

MOZART'S LAST MISTAKE

A brisk tale with slow music and four deaths

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CHARACTERS

Constanze - Mozart's widow

Teresa - Salieri's wife

The Mysterious Man in Black

The Mozart quartet

The Salieri quartet

December 18, 1801. Evening.
The spacious, long-abandoned
room where Mozart died. The
remaining furniture is shoved
into a corner and covered
with a dusty tarp.

The squeak of a long disused
door lock being turned.

Enter Constanze. Her steps
echo in the dark. She lights
a torch causing gloomy
shadows to crawl across the
walls. A shattering scream.
This is Constanze reacting to
a mouse that runs between her
legs. She wipes sweat from
her forehead, takes a deep
breath. Looks around the
abandoned room as if
listening to old memories.
She hears Mozart's laughter
ringing in the air. The
laughter dies out with her
memories.

Constanze pulls a note out of
her pocket and reads. A gust
of wind blows the door open
and a snowy whirlwind whirls
in. Constanze hurries to slam
the door shut. Horse hooves
on pavement. Constanze looks
out the window where
someone's huge, gloomy shadow
passes by. Constanze screams
and runs into the corner
where she hides beneath the
tarp covering the old
furniture.

Quiet. The gloomy silence is
broken by an ominous knock at
the door. Constanze cries out
in fright. The door opens. A
bright ray of yellow light
pierces the dark. A figure
appears in the doorway and
casts a menacing shadow on
the room's opposite wall.
This figure in a black,
floor-length cloak enters the
room. It holds a large
leather traveling bag.
The figure looks around, puts
the traveling bag in the

corner, goes to the door and locks it with the key Constanze left in the keyhole. It lights a candle and begins to resemble a normal human being. Constanze sneezes beneath the tarp. The figure goes to the corner and pulls back the tarp.

CONSTANZE

(Cries out in fright and covers her face with her hands) A-a-a-a!

TERESA

Shh! Quiet!

CONSTANZE

Who are you?

TERESA

I invited you here. You did get my note?

CONSTANZE

So you're the one. *(Holds a piece of paper out to the unknown woman.)* "Dear Baroness Constanze Nikolaus von Nissen! I humbly beg your audience in the home where your husband Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Mozart died. Today. Immediately after sundown." So what is it you want?

TERESA

I want to know who killed Mozart.

CONSTANZE

As if you didn't know.

TERESA

No. I don't.

CONSTANZE

Salieri did it. Everybody says so.

TERESA

On the contrary. The city is rife with rumors that Salieri did not kill him. The city is up in arms! The shadow of suspicion has fallen on someone else!

CONSTANZE

That's nonsense and gossip! Salieri did the deed.

TERESA

No! He was a model family man and -

CONSTANZE

Since when has the notion of a model family man guaranteed unsullied moral purity? As a rule, the worst maniacs are respectable family men.

TERESA

No, no. Salieri did not kill the great Mozart. Tomorrow the town unveils a new statue to Mozart, not Salieri!

CONSTANZE

Yes, he's still alive. But Mozart is dead. It would be better the other way around. Our world is not just. But who are you? Oh, yes! I recognize you! You are one of those crazy admirers who hung around Mozart! What are you after? You can have a seat in my loge at the unveiling. Now, get out of here!

TERESA

All right, all right! Just one question first. I'm looking for something here.

CONSTANZE

What? In my home? Are you crazy? What could possibly belong to you here?

TERESA

Something that can save my reputation.

CONSTANZE

Reputation? What reputation? Who are you?

TERESA

(Quietly) Salieri's wife.

CONSTANZE

(Horried) Who? *(Hides behind the divan.)*

TERESA

Teresa Salieri.

CONSTANZE

Get out of here! *(Crawls under a table.)* I'll call my servants.

TERESA

Hear me out!

CONSTANZE

(Shouts) Help!

TERESA

Stop shouting! No one can hear you!

CONSTANZE

What do you want from me?

TERESA

I have no plans to kill you.

CONSTANZE

Then why have you come?

TERESA

(Bends over awkwardly to look at Constanze) To prove once and for all -

CONSTANZE

(From beneath the table) What?

TERESA

(As if talking to a child) That Salieri did not kill Mozart.

CONSTANZE

(Hunching back as far into the corner as she can go) But everybody knows Salieri did it.

TERESA

That's a lie.

CONSTANZE

(Quickly) Witnesses have sworn to it.

TERESA

(Gets down on hands and knees to look Constanze in the eye although Frau Mozart turns her back on her) What proof could your witnesses have? These are people who hated Salieri and their words were accepted as truth by their heirs. You must help me find Mozart's real killers!

CONSTANZE

There is no such thing! Leave my house this instant!

TERESA

You don't realize what danger you are in yourself. Mozart's assassins could kill you, too. *(Waits for a reply that never comes. Gets up and heads toward the door.)* So be it, then. If you truly aren't interested in learning who the real killer is -

CONSTANZE

(Comes out from under the table) No, no. Don't go. *(Hurriedly.)* You must tell me what you know. Only I'm warning you: everything concerning my husband's death is shrouded in mystery.

TERESA

I thought you said there were no mysteries.

CONSTANZE

Oh, there are. But it's best not to stir them up. Why try to change what everyone has grown accustomed to? Mozart can't be resurrected. Even if you can prove that Salieri didn't kill him, what will that change?

TERESA

You don't understand, then. I am the wife of Mozart's killer. Can you imagine what it is like to live with that? Everybody shuns me. And you ask what might change. I live the life of a leper! In fact, I'm a very nice person! I am capable of offering aid in a moment of need. But nobody ever requires anything of me. Sometimes I hate Salieri for dooming me to such isolation.

CONSTANZE

Where is your husband?

TERESA

He's shut away. In an insane asylum.

CONSTANZE

Ah! So we have something in common.

TERESA

What's that?

CONSTANZE

My husband is shut away, too. Only he is in a coffin. Another time I might have been convinced to help you.

TERESA

Help me now! You can't imagine what it's like to live with the shame of being Mozart's killer! Help me!

CONSTANZE

I'm a complete idiot for even listening to you. But so be it. If you'll tell me everything you know about these new suspects. That is, I mean to say if you'll promise it will all be very scary I'll go along with it. I love being scared. I hope ghosts pay you visits!

TERESA

My heavens, this is no plaything! Don't you remember how it happened?

CONSTANZE

What's it to you?

TERESA

The notion of the experiential return. You have to duplicate everything just as it was that night and then the past can be relived.

CONSTANZE

(Thinks) You think so? You mean act it out as if we were in a theater? I doubt it.

TERESA

Constanze! It's too late to back out now. I know for a fact that Mozart's killer is out to get you, too. You need to know who killed him in order to save yourself! And so: Can you recall everything that happened the night of Mozart's death?

CONSTANZE

(Looks around the room, shifts the table over a bit) It's been so many years. *(Thoughtfully.)* A year is a time frame consisting of three hundred sixty-five disappointments. A countless amount of such time frames have gone by since.

TERESA

Oh, not that many. It's only been ten years.

CONSTANZE

Ten years?! Why that's an entire eternity! I can't remember what happened yesterday. How can I remember what happened ten years ago?

TERESA

Yesterday was Valentine's Day.

CONSTANZE

Oh, yes. Just one person sent me a card. I sent it myself! No one else would do it. Can you imagine that? When Mozart was alive I was inundated in Valentine's cards. He was even a little jealous!

TERESA

I know what you mean. No one remembered me yesterday, either.

CONSTANZE

Have a candy. I still have some lying around here. They're Chinese. So, you're alone now, are you? Isn't that quaint? Say, what do you miss most in your husband? What part of his body? Huh?

TERESA

That could sound rather vulgar.

CONSTANZE

Oh, come now. Don't be shy. What?

TERESA

His snore. When I would come to bed, Salieri would already be snoring. I used to try singing in bed, and whistling. It had no effect on him, and I couldn't fall asleep to save my life. That's when I began writing him letters. When he was taken away - that's when I suddenly realized I could not fall asleep without his snoring.

CONSTANZE

What did you write him letters for? Couldn't you just tell him what you had to say?

TERESA

Not about that - they were love letters. Love letters about ideal love. He wouldn't have understood. He was a strict sort. You know how it is. You see somebody all the time and you can't say a thing to them. Then you're all alone somewhere and your head starts filling up with bright ideas. But there's nobody to tell them to! He's gone! That's how it was with Antonio and me. But what's Salieri got to do with it? It's Mozart we're here to discuss. Has anything changed here or is everything as it was that last night?

CONSTANZE

I don't know. I wasn't here the night he died. What I know from our servant's stories is that Mozart was composing something.

*The Mozart quartet plays
Mozart's "Requiem." The
musicians are almost naked.
In some strange way their
bodies seem to supplement
this tragic music so filled
with life.*

TERESA

Do you think he was writing something sad?

CONSTANZE

Tragic! Everybody knows that just before Mozart died he was commissioned to write a requiem. The commission came from a man in a black mask. And since Mozart died soon after, everyone concluded it was this mysterious man who poisoned him.

TERESA

Why would he do that?

CONSTANZE

I don't know. There was a rumor it was your husband behind the mask of the mysterious man in black. And that's the whole truth. And since he was never seen again, I sold the "Requiem."

TERESA

You sold it twice.

CONSTANZE

I had a family to feed. If your husband didn't kill Mozart, then it was his "Requiem" that killed him. The more Mozart worked on it, the worse his health deteriorated. You may not know this, but before he died, Mozart's hands and feet swelled terribly. That's a sure sign of poisoning. And you should have smelled him! (*Sniffs.*) My Lord, it still smells here the way it did the night he died. Strange! How could that aroma last so long? And such a vivid one at that! If that's how death smells, you could fall in love with it.

TERESA

Static? In motion?

CONSTANZE

Who? The smell?

TERESA

Mozart!

CONSTANZE

Oh, my husband. He spent most of his time lying down. Then he'd sit awhile. You know he was nearly sent to debtor's prison.

TERESA

What does that have to do with anything? I want you to describe your husband. Can you do that?

CONSTANZE

You can't be serious.

*Teresa winds up the wall
clock.*

What are you doing?

TERESA

I am activating an apparatus of tremendous moral value. And incidentally, we are almost out of time.

CONSTANZE

Aren't you full of riddles tonight?

TERESA

It's now nearly nine o'clock in the evening and, if I'm not mistaken, Mozart died at twelve fifty-five. We must finish everything by then. So, please. Help me. What was Mozart doing that night? Was he composing his "Requiem"? How did he do that?

CONSTANZE

By and large he could never sit still. Sometimes he would sit, sometimes he would wander around. Sometimes he would leap up and come running after me -

TERESA

How so?

CONSTANZE

You mean how did he run or how did he come?

TERESA

I mean how did he come after you! I want to know everything in every detail.

CONSTANZE

For goodness' sake, how can I talk about such intimate things?

TERESA

Don't if you don't want to. Were you the same height as your husband?

CONSTANZE

Yes. But what difference does that make?

TERESA

(Extracts a measuring tape) Stand here. *(Measures her height.)*

CONSTANZE

I was born for the stage, don't you think?

TERESA

You were born for granite. On a gravestone. You lied to me. Mozart was shorter than you by an inch and a quarter.

CONSTANZE

A genius towers over only prejudice but he might well be shorter than his wife. Don't let yourself be fooled!

TERESA

Look! *(Uses wooden pliers to remove a pair of pants from the traveling bag.)* You see this?

CONSTANZE

What's there to see? (*Holds up a lorgnette to examine the pants.*) Wait a minute. Those are his winter pants. He was buried in these. Did you strip poor Mozart of his pants?

TERESA

I couldn't help myself! Put them on!

CONSTANZE

Me? Why?

TERESA

Didn't you want to look like Mozart?

CONSTANZE

But the smell will be horrid.

TERESA

History leaves no aromas. Only rumors. Put them on. I've washed them.

CONSTANZE

Why did you do that?

TERESA

So they wouldn't smell.

CONSTANZE

Not wash them; bring them. Did you take them off Mozart yourself? How could you leave him there naked?

TERESA

It wasn't I. It was that nasty gravedigger. Nobody will ever understand what goes on in those people's heads. Maybe he was a Mozart fan too. Listen, Constanze, don't pretend to be squeamish. Put them on. We do want to get to the bottom of things, don't we?

CONSTANZE

(*Being stubborn*) I thought there was truth only in wine and that men's pants concealed something altogether different.

TERESA

Would you stop that? You keep twisting everything I say.

CONSTANZE

(*Puts on the pants with a huge codpiece*) So what am I supposed to do in these?

TERESA

(*Wiggles her hips suggestively*) Whatever your husband did.

CONSTANZE

How come there's so much free space up front?

TERESA

Because he was a man, sweetheart. Have you forgotten?

CONSTANZE

Mozart was unlike any other man alive.

TERESA

On this account, all men are alike.

CONSTANZE

Not Mozart.

TERESA

How's that? Was your husband missing something other men have?

CONSTANZE

Yes. Mozart was a freak. And he concealed the source of his shame with a wig.

TERESA

How long a wig did he have to cover up a shame like that?

CONSTANZE

Not as long as you think. Just ten inches. Mozart's wig only had to cover his ears.

TERESA

His ears?

CONSTANZE

Mozart's ears were not symmetrical. His left ear was bigger than his right.

TERESA

Is that so?

CONSTANZE

Oh yes. Nobody knew about that. He would turn his short ear to me when I was shouting at him and that way he could still hear magical melodies with his long ear. (*Waves her hand.*)

The Mozart quartet begins to play. The musicians draw their bows across each others' bodies.

TERESA

Stop that! (*Throws the tarp off the furniture.*) Let's continue our experiment. Please sit in this chair and try to be a perfect replica. (*Extracts a quill, ink and paper from the traveling bag.*)

CONSTANZE

Of whom? The chair?

TERESA

Of Mozart. Take this paper and pen -

CONSTANZE

Did you get this quill from his grave, too?

TERESA

So what if I did?

CONSTANZE

Why would Mozart have had so many quills in his grave? It's not like he's a bird to be all covered with feathers.

TERESA

Would you please stop making fun of the corpse? I trust you witnessed how your husband went about composing music?

CONSTANZE

Of course I did. The neighbors at such moments assumed he was a nut case. His admirers called it genius. For him it was something like flirting. But the object of his attention was music rather than women. He would stroke the piano so tenderly. Just as if it were me. Like this. It always started when I was getting ready to go out and do the shopping.

TERESA

To spend all of Mozart's hard-earned money?

CONSTANZE

Yes! That's what a simple woman I was. Everybody else lived in the shadow of his genius. I lived in the shadow of his poverty.

TERESA

Poor Mozart! But he had many friends. Was there really no one who could lend him money?

CONSTANZE

Friendship is kindled only in warm weather. Stormy days make quarters much too tight for two. (*Looks at herself in the mirror.*) Don't you think I make a handsome man?

TERESA

You might be even more handsome if you were to try on a bit of modesty as well. (*Looks around.*) Do you remember how the furniture was situated that night?

CONSTANZE

No. I already told you - too much time has passed since then.

TERESA

Let me remind you, then. (*Looks over the furniture.*) The table, the chair, the easy chair... Wait a minute. There should also be a chest of drawers and a harpsichord here.

CONSTANZE

How would you know?

TERESA

I saw them.

CONSTANZE

Where?

TERESA

In a picture.

CONSTANZE

Ah, you mean that pathetic soul who drew that picture the morning after Mozart's death? A hack artist if ever there was one. I refused to buy that picture he drew.

TERESA

Your mistake. It's a document. No matter how badly it's done, it shows everything in its proper place. I happen to have the picture with me. (*Pulls a picture from the traveling bag.*)

CONSTANZE

Where in heaven's name did you get that?

TERESA

I bought it. Now help me arrange everything just as it was that night. The chair in the middle. And this table to the center of the room.

They rearrange the furniture so that it corresponds to what is depicted in the drawing. Teresa draws the missing items in chalk on the floor. Constanze slips and falls.

CONSTANZE

Oh!

TERESA

Careful. You shouldn't be wearing those shoes. (*Helps her up.*) What are those, anyway?

CONSTANZE

They're ancient. I always wear them when it's slushy outside.

TERESA

How interesting. Split heels. Rather like a devil's hooves, don't you think?

CONSTANZE

It was the fashion.

TERESA

I must have been completely out of fashion back then.

CONSTANZE

So what else is new?

TERESA

Next topic please.

CONSTANZE

(*Looks over the picture*) What is this squiggle here?

TERESA

A trombone. (*Pulls a trombone case out of the traveling bag.*)

CONSTANZE

Doesn't look like one. A trombone is a sinful little thing that can drive one to divine enchantment. But this - I told you, the guy was a hack.

TERESA

(*Takes the picture away from Constanze*) He's not a hack. This is a document.

CONSTANZE

(*Goes to the trombone case*) May I look at this?

TERESA

(*Shielding the case from her*) Not just yet. The day before Mozart's death a trombone like this was brought here. You don't happen to know what he needed it for, do you?

CONSTANZE

No, I don't. I only know he never tooted on a trombone.
(Tries to reach the trombone case.)

TERESA

(Pushes the trombone away from Constanze) So he didn't play the trombone. Why did he need one then? Who could it have been for? (Compares the position of the furniture with the drawing.) Everything here is just as it was.

CONSTANZE

(Reaches for the trombone again) May I just give this thing one little blow -

TERESA

Patience, sweetheart. All in due time. (Removes the trombone case to the corner.) All witnesses say that on the last night before Mozart's death there were two wine goblets on the table.

CONSTANZE

Well of course! (Points to the picture.) You can see it right here - one goblet with wine in it, another one empty. When the doctors said Mozart might have been poisoned I had no doubts. The empty goblet was Mozart's. Plus, he was all bloated.

TERESA

You can be bloated by almost anything. Your babbling, for instance.

CONSTANZE

Or your husband's music.

TERESA

What?! You've never heard the true Salieri! (Motions to the Salieri quartet.) "Tarantella for the Holiday of the New Wine." By Antonio Salieri. Opus No. 99. From the 13th measure, please.

Enter the Salieri quartet. It is made up of old men resembling cabbages because of the huge wigs with bows they wear on their heads. They play with a delicate tartness - entirely unlike the Mozart quartet.

Salieri was always so concerned about his musicians. He was eternally ready to come to their aid. I remember one Christmas he asked me to make a list of all the sick musicians in his orchestra. "Would you like to buy them

medicine?" I asked. "No, I want to invite them into our home," he said. "I've done the calculations and sick people eat far less food."

CONSTANZE

What a dreadfully resourceful husband. Just dreadful. Rather like his music. I always need a drink when I hear his music.

TERESA

(Removes goblets and a wine decanter from the traveling bag) I've heard your husband appreciated the joys of Bacchus.

CONSTANZE

I'd put it this way: He stood shoulder to shoulder with Bacchus but was prepared to bow down before Bach.

TERESA

Shall we do reverence ourselves? *(Pours drinks.)*

CONSTANZE

Oh, that has a nice ring to it. Only don't drown me! *(Drinks affectedly.)*

TERESA

(Shouts) Not like that! You're a Mozart!

CONSTANZE

(Downs her glass in a gulp) Not bad. May I have another?
TERESA *(Pours)*: Is it true your father kept a poisonous vineyard?

CONSTANZE

What?

TERESA

I say, is it true what they say about your father cultivating a poisonous vineyard?

CONSTANZE

Who told you that?

TERESA

Everybody in town said so.

CONSTANZE

More gossip! My father never used the stuff.

TERESA

You mean, it's true about the poisonous vineyard, then?

CONSTANZE

What? (*Stops the Salieri quartet.*) Are you suggesting I poisoned my husband? How dare you?! I loved that man!

TERESA

How many times?

CONSTANZE

Three times a day at first. Later two. Then three again - but by then it was per year.

TERESA

Aren't you vulgar.

CONSTANZE

That's life! Drop your silly suspicions.

TERESA

You always begin with those closest to the victim.

CONSTANZE

Closest? My Lord, everybody who knew Mozart loved him. We met when he was 26 and I was 19. My mother sheltered him in our home when everyone else was kicking him out. He was a nobody then. There was nothing left of his former fame as a wunderkind.

TERESA

So you married him out of pity.

CONSTANZE

I was in a terrible state of limbo and I mean that literally and metaphorically. I was a malicious type. When I went outdoors I never saw anyone - it was like I was walking in my sleep. It was a hazy, fuzzy state of mind I was in. And I lost my head. He wrote me letters and was in despair himself. His father had renounced him. He had no money. I had lost all hope and then, suddenly, he asked me to marry him. My head spun from the joy of it even though I knew he loved my older sister more than me. I married him anyway. And I never regretted it. We had a good marriage.

TERESA

I don't doubt it -

CONSTANZE

Then what do you doubt?

TERESA

That Salieri killed him! I want to find Mozart's true killers! And I want to punish them.

CONSTANZE

Punish Mozart's killers? Have you forgotten what country you live in? Courts of law in this country are famed for those who never have to answer to them.

TERESA

Why speak so badly about our country? Democracy here is spreading like wildfire!

CONSTANZE

You think so? All I see are two or three people getting rich and everybody else falling into debt. You haven't heard the latest gossip. About the growth of the common welfare. Our emperor resolved to enjoy a nice autumn day by taking a ride around Vienna. He had been told there was a fine wheat crop and he wanted to see it. The prime minister called in the Burgermeister of Vienna and asked about the year's crops. "Wheat only up to your knees," the Burgermeister answered sadly. "There's nothing to show." "Nonsense," said the prime minister, "get the peasants down on all fours and it will look like there's wheat up to their necks." You can say the same thing about the common man's salary. (*Climbs onto the back of the easy chair and stands there.*)

*Teresa tries to reach
Constanze but cannot.*

(*Happy that she has eluded the reach of her tormentor, Frau Mozart laughs gaily.*) I always knew I should have joined the circus. I could have been a great actress.

TERESA

I think you've turned out a big idiot. Who among Mozart's intimates could have wished him evil? Relatives, family members, friends -

CONSTANZE

I already told you: Everybody loved Mozart. It's all there in his music. Listen - (*Gestures to the Mozart quartet.*)

*The Mozart quartet plays
something gay.*

(*Constanze is carried away and begins to dance. Falls.*) Oh!

TERESA

Did you behave so foolishly with Mozart, too? No wonder he didn't live to 40.

CONSTANZE

It's my shoes.

TERESA

What's wrong with your shoes? (*Bends over and looks at her shoes.*) How interesting. Let me see those. (*As Constanze kicks her legs up in the air, Teresa examines the shoes with a magnifying glass and compares them to the picture.*)

CONSTANZE

Is there some problem?

TERESA

Can you lower your feet?

CONSTANZE

(*Continues to hold them high*) No.

TERESA

(*Yanks her into a standing position*) Do you recall that the night of Mozart's death there was a wet snow falling? (*Shows the picture.*) On this drawing you can clearly see dirt marks on the floor. There are a lot of foot prints. But the most interesting thing is that amidst all of these varied marks, there are marks of a woman's split-heel shoe. They are your shoes!

CONSTANZE

Mine? (*Looks at the drawing with the magnifying glass.*)

TERESA

Why did you conceal the fact that you were here that night?

CONSTANZE

(*Frightened*) Because I almost wasn't here. I arrived from Baden-Baden and I just dropped in to check on my ailing husband. He was feeling quite fine -

TERESA

So fine that he died after you left? Tell me, have you published all of Mozart's works?

CONSTANZE

All of them. Well, almost all. What does that have to do with anything?

TERESA

You're right - nothing. I just wanted... On the other hand, it doesn't matter anymore. Allow me to take this drawing and these - (*Takes the picture and Constanze's shoes and heads for the door.*)

CONSTANZE

Where are you going?

TERESA

You wanted me to leave. I'm going.

CONSTANZE

Wait a minute. You've got my things. Give me back my shoes! And that drawing! What do they have to do with Salieri?

TERESA

The tracks of these shoes will lead me to court and then let justice be done. Mea culpa.

CONSTANZE

(Throws herself at Teresa but fails to wrangle the picture and shoes from her. Calmly) Please, give me back my shoes! You've got it all wrong. How much do you want?

TERESA

I don't want your money. I want Mozart's last composition.

CONSTANZE

What?

TERESA

In exchange for your shoes.

CONSTANZE

His last composition was his "Requiem." Everybody knows that.

TERESA

(Stops the musicians) It wasn't his "Requiem." I want Mozart's final, *unknown* composition.

CONSTANZE

Was there such a composition? I don't know it.

TERESA

There's nothing surprising about you not knowing what your husband was up to. Did he have a secret compartment anywhere around here?

CONSTANZE

He had no reason to hide anything from me.

TERESA

Every husband has reason to hide something from his wife.

CONSTANZE

Hide? Only if it were money. Money, of course. He always hid money from me. A secret compartment. I don't recall. In the table leg? *(Begins looking everywhere, slips and falls.)* Oh yes! I think it was under one of the rugs. I forgot all about it. Mozart hid his money from me there and

when unexpected guests arrived, he would shove his dirty socks down there, too. I think it was around here somewhere. (*Tries pulling up one parquet tile, then another but nothing happens. Carefully looks over the floor and then suddenly -*) I know! It's the 18th one from the harpsichord leg. (*Counts off the parquet tiles and pulls back the 18th. A strange light emanates from below. From the hole in the floor she pulls out a pile of dirty socks and a paper packet.*)

TERESA

Let me see that! (*Snatches the packet and heads for the door.*)

CONSTANZE

Hey, where are you going? What about the drawing? And my shoes?

TERESA

(*Throws the shoes and drawing at her*) You can have 'em!
(*Opens the packet.*)

CONSTANZE

(*Picks the shoes and drawing up off the floor*) My, but it's hot in here! And I'm cold! How about a little fire in the fireplace? (*Sets the drawing on fire with the torch and tosses it in the fireplace. Throws her shoes in after it.*) What have you got there?

TERESA

(*Looks over the score. Reads*) A composition for quartet. So much music and so few instruments! Number one is the flute. Number two is the harpsichord. Number three is the trombone. Number four - I can't make out number four. The instrument's name is crossed out everywhere. (*Leafs through the score.*) Crossed out. It's even crossed out here. And here. The fourth instrument is crossed out everywhere!

CONSTANZE

May I see that?

TERESA

(*Holds the score up for Constanze to see, but does not give it to her*) Did Mozart ever say anything about this manuscript?

CONSTANZE

No. Why would he have hidden it? A week or two before he died, Mozart told me he was writing something that was either going to undermine society or doom it -

TERESA

Doom it?

CONSTANZE

Something like that.

TERESA

How curious. This composition is called "The Concerto of the Doomed." What do you know about that?

CONSTANZE

A few days before he died, Mozart told me he was writing a new concerto. He said all of Vienna would be shaken to the core if it were performed. I asked if he had composed a brilliant new melody. He said music wasn't the point.

TERESA

Then what was? The critics' reviews?

CONSTANZE

No. Its power.

TERESA

What power?

CONSTANZE

He didn't explain anything. But once he did say the essence of the concerto was in its symbols.

TERESA

What symbols might they have been?

CONSTANZE

I get the creeps just talking about this. (*Lifts the bed mattress, rummages around for a long time then sits on the bed.*) You won't believe it. He said this music would be impossible to listen to.

TERESA

What a curious goal for a composer. (*Holds the score up to the light and looks it over.*)

CONSTANZE

Don't touch it with your fingers.

TERESA

Why not?

CONSTANZE

He said it could kill the uninitiated.

TERESA

What? (*Tosses the score away.*) You mean he used poison ink?

CONSTANZE

I don't think so. Otherwise he would have been poisoned himself.

TERESA

(Dons a pair of rubber gloves) How else could it kill, then?

CONSTANZE

You won't believe this, but Mozart said this music was as lethal as any weapon. I don't know why. Don't ask! If you perform this composition as intended, everyone will die.

TERESA

Everyone?

CONSTANZE

Almost everyone. Although I don't know for sure, of course.

TERESA

(Approaches the score, picks it up gingerly with two fingers) That sounds incredible! "The Concerto of the Doomed." Maybe only the guilty will die?

CONSTANZE

The guilty? *(Suddenly.)* God, it's stuffy in here!

TERESA

Stuffy?

CONSTANZE

I think it's the wine you served. *(Looks at her goblet.)*

TERESA

Don't worry. My father did not tend a poisoned vineyard.

CONSTANZE

I think I'm bloating up!

TERESA

Stop that! What would cause you to bloat? You aren't guilty of anything!

CONSTANZE

That's true! Let me have a look at that score. *(Grabs it.)*
B - A - B - A - B. Not bad, huh? This concerto is a real riddle.

TERESA

What's that you said? A riddle?

CONSTANZE

Yes. So what?

TERESA

You mean you don't know? More even than pastries, the Viennese love to solve riddles. It's the pastime of all Viennese musicians - to encipher real people in the form of musical instruments. Rather like a game of charades.

CONSTANZE

(Picks up a violin and plucks the strings) Charades? You mean to say that the instruments in this score are part of a code?

TERESA

They are people!

CONSTANZE

What?

TERESA

Mozart enciphered specific people in the guise of instruments. The concerto begins with a flute solo. Who plays the flute?

CONSTANZE

Who doesn't play the flute?

TERESA

That's no answer. There must be some specific sign that points to a specific person. Tell me, did Mozart beat you?

CONSTANZE

Do you mean to ask if Mozart loved me? Yes. The neighbors used to think he was teaching me to sing. He would keep me singing like a bird, a-a-a-a-a! *(Her ecstatic cry turns into singing.)*

TERESA

You're not a bad soprano, Constanze!

CONSTANZE

Yes, if only I'd given it more time I could have been quite a singer.

TERESA

You're not the only one, sweetheart. Human desires are basically all the same, it's our potential that differs. So why did Mozart used to beat you?

CONSTANZE

Because I constantly tried to rip out the number 18 on his camisole.

TERESA

I'd beat you for that, too. Eighteen was the rank Mozart achieved in the Masonic lodge!

CONSTANZE

How do you know that about my husband?

TERESA

From my husband, Salieri.

CONSTANZE

Those who envy us always know more about us than we do ourselves. Do you have anything against me telling my present husband about this number 18? Baron von Nissen and I are currently working on a biography about Mozart.

TERESA

(With irritation) Would you quit repeating every silly thing I say?

CONSTANZE

But I look so smart when I do it.

TERESA

Wait a minute! *(Counts the pages in the manuscript.)* My God! There are exactly 18 pages here! *(Thinks.)* And, incidentally, Mozart died in 1791. If you add those figures - 1 plus 7 plus 9 plus 1 - you get 18!

CONSTANZE

And it was the 18th century!

TERESA

I trust you know how old Mozart was when he died.

CONSTANZE

Almost 36.

TERESA

Do you see?! 36! Three times six is 18!

CONSTANZE

Crazy geniuses are always surrounded by dim-witted crazies.

TERESA

Nevertheless, we had better be careful with this 18-page concerto. It has lethal power.

CONSTANZE

Beauty can't kill -

TERESA

Listen, Constanze. Like my brain-dead husband used to say, the number 18 in the Masonic lodge means "sacrifice." Or something like "self-sacrifice." (*Takes a camisole with the number 18 sewed into it out of the traveling bag.*) You said something about a camisole. Is this it?

CONSTANZE

(*Horrified*) You really did leave poor Mozart lying there naked!

TERESA

I rather suspect it was all the same to him.

CONSTANZE

(*Putting on the camisole*) Just right. How frightening!

TERESA

(*Seeing her as Mozart*) Amazing! You're the spitting image of Mozart!

CONSTANZE

More like of his sins. Do you know what death is?

The Mozart and Salieri quartets freeze, as if music has disappeared from the world.

TERESA

It's just like in music - silence and nothing more. We must get to the bottom of this: how is this score capable of killing? If we don't do it, someone will do it for us.

CONSTANZE

Who?

TERESA

This is the score for "The Concerto of the Doomed." Listen, if Mozart composed music capable of killing, it follows that it was written with the intention of leaving a mark on the lives of his enemies! Think. Who could have hated Mozart?

CONSTANZE

No one! Everybody who ever came into contact with him adored him. The butcher that Mozart patronized loved him because he could always cheat him. His tailor loved him because he saved money by cutting his sleeves short. Wolfgang loved it because he thought he was growing taller. But best of all was his barber. Wolfgang used to ask him, "Basilio, how come your hands are so dirty?" The barber

would say, "Because I don't bother washing my hands until after you've been in."

TERESA

Joking again! What I want to know is was there anyone in Mozart's circle who died under suspicious circumstances.

CONSTANZE

I told you, no. Except, wait a minute. Shortly after he died, someone tried to stab one of his pupils to death.

TERESA

Who was that?

CONSTANZE

The young pupil's own husband. His name was Hofdemel.

TERESA

What for?

CONSTANZE

Because she gave birth to a boy.

TERESA

Since when is that a crime?

CONSTANZE

The crime was that this boy was the spitting image of Mozart. When Hofdemel saw the child, he swore he would kill Mozart. He grabbed a knife, ran down his wife and slit her throat! But she survived. So two days later her husband went after her with a jagged-tooth saw.

TERESA

And?

CONSTANZE

This time he didn't miss. There was blood everywhere. Only it was his, not hers.

TERESA

What did he do to Mozart?

CONSTANZE

He didn't have the nerve to raise his hand against a genius.

TERESA

And so. Hofdemel played -

CONSTANZE

The flute.

*A flute is heard in the
Mozart quartet.*

TERESA

So number one in "The Concerto of the Doomed" is the
suicide Hofdemel.

CONSTANZE

You must be right. How old do you think Hofdemel was?

TERESA

You're kidding.

CONSTANZE

No. 36.

TERESA

And if you multiply 3 by 6 -

CONSTANZE

You get -

TERESA

18! So music punished him for threatening to kill Mozart.

CONSTANZE

But there's more to the concerto.

TERESA

Then there must be others who wished Mozart ill. Tell me,
was Mozart wealthy?

CONSTANZE

Wealthy? I wouldn't say so. The last two years of his life
he was poor as a church mouse.

TERESA

Mouse? Where's there a mouse? (*Goes to the cupboard and
opens drawer after drawer. Takes out plates and goblets and
begins to set the table as if she were expecting a guest.*)
Is there anything to eat around here? Tell me, why do you
think rich people need poor friends?

CONSTANZE

(*Afraid to move*) Your questions are naïve. Rich people
don't have poor friends.

TERESA

(*Wipes a goblet with a napkin and holds it up to the light*)
Then why did all those princes and counts call Mozart their
friend?

CONSTANZE

(Applies liner to her lashes) Wait a minute! Do you think this color suits me? *(Looks in her pocket mirror.)* I think it's quite nice.

TERESA

Did you hear what I asked you?

CONSTANZE

Oh, I'm sorry. Because they wanted to rub shoulders with a genius.

TERESA

Did they? Do you really think those people were capable of experiencing veneration?

CONSTANZE

(Powers her nose) For the sake of their own vanity, yes. I told you - my husband was like a tree. A great oak tree! His genius cast its shadow not only on him, but on everyone who knew him! Don't you think I could use a little more rouge on my cheeks?

Teresa takes the mirror away from Constanze.

(Offended) You're always under foot!

TERESA

Mozart did nothing for their vanity. They were after something else. Think. What could it be?

CONSTANZE

(Puts rouge on her cheek) Oh, I think I'm starving!

TERESA

Starving?

CONSTANZE

Exactly! What do people want who have everything? Immortality and nothing else. They're always trying to cook up a new recipe for immortality.

TERESA

Well, in a sense, Mozart found the recipe for immortality in his music. His music is immortal.

CONSTANZE

That's nothing but a metaphor. *(Pours a glass of wine and downs it in one gulp.)* And Mozart's friends weren't the type to play around with metaphors.

TERESA

Are you suggesting that some formula is encoded in his compositions? A formula for immortality? (*Ties a napkin around Frau Mozart's neck. Raises a spoonful of soup to her mouth.*)

CONSTANZE

(*Refuses the soup*) Judging by the title of the concerto, it was a formula for evil.

Teresa whacks Frau Mozart over the head with the concerto manuscript. Constanze opens her mouth in surprise.

TERESA

(*Shoves the soup spoon in Constanze's open mouth*) Do continue!

CONSTANZE

If you cross evil and immortality you get Armageddon. This manuscript contains evil. What kind, I don't know. But it's there.

TERESA

Exactly! You know who might come visit you? One of those who are still seeking that evil to this day.

CONSTANZE

So then who stands behind the harpsichord?

TERESA

(*Looks at the manuscript*) I think a woman that Mozart loved - and scorned!

CONSTANZE

You're insinuating me again.

TERESA

(*Looking at the manuscript again*) Or maybe it was a man who envied him? Was Mozart fond of men?

CONSTANZE

Who didn't he love? Only don't go reading anything into that.

TERESA

So who was that woman Mozart was seeing?

CONSTANZE

I told you. Magdalena Hofdemel. The one with the slit throat.

TERESA

Pretty?

CONSTANZE

Ugly as sin. The situation, anyway.

TERESA

Did Mozart love her?

CONSTANZE

Of course he loved her if he paid her those little visits. He was as insatiable as Dionysus, as passionate as Bacchus and as hot as a pistol!

TERESA

Your symbols are rather obscure!

CONSTANZE

Music flowed from him like semen.

TERESA

(Shouts) What a horrid comparison!

CONSTANZE

What are you shouting at me for? You're the one who asked about love.

TERESA

What did this Magdalena play?

CONSTANZE

The harpsichord.

TERESA

Just like me!

CONSTANZE

What do you have to do with it? The score has a harpsichord in it.

TERESA

So it's Magdalena, is it?

CONSTANZE

I don't know!

TERESA

(Thinks) It would be the natural thing to consider a scorned woman capable of seeking vengeance. In fact, a humiliated lover might be capable of killing.

CONSTANZE

No. She couldn't have done that. She loved him. Maybe more than anyone.

TERESA

Oh? How would you know?

CONSTANZE

She always walked around with her head proudly raised in the air.

TERESA

What did she have to be so proud of? Because Mozart lay hands on her a couple of times?

CONSTANZE

Yes! As a scorned woman, she wanted people to see the scars she wore on her neck for the sake of Mozart's love!

TERESA

Whatever became of her?

CONSTANZE

Didn't I tell you? She choked to death on a piece of herring. Her throat was her weak spot.

TERESA

What an unromantic death. So music punished her, too. (*Looks at the score.*) But the concerto continues. And she is not the final suspect. It's now the third instrument's turn to solo. The third instrument here is... Tell me, what is that medallion hanging on your neck? What is that figure there?

CONSTANZE

That's my son, Franz Xavier.

TERESA

(*Takes a closer look*) How handsome.

CONSTANZE

My son or the medallion?

TERESA

Your son.

CONSTANZE

He's six months old here.

TERESA

Ah, so the boy's portrait was done shortly before Mozart died?

CONSTANZE

Yes.

TERESA

Franz Xavier is a handsome name. (*Looks at the manuscript.*) After the flute and harpsichord a third instrument - a trombone - appears in the score. How uncommon! A trombone in a quartet? Who in Mozart's circle would have played trombone?

CONSTANZE

Mmm, I wouldn't know.

TERESA

What a curious name you gave your son: Franz Xavier.

CONSTANZE

What's so curious about it? It's quite common.

TERESA

I seem to recall that one of Mozart's pupils had that name. You don't happen to recall what instrument he played?

CONSTANZE

What difference does it make? Pure coincidence.

TERESA

What's that?

CONSTANZE

The fact that he played trombone.

TERESA

Who?

CONSTANZE

Franz Xavier.

TERESA

Your newborn son?

CONSTANZE

No. Mozart's favorite pupil!

TERESA

No need to raise your voice. I was merely inquiring. This score has an exquisite and distinctive part for a trombone! (*Takes the trombone from its case.*) Would you care to give it a toot?

Constanze does not react.

I thought you wanted to? Blow, Constanze. Go ahead, blow!

Silence.

And so, this young pupil of Mozart's, Franz Xavier, is also written into "The Concerto of the Doomed." You don't happen to have his portrait do you? (*Looks at the picture.*) I wonder what his shoes looked like? You don't have a locket, do you?

CONSTANZE

With what, a pair of men's shoes?

TERESA

No, his portrait. (*Gestures to the Salieri quartet and announces the work to be played.*) "Ode to Unrepentant Confessions." Antonio Salieri, from the 18th measure.

The Salieri quartet performs a slow, plodding melody.

CONSTANZE

(*After perusing her medallion*) Yes! He's not Mozart's son!

TERESA

I had guessed that.

CONSTANZE

So what was I to do? He had his half-slit Magdalena.

TERESA

And you had Franz Xavier. I presume that after you had his child he must have truly hated Mozart.

CONSTANZE

Your husband hated him a lot more!

TERESA

My husband hated him because of music; Franz Xavier hated him because of you! (*Gestures to the Salieri quartet to move on to the coda.*) "Ode to Unrepentant Confessions." Repent, Constanze. Repent! Why aren't you repenting?

The Salieri quartet plays a thunderous conclusion.

CONSTANZE

Franz Xavier was Mozart's favorite pupil. I was charmed by him! The instant I saw him I knew we were bound by a common secret.

TERESA

And what was that?

CONSTANZE

An irresistible mutual attraction.

TERESA

Weren't you original? That's how animals are made.

CONSTANZE

Yes, but with the difference that humans strive to hide it and animals don't. It was Voltaire who said that.

TERESA

How do you know? Did he tell you himself?

CONSTANZE

He told it to the world!

TERESA

Let's get back to your trombone.

CONSTANZE

Franz Xavier was my golden boy. And I always felt like a pirate who had stolen him.

TERESA

Poor Mozart! Nothing makes a man more vulnerable than playing the role of the husband.

CONSTANZE

That's not true! Mozart deceived me first when he went with Magdalena! I just wanted to prove to him that love is not music!

TERESA

What do you know about music?

CONSTANZE

Everything! You know how love differs from music? The pleasure of love ends when you marry. The pleasure of performing ends when you have to pay for it.

TERESA

Your love must have caused Mozart much pain.

CONSTANZE

More like the sickness of paying for love.

TERESA

Loving your husband as you did, it's amazing you ever bore him any children.

CONSTANZE

And there were many! I bore Mozart five children! True, four died before the age of a month. But when I learned I was pregnant by Franz Xavier I resolved that this child must live because he was a child of love. Only I beg of you - my son must never know he is not a Mozart. Of all people, you must know how it hurts a boy when people say, "Kid, your father is no genius."

TERESA

Yes. My children hear it all the time. But I'm more worried about something else. How did you ever fall in love with a trombonist? It's one of the least popular instruments in the musical world.

CONSTANZE

But it was this very trombone player - Franz Xavier - who completed Mozart's incomparable "Requiem" when Mozart died.

TERESA

Why didn't you marry him? There was nothing stopping your trombone man. You could have tooted together to your hearts' content.

CONSTANZE

I told you. Love ends when marriage begins. So there was nothing for me to do but to give in to the advances of the rich Danish diplomat Nissen. Do you know what he ordered to be engraved on his gravestone?

TERESA

What could a wealthy Danish diplomat possibly have engraved on his gravestone?

CONSTANZE

"Here lies the second husband of Mozart's first wife." How about that?

TERESA

You always talk about love in such flat, bored, petty, uninteresting terms. Meanwhile Mozart outclassed himself in writing about your love for the trombone player. Listen to this - it's genius! (*Picks up the trombone and lifts it to her lips. As she prepares to blow, Constanze lets out a screeching howl.*)

CONSTANZE

(*Howls*) Don't you dare!

Teresa drops the trombone.

Don't play that! I believe you!

TERESA

What's your problem, sweetheart?

CONSTANZE

What if one of us dies right now?

TERESA

True. I didn't think about that. If this music can kill, we'd best not play it. But look here at the score. The trombone part breaks off. Why is that?

CONSTANZE

My but how he foresaw it all!

TERESA

What?

CONSTANZE

Franz Xavier's death. His life was cut short just as abruptly. He climbed a bell tower to study the nature of the bells -

TERESA

And fell off?

CONSTANZE

No! There was a nasty wind and he caught cold. Then pneumonia and -

TERESA

He died?

CONSTANZE

No. He began to drink Schnapps and -

TERESA

Died of alcoholism?

CONSTANZE

No. It was all the horse's fault.

TERESA

The horse gave him a disease -

CONSTANZE

No! It came up on him in the dark one night when he was making his way from the bell tower to the doctor's house. Those two always drank together.

TERESA

What a mess. I don't suppose he was -

CONSTANZE

Yes, he was! 36!

TERESA

That arithmetic will kill you! So what comes next in the score?

CONSTANZE

It's now time for the fourth instrument's solo. (*Approaches the music stand and looks over the score without touching it.*) What do you think? What instrument is crossed out here?

TERESA

I think it looks like "drums."

CONSTANZE

I'd say it says "lute."

TERESA

No, it's bass-bassoon.

CONSTANZE

But look what a high key it's written in. Could it be an English horn?

TERESA

In the fifth octave? Come now. It's a harp.

CONSTANZE

Mozart hated the harp.

TERESA

You don't mean to say it's an oboe or something?

CONSTANZE

Heaven forbid! That was my husband's favorite instrument.

TERESA

And the emperor's too! (*Rustles the manuscript.*) My God! It's a violin!

CONSTANZE

Violin?

TERESA

Yes. The composer Gluck, the poet Metastasio and the maestros Bonno and Salieri all described Mozart as a violin.

CONSTANZE

A violin.

TERESA

What's the matter?

CONSTANZE

I can prove that Franz Xavier didn't kill him. Nobody killed Mozart. There was no crime.

TERESA

What happened then?

CONSTANZE

Suicide.

TERESA

Suicide? You mean he doomed his soul to eternal hell-fire?

CONSTANZE

So as to escape the inferno of the flesh. He was ill.

TERESA

Everybody knows that.

CONSTANZE

No, it was a different kind of illness. And I kept his secret. But now -

TERESA

Speak!

CONSTANZE

(Mumbles) C... c...

TERESA

Speak up!

CONSTANZE

C... c...c...

TERESA

C-c-c what?!

CONSTANZE

Ca-ca-ca-

TERESA

Caw, caw, caw?

CONSTANZE

I - can't say.

TERESA

I will kill you where you stand, Constanze Weber!

CONSTANZE

He took mercury for it!

TERESA

You must be kidding. I don't believe it.

CONSTANZE

It's true. That's why I could have no more children by him. Listen, maybe he dreamed up this whole story about the mysterious man in black so everyone would think he was murdered? He didn't want anyone to know he was dying from a shameful disease. Why are you smiling?

TERESA

How unexpected. So no one is guilty. Lord have mercy on the soul of the great Mozart. (*Gestures to the Salieri quartet.*) "On the Death of Lucullus." Antonio Salieri. Opus No. 7.

The Salieri quartet plays a poignant melody.

CONSTANZE

No. It should be his music to honor his soul. (*Motions to the Mozart quartet.*)

The Mozart quartet plays Mozart's "Requiem."

TERESA

(*Once again studies the manuscript. She suddenly stands and claps her hand. The Mozart quartet ceases to play*) Wait! (*To the Salieri quartet.*) Give me a Do. Constanze, please répète.

Constanze sings the note.

(*To the Salieri quartet.*) Be so kind: Mi. Now, Constanze, Sol. Uh-huh. Now, sweetheart, let me hear Si. Marvelous! Re. You have a splendid soprano!

CONSTANZE

I even sang at court.

TERESA

You have been leading me astray on purpose!

CONSTANZE

But I did sing for the emperor.

TERESA

After five glasses of Asti spumante?

CONSTANZE

Yes. The emperor loved mixing me with wine. You're so skeptical. It would be easier to mislead a fortune teller than you.

TERESA

That's not what I'm talking about. Number four is not an instrument. It's a voice. A soprano! It's your voice, Constanze. The poison he took was not mercury. It was you.

CONSTANZE

What?

TERESA

This score lays the blame on you!

CONSTANZE

(Not reacting immediately) Yes, I blame myself more than anyone. *(Pause.)* That night I did not merely come to check on him. I came to him from Baden-Baden specifically to find out who he was sleeping with behind my back.

TERESA

What were you wearing?

CONSTANZE

I was in a black, hooded cloak. You couldn't see my face.

TERESA

(Removes a cloak from the traveling bag) Could this be it?

CONSTANZE

How did you get that?

TERESA

Put it on. And continue.

CONSTANZE

Mozart was alone. I called his name. He rose. His eyes shone. He approached me, tore off my cloak, threw it aside and shouted, "Damn it!"

TERESA

Yes, when it came to women he always did have a way with words.

CONSTANZE

But where did you get my cloak?

TERESA

Don't change the subject!

CONSTANZE

"You're spying on me!" he shouted. "See?! I'm alone!" I looked around and there really was no one there. One thing bothered me, though. An aroma. There was an aroma in the air -

TERESA

Of poison?

CONSTANZE

No.

TERESA

Wine?

CONSTANZE

Not only.

TERESA

Tobacco?

CONSTANZE

No. It was the scent of a woman. The barely traceable scent of perfume. (*Sniffs the air.*) You know, something like... um -

TERESA

(*Goading her on*) And then what?

CONSTANZE

In a fury he threw himself at me and began choking me. It happened right here. Come here. Grab my neck. Just like he did.

TERESA

(*Seizes Constanze by the neck and chokes her*) Like that?

CONSTANZE

Harder.

TERESA

Like that?

CONSTANZE

Harder still. He really locked onto me.

TERESA

(*Chokes her harder*) Is that enough?

CONSTANZE

(*Coughs*) Enough! Enough!

TERESA

(Continues holding her by the throat) Then what?

CONSTANZE

I pushed him off of me! And he fell. *(Pushes Teresa so hard that she falls.)* Sorry. I didn't mean to drop you.

TERESA

You could have killed me!

CONSTANZE

Fortunately, you're tougher than Mozart. When he fell he began bleeding. I was so frightened I ran straight out of here. If only you knew what I experienced the next morning when I heard Mozart had died and I realized I had killed him! You don't know how fortunate you are not to be in this list of the doomed. You did well to initiate this crime reenactment.

TERESA

Yes! My innocent Salieri is innocent. *(Motions to the Salieri quartet.)* "Capriccioso of the Innocent Dove Flying over a Fig-Tree." Antonio Salieri.

The Salieri quartet plays.

Write out your confession. *(Puts a quill into Constanze's hand.)* I will be the first to petition the court for lenience. *(Puts a piece of paper before her. Dictates.)* "I, Constanze Nikolaus von Nissen" -

CONSTANZE

(Repeats in part) Von Nissen -

TERESA

"Known in my first marriage as Constanze Mozart" -

CONSTANZE

Mozart.

TERESA

"Declare I am guilty of killing my husband Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Mozart."

CONSTANZE

Mozart. There. It's done!

TERESA

(Triumphantly snatches the confession from Constanze)
Finally! Vindication for my children! Sweet success! Now let people have their petty earthly reprisals. God's justice has been done! Has been done on high! And you shall be punished!

CONSTANZE

I shall! (*Suddenly throws away the quill.*) Only not by people!
(*Jumps up.*) No!

TERESA

No, what, sweetheart?

CONSTANZE

Mozart will do it. If I killed him, let him kill me! (*Picks up the score, looks for something specific then begins to sing.*) Si bémol, La, Sol dièse. (*She sings but suddenly stumbles and can't reach the low notes.*)

Teresa picks up where Constanze left off. Astonished, Constanze quits singing. Teresa continues singing alone. Constanze watches in amazement.

Teresa -

TERESA

Yes?

CONSTANZE

It's not a soprano. It's not my voice. It's a contralto. Ergo, that's not I in "The Concerto of the Doomed." Capiche?

TERESA

No. Your excuses won't help you now!

CONSTANZE

No women in Mozart's circle had such an unusual voice.

TERESA

Unusual?

CONSTANZE

So unusual as yours. (*Races up to Teresa and sniffs her.*) That aroma! I know that aroma! Just like ten years ago! It's the scent of a woman, Teresa! It's the scent of your perfume! Why did Mozart write your voice into his "Concerto of the Doomed"?

TERESA

You've lost your senses, Constanze!

CONSTANZE

And the cloak?

Teresa is silent.

Where did you get my cloak if Mozart tore it off my back?

Silence.

The next morning it was gone. And it wasn't in the picture, either!

Teresa smiles.

I want an explanation! (*Sniffs.*) I can't believe it! No! It can't be! Mozart didn't know you! (*Grabs the score and the cloak and runs for the door.*)

TERESA

Where do you think you're going?

CONSTANZE

To find someone to solve this riddle. Your voice. Your aroma. My cloak. The evidence is against you. But Mozart didn't know you!

TERESA

You have it all. You're right. He didn't know me.

CONSTANZE

Then why are you in his concerto?

TERESA

That's what I want to know! That's why I have come here!

CONSTANZE

(*Tries to open the door. It is locked*) You mean you locked me in?

TERESA

What are you talking about?

CONSTANZE

Who locked the door?

TERESA

Obviously, someone you have crossed.

CONSTANZE

You, is it? Don't come near me! I'll scream!

TERESA

Shut up! I'll scream before you will.

CONSTANZE

Why?

TERESA

I've got a stronger voice. (*Screams.*)

Constanze screams too. The Mozart and Salieri quartets add to the din. Silence. Constanze suddenly races to the door and struggles to open it.

There's no point trying to escape, sweetheart. The door is locked. And I have the key.

CONSTANZE

Lord, deliver me!

TERESA

Only one thing can deliver you. You must see me as Mozart would have.

CONSTANZE

How?

TERESA

It's a crime reenactment.

CONSTANZE

Again?

TERESA

Then we'll learn the killer's name! You know your husband better than anyone. Put yourself in his shoes.

CONSTANZE

Do I have to die? I don't want to.

TERESA

You have to try reliving that night for him. You're wearing his camisole, his pants (*takes a wig from the traveling bag and puts it on Constanze*), you have his pen and his divine composition. What else do you need to feel as though you are he?

CONSTANZE

I'm no genius.

TERESA

But you're a human being. And he was a human being. You loved and he loved. You suffered and he suffered. You cheated on him; he cheated on you. You were one complete

whole! You lived many long years with him. You bore him children. You were his inspiration and his muse.

CONSTANZE

There are times I think we were one entity, one person. Especially in the first years of our life together. It was as marvelous as his music.

TERESA

So let it be heard again.

CONSTANZE

I feel like I'm burning inside -

The room is plunged into darkness. In the silence we hear whispers: "Follow me, Constanze. Don't stay here. You will be happy. There is a place and there is forgiveness in the world for all of our passions."

(As Mozart.) I hear music. It consists not of male or female voices or the voices of friends. It is something I served as would a faithful slave. It is that for which I endured the greatest sacrifices in the world.

Unseen by Constanze, Teresa knocks on the floor as if knocking at a door.

Who's there?

TERESA

I don't know. (*Produces the key.*) I'll open the door. (*Again knocks the floor unseen by Constanze. Opens the door, goes out. Only her voice is heard.*) Hey! Who is that? Who's there?

The light grows brighter. Everything is just as it was ten years ago. Constanze-as-Mozart stands at his table composing. An unexpected knock. Mozart ceases to write. Another knock.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Just a minute! (*Hurries to the door and opens it.*)

*Enter a man in a black mask
and a black cloak.*

CONSTANZE-MOZART

(Staggers back in fright) Who are you?

MAN IN BLACK *(In a man's voice)*
You still don't recognize me?

CONSTANZE-MOZART
Oh, it's you. The mysterious man in black.

MAN IN BLACK
Have you fulfilled my commission? Is the "Requiem"
complete?

CONSTANZE-MOZART
No.

MAN IN BLACK
This is my third visit. Every time the answer is "no."

CONSTANZE-MOZART
It's half-written. But -

MAN IN BLACK
"But"? Again?

CONSTANZE-MOZART
I dropped my "Requiem" only because I began writing
something else.

MAN IN BLACK
For whom?

CONSTANZE-MOZART
Myself.

MAN IN BLACK
And what is this other music?

CONSTANZE-MOZART
"The Concerto -

MAN IN BLACK
A concerto?

CONSTANZE-MOZART
"Of the Doomed."

MAN IN BLACK

What is that supposed to mean?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Nothing but my own fears! I sense I am dying.

MAN IN BLACK

Dying? Of what?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Of the evil I have come into contact with. I have enciphered the madness of mankind in the cold and brilliant harmony of music. The result is poisonous.

MAN IN BLACK

Poison in music? And who will this music kill?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

I don't know. Perhaps me. Tell me, for whom did you commission the "Requiem"?

MAN IN BLACK

For myself.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Why? You don't seem to be an old man.

MAN IN BLACK

My soul is perishing.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

My final concerto is also about souls that are perishing. If I may ask, what is your name?

MAN IN BLACK

It isn't as well known in theaters as yours.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Do I know you?

MAN IN BLACK

No.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Have I seen you?

MAN IN BLACK

Perhaps. But you never took notice.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

What a complex riddle.

MAN IN BLACK

I'll give you a hint: I have long sought to make your acquaintance and, like a cat, have crossed your path often merely to be able to look at you.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Like a cat? Who are you? (*Moves to pull the hood from his visitor.*)

MAN IN BLACK

(*Stepping back*) One moment. (*Goes out and returns immediately holding a traveling bag before him.*)

CONSTANZE-MOZART

So, who are you then? (*Quickly approaches the Man in Black and pulls back his mask. Gasps. It is Teresa standing before him.*)

(*Note: This trick is performed easily. Immediately after the knock at the door, a hooded actor enters in place of the actor playing Teresa. When the Man in Black goes out for a moment, it is the actor playing Teresa who returns holding the traveling bag before her.*)

A woman?! I would never have guessed that. (*Circles Teresa.*) And you're beautiful! I wouldn't want my music to be the cause of your death. I doubt I will ever finish my "Requiem." Yes, I even feel a little better now knowing you're a woman!

TERESA

I came to this third meeting with you in the hopes you would understand me. Where is your wife right now?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

In Baden-Baden. Taking the cure.

TERESA

From what?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

From a life of lies. However, I don't know what else might be ailing her. But tell me, who are you?

TERESA

I'm afraid that might frighten you. I am from Rome.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Splendid! Rome is where I had my first success. Do go on -

TERESA

And my husband -

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Your husband? That's a little disconcerting. But not too. Say no more. I'm not interested.

TERESA

But I am. His name is spoken as often as yours.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Is it, now?

TERESA

Yes! Salieri!

CONSTANZE-MOZART

You are Salieri's wife? No! Why have you come to me?

TERESA

I thought you would understand.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

What?

TERESA

That I love you.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

(Disgusted) You? *(Laughs.)* Are you joking? You'd think Beaumarchais had dreamed up this comedy!

TERESA

So you mock me?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

I'm feeling sick. I think my enemy's wife had best leave. Go! *(Seizes the manuscript to the unfinished concerto from the table.)*

TERESA

I knew you would say that.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

What?

TERESA

That I am your enemy. But my love can do you no harm. Allow me to prove it.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

How's that?

TERESA

Wine.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Well yes, *in vino veritas*. Why not have a drink, indeed?

TERESA

(*Puts out two empty wine glasses. Pours*) You'll feel better now.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

You know, I'll let you in on something. I am not washed up. I hear music again! Sometimes I am seized by horror. In the clear light of day I see that everything I am attached to in life - the pursuit of fame, money and the attention of the powerful - all of that is nothing but a pale shadow or feverish apparition of what music is capable of giving me. What I don't understand is why I must choose between music and the ones I love. I will die if music falls silent inside of me.

*We hear "Eine Kleine
Nachtmusik."*

TERESA

As will I, brother!

*We hear the first strains of
"Requiem."*

If you can't call me your wife, call me your sister. All mankind is one great sisterhood.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

A raving idiot! Where is the jester?! The candles?! Hey there, let's revel! Teresa, why so down in the mouth? It's all clear to me now! I never wrote a single note about death. I wrote about life. The earth and the heavens! People are instruments. And the world is one great orchestra!

TERESA

I am a drum. I will be your echo. I will repeat each of your follies three times running.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Where's your husband?

TERESA

He's gone mad! He's in a nuthouse where the only things in the window are blue sorrow and a yellow moon!

CONSTANZE-MOZART

A nuthouse?

TERESA

They don't get any nuttier. His nightcap looks like an acorn, his robe looks like a squirrel's tail and the trees in the garden are all walnuts. There's something very sad about it.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

You are a drum, aren't you?

TERESA

It takes a trombone to recognize one. Let's drink!
(*Produces a carafe of wine.*) What begins in everyone's belly, balances precariously on the tip of the tongue, sloshes around amidst addled brains, is spilled out to water the dusty earth and finally shows up again as a sparkling bead on a grape vine? This glass is for you. This one's for me. Don't confuse them. Turn your back, please.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

What are you up to?

TERESA

An amusing game. Turn your back. Please, my dear Mozart!

CONSTANZE-MOZART

You want to play? All right. I do too. I'll turn my back - and you close your eyes.

*Teresa closes her eyes.
Mozart leaps up and grabs the manuscript. Sprinkles something on it, laughs and hides it in the secret compartment in the floor. Turns his back on Teresa. At that moment, Teresa pours powder into her wine glass out of a ring, out of her bodice, out of every possible hiding place on her. Teresa again covers her eyes with her hands.*

(*Turning around.*) You can look now, you trickster!

TERESA

Look who's talking!

CONSTANZE-MOZART

What were you doing behind my back, Teresa?! I saw you were up to something!

TERESA

It's a surprise. You'll know in five minutes. What about you?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Also a surprise. Now nobody will ever make sense of my composition even if they find it.

TERESA

What won't they understand? What's in it?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Doesn't matter! My throat feels scratchy. Do you know what happens now?

TERESA

No.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Well, I do. My music has a past and a future.

TERESA

I don't believe you. If you really knew what is about to happen... Let's drink!

CONSTANZE-MOZART

I'll tell you what will happen to you. You will live to a ripe old age, Teresa. I see that in your eyes. What are we drinking to?

TERESA

Our desires!

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Better to our potential.

TERESA

Why is that?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Because human desires are basically all the same, it's our potential that differs.

TERESA

Ha-ha-ha! That's about you and my husband. Then let's drink.

A knock at the door.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Who's there?

TERESA

Who cares? Drink up.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

No. Somebody is out there. Let's go see who it is. Open the door, Teresa! What if it's your husband! Ha-ha!

Teresa timidly goes to the door. Mozart switches the wine glasses.

TERESA

(Stopping before the door) I don't want to open it.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

You're right. You'd better hide. What if it's my wife? I'll open it.

Teresa switches the wine glasses. Hides. Mozart goes to the door. Opens it. A bright beam of light shines in.

You. At such a late hour? Why have you come? You think I'm deceiving you. Thousands of hussies beat a path to my door, but you up and leave me for Baden-Baden. Look. There's no one here. Why are you spying on me? You constantly suspect me of infidelities I don't commit! If I don't answer a letter immediately you think I've forgotten you. Why are you hissing like a cat? You'll suffocate me. Stop it. What are you doing? You'll kill me. *(Pushed by some force, he falls back into the room and is silent. A thin stream of blood runs from his head and trickles across the stage.)*

TERESA

(Looks out from behind the portiere and runs to Mozart) My God.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

(Gets up with difficulty) God is higher still. If you mean me, lean over and help me stand. I think that witch wanted to kill me. And people will say it was your husband who did it. There's injustice for you.

TERESA

Oh, Wolfgang. Here, let me help. *(Helps him stand.)*

CONSTANZE-MOZART

You're not such a bad woman after all, Teresa. Give me my wine. Let's drink. (*Switches the glasses.*)

TERESA

Maybe not?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

You just wanted to yourself! What are you looking at? It's just a drink, not some terrible deed. Here's to you. (*Drinks.*)

TERESA

(*Nervously*) Only don't blame yourself!

CONSTANZE-MOZART

What's that supposed to mean?

TERESA

I was moved by love. I knew you would reject me as soon as I opened my heart.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

We settled that, Teresa. Friendship, riddles and surprises - but no banalities.

TERESA

I'm dying.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

We'll all die someday. But not today.

TERESA

Love dies so quickly. Sweetness turns to poison and attraction turns to repulsion. There was poison in my wine.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

No -

TERESA

There was poison in my wine.

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Tell me you're joking! You couldn't have!

TERESA

Why?

CONSTANZE-MOZART

Oh, what a joke! I switched the glasses. I've drunk the poison. What kind of poison was it? What are you standing there for? You fiend, give me an antidote.

TERESA

(Stonily) No. Anything but a surprise like that. O heavens!

CONSTANZE-MOZART

My God. I can't feel a thing. Is that how this poison works? Speak to me. Say you have deceived me. That there was no poison - *(Falls dead.)*

The light changes back to normal. The women come out of their trance.

TERESA

So that's how it ended. He poisoned himself with my wine. I'm the assassin, my dear. I did it.

CONSTANZE

Why did you do that?

TERESA

So he would know how much I loved him.

CONSTANZE

No, why did you undertake this whole investigation when you knew from the start that you killed him?

TERESA

I wanted to repent. But I was afraid to. I've grown tired of carrying the burden of this secret.

CONSTANZE

You tried to convince me that I killed Mozart. And you almost succeeded.

TERESA

Now you know what it's like to live with the burden of being Mozart's assassin.

CONSTANZE

You nearly convinced me. So now what do we do?

TERESA

Believe Salieri is innocent! And live with that.

CONSTANZE

Can't be done. What would Mozart's reputation be down through the ages without this great legend about the mysterious man in black? Without the gory tale about the premonition of death? Without the horrible truth about his being poisoned? My dear friend, legends are much easier to sell than real stories.

TERESA

In any case, the crime reenactment experiment is finished. I hope we won't have any more visitors today.

CONSTANZE

I don't imagine so. Shall we have a drink? (*Pulls a small bottle out of her pocket. Pours the wine.*)

The two clink glasses. Teresa drinks; Constanze does not.

TERESA

Why don't you drink?

CONSTANZE

I wanted to see what would happen to you.

TERESA

And what's going to happen to me?

CONSTANZE

You seem to have forgotten. This is wine from my father's vineyard. Ha-ha. It's poisoned.

TERESA

What have you...? (*Grabs her throat.*) But why?

CONSTANZE

Just kidding. Forget it.

TERESA

I damn near gave up the ghost! (*Laughs.*) Do you really believe your husband composed music capable of killing? (*Picks up the manuscript.*)

The two women sit on the floor. They drink from the bottle, passing it back and forth. Constanze looks over the manuscript and moves her fingers in the air as if playing an invisible keyboard. We hear Mozart's Fantasia in C minor for fortepiano. Teresa weeps. At first quietly, then more loudly.

CONSTANZE

Yes! He embedded the madness of humanity in the cold and brilliant harmony of music. And poison was the result. I'm telling you - it's poison. I could feel this music burning my ears when he played it.

TERESA

What do you think would happen if we arranged for the public to hear it? What if half the audience dropped dead?

CONSTANZE

And what about us?

TERESA

I've already thought about that, sweetheart. (*Pulls out a pair of earplugs. Hands one to Constanze.*)

The women plug their ears and approach their respective orchestras.

CONSTANZE

(*As if announcing*) Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Mozart -

TERESA

"The Concerto of the Doomed."

A knock.

Who's there?

CONSTANZE

I thought we were all here already.

TERESA

It seems not. Now it's my turn to open the door. But who could it be? (*Opens the door.*)

A bright ray of light shines as if emanating from hell. The overture of "The Stone Guest" from Mozart's opera "Don Juan." The door flies open. On the floor is visible the enormous shadow of the mysterious Man in Black.

MAN IN BLACK

(*In a scratchy voice*) We commissioned music from you.

CONSTANZE

(*To Teresa*) I thought that was you.

TERESA

Maybe we mixed something up in the concerto. Maybe it wasn't my wine that killed Mozart.

CONSTANZE

You mean there's a sequel?

TERESA

(To the Man in Black) Who are you?

MAN IN BLACK

Are you trying to ruin everything? The Man in Black - a broad in love with Mozart?? What nonsense! People understand envy better than love. Everybody knows Salieri killed Mozart. If the world learns that isn't true - the myth will collapse. People will stop listening to Mozart's music. And then they'll stop listening to Salieri. As a criminal, Salieri achieved respect and notoriety in the eyes of the world. Give me that manuscript.

CONSTANZE

(Hands over the manuscript to "The Concerto of the Doomed")
It's yours! You're welcome to it! Only, I'm afraid Mozart may have a surprise for you.

MAN IN BLACK

(Opens the manuscript to find nothing but blank sheets of paper. Looks over the papers in confusion) Where is the music? I heard you playing it.

TERESA

(Laughs) Surprise! You have all of eternity to solve Mozart's riddle.

MAN IN BLACK

But I heard you playing this music!

CONSTANZE

Mozart's favorite trick. He played it on the emperor once. Mozart played his latest composition, the whole time staring holes in the sheet music. The emperor held up his lorgnette and saw Mozart was staring at blank sheets of paper!

MAN IN BLACK

You won't get away with this! *(Throws the manuscript in the fire.)*

TERESA

(Quietly) My love!

CONSTANZE

(Quietly) My money!

MAN IN BLACK

Do you really think people will remember his music forever?

TERESA

We aren't that naïve. A time will come when people will forget Mozart and Salieri. Then silence will be upon the earth. But in order to assuage its imagination, mankind selects the saddest, most hopeless tales and then later people pay enormous sums of money to see them reenacted in new ways.

CONSTANZE

Almost no one remembers the women who loved Mozart any more. A few scholars remember the names of his closest friends. When these people die their names will be lost in oblivion. Someday even Mozart will be forgotten. People will have new idols to worship and then they will be forgotten, too. But it's enough that this love did exist. All these little streams of love will once again flow into the great ocean of love that gave rise to them in the first place. You don't even need memory to love. There is the land of the living and the land of the dead. Love is what bridges the two. It is the only thing that has meaning and the only thing that can offer salvation.

The two women stand opposite each other. Wind blows their long cloaks of blue and gold. They slowly approach each other like widowed queens. The space changes. We see that the floor beneath them bears the pattern of a chessboard. Above their heads is a black sky filled with stars.

(Approaches the traveling bag and removes from it "The Concerto of the Doomed." Puts sheet music in each musician's music stand.) If we are at all capable of sacrificing anything besides what we can't have anyway, the greatest sacrifice Mozart could have made to music was to cease living. What if we were capable of doing that, too?
(Waves her hand.)

It seems as if sounds have begun falling from above like snowflakes. The air is filled with sparkling particles as if it were snowing. The musicians play "Lachrymosa" which grows more and more joyful until it transforms into "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" before dying out in the darkness.

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