

EuroVision

A Play
by Tim Luscombe

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List of Characters

Gary
Kevin
Katia Europa
Hadrian
Antinous
Sergio Flores
Andreas Alexiou

And four more actors [3 male, 1 female] who play:

Sylvanus
A Priest
Followers of Hadrian
Rocco
Dolores
3 Paparazzi
TV Director (voice only)
Greek backing singers
Fred
Hotel receptionist
Room service waiter
3 TV floor managers
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's singer
The Finnish singer

(Total: 11 actors needed)

ACT ONE

1.

Rome AD 128

An April Night

The Imperial Palace, which looks down on the city from what is modern-day Pincio, and across to the hills beyond. The sky is bright with fire. We hear fireworks explode. Crowds can be heard celebrating.

Antinous: Look at all the bonfires on the hills! Can you see the people? Look! Silhouetted against the flames!

(Fireworks)

Hadrian: Even my mausoleum looks rather jolly tonight. Do you see it, Antinous?

Antinous: *(ignoring the reference to the mausoleum)* Look at the torches, all the way along the road to Ostia.

Hadrian: And hardly a murmur of protest.

Antinous: I should think not! They've got their Emperor where they want him, back in Rome. And a new goddess! Rome! You've deified her! She is eternal!

Hadrian: *(mocking Antinous)* What more do they want in a day?

Antinous: *(a bit hurt)* Well...

(Hadrian suffers a spasm of pain)

Antinous: *(holding Hadrian)* Shhh.

Hadrian: *(recovering)* I used to feel myself a leopard as well as an Emperor. Now...

Antinous: I'm here.

Hadrian: Yes. You're here.

(Fireworks)

Antinous: When do we leave?

(Hadrian laughs)

Hadrian: There's a certain irony in the fact that when I die, they'll declare me eternal. I'd be more grateful if they declared it now. But when I touch you, I feel eternal. I'm in touch with your soul.

(Sylvanus enters, taut with agitation)

Sylvanus: Aah, Hadrian, umm... Is it true, you're leaving Rome tomorrow?

Antinous: Tomorrow?!

Hadrian: Not now, Sylvanus.

Sylvanus: *(to Hadrian)* Perhaps you don't realise how dangerous it would be.

Hadrian: There are others, much abler than I, to keep the peace here between all your squabbling tribes. My job is to wage peace throughout all our lands. From Libya to Armenia to Russia to England. One federated nation! Europe! Where all the arteries are open for ideas to flow, for trade to flow. One federated nation. Strength in diversity!

Sylvanus: Yes, sir. *(Fireworks)* But you know how it'll be taken in the senate if you return to Greece so soon.

Antinous: *(excited)* Greece?!

Sylvanus: You've only just come back.

Hadrian: *(to Sylvanus)* It was meant to be a surprise, you imbecile!

Sylvanus: *(overlapping)* I don't understand. *(Fireworks)* You know the anti-Greeks are already frighteningly powerful here. *(Fireworks)*

Hadrian: I want Antinous to see his family again. *(Fireworks)* Aren't they splendid?

Antinous: Did you like the elephants, Sylvanus? Weren't they wonderful?

Sylvanus: *(dryly)* The elephants were wonderful.

Antinous: And the poetry festival begins tomorrow. Then the great song competition next week! Are you going to it?

Sylvanus: I have a large amount of money on Mesopotamia.

Antinous: I heard the Greek song in rehearsal. It'll be hard to beat.

Sylvanus: I'm not sure the voting panel will be quite so well disposed.

Hadrian: Catalonia gets my vote. When I heard it I cried. The words took me straight back to my childhood.

Sylvanus: You haven't visited Catalonia since you became Emperor, sir.

Hadrian: Yes. I've almost forgotten how to speak my own language.

Sylvanus: If you spent equal amounts of time in all our lands –

Hadrian: Sylvanus, I've warned you. This is insolence.

Sylvanus: But it's this...emphasis on Greece –

Hadrian: I have plans for Athens.

Antinous: The fireworks have finished.

Sylvanus: *(to Antinous)* And you miss Greece so much...?

(Antinous looks at Sylvanus)

Hadrian: Antinous doesn't miss Greece. Greece is in him. It's his strength. I miss Greece. Go to bed, Sylvanus.

Sylvanus: I –

Hadrian: Goodnight, Sylvanus.

Sylvanus: Goodnight, sir. *(to Antinous)* Sir.

(Sylvanus leaves)

Antinous: Maybe he's right, Hadrian. *(seeing that Hadrian is looking at the mausoleum)* Don't look at it.

Hadrian: It's almost complete.

Antinous: Maybe we should stay a bit longer.

Hadrian: Stay and watch them build my tomb?

Antinous: I can't believe today won't last forever. The bonfires will never burn out. The Tiber will endlessly run. The night air will always sooth your hot brow.

Hadrian: I'm sorry to be so morbid.

Antinous: It's alright. And my strength is not in Greece as you said, but in you.

Hadrian: My genius! When you hold me, I don't fear death.

Antinous: My soul is at sea. I abandon reason and surrender to your touch. You are my master. I am your slave. I am your dog.

Hadrian: You are my genius.

Antinous: Look at your eyes! I can see all of you in your eyes and all of me. A gentle touch, a cry in the night, a tender caress, the desolation and pain - that I can take away, if you let me. I can breathe life into your heart.

Hadrian: I believe you want to.

2.

Gary's flat in Peckham, a short time in the future.

A Sunday afternoon. The front doorbell is ringing.

Gary is writing, surrounded by books scattered across the floor.

Gary: Hang on! (*writing*) "I can breathe life into your heart" (*finishes writing*) Coming!

(*Gary opens the front door to Kevin, who is in Ryanair steward's uniform*)

Kevin: Hi!

Gary: Hi! Kevin!

Kevin: I was just passing, on my way home, so I thought I'd just –

Gary: (*overlapping, surprised*) Yes, great. Would you like a coffee or something?

Kevin: Something, I think.

Gary: What?

Kevin: Anything.

Gary: Coffee?

Kevin: I'll look.

(Kevin goes out to the kitchen for something alcoholic. Gary looks at what he was writing)

Gary: Oh, god, it's hopeless. I'm no good at sex.

Kevin: Really?

Gary: I mean I'm no good at writing it. It just comes out funny. Or sappy. "I am your dog". Woof woof.

Kevin: *(off)* How's it going, the novel?

Gary: Oh, you know, the same, nothing.

Kevin: And life in the box office?

Gary: Not so's you'd notice.

Kevin: *(entering with wine etc)* You don't mind?

Gary: No, great. And you. How are you?

Kevin: Fine.

Gary: You look well.

Kevin: Sunbeds. I spent the whole of yesterday in the sauna in Amsterdam so I'm wrecked.

Gary: How was it?

Kevin: Full of Italians, for some reason.

Gary: Right up your street.

Kevin: They certainly were.

Gary: I don't know how you do it. You just look at these stunning people and they fall to their knees.

Kevin: It's 'coz I'm gorgeous.

Gary: What happens in the sauna if someone gives you his number?

Kevin: What do you mean?

Gary: Well, where do you put it?

Kevin: And I've spilt up with Roberto.

Gary: No!

Kevin: Yes.

Gary: When?

Kevin: A few days.

Gary: Why?

Kevin: Too much hassle. It used to be fun but... I dunno. It didn't seem worth it.

Gary: Why not?

Kevin: We hit some problems, and, you know...

Gary: But you need to work at these things. It can't always just be fun.

Kevin: Why not?

Gary: What problems?

Kevin: Oh, nothing. He was getting so serious –

Gary: Honestly, Kevin, you're terrible. You just up and go as soon as anything starts getting real.

Kevin: He was cute. That's all. I got bored. Alright?

Gary: Look, this is ridiculous. Roberto was lovely. Only last week you said he was everything you wanted. That you might even feel...you know!...

Kevin: Will you stop going on about Roberto? What do you know about relationship -...

Gary: I'm sorry.

Kevin: No, I'm sorry.

Gary: No, I'm sorry.

Kevin: No, I'm sorry.

Gary: No, I'm sorry.

Kevin: No, I'm sorry.

Gary: No, I really am sorry.

Kevin: (*handing Gary an envelope*) Anyway, here you are. This is really what I came by for.

Gary: What is it?

Kevin: Open it!

Gary: Is it? Yes! Rome! Tickets to Rome! Oh, Kevin, thank you!

Kevin: Did I get the right weekend?

Gary: You certainly did! (*singing the Eurovision theme*) Da dah da da dah da DAAAAAH daah! Etc

Kevin: What's that?

Gary: The Eurovision Song Contest!

Kevin: You're not going to the Eurovision Song Contest!

Gary: I am now! It's my life's ambition! And it 's Rome this year, where it all began.

Kevin: Hang on, you told me Italy wasn't in it anymore.

Gary: They're back in. Last year was the first time since 1994, and they won, can you believe? So they're hosting it this year. Will you come with me?

Kevin: You want me to come to the Eurovision Song Contest with you?

Gary: Yes.

Kevin: Why?

Gary: I just want you to.

Kevin: Really?

Gary: Yes.

Kevin: Oh, thank you...Well, I'm flattered. Can I think about it?

Gary: If you like. (*lying*) I don't mind.

Kevin: Why don't you go with one of your Eurovision Song Contest fan club friends?

Gary: Well, I was going to, but they're dreadful really. They're like train spotters, only camper. Oh, I can't believe it! I'm actually going to the Eurovision Song Contest! It's the most thrilling event ever! It's sexual, it's actually sexual!

Kevin: Well, if you find the Eurovision Song Contest sexual, no wonder you never get laid.

Gary: I get laid.

Kevin: But you're always complaining that –

Gary: No, I just never get laid by the right people.

Kevin: God, Gary, there's no right and wrong. It's whoever turns you on.

Gary: But that's it. I don't seem to turn the people that turn me on on. No. Look. The thing about the Eurovision Song Contest is that it's Europe united – together – it's about the fact that the countries of Europe don't fight amongst themselves anymore, but battle it out in friendly competition with songs; just like in Hadrian's day –

Kevin: Hadrian?

Gary: As in the wall. The one I'm writing the novel about. With his kind of pan-Empire festival of songs and so on. It's an index of how civilized we are.

Kevin: The Eurovision Song Contest is an index of how civilised we are?

Gary: It's only in England that people make a joke of it; it's taken terribly seriously everywhere else. You see, the songs reflect the various cultures and traditions of Europe.

Kevin: *(losing interest)* Really.

Gary: Yes. Unity through diversity! You can still hear the ancient cries of the lonely Greek shepherd in the Greek songs, and the melancholic wailing of the Finnish deer hunter in the Finnish.

Kevin: Maybe that's why Finland never wins.

Gary: It's just there. In the music. And it's political.

Kevin: Political.

Gary: Yes. I mean, on the surface, it's completely unpolitical, of course. But underneath it's absolutely seething with political repercussions. For example when Britain went to war with America in Iraq, which was terribly unpopular with most of the rest of Europe, our song came last with Nil Points. And the year Turkey invaded Cyprus, the Greek TV network just showed a picture of a bunch of flowers while the Turkish entry was performing. And *vice versa*. And Germany always does badly because everyone hates them. And ...Ooh!

Kevin: What?

Gary: I've just thought. Yannis. He works for the Cypriot TV Station. He might be able to pull some strings and get us in with the Cypriot delegation. Each country has a delegation of journalists and things.

Kevin: You think we'd honestly pass for Cypriot journalists? Why don't you just buy a ticket and go?

Gary: I want to go to all the rehearsals and we'll need proper passes to get into all the back stage areas and everything.

Kevin: Oh no!

Gary: Alright, we don't have to go to all the rehearsals. I'm so happy! Will you come?

Kevin: What are you doing tonight?

Gary: I was going to work on this. Sunday's my real writing day.

Kevin: Do you want to go to Queer Nation?

Gary: Oh, God, no. I'm terrified of everyone at Queer Nation. They're all prettier, richer and trendier than me.

Kevin: Gary!

Gary: Well, they are.

Kevin: You have such a wrong impression of yourself.

Gary: I do?

Kevin: Yes. You're gorgeous.

Gary: Do you think so?

Kevin: Yes.

Gary: I'm not.

Kevin: Alright then, you're not.

Gary: Aren't I?

Kevin: Oh, Gary, honestly! Just come out with me tonight. It'll be fun.

Gary: If you come to Rome with me.

Kevin: Come on, Gary. Do something!

Gary: What do you mean "do something"?

Kevin: Take some action. Stop observing.

Gary: I just don't think I'm strong enough tonight to stand around, being ignored, and watch you get off with all the hunky men, that's all.

Kevin: For god's sake, Gary, this has to stop. You're perfectly capable of picking up anyone you want.

Gary: I'm not.

Kevin: You just have to stop talking to them about the Eurovision Song Contest.

Gary: Does this mean you won't come to Rome with me?

Kevin: Fuck Rome! (*smiles despite himself*) I mean, I just don't see the point of all this. You'll end up living in this dream world of Hadrian and ancient Rome and the bloody Eurovision Song Contest if you don't...

Gary: What about beauty? What about art?

Kevin: You can find all the beauty you need in –

Gary: In the sauna, don't tell me.

Kevin: Yes! Like yesterday, right? There's this bloke. He looks at me. I look at him. My body's on fire. Time stops. The only thing is what I'm feeling. We're talking to each other with touches, strokes, pleasure. Not a word said.

Gary: Very nice. Very animal.

Kevin: I don't even know his name. What more is there to life than that?

Gary: What more...? Oh! I don't want that! I want a different time...a calmer time. Not this frantic, acquisitive, shallow...

Kevin: You can't live in the future.

Gary: I mean the past. Like Hadrian's time.

Kevin: Well, you certainly can't live in the past! The present's what you've got. You're always searching for some idealized...thing. Doesn't exist, Gary.

Gary: Listen to this. This about Second Century Rome. Hadrian's time (*reading from one of his research books*) "Just when the gods had relinquished their authority and the Christians had not yet come, there was a unique moment in history, when man stood alone. A time when everything seems to have been noble, and simple, too; whether tenderness, glory or death. An heroic world where lovers would die for each other". Isn't that marvellous?

3.

The Green Room in a modern conference centre, in Rome, where the Eurovision Song Contest is being held.

There are several chairs and tables. At the centre table, Gary and Kevin are having coffee. They have their Eurovision Song Contest handouts with them (a programme, guides, schedules etc), and each is wearing his accreditation badge. Gary is writing in his notebook. Kevin is reading from the glossy programme.

Kevin: (*reading*) "Pogere il benvenuto del Concorso Eurovisione della Canzone".

Gary: (*not really looking up*) Welcome to the Eurovision Song Contest.

Kevin: This programme's all in Italian.

Gary: I thought you spoke Italian.

Kevin: I can say bread roll and sick bag. Strangely enough, at the Ryanair School for young airhostesses they didn't teach us how

to say “Welcome to the Eurovision Song Contest”. Oh, no, it’s alright, it’s in English as well.

Gary: Concorso Eurovisione della Canzone. Sounds beautiful, doesn’t it?

Kevin: (*reading*) “The Euro festival will surely be viewed by an immense television audience”.

Gary: Between 200 and 500 million. Depends who you talk to.

Kevin: “And represents one of the traditional borderless happenings”. None of this makes sense.

Gary: Hang on a sec. I’ve got to an important bit. (*writing*) “I give you my life, happily, lovingly” (*thinking*) Um.

Kevin: “Previous winners for Italy are “No ho l’eta” by Gigli...Gigli...

Gary: Gigliola Cinquetti.

Kevin: Yes, her. In –

Gary: 1964. (*singing*) “No ho l’eta, no ho l’eta, per amati, no ho l’eta –

Kevin: And Tuto Cutugno’s song “Insieme”.

Gary: (*singing*) “Insieme, unite, unite, Europe”! (*spoken*) A song about European unification. You see, they’re not all mindless rubbish.

Kevin: Slovakia’s song seems to be about a scheme to build a hydroelectric power station.

Gary: Yes. Fascinating. Don’t think it’ll win, though.

Kevin: Listen to this. This is Portugal. “Tomorrow there’ll be time to think about life, to have children, to invest all my savings. Hurrah!” I’m going mad. Will you stop writing in that bloody notebook and talk to me.

Gary: I just wanted to get rid of Antinous.

Kevin: From one fantasy to another.

Gary: He walked into the river Nile and drowned himself; trying to extend Hadrian’s life.

Kevin: Sounds logical.

Gary: At least that's what I think. Lots of people think he was assassinated by the anti-Greeks. There are conflicting theories.

Kevin: Really?

Gary: Yes, you see, the anti-Greek lobby was very strong, and Antinous represented a threat, as they saw it, to Rome. But I think their love for each other was so strong, selfless, epic, pure. It was the logical thing for Antinous to have done for his dying lover: sacrifice himself.

Kevin: Really.

Gary: Yes, there was a belief in those days, you see, that if you literally sacrificed yourself for someone, then the person who you sacrificed your life for would live longer by the number of years you'd already lived on earth. So Antinous was giving Hadrian, who was gravely ill, dickey heart, another 19 years to live. Amazing huh?

Kevin: I'm speechless. Why are we waiting here?

Gary: Because this is the Green Room for all the contestants. It's where it's all at.

(They look around)

Well, it's early. They'll be here.

Kevin: Who?

Gary: The singers and the press and everybody.

Kevin: Then what'll we do?

Gary: Oh, you know.

Kevin: No. What?

(Gary wrinkles with excitement)

Kevin: Maybe we'll see Terry Wogan.

Gary: Oh god, I hope not. He is the enemy. Xenophobic, hateful, ignorant man. He talks through the music! What does he think this is? Radio 2?

(Katia Europa enters)

Oh look! Katia Europa!

Kevin: Who's she singing for?

Gary: No-one. She's the TV presenter!

Kevin: Oh.

Gary: Ah, scusi, Signora Europa?

Katia: Sì.

Gary: Um. Would you be kind enough to sign our programme. (*He snatches it from Kevin*)

Katia: Oh, yes. Of course. Who are you?

Gary: Gary. And that's Kevin. It's a great honour to meet you.

Katia: Thank you, thank you.

Gary: Good luck with the rehearsals.

Katia: I am very how-you-say out at lunch. So much rehearsal. Heavens! Technical, make up... You are sick of the songs.

Gary: Are you?

Katia: They are rubbish, no?

Gary: Well...

Katia: Ah. You are fan club people?

Gary: Well...

Katia: You are English! Yes, very nice. Your song not so bad.

Gary: Oh, do you think so?

Katia: (*insincerely but smoothly*) Yes. Goodbye.

Gary: Goodbye.

(*Katia goes*)

She's marvellous, isn't she?

Kevin: (*snatching the programme back*) Um.

Gary: I think we stand a chance. The song's no good at all but that

often isn't important. They perform it very well. We'll probably come second. Or last. That's us these days. Second or last. My money's on Spain, though. Or possibly Malta.

Kevin: Malta? Haven't they run out of singers yet?

Gary: They recycle. Unlike Luxembourg, who always use to hire in.

Kevin: Used to?

Gary: They don't bother to come any more. Not since 1993. Tragically. Vicky Leandros, famously. She's Greek but she sang for Luxembourg. Après Toi. 1972. (*quickly sings a brief refrain*) Greece itself has never won of course.

Kevin: Why "of course"?

Gary: Well, they always get it a bit wrong. They either go too ethnic and wear shepherd costumes or something, or they try and be sort of poppy and it just comes over as tacky and imitative. Or they do comedy songs. Never a good idea. Sincerity's the key to success. Look at Nicole. Sung for Germany, 1982. Nicole was 17, and she sat there and just sang and played this huge guitar, all virginal and sweet. A song about peace. A Little Peace. Ein Bisschen Frieden. Romped to victory. You see, by 1982 the voting panels wanted to show that they were finally ready to start forgiving Germany for the Second World War. They were absolutely ruthless, the voting panels. Of course now it's all televoting, apart from sometime the Ukraine or Russia or Turkey can't cope with the technology involved, so they still have a voting panel. I mean, who makes up the panel, I can hardly imagine. I have an image of a dozen or so 60-year-old peasant women, all dressed in black, sitting in a dingy studio in Istanbul with headphones on. It's one of the great unsolved mysteries of our time. How each country picks its voting panel. Do you know it used to be just 2 people from each country. But the problem was the range of possible scores wasn't big enough. In 1969 in Madrid, for example, four countries came first equal. France, Spain, Holland and Britain. I mean, it was ludicrous! Can you imagine how embarrassing it must have been?! (*resuming his central point*) And looks, of course, play an important part. And running order. For instance, it's an enormous help going last. Like when Yugoslavia won in 1989. Terrible song, sung last, came first. And a key change before the third chorus. Countries like Greece seldom win. Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, Morocco, Malta. None of them have ever won. There's a kind of bias towards the North of Europe, you see. Ireland, Estonia, UK, Sweden, Netherlands. Always do well. And look at Latvia! People are funny about languages they're not familiar with, too. Before the 2001 rule change,

countries like Iceland and Finland didn't stand a chance because the language sounded unpleasant to most people. As in the famous case of Norway, after having had "nil points" two years running, they put the hundred nicest-sounding Norwegian words into a computer and asked it to compose lyrics using just those words. That year Norway came second.

Kevin: You're mad.

Gary: No, it's true. Do you think it's because I'm gay that I like the Eurovision Song Contest?

Kevin: No, you're just mad. Anyway, I'm gay and I can't stand the Eurovision Song Contest.

Gary: You will. You'll get into it.

Kevin: I think I just got into it.

(Andrea Alexiou has come in. He gets himself a cup of coffee and sits DSL reading his fan mail)

Gary: What? Oh, that's Andreas Alexiou. The Greek entry. Yes. He's gorgeous, isn't he?

Kevin: I think I'm in love.

Gary: And look! Oh my god! There's Sergio Flores!

(Sergio has come in and sits DSR)

You're looking at the odds-on favourite to win this year's Eurovision Song Contest. Oh no, you're not. Get your eyes off the Greek boy. Look. There! Sergio Flores. *Probemos Una Sola Vez*. Marvellous song. He's terribly famous.

Kevin: I've never heard of him.

Gary: Well, he's not famous in Britain, of course. Xenophobic, un-European Britain. But on the continent he's a major star. Very big with a major part of the group of people who'll stay in on a Saturday night to watch it, I should think...oh!

(Kevin has slipped away and gone over to Andreas)

Kevin: Hello.

Andreas: Yia sou.

Kevin: May I sit down?

Andreas: You are gionalista?

Kevin: I am...?

Andreas: Gionalista. Your lapel.

Kevin: Well, no – Yes! I am. Journalist. From Cyprus.

Andreas: Iste Kibrios? Ma then miazete katholoy Kibrios!

Kevin: Sorry.

Andreas: You are not from Cyprus. You play joke with me. Hahaha.

Kevin: *(laughing along)* Oh, I see.

Andreas: Why you say you from Cyprus? Cyprus is Greek.

Kevin: Is it?

Andreas: Their song is no good. It is Turkish.

Kevin: I'm very confused.

Andreas: My song is very beautiful. I will win, no?

Kevin: Yes. Kevin. Kevin Curtis.

Andreas: Andreas Alexiou. I will be first Greek to win. *(pointing to Sergio)*
I will be famous like him one day.

Kevin: You see, although it says gionalista –

Andreas: Eniosa kati mestin karthia stin karthia mou, in ena mistiko trayoutho! Ine yia mas tous alithino to kathe lebto.

Kevin: My goodness.

Andreas: It is my song.

Kevin: Ah.

Andreas: You do not know it?

Kevin: Yes, of course.

Andreas: It is written by Fortini Christou and Leonidas Soteropoulos. Very famous artists in my country. You don't write this down?

Kevin: Ah.

(Kevin starts to write on whatever is to hand)

Andreas: I wined 158 points in the Greek national final with my song.

Kevin: *(correcting him)* You won 158 points.

Andreas: I know. I give very good performance.

Kevin: I'm sure.

Andreas: Last year I came twice in the festival of Tesseloniki.

Kevin: I beg your pardon.

Andreas: Twice... Tooth? Second!

Kevin: Second! And how old are you Andreas?

Andreas: I am born in [whatever year makes him 19 now].

Kevin: Good Lord.

Andreas: Ask me more questions.

Kevin: Are you enjoying Rome?

Andreas: Rome is nice. I am from Boli. It is in Turkey but I am Greek.

Kevin: Uh-huh. Have you found any clubs in Rome that you like?

Andreas: My manager, he no like me go to clubs. I am very bad boy.

Kevin: Are you?

Andreas: Yes. I go out. I get drunk. Woops. My voice, it is very how-you-say...dear?

Kevin: Precious.

Andreas: Precious. Very good. Yes. So I no go to clubs. Where are clubs?

Kevin: Well, are you busy tonight?

Andreas: Tonight is big dress rehearsal. I sing!

Kevin: Of course you do! Well, maybe some other time.

Andreas: You want naughty tale!

Kevin: Well, good luck in the contest.

Andreas: Thank you for interview.

(Kevin comes back to Gary)

Kevin: He thinks I'm a journalist. What should I do? Oh, come on. Don't look like that. You could just as easily have gone over there and –

Gary: Alright.

Kevin: I think he was flirting with me.

Gary: How do you know he was gay?

Kevin: I didn't. He might not be.

Gary: Kevin?

Kevin: Um?

Gary: Thathela kalamaraki tiyanito, ke mia mikri mboukala kراسي kokkino.

Kevin: What does that mean?

Gary: I would like the deep fried squid and half a bottle of the house red.

Kevin: Don't understand.

Gary: It's just very easy to sound sexy in Greek, that's all.

Kevin: Don't be stupid. Don't be jealous of me.

Gary: I'm not jealous of you. I mean I just wish someone would come up to me, and pretend to be a journalist and get into my trousers.

Kevin: They might.

Gary: Who? Sergio? I think not!

Kevin: Is he gay?

Gary: No, he's as straight as a whatsit. I presume. He's kind of famous for it. His affairs with different women are always in the

papers. Why do you assume that everybody's gay? Anyway, what did Andreas tell you?

Kevin: Everything. It was relentless. He's a great singer, he was born in xxxx, he came second in some other contest, he comes from Boli and he doesn't go out much.

Gary: But he's Greek.

Kevin: So?

Gary: Boli's in Turkey.

Kevin: Is it?

Gary: Are you sure he said he was from Boli?

Kevin: Yes. Hang on, I wrote it down. Yes. Boli. "It's in Turkey but I am Greek".

Gary: But that's incredible. It's where Antinous was born.

Kevin: Oh, no. Is there no escape?

Gary: It's in what used to be Greece in Antinous' day, but has been Turkish for about a thousand years. It was called Claudiopolis in the second century. Then it became shortened to just Polis, which was corrupted to Boli by the Turks. It's incredible.

Kevin: Well, not really. He has to come from somewhere. So, you want another coffee?

Gary: Not really. I've already had five.

Kevin: What about some wine?

Kevin: Do you?

Gary: I'm asking you.

Kevin: Yes, alright.

(Kevin goes off. Gary looks timidly over to Sergio, trying to pluck up courage to speak to him. Instead, he grabs Kevin's programme and reads)

Gary: *(flicking through programme)* Sergio, Sergio. *(reading)* Sergio Flores was born in [whatever makes him about 45] in Santiponce! *(closing the programme quickly)* Oh my God!

(He goes over to Sergio)

Permiso, Señor Flores. Gary Roberts de la BBC. ¿Me permite una pregunta?

Sergio: Por supuesto, Gary.

Gary: El programa dice que tu nascite en Santiponce.

Sergio: Si, es cierto.

Gary: ¿Es el lugar natal del Emperador Adriano, no es cierto?

Sergio: Si, creo haberlo dido antes.

Gary: Vale. Gracias.

(Kevin returns with wine)

Sergio: Bien.

Gary: Exito en la competicion.

Sergio: Muchas Gracias.

(Gary returns to Kevin)

Kevin: I didn't know you spoke Spanish.

Gary: Kev, something strange is happening.

Kevin: That's really impressive.

Gary: Kevin, are you listening to me?

Kevin: When did you learn?

Gary: Kevin!

Kevin: What?

Gary: This is unbelievable. Andres Alexiou comes from the same town that Antinous was born in, and Sergio Flores comes from the same town where Hadrian was born.

Kevin: Really.

Gary: Yes, and look at them. Andreas is really young and pretty just like Antinous was and Sergio is the same age as Hadrian when Hadrian died.

Kevin: So, it's coincidence.

Gary: It can't be.

Kevin: It can't be anything else. Calm down.

Gary: I'm calm, I'm calm.

Kevin: I really can't cope with this, Gary.

Gary: But it's amazing.

Kevin: Gary, I didn't come all the way to Rome with you so you could endlessly indulge in your fantasies about Roman Emperors and all this crap.

Gary: It's not crap!

Kevin: And when I get interested in something, I'm made to feel like an unfaithful husband. I need some fresh air.

(Kevin leaves, taking time to wink at Andreas who smiles back)

Gary: Damn.

(Gary sits, dejected. He looks at Sergio and then at Andreas. The lights subtly change to something more romantic as, at first imperceptibly, we hear romantic slushy euro pop slowly becoming more audible. (suggest: Gli Amori by Eros Ramazzotti.) Sergio and Andreas catch each other's eyes and lock with extraordinary passion. The music builds. Something strange is going on! Gary, between them, watches, enthralled.

Sergio's and Andrea's choreographed rises and initial moves towards each other are soon interrupted by the brisk, mood-changing entrance of Rocco (Sergio's manager), Dolores (Sergio's wife), and the paparazzi. The music ends as abruptly, and the lights re-establish.

One journalist is from RAI. The others are Spanish. Sergio's party arrives at Sergio's table)

Rocco: Hola, Sergio.

Sergio: Hola Rocco.

Rocco: A qui esta la esposa. Los chicos quieren unas tomas y unas palabras.

Sergio: Hola, chicos.

Paprz: Hola, Sergio, ciao, etc.

(Dolores puts her arm through Sergio's, immediately establishing a happy husband/wife look and feel - a bit cheesy)

Rai: Stà godendo la nostra ospitalità Romana, Sergio?

Sergio: Ah! In Italiano, si. Si, è bello essere qua.

Dolores: Si.

Sergio: Amiano Roma.

Dolores: Si.

Sergio: Per mia moglie ed io è meraviglioso.

Pap2: ¿Que posibilidades crees tener de ganar mañana?

Sergio: La cancion es genial.

Dolores: Como mi marido!

Sergio: Creo que es la cancion española mas fuerte en años. Tan Fuerte como Vivo Cantando de Salome!

Dolores: Pero, vosotros sois muy jovenes para recordar, no?

Pap3: ¿Tu esposa viaja contigo esta vez. Para acompañarte.

Sergio: Es una ocasion muy especial. Les quiero contra que celebremos mañana nuestras bodas se plata.

Paprz: Hahaha.

Pap2: Felicitaciones!

Rai: Fantastico!

Dolores: Allora, facciamo le seconde nozze di miele qui a Roma questa weekend.

Paprz: Hahaha.

Rai: Va bene. Molto grazie, Sergio.

Pap2: Gracias. Suerte mañana.

Rocco: Gracias, chicos.

Pap3: Vale.

Rai: Bisogna spicciarsi. I Danesi stanno tenendo una conferenza stampa nella sala dei VIP adesso.

Rocco: D'accordo. Via andate.

Pap2: Gracias, Señor Flores.

Sergio: Nada. Adios.

Pap3: Adios.

(The Paparazzi go, leaving Sergio and Dolores who professionally disentangle)

Sergio: Gracias, Rocco. Estuvo formidable.

Rocco: Vale, Dolores. Estuvo formidable. Te veo en el hotel.

Dolores: Bien. Hasta luego, Rocco.

(She moves away)

Rocco: Bien, Sergio. Te quieren con maquillaje. Estamos a media hora del ensayo.

Sergio: Vale. Estoy contigo.

(Sergio hangs back and Rocco strides off, picking up the dawdling Dolores and manhandling her arse. Sergio throws a look over his shoulder to Andreas, who rises to his feet as if to say something, but Sergio has gone. Andreas looks momentarily forlorn)

Gary: Sergio Flores is a closet queen!

4.

Technical Rehearsal on stage

Gary is in the audience.

Sergio is performing Probemos Una Sola Vez (Music and Lyrics by Jason Carr). We hear the closing bars of this fairly dreary Spanish ballad.

The song ends.

Director: (over PA) Applausi, applausi, applausi.

(Katia enters in rehearsal frock with notecards. Note: we never see the TV Director)

Director: Camera sei. Microfino Katia. Stand by telecamera su binario. Segnale il Postcard. Segnale Katia.

Katia: Grazie Sergio Flores dalla Spagna. This beautiful conference centre is situated in the historical city of Roma. Built on the site of an old imperial palace, we are strangely reminded of Rome's historical past. Yes, the walls resound with past glory. In walking backstage here, we can almost sense the spirits of those who walked on this place behind us.

Director: Before us.

Katia: Walked on this place before us. E il segnale autocue che è sbagliato, cara, non io. Lo puo cambiare qualcuno?

Director: E fatto!

Katia: I don't know what I have to do this for? No-one sees me, there's the VT theyre all looking at.

Director: You're back up link if something goes wrong.

Katia: That's all I am. Bloody back up.

Director: The beautiful set...

Katia: The beautiful set, designed by Lucio Ricci, depicts the kind of palace that stood here two thousand years ago. The Emperor Hadrian lived here. And other famous people. Maladetta inferno. Chi ha scritto questa merda?

Director: E ora la Grecia. (*under her breath but the mike picks it up*) Cretina.

Katia: E ora la Grecia. Terra di vino e canzoni. Quest'anno, l'entrata Greca è cantata da Andrea Alexiou. Lui canterà per la sua paese Bim Bam Bom, composto da Fortini Christou e Leonidas Soteropoulos. (*to a different camera*) Et maintenant la Grèce. Pays du vins et de chanson. Cète année, le concurrent Grèque est Andres Alexiou, qui chantera pour son pays Bim Bam Bom, écrite par Fortini Christou est Leonardis Soteropoulos. (*another camera*) And now Greece. Land of wine and song. This year Andreas Alexiou sings for his country Bim Bam Bom. Boom! Waahh!

(A wind howls quietly. Katia is thrown)

Director: Que cosa succede? Fermiamoci. Que cosa è quel rumore?

Katia: *(recovering fast)* No. Va bene. No fermatevi. E niente. It's just nerves. Sorry everyone. Katia makes the boo boo. And now song number 14 for Greece: Bim Bam Bom.

(Katia exits, flummoxed. Andreas enters and sings his song. He has three backing singers. He sings the first half of Bim Bam Bom, the Greek half. Music by Jason Carr. Lyrics by Jason Carr, translated by George Savvides)

(During the song, Sergio enters the audience and talks to Gary. We cannot hear what they say. They exit together)

5.

Kevin is at an art gallery with his Walkman on. He is dejected, uninterested. The focus of the room appears to be out-front. If we were to see it, it would be a life-sized, or larger, sculpture of a young man. Kevin, bored, starts to move to the music in his ears. Another young man enters. Kevin takes his Walkman off, his interest aroused. The man walks over to the statue and studies it, immediately enraptured.

Kevin: Hi.

Fred: Hi.

Kevin: *(sort of a joke)* Do you come here often?

(The man starts to wander off)

Sorry! Do you speak English?

Fred: Yes.

Kevin: Oh great. Where are you from?

Fred: Den Hague. The Netherlands.

Kevin: I love The Hague. *(correct Dutch)* Hague. *(thinking it sounded better before)* Hague.

Fred: Yes, it's nice. And you're English?

Kevin: Yes. From London.

Fred: Where about?

Kevin: Belsize Park

Fred: (*factually*) That is near Hampstead Heath.

Kevin: Sure.

Fred: (*not at all rudely*) Well, goodbye.

Kevin: Don't go! I mean... Don't go. Do you fancy a cup of tea?
There's a café –

Fred: Thank you, but I want to look more at the art.

(*He starts to go again*)

Kevin: (*knowing it's limp*) Are you on holiday?

Fred: (*after a pause*) Why did you come here?

Kevin: Well, you know Rome. Nothing opens till late.

Fred: I don't understand.

Kevin: Bars, clubs.

Fred: Gay places?

Kevin: Yes.

Fred: You have to be somewhere gay?

Kevin: No.

Fred: But, you came to the Borghese, you're not in a café or...

Kevin: The guy I'm here with, he seems to think there's something in all this.

Fred: And you're "giving it a try".

Kevin: But it's rubbish. I mean, I don't see what it's got to do with me.

Fred: This doesn't move you? I come here once a year to see him.

Kevin: You come here once a year to... Who is he?

Fred: He was the last of the pagan gods. I took Lesbian and Gay studies at University in the Netherlands –

Kevin: Really?

Fred: And we studied him.

Kevin: Maybe there is something to this after all! Well, I'd better be getting back. We're here for the Eurovision Song Contest, can you believe it?

Fred: (*singing*) "Ding a dong every hour, when you pick a flower, even when you're your lover is gone gone gone!" That was a Dutch song!

Kevin: (*to himself*) Maybe I'm the one who's mad. (*to the Man*) Anyway, I've already missed one rehearsal this afternoon. I can't miss this evening's as well.

Fred: Because I don't want to have a cup of tea with you, by which presumably you mean social foreplay to us having sex together, you become uninterested in me.

Kevin: No, no, no. I just realised the time and Gary, he's the guy I'm here with, doesn't know where I am. (*pause*) I'm sorry, you're right.

Fred: Fred.

Kevin: Kevin. Your English is amazing.

(*They look at the statue*)

Who was this God, then?

Fred: Antinous.

Kevin: Oh, no!

Fred: What is it?

Kevin: Never mind.

Fred: After he drowned - he was very young - his lover, the Emperor Hadrian, made him into a God.

Kevin: Nice.

Fred: Yes. I suppose every young man who dies is a God for those who have loved him. Do you know what Hadrian did? He

created an immense city on the spot where Antinous had drowned and called it Antinoöpolis. It became the centre of the new religion. Even as far away as my country, they have found remains of Antinous' temples and "bits and pieces". Not in your country, I don't think. I don't know. A few centuries later, when the Christians became more powerful, they got rid of Antinous. They said that Hadrian had merely deified his lust. They couldn't understand that it was more than just lust. They thought that Antinous was what's-the-word depraved, simply an object of Hadrian's perverted passion. You see, the Christians tear apart the spiritual and the physical. It is a strange separation. It would make no sense to the so-called pagans.

Kevin: You've lost me.

Fred: Well, in Rome then, it would have been possible - more than possible – appropriate really, for Hadrian to have...cultivated Antinous' soul, to have...venerated the divine in Antinous, to have admired the beauty of his body, but also to have consummated this love by fucking with Antinous.

Kevin: Wicked!

Fred: Wicked! Yes. The Christians are spiritually poor for not understanding the connection, don't you think?

Kevin: This course you did...?

Fred: What about it?

Kevin: Nothing, really. It sounds great.

Fred: (*smiling*) What is most stupid is that the Christian god is exactly the same as the pagan god. One was from Nazareth and one was from Greece. But both were sacrificed and both were resurrected. The Christians don't like the comparison. Because the pagan God was gay.

Kevin: I'm beginning to understand... What was he like?

Fred: Well, what do you think?

Kevin: How would I know?

Fred: Well, look!

Kevin: Oh, I see. Well... He's very beautiful.

Fred: Yes. Sensuous. Patient. Loyal. Gentle.

Kevin: Yes.

Fred: Fierce. Proud.

Kevin: Yes.

(Pause)

Fred: He's 17 in this one. He is probably all these things. 17 year-olds are very changeable.

Kevin: He is beautiful.

(Pause)

Fred: There have been more works of art of Antinous that of anybody else throughout history. And he was not a statesman or a philosopher. He won no wars. He was just someone who was loved.

(Pause. Kevin is lost in the stone)

I hope you find in Rome what you are looking for.

(Fred goes. After a moment, Kevin seems to have heard what Fred said, and turns to him)

Kevin: What? *(but Fred has gone)* I'm not looking for anything.

(Kevin looks at the statue; really looks at it. He seems to be talking to Antinous in his mind. After a while, Antinous' ghost is in the room, slowly approaching Kevin from behind)

Antinous: Hello.

Kevin: *(to the statue)* Hello. *(realising that statues don't speak, turning round to the voice)* Oh, hello. *(double take with mounting horror)*

6.

Sergio's dressing room, backstage at the conference centre.

Sergio ushers Gary in.

Sergio: Go in. Go in, please.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO READ THE REST OF THIS PLAY PLEASE CONTACT
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