy you are not. You are a very sociable person, Meldy. A social animal. After your initial nervous breakdown, you even became a true political animal.

IMELDA

(Walks towards the higher end of the dead-end street.)

The psychiatrist in New York told you that I could not take the stress of being married to a politician. Of being around so many people all the time. After all, I grew up in a family that is almost cloistered.

FERDINAND

So I said, if it will make you well, I'd quit politics immediately.

IMELDA

When I heard that, I was touched. I thought, if this man can give up his ultimate ambition to become President of the Republic of the Philippines for my sake, why can't I give something back? Wasn't it better that it was I who the other people go to to get help rather than me going around begging for assistance?

FERDINAND

You realized you just needed a change of attitude. After that, you were like fish thrown into the water. You'd go to the neglected, far-flung barrios to sing and get votes. And you learned to love the attention. You loved it so much that it became your new sickness. You liked flaunting yourself. You showed off your beauty and singing talents. And later, those

shoes, gowns, jewelry, buildings, and edifices. I'd say that you would die if you were not in the limelight, Meldy. You would wither and perish if people stopped paying attention to you.

IMELDA

I don't want any of the people's attention now. I am tired. They made me a laughingstock of the world. They coined the word "Imeldific" to mean ostentatious extravagance, flamboyant excessiveness; and they put it in the dictionary. In crossword puzzles, the answer to "Shoe lady" is Imelda Marcos.

FERDINAND

Cheer up, Meldy. Don't you see? You have attained immortality. I promised you eternal fame, and you achieved it on your own. You are now a dictionary entry.

IMELDA

We are also in the Guinness Book of World Records... as the biggest thieves of the world. Is that something to be proud of? Because of you, people make fun of me. They think I'm crazy.

FERDINAND

(Gets up, and approaches IMELDA.)

Don't you think it's rather unfair to blame everything on me, Meldy? After all, you were my accomplice in everything I did. And I did everything, believe it or not, for you. Because I love you. Because I gave you a promise. I made a deal with you. When I asked you to marry me, I promised you that you would be First Lady of the Philippines. I promised to give you anything you wanted, and everything that you could ever want. You wanted fame, I gave it to you. You wanted power, I shared it with you. You wanted money, I left you millions and millions to last you five, maybe ten, lifetimes. But your shoes are your shoes.

IMELDA

Don't you dare start with my shoes.

FERDINAND

I don't know. But they puzzle me, too. How can you have so many shoes? My dear Meldy, your three thousand pairs is more popular than Cinderella's glass slippers. Or dear Dorothy's ruby red shoes. And you are even more famous than Mother Goose's old lady who lived in a shoe. In New York, shoe stores have posters declaring "There is a little Imelda in each one of us." Your shoes are a stuff of legend. They have become a metaphor for something worse than greed.

IMELDA

I only had 1,060 pairs!

FERDINAND

My count includes the ones made in Marikina, and those you ordered from the house of Ferragamo in Italy. I know that I said I'll leave your shoes off the table if you leave me alone with my personal vices. Still, I wonder what got into you to collect all those thousands of shoes. Was it to make up for your childhood deprivation? I knew that you were only given a pair of shoes and two new dresses a year when you were growing up. I also knew you used to go around the house barefooted before I married you. And wasn't it true that in your provincial upbringing, shoes were to be preserved from wear and tear and worn only on special occasions?

IMELDA

You will never understand a woman. A working man can live with three pairs of shoes: a pair of white sneakers, a pair of brown casual leather shoes or sandals, and a pair of black formal. But women, we have to have shoes to match our every dress, our every purse, our every hairdo, our every mood. If an ordinary office girl in Makati has at least twenty pairs, why shouldn't I have more? I represented you and our country. If a movie star has at least a hundred pairs, why shouldn't I have more? Didn't you ask me to give our people some star quality? Didn't you want me to give them a Hollywood dream? How can I be dazzling if I was wearing rags and the same pair of shoes over and over again?

FERDINAND

But three thousand pairs?

IMELDA

I said I had 1,060! Why do you keep picking on my shoes? Some people collect stamps. Some people collect friends. Some men collect women!

(Realizes something.)

What the hell? You're dead! And I am in your heaven, not knowing for sure whether I am dead or dreaming so let us not try to be civil to each other. Let's lay all our cards out on the table.

FERDINAND

This is not how I wanted you in my heaven.

IMELDA

So kiss my ass! You don't have a choice now. I am here, and it seems you have to deal with me.

Light change to a shade of cautionary

yellow.

FERDINAND

I can deal with you all right. Do you know that I can push you off the edge from here?

IMELDA

What is down there?

FERDINAND

Do you want to find out?

IMELDA

Of course not! Do you plan to push me off?

FERDINAND

I'm the fourth man you met since you got here, right? Maybe I can do something so you won't have to meet the fifth.

IMELDA

(Moves away from the edge, and from FERDINAND.)

Stop! You are scaring me.

*More dramatic light change, something
sinister like yellow-green. The
STREETLIGHTS emit an extra wicked glow.*

*FERDINAND laughs diabolically, lunges,
and grabs IMELDA by the waist.*

IMELDA

(Fights FERDINAND off.)

Let go of me. What are you doing?

FERDINAND

(Villainously.)

This is my heaven, Meldy. I can do what I want.

(Laughs terrifyingly.)

And that includes getting rid of you.

IMELDA

(Suddenly scared.)

No! Let me go! Let me go!

*FERDINAND laughs more loudly. It is a
scary, sinister, crazy man's laughter. He
drags IMELDA towards the edge.*

IMELDA

(With fear.)

Please, Ferdinand. Don't do this to me.

More struggle as FERDINAND tries to push IMELDA off the edge, and IMELDA tries to break free from FERDINAND's hold.

You son of a bitch. Let me go! Let me go!

More struggle until IMELDA finally breaks free. She runs away from FERDINAND and the edge.

FERDINAND

(Runs after IMELDA.)

Hey, where are you going?

IMELDA

Anywhere but near you. You sicko.

FERDINAND

Oh, Meldy. Come on. I was just joking. Did you think I'd really push you off?

IMELDA

Joke, my ass! You just tried to kill me.

FERDINAND

Come on, I was just joking. Why would I try to kill you? I was just trying to have fun. I'm just happy to see you again. It's been a long while since we had fun together. And it gets boring here in the afterlife. I just wanted some action. Heaven can be all talk, you know.

IMELDA

You mean you did not really intend to push me off the edge?

FERDINAND

Of course not, silly! I'm stuck with you for a while. And you're stuck with me. That's the deal.

IMELDA

So it is true? You have no choice but to deal with me while I am here?

FERDINAND

Where else can I go?

IMELDA

It's like being married again, huh?

FERDINAND

Who was it again who said that hell is the eternity of a Catholic marriage gone sour? He must have previewed something like this.

IMELDA

I don't know. I leave the famous quotes to you. I only know that I loved you, Ferdinand. I shared your dreams. I gave up my simple dreams to live out your wild fantasies.

FERDINAND

Oh, come on, Meldy. Do we have to do this again?

(Aside.)

Why do women always nag? Imelda can be such a broken record.

IMELDA

I gave up my simple dreams to live out your wild fantasies. But you screwed it up. Don't you think that I didn't know about your philandering. Dovie Beams pushed me to the edge. But first there was Carmen Ortega.

FERDINAND

I didn't lie to you about Carmen.

IMELDA

You didn't tell me about her before you married me either!

FERDINAND

What can I do? I had three children with her.

IMELDA

Three before you married me. Then, one *after* we got married.

FERDINAND

Carmen was from a long time ago. Like you, she was also from a beauty contest. She asked me to sponsor her in a contest for Miss Press Photography in 1950. And that's how it got started.

IMELDA

(Starts going down the street.)

She became your full-time mistress and moved into the house you shared with your mother.

FERDINAND

(Follows IMELDA.)

I liked her a lot. She's also an Ilocano. But I figured that she wasn't much help to get me into Malacañang. Her family had some political clout, but only around their home in La Union where I already had a solid base. She was not politically valuable as a wife. But you were. You came from a family of lawyers and politicians. In the Visayas region, the Romualdezes controlled at least a million votes. Your name had national recognition. And although you may have been a poor relative to the Romualdezes in Manila, your name had a certain respectability. I saw it as my key to social acceptance. You see, I tried to make it on my own via politics but people gave me a hard time. Like you, they considered me a provincial upstart.

IMELDA

So, what did that make of me? Your political mistress?

FERDINAND

Wife. Political wife.

IMELDA

Carmen was your common law wife. Your mother thought so until she died. Your mother didn't really like me. She always thought of Carmen as *the* Mrs. Marcos.

FERDINAND

It was you whom I married in church. May 1, 1954. It was a beautiful wedding, Meldy.

You wore a white satin gown with nylon tulle.

IMELDA

(Dreamily.)

It had a wide skirt covered with leaves in nacre sequins, seed pearls and rhinestones. The sleeves were of satin and traced in chenille. The wisteria motif was repeated on the panels of the billowing skirt and the gloves. A long satin train trailed at the back. A veil of illusion tulle was held in place by a small coronet with white feathers covering my ears and framing my face.

FERDINAND

It was the best that money could buy for a rich congressman's bride. The press drooled over your dress. A dream ensemble of satin and nylon, they called it.

IMELDA

Yes, it was a wonderful wedding. But back then, I did not know that it was designed to mark your debut as a presidential contender.

FERDINAND

President Ramon Magsaysay was our principal sponsor. He hosted the reception at the Malacañang Palace. There were about a thousand guests, mostly members of Congress, cabinet officials, and a sprinkling of notable society figures.

IMELDA

The wedding cake was in the shape of the Philippine House of Congress. A nice 3-foot by 3-foot replica, as if to confirm my role as your political wife. It was a dream wedding. A great show. A successful *palabas*. Then, I woke up to a nightmare.

(Beat.)

When I learned about Carmen, I mustered all my courage and went to see her. She had just become pregnant with your fourth child. I fell on my knees begging her to stop seeing you. I told her that it was breaking up our marriage and ruining my happiness. Her response was devastating to me. She said that leaving you to me would mean ruining *her* happiness.

FERDINAND

Carmen loved me. And yes, I loved her, too. But love is not enough for me. I had big dreams. And I knew your Romualdez name would help me.

IMELDA

You were an obsessively driven man. You could never be content with what you have, or what you had.

FERDINAND

Look who's talking.

IMELDA

(Paces around.)

No. If I became more like you, it was because that's how you wanted me to be. In the beginning, I was repelled by your wastefulness and extravagance. I was unprepared for your posh lifestyle. My beliefs and attitudes had been shaped by my simple life in Tacloban, by my father, and the nuns at the Holy Infant Academy. But you kept pushing me to be other than what I was – to be sophisticated, well-read, a woman with worldly élan. You wanted me to act like a Romualdez, an aristocrat, and most of all, a prized political asset.

FERDINAND

(Follows IMELDA around.)

We were perfect together. We were a team. A love team like in the soap operas, and the Filipino people bought it. They loved it. Somehow, we were happy. Even if I knew that I wasn't the big love of your life either.

IMELDA

Damn right, you were not! But I married you. You don't understand women. Sometimes, we marry the man who promises us love and security more than the man we love the most. It's a feminine survival instinct.

FERDINAND

(Stops following IMELDA, starts pacing around.)

So, it was Ariston Nakpil all the while?

IMELDA

(Follows FERDINAND around.)

When I married you, I tried to forget Ariston. I couldn't. Yet I suffered my love in silence. I was a proper wife to you. I tried to be perfect. I taught myself to love you. I kept telling myself, "How can you not love a man who gives you everything that you ever wanted? Who shares his big dreams with you?"

FERDINAND

So, you did love me.

IMELDA

Damn it, yes! You'd have to be blind not to see it. I loved you.

FERDINAND

Really?

IMELDA

Married people learn to love. Sometimes slowly, but they learn. I'm a good learner. I'm a fast learner. So, there. I loved you! Maybe more than I should have.

FERDINAND

Married people learn to love. I loved you, too, Meldy!

IMELDA

Every day, I taught myself to love you. I suffered a nervous breakdown as you molded me into a perfect political wife. But I persevered. I had troubles adjusting to the crowds of your supporters. But I learned. I studied the books you wanted me to so that I did not come across as dumb and stupid in front of your friends and colleagues. I crammed lessons of Geography, Politics, History, Economics, and Culture into my brain. I memorized the names of mayors and governors down to their barangay captains so you could strengthen your political base. I memorized the names of their wives, their birthdays, their children, and even the names of their pet dogs. I tried to be your perfect political wife.

FERDINAND

And you were amazing. Your campaigning was something the country had never seen before. Unlike the wives of my colleagues and opponents, you travelled far and wide to get the votes. You flew by air, travelled by boats and small bancas to remote islands. You rode jeepneys, trucks, tricycles, just to make sure we got every single vote. When they requested you to sing, you obliged. And you delivered the votes.

IMELDA

(Charts her own pacing.)

More than that, I kept my silence regarding your womanizing. You would go to Carmen, and I would cry myself to sleep in the middle of the night. But I remained strong for the sake of our three children. I endured your unfaithfulness because, in a way, I really learned to love you. I told myself, for as long as you were discreet, I didn't care if you bed all the beauty queens and international beauty contestants, all the beautiful movie stars and young movie actresses in the Philippine cinema, and all the prominent young society matrons who caught your fancy. I could even forgive you for setting up a house for Carmen. But Dovie Beams and her incontrovertible public evidence was the last straw.

FERDINAND

She meant nothing to me. She was just one of the many.

IMELDA

Well, she screwed you big time. As I said, I could bear your womanizing as long as you were discreet. But I could not stand a scandal. I could not bear the humiliation. It was more than I could endure.

FERDINAND

And you punished me for it.

IMELDA

Trust a woman to make a mountain of a molehill. Give me a sperm, and I will deliver you a child. Give me groceries, and I will prepare you a meal. Give me a house, and I will make you a home. Give me crap, and I will give you tons of shit.

FERDINAND

Dovie Beams was a troubled soul, a plain adventuress in search of fortune, romance, and kicks. She was a latter day Mata Hari, or maybe a pitiful psychiatric case who belonged in an asylum.

IMELDA

And you were a wild goat. You did not have any vices at all except for women. You didn't smoke, you didn't drink. But you liked American blondes.

FERDINAND

Dovie Beams changed our marriage.

IMELDA

And our politics.

(Faces FERDINAND.)

All I wanted from you, Ferdinand, was respect. I wanted you to see me as me and love me for it. But no, back in those days, you just saw me as a political weapon. Then, you

made *the* fatal mistake. You were careless with your affair with Dovie Beams. She would have caused me another nervous breakdown. But I made myself strong.

FERDINAND

You used Dovie Beams as leverage to get more power.

IMELDA

(Looks away from FERDINAND.)

If I was to endure the hell of being stuck with you forever, I might as well use our marriage to get the best of it.

FERDINAND

You threatened to leave me unless I shared power with you.

IMELDA

(Goes towards the MURAL.)

I learned what I did not realize when I married you. I came to know that I was worth a great deal to your political ambition.

FERDINAND

More than just a First Lady, I made you a diplomat. You liked seeing the world, I sent you on travel junkets. You liked attention, I let you meet world leaders. Chairman Mao,

King Hassan, Muammar Qaddafi, Sadam Hussien, Fidel Castro. You wanted to have control and authority, I made you Minister of Human Settlements with vast powers.

IMELDA

(Leans on the MURAL.)

I personally did something for the poor. Water, power, food, clothing, shelter, medical services, education, ecological balance, sports, recreation, livelihood programs, roads, bridges, communications and the like. I ensured that the people benefitted from my programs. I was a good governor and minister. I got things done.

FERDINAND

I made you Governor of Manila. At one time, you controlled more than 15% of the country's national budget. I let you buy whatever you wanted. Shoes, jewelry, properties.

IMELDA

I *gave* a lot to the poor. You used me. Everybody gained because of me. Somehow, I felt that I was entitled to enjoy some privileges. There was a lot of money to play around. I did not know which was ours, and which was the country's. I got loans and grants for the country, why shouldn't I get some sort of a commission for them?

FERDINAND

From then on, you never again felt guilt about money, or what it could buy.

IMELDA

We played our cards well regarding the U.S. military bases in the country, why shouldn't I enjoy some of the profits *you* got from them?

FERDINAND

I groomed you to be my successor. I taught you all the tricks of the trade.

IMELDA

All I wanted from you, Ferdinand, was respect. I wanted you to see me as me, and to love me for it.

FERDINAND

But I did respect you, Meldy. I loved you, and respected you for all that you were. Only, by that time, you had become a strong woman, a steel butterfly. A full-fledged dragon lady – scheming, red-clawed, dripping with diamonds. The student became greater than her teacher. You became a political animal. My health declined, and my medical condition failed me. You practiced more government power and control. I couldn't stop you. Our political opponents did not like it. Even America wasn't happy with the prospect of you succeeding me. Then, Ninoy Aquino was shot.

IMELDA

(Paces around again.)

You knew about it. You were not that innocent.

FERDINAND

I did not understand why he had to be slain that way.

IMELDA

The soothsayer said that the days of the Marcoses will be over if Ninoy's feet touched the Philippine soil. The people that were loyal to us had to do something.

FERDINAND

Did you give the order?

IMELDA

I thought you did.

(Beat.)

Did you give the order?

FERDINAND

I thought you did.

IMELDA

Who killed Ninoy was never known. Maybe it will remain a mystery forever, but his widow benefitted from his death. It cost us the Malacañang. You promised me we would live happily forever. But you left me lost and defeated.

FERDINAND

(Approaches IMELDA.)

Let go, Meldy. There are things greater than all the world can offer. There are things beyond all the shoes, jewelry, bank accounts, properties, beyond all material things. There are things greater than power, wealth, fame, recognition, and society's acceptance.

IMELDA

All I wanted from you, Ferdinand, was respect. I wanted you to see me as me, and to love me for it.

FERDINAND

(Holds IMELDA by her shoulders so she faces him.)

I did, Meldy. I did see you as you. And I loved you for it. If I could do it all again, I would do it differently. Would you?

IMELDA is silent.

Would you do it differently, if we could do it again?

IMELDA

I don't know. I am at peace with my conscience and with my Creator.

FERDINAND

I am not the press you have to impress. I am dead.

IMELDA

I am not afraid. When it is my time for judgment, and God finally asks me, “What have you done with your life, Imelda?” I will say, “Lord, this is the life you gave me and this is what I have done with it.” And I’m sure that the Lord will embrace me, give me a big smile, and bring me to heaven and to eternity. I am sure of that.

FERDINAND

Well, good luck to you. This is my heaven, and the afterlife has taught me humility. Like the thief on Christ’s side at the cross, I repented at the last minute, and prayed that all my sins would be pardoned. I asked God to take my soul to heaven. I am at peace now. I wanted to see you one last time to tell you that I saw you as you. That I respected and loved you for what you were.

IMELDA

Damn you for not telling me years ago! Damn you for letting me go out of control. Damn you, Ferdinand, damn you!

FERDINAND

I tried to tell you towards the end, Meldy. But you wouldn’t listen. You dismissed everything that I said as empty talk of a dying old man. While on the chopper that took us

to Guam, I tried to tell you. But you were thinking differently. You tried to cheer everyone up. On that long flight to exile, over and over again, you sang your favorite American show tune, “New York, New York,” all the way to Guam while I pissed in my diapers.

IMELDA

How could you give up and leave me?

FERDINAND

How could you expect me to go on? I loved you, Imelda. But my health was failing me. If you must know, my life’s greatest happiness was dying with you and our children around me. You sang to me just before I breathed my last breath.

IMELDA

I didn’t think you heard. But somehow, I believed that hearing was the last sense to go.

FERDINAND

Sing to me again. Please? I can ask for nothing more.

IMELDA

(Starts to cry, then sings while crying.)

DAHIL SA ‘YO, NAIS KONG MABUHAY

DAHIL SA ‘YO, HANGGANG MAMATAY

FERDINAND wipes her tears with the back
of his hands.

KUNG TUNAY MAN AKO AY ALIPININ MO

FERDINAND joins *IMELDA* in singing.

IMELDA and FERDINAND

(Sing.)

ANG LAHAT SA BUHAY KO'Y DAHIL SA 'YO.

FERDINAND and *IMELDA* look lovingly at
each other. Then, they slowly kiss.

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT FOUR.

ACT FIVE

SETTING: *Vicente Orestes Romualdez's heaven is like a shoe store lighted by an oppressive GRAYED BLUE. It has endless racks of shoes. There is a pervasive sense of gentle sadness in the atmosphere created by the light melancholy blue, a sense of longing, of something left unfinished. The blues in Orestes's heaven speak of powerlessness, melancholy, coldness, and passivity like in a morgue, or a refrigerated room.*

AT RISE: *There are WHITE RACKS of neatly arranged shoes from wall to wall. Scattered all over the stage area are WHITE BLOCKS of various heights. Some have shoes displayed on top, others serve as something to sit on. CENTER is a WHITE LIGHTBOX, about four feet tall, that slowly lights and fades, fades and lights, all the different colors of the rainbow. On top of it, encased in GLASS is the most wonderful PAIR OF SHOES in the world. A soft, mournful ENGLISH HORN CONCERTO, plays in the background like piped-in music in a department store.*

IMELDA, barefooted, hair in chignon, and dressed in a white VENUS-CUT GOWN, enters. She looks around and is immediately drawn by THE MOST WONDERFUL PAIR OF SHOES IN THE WORLD. She looks at

them admiringly. She circles the WHITE LIGHTBOX, touches the GLASSCASE, and inhales deeply as if smelling the shoes.

A teenage ORESTES, youthful looking in a BARONG TAGALOG, enters.

ORESTES

I told you: Never love a thing that cannot love you back.

IMELDA

P-papa? I never saw you so young. I mean, I only saw you that young in pictures.

ORESTES

Why would I like to be an old man in my heaven?

IMELDA

You are my fifth person. What happens next?

ORESTES

Who knows? I think we go around again and again meeting our five people until we are finally at peace with all of them. Then, we go to a final trial on Judgment Day. I was thinking that the five people we meet in heaven, or limbo, or purgatory, or whatever you call this dimension, will serve as witnesses at our big trial before our Creator.

IMELDA

Did you want to meet me in your heaven, Papa?

ORESTES

I loved you, Imelda, and I thought I failed to show it to you when I was alive. I knew you felt neglected. What with you and your mother living in the garage of our house on Calle General Solano.

(Sighs.)

I've already made my peace with your mother. I want to make my peace with you right now.

IMELDA

You loved me? Is that why your heaven is an endless collection of shoes, Papa? Did you think that I was all about shoes? Did you think that love is all about shoes? I'll tell you about shoes, Papa. They protect the feet. Not the heart. Not the soul. Not the spirit. I was a broken woman. Since I was a child, I was a broken spirit. No amount of shopping, no amount of shoes can ever heal that.

ORESTES

I'm sorry you had to live in the garage. I'm sorry your Mama died the way she did.

IMELDA

Papa, I did not understand. I was too young to understand. I only saw Mama's suffering. As her eldest child, and the closest to her, I was a sustained witness to her growing distress and desperation. I was her confidant. Her shock absorber. Almost every night, I heard her cry herself to sleep. I hated it! She was a good mother, but as a wife, she let herself be abused. I swore I'd never be like her.

ORESTES

You denied your mother for the longest time. You rarely talked about her after she died.

IMELDA

She was poor and weak.

ORESTES

You tried to erase her memory. You blotted her out.

IMELDA

Because she represented the oppression that we, her children, suffered. Not only were we treated as the poor relatives of the Romualdezes, my siblings and I were also treated as a poor second family. We lived in the garage while your children from your first family lived in the house.

ORESTES

It was all my fault. I was not strong enough to contradict Lourdes.

IMELDA

It was Mama's fault, too. She did not fight for her rights. She allowed herself to be trampled by the children of your first wife. Mama tried to be a saint. But sometimes, a woman needs to be a bitch to protect her children. She needs to be a tigress to protect her cubs.

ORESTES

She tried her best.

IMELDA

By taking us to live in the garage? Do you know what it can do to a growing child, Papa? All my life, I have been haunted by self-doubt and an inferiority complex. People have accused me of superficiality, of artifice and extravagance. I built big buildings, Papa. I

bought prime properties in New York. My enemies said I had an “edifice complex.” Did I overcompensate for the garage years? Did I surround myself with material things so I could feel self-assured and superior? Papa, I am lost. I don’t know what to do.

ORESTES

(Leads IMELDA to a BLOCK on which to sit.)

I’m sorry, Imelda.

IMELDA

You can apologize for many things, Papa. But how can you mend a broken spirit? How can you fix a life so messed up by psychosis that arises from a difficult childhood? How can I forgive you?

ORESTES

I was the son of a woman who suffered a nervous breakdown. Your grandmother Trinidad came to Manila from Leyte in search of absolution. She felt ashamed for being the daughter of a philandering priest.

IMELDA

(Sits on the BLOCK.)

Lola Tidad.

ORESTES

While in Manila, she was tricked into marrying a sickly man. Her confessor priest shrewdly advised her against the nunnery arguing that marrying and seeing a dying man through his difficult days would be a better way to show exemplary Godly devotion. Instead of becoming a nun, she married my father who was afflicted with tuberculosis. She took her husband to Leyte where she believed that abundant sunshine, seawater, and coconut wine would restore my father's health. With a sick husband, she worked so hard, and drove herself to exhaustion trying to preserve the family. She pushed too hard for her own good. While pregnant with me, she suffered from a nervous breakdown. Later, when I was old enough, I was told that she would wake up at night screaming, unable to bear the sound of the wind. Even little insects frightened her.

Goes to another BLOCK nearby.

Back in those days, rural people had an infallible cure for nervous disorders – baths in the sea. It was believed that salty seawater and the rhythm of the waves pacified the troubled mind. Your grandmother would later recall to me with humor how she was brought to the sea to bathe under a mosquito net held by her brothers. I didn't understand it when I was little, but my doting mother was already a broken woman when she had me. She filled me with romantic notions. But not the drive or ambition that characterized my older brothers.

IMELDA

(Approaches ORESTES.)

Lola Tidad suffered from a nervous breakdown. I did, too. She had insomnia as did I. She hoped to blot out her past by becoming a nun in Manila. How much did I take after her? I tried to blot out Mama from my memory because I was ashamed of her weakness and poverty. When I became First Lady, Marcos wanted me to be no less than a true aristocrat. In my authorized biography, I had to describe Mama as a well-bred daughter of a jewel dealer, and a holder of a degree in music from the University of the Philippines. But I knew that my maternal grandmother was an itinerant merchant who, for convenience, had to keep her daughter in the convent. My mother's mother sold jewels, and also peddled carabao milk in the mornings!

ORESTES

(Sits on the BLOCK.)

My first wife died of leukemia and left me with five children.

IMELDA

That was no reason to be footloose and fancy-free.

ORESTES

I was only 42.

IMELDA

And a hot-blooded male.

ORESTES

I had... needs.

IMELDA

(Aside.)

Funny. But that was what Marcos said, too.

(To Orestes.)

Pretty ladies flitted in and out of your life.

ORESTES

I started to play the field.

IMELDA

You played with your household help, too.

ORESTES

Your Lola Tidad grew alarmed.

IMELDA

(Paces around.)

So she went to a convent to find a new wife for you. And that's how she found my mother.

ORESTES

In the 1920s, the convents were useful for such things, serving as schools not only for nuns but also for marriageable wards who were taught cooking and sewing.

IMELDA

Your mother found two girls acceptable. One of them became my mother.

ORESTES

They were invited to our house for a merienda. On the pretext of delivering a note to my brother Miguel, and to wait for his reply.

IMELDA

In fact, it was just a blank piece of paper in a tightly sealed envelope.

ORESTES

While the convent girls were waiting, they were invited to sit down and eat, and then to entertain. One girl had the dark Moorish looks of my first wife. Mama favored her in the hope that the look alike might help me recover from my loss. But I chose your mother.

(Dreamily.)

Remedios was a typical Filipino beauty, with golden brown complexion and soft features.

Although not pretty, she exuded grace.

IMELDA

Mama won you over with a song.

ORESTES

I requested the Moorish beauty to sing. She said she did not know how to sing. What about a piano, I asked. Or the violin perhaps? Still the answer was no. The family was disappointed. How could a prospective Romualdez bride not know anything about music?

It was a custom at Romualdez reunions to hold a musicale – a time when every Romualdez had a chance to show off with a song, a violin piece, a piano rendition.

IMELDA

Mama sang “Ako’y Ibong Sawi.”

ORESTES

It was a memorable performance. Your mother’s voice had the essence of sadness.

IMELDA

She sang a classic Filipino love song about the tragedy of a felled bird. How can she not sing with “the essence of sadness”?

ORESTES

I always thought that you got your good singing voice from your mother.

IMELDA

Mama had been wary at the prospect of marrying you with your five children. She balked at the marriage. She said that she had already fallen in love with an engineer who had recently left for America.

ORESTES

She was 27. I was 43.

IMELDA

That was about my age and Marcos's when we got married.

ORESTES

Your stepsister Lourdes, at that time, was 17.

IMELDA

But Lola Tidad rallied the convent directors behind her. They arranged the wedding.

ORESTES

Your mother and I were married on September 8, 1928 at the San Marcelino Church.

IMELDA

At three o'clock in the morning.

ORESTES

Yes. At three o'clock in the morning.

IMELDA

(Picks up a PAIR OF SHOES, and approaches another BLOCK to sit on.)

Because your mistress threatened to disrupt the wedding. She warned your brothers that you would marry only over her dead body.

ORESTES

She was crazy.

IMELDA

(Sits on the BLOCK, and tries the SHOES on.)

I've known crazy women in my life, too, Papa. Especially mistresses, when their men try to break away from them. Dovie Beams went nuts when she felt that Marcos was about to dump her.

ORESTES

I married your mother on September 8, 1928. It was the Feast of the Virgin Mary's Birthday.

IMELDA

I was born within a year, on July 2, 1929.

ORESTES

(Stands up.)

You were like a birthday gift to me. You were so beautiful with your large eyes, milky complexion, and delicate chin. You were the prettiest member of the family.

IMELDA

Papa, your birthday is July 3. They say that people born on that day are born chroniclers, diarists, and commemorators of events and tradition. They also say, many July 3 people are archly cynical. We were born under the same sign, and yet we ended up so different from each other.

ORESTES

(Paces around.)

My cynicism is a façade set up to hide my sensitivity. Like a protective shell.

IMELDA

Maybe my frivolity is a façade to conceal my feelings of inadequacy. God knows I needed more than just a protective shell. I am a Cancerian, a crab looking for a hole I can call my home.

(Beat.)

I saw you as highly philosophical, Papa. Surveying life as a judge might from the bench. You also wielded the gavel well. Putting an end to extraneous, discursive or pretentious talk with such quick dispatch. But you were soft and slow when the issue was your second family.

ORESTES

My family didn't take me seriously. My brothers always teased me because I was a mama's boy. It was true. I was my mother's favorite, and she worried about me because everyone else thought I had a certain lack of drive.

IMELDA

You and your brothers made your fortunes as lawyers in Manila. Uncle Norberto became a justice on the Supreme Court. Uncle Miguel, in addition to building a successful law practice, served as mayor of Manila.

ORESTES

My brothers established the Romualdez name in Manila. They made our family one of the most illustrious. One of the top 400. Manila's 400. I did fairly well to start as a lawyer but my drive paled beside my brothers. I refused to learn English to attract more clients.

IMELDA

Your political drive may have not been very strong, Papa. But your hormonal drive surely was. You kept Mama constantly pregnant. She bore you six children, and suffered three miscarriages in your ten years of marriage!

ORESTES

I had my... needs.

IMELDA

Yes, you even made her conceive Conchita in that rickety, stifling room, with its bare cement floor of our garage.

ORESTES

Conchita?

IMELDA

Chit. Your youngest daughter! Do you know all your children's names, Papa?

ORESTES

Of course, I do. What do you think of me?

IMELDA is silent, rolls her eyes.

I never apologized for it. But I'm sorry about the garage. I'm sorry you had to live there.

IMELDA

(Leaves the shoes on the floor, and rises.)

Mama was so weak. She did not fight for her rights. Or her children's.

ORESTES

When Remedios came, she tried to mother her stepchildren. But my eldest daughter had already established herself as the mother substitute.

IMELDA

(Grabs another PAIR OF SHOES, and approaches ORESTES.)

Lourdes and Mama always quarreled. From the day Mama moved in, she and Lourdes were rivals, constantly quarrelling. While you only looked the other way.

ORESTES

What did you want me to do?

IMELDA

Show some spine! For me. For us. For your second family.

(Crying.)

You were out of the house all day with your work or your friends. Your attitude was to just let the women handle it. You did not care that Mama wasn't aggressive enough to fight for us. What were you thinking, Papa?

ORESTES

Lourdes said that I should never have remarried. They were happy and free. They didn't need anyone looking out for them. She said that she could take care of her brothers and sisters. She didn't need another woman in the house.

IMELDA

That other woman was my mother. Your wife!

ORESTES

Lourdes said that Remedios was hot tempered.

IMELDA

I bet Lourdes didn't tell you that Mama was only trying to tidy the house after them. She washed and ironed your children's clothes but they were too lazy even to put them away. And they'd scream at Mama if they couldn't find something. My mother was prepared to be the kind of dutiful second wife society expected then. But Lourdes never gave her a chance. Lourdes influenced the others to see my mother as the wicked stepmother. I saw it all. But I was too young to understand anything. I was too young to do anything.

(Hysterical.)

You were supposedly observant and sensitive, Papa. But you were only withdrawn and laidback.

(Moves away from ORESTES.)

ORESTES

The entire Romualdez clan faced disgrace in the infamous Bar Questions Leak in 1930. My niece Stella, Miguel's daughter and Norberto's secretary, was charged with helping applicants cheat on the bar exams. It ruined the law practice that I shared with Miguel. There was a court trial, a year of scandalous press coverage, and a steep and sudden decline in our clients.

IMELDA

Instead of mustering courage and strength, you just gave up. What little drive you had further diminished so that, in the end, you couldn't even control Lourdes.

ORESTES

Their fighting was intolerable. Night and day, day and night, your mother and Lourdes fought like cats and dogs.

IMELDA

So, it was easier to send your second family to the garage!

ORESTES

Remedios reached a sullen compromise with Lourdes. She was willing to move into the one-room garage in front of the house.

IMELDA

The garage with its bare cement floor. Mama caught a cold there. It turned into pneumonia. I didn't know what was happening. All of a sudden, there were doctors and priests all around. You asked Lourdes to talk to my mother. She held Mama's hand and they talked of forgiveness. Then, Mama breathed her last breath. She died in that God-forsaken garage. With its bare cement floor!

(Hysterical, emotionally out of control.)

Now, tell me, Papa. Was that a scene I was supposed to remember and recount again and again? For the first nine years of my life, I was a witness to her suffering. I could not remember her being happy in marriage. All I can remember were her tears and her crying in the night. Can you blame me if I rarely talked about my mother? Can you blame me if I tried to blot out the memory of Remedios Trinidad Romualdez? God knows, I loved my mother but she wasn't strong enough. Mama wasn't strong enough even for the sake of all her six little children. I swore on her dead body, Papa, that I wasn't going to end up like Mama. What happened to Mama deeply wounded me. I became cynical about sex. And intimacy unsettled me. What if I married someone who would keep me pregnant all the time? What if I married someone like you who would not be there to protect me when I needed security and protection? I am glad that I was wiser than my mother. I learned to use sex as power. I married wisely.

ORESTES

(Approaches IMELDA.)

You married Marcos, and you changed.

IMELDA

Damn right, I changed!

(Tries the shoes on.)

Everything changes. People change. Beliefs change. Passions, desires, emotions, change. I loved Ariston. I wanted to marry him. He was the only man who treated me like a lady. He was a gentleman. Although of a prestigious family, he accepted my poverty and provincialism. I wanted to marry him. But you were against it.

ORESTES

He was previously married. Of course, at that time, I did not know that Marcos had another family.

IMELDA

He was working to have it annulled. But annulment wasn't good enough for you. You told me that if I married Ariston I would forever be just a mistress in your sight.

ORESTES

If you so loved Ariston, why did you marry Marcos? And in such a whirlwind manner?

IMELDA

Eleven days, Papa. It was romantic. The romance of the year, it was called. Stuff of soap operas. The courtship of a beautiful, talented woman marrying a hard-driving, brilliant man.

ORESTES

It goes against all that I knew of you. I knew you cared so much about what your family had to say. And yet you decided alone in a most impulsive way.

IMELDA

You did not understand, Papa. I was not getting any younger. I was 28. I wanted to be married. I wanted a peaceful and secure life as a housewife to a rich man.

ORESTES

I did not know anything about the man you married. Except through the press releases about him. He was supposedly an important man, an outstanding congressman. The article said that he was a top-caliber student, and had graduated cum laude from the College of Law of the University of the Philippines. He was also a war hero, and a brilliant trial lawyer.

IMELDA

All I wanted was a peaceful and secure life as a housewife to a rich man.

ORESTES

But Marcos had other plans. He changed you. Transformed you into someone that I didn't know anymore.

IMELDA

(Walks away from ORESTES.)

Who was I, Papa? How much did you know about me? You had eleven children. And you were largely away. You were there physically. But your mind was somewhere else. You were emotionally far. Did you ever see how we hurt? How we suffered? Did you see me at all, Papa? How well did you know me?

ORESTES

I knew you, Imelda. I knew your strength. I knew your strong will. I saw the goodness in your heart. I knew how much you cared for your brothers and sisters. I knew how much you cared for your family. I knew you were a survivor, but also that you cared so much about what I had to say. You listened to me. If you were ambitious and coveted the good things in life, I brought you up to pursue those goals within a moral framework. Our poverty taught you meekness, humility, and submission. I believed in your goodness.

IMELDA

(Throws the shoes in anger.)

You don't know me. Nobody really knows me. How can anyone know me? I'm a chameleon. I transform myself to suit the situation. I am a woman, and I needed to

survive. I did what I had to do, Papa. Because I needed to survive. I adored you, and you didn't even see me.

ORESTES

But I saw you, Imelda. I knew you more than you think I did. I cared for you.

IMELDA

Really? Then why the hell did you die leaving us out of your will? Your children from your first marriage retained sole title to all your properties. You didn't see us, Papa. You just didn't see us. Had I not married Marcos, my siblings and I would have remained as dispossessed as in the days when we lived in the garage.

ORESTES

I have no excuse. It was profound carelessness on my part.

IMELDA

To think that I cared for you when you were dying. I took you in my home, Papa. In my home! I convinced Marcos to let you stay with us. With generosity and magnanimity, I gave you the attention and care of a devoted daughter. I was hurting inside as I remembered the hell of living in the garage. Yet I denied my bitterness and anger in order to be loved and accepted by you. Despite how you overlooked us, I took care of you, Papa.

ORESTES

I'm sorry, Imelda. I have no excuse.

IMELDA

All I wanted from you, Papa, was for you to see me. Parents are supposed to love and accept their children unconditionally. But you died without really seeing me. Without really knowing me.

ORESTES

But I saw you. And I loved you.

IMELDA

If you loved me, if you saw me, you would have included me and my siblings in your will. I didn't need anything from you, Papa. I married well. I married a rich man. But it would have meant a lot to me if you at least mentioned us in your will.

ORESTES

As I said, I have no excuse. It was carelessness on my part.

IMELDA

Is there anything else you can say, Papa? Tell me something that I don't know.

ORESTES

I love you, Imelda.

IMELDA

Stop!

BACKGROUND MUSIC stops.

I can't hear that. I can't possibly listen to that. How can I believe you? You were never there for me. You never even saw me when you were alive. You spoke of a nice girl. A good girl. But I'm no longer nice. I'm no longer good. I have changed.

ORESTES nods.

A long awkward silence.

IMELDA starts to exit.

IMELDA

(Turns to ORESTES.)

Thank you, Papa. For saying the words I wanted to hear. I love you's and I'm sorry's are a dime a dozen. But when they come from the people who matter most to you, they are

priceless. I would have given the world for those words from you when I was little, Papa.
I wanted to hear them so badly.

ORESTES sighs.

I love you, Papa.

Light changes to a warm blue.

And I forgive you.

ORESTES

One last thing, Imelda. Your mother – she was a saint. She loved you. She trusted you. You should have never denied her. She wasn't weak. She was a strong woman. You should have been proud of her. Your Mama was so strong that she could afford to sacrifice. She was so strong that she carried the cross, and bore all suffering. Only a strong woman can carry the cross.

IMELDA

I know. But late have I understood... so late have I understood.

*Lights fade to darkness except for the
COLOR-CHANGING BOX.*

*As IMELDA exits, she is met by the three
ANGELS singing “Diyos Lamang Ang
Nakakaalam.”*

*The ANGELS lead her back to the MOST
WONDERFUL PAIR OF SHOES.*

*IMELDA looks at the SHOES. She shakes
her head no.*

ANGELS

(Sing.)

ANG BUHAY, TULAD NG ISANG AWIT LAMANG
MAYRO'NG SIMULA AT MAY KATAPUSAN
ANG ARAW AT GABI'Y LUMULUNGKOT, HIRANG
SA MGA SULIRANIN PINAGLALABANAN

*The ANGELS lift the GLASSCASE up to get
out the SHOES. They give them to IMELDA.*

IMELDA shakes her head again, and tries to go away.

The ANGELS stop her, and lead her to a BLOCK. They make her sit, and give her the SHOES. IMELDA sighs in resignation, and then, tries the SHOES on.

ANGELS

(Continue singing.)

ANG AKING PAGKUKUNWARI SA BUHAY
PAGBABALAT-KAYO SA KATOTOHANAN
ANO MAN ANG AKING MAGING KAPALARAN
TANGING DIYOS LAMANG ANG NAKAKAALAM.

The ANGELS continue to sing as IMELDA takes the SHOES off, and puts them back on top of the LIGHT-CHANGING BOX. The moment she does, the LIGHT-CHANGING BOX dies, as if power has been cut off.

Without music, IMELDA slowly begins to dance.

Then, as if music itself is moved by her dancing, the HORN CONCERTO (perhaps in a duet with a piano this time) plays again.

IMELDA is now in her element. She dances with freedom, and wherever she goes, life affirming PINK LIGHT shines, as if life, innocence, love, and goodness, bloom where her feet touch. Everything's coming up roses!

Childlike, IMELDA runs around barefoot. She begins to laugh, and she laughs heartily. It is the laughter of freedom and innocence. Her laughter ECHOES in every direction.

When she finally exits, the stage is fully bathed in PINK LIGHT. In contrast to the oppressive grayed blue in the beginning of the scene, we feel THE LOVE.

CURTAIN.

END OF "IF THE SHOE FITS."