

LIVES THAT FLOW FAR AWAY: LJUBKA AND THE OTHERS

NORA GREGOR (1901-1949)

NICOLETTA CORONINI CROMBERG (1896 – 1984)

GIGI OCA – LUIGI PECORARI - (1885 – 1958)

WUGLIELMINA RAMSBACHER

LJUBKA ŠORLI BRATUŽ (1910 – 1993)

It's rough to study women (The Merry Widow) images by Nora Gregor

SCENE 1

NORA – (*Luce, left: writing a letter*) My dear Nicoletta , I entered the world of silent films in 1920. My popularity in the Austrian capital, however, is primarily due to my frequent roles in comedies. The magazine «Komödie» called me “a leading actress much loved by the public,” emphasizing my temperament and elegance. I also appear in the film "Michael" in which I play Princess Zamikoff. Later this year I will celebrate my wedding to the pianist Mitja Nikisch." ***Silent film video by Nora Gregor***

NICOLETTA - (*enters with the letter in her hand*) It's 1924 and my friend Nora Gregor, who is five years younger than me, is getting married while the prospect of me ever having a good marriage has now completely disappeared due to the excessive debts my family has accumulated. (*exits*)

Tell Me About Love, Mariù (1932) – Vittorio De Sica

SCENE 2

GIGI – Caramels! Caramels! Pistachios, almonds, dried figs... Caramels! My name is Luigi Pecorari, born in 1895. After the First World War, during the slow period of recovery, I became Gorizia's candy maker, a sweet profession in very bitter times. I wander around the city with my cart, selling, depending on the season, fresh and dried fruit, candied.

GUGLIELMINA – (*entering on the right*) The Caramei !

GIGI – My lady, I also sell ice cream, shelled walnuts and almonds, and cotton candy. I built this little shed specifically to protect the ice cream in

the summer. The architect Max Fabiani designed my contraption... and then I tried to shape it into a swan.

GUGLIELMINA - Pecjât that from afar somea pitost to an ocja.

GIGI - From which my famous nickname "Gigi Oca" comes.

GUGLIELMINA – O par furlan "Gigi Ocja". You go shopping at the mercjât. *(sucking the caramel)* But sâs ch'al is really good! *(exits left)*

GIGI – Excuse me, this baba made me lose the thread of the conversation... Oh yes, I told you that my specialty is caramei, dried fruit skewers covered in caramelized sugar.

NICOLETTA – *(enters right)* Gigi, when are you going to change this contraption? It's so ridiculous: it looks like a goose.

GIGI - *(impatiently)* You too, Countess, with this story about the careto? I'll never change it. Have you heard of Max Fabiani?

NICOLETTA – And who doesn't know the architect Fabiani , who contributed to the reconstruction of Gorizia, severely damaged by the war ?

GIGI – Well done! And he was the one who drew this cartoon. My son is an author's caress...

NICOLETTA – Gigi! Why don't you go sell candy somewhere else?

GIGI OCA – I'm going, I'm going... *(disappointed)* Caramei! *(walks away with his cart)*

But the legs – *(Trio Lescano 1937)*

SCENE 3

NICOLETTA – I can't believe it, Nora Gregor! *(hug)* Have you finally returned to Gorizia?

NORA – *(enters from the left)* Yes, I came to Piazzutta to visit my mother, who returned to Gorizia after being widowed.

NICOLETTA – Over the years I have received your letters, Nora, and I have always followed you in the newspapers: I have heard that you are going through the most successful period of your career .

NORA – Nicoletta, if you know, I was noticed in Berlin by Max Reinhardt, who wanted me with him. Under his direction, I performed in various roles. I also participated in the Salzburg Festival as Beline in *The Invalid*. Molière's *imagination* .

NICOLETTA – The critics called your appearance on stage truly enchanting. Your story is that of a great artist: from Piazzuta to Hollywood.

NORA – Everyone calls me Nora, but my real name is Eleonora Hermina. My father was a goldsmith and watchmaker in Travnik. I speak Slovenian fluently and get by with Italian, but my family language is German.

NICOLETTA - Since you were a child, you've always had a passion for acting. You revealed your talents in charity plays and parties at the boarding school of the Sisters of Notre Dame, but in 1915, like us Coronini in Velenje, your family quickly fled Gorizia.

NORA – My parents and I loaded our few belongings onto a wagon and fled the war, leaving Gorizia. First we went to visit relatives in Klagenfurt and then we took refuge in Graz.

NICOLETTA – So you also brought your dreams of becoming a famous actress with you.

NORA - I studied acting in Graz and, encouraged by Alexander Moissi, I made my debut on the Viennese stage at 17. But don't think becoming a silent film star made up for the many disappointments life has thrown my way. I would have thought anything but having to leave my hometown of Gorizia...

NICOLETTA - Your story is emblematic of that period.

NORA – My father was Bohemian... my mother was Carinthian, I was baptized by a Slovenian chaplain, my godfather was German, and an Italian midwife helped me come into the world.

NICOLETTA - Gorizia didn't have time to really get to know you. You were born in the beautiful house in Piazzutta, on the corner of Via della Scala.

NORA – Remember? As a child, I used to climb the wall in Coronini Park, but I'd retreat after a few meters at the furious barking of your dogs. How scary! After having worked in silent films in Vienna and Berlin, last year, with the advent of sound, I took flight for Hollywood, where I've made a few successful films. In California, I continue to work in theater, paired with Douglas Fairbanks Jr.

NICOLETTA – So, since you returned to Europe, you have consolidated your popularity in Austria and Germany.

NORA – I was the protagonist of light films like *Was Frauen träumen* , shot in Berlin in '33, with a screenplay written by a young man. (*he thinks*) His name is Billy Wilder: he's still at the beginning of his career, but he's already about to emigrate to the United States.

NICOLETTA – How many films have you acted in?

NORA - I've acted in over twenty films. I was the favorite actress of Max Reinhardt, the master and reformer of the European theater scene.

NICOLETTA - Your fame as a Hollywood actress has brought you to the pinnacle of your career.

NORA – Yes, I was acclaimed by the audience at the Burgtheater in Vienna, the temple of European theatre, where I gained the attention of the most accredited Austrian theatre critics. But I also performed in Berlin .

NICOLETTA – The peak of your success, however, came around the mid-1930s.

NORA – When I revealed my true nature as a great dramatic actress.

NICOLETTA - Impersonating the most famous heroines and the most classic female characters.

NORA - I have played over a dozen classical roles: from Shakespeare's Juliet to Natalie in *Prinz von Homburg* .

NICOLETTA - I read in the papers that you divorced the pianist Mitja Nikisch.

NORA – Yes, in '34, but then I met the Austrian aristocrat and politician Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, with whom I had my son Heinrich and whom I married this year. Oh my God ! I left my son alone with my mother. I have to rush home. I'm writing to you!

(Nora kisses Nicoletta and exits. From the other side, Gigi Oca enters with his cart, followed by Guglielmina, with her market shopping bag.)

GIGI - Caramel! Dried figs, pistachios, almonds, caramel...

GUGLIELMINA – *(to Gigi Oca)* Give me a caramel, Gigi. *(Gigi sells a sweet to Guglielmina)*

GIGI - Carameli! *(He stops in the background waiting for customers and listens.)*

NICOLETTA – Guglielmina, have you been to the market before? Then you can join me.

GUGLIELMINA – *(eats the caramel)* Veramentri a cjaso the gjat merciless on the spargher. You must have the gjalina brût ready for your husband Olga...

NICOLETTA – Come on, Guglielmina, the soup can wait. Let's just take a walk. Come winter cold or summer heat, Gigi Oca is always in front of the schools with his cart.

GUGLIELMINA - Along the shore the summer season goes to the bottom of the ice cream shop to sell ice cream and the cold one goes to the sweets. *(tastes)* Your sweethearts are really good, Gigi ...

(Gigi walks away satisfied and the two women, walking, meet a young woman in mourning with a pram)

NICOLETTA - *(hugging her)* My dear Ljubka, how are you? Father Vinko Vodipivec told me about the sudden death of your husband Lojze Bratuž. He was still so young. A serious illness?

LJUBKA – So you didn't hear anything?

NICOLETTA – No, Ljubka.

LJUBKA – On Boxing Day 1936, after leaving the church in Podgora, or Piedimonte, as we Slovenians are now forced to call it by the fascist regime, he was dragged to the Fascist headquarters and forced to drink a mixture of machine oil and gasoline. Lojze died on February 16th after nearly two months of agony and terrible suffering. Imel je le petintrideset let. *(He bursts into tears.)*

NICOLETTA – What? She was only thirty-five!

LJUBKA - Newspapers never reported her death or her funeral. The funeral was held at dawn two days after her passing, to avoid any possible protests.

GUGLIELMINA – Did Lojze work as a musician?

LJUBKA – In reality he was an elementary school teacher in San Martino di Quisca and in Salcano, but he also taught music alongside his school teaching.

GUGLIELMINA – In those days I had no interest in politics.

LJUBKA – My husband had only been involved in politics sporadically.

NICOLETTA - But that was enough for him to be sent into confinement near Pescara.

LJUBKA – It happened many years ago, even before we met, around the time of the 1924 general elections. I was born in Tolmin in 1910 and spent the happiest years of my carefree childhood there. Then, when the First

World War raged along the Isonzo River, I had to flee as a refugee to Jesenice, where I attended my first years of elementary school, and then completed my studies in my hometown. Later, I met Lojze Bratuž, and we married in the church in Tolmin. It wasn't until 1930 that I came to live with him here in Gorizia.

NICOLETTA - It was Archbishop Frančiška Borgia Sedej who called him to Gorizia, offering him the chair of music at the minor seminary.

LJUBKA – But following an arrest for his activities in Slovenian Catholic associations, he was also forced to leave teaching.

NICOLETTA – I remember that Archbishop Sedej had given him the role of inspector of the choirs of the parishes of the diocese.

LJUBKA – Lojze played the organ in church and conducted various choirs, both Slovenian and Italian. He was also a friend of Cesare Augusto Seghizzi, who had appointed him to conduct the cathedral choir. He also composed religious music and transcribed and adapted folk songs.

NICOLETTA – His only crime was being known and respected in the Slovenian community, which was opposed by the fascists. These were dark years, when fascist violence particularly targeted prominent members of the Slovenian community.

LJUBKA - Lojze had combined the universal language of music with singing in Slovenian, a linguistic expression prohibited by fascism.

GUGLIELMINA – Do you want to go back to where you have suffered other harassment from the fascists?

LJUBKA – Already in 1930, he was the victim of an attack that forced him to spend three weeks in the hospital. In 1932, he was arrested several times and spent nine months in prison, without any evidence against him and unable to write or read . He was also forced to change his name to Luigi Bertossi.

NICOLETTA – Were you newly married?

LJUBKA – Yes, only three years ago . It was a truly short time in which I was able to enjoy the happiness of being a wife and mother to my little sons Lojzka and Andrej, the latter born only a few months ago. The heavy, murderous hand of the Blackshirts soon fell upon our lives.

NICOLETTA - For you, Ljubka, it must have been a terrible ordeal.

LJUBKA - At Christmas in Podgora, religious services were held in Slovenian, but local fascists attempted to prevent the celebration. Due to the presence of several police officers, they were forced to abandon the service, but the Blackshirts returned two days later to take revenge on Lojze and four other choir members. Only Archbishop Margotti reported the incident.

NICOLETTA - If you need comfort and help, my home is always open to you. *(They hug and Ljubka walks away.)*

Don't forget my words – *(Carlo Buti 1937)*

SCENE 4

Gigi enters with the cart and sits on the bench.

NICOLETTA – *(enters from the right and goes to sit on the bench)* Oh, here's our Gigi Oca again, a great friend of Max Fabiani...

GIGI – Countess, look, I'm not going to tell you anything... Max Fabiani lives right next to my house, on Via Brigata Casale.

NICOLETTA – *(ironic)* And he often goes for walks with you.

GIGI – You don't believe me, but it's all true.

NICOLETTA – And I guess he even helps you “bump” the cart and maybe he even zigs: “Caramei!” *(She bursts out laughing and Gigi walks away, offended)*

Lili Marleen – *(Marlene Dietrich 1938)*

SCENE 5

NORA – *(light on the left: she is sitting on the trunk and writing a letter)*
My dear Nicoletta, following the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, in 1938 I had to flee into exile with my son Heinrich and my husband, Prince Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg, an opponent of Hitler's Anschluss of Austria, first to Switzerland and then for a short period to France.

NICOLETTA – *(enters on the right with the letter)* Even the great Nora Gregor had to flee the winds of Nazism that were beginning to blow across Europe. *(The maid enters.)*

NORA – *(cs)* In 1939, in Paris, I played the lead role in Jean Renoir's film "La Règle du jeu" (The Rules of the Game) , which he admired. But the film wasn't as successful as I'd hoped: war broke out shortly after its release.

GUGLIELMINA – Franzia has also been occupied by Hitler.

NORA – *(cs)* I fled with my son first to Spain and then to Portugal, and from there I will embark for Argentina.

NICOLETTA – The regime censored and prohibited the viewing of all of my friend Nora Gregor's films.

GUGLIELMINA – The other week or you met Nora's sea. He told me that the SS had confiscated the family's assets from his family and, for a little while, could live with thanks to the economic support from his friends. What a woman is of cjasà ancjemò in Guriza, ca dongja... in Plazzuta. It's so bad...

NICOLETTA – I know, she wanted me to keep the letter Nora wrote to her from her exile in Mar del Plata.

NORA - *(light on her as she writes)* I often think of Piazzutta. My fondest childhood memory is the annual Easter celebration: I can still see the church lit up and the countless lights on the houses all around. I can still hear the band's music and remember our joy perfectly. Those were good times, dear Nicoletta! *(Darkness on Nora)*

Walking in the Rain (Trio Lescano - 1942)

SCENE 6

It starts to rain: Guglielmina enters with an umbrella and meets Ljubka.

GUGLIELMINA – Oh, gospa Ljubka Šorli. Kako gre? Al è tant che no la incuintri in zâr par Guriza.

LJUBKA - Even in death, Lojze remained in the fascist sights; his grave, without a cross or a name because his family and I refused to use the name imposed by fascism, was guarded by the police for a long time. On the first anniversary of Lojze's murder, the regime had issued a circular to all police stations in the Gorizia area to ensure that his name would not be mentioned during memorial masses. 1943 brought me further suffering: first my mother and then my sister Marica were locked up in prison. I too suffered the same fate: I was arrested and tortured .

GUGLIELMINA – After the martyrdom of the late Lojze Bratuž, did the fascists continue to persecute her?

LJUBKA - Fascism is dominated by German politics. On April 1st, the Collotti Gang forced their way into my home on Via Foscolo in Gorizia, arresting me and Cilka, the woman who helps me look after the house.

GUGLIELMINA - Che banda al è cognossuda a Guriza par una serie terrificatosa di azioni criminosi di rastrellamenti cuintra i antifascists e lis formazioni da resistenza, soledut slovena e croata.

LJUBKA - My little Lojzka and Andrej were left alone for three days, with the blackshirts, until Lojze's brother, Jožko, thanks to the archbishop's intercession, was allowed to take them in. I was imprisoned and tortured because I was thought to be a Yugoslav spy. They stripped me naked and laid me on a plank bed, then poured buckets of ice water over me to force me to confess.

GUGLIELMINA - Oh, Mr. Benedet! *(sign of the cross)*

LJUBKA - During my long Stations of the Cross, I was subjected to terrible physical torture at the hands of Collotti and his followers. I was locked up on Via Bellosguardo in Trieste, in addition to being interned for several

months in the Sdraussina camp. Remembering my imprisonment, I wanted to compose this poem.

Evening in Sdraussina

The wind blows lightly, beyond the fields,
nature yearns for the sweet silence; the trees sway wearily and the warm
day turns to evening. Beyond the walls, full of young hopes, the soldiers'
song rises into the evening, echoing beyond the fields, returning through
the green meadows, a silent echo. Up there, beyond the road, the train
races far away. The clatter of its wheels brings me back to everyday life.
Where does my thought linger? HOME, home my heart yearns for. From
the horizon, like a burning fire, the setting sun bids farewell and from
beyond the acacia branches bids me farewell, wishing me peace and
serene dreams.

See

more

oglaša;čez polja vre in tiho spet ugaša,ko vrača mimo se zelenih trat.Nad
basket gori v daljo vlak drvi.Ropot koles v vsakdanjost me prebuja.What
moja misel se ob njem pomuja?DOMOV, domov srce zahrepeni...Z
obzorja, kakor ogenj plameneč,zahajajoče sonce se poslavlja
in mimo vej akacij me pozdravlja,
pokoja mi in lepih sanj želeč.

LJUBKA - I opposed the violence with my unshakeable religious faith, the
dignity of my feelings, my poetry, and so, after long months, I was finally
released.

GUGLIELMINA – Tančj abuse and violence on a defenseless female pûara.

LJUBKA – After September 8th, I returned to my hometown of Tolmin,
where I dedicated myself to teaching, a lifelong dream of mine. My
mother owned a shop, so as a young girl , after graduating from public
school, I enrolled at the Commercial Institute in Gorizia, where I also
studied violin under Professor Rodolfo Lipizer. After graduating high
school, I returned to Tolmin. I was first violin in the town orchestra,
played mandolin in the lute orchestra, participated in underground youth

associations, and founded a small women's choir. Then I dedicated myself to teaching singing to young girls.

GUGLIELMINA – But after the war my life improved.

LJUBKA - When renowned speakers like Anton Kacin and Vinko Belicic began teaching Slovenian to teachers in Tolmin, I didn't hesitate to sign up to improve my native language. I then completed the teacher training course in Gorizia.

GUGLIELMINA – So she has become a teacher. Mestre's work is just for me.

LJUBKA - This new situation also allowed me to unleash my poetic creativity, which I had cultivated since childhood. I published my poems in magazines and calendars of the Slovenian community abroad, as well as in Carinthia and Argentina.

GUGLIELMINA – Atraviars the faith je à cjatât the courage of living and suffering. If the tragedy from the martyrs of Lojze to the gambiât my life, it is not gambiada.

LJUBKA - Death took my husband from me, but not the love I have for him.

GUGLIELMINA – O ài savût che li so poesîs in Sloven esprimin i sentiments par il so omp muart, l'amor di patria, la so religiositât e l'amôr pa' natura. Volarês heard another poem.

LJUBKA – I'll satisfy you right away, Wilhelmina. I wrote this in memory of my husband Lojze Bratuž. (*Exits*)

Kadar ciprese šumijo

Razgibal je veter široke poljane,
from bilka je vsaka na njih
vztrepetala;
a mil je moja med križe zbežala,
kjer v sencah cipres so solze
posejane.

When the cypresses whisper.

The wind swept across the vast plains,
it made every single stem of your body
tremble;
my thoughts flee among the crosses
wet with tears, under the cypress trees.
And there, among the cypresses, my

In tam med cipresami dragi počiva... love rests...
Ko v poznih večerih vrhovi šumijo, In the dead of night I hear them
o moji ljubezni mu v noč govorijo, rustling:
from v hladni gomili vse mirneje they let him know that I still love him,
sniva and he finds the peace of sleep.

If I could have 1000 lire a month (Gilberto Mazzi - 1939)

SCENE 7

GIGI – On 29 April 1945 the German troops finally arrived in Gorizia.

NICOLETTA - But this time our villa on the Grafenberg was requisitioned by the Yugoslav occupiers and a partisan command was set up there.

GIGI – This was an act of force that prefigured the Yugoslav occupation of Gorizia.

NICOLETTA - Archbishop Carlo Margotti was also held prisoner in our palace for a few days.

GIGI – Jolanda Pisani, better known as Cassandra, wrote in the Gazzettino about the prelate's "disappearance."

NICOLETTA - *(seeing Ljubka enter on her bicycle)* Ljuka, how nice to see you again in Gorizia!

LJUBKA – Good morning, Countess Coronini. After the liberation, public transportation still wasn't functioning, so I cycled from Tolmin to Gorizia every day to attend a Slovenian language course. The course opened the door for me to teaching. So I'm dedicating myself to teaching the children of the Tolmin mountains.

GIGI – Cassandra also wrote about the "forty days" after the liberation, in which Marshal Tito's communist militia began rounding up Gorizia residents from their homes who might pose an obstacle to Tito's desire to annex Gorizia to Yugoslavia. Over 1,000 fellow citizens were deported, and 650 never returned. *(exits)*

LJUBKA – The intention was only to take revenge on the fascists who had administered the territories of Gorizia with an iron fist, truncheon, and castor oil, imposing forced Italianization on us Slovenes.

NICOLETTA – However, it wasn't just fascist leaders and political figures who were deported, but also prominent figures from the Italian community.

LJUBKA – You're right, Countess. The fascists who committed atrocities against our Slovenian community must be harshly condemned, but the tragedy of the foibe must also be deplored without seeking false justifications.

In the mood – Glenn Miller (1939)

GUGLIELMINA – *(enters) Son rivâs i Americans! (loud music and everyone dances)*

SCENE 8

NICOLETTA – On September 15, 1947, Gorizia, stripped of its former Yugoslavian possessions, was returned to Italian sovereignty. And the Allied Military Government installed a unit in our villa on Grafenberg.

LJUBKA – But the new border drawn in 1947 by the Allies meant that you, Counts Coronini, lost the properties of Kronberk, Sempas and Velenje.

NICOLETTA – The final relinquishment of Cronberg Castle was deeply painful for my family. The castle had been owned by the Coronini counts since 1609, a landmark, also due to the large amount of land given to the colony.

LJUBKA - And to think that you Coronini had always shown constant solidarity with the people of Kromberk.

NICOLETTA - I still remember that dramatic day at our residence in Moncorona. I didn't hesitate to turn to the Nazi authorities to save some women from internment. They were accused of complicity with the partisans.

LJUBKA – Those were terrible months in 1944, with the Germans beating and abusing... slovenski narod, the Slovenian population. (*She exits crying with her bicycle.*)

I have a pebble in my shoe – Natalino Otto (1943)

SCENE 9

GIGI – (*returns and sees a lady arriving*) Watch out, Countess Coronini is coming. She'll never buy me a caramel...

NICOLETTA – (*entering*) But how many have you sold to the high school students on Viale XX Settembre in front of my villa or to the college girls, when you park your legendary cart on Via Orzoni under the Convitto Santa Gorizia?

GIGI – Countess, everyone likes my sweets, boys and girls, young men, young women, and old men, soldiers, occupiers, and liberators, who come eagerly to buy something. But above all, students are my main customers: I always make sure to be there punctually, outside the school, for the bell that announces the end of class.

NICOLETTA – Gigi, you're very generous, perhaps a little too much: I've been told you often give credit to students.

GIGI – It's true. But at a certain point I stop the supplies and go to the parents of my debtor children to claim what I'm owed.

NICOLETTA – I don't think you'll be able to recover all your small debts...

GIGI – You're right, Countess Coronini. You're a sensitive, cultured woman, and you speak many languages perfectly, unlike me, who only expresses myself in the Gorizia dialect and makes do with a little Furlan. Like your brother Guglielmo, you too are a great art enthusiast.

GUGLIELMINA – (*enters showing great discomfort*) Countess, do you know your friend Nora Gregor?

NICOLETTA – No. Some time ago she wrote to me from South America telling me her husband had abandoned her. I only know that since the end of the war she's been in Chile, penniless and with a child. Friends advise her against returning to Vienna because, due to her husband's Nazi past, she's not well received in the Austrian capital's theaters.

GUGLIELMINA – The precarious economic conditions and the artistic decline must cause a terrible depression.

NICOLETTA – *(suddenly worried)* Did something happen to her?

GUGLIELMINA – *(shows the newspaper)* Nora Gregor died in Viña del Mar, Chile, on January 20, 1949, at the age of 48. Perhaps from a heart attack, but suicide cannot be ruled out. *(they exit)*

A Kiss at Midnight (1953) – Quartetto Cetra

SCENE 10

Nicoletta and Guglielmina are sitting on the bench and Gigi on the bench.

GIGI – Siora Countess, what's the news?

NICOLETTA - *(patient)* Let's hear it, what's the news today? Perhaps the Third World War?

GIGI - It's almost here, Countess Nicoletta. Tito has massed his troops just beyond the border. He wants Gorizia at all costs.

GUGLIELMINA – After all this never ends. Or since 1953 and like this we have announced this '45.

NICOLETTA - Don't worry, Guglielmina, nothing serious will happen. If you knew how to read the newspaper, as well as gossip, you would have known that the government has sent thousands of soldiers along the border with Yugoslavia.

WUGLIELMINA – Gigi, are you alive in tančj who are back to Guriza?

GIGI - No, I haven't seen them. I'll be in the barracks. Too bad, if I were to go on leave, I'd make a lot of money with the charlatans.

NICOLETTA - So, Gigi, what news did you have to tell me?

GUGLIELMINA - Maybe it was Gambi's decision, the so ridiculous cjaruz...

GIGI - (*thoughtfully*) Do you know, Countess, that I've forgotten? When I hear talk of war, brrrrr, how scary and I don't remember anything anymore.

NICOLETTA - I, on the other hand, remember the summer of 1953 well. The spectre of the Third World War loomed over Gorizia and the Julian March.

GIGI - Thousands of soldiers were sent from one side of the border to the other. Tito threatened to invade Italian territory. But our government's response was decisive.

NICOLETTA - It was led by Christian Democrat Giuseppe Pella. He demonstrated an unsuspected determination, even though his cabinet was supported by a shaky majority, to say the least.

GIGI - Trieste wasn't yet Italian. Gorizia was experiencing constant social tension.

NICOLETTA - As the weeks passed, fortunately, diplomacy prevailed over threats.

GIGI – And we in Gorizia breathed a sigh of relief.

NICOLETTA - The rest of Italy watched with apprehension what was happening in this easternmost corner of the peninsula, whose history is difficult to understand, then as now.

GUGLIELMINA – There has also been a positive ruviars in the media, due to the large influx of soldiers in the barracks of Guriza.

GIGI – How many sweets I sold to the soldiers on leave. But along with the soldiers, there were also the sub-officers, and so we're full of thieves and lice...

GUGLIELMINA – Pedoi?

GIGI – If she goes to the “Centrale” Cinema, better known as Cine Pedocio, because xe es el más frequented by the military, it comes out that they are grateful to her like a madwoman...

NICOLETTA - The arrival of military personnel and Yugoslavians in the city proved to be a great economic advantage.

GIGI – However, when I, a customer from Gorizia, enter a shop on Via Rastel or Piazza Vitoria, the old Travnik to be clear, I am greeted with a “Prosim gospod?”

GUGLIELMINA - Even the ordinary compradors are almost two Slovenians.

GIGI - Pensevese, the other day I asked the clerk at a shoe shop how much a pair of man's boots cost. Baba told me the price in dinars!

GUGLIELMINA - Parsè no saveva trop che costavin in liris. *(laughs)*

GIGI - For a few years now, the Standa has been located in Corso Verdi, and there has been a notable commercial expansion.

GUGLIELMINA - Ancja tai sentiments al è una aria gnova. Cetantis feminis di Guriza fell in love with the grim soldiers.

GIGI - Some of them have remained *(he mimes a pregnant peace)* , but many have emigrated for love to other shores... Nova Goriza is «the hole in the evening through which Tito spies on the West».

NICOLETTA - In 1953, Italy wanted to make its support for Gorizia felt in every way possible. And among the tangible signs was a news report by a national weekly dedicated to the women of Gorizia.

GIGI – I read that article too.

NICOLETTA – It was published in September 1953 in the weekly magazine *Visto*, available on newsstands for 30 lire. It dedicated a double-page spread to the women of Gorizia.

GIGI - The photo of Luciana Jorio Dreossi, "one of the most beautiful Gorizians and a skilled pilot," stands out. The other interviews were...

NICOLETTA - One was Maja Monzani. It was written about her (*read with emphasis*): The Piccolo Teatro di Gorizia is the most cherished creation of Maja Monzani, a young dramatic actress. Maja tours Italy during the performance season, but in the summer she puts on shows in Gorizia. She is married to an Army major.

WUGLIELMINA – Parsè no si fevela ancja di Erna Zuleger in chel articul? Dome pos ains prima al era stada elletta Miss Guriza.

NICOLETTA - What a question, Erna's story was, so to speak, off-topic with respect to the message of Gorizia's Italianness that the report was intended to convey.

GIGI - (*annoyed*) Would you like to explain to me too if it's a big inconvenience?

GUGLIELMINA – You âs rason Gigi, you thought I remembered that story. In 1949 Erna Zuleger was elected Miss Gorizia.

GIGI – Do you really think I don't remember? (*sigh of regret*) How many sweets did I sell out there...

GUGLIELMINA - (*severe look at Gigi*) Do you think it's worth interrupting this interesting story with your sweethearts?

GIGI – Who didn't know Erna? She had disfigured years, blue eyes, and a cascade of blond hair. She had an Austrian passport thanks to her father, Hans, a Viennese metal dealer. Her mother, Luigia Zorzut, was from Friuli. The Miss Gorizia competition was held by the Gorizia Gymnastics Union, which has always been a symbol of Italianness.

GUGLIELMINA - Erna summarized in herself the multicultural traits of the territories of Gorizia and the complexity of the situation. During that time, in fact, I know Fradi Herbert was an officer of the Luftwaffe in Russia, and his cousins were from the Slovenian band instead of partisans yesterday in the mountains and one of them was also sent to Cividà this December since '44.

GIGI - Accompanied by her brother Herbert, she also reached the gymnastics gym, which was packed with people. She could see right away that something wasn't right. There was a palpable tension in there. It must have been the excitement of all that beautiful girl showing her... yes, well, in a bathing suit...

GUGLIELMINA – Tu âs tal cjâf dome li feminis! La int a era emozionante par un'altra question. I talians no volevin che vences una slovena ei slovens no volevin che a vinci fos una taliana.

NICOLETTA - At the time, the wounds of the eastern border, in the Gorizia area torn between Italy and Yugoslavia, made the climate even more heated. Even the fact that, the year before, in 1948, Fulvia Franco, a native of Trieste and considered a symbol of Italianness, had triumphed in the national Miss Italy pageant, had sparked controversy and division.

GIGI – Let's move on, I'll tell you how it went...

GUGLIELMINA - These inflamed oris that preceded the parade in the UGG hall, to dispel the tension of someone who knew Erna had entered her in the competition that had just happened to her, thus provoking the irritation of so fradi.

GIGI – I happened to find the name of a beautiful eighteen-year-old girl in the room whose first and last name was clearly Austrian and therefore neutral, who had thus automatically entered the competition. Everything happened in a few minutes.

GUGLIELMINA - At the time I was shown on the stage I gave the permission of my brother Herbert who was coming from another band in

the hall, who was full of concerts and so I couldn't have prevented my participation.

GIGI – The enchanting Erna immediately emerged as the most beautiful. She suddenly found herself walking down the catwalk with the other contestants. I remember she was very embarrassed, and even more so when the judges proclaimed her Miss Gorizia. Even now I won her, Mrs. Erna is beautiful.

NICOLETTA - Her origins thus allowed her to overcome the deep political divisions that were very strong in the post-World War II period, both in the city and in the Julian March.

GUGLIELMIMA – I see that the election of a young citizen of German origin with an Austrian passport made my feelings so delicate in such a moment. The winner of the competition was neither Italian nor Slovenian.

GIGI – In short, he saved Gorizia from the Third World War...

Moonlight Serenade – (Glenn Miller 1953)

SCENE 11

GIGI – (*near his cart*) There has been much gossip in Gorizia about the reasons why you, Countess, have never married.

NICOLETTA - The truth is very simple, Gigi. A young romantic, I fell in love with an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army... or was it the Royal Army. (*Ironically*) Would you like to know the truth? Instead, only my dog Pedro knows the truth. (*She exits, offended.*)

GIGI – He's offended her

Ba Kiss Me Little One on the Mouth (1953) – *Quartetto Cetra*

GIGI – (*sitting on the bench, sees Guglielmina enter*) Ostroporco, what is Guglielmina doing here? Are you going to buy me a caramel naked?

GUGLIELMINA – No, Gigi, your dears are ruining my dinner and I'm not with the best dentists... The other day you saw yourself cjaminâ and fevelâ as an elderly man, but so distinguished... *(sits on the bench with Gigi)*

GIGI – That was the famous architect Max Fabiani. I complained to him about the decline in sweets sales, and he complained to me about the construction of ugly buildings that are disfiguring the city of Gorizia, which he's always loved very much...

GUGLIELMINA – And cemûd vâ cui afârs?

GIGI – Many years passed, between periods of peace and war: business is declining and my health is getting worse. My sweets are no longer as popular as they once were. There's competition from popcorn, chewing gum imported from America, but also from the candy industry in Gorizia, which has benefited from the Free Zone. *(bells ring)*

GUGLIELMINA – At the end of the day I'm ready to taste it.

GIGI – Stop here for a moment, come on, I'll tell you something.

GUGLIELMINA – *(looking at the clock)* No podiums. Or ai the gjat on the spargher. Yesterday or soi lada to cjatâ me fradi in Udin, and then you want to move me there in the plaza to buy fasui, patatis, kapuzi and salata. Otherwise you daurman Countess Nicoleta and so Mari Olga will not have anything to taste. *(runs out)*

GIGI – *(left alone)* No one has time to listen to me anymore. It seems everyone is having an issue with me. The highway code no longer allows the circulation of carts like mine, and I can't even stop in front of a school in Gorizia because the principal, who was my client, doesn't want to see me there with my cart. *(coughs)* My health is getting worse and worse. My zenoci clogs me up and I can't stand on my feet anymore, and working is getting harder and harder... No one wants to give me a hand. I'm afraid I'll have to retire soon. *(exits)*

Only You – *(The Platters 1955)*

SCENE 12

LJUBKA – Countess Nicoletta! She's always so busy with her charitable activities.

NICOLETTA - Yes, my dear Ljubka. Since 1949, I have been involved with the International Refugee Organization, the UN branch dedicated to caring for refugees from the Second World War.

LJUBKA - Charity, inspired by her deep religiosity, ended up absorbing her completely, Countess.

NICOLETTA – Exactly. I also continue to attend conferences at the San Vincenzo and the spiritual assistance program for the armed forces. Despite our childhood being tainted by the Great War, we Coronini grew up in comfort. We've had so much in life, thanks to our parents. It's right to give back to the less fortunate what we've received, even in excess. And how's Ljubka doing with you?

LJUBKA – Well, Countess, well. Over the years, I've dedicated many verses to the children I teach in Slovenian schools in the Gorizia area. I taught first in San Floriano and then in various schools in the Gorizia area, from Vermeigliano to Mernico and Scriò. In my poems, I sing of a world without borders and without hatred, where peace, freedom, and harmony will ultimately prevail.

NICOLETTA – I had the opportunity to read the heartbreaking letters she wrote after her husband's death, when she was locked up in prison.

LJUBKA - The memory of Lojze has transcended fascism and the tumultuous months following the end of the conflict along our eastern border, and today he is counted among the Slovenian martyrs and among the prominent figures of choral singing, a discipline that represents one of the most beloved cultural heritages of the Slovenian people.

NICOLETTA - You are a poet of great sensitivity, who in her life experienced unspeakable suffering due to persecution, but whose voice

never uttered a word of hatred or vengeance. Your poems celebrate the Gorizia landscape, historical events, the love for your husband, and religious themes. I would like to hear some of your verses, please.

LJUBKA – With great pleasure, Countess.

V gozdu

Vse zatopljeno je v sanje —
daleč so misli vsakdanje. Bori molče.
Nekaj se v njih je zganilo,
nekaj iz sanj prebudilo moje srce.
Kakor da temni spomini
v gozda skrivnostni tišini mimo beže.

In the woods

Everything is immersed in dreams—
everyday thoughts are far away. The pine trees are silent.
Something in them moved,
something shook my heart from dreams.
As if dark memories
in the arcane silence of the forest
were flowing past me.

NICOLETTA – (*claps her hands*) But it's wonderful, Ljubka. Could I listen to another one?

LJUBKA – I wouldn't want you to get bored with my verses, Countess.

NICOLETTA – I'm a writer too, but her verses are beautiful because they're written from the heart.

LJUBKA – Well, if you really insist, let's listen to two short sonnets about autumn.

Po njivah rumenih

Po njivah rumenih
je burja zavelain tožno zapelaje pesem jeseni.
Tam v vrtu za hišo
so astre zacvele in težko so vplelev nas misel jeseni.

A bori so temni
do tal se sklonili in tiho molilimolitev jeseni.

Across the yellow fields

Across the yellow fields
the bora blew and sadly sang a song to autumn.
There, in the garden behind the house
, the asters were in bloom and barely inspired us to think about autumn.
But the pines bent
darkly to the ground and silently recited a prayer to autumn.

Jesenska

Vse žalostno je in otožno.
Mar sonce boji se jeseni, da skrilo se je za oblake? Tesno zdaj pri srcu je
meni. (*Guglielmina enters with the groceries*)
I don't know any planinah,
I'm talking about something, gozdovi. In mrtvo brez listja je drevlje —in
temni so naši domovi.

Fall

Everything is sad and desolate.
Does the sun fear autumn, which has hidden behind the clouds? I now
feel anguish in my heart.
There is no sun on our pastures,
all the fields and woods are dark. And the trees are dead and leafless—
and our houses are dark.

NICOLETTA – Despite the difficult trials she was forced to face, such as the
martyrdom of her husband, and the torture inflicted on her, she always
maintained a noble and kind demeanor towards everyone.

LJUBKA – Thank you for these kind words, Nicoletta. (*notices Wilhelmina*)
Dobrodošli Wilhelmina .

NICOLETTA - You've arrived too, Guglielmina.

GUGLIELMINA – Excuse me, Sister Ljubka. I listened to the last part of that
most beautiful poem of his about autumn. But since it's a little cold,

wouldn't it be worth a poem about the moment too? So, maybe I'll scjaldâsi a little...

LJUBKA – Okay Wilhelmina.

Gmajne gorijo

As soon as the

wine is older,

the wine will be fine.

In ruja grmiči?

Po njihza oddihse žarki lovijoin liste razkuštranerdeče škropijo.

Popotnik gre mimo,

začuden obstane, oči si pomane. Joj, gmajne gorijo.

The meadows are burning

across the karst terrain

, the stripped vines smile goldenly. Even the groaning of the pine trees disperses in the sun like sad dreams.

And are the bushes in bloom?

The sun's rays chase them like refreshment, and the disheveled leaves pellucid red.

The traveler passes by,

stops in amazement, rubs his eyes

. Ah, the meadows are burning.

LJUBKA – I hope Wilhelmina has warmed herself from the burning meadows... Now I really must say goodbye. Countess... *(shaking hands)*

GUGLIELMINA – See you again, Sister Ljubka. *(Ljubka exits)* Countess Guglielmina, are you looking forward to Gigi Ocja?

NICOLETTA – Do you mean Luigi Pecorari, the street vendor of sweets?

GUGLIELMINA – Chel. Al è muart za more than a month ago, intuna Freda zornada di marz since 1958. Lu ài savût as soon as vuê in the morning at the marcjât.

NICOLETTA – Poor Gigi, he had always been a reserved and solitary man.

GUGLIELMINA - He says he's dying of pneumonia.

NICOLETTA – He must have been abandoned by everyone. I think what killed him was the indifference of those who had loved his loved ones so much . *(They exit.)*

The sky in a room – *(Gino Paoli - Mina 1960)* LONG x CHANGE DRESS

SCENE 13 - Written: 1990

GUGLIELMINA – *(enters with a cane and sits on the bench)* Who is this again? Ljubka Šorli!

LJUBKA – Wilhelmina ! *(enters with a cane, they shake hands)* How many years have passed since our last meeting?

GUGLIELMINA – *(trying to speak in Italian)* Amancul vinc... venti.

LJUBKA - Were you able to recognize me right away, even though I have white hair and so many wrinkles now mark my face?

WILLIAMINA – Cui no cognô a Guriza the famous Slovenian poet Ljubka Šorli. Fâs ancimò the teacher?

LJUBKA – No, I've been retired for many years. When the competition for Slovenian language teachers was announced, I got a teaching position at the elementary school on Via Randaccio in Gorizia, and I remained there until I retired. Over all these years, I've written over a thousand poems.

GUGLIELMINA – Mil poesîs?

LJUBKA – Yes, I composed them in memory of my husband, but above all I dedicated them to children, publishing them in Pastirček, the periodical where I was the editor for 40 long years. Sometimes I was drawn to a beautiful postcard displayed in the Katoliška knjigarna on Travnik, and, inspired by the postcard's theme, I would write a poem on it, which I would send to my grandchildren Vera and Igor in Sistiana and to Vojko Simčič, the son of my cousin Silva Božič in Idrija. I also wrote many sonnets, but besides poems, I loved writing short skits for school use, and

for many years I collaborated with the Slovenian Radio station in Trieste on the program Radio za šole.

GUGLIELMINA – Radio for Schools. I know it has received many prestigious awards.

LJUBKA - Yes, that's true. But the award I'm truly proud of is Pope John Paul II's Pro Ecclesia et Pontefice in 1979. I learned that your mistress, Countess Nicoletta Coronini, also passed away in the meantime.

GUGLIELMINA – *(trying to speak in Italian)* Yes, more than four years have passed now... four years.

LJUBKA – Don't force yourself to speak Italian, just use your Friulian. I don't speak it, but I understand it well enough. When I was young, I lived in Podgora, or Piedimonte as you call it, and the older people there all spoke four languages: Slovenian, Italian, German, and Friulian.

GUGLIELMINA – *(relieved)* Thank you. Our mistress Nicoleta no avend vût frûts come suo fradi Guglielmo, a iera lada a fâ testament dal notaio Sardela...

LJUBKA – *(correcting her)* Notary Sardelli... The Coronini counts had always maintained excellent relations with the Slovenians across the border. Nedelja...

GUGLIELMINA – Sunday...

LJUBKA – Well done! So you understand a little Slovenian too... On Sunday they rode their bikes to Kromberk, attended Holy Mass, and then chatted with the villagers.

GUGLIELMINA - When Countess Nicoleta died in 1984, I know Fradi Guglielmo took a coach...

LJUBKA – Nualizât...?

GUGLIELMINA – Yes, he got married, he rented a bus to have the inhabitants of Kromberk participate in his funeral. What a time it was that

I was taken care of by Countess Nicoletta. But the countess made such a will by the notary Sardela...

LJUBKA – Notary Sardelli...

GUGLIELMINA – Sardela or Sardeli, al è simpri pes di magjâ. This will was also taken into account by my servitude. To me, Guglielmina Ramsbacher, in addition to the severance pay that was merciless to me for so many services, I was left with a little bit of bez, to assure me of a peaceful retirement.

LJUBKA – Bernarda Ferligoj, his beloved Slovenian housekeeper from Doberdò, confided in me that he also left her an annuity of 120,000 lire a year and without having to pay any inheritance tax.

GUGLIELMINA – Who was also Count Guglielmo Coronini killed by a blow in Vienna . And he cummed on the wrist dongja so sùr ta cuiete da capela di famea. Par testament à vuarut up there dut to the Municipality of Guriza. *(they go out together)*

Music for the final scene

ALESSIO - Ljubka left this world at the age of 83, on April 30, 1993. The Bratuž-Šorli family grave in the Gorizia cemetery is the work of the painter Tone Kralj. But the poet's memory lives on in Tolmin as well: a plaque commemorates her on the facade of her birthplace, and a bust on the house where she later lived, now the headquarters of Caritas. Since 2014, the Slovenian elementary school in Vermeigliano has also been named after her.

ANTONIETTA - We must remember Ljubka, her life journey, her poetry, and her message. The Slovenian poet taught us that even suffering—no matter how great—can be soothed if we raise the spiritual level of our lives. Ljubka Šorli sought salvation in poetry and wanted to generously share the treasure she carried within herself with others.

FINAL SONG OR MUSIC