

VERSATI

He's not due home until three.

GERTRUDE

That's right, you don't know. There's a problem. Someone else.

VERSATI

Someone else?

GERTRUDE

The barber. He wants to make sure you're never with her.

VERSATI

Aha.

GERTRUDE

I'm going to get more fabric. I hope you enjoy yourselves while I'm gone.

(She slips out. Versati looks at Louise, approaches her slowly.)

VERSATI

Louise.

LOUISE

(Starts toward him, breathless.)

Yes.

VERSATI

How do you feel?

LOUISE

I'm afraid.

VERSATI

You should be. At this distance, you ignite a warm blue flame in me. Nearer, and I would be razed.

LOUISE

My breath quickens.

VERSATI

Your breasts swell already. I can see the muslin move.

LOUISE

My pulse.

VERSATI

What about it?

LOUISE

(Rapturously.)

It exists.

VERSATI

There are so many women, Louise. Pale blondes with subtle streaks of blue along their wrists. Dark-haired, with elegantly

cut figures, tall, short, some wear jangling beads and stones, or translucent dresses that silhouette in the sun. Some are so fragile that you touch them like a leaf, some are strong and you draw them into you forcefully. But you, Louise, are beyond category, and when I am with you, I will be in unknown territory, taking in my hands something unfamiliar and new, unlike anyone ever. I am on fire, Louise, and there is no doubt I am finally and forever in love.

LOUISE

Take me.

(But he doesn't. Instead, he keeps talking.)

VERSATI

"Take me." In those two words, our fate. How beautiful when you say them. If I could capture that feeling on paper, I would be one of the greats!

LOUISE

Take me.

VERSATI

Take . . . take . . . I must take up my pen! My inspiration is so direct, what I write could not come out false.

LOUISE

Take me.

VERSATI

Yes! I will take you and transform you into words.

le
itly

(He picks up Cohen's scarf, wraps it around Louise's neck.)

And when I am done we will be as tightly woven as this scarf. I the warp and you the weft . . . and then and only then will I demand full payment of your beauty.

(He runs into his room.)

LOUISE

(To the air, her hands rubbing over herself.)

My resistance is gone . . .

(Door slams.)

Hello?

(She goes and listens at Versati's door, confused. She knocks again.)

Herr Versati?

VERSATI

(From behind door, offstage.)

Five minutes, please . . .

(She removes Cohen's scarf, touches it to her face.)

LOUISE

"I the warp and you the weft . . ."

(Cohen appears at the door, sees her, enters. He has a bag of coffee.)