

# BASTARD NIGHTS

Translated by Craig Allen

**Carmen**

Good evening. We'd like to begin by thanking you all for coming. We regret to inform you, however, that we won't be able to put on the show tonight. As some of you may already know, our dear colleague, Renata Ciaravino, took her own life. We'd decided that the show had to go on anyway, but in the end we just couldn't do it. Please forgive us.

**Silvia**

In recent months, Renata had begun investigating modern Italy: the economic crisis, the increasing shortage of information, the growth of ignorance and the rise of xenophobia. Our show was going to be all about this. Renata read and read and discussed everything with us. But the more she investigated, the more she realized that it was impossible to do absolutely anything about the brutalization of Italy. She had looked for inspiration in the words of other non-conformists like Michael Moore, Naomi Klein... and in particular Naom Chomsky. A few months ago, she'd even gotten hold of Mr. Chomsky's cell phone number. She started calling him night and day. He finally reported her for stalking him.

**Carmen**

We'd like to take this occasion to publicly apologize to Mr. Chomsky.

**Silvia**

Renata finally decided to leave us. We believe that her suicide was her final act of rebellion. We think that this was Renata's way of expressing the most unfortunately irreversible and extreme form of dissent. In honor of this gesture, we'd like to share with you a short video...

**Carmen**

Very short...

**Silvia**

...our final farewell to Renata and her desperate vitality. We'll be serving snacks afterwards, and we'll be happy to answer any questions you might have.

**Carmen**

At any rate, the troupe intends to keep touring and presenting other shows that we've already translated into English... Thanks.

**Silvia**

Ciao Renata.

*Video of funeral. Silvia, Carmen and Renata come on stage .*

**Silvia**

Renata! You are back!

**Carmen**

What the hell are you wearing?!

**Renata**

Silvia, Carmen, I was getting ready to enter the White Light when I got the feeling that there was one more thing I had to do here on Earth before moving on.

**Silvia**

Ok Renata, don't give up!

**Renata**

I just realized that I hadn't been born to act on stage, do politics or spread culture. I was born to do something much greater than all that. I was born to present television shows like X Factor!

**Silvia e Carmen**

Oh, fuck you.

**Renata**

Hey girls, that's my dream.

**Carmen**

Well, it's your dream not ours.

**Renata**

Hey girls, I'll kill myself with lexotan!!!

**Silvia**

Don't do it.

**Carmen**

Keep calm!

**Silvia**

Well... then maybe we'll be able to help you! Carmen! Go get ready!

**Carmen**

I'm going.

**Silvia**

Here's the studio.... *(gets a clipboard)*... Here's your clipboard...

**Renata**

A real clipboard just for me? This is so thrilling.

**Silvia**

Here, grab the mike.... Now all you have to do is say the magic words:...

**Renata**

Lights! Camera! Action!

*Music.*

Ladies and Gentlemen! Let's give our warmest welcome to the proud winner of the following titles: *Miss Bergamo Flaming Smile 2008! Miss Burnt T-Shirt 2009! Miss Flaming Butt 2010! Miss Burning Hot Match-girl 2011!* Ladies and Gentlemen! (Egidio! switch off the music please!) ... Here with us tonight is Stella Scorching!

**Renata**

Welcome to the show, Stella! Have a seat.

**Stella**

I'd just like to blow a kiss to everyone who knows me out there.

**Renata**

As you all know, only women who've been burned by accident can become candidates for Miss Skin Burn. Otherwise it'd just be too easy: you come home, put on a pot of water, wait 'til it's good and boiling, stick your head in, and then Bingo! You've got prize-winning burns! I mean, *anybody* can do that.

**Stella**

Oh you're so right, Renata! You'd be surprised how many people I know...

**Renata**

For all our spectators who may not know, Stella is a girl who burned the candle at both ends and burst into the finals like a firecracker. Here we are, Stella, we've got more than a few fish to fry so let's start cooking. Tell us the truth: It's not enough just being burned to be someone, is it?

**Stella**

Absolutely not, Renata, you've got to have fuel inside you, you've got to have something burning inside, something that really wants to make you explode.

**Renata**

Can you truthfully say "I've got this fuel to burn"?

**Carmen**

I know I've got this chance and I don't want to burn it up.

**Renata**

We're talking about fuel to burn. We're talking about the X Factor. We're talking about the sacred fire of Art. We'll also be talking about benefits of having third degree burns. What are they? In addition to being here, that is?

**Stella**

Well, there's lots of advantages. Everybody knows that. The first thing that comes to mind is that I don't have to shave my legs anymore.

**Renata**

Well that's one big advantage, to be sure. You went right to the root of the problem, didn't you? And burned it right out.

**Stella**

Yes but... I do have one regret, however...

**Renata**

And what is that?

**Stella**

I wish I'd burnt my underarms as well...

**Renata**

I'm clapping. Do you know why I'm clapping? Because with this declaration, Stella wants us to know that even a lucky girl like her also has her own little cross to bear. But tonight I want to laugh, so go on, further benefits?

**Stella**

Well... my bust. As you can see, I've got a very big bust. And a big bust - as some of the ladies here in the studio might certainly know - a big bust just tends to sag. But this scar tissue here... here...here...and over there..... holds it all up nicely...

*Silvia pops out.*

**Silvia**

Really? I'm starting to see a bit of a sag myself. The only solution for common women like us is plastic surgery.

**Renata**

I, instead, happened to play mini-basketball as a girl and that's helped a lot. You see, mine are still going up for the rebound! So...in your opinion, can we say that mini-basketball and skin burns offer a valid alternative to plastic surgery?

**Stella**

Oh absolutely.

**Renata**

Stella, we've got another burning issue here at hand. Would you mind telling us what you think about Tania Bonato, your current rival for the title?

**Stella**

Well, I'm pretty thin-skinned and I don't want to make any cutting remarks... Tania is certainly a girl who leaves a sign but she's only got 37% burns and I've got 46% burns. Tania has only second and third degree burns. Mine are all certified third and fourth degree. In black and white, the figures speak for themselves.

**Renata**

True. True. But remember that Tania's face is completely disfigured and that's worth a twenty point bonus.

**Stella**

But you see, Tania still has all the lines on the palm of her right hand whereas I had to have a skin graft. That skin there came from my arm...

**Renata**

There's so much reassurance in your statement, but I think it would be more honest to proceed with the test. Mr. Notary!

**Stella**

Ok...

**Renata**

3, 2, 1...

**Carmen Renata**

A perfect fit!

**Renata**

Thank you, Stella, you've been so sincere. But now it's time to stop playing games. I'd like to take you – if you'll let me – to a different place. I want to bring you into the "Heart Room". You've told us that your burns have given you so much.

**Carmen**

Ever so much....

**Renata**

But you're also a woman, and therefore fragile, as only we women can be... Your burn must have also stripped you of something. Would you mind sharing this with us?

**Stella**

Oh Renata, what I wouldn't pay to be able to go back to what I was before: the boy next door. Wherever I go, people stop me on the street. They want to know why. And the men! They go out with me just because they know that wherever we are we'll always be the center of attention. Even when I go out by myself, to the beach, for example. I put on my swim-suit and then Boom! Everybody's just ogling me!.... Sometimes I just feel like telling them: I'm pretty on the inside, too, you know! All this appeal is hard to bear sometimes.

**Renata****Renata**

What a wonderful emotion you've offered us! You *can* do it, and do you know why? Because you're a nice person. And I could spend hours just shooting the breeze with you..... but... the moment we've all been waiting for is arriving. Stella, it's time for you to make your appeal to the audience.

**Stella**

Ok... I've got 46% burns. I am what I am... It's all real, and there's no silicone. Come up and check for yourselves....And if you like what you see... cast your vote for me.

**Renata**

Silvia. Hand me the winning envelope, please. And now, ladies and gentlemen, the winner of this First Edition of Miss Skin Burn Italia 2012, after screaming, shrieking, weeping, shouting...after going to Hell and back...after hoping, and praying, after rising, and falling, and rising again, the winner of this First Edition of Miss Skin Burn Italia 2012 is.....It's you! Stella Scorching!

**Stella**

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you all ever so much. This is my dream come true.

*Renata and Carmen leave the stage. Silvia stays on, addressing the audience.*

**Silvia**

What's happening here is that even the weirdest things have become ordinary.

Getting your breasts done by the plastic surgeon, then rushing to the emergency room because the implant got infected, spending five hours in the operating room and then 7 days on your back in bed hooked up to the catheter that drains the pus from your breast. Taking Lexotan so you never feel even the slightest pain at all. Feeling all crawly when you get on the city bus because your sense of smell makes you hate the scent of other people's skin. Then imagining all those tiny bacteria from Africa and God-knows-where else crawling through the little holes in your body, eating you out from the inside right there on the bus. Knowing that some soubrette on the telly makes more in one night than your father's pension pays in one month.... To a man who worked 14 hours a day every day since he was ten.... reconstructing this country after the Second World War. Feeling all this and not seeing any meaning any more, just a fuzzy outline. Some days, you can distract yourself from it all. Other days, you just feel so it's sad to feel this way... disjointed, laughed at, spied on, robbed, disarmed, disdained, threatened, silenced, humiliated, taken for granted.

*Enter Renata.*

**Recorded voice**

*Renata Ciaravino is an Italian woman. She's thirty-five years old. She's a Leftist. It's not the best of times for people like her.*

**Renata (to the audience)**

Certain evenings I feel so bad that the only thing that makes me feel better is to stretch out on the sofa, turn on the telly and watch a detective show. My favorite is "Criminal Minds". Do you know Criminal Minds? Those guys in Quantico, Virginia?

They go hunting for serial-killers. After they've solved the case, they fly back to Quantico, Virginia, in their private jet exchanging pithy aphorisms about life...quoting Ovid and Shakespeare....Some evenings I feel so bad I can hardly repress the urge to get up and get a pen and write these things down.

I'm a woman. I'm thirty-five years old, and I'm a Leftist. That's why certain evenings I feel even worse.

If I were a conservative there'd be nothing wrong with just lying there drooling on the sofa watching detective serial all night, but because I'm a Leftist when I don't know what to do I think I ought to



do something else. Like listen to an audiobook by Isabel Allende..... Or rent some obscure Polish film masterpiece and watch it without subtitles, alone, in my bedroom, striking my self... Or maybe just something simple: get out of the house and go drink a beer somewhere. But then I think: what if somebody sees me? Sees me all alone like that? They'll think I'm a nerd! So I start thinking of the excuses I could use...

"Oh hullo! I've just left the cinema, actually. Went with some friends. There were around forty of us. We saw this incredible film about Pakistan... I was so moved by the story that I told everybody else: you can all go home if you like, but me, I want to sit here by myself for a while and think about Pakistan..."

If I were a Conservative, certain evenings, I wouldn't have any problem about logging on to YouPorn. You all know, YouPorn, don't you?

But....I'm a Leftist and I've learned the lesson that women can't watch porno because porno always shows women in a submissive position etcetera, etcetera, and etcetera.... I log on anyway....I begin touching myself ....I climax....I feel guilty.

Sometimes it helps me to delete these sites from my bookmarks, so that if anyone sees my computer they'll see only respectable sites like Barackobama.com and we'll all feel a little safer!

I haven't been paid in four months. And because I'm a leftist....I feel even worse because I haven't been able to organize the other workers.

So I say: "OK, tonight I'm going to roll myself a joint and chill out big time..." But then I starting going into a deep paranoia... so I jump up to make myself a relaxing cup of herbal tea. I've got at least 25 types to choose from...And then I feel better...because it's natural.... and because it's natural, it's also leftist...

So I step over to the balcony with my steaming cup of natural relaxation in my hand and hope somebody passing by looks up. I try to imagine what they'd think "Look at her! She looks so calm gazing out at the city sipping her herbal tea. She's definitely a Leftist..."

Half an hour goes by, not a fuckin' soul passes by and looks up. My tea has grown cold in my hand and I feel pneumonia coming on. I might even have a fever. I start feeling delirious....

So I dream I'm in Central Park, and I'm going... "I can't stand always having to fit into the outdated stereotypes of what a leftist can do or cannot do....I feel like I'm in a dream where I want to run and run but instead I just stay there rooted to the ground...."

Deeply impressed with this final outburst of mine, the New Yorkers begin clapping their hands ... I wake up and have my first positive thought: I'm going to get away from all this! If I can't be myself in the middle of all this chaos, then I'll go be myself in the barnyard of the farmhouse I buy in Tuscany!

And I'll go there with my maaa....but what do I mean, my "man"? I'll go there with my companion.

... And we'll have a baby! But we'll conceive that baby with loving awareness! Not screwing in front of the telly watching X-Factor! And

we'll call the baby.....we'll call him... Antares! Antares! Because he's got to have a special name that belongs to only him and a constellation up in the sky somewhere.....We won't even know where it is, there's so many constellations up there!

Then I'll be able to brag to everyone that we bought two goats and we've got a hen that lays an egg every three weeks. And I'll crush the balls of anybody I know beneath the wheels of my personal tractor shouting that I only eat raw, organically-raised barley from a wooden bowl!

If the only solutions to reach a little stability are the ones I've just listed, I swear I'm going to go back out onto that balcony where I had my herbal tea and hop over the railing.

Or else....I just might enroll in one of those courses where they take you into the woods and tell you to run. And you run. Then they say: here you are, Renata, this is your oak, hug it!

*Enter Carmen and Silvia.*

**Carmen**

Renata we went over there and we understood the problem. We listened close and we heard this strange tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock: Is that your biological clock ticking away?

**Silvia**

Renata, you can express all the creativity you want. You can act. You can write. You can even win the Nobel prize. But no woman is anything if she doesn't have a baby.

**Renata**

Having a baby is one of my priorities.

**Carmen**

So who are you going to have it with?

**Renata**

With Elvio my boyfriend.

**Carmen**

Come on, Renata, get real... You need somebody with balls! You need a man, not a boy. Otherwise, what kind of kid are you going to get? Me? I've said goodbye to a certain type of proto-man. Do you remember my ex, the chubby? If I ever run into another fatso like him who screws me with his socks on and puts his hands on my shoulders and says: "Ugly bucket of worms can you kiss my willy?" Do you know what I'll tell him? "Hey chubby, can't you see I'm as dry as a desert?"

**Silvia**

Excuse me, but are you ready to talk about my old ex? Leftist men, listen up! If I ever meet another drug-addled Leninist who goes

around in Birkenstocks with the soles peeling off and he just keeps smiling and gluing them back on, who leaves me little presents like pubic hairs in the bathtub .... Do you know what I'll tell him?

Che Guevara! Gather up your pubic hair and move into Ken Loach's house right away! Also because if you have a father like this for your baby, what can you expect him to do in life? Teach him how to clean chillums?

**Renata**

You've convinced me. Now I want to wink and say ciao to certain men, starting from those guys who touch your clitoris like they're ringing a doorbell! (*imitates a guy hanging on a doorbell*)....Hello?....Hello!...Hello!!!

What are you ringing for, you silly twit? THERE'S NOBODY HOME!

**Carmen**

And you know what I say? Incompetent, immature, un-evolved men....

**All together**

Fuck off!

**Silvia**

Right. And this is where our project begins. We want to have a baby with the Top Gun, the leader of the pack, just like the Virgin Mary. A strong arm with a good job, and above all, a guy who knows how to make us laugh.

**Carmen**

The key to the project is in your hands. Open it up. This is sperm. But not just anybody's sperm: you can see from its creaminess that this is primo quality product.

**Renata**

Above and beyond the quality, I'd like you to notice the quantity. Most men, like you....you...or you there, for example.....you look like one of those guys with a dry ejaculation... You know, those two or three droplets that anyone might confuse with the pattern on the carpet?... Just have a look at the abundance here!

**Carmen**

Do you know whose sperm this is? Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to present the sperm of the future President of the Italian Republic, Silvio Berlusconi. Our future president is currently working hard behind the scenes making sure the nation never forgets him, all that he has given, and everything still in his power to give. With the self-abnegation that only he possesses, our future President kindly consented to help us. And in record-breaking time, we

prepared 10 million little plastic bags that we'll be mailing to the homes of all the women in Italy and more. Let's give a big round of applause!

Now it's time for our live demonstration: you open it, you dive in, you savor it.

**Silvia**

It smells delicious!

**Carmen**

Extraordinary!

**Renata**

It's got an unmistakable bouquet...

**Silvia**

I want to taste it...*(she takes a modest sip with a straw)*

**Renata**

I feel like indulging *(she swallows the entire bag)*

**Carmen**

So what do you do with this precious jewel? You just swing down to your National Health clinic and tell them to inseminate you. It's absolutely free. Also remember that this sperm is a great facial moisturizer...

**Silvia Renata**

Carmen!!! I need more!

**Silvia**

Carmen, Carmen...Let's go all the way, now...

**Renata Silvia Carmen**

Pull out the swimming pool! *(Carlo hands her an inflatable pool)*

**All together**

Silvio you're in me.

Silvio we'll never forget you. Look at me.

*The three ladies take a bath in the pool filled with sperm/yogurt. Silvia and Renata are the first to come out.*

**Recorded voice**

*What you now see before you is Carmen Pellegrinelli at the end of the fourth Berlusconi government.*

**Carmen**

Good evening, my name is Carmen Pellegrinelli. I'm here for the acting try-out even if I'm more of a classical bally dancer. I graduated from the Royal Geographic Academy of London. I also graduated from the Brandon, Marlon, Actor Studios of New York and the Royal Shakespeare Harry Potter Theatre Company of Edinburgh.

Three adjectives that describe me?

Sincere, sober, sunny.

Three values I believe in?

I believe in me; I believe in women; I believe in dogs.

My hobbies?

I do a lot of Pilates. I also love to read... My favorite book is Jonathan Livingstone Seagull because it's all about friendship, freedom, and the joy of life.

My motto?

Enjoy your life, one sip at a time.

An image that describes me?

Can I get a little help?

May I spin the wheel?

Can I buy a vowel?

Are you playing with us tonight, Abruzzo?

*Carmen goes offstage .*

### **Silvia**

*Dear President Napolitano,*

*It's 2 o'clock in the morning. There's chaos outside in the street. The Midnight News just finished but I'm still watching the faces moving in silence on the screen. I switched off the volume. I wanted to hear what was going on in the street. There are ambulances everywhere. The police are here, too.*

Dear President Napolitano,

I'm 65 years old. My husband's dead and thank God. He used to beat me all the time. He used to beat our two kids, too. Now there's only one because my youngest daughter overdosed on cocaine. My youngest son Pietro is forty years old now. He ran into a streetlight on his scooter one day and broke his head. Now he's over at the mental hospital 5 days a week. The insurance company still hasn't paid us so I'm still supporting him. We live on my pension.... 750 Euros a month...

Dear President Napolitano,

I'm writing to you about something I'm ashamed of: I was spying on my neighbors. I saw him, her, their two kids. They were all setting the table and laughing. I felt like killing each one of them. I just didn't have the courage.

They just renovated the building I live in and I had to pay five thousand Euros. I didn't have the money so I had to borrow. Then

another unexpected expense came up. The others decided to install a pipe that carries the kitchen fumes from the tavern downstairs up to the roof. That pipe runs right next to my window and I didn't want it. But the rest of the tenants voted and I lost. My next door neighbor wanted it. What's five thousand Euros, he said. That bastard.

Some time ago I was at the market and a strange thing happened. I was at a stall looking at slippers when I smelled shit somewhere. I thought I must have stepped in some pooh. I looked under my shoe but it was clean. So I bought my pair of slippers and moved on. But I still smelled shit in the air. I kept walking, but this strange feeling kept bothering me: I don't know if it's ever happened to you, Mr. President, but have you ever been in a crowd of people and felt that you smelt like shit? I still don't know until I look at my overcoat from the corner of my eye: there's a brown stripe of shit at the bottom near the hem. How could I have gotten shit on my overcoat I wonder. I must have brushed up against someone else with shit on them. So I hide behind a van and ransack my bag for a tissue. Not a one. So I take off my blue hat, spit on it, and start working on my overcoat. I finally get myself clean and look for a place to throw away the hat. This lady sees what I'm doing and goes "What's this? Throwing the hat away, are we? Give it to me."

I'm too ashamed to give her a hat soiled with shit but she just pulls it out of my hand and dashes off. She'll have run all the way home, pulled out the hat and put it on her head.

Mr. President, our overcoats soiled with shit.

Dear President Napolitano,

I finally got something done today. With Pietro, my son. I had to let off a little steam, you know how it is?

I've got these Pakis sleeping rough under my bedroom window. They've been there for years. Nobody knows. Nobody cares.

Pietro was nervous all day yesterday because he'd run out of cigarettes. He stopped in front of these Pakis and threw a rock. Hit one of them square in the head. But somebody saw him and that night he was on the news. He got pretty worked up about it. You could even see our front door with its new paint job, right there on the telly.

Around ten o'clock that night, Pietro went to buy the petrol from a service station without a hidden camera. He filled up the empty bottle of fabric softener I gave him with three Euros. Then he came back home and we waited until midnight. Then he went downstairs. He stood in the street for a while to make sure that no one else was around. I looked out from the window.

The Paki was wrapped up like a worm in his sleeping bag that stank of drink. He had a paper plate with some cat food/fish guts on it and a plastic bag full of rags at his side. His toes stuck out of the sleeping

bag; his shoes were scattered on the pavement. Of course I recognized him. It's three years he's been sleeping here! At first it was because his wife ran out on him. He was utterly dejected. Not because he was sleeping rough but because he was still in love with his wife. Over the next three years he turned into a monster. Every time he saw me he asked me for money.

So he was there sleeping. Pietro crept up close. Poured the petrol over the cardboard he was lying on, careful not to spill any on him so as not to wake him up. He poured the petrol around good, the whole bottle. Then he lit a match and tossed it on the ground. Then there was this big burst of flame.

At first, the Paki didn't even notice and went right on sleeping. Then all of a sudden he sat up with a bolt and started yelling. He got to his feet and stumbled around, waving his arms. He was burning. Burning and screaming. The flames got bigger.

Everything around him caught fire. The cardboard. The little paper plate. His bag of rags. Even his shoes.

He bellowed, like a wild animal.

He got his shirt off.

He pulled his pants down. The skin on his legs came off with it.

Then he was buck naked, even his Paki dick was burning.

We watched. His face started melting , his hair was smoking.

He tore away locks of it, throwing them on the ground.

He kept dancing around for quite a while. Then he twirled and fell to the ground.

His body lay twitching there, smoking.

Then he stopped moving.

Porco Dio/Son of a bitch!

Now I can go to bed.

Tomorrow I go do the ironing for this guy who changes his shirt twice a day. He goes on and on about how I'm supposed to iron the cuffs and the collar.

He owes me 3 months pay!

*Silvia goes out.*

### **Renata**

When you're twenty, you feel like you have your entire life ahead of you and all you have to do is to wait for the opportunities to arrive.

The opportunities never arrive.

And all you can say is that the opportunities didn't arrive because I didn't deserve them. Because I'm not good enough. I'm not lucky enough. I'm not clever enough.

The truth is that opportunities do not arrive also because there aren't enough for everyone. Some people get them; others don't.

What hurts the most is to see how the people who never got any opportunities look at the people who did, like someone who might be able to tell them how to be and what to do. Like a dog.

An american Stand Up comedian, Bill Hick, at the end of his show said: "While you live, don't be afraid, never be afraid. Because, it's just a ride...". "A ride??? Don't you see my house? My car? My holidays? All this has to have a meaning! All this has got to last forever...".

The problem is always our perception of time as it flows. If I were really aware of the continuous passage of time I doubt if I'd let myself feel so humiliated and taken for granted.

You've spent the evening in the company of Silvia Gallerano, Carmen Pellegrinelli and Renata Ciaravino. Thank you and good night!

The end