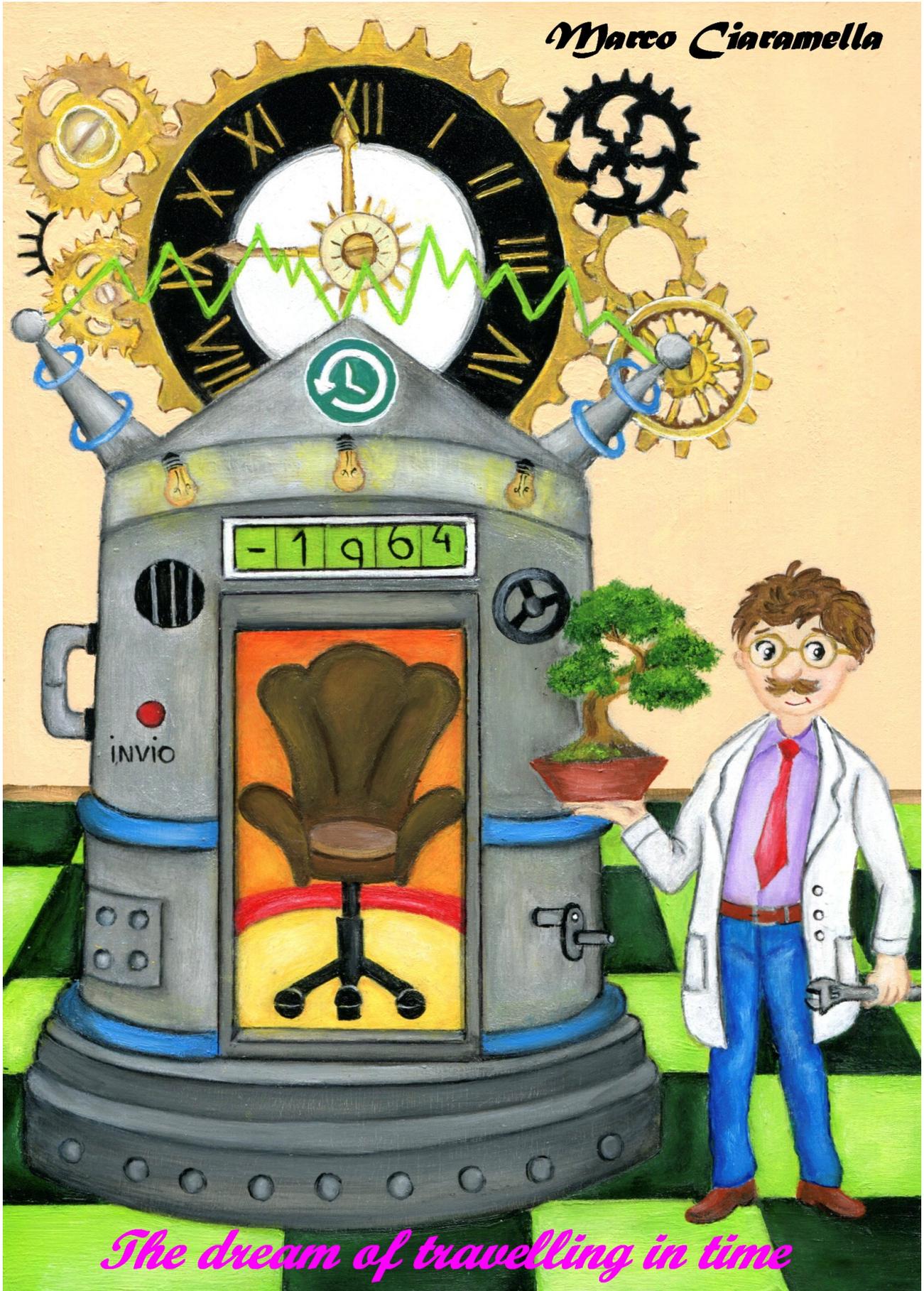


Marco Ciaramella



*The dream of travelling in time*

## CAST:

**Vincent:** Cassandra's husband

**Cassandra:** Vincent's wife

**Antony:** Florist

**Ashlie:** Antony's wife

**Archibald:** Lawyer

**Ernest:** Botanist

**Tim:** Friend of Vincent

**Millie:** Friend of Cassandra

**Martha:** Friend of Cassandra

**Judie:** Fruit seller and Vincent's ex-girlfriend

**Vivyan:** Housekeeper

## FIRST ACT

*In the opening scene, which takes place in the living room of an apartment, a man is working on a rudimentary prototype of a time machine.*

**Vincent:** *(Screwing in a bolt)* This was the last one. Now I just need him to make it work.

*Cassandra enters the scene.*

**Cassandra:** Are you still working on that contraption? But aren't you tired of playing with that horrible machine yet?

**Vincent:** I am not playing and this machine isn't horrible, it is the invention that will revolutionize the world and change our lives, especially mine!

**Cassandra:** *(Starting to laugh)* How funny you are! As a comedian you would have a future!

**Vincent:** Make fun of me, you'll see later...!

**Cassandra:** What else should I do? Should I take you seriously?

**Vincent:** At least don't bullshit me.

**Cassandra:** Moderate your terms, otherwise I'll throw you and that strange machine out of the house. I've been putting up with this confusion in the living room for weeks, so don't test my patience any further!

**Vincent:** Just what you've been doing with me for twenty years! But it's not your fault, it's me who was wrong when I chose you.

**Cassandra:** Why? What alternative did you have?

**Vincent:** I could marry another woman.

**Cassandra:** But did you see yourself in the mirror? A miracle has already happened that I married you!

**Vincent:** You are very wrong! I had many opportunities.

**Cassandra:** *(Sarcastically)* Ah, sure, I remember your conquests! My competitors were very delightful.

**Vincent:** However, I would have spent a much more peaceful life, I would not have eaten bread and gall every day as with you.

**Cassandra:** Maybe you wouldn't have eaten at all! After all, what did you miss in our marriage?

**Vincent:** Love was missing. In twenty years you have given me only offenses and never attention!

**Cassandra:** Those must be deserved! It's not my fault that you aren't good at anything, you are a failure, a man without attributes. Tell me one good thing you've done. Come on, I'm waiting...

**Vincent:** Keep to offend me, but when everything changes you will have to apologize for what you are saying now.

**Cassandra:** Meanwhile change your clothes! You stink a lot.

**Vincent:** Those who work sweat and may even stink a little. What do you want to know that you have never worked in your life?!

**Cassandra:** The stench you give off, however, I assure you is above average.

**Vincent:** So stay away from me so you don't feel anything. After all, you never get close, why do you want to do it today?

**Cassandra:** My friends will be here soon and I don't want to make a bad impression, so go wash immediately!

**Vincent:** Your usual fake respectability! Just appear...

**Cassandra:** *(Interrupting him and pointing to the door)* Always your usual useless talk! Go take a shower and be quiet!

**Vincent:** *(Sarcastically)* You don't know how willingly I walk away from you. *(And he leaves the scene)*

**Cassandra:** Now even fleas get coughs!

*Someone knocks on the door and Cassandra goes to open it. Antony and Ashlie enter the scene.*

**Antony:** *(Holding a sapling in his hand)* May we?

**Cassandra:** Of course! Take a seat as well. Don't you want to stand at the door with the weight in your hand?!

**Ashlie:** *(She too with a small bonsai in her hand)* Don't worry, they aren't heavy.

**Cassandra:** I worry because if they fall to the ground, being very delicate, they could be damaged and die as mine is doing...

**Antony:** And that would be really bad, since we haven't sold them to you yet.

**Ashlie:** *(Annoyed)* Antony, what are you saying? Use a little discretion when you speak!

**Cassandra:** I remind you, however, I haven't decided anything yet.

**Ashlie:** We understood that we had to come and deliver them to you.

**Cassandra:** Then you have misunderstood.

**Antony:** *(Turning to Ashlie)* I told you it was useless to carry them...

**Ashlie:** *(Answering her husband)* But she asked me the price and also said it was fine.

**Cassandra:** It's true, provided the bonsai were perfect. And these are both bare.

**Antony:** They aren't bare! Maybe they are of a different model than you had in mind.

**Ashlie:** But how do you talk? They aren't cars, you have to say that they are of another race.

**Antony:** You are wrong! They aren't dogs.

**Cassandra:** *(Interrupting the diatribe)* Cars or animals, it doesn't matter, I just don't like them!

**Antony:** *(Turning to his wife)* So we just came to waste time?

**Cassandra:** Sometimes it happens!

**Antony:** It almost seems like you're having fun.

**Ashlie:** Antony, try to have some self-control! We aren't in our shop.

**Cassandra:** Why? In your shop, what would you do?

**Antony:** I would tell you to go fuck...

**Ashlie:** *(Interrupting him just in time)* Antony, shut that mouth!

*Antony makes the gesture of closing his mouth with a virtual zip.*

**Cassandra:** Maybe, however, you didn't come uselessly. *(Then she goes to take her bonsai from the table and shows it to the two)*

**Antony:** *(Turning to his wife)* Isn't she going to sell us her?

**Ashlie:** Stop talking nonsense and let her talk!

**Cassandra:** I propose you a deal...

**Antony:** *(Even more sarcastically)* We are so eager to hear you!

**Cassandra:** But if you aren't interested...

**Ashlie:** Don't pay attention to my husband. We are certainly interested.

**Cassandra:** As you can see "Nemo" is suffering ...

**Antony:** After being twenty thousand leagues under the sea it seems normal to me!

**Ashlie:** Keep that mouth in check!

**Antony:** Sorry, but I'm like the Nautilus, sometimes I need to come to the surface to breathe and talk.

**Ashlie:** Then let's hope you drown, so shut up once and for all!

**Cassandra:** If I finally have your attention, I would like to make you this proposal: if you find a way to heal my Nemo, I will also buy your two bonsai.

**Antony:** But weren't they ugly, smelly, bald, stunted, misshapen?!

**Ashlie:** Keep your hair on!

**Cassandra:** If you healed mine, yours too would take on a completely different beauty.

**Antony:** But couldn't you have said it right away?

**Ashlie:** The lady speaks in due time.

**Antony:** Antony, on the other hand, speaks immediately, let's go away that I broke my balls. We just waste time here.

**Cassandra:** I'm sorry you think so, because it seemed like a reasonable proposal to me, I don't understand why to refuse without making an attempt.

**Antony:** Oh Mrs. Crossing, I'm not blind!

**Ashlie:** But you are really sassy! How dare you address her like that?

**Antony:** I didn't offend her! Don't you remember the movie? Cassandra Crossing was the name of a bridge.

**Ashlie:** Pretend he hasn't spoken, whoever understands my husband is a genius!

**Antony:** Ashlie, there is little to understand here; that bonsai is about to take its last breath, so she doesn't buy plants for us.

**Cassandra:** I hoped...

**Antony:** Unfortunately we are not yet equipped for miracles.

**Ashlie:** Between the two of us he is the plant expert and if he says so...

**Cassandra:** I would be willing to pay even twenty thousand pounds to be able to heal Nemo.

**Antony:** Maybe if I were Copperfield the magician I could, unfortunately I'm not.

**Ashlie:** Antony, are you really sure? Look at it better, maybe...

**Antony:** Even if I watched it all day, the situation would not change. Can't you see it's afflicted with a parasite?

**Cassandra:** Can't it be cured?

**Antony:** That parasite is particularly difficult to eradicate. Also because it would have been necessary to intervene earlier, it is now too late.

**Cassandra:** I am willing to make any attempt. You must know, that I have had this bonsai since the age of five, my father bought it the same day he died in a bad car accident.

**Antony:** We are very sorry, but that doesn't change things. Unfortunately the case is desperate.

**Ashlie:** We could ask Ernest for a second opinion, what do you think?

**Antony:** I say that in my opinion it is wasted time. Anyway, if you want to do that, take a photograph of the tree and then send it to him, maybe he has the magic wand and could prove me wrong.

**Ashlie:** *(After taking a photo with the mobile phone)* If we had good news, we would notify you immediately.

**Antony:** Now, however, let's go!

**Ashlie:** See you later. *(And they leave the scene)*

**Cassandra:** *(Once left alone)* I will never give up!

*The doorbell rings but she doesn't move. Vincent enters the scene.*

**Vincent:** Can't you hear the doorbell?

**Cassandra:** *(Who is sending a message with cell phone)* Now I don't have time. Go and open the door. *(And she leaves the scene)*

**Vincent:** I have now become the doorman of this house! *(Then he opens the door)*

**Archibald:** What's so urgent to make me run here? I have no time to waste.

**Vincent:** Don't worry, I'll explain quickly.

**Archibald:** It will be better for you, otherwise the fee will go up.

**Vincent:** That doesn't matter since my wife pays.

**Archibald:** So what is it about?

**Vincent:** I want to divorce my wife.

**Archibald:** I'm sorry but I can't help you.

**Vincent:** Aren't you a civil lawyer?

**Archibald:** Yes, but I absolutely can't represent you.

**Vincent:** Why? Did you buy your law degree on Amazon and you aren't qualified to the profession?

**Archibald:** Don't be silly! You can't divorce because with the separation you would end up like a homeless man.

**Vincent:** What are you saying?

**Archibald:** Have you considered the consequences of your decision?

**Vincent:** Will I be entitled to something?

**Archibald:** Absolutely not.

**Vincent:** But the money in the bank account is mine too.

**Archibald:** You have nothing of your own, you only have eyes to cry in case you decide to go on.

**Vincent:** But we own many houses, by the sea, in the mountains...

**Archibald:** (*Interrupting him*) They are all your wife's, nothing is in your name. I remind you that you signed a pre-marital agreement.

**Vincent:** So what benefit have I gained from marrying a rich woman?

**Archibald:** Not having worked for twenty years, isn't that enough?

**Vincent:** But how dare you tell me this? I am an aerospace engineering graduate.

**Archibald:** So I'll tell you what my father, who was a railway transport operator, said: "the more you study, the less you understand".

**Vincent:** This isn't my case.

**Archibald:** Remember that cultured doesn't mean intelligent.

**Vincent:** Are you telling me I'm stupid?

**Archibald:** Absolutely. However, I want to give you some advice: if you are still determined to divorce, you will have to contact someone else, because I am also the lawyer of your wife, which is the only one of you two who has the money, so if I have to choose...

**Vincent:** But I don't know any other lawyers.

**Archibald:** My father was right!

**Vincent:** I get it, you don't want to help me.

**Archibald:** I'm already doing it, advising you not to divorce your wife.

**Vincent:** Unfortunately I can't resist living with that woman anymore.

**Archibald:** Then start looking for a job to pay another lawyer.

**Vincent:** But I want you.

**Archibald:** Follow my advice and abandon the idea of separation, otherwise your wife will crush you like a twig.

**Vincent:** How do you know?

**Archibald:** Because I'll be the one to represent her.

**Vincent:** So do I really have to resign myself?

**Archibald:** Exactly! Now if that's all, I really have to go. *(Before opening the door he stops in the doorway looking at Vincent)*

**Vincent:** Anyway thanks, I got the message.

**Archibald:** Better late than never! *(As he leaves the scene, two women arrive)*

**Vincent:** Hi, are you looking for Cassandra?

**Martha:** Yes, we came for the book club meeting.

**Millie:** Today we will talk about an extraordinary book.

**Vincent:** Which?

**Martha:** The greatest masterpiece of nineteenth-century literature: "The Adventures of Pinocchio".

**Millie:** A timeless classic.

**Martha:** And this is the first edition of 1883. *(Showing the book)*

**Millie:** So it's worth a lot of money.

**Martha:** And it will be your wife's.

**Millie:** Even if it's not the one with the leather cover...

**Martha:** It is worth a lot...

*Cassandra enters the scene.*

**Cassandra:** Vincent what are you doing? Won't you let them in?

**Vincent:** *(Turning to the women)* Excuse me, what a rude I am! *(Then, whispering something in Millie's ear)* Well, how much is it worth?

**Cassandra:** Why are you whispering?

**Millie:** He was asking me the price of this book.

**Vincent:** *(Tugging at her arm)* *Spy!* I wanted to give my wife a present for her birthday and you ruined everything!

**Cassandra:** Be careful to tell lies. Otherwise, your nose will grow too!

**Vincent:** I never tell lies.

**Cassandra:** Really? And where do you find the money? To buy an ancient book like that you should have made a robbery. I remind you that you don't have a cent!

**Vincent:** When I patent my invention you will see!

**Cassandra:** Stop daydreaming!

**Vincent:** Okay, I leave you to your speeches on literature, I don't want to disturb you further.

**Cassandra:** This is a really good idea. And as you go into the kitchen tell Vivyan to come and serve us coffee.

**Vincent:** *(Sarcastically)* At your behest my lady and mistress!

**Cassandra:** In the meantime, let's sit down!

**Martha:** *(After sitting down)* Here is the book you asked for, we finally found it. *(Showing the book)*

**Cassandra:** I am very excited! But before skimming through it, I have to go and get my glasses, I want to enjoy every single page and without them I can't see a damn thing anymore. *(And she leaves the scene)*

**Millie:** *(Going to open the door from which Cassandra came out to make sure there is no one who can listen to the conversation)* There is no one, neither Cassandra nor her stupid husband, we can speak freely.

**Martha:** So let's hurry up to establish the price before either of them gets back.

**Millie:** I was thinking of asking her at least thirty thousand pounds.

**Martha:** In my opinion, forty thousand would be better.

**Millie:** All right, this woman doesn't lack money, so let's take advantage of it.

**Martha:** Besides she trusts us, so he won't object to the price.

**Millie:** *(Going to the door again to check that no one is coming)* Still no one in sight, we can continue the conversation.

**Martha:** But how much did you pay it?

**Millie:** This is a reprint of the twentieth century.

**Martha:** I realized that it isn't the original copy from 1883, but in monetary terms how much did you shell out?

**Millie:** I laugh at just thinking about it.

**Martha:** Then you make me laugh too, I can't resist curiosity anymore.

**Millie:** One hundred pounds.

*Vivyan, the housekeeper, enters the scene with the tray of coffee.*

**Vivyan:** Can I put the tray on the table?

**Martha:** Absolutely not, if you spilt the coffee on this precious manuscript it would be a catastrophe! *(Beginning to leaf through the book without paying attention to the maid, who, left with the tray in hand, begins to get impatient)*

**Vivyan:** Then you tell me where you want me to put it. I can't stay like that until you've finished reading the book!

**Millie:** And wait a minute! But what an insolent maid you are!

**Vivyan:** Holding arms in tension is not very pleasant.

**Martha:** For two minutes nobody ever died!

**Millie:** Wow Martha... look at this... I was naive, she won't be an expert, but if she sees...

**Martha:** What do you mean?

**Vivyan:** *(Arrived at the limit of endurance)* Sorry, but I have rheumatoid arthritis and my joints hurt if I don't put the tray down...

**Millie:** *(Interrupting her)* Okay, put it down.

**Vivyan:** Thank you very much, I couldn't take it anymore. *(As she is about to set the tray down, Millie trips her up. The coffee spills on the table, completely wetting the book)*

**Millie:** Look what you've done, wretch!

**Vivyan:** But I...

**Millie:** You did the damage and now you will take responsibility for it. We told you had to wait, but you insisted on putting down that damned tray right away.

**Vivyan:** *(Sorrowful)* I'll go immediately and get something to clean up with, maybe it's not too late to fix it. *(And she leaves the scene)*

**Millie:** *(Very satisfied, showing the ruined book to her friend)* She is wrong, it's too late now.

**Martha:** Why did you trip her?

**Millie:** Because even if Cassandra isn't an expert and would not understand that the paper used can't date back to the year of the original edition, she isn't so stupid as not to notice the year and place of reprint.

**Martha:** I didn't think about it.

**Millie:** Initially neither did I. In the state in which the book is now, however, she will no longer be able to notice it and it will only have been the fault of the housekeeper.

**Martha:** What a wonder you are!

**Millie:** This time we were lucky, I noticed in time. In the future, however, we must be more careful.

**Martha:** Now I would challenge anyone, in those conditions, to say that the book is not original.

**Millie:** I'm such a genius!

*Vivyan enters the scene with a rag in her hand followed by Cassandra who is berating her.*

**Cassandra:** (*Worried*) Tell me it's not ruined.

**Martha:** Unfortunately, yes, and in this state its value will have reduced to a tenth of the purchase price.

**Millie:** It is a real tragedy. What a few minutes ago was an object to be shown to everyone as a flagship is now to be kept well hidden.

**Martha:** It's a pity, given the cost!

**Millie:** If I think about the time it took to find it, it breaks my heart!

**Martha:** Even my clothes are unrecoverable, and all because of that stupid careless housekeeper.

**Millie:** Who doesn't look where she puts his feet as she walks.

**Cassandra:** Don't worry, she will be punished properly.

**Martha:** It seems to me the least you can do.

**Cassandra:** But how much did the book cost?

**Millie:** Forty thousand pounds.

**Martha:** To that amount it will also be necessary to add the price of my clothes...

**Cassandra:** Don't worry, I will refund you everything, even the cost for the dry cleaning.

**Martha:** I don't know if it will be enough, you know these are designer clothes and I don't know if they can be cleaned or if...

**Cassandra:** I get it, I'll buy your clothes too.

**Millie:** We are sorry for what happened.

**Cassandra:** Do you think forty-five thousand pounds is enough?

**Martha:** I don't know, my shoes got stained too.

**Cassandra:** Forty-five thousand two hundred?

**Martha:** Three hundred would be better, you know these are...

**Cassandra:** Okay, forty-five thousand three hundred and let's close the matter.

**Millie:** Given what has just happened, I think the book club meeting is skipped for today.

**Cassandra:** Of course! (*Then, turning to the maid*) And you leave this house, you're fired.

**Vivyan:** I assure you it wasn't my fault.

**Martha:** The carelessness and arrogance have a price.

**Millie:** She wanted to serve us coffee without waiting even a second.

**Martha:** We asked her to wait, but she didn't want to hear reasons. I wouldn't be surprised if she even did it on purpose.

**Millie:** We are sorry for what happened.

**Cassandra:** Do you think forty-five thousand pounds is enough?

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**Vivyan:** I assure you it wasn't my fault.

**Martha:** The carelessness and arrogance have a price.

**Millie:** She wanted to serve us coffee without waiting even a second.

**Martha:** We asked her to wait, but she didn't want to do it.

**Millie:** In my opinion she also did it on purpose just to get our clothes dirty.

**Martha:** Surely, not being aware of the value of the book, she thought she was just doing us a nasty spite, without paying the consequences.

**Vivyan:** I swear to you that I would never dare to voluntarily pour coffee on the guests...

**Cassandra:** The decision has now been made: you have to go away, you are no longer a welcome person in this house.

*Vivyan, resigned, head down, without saying a word, leaves the scene.*

## SECOND ACT

*Same scenography as the first act.*

*Vincent is sitting in the armchair and looking at the ruined book.*

**Vincent:** Did you really have to fire Vivyan for this?

**Cassandra:** Do you have idea of the damage she has done? This was a first edition from 1883.

**Vincent:** But it still is, and then Vivyan had worked for us for twenty years.

**Cassandra:** Because of her I have to shell out forty-five thousand three hundred pounds for a book that seems to be worth just a hundred.

**Vincent:** Forget the money and think.

**Cassandra:** *(Showing her husband a check that has just been filled in)* Now there is little to think about, I have to pay, that's all!

**Vincent:** I remind you that human relationships are worth more than anything else. Come on, hire her again!

**Cassandra:** Absolutely not!

**Vincent:** In all these years she has never made a mistake, where do you find another like this?

**Cassandra:** With so many unemployed around, I surely find someone and maybe pay even less, so I get some money back.

**Vincent:** I have grown fond of her, I am very sorry not to have her with us anymore.

**Cassandra:** I am the one who pays so the final decision is up to me.

**Vincent:** But are you really sure it was just his fault? After all, you weren't there when the tray with the coffee was overturned.

**Cassandra:** What do you mean?

**Vincent:** I mean that your friends should have had more regard for the book too and maybe not put it on the table while the coffee was served.

**Cassandra:** How did they know she was so clumsy?

**Vincent:** For the avoidance of doubt, especially given the value of the object, I would never have placed it where you drink and eat. It is known that certain inconveniences can happen. So I'd put your friends in blame too.

**Cassandra:** That's enough! Let's close the discussion. I don't want to think about it anymore. It is no use crying over spilt milk.

**Vincent:** Why? Did they also spill the milk? Then they made a white coffee!

**Cassandra:** But how much funny you are! Since it's not you who pays.

**Vincent:** I just wanted to play down.

**Cassandra:** Sometimes silence is better than a hundred words!

*The doorbell rings.*

**Cassandra:** Go open the door. The one who brings home fruit has arrived. I recognize her from the way the doorbell rings. She must think that we are deaf.

**Vincent:** I would bet that now that Vivyan is gone, it will be my turn to put the fruit and vegetables in the refrigerator.

**Cassandra:** *(Sarcastically)* How smart you are! So go and get rid of her as soon as possible, she always wants to chat.

**Vincent:** If I didn't know you, I'd say you're jealous.

**Cassandra:** What are you saying? I'm not jealous of your penniless ex. Why should I be?

**Vincent:** Because if I had married her...

**Cassandra:** Now you would be downloading the fruit cases.

**Vincent:** Maybe I would have a broken back, but I would have a full heart.

**Cassandra:** What can I say? You should have thought about it at the time, now it seems to me that you are a bit late, as she has a husband and three children.

**Vincent:** *(Sighing)* Yeah... children, my passion!

**Cassandra:** Still with this story of the children! You really got me fed up. If you realized how difficult it is to take care of them, your desire would vanish instantly. *(And she leaves the scene)*

*The doorbell rings again. Vincent finally gets up. He puts the book on the table and goes to open the door.*

**Vincent:** Come in. Can I help you download?

**Judie:** Thank you but it isn't necessary, by now I'm used to it.

**Vincent:** I gladly do it! *(Then sighing)* Time passes and you always remain beautiful, but how do you do it?

**Judie:** Are you teasing me?

**Vincent:** I would never do that. You know I've always been honest. It is for this reason that I want to reveal a little secret to you.

**Judie:** To me?

**Vincent:** Taking stock of my life, I realized I have a great regret.

**Judie:** What are you referring to?

**Vincent:** Don't be naive, you know what I'm referring to.

**Judie:** I think it is useless to talk about it now. I don't feel like reopening an old wound, so immediately stop.

**Vincent:** Have you ever wondered what life with me could have been like?

**Judie:** And have you ever wondered how I felt when you left me to marry that rich wife of yours?

**Vincent:** Don't remind me! Every day I regret that choice.

**Judie:** I'm sorry for you, but now I have three wonderful children, so that's all.

**Vincent:** But is the marriage with your husband going well?

**Judie:** None of your business.

**Vincent:** *(Taking her tenderly by the arm and looking her straight in the eye)* But it's my business, because I still love you.

**Judie:** I hate you instead, so leave me.

**Vincent:** *(Realizing that the woman is not really thinking what she says)* Look at me and answer this question truthfully.

**Judie:** What else do you want from me? Wasn't the evil you done me in the past enough for you?

**Vincent:** I know it will seem absurd to you, but I have the solution to be forgiven for everything, first, however, I absolutely have to know one thing.

**Judie:** The only solution is to put the past behind us.

**Vincent:** I will just ask you one question, then I promise you that I will never deal with the subject again and I won't bother you anymore.

**Judie:** So ask this question, so we put an end to this conversation...

**Vincent:** If I hadn't left you twenty years ago, would you have married me and have as many children with me as you did with your husband?

**Judie:** *(After looking into his eyes)* Damn you Vincent! Of course I would, I loved you madly.

**Vincent:** Then all is not lost. I just ask you to have a little patience and wait for me.

**Judie:** Where should I wait for you? At the bus stop? Wake up dreamer! The reality is that we have two families that we will never leave... and now leave me the arm that you are wasting my precious time with these useless talk.

**Vincent:** I do it only because I have a certainty: our time is coming.

**Judie:** In my opinion, nostalgia is making you stupid.

**Vincent:** Think what you want, but now I know what to do. (*Then taking the book*) I am so happy that I feel like the protagonist of this book when he goes to Toy-Land.

**Judie:** Are you talking about the adventures of Pinocchio?! You must know it was my favorite reading as a child. It was right after reading that book that I began to have a visceral love of literature. Not surprisingly, as a young girl, I spent whole days in my grandfather's antique shop where I was able to hold manuscripts of inestimable value in my hands.

**Vincent:** Just like this one, which is a first edition from 1883. Or rather, the value was there before Vivyan poured the coffee over it.

**Judie:** I'm sorry to contradict you, but this book is of poor value and not because of the coffee, but because it is a very vulgar reprint.

**Vincent:** Are you sure?

**Judie:** Very sure. My grandfather taught me all the tricks of the trade and I know what I'm talking about. If I didn't carry on the family tradition, it was only because I was still too young to take charge of the shop and so it was sold to others, otherwise I would be dealing with books now, rather than breaking my back to unload cases of fruit.

**Vincent:** And how do you understand that this is not really the first edition?

**Judie:** There are many details that confirm this to me. First of all, the type of paper, even if it is stained, it is clear that it doesn't date back to that time. The cover is also not the original one. In addition, there are other details that an expert immediately notices.

**Vincent:** So what is this book worth?

**Judie:** I bought an identical one for my son for one hundred pounds.

**Vincent:** Holy shit!

**Judie:** Why are you surprised? How much did you pay it?

**Vincent:** Forget it, it's a long story! Anyway thanks for the precious clarification.

**Judie:** Don't thank me, I'll put down on the bill this too.

**Vincent:** Why? Do you make me pay for your consultation?

**Judie:** I'd like to make you pay, but not the consultation.

**Vincent:** Touché!

**Judie:** But now I have to go, I'm very late, and if I don't hurry, I won't be able to make all the deliveries.

**Vincent:** See you later.

**Judie:** Maybe sooner than you think, I realized I didn't bring you bananas, so I have to go back. See you later. *(And she leaves the scene)*

**Vincent:** *(Looking at the book)* Dear wife this is what you get when you put your trust in others and not in your husband.

*After placing the book on the table, put on an apron to start arranging all the fruit. Meanwhile, the doorbell rings.*

**Ernest:** hi, my name is Ernest, the owners of the flower shop told me to come here. I need to speak to the hostess. You, at a guess, should be the servant.

**Vincent:** In a way, right now...

**Ernest:** So if you can please go and call her...

**Vincent:** I would very gladly do it, but now I can't disturb her, if you want to report to me in the meantime, I am informed of everything that happens in this house.

**Ernest:** Then you will also know about the twenty thousand pound reward?!

**Vincent:** Sure... I know everything. And are you the person who should collect it?

**Ernest:** Basically yes. I am a very experienced bonsai botanist and I am sure I have the solution to get rid of the parasite from that plant. *(Pointing to the bonsai)*

**Vincent:** But why didn't the owners of the flower shop come directly to talk to my wi...? *(Realizing that he is about to betray himself, he abruptly stops and invents the first thing that comes to mind)* How late it is! *(Pretending to look at the clock, then seeing Ernest's puzzled face)* It's time for the mistress's medicine. I have to prepare it for her right away or she gets hysterical. *(He opens a drawer and takes an effervescent aspirin and throws it into a glass with water)* *However you continue to explain to me.*

**Ernest:** I came because Antony and Ashlie are convinced that there is no possibility of recovery, but I am not of the same opinion.

**Vincent:** So, in summary: the owners of the flower shop think they can't save the tree, but they still send you to try to solve the problem, in order to collect, if successful, the reward money.

**Ernest:** Exactly! Then I'll divide the money with them.

**Vincent:** So you are sure that the bonsai will heal.

**Ernest:** With this product *(Showing a bottle)* I am hundred per cent sure that the parasite will be eradicated.

**Vincent:** *(After taking it in his hands and looking at it)* Excuse me, but I don't think it's worth all that money.

**Ernest:** If it solves the problem why not? Are you questioning my professional competence?

**Vincent:** Absolutely! But I'm sure you'll never get twenty thousand pounds from my mistress in exchange for that bottle. Trust me, I know her well, I have been at her service for over twenty years.

**Ernest:** But the lady is very wealthy and I thought...

**Vincent:** *(Interrupting him)* You thought wrong! However I have the solution.

**Ernest:** And would you be kind enough to tell me?

**Vincent:** Listen to me carefully: to justify that price, you have to make it seem like you've almost performed a miracle.

**Ernest:** How could I do it?

**Vincent:** You have to do a voodoo ritual.

**Ernest:** What nonsense is this ?! Just add this product to the soil for a couple of consecutive days, give it a little water and the bonsai will come back to life.

**Vincent:** But Mrs Edwards doesn't have to know this. The healing must seem due to an extraordinary, divine fact. If she saw you put that product in the soil, even if the bonsai healed, you would never get the promised amount.

**Ernest:** But without this product the sapling will die.

**Vincent:** Don't worry, I'll take care of this. You invent something very extravagant for her to do, I'll take care of adding the miraculous medicine to the soil.

**Ernest:** And when your mistress sees the bonsai heal she will be convinced that it was thanks to the ritual.

**Vincent:** And she will pay the agreed amount without objecting.

**Ernest:** In fact, the price of that kind of service is more difficult to quantify.

**Vincent:** I see you finally understood.

**Ernest:** *(Thoughtfully)* Wait a moment... what do you get by helping me?

**Vincent:** Five thousand pounds could be fine?

**Ernest:** But...

**Vincent:** It seems to me a right figure. Twenty thousand divided by four...

**Ernest:** *(After a moment's hesitation)* Maybe, I can get the other two to accept the proposal.

**Vincent:** Listen to me, otherwise the amount you will collect will be much lower.

**Ernest:** Okay! Keep this *(Handing him the bottle)* and then go inform Mrs. Edwards of my arrival.

**Vincent:** Clearly, payment will be made only after the bonsai has healed.

**Ernest:** Then you will have to be the one to contact me to tell me when to return to collect the money.

**Vincent:** I will do much more than that, I will bring your reward personally to you.

**Ernest:** *(Taking a business card out of his wallet)* In this case, this is the address and telephone number where you can contact me at any time.

**Vincent:** *(After pocketing the business card)* Very good. Now wait here, I'm going to call you Mrs. Edwards.

**Ernest:** But don't you forget anything?

**Vincent:** I don't think.

**Ernest:** The medicine for Mrs Edwards. Didn't you say that if she doesn't take it she becomes hysterical?

**Vincent:** What a careless I am! *(Then he takes the glass and goes towards the exit)*

**Ernest:** *(Thinking aloud)* In the meantime, I have to come up with something. I don't know what is done in a voodoo rite, I've never done anything like this in my life. Maybe Google could help me.

*Vincent stands on the threshold of the door for a moment to observe Ernest.*

**Ernest:** *(Starting to read)* Syncretistic cult of African origin, blah, blah; the cult involves animal sacrifices... Ah, this could be useful: in the voodoo cult ritual dances have a prominent function. Maybe, I could make her do... *(Starting to make weird gestures)*

**Vincent:** Let's hope he can come up with something! *(And he leaves the scene)*

**Ernest:** *(Completely absorbed in reading)* Let's go on. The rag doll represents a person who must be the object of actions by those who perform the rite, for example heal her from illness or on the contrary cause her pain. In fact, I could improvise something similar.

*Cassandra enters the scene running.*

**Cassandra:** *(Excited)* So you are my savior! Tell me what to do I am at your complete disposal.

**Ernest:** I'm glad to hear you say that. Let me introduce myself: I am Ernest. Nice to meet you. *(Holding out his hand)*

**Cassandra:** Let's skip these unnecessary pleasantries and get started. My Nemo may be about to die.

**Ernest:** Right, no more chatter! So, first of all, you need to take a sheet of paper and draw a tree similar to yours on it.

**Cassandra:** *(After taking a pen and paper from the drawer he begins to draw)* I confess that I don't believe much in these things, but I'm so desperate that I don't want to leave any stone unturned.

**Ernest:** You will see that I will make you will change your mind. But now let's not waste time, we have a lot to do. Now you need to focus and execute without objecting.

**Cassandra:** *(After showing Ernest the drawn tree)* Can it be okay?

**Ernest:** Very well! Now stand on the chair and wave the paper as if it were a flag.

*Cassandra does it without objecting.*

**Ernest:** Now put the index finger of your left hand in your nose and start blowing.

**Cassandra:** But in which nostril should I put it?

**Ernest:** In the left one.

**Cassandra:** Is it okay?

**Ernest:** Yes, but don't waste your breath talking, we're just getting started. Now while you are blowing, start waving the sheet of paper.

**Cassandra:** But I...

**Ernest:** Faster, the paper has to wave more and don't forget to blow.

**Cassandra:** But are you really sure this is a voodoo ritual?

**Ernest:** You must be silent otherwise the ritual will not work.

**Cassandra:** Okay, I'm not talking anymore.

**Ernest:** Now go down and sit on the chair, but you must do it without taking your finger off your nose.

**Cassandra:** I would not like to fall.

**Ernest:** Do you want to heal your bonsai or not?

**Cassandra:** Of course!

**Ernest:** So don't complain and do what I tell you. *(After Cassandra sits down)* Well, now take a sponge, a knife and three pins.

**Cassandra:** What kind of sponge should I take? The one used for washing dishes or the one for flower arrangements?

**Ernest:** The second is better.

**Cassandra:** Okay, I have everything I need in the cupboard drawer.

**Ernest:** All right then take everything immediately.

**Cassandra:** But I have two hands, how can I do what you ask me? I remind you that I have a finger in my nose and with the other hand I hold the sheet of paper.

**Ernest:** You can place the paper on the table for a moment. After taking the sponge you cut it to form a triangle and then you stick the three pins into it.

**Cassandra:** Should I build some kind of stylized tree?

**Ernest:** Exactly! *(After Cassandra has done as requested)* Now lie on your back and place the paper on your chest and the sponge on your forehead.

**Cassandra:** *(Worried)* If the sponge falls, though, I might prick myself.

**Ernest:** *(Without paying attention to what Cassandra said)* Now take your right leg with your left hand, then take your left leg with your right hand.

**Cassandra:** I take less effort when I go to the gym.

**Ernest:** We're almost done. Place everything on the table, then lie on your back and do three push-ups.

**Cassandra:** One, two and three. Also done these.

**Ernest:** Now get up and stand at attention, then hold your breath as long as possible.

**Cassandra:** *(After turning red as a pepper while holding her breath, she finally manages to say with a faint voice)* I choke!

**Ernest:** Here, it's the right time, take a deep breath and forcefully exhale all the inhaled air on the plant and we're done.

**Cassandra:** *(After doing what was requested)* Can I sit down? Because my head is spinning.

**Ernest:** Of course! As I told you, we're done.

**Cassandra:** If this ritual doesn't work, in addition to not paying for it, I will also sue you for personal damage.

**Ernest:** The result is assured.

**Cassandra:** I hope so for you!

**Ernest:** Well, now I just have to say goodbye and wait for the results. See you later. *(And he leaves the scene)*

**Cassandra:** *(Turning to the bonsai)* Do you see what am I willing to do for you? Now I'm going to rest, I'm exhausted. *(And she leaves the scene)*

*The doorbell rings, Vincent enters the scene and goes to open the door.*

**Vincent:** I have become the servant of this house. *(After opening)* Hi Tim!

*Tim enters the scene.*

**Tim:** Hi Vincent! How are you my friend?

**Vincent:** I'm ready to go.

**Tim:** Why are you in such a hurry?

**Vincent:** The time machine is ready and now I know Judie will marry me too, so why should I stay with that witch any longer?

**Tim:** But from now on, who will I play pool with?

**Vincent:** With me. Didn't you understand how the time machine works?

**Tim:** This is precisely what worries me, I have strong doubts that it will work. I'm afraid of losing you, however if you tell me that nothing will change for us and we will always remain friends, I will help you.

**Vincent:** You know I need you to make it work. It is you who will have to activate the thruster by that button located on the outside of the machine that will catapult me back in time.

**Tim:** I know. You've explained it to me a thousand times, I'm not as dumb as you think...

**Vincent:** I had decided to leave after having collected five thousand pounds, but then I changed my mind.

**Tim:** Why?

**Vincent:** The reactor battery is running out, and waiting another day would mean replacing it. The cost for the replacement would be much higher than the amount I should collect, so I have to leave today.

**Tim:** I would like to change your mind, but I see you too determined and I think I would not be successful.

**Vincent:** *(Before sitting inside the time machine he takes the bonsai and pours into the soil the contents of the bottle Ernest brought)* Tomorrow I will give you the other half and you will soon be well.

**Tim:** What are you doing? Do you bring the bonsai with you?

**Vincent:** I want to spite that harpy. And then I too became fond of this tree, and I don't want to let it die. Without the second dose of this product, which can't be administered until tomorrow, its end would be inevitable.

**Tim:** But you will make her suffer beyond belief.

**Vincent:** About as much as she did with me for twenty years.

**Tim:** What a pity that you have come to this point and haven't had the opportunity to resolve your marital problems.

**Vincent:** I've tried a thousand times, now it's time to put an end to this marriage.

**Tim:** Come on, get ready, otherwise I'll change my mind and won't help you.

**Vincent:** *(Before closing the lid of the machine, swallows a pill)* This will help me endure the journey. The dematerialization process will be quite painful, so it's better to take some precautions.

**Tim:** I hope you don't suffer too much.

**Vincent:** Now don't think about this and remember that every minute corresponds to a year, so you will have to move the clock hands (Pointing to the dial installed on the machine) by thirty notches clockwise, understood?

**Tim:** I understood! Don't tell me again.

**Vincent:** Once the lid is closed, you will have to wait for the message that I will send you on your mobile to start the procedure. I must first enter some parameters from the internal console with which I will adjust the thrust of the engine.

**Tim:** And only then can you embark on the journey in the chosen year!

**Vincent:** *(Raising thumb in agreement)* The time has come. See you soon my friend! *(And he closes the lid)*

**Tim:** Ah it's not Vincent, hello ... yes mom, where am I? I'm at a friend's house. Okay, I'll go to the supermarket. Wait, for all this stuff, I have to take note. *(After activating the mobile phone agenda, he begins to write)* 1 kg of potatoes, 2 onions, 1 kg of oranges, fabric softener, dish detergent, 4 packs of toilet paper, but we have to take it for everything the condominium? Ah, it is on promotion! All right...

*Meanwhile, the lid of the time machine is reopened. Vincent (angry) interrupts Tim's conversation with his mother.*

**Vincent:** Did you have to make your shopping list right now?

**Tim:** Sorry, but it's my mother who...

**Vincent:** *(Threatening)* If I find you in the past, I swear I avoid making your acquaintance, so we won't be friends anymore.

**Tim:** Sorry mom, I'll call you back in ten minutes... no, I can't explain... it's an urgent thing believe me, yes I will also buy you 10 artichokes and 1 cauliflower, don't worry.

*Vincent, after throwing a dirty look at his friend, imitates the proverbial gesture of The Undertaker.*

**Tim:** *(Scared)* I'll call you back later, it's better. *(And he stops the communication)*

**Vincent:** If your phone rings again...

**Tim:** I promise you I will not answer.

**Vincent:** I hope it for you. Hi.

**Tim:** *(Waving to his friend, he observes the lid of the time machine closing again. After seeing Vincent's message on the phone, he moves the hands, presses the button and crosses his fingers)*  
Let's hope well! So much by now, what done is done!

### THIRD ACT

*Same scenography of the two previous acts.*

*The curtain opens and Vincent comes out of the time machine with the tree in hand. The bonsai seems to be reinvigorated, while Vincent, walking like a zombie, still a little dazed, approaches the dial of the big clock of the time machine.*

**Vincent:** What an idiot he is! Luckily he understood! *(And he leaves the scene)*

*Cassandra enters the scene and sees the mobile phone that Tim carelessly left on the table.*

**Cassandra:** This is surely Tim's phone. He is the only adult I know who owns a phone with a Tom and Jerry cover. Now I'm calling him, I want to know where his friend is. *(While she is dialing Tim's number, the doorbell rings, she goes to open the door)*

*Tim enters the scene.*

**Tim:** Sorry, but I need the shopping list. I was writing it just when Vincent was about to... *(Stopping suddenly)*

**Cassandra:** Come on, genie of the lamp, finish the talk and tell me where your friend is.

**Tim:** *(Noticing his phone in Cassandra's hand, he tries to dodge the question)* Luckily you found it, otherwise what would I have bought at the supermarket?

**Cassandra:** What does the supermarket have to do with it now?

**Tim:** Where do you think I wrote my shopping list? In my phone's notes app. Now if you can return it to me...

**Cassandra:** First you have to tell me where Vincent is. Soon the grocer will arrive with the food to put in the pantry and he has to take care of it.

**Tim:** I believe that you will have to do it yourself.

**Cassandra:** Why? Come on, tell me where he is, I'll go get him and give him a good dressing down.

**Tim:** I don't know exactly, he just told me that we will see each other again in a while.

**Cassandra:** Stop being so mysterious! My friends for the book club will be arriving shortly and someone has to serve the guests, so don't waste any more time.

**Tim:** I remind you that you are talking about your husband, not your drudge! Find another slave and stop harassing me.

**Cassandra:** Even though you're Vincent's best friend, I won't let you talk to me like that.

**Tim:** You bothered me, I'm leaving.

**Cassandra:** You don't leave here until you tell me where I can find that slacker.

**Tim:** And how do you think you make me stay here? I'm not your husband, you have no power over me.

**Cassandra:** Are you really sure? I remind you that I have your phone. If I didn't give it back... goodbye shopping list that seems to be so important...!

**Tim:** Come on, give me that damn phone, I absolutely need it, my mother will be mad if I don't bring her what she asked for.

**Cassandra:** If you don't want to piss her off, you know what to do. So, will you tell me where is Vincent?

**Tim:** I have no idea where he is now. I only know that he went away taking the bonsai with him.

**Cassandra:** *(Turning abruptly, she realizes only in that moment that the bonsai is no longer in its place, so in anger she grabs Tim by the collar)* What did he do? Tell me immediately where it is, or I'll kill you instantly.

**Tim:** *(Desperate)* I swear I don't know!

**Cassandra:** *(Jerking him further)* Don't fool me, you are protecting him.

**Tim:** You're choking me! Okay, I tell you.

**Cassandra:** *(After loosening the hold)* You have a minute from now.

**Tim:** *(Crying)* He went to look for the fruit lady, because...

*Vincent enters the scene with the tree in his hand.*

**Vincent:** Because she forgot to bring bananas and without them the fruit salad is not good.

**Tim:** *(Shocked to hear that sentence)* Bananas?

**Vincent:** Sure, they contain a lot of potassium, and I need to recover my strength.

**Cassandra:** *(Turning to Tim)* All this mystery about two bananas, you are such a jerk! And you *(Turning to Vincent)* had to take my bonsai with you?

**Vincent:** I thought it might need some fresh air.

**Cassandra:** *(Taking the bonsai from her husband's hands and seeing the marked improvement)*  
Wow, these voodoo rites really work! Now I'm going to take it to the terrace, and I'll let it get some more fresh air. *(After placing Tim's phone on the table, he leaves the scene)*

*Vincent and Tim look at each other for a long time, then the first breaks the silence.*

**Vincent:** Only one thing you had to do! You told me you understood... instead you did the exact opposite.

**Tim:** *(Scratching his head)* Why, what did I do wrong?

**Vincent:** Nonsense, instead of sending me to the past, you sent me to the future.

**Tim:** In the future? But I...

**Vincent:** I told you to move the hands clockwise...

**Tim:** Just what I did!

**Vincent:** *(Pointing to the dial)* Are you really sure?

**Tim:** I would say that...

**Vincent:** *(Interrupting him)* You haven't learned anything at school.

**Tim:** Excuse me, can you forgive me? I am truly mortified I destroyed your dream, but, if you want, we can try again.

**Vincent:** The machine has been designed for only one outward and one return journey. However, sometimes a blessing in disguise.

**Tim:** What do you mean?

**Vincent:** Taking a leap forward thirty years, I found myself here in the house, married to my wife.

**Tim:** Holy shit, a real tragedy!

**Vincent:** On the contrary, because we were no longer alone, Alexia was with us.

**Tim:** Who is Alexia?

**Vincent:** She is our daughter.

**Tim:** *(Perplexed)* Mine and yours?

**Vincent:** What a fool you are! Mine and Cassandra's. Becoming a parent has always been the dream of my life and thanks to that woman it will come true.

**Tim:** But, if I remember correctly, your wife doesn't like children.

**Vincent:** Yes, but her daughter will love her more than her own life. Indeed, it will be thanks to that little girl that Cassandra become a better woman.

**Tim:** If your life was so idyllic in the time you went, why did you go back and not stay there?

**Vincent:** Because I don't want to miss the birth and the best years of my daughter.

**Tim:** But now how are you going to convince your wife to have a child?

**Vincent:** It's simple: I will fulfill her three wishes. The first, the healing of the bonsai, is already in the process of being solved...

**Tim:** The second wish, however, what would it be?

**Vincent:** Finding the first original edition of the book "The Adventures of Pinocchio". To fulfill this one I already know who could help me out. Indeed I'll send her a message right away. *(He takes his cell phone and starts writing)*

**Tim:** Then now tell me the third wish.

**Vincent:** This is the most difficult: I will have to love her as she is, and not as I would like her to be.

**Tim:** And was there a need to go to the future to find out? I was telling you even before you left.

**Vincent:** It's true, but now I know that by doing so, she will become a better person.

**Tim:** *(After retrieving his phone and looking at his watch)* My mom will kill me if I don't get back to shopping in time. I have to go now. *(Running out as Judie enters the scene)*

**Judie:** *(After handing over the bananas)* These are the bananas I forgot and this is the book you asked for.

**Vincent:** How did you find it so quickly?

**Judie:** Remembering that my uncle owned the 1883 edition and that, being in great financial difficulty, he had decided to put it up for sale, I gave him a call and here it is.

**Vincent:** Have you already checked that it is original?

**Judie:** Sure! There is also the declaration of authenticity signed by my grandfather. As I told you, he owned an antiques bookshop, so I can vouch for the originality of this book myself.

**Vincent:** How much is your uncle asking for this book?

**Judie:** As you can see, it also has a leather cover. This edition is almost unobtainable, so the price is sixty thousand pounds.

**Vincent:** What do you say, though, if I tell Cassandra that it costs seventy five thousand?

**Judie:** Why should I tell her seventy five thousand if my uncle gets sixty thousand?

**Vincent:** The other fifteen thousand are for me to give a gift to someone.

**Judie:** You just don't want to resign yourself!

**Vincent:** Don't worry, it's not for you, I promised you I wouldn't bother you anymore and I'll keep my word.

**Judie:** I'm glad to hear you say this, this situation made me very uncomfortable.

**Vincent:** I would like to ask you one last favor: even if I don't have the money to give you now, could you still leave me the book? I assure you that I will pay it to you within a couple of days.

**Judie:** Of course! Do you want me not to trust you? You will give me the money on the next delivery. Anyway, once a week I have to come and bring you fruit.

**Vincent:** Thank you very much, you are a true friend!

**Judie:** Say no more! See you soon! *(And she leaves the scene)*

**Vincent:** Now, to complete the work, all that remains is to unmask those scammers... they should arrive soon. *(And he leaves the scene)*

*Cassandra enters the scene. After looking around for a while...*

**Cassandra:** That slacker is gone again!

*The doorbell rings and Cassandra goes to open the door:*

**Martha:** Hi Cassandra!

**Cassandra:** Hi! Come in and take a seat.

**Martha:** We finally get together again and hopefully this time we can talk some literature!

**Millie:** We couldn't do it last time because of that unfortunate episode.

**Cassandra:** Don't make me think about it, otherwise my blood will boil in my veins.

**Millie:** Fortunately, as I told you by phone, we have miraculously found another copy of the first edition. It wasn't easy, we searched all the UK bookshops, until we finally found this one.

**Martha:** We also tried to negotiate the price, but the seller was unwilling to go below the amount we paid.

**Millie:** Which amounts to ninety thousand pounds.

**Cassandra:** Why is it more than double the price of the other book?

**Martha:** *(Embarrassed)* Millie, explain to Cassandra why!

**Millie:** Because it is in a stratospheric state of conservation, it looks almost new.

*Vincent enters the scene.*

**Vincent:** *(After sitting next to them)* Hi dear ladies! *(Ironically)*

**Martha:** What are you doing, are you staying here with us?

**Millie:** You have never joined the reading group before today.

**Vincent:** I would like to make an exception to the rule. Can I?

**Martha:** Of course! No problem for me.

**Millie:** But I warn you that you need to be well informed to be able to discuss the subject.

**Cassandra:** *(Showing the book to her husband)* First of all, the first thing you need to know is that we have an object of great value in our hands, in fact, to buy this it takes a lot of money.

**Vincent:** Why?

**Millie:** The price depends on the state of conservation, the watermark, the cover and so on. You need to be an expert to understand why this book is worth ninety thousand pounds.

**Vincent:** *(He gets up and goes to get the book his wife is holding)* That's right, I'm not an expert, but I've done some research.

**Millie:** Do you question what I say?

*The doorbell rings. Vincent, without answering Millie's question, goes to open the door and lets Vivyan in.*

**Vivyan:** *(Fearful)* Don't be angry madam, I'll take the trouble off right away, but first I want you to listen to my side of the story.

**Cassandra:** *(Turning to her husband)* Why did you let her in? I told you I didn't want to see her anymore.

**Vincent:** Actually, it was I who asked her to come. It was fair to hear her version.

**Millie:** No need to listen to the words of a scullery maid.

**Martha:** She will surely invent some lies to justify her carelessness.

**Vincent:** Shut up, you ugly crows! And listen carefully to what she has to say.

**Martha:** You can't treat us like this, we've come to...

**Vincent:** *(Raising her voice)* I said shut up!

*After a moment of silence.*

**Vivyan:** Mrs. Edwards, if I spilt coffee on your book, it was because someone tripped me.

*Martha and Millie would like to reply, but Vincent's threatening gaze makes them desist.*

**Vincent:** Please go on.

**Vivyan:** I also believe I know why. Those two wanted to give her a book of little value by passing it off as a precious one. Pouring the coffee on it would have been difficult to understand and would also have discouraged her from showing it to experts.

**Cassandra:** *(After thinking for a moment)* Can you prove your thesis?

**Vincent:** Not her, but I do. *(After taking the book brought by Judie, he give it to his wife)* Look at this, doesn't it look a little different from what they were about to give you now?

**Cassandra:** *(After comparing them)* You two... damn scammers, not only did you want to cheat me with the first book you also wanted to do an encore.

**Martha:** You're wrong, it's just a misunderstanding.

**Millie:** The seller told us they were original, it was certainly not our intention to scam you.

**Cassandra:** Out of this house, cursed harpies! *(Seeing Cassandra's threatening gaze, the two run away quickly. When they pass by Vivyan, she takes her well-deserved revenge by tripping Millie who falls to the ground)*

**Millie:** *(As she stands up)* Ouch, I broke my knee.

**Cassandra:** If you stay there another second, it won't be the only fracture you will suffer, I assure you!

**Martha:** *(Trying to help her friend get up)* Come on, get up! Didn't you hear what she said?

**Millie:** *(With difficulty, she finally manages to get up)* Oh my, how badly it ended! *(And they leave the scene)*

**Cassandra:** Luckily I hadn't given them the check yet.

**Vincent:** But I would need one to pay for this. *(Pointing to the book Judie brought)*

**Cassandra:** Tell me the amount you need!

**Vincent:** Seventy five thousand. But this also has the certificate of authenticity.

**Cassandra:** And so today there are ninety five thousand, I also have to pay the bonsai expert.

**Vincent:** No love, I've already done it. I wanted to give you a gift, it's been a long time since I gave you one.

**Cassandra:** I'm speechless, you haven't called me that for centuries. But where did you get all that money?

**Vincent:** I collected a consultancy.

**Cassandra:** I finally found again the man I fell in love with twenty years ago.

*Cassandra throws herself into her husband's arms and kisses him passionately.*

**Vivyan:** *(Embarrassed, she opens the door to go out)* I better go away.

**Cassandra:** *(Holding her husband's hand)* Where are going? I order you to return to duty immediately.

**Vivyan:** Really?

**Cassandra:** Of course! Not only, I want to offer you my apologies for how I behaved and I also offer you a pay raise.

*Meanwhile, having found the door open, Tim enters the scene and sees Cassandra e Vincent holding hands, looking at each other with sweet eyes.*

**Tim:** Vincent, what are you doing?

**Vincent:** *(Looking at his wife tenderly and maliciously dragging her to another room)* Simple friend of mine: I just make the future come true!

**THE END**