

The Red Hands

A New Play

By Liza Lentini

212.592.8960

LizaLentini@yahoo.com

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AT RISE:

A dark, bare room with a tiny window, late afternoon light is streaming through. MARIA, an Italian woman in her thirties and dressed in a long, black dress sits directly across from KRISTINA, an attractive and very professional woman, late-twenties - early-thirties. KRISTINA has an intense look on her face. We hear the sound of church bells ringing.

(Long pause.)

KRISTINA

Maria?

(Louder.)

Maria? I can't help you if you won't speak to me. We've been sitting here for twenty minutes and...I'm here to help you. I'm not going to judge you. Il suo avvocato.

MARIA

Lei parla l'italiano?

KRISTINA

Sì. Parlo l'italiano. But you're going to need to speak English. You understand me, don't you? Lei capisce?

MARIA

Sì. Capisco. Yes.

(Pause.)

KRISTINA

I'm not kidding around. You cooperate or I'm out of here and you'll find yourself without counsel. We have a lot of work to do. Is this a good time? Maybe I should just come back tomorrow—

MARIA

No.

KRISTINA

You want me to stay? Then you have to cooperate.

(MARIA nods.)

KRISTINA

Good.

(Looks at her watch.)

Okay. Well, I only had an hour because I had a meeting about your case and...we've already wasted enough time, don't you think? I'd like to get as much accomplished today as possible, so let's try and focus. All right?

(No response.)

Let's try this again. These are just preliminary questions. Just so I can paint a picture. Now, I have a whole file on your case. I've read every bit of it, but there are some things I'd like to hear from you. Stop me if there's anything you don't understand.

(She takes out a file and a pen.)

Where were you the night before the murder?

(Pause.)

Maria...please. I need you to help me. This is all for you. I can't help you if you don't help me.

(Pause.)

How long had you been in New York City? The report says five months. Is that correct?

(Long pause.)

MARIA

Si.

KRISTINA

An answer! Thank you. That wasn't so hard, was it?

(Beat.)

When the assailant broke into your home, were you sleeping or were you awake? What were you doing earlier that day? Were you working? You clean homes, correct? Were you working earlier that day? It was a Sunday. Did you work on Sundays?

(Beat.)

Maria? Is there something you wanted to ask me? Dr. Freeman, I know, prepared you...told you I was coming... I have lots of questions and little time to waste.

MARIA

I killed him.

KRISTINA

(Pause.)

Yes. We know that. But...Maria...you shouldn't say that to anyone but me. Do you understand?

MARIA

I killed him.

KRISTINA

You were assaulted. Do you know what that means? You were assaulted.

(Pause.)

MARIA

No.

KRISTINA

He came into your room...well...

(Beat.)

Why don't you tell me what happened.

MARIA

He stole from me.

KRISTINA

That is not what happened.

MARIA

He stole from me.

KRISTINA

Parleremo l'italiano? Non ha rubato da lei.

MARIA

Si, ha rubato da me.

KRISTINA

(Sternly.)

Maria, no. Ascoltare...

(She takes a deep breath.)

They will ask you what happened. You cannot tell them that you killed a man because he stole from you.

MARIA

È vero.

KRISTINA

No. It's not true. Speak English, please.

MARIA

È vero.

KRISTINA

Parlare l'inglesi, per favore. If you do not speak English, I cannot help you.

MARIA

You cannot help me. Sono colpevole.

KRISTINA

I am defending you. I think we have a shot at this.

MARIA

Che?

KRISTINA

Protecting your innocence.

MARIA

Non sono innocente.

KRISTINA

English, please.

MARIA

I am not innocent.

KRISTINA

Do you want to die? Is that what you want?

MARIA

(With difficulty.)

I will speak English.

KRISTINA

Thank you. Now--

MARIA

He stole from me.

KRISTINA

No Maria. That's not what this is all about.

MARIA

Ha rubato da me.

KRISTINA

No.

MARIA

He stole from me and I killed him.

KRISTINA

Stop! You keep telling that story and they will kill you, too.

MARIA

Voglio fare quello che ha ragione.

KRISTINA

Good. Speak English please or I cannot help you.

MARIA

You speak very good Italian.

KRISTINA

Thank you. My mother was from Italy. Palermo.

(Beat.)

And before the assault you were in New York City for five months. Were there any other men in your life at that time? Any men that you were intimate with—

MARIA

He stole from me.

KRISTINA

Maria...!

(Beat.)

It is my job to speak on your behalf. But your story and my story have to match. Understand?

MARIA

Is my story, no?

KRISTINA

Yes, it's your story, but you are not in a state...

(Beat.)

Do you remember working with Dr. Freeman? Didn't he help you through all of these conflicts?

MARIA

Conflicts?

KRISTINA

Your conflicts. You know what they are, correct?

MARIA

My story. Not your story.

KRISTINA

(Starts to pack up.)

Maria...I'm going to go away and come back tomorrow. That will give you some time to think this through. Capiisce?

(MARIA does not respond. KRISTINA puts her things together and starts for the door.
KRISTINA is almost to the door.)

MARIA

Please. Wait.

KRISTINA

(Stops.)

Maria, listen. I know that Dr. Freeman is a...nice guy. I know he's very gentle. I know he listens. That's his job. My job is to save you. I have very different tactics. I'm good at what I do. I know we can make a bargain with this. All you need to do is repeat what I say. Please trust me.

MARIA

Repeat?

KRISTINA

I will tell you what to say and you say it.

MARIA

It is my story.

KRISTINA

Maria, I'm your last hope. No one wants to deal with you. Do you understand that? No one wants to try to defend you because, yes, you killed a man in cold blood.

(Beat.)

Now...there's a technique that I think might really work for you. Think of it as a game. Let's pretend we're telling a story. We'll tell it together. So...it's not my story, it's not your story...it's just...the story. How's that sound?

(Silence.)

KRISTINA (Cont'd)

Okay...so...the story starts this way. Once upon a time...there was this woman—

MARIA

You found me.

KRISTINA

I found you?

MARIA

Yes. You wanted me. Requested me.

KRISTINA

How did you know that?

MARIA

You found me.

KRISTINA

Well...yes. I was interested in your case. I want to see you win.

MARIA

You want to win.

KRISTINA

I think I can help you.

MARIA

I killed him.

KRISTINA

We need to start right there. In this story...remember, we're telling a story? The woman is traumatized.

MARIA

Were all the women...traumatized?

KRISTINA

My previous cases? Yes. They were victims. Just like you.

MARIA

Did they kill...?

KRISTINA

No...none of them...killed anyone. But I made sure that justice was served on their behalf.

MARIA

I killed a man.

KRISTINA

You can't say that anymore. You need to say that you don't remember killing him.

MARIA

I do remember.

KRISTINA

Clearly you do, but...

(Beat, frustrated.)

Maybe you don't realize this, but Dr. Freeman offered an evaluation stating that you were completely sane and capable of standing trial. The jury will believe everything you say.

MARIA

I understand.

KRISTINA

Oh, god...you really don't know what I'm talking about, do you?

MARIA

I do. I changed my dress and washed my hands and called the police myself. I am guilty. I told them.

KRISTINA

Tell me how I can help you. Tell me what you want to do.

MARIA

Listen to me.

KRISTINA

You have a trial. They will ask you what happened. When you tell them you remember killing him, you will be sentenced to death.

MARIA

I am sentenced to death.

KRISTINA

Not yet.

MARIA

Yes.

(Whisper.)

He stole from me.

KRISTINA

Stop saying that.

MARIA

(Assertive.)

It is true.

KRISTINA

What about what he stole from you? Huh? We know he forced himself on you. You were bleeding, there was blood. There were bruises on your neck and wrists. You had small cuts on the edge of your mouth...

(Beat.)

We'll work on the story. The woman was sleeping. He came in through her window...you fought him. He left you traumatized and you—the woman—went to find him in a trance. It's true, isn't it?

(Beat.)

You were sleeping, right? When he came in? We could argue that you were delusional. Do you know what that means?

MARIA

I was awake. I knew where he was. I walked there, with my knife...I pulled him by the hair to stretch his neck... and I slit his throat—

KRISTINA

Maria! Stop.

(Long pause.)

How are they treating you here? Is it okay?

MARIA

They are good to me here.

KRISTINA

Do you miss your family?

MARIA

Yes.

KRISTINA

Your mother and father must be very worried about you.
They must miss you very much.

MARIA

Yes.

KRISTINA

They love you very much and would be very sad if you were
to be sentenced to death.

MARIA

Yes. I know. But they know me. They know I am strong.

KRISTINA

Yes. I suppose so.

MARIA

Do you have parents?

KRISTINA

Yes.

MARIA

Do they worry for you?

KRISTINA

Do they worry about me? Well I'm not in prison, if that's
what you mean.

MARIA

That is not what I mean.

(Pause.)

KRISTINA

Um...well, no. They don't worry about me. They have no
reason to worry about me.

MARIA

You have a good life.

KRISTINA

I have a very good life.

(Beat.)

Is there anything you'd like me to bring you? I could bring you books or food...would that make you feel better?

MARIA

I feel good. Thank you.

KRISTINA

Is there anything you need, or want...?

MARIA

A husband.

KRISTINA

A what? Oh, shit, Maria.

MARIA

A husband.

KRISTINA

I can't bring you a husband.

MARIA

That is what I want. Wanted.

KRISTINA

Music? I could see if we could get you some music. Would you like that?

MARIA

(Pause, smiles.)

Puccini?

KRISTINA

Yes. Wouldn't that be—

MARIA

No. No music.

KRISTINA

Fine.

(Beat.)

Tell me what would make you happy?

MARIA

Do you have a boyfriend?

KRISTINA

I don't think I'd feel right about sitting-

MARIA

Then you can go. I do not wish to talk.

(Pause.)

KRISTINA

Do I have a boyfriend? Uh, right now, no.

MARIA

No man?

KRISTINA

(Laughs.)

I didn't say that. I just said I didn't have a boyfriend.

MARIA

I do not understand.

KRISTINA

I have...many boyfriends. At the same time.

MARIA

Do you want to marry one of them?

KRISTINA

Oh, no. I don't want to get married.

MARIA

Why?

KRISTINA

I don't think everyone should get married.

MARIA

Not you?

KRISTINA

Right. Not me. Especially not me.

MARIA

Why not?

KRISTINA

Because I...I don't want to be a wife. You wanted to be a wife, didn't you?

MARIA

Oh, yes. I wanted to be a wife.

KRISTINA

Does that make you sad, somehow?

MARIA

You cannot change what is done. No?

KRISTINA

Do you regret what you did to him?

MARIA

Regret?

KRISTINA

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

(Pause.)

MARIA

He stole from me. I took...from him.

(Beat.)

I did not want to. I had to.

KRISTINA

I see.

MARIA

You see how I can say I am not guilty. Pretend I did not mean to.

KRISTINA

I think that guilt can be defined in many different ways.

(Beat.)

You feel badly about what you did, though. Don't you? Do you ever regret it? Even sometimes?

(Pause.)

MARIA

I am not ashamed.

KRISTINA

Maria...I want you to know that I don't judge you for what you did. I want you to know that—

MARIA

Do you think I was right?

KRISTINA

Well, I can't tell you that.

MARIA

Yes. Please, tell me. Do you think I was right?

KRISTINA

I can't tell you that you were right for killing someone. I can't do that.

MARIA

But you think it. No? You think I was right?

KRISTINA

We don't live in a society that is allowed to go around killing people. But I do believe that you killed in self defense. I think you did.

MARIA

No. I did not. I got dressed and brushed my hair and selected the knife. And I set out to find him. I wanted to do it in front of his friends. I wanted them to see it. I wanted them to know I was guilty. I wanted them to know.

KRISTINA

In this country...that's not acceptable.

MARIA

Yes. How do you say...justice—

KRISTINA

The court decides if someone is guilty and if—

MARIA

Why?

KRISTINA

I don't know. It's our system. It's the law.

MARIA

Do you think it's right?

KRISTINA

I think...it's our justice system. And I do believe it is faulted, at times. There's a good chance that a jury will look at you and only see a strong, pretty woman who wanted revenge deserves to be punished. A jury is only human. They've lived whole lives by the time they come to your case and all of their biases and experiences are going to be a part of what you have done. Like it or not. It's my job to...help them out. To help them to see that you are in fact strong and pretty...but you're incredibly vulnerable. And we'll accentuate how humble you are and how...modest you are by the way you dress and...we're not misleading them, because it's all true. You are those things, all of them. I like to think that we're helping the jury to see the truth. It's shameful to confuse them. So, I try to make their job as easy as possible.

(Beat.)

The system is faulted. Very, very faulted at times. But...whether or not we want to abide by it is our decision, and...

MARIA

Those women who did not kill...

KRISTINA

My previous cases...yes?

MARIA

How do they live?

KRISTINA

With themselves, you mean?

(Beat.)

I can't...change the way things work. It's not my system.

(Realizing.)

But you were in shock. Of course you were. Yes. That's it, Maria. You were in shock. You'd suffered a trauma and you were...reacting in the only way you could. Don't you realize this?

MARIA

Why do you want to make me...crazy? I am not crazy. I decided. I selected the knife.

KRISTINA

Yes, but don't you see—

MARIA

Stop! Please. You must accept that I killed that man because I believed it was right. Please. You will make me very angry talking like this. I am not...wanting to talk like this any longer. You will make me very, very angry—

(MARIA is silenced by the church bells from outside the window. She gets up and walks towards the window.)

KRISTINA

What's out there, Maria? Church? I could get the priest if you—

MARIA

Shhh!

(She listens.)

Ascolta.

(They do.)

MARIA

Do you think that God knows?

KRISTINA

Knows what?

MARIA

Who is guilty?

KRISTINA

I don't believe in God.

MARIA

You do not have faith.

KRISTINA

Ah, no. I think it's...fine that you do, though. Really. And if God is helping you through this...I think that's just...great.

MARIA

I think God knows. It is not right to kill a man, but I did what was right. You think so, don't you?

KRISTINA

I think you...did what you thought was right. Yes.

MARIA

(She looks out the window.)

He said he would come for me, but...

KRISTINA

(Beat.)

You were sleeping. He came in through the window. He assaulted you. You were shocked and upset and you found him and killed him. And now you are very sorry.

(Beat.)

MARIA

And now you are very sorry.

KRISTINA

This is not about me.

MARIA

It is not about me.

KRISTINA

Maria...I'm at wit's end. Perdo la mia mente. Tell me what to do. Aiutarme, Maria.

MARIA

Tell me. Where do you come from?

KRISTINA

I grew up in a boring suburb. I'm the oldest of four children. My parents are still married. My father is a computer technician. My mother was a housewife. I got my degree at a very good college. And then I went to Law School. I graduated at the top of my class. Got placed with a good firm after that. Decided I wanted to work with the state, which is...how I found you.

MARIA

And me?

KRISTINA

You?

MARIA

Why me?

KRISTINA

Well...when I heard about your case I was very, very interested. I thought I could help you win. I'm very good at helping women like you win.

MARIA

Women like me?

KRISTINA

Women who have been victimized...like you.

MARIA

Why do you help those women?

KRISTINA

I want to.

MARIA

Why?

KRISTINA

I...I don't like seeing them so helpless. I refuse to allow them to be helpless again.

MARIA

(Pause.)

I always dreamed of being a wife. In my village, you plan to be a wife, you work to be a good wife and hope that you will meet a good man. I spent my whole life practicing how I would be a good wife. I woke early and cooked breakfast, and cleaned, and...even as a girl my father was the man of the house. Not like America. He was the man. I liked...serving him. Making him feel happy. And I dreamed of having a husband. My village was very small. And time passed and...there was no one...for me. But I was old. I had waited so long. I would have made a good wife. I could do everything so well. I was very...how do you say...diligent. I would have made a good wife.

KRISTINA

I'm sure you would have been a good wife.

MARIA

I waited. I was...old. In my village, girls marry young. But I was old.

KRISTINA

There's nothing wrong with being old and not being married. In America, we see nothing wrong with that. And you happen to also be in New York. Which is an added bonus.

MARIA

And you do not want to be married?

KRISTINA

I do not want to be married.

MARIA

Have you never had a husband?

(Pause.)

KRISTINA

You realize that if you don't cooperate on this case you will be sacrificing yourself. It's almost like suicide. You'd be letting down a lot of people. Your mother, your father. Even God.

MARIA

I have made peace with God. It would be wrong of me not to tell the truth.

KRISTINA

Maria...I don't think you know what the truth is. You are very upset—

MARIA

I am not upset. You are upset.

KRISTINA

I don't want to see you...

MARIA

Die? I'm not afraid.

KRISTINA

(Frustrated, puts her head in her hands.)

What can I say that will reach you?

MARIA

Did you have a husband?

(Pause.)

I am asking...did you have a husband?

KRISTINA

Yes. I had a husband.

MARIA

You were married.

KRISTINA

Yes.

MARIA

Tell me.

KRISTINA

There's nothing to tell. We were young. It didn't work—

MARIA

Why?

KRISTINA

Sometimes people make bad choices. You might not regret killing a man, but I regret marrying one.

MARIA

Did you love him?

KRISTINA

Yes. I did.

MARIA

Did he love you?

KRISTINA

(Pause.)

Yes. I think so.

(Beat.)

Do you think that Domenico loved you?

MARIA

I loved him.

KRISTINA

What did you love about him?

MARIA

He was a very handsome man. I loved that he was very strong.

(Beat.)

Strange...I loved that he was so strong.

KRISTINA

How do you feel about that now?

MARIA

I still love that he was strong. I wish he didn't do what he did.

KRISTINA

That's a good answer.

MARIA

It is true.

KRISTINA

Did you think he would marry you?

MARIA

He said he would marry me. Before.

KRISTINA

Did you think...when he came into your room—

MARIA

No. Did I think he would marry me then? No.

KRISTINA

What...what did you think?

MARIA

(Pause.)

Is your husband dead?

KRISTINA

No.

MARIA

What did he do to you?

KRISTINA

He didn't...he didn't do anything. I'm not sure that people do things to you. I think you invite them somehow.

MARIA

Invite? Did I invite Domenico into my room?

KRISTINA

Did you?

(Pause.)

I think that he came into your room when you were sleeping. You may have trusted him at first but after a while you were afraid. You told him to stop, but he didn't. Then, in the wake of trauma, you got a knife and went after him. I think that you were assaulted. I think you were a victim. Am I right?

MARIA

Did I invite him?

KRISTINA

You can't have invited him. Do you understand me? You did not invite him.

MARIA

I wanted to marry him. In my village you do not...invite a man unless you are married.

KRISTINA

Right. I know. But we're not talking about sex, are we.

MARIA

I do not understand.

KRISTINA

Many women invite men to have sex with them. But the question is, do they...or do you...did you...invite a man to hurt you.

MARIA

Is it possible to invite someone to steal from you?

(Beat.)

Did someone steal from you?

(Beat.)

Did you invite him?

(The church bells ring outside again.)

MARIA

Did you ever believe in God?

KRISTINA

I was raised Catholic. I'm from a very Catholic family.

MARIA

Why do you not believe in God now?

KRISTINA

Well, I suppose it's easier to not believe in God than to be angry with him all the time.

MARIA

Do you have something to be angry with him for?

KRISTINA

Don't you?

MARIA

I'm not angry with anyone.

KRISTINA

You're not?

MARIA

No.

KRISTINA

I'm angry for you.

MARIA

Why?

KRISTINA

Because you're in prison. Because some very unfair things have happened to you and you should be incredibly angry.

MARIA

I chose to be here. I will tell the judge.

KRISTINA

Maria...you can't do that.

MARIA

I will.

KRISTINA

Please don't.

MARIA

Why?

(Beat.)

Why?

KRISTINA

Because...we can win this case.

MARIA

Who?

KRISTINA

Me and you.

MARIA

I do not feel that I have lost.

KRISTINA

You will lose if you...if you tell the truth.

MARIA

I cannot lose if I tell the truth.

KRISTINA

(Beat.)

What do you miss most about being outside?

MARIA

Going to church. I miss church.

KRISTINA

Okay. Do you miss taking walks? Smelling the grass?
Going to the store?

MARIA

You have to make sacrifices. I made sacrifices. I have no regrets.

(Pause.)

I do miss...Domenico.

KRISTINA

You miss him?

MARIA

Yes. I miss him. I do not think of him as...dead. I do not even think of him as...coming into my room or...I don't. I think of him as he was before. I do not remember the bad. I recall him as...a very nice man. Very, very handsome. And I was...old...not to be married. I was. He was right for me. I think of the way he smiled and how we used to go for walks after dinner and he would leave me at the door. He was very, very handsome.

KRISTINA

Do you wish you hadn't killed him?

MARIA

I can remember him. What happened...wasn't him. I killed...that man. Yes. He is gone. But I remember him as I like to remember him.

KRISTINA

Does it make you sad...to remember him that way?

MARIA

To remember the good in him? No.

KRISTINA

So...you think that he was a good man?

MARIA

Oh, yes. I would not have loved him if he was a bad man.

KRISTINA

You don't think so?

MARIA

I know.

KRISTINA

Do you think it's possible he showed you a side of him he wanted you to see?

MARIA

I chose him. Just as he chose me.

(Beat.)

You chose, too. You chose your husband?

KRISTINA

Yes. I did choose him.

MARIA

Did you love him?

KRISTINA

(Beat.)

Maria...it would be really helpful to me if we could work on the story you're going to give in court. Step by step.

MARIA

The story...?

KRISTINA

Tell me...explain... Dirme ciò che è successo.

MARIA

Did he hurt you?

KRISTINA

Domenico had been courting you. Yes? He'd seen you...around town...

MARIA

Yes. He called for me.

KRISTINA

You would go for walks together?

MARIA

Yes.

KRISTINA

How long did that go on for?

MARIA

How long were you married?

KRISTINA

I was only married for three months. I received an annulment, um...annullamento.

MARIA

Did you get married in a church?

KRISTINA

Yes. I did. Anyway...he courted you-

MARIA

Why did you—

KRISTINA

My turn. Did you realize at any point during the courtship that he would be violent—

MARIA

Did he do injustice to you?

KRISTINA

Injustice? No.

(Beat.)

What do you mean by injustice?

MARIA

Did he steal from you?

KRISTINA

No...not in the way someone stole from you.

MARIA

You know he stole from me.

KRISTINA

Yes. Maria. I do. But that's not what you should say in court.

MARIA

Did your husband steal from you?

KRISTINA

Not like...

MARIA

I know. Not like me. But someone stole from you? Something. Yes?

KRISTINA

I don't know.

(Beat.)

Did you realize at any point in the courtship that he was violent?

MARIA

You do not always know.

(Beat.)

Do you think it was my fault?

KRISTINA

The rape?

MARIA

Yes.

KRISTINA

No. That wasn't your fault.

MARIA

But he died...and that was my fault.

KRISTINA

You killed him. But you knew that already.

MARIA

Oh, yes. But was it my fault?

KRISTINA

(Beat.)

So...I take it you didn't find him to be violent at any point?

MARIA

Not until that night. You see, he called for me. He said he would come for me. He was invited. I wanted him to come. I was waiting for him.

KRISTINA

Had he come before?

MARIA

Yes.

KRISTINA

Oh, no.

MARIA

Yes.

KRISTINA

Maria...had Domenico touched you before? Were you intimate with Domenico before that night?

(Beat.)

There was blood and... We know he forced himself on you. You had bruises. Domenico was a big, strong-

MARIA

Kristina...? Did you think it was my fault?

KRISTINA

I can't tell you that.

MARIA

Why not?

KRISTINA

You killed him.

MARIA

Yes.

KRISTINA

I can't tell you it wasn't your fault.

MARIA

Why?

KRISTINA

Look, as your lawyer...

MARIA

That is why it is better if I ask questions.

KRISTINA

It's my job to-

MARIA

What did he do that you were married for such short time?

KRISTINA

We didn't get along. We were very young.

MARIA

Did he hurt you?

KRISTINA

(Beat.)
He used to hurt himself.

MARIA

Why?

KRISTINA

I don't know.

MARIA

Perhaps...I suppose he was in pain. People who are in pain are often comfortable there.

(Long pause. KRISTINA checks her watch.)

KRISTINA

We're...we need to move forward. Please...let's try the story again...

MARIA

Yes. I will start. Once upon a time...there was a girl and she married a boy—

KRISTINA

Stop!

(Beat.)

Well, your English can be quite efficient when you want it to be.

(Beat. She checks her watch again.)

Look Maria, we're running out of time. I'd like to get one thing—

(The church bells ring again, and both women are distracted.)

MARIA

I understand.

KRISTINA

What do you understand?

MARIA

You are guilty, too.

KRISTINA

Guilty? For what—

MARIA

No. I am sorry...my English. You believe you are guilty.
Yes.

KRISTINA

But I didn't do anything.

MARIA

Yes. I know. And you—

KRISTINA

Look, Maria, I'm going to be frank with you. Our hour is nearly up and I have accomplished next to nothing. If you think you need someone else to represent—

MARIA

You found me.

KRISTINA

Yes. Maria, I found you. Your case has the potential to make or break the both of us. But I had no idea you would be so.... Now, I'm not going to lie to you. I need you to cooperate or I cannot continue—

MARIA

I am not saying you are guilty for what you have done. Perhaps it is possible to be guilty for what you have not done. It is possible. Is it not?

KRISTINA

I don't think I understand.

MARIA

Did you kill your husband?

KRISTINA

Maria!

MARIA

I know you did not kill him, not as I killed a man. But, you see, I did not kill Domenico. I remember him. I love him. Still. But you...did you kill your husband?

(Pause.)

KRISTINA

I did not kill my husband.

MARIA

But you are guilty. You feel guilty. No?

KRISTINA

Do you feel guilty?

MARIA

I am guilty. I killed a man. What are you guilty for?

KRISTINA

I asked you before, Maria, to stop saying that you killed a man—

MARIA

You found me. I didn't ask for you. Lei me ha trovato. He stole from me. You know he stole from me. Your husband stole from you—

KRISTINA

Yes, Maria. He stole from me. What else do you want to know? Huh? What will it take to get you to say the things I need you to say? Che lei vuole sentire? Dirme.

MARIA

Did you invite him?

KRISTINA

Maria...I don't know.

MARIA

Dirme. Tell me the truth.

KRISTINA

I can't. I don't know. Non so.

MARIA

He came to you, yes?

KRISTINA

Yes. He came to me.

MARIA

How did he steal from you?

(Pause.)

How did he steal from you?

KRISTINA

I...he...I don't know, Maria. I really don't know. I'm telling you the truth. Gli dico la verità. I did not kill him. I know that much. But he almost died. I really don't remember. All I know is that we were both covered in blood. Him and me. He was hurting himself. I think he wanted to die. I woke up one day and...our bed was covered in blood. But that was so long ago. We were both very young. He's not...I did not kill him.

(Beat.)

I'm sorry. I can't tell you more than that. But that's the truth. Ho detto la verità.

(Beat.)

Now, let's work on your story, all right.

(She checks her watch.)

Please, let's try to focus on this because it's very important to us both that we get it right. The stories have to match.

MARIA

The stories match. Yes.

KRISTINA

Right. Okay. So why don't you tell me the story?

MARIA

Once upon a time there was a woman.

(Beat.)

KRISTINA

Go on.

MARIA

How did he steal from you?

KRSITINA

Once upon a time there was a woman. She was courted by a man. She thought he was a good man—

MARIA

He came into your room. Tell me what happened.

KRISTINA

I can't tell you. I can't tell you that.

MARIA

Do you still love him?

KRISTINA

We should be working on your story—

MARIA

What did you love about him?

KRISTINA

I loved that he was so...selfless.

MARIA

Selfless?

KRISTINA

Altruistico.

MARIA

Si. Strano. Ma... lei deve fare il sacrifices.

KRISTINA

Che?

MARIA

You have to make sacrifices.

KRISTINA

I'm not sure I understand.

MARIA

He came to you.

KRISTINA

Yes.

MARIA

He stole from you. Did you invite him?

KRISTINA

I can't tell you...I can't tell you that.

MARIA

Is it possible that you do not know the truth?

(Pause.)

How do you know the things you know?

(Pause.)

Do you think you are guilty?

KRISTINA

Why are you asking me that?

MARIA

You are here to bring justice...no? Is it possible to be guilty for something you have not done?

KRISTINA

I don't understand.

MARIA

I killed a man. You say you did not kill a man. Who is guilty?

KRISTINA

You think...I'm not innocent?

MARIA

Why would you be guilty?

KRISTINA

Do you think I did something wrong?

MARIA

What is justice?

KRISTINA

You've gotten us off track again.

MARIA

Do you wish to work on the story?

KRISTINA

Yes, I—

(Beat.)

You're making fun of me.

MARIA

No. I am asking.

KRISTINA

I do wish to work on the story. Your story.

MARIA

You tell me the story.

KRISTINA

Something's not right here...

(Beat.)

You know this isn't about me, don't you?

MARIA

It is your story. No?

KRISTINA

(Angrily.)

I'm trying to help you. I told you everything you wanted to know.

MARIA

I do not believe that you know the truth.

KRISTINA

You think I did something?

MARIA

Don't you?

KRISTINA

I may...I may be guilty of not doing something. It's true. But it was years ago—

MARIA

Is that why you believe you are guilty?

KRISTINA

I never said—

MARIA

Who decides what is justice?

KRISTINA

I explained this to you—

MARIA

Tell me. Who decides?

KRISTINA

The court will decide.

MARIA

Who are they?

KRISTINA

People. They're supposed to...determine what is morally...right.

MARIA

What if they do not?

KRISTINA

That's why I'm here to help you.

MARIA

You think I am right?

KRISTINA

I do not believe you should go to prison. I don't think you deserve it. It wouldn't be fair.

MARIA

Is justice what is fair?

KRISTINA

It's supposed to be...what is right. Righteousness.

MARIA

Giusto?

KRISTINA

No, no...you misunderstood.

MARIA

If you invite them, does that make you guilty?

KRISTINA

I don't know.

MARIA

You know.

(Beat.)

You do not think I am guilty.

KRISTINA

I know you're not.

MARIA

Then why are you not innocent like me?

KRISTINA

Maria...I was...responsible. I didn't ever...contribute. But I never stopped him, either. It was as though he needed me to...watch him. He needed to know that he wasn't alone and I suppose I thought that...I was helping...at the time. He would...cut himself. Deep. I would watch it happen. There was a lot of blood. We would watch him bleed. Together.

(Pause.)

MARIA

Lei sono colpevole?

(Pause.)

Are you guilty?

(Beat.)

Sono colpevole per amare un uomo. He did something very wrong to me. Not like people think. Not...como se dice...the assault. Not that. Not that he came in my window. Not that he forced me. Not how he left and insulted me. Not that even. He stole from me. Ha rubato da me. It is my story. It is your story, too. No?

KRISTINA

No. We do not have the same story. No.

(Looks at her watch.)

Maria, I want you to know that I appreciate...I think I understand. Thank you for whatever it is you're trying to do. Thank you. But you cannot help me. I do not have a simple story. And it was long ago. It's over now.

MARIA

Over. Lei pensa che sia sopra?

KRISTINA

Si. È sopra. I've made peace with...it. I have. Now we have to discuss your story. I'm very nervous that we are running out of time. And there's a chance that I won't come back. I can't come back.

MARIA

Lei vuole la mia storia?

(KRISTINA nods.)

MARIA

Very good. Yes. You tell me. I will...repeat.

KRISTINA

You will?

MARIA

Yes. Tell me the story. Me dire la storia. Per favore.

KRISTINA

Fine. Great.

(Gets out her notebook.)

Right now, you and I are sitting here because you have been imprisoned for killing the man who violated you.

MARIA

(Pause.)

You never ask. You assume.

KRISTINA

He raped you. There was blood, there were bruises. He forced himself on you.

(Pause.)

Didn't he?

MARIA

Define...rape.

KRISTINA

You didn't welcome him.

MARIA

You don't ask.

KRISTINA

There's no time to ask.

MARIA

Do you think one must make justice happen?

KRISTINA

Make justice...well, that's what I'm trying to do for you.

MARIA

That is not what I mean.

KRISTINA

An individual cannot take justice into their own hands, if that's what you mean.

MARIA

Then, what happens when justice is not...how do you say...?

KRISTINA

Served?

MARIA

Yes. Served. When justice is not served, what becomes of the person who has been... Come lei lo dice?

KRISTINA

The person who has been injusticed?

MARIA

Yes. What happens to them?

KRISTINA

That's why people sue each other. That's why I have a job.

MARIA

But you believe the system does not always serve.

KRISTINA

Justice will be served if you listen to me and do as I say.

MARIA

I believe that justice relies on... Come lei lo dice... responsabilità?

KRISTINA

Responsibility? Yes. That has something to do with it. But often responsibility is subjective. Soggettivo.

MARIA

So is justice. Giustizia.

KRISTINA

How do you mean?

MARIA

Do you think your husband was a good man?

KRISTINA

I don't know...maybe he was...what difference does it make?

MARIA

If he was a good man who did bad, then that would make you guilty. If he was a bad man who did bad, you will have been done...injustice.

KRISTINA

Do you think you were done...injustice?

MARIA

(Beat.)

Justice is complex when love is concerned. It is true, no?
È vero.

(Beat.)

Sì. Lei sa. Lei sa ciò che ha ragione.

(Beat.)

Can you invite a bad man? Do you chose a bad man? If so,
then who is the one responsible?

(Beat.)

KRISTINA

Maria...I did kill I a man. I think. Not like you. I
didn't slit his throat. But...one minute he was alive and
the next thing I knew he was...dead. Inside. Tortured.
It was because of me. I know. He's still...alive. I
think. I don't know what... All I know is that something
in me killed something in him. And...I suppose...he killed
me, too.

(Beat.)

I watched him as he traced his arm, his leg, his
chest...carved...deeper and deeper. We watched the blood
drip right out of him together. I wanted to help him...I
suppose I thought I was.

(Beat.)

He stole from me.

MARIA

I did invite him.

KRISTINA

You what?

MARIA

I invited him.

KRISTINA

No—

MARIA

Yes. It wasn't the first time, Kristina. He would visit me through my window. He had...visited me many other times.

KRISTINA

Oh, Maria...

MARIA

Yes. It is true. He did touch me. Many times.

KRISTINA

You said he stole from you. I thought you meant—

MARIA

He did steal from me. I told him it was time to be married and he said, "Only pigs marry." He called me a pig.

KRISTINA

You killed him because he insulted you.

MARIA

No. He stole—

KRISTINA

You killed him because he called you a pig?

MARIA

No! It is not—

KRISTINA

You were assaulted! He forced you!

MARIA

Yes, maybe this one time, but—

KRISTINA

Yes! He did! You must stick with the story!

MARIA

Kristina, no. Not your story—

KRISTINA

You cannot tell anyone you killed a man for calling you a name!

MARIA

(Furious.)

That is not all! It is my story!

(Beat.)

Yes there was blood and bruises. My story is not about that. He called me a pig. He stole from me.

KRISTINA

This is exactly why we needed to work today. And now we're running out of time. You can say we have tomorrow, but every single day—

MARIA

Ascoltare! Kristina!

(Silence.)

Is it wrong to make justice?

KRISTINA

Yes.

MARIA

You lie.

KRISTINA

I do not lie.

MARIA

You lie.

KRISTINA

Stop it.

MARIA

Bugiarda.

KRISTINA

I am not a liar.

MARIA

Bugiarda!

KRISTINA

Don't you dare—

MARIA

Bugiarda!

KRISTINA

Shut up!

(An officer bangs on the door and the
two women hush instantly at the sound of
the loud, echoing steel.)

KRISTINA

I don't think...if you don't want me on this case, then
I'll just go.

MARIA

You decide.

KRISTINA

I would like to help you. But you won't let me. Why?
Perché , Maria? Che ho fatto l'ingiustizia?

MARIA

I want you to tell the truth.

KRISTINA

I have told you the truth—

MARIA

No.

KRISTINA

Yes.

MARIA

I invited him.

KRISTINA

No. I'm sorry. You didn't.

MARIA

Yes. I invited him. I invited him to tell him we were to
marry—

KRISTINA

But you didn't invite him to have sex with you, is that right?

MARIA

You do not listen—

KRISTINA

So...there was an assault—

MARIA

I invited him. He stole from me—

KRISTINA

What am I supposed to tell a jury, Maria? Tell me.

MARIA

You know. You told me—

KRISTINA

But I didn't slit a man's throat and call it justified—

MARIA

You envy me.

KRISTINA

I...what? Oh, sure...is this some sort of contest? Maria, you have wasted enough of my time...

(KRISTINA begins to collect her things.)

MARIA

Tell me how you can say that you know what it means to defend people if you do not want to listen to the truth?

KRISTINA

I think our session is just about over—

MARIA

You know what it means for someone to steal from you. When they steal you can never get it back. Even if they try to give it to you, you can never get it back. You can never get it back! Never get it back!

KRISTINA

(Practically in tears.)

I don't think I will be able to help you.

(The church bells ring again and KRISTINA is stopped dead in her tracks at the door.)

KRISTINA

Maria...in truth...I do not believe that you should be sentenced to death for what you did. I do not know what justice means. I only know that you should have killed that man because he stole from you...and most people will not understand that. It's my job to make sure that you find a way to live...in spite of them.

MARIA

You understand.

KRISTINA

Sì. Capisco. I wish I didn't, but I do.

(Beat.)

I married a man who...would hurt himself instead of hurting me. He made me...watch him. But I wish he'd hurt me. It would have been...better. He was...very good at making me... Well...no...I don't know. I suppose it doesn't matter now. It was so long ago and...memories get... You want so badly to speak the truth, but the truth's irrelevant to most people. I told the truth. And the worst of it is...that they didn't blame me. The courts, his family...no one blamed me at all. Not outwardly. I didn't...contribute. Not in the way that you did. But I was there...a part of it. Not doing anything they could blame me for...but still...not doing anything at all. I was guilty.

(Beat.)

I'm guilty now, too. He's still alive, in his own way. Should I have pushed him farther...give him what he wanted? I hear he still suffers. And me, well, I guess I do, too.

MARIA

Then you do know what justice means.

KRISTINA

Yes. I suppose I do.

(KRISTINA looks at her watch.)

It's almost 7:00. What will you do with yourself this evening?

MARIA

The church service is at 7:00.

KRISTINA

(Nods as though she understands.)
So...you'll sit here and...?

MARIA

Yes.

KRISTINA

They have priests, if you'd like—

MARIA

No. I am fine.

KRISTINA

Yes.

(Pause.)

Do you ever wonder...even for a second...if what you did was wrong?

(Beat.)

So...what do you want to do now, Maria.

MARIA

Yes. I am feeling very hungry.

KRISTINA

I wasn't asking you what you wanted for dinner. I was wondering what you wanted to do about your case.

(The church bells begin to sound again.)

MARIA

Kristina...your hour has passed.

(Instead of making her exit, KRISTINA sits back down in her chair. Fade to black.)

END OF PLAY

CHARACTERS

KRISTINA Late-twenties - early-thirties, determined,
 feisty, and efficient lawyer.

MARIA Early-mid thirties. Poised, confident.

SETTING

Maria's prison cell. Present day. New York.