

# CONFINAMENTO

A One-Act Play

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## CHARACTERS

*(In order of appearance)*

WOMAN - a beautiful young woman

JOHN - a recently retired podiatrist from the U.S.

JEAN - a retired housewife, former nurse from the U.S.

ROBERT - a young newlywed from England

ELIZABETH - a young newlywed from England

## SETTING

An interior garden at an Airbnb in Italy

## TIME

Early spring 2020

## SYNOPSIS

A newly retired couple take their fantasy trip to Italy only to discover divorce and the coronavirus are in the air. On the eve of their return to the United States, Italy is on lockdown (confinamento) and they are stranded – together. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. Will they survive the coronavirus? Will they survive each other? Time will tell.

**(SAMPLE OF THE SCRIPT)**

## CONFINAMENTO

*As house lights fade, Italian music is heard in the distance.*

*AT RISE: Upon blackout, a beat, and then the sound of a boxing ring bell is heard. A beautiful YOUNG WOMAN enters and crosses center carrying a sign – the kind you might see in a boxing ring. She stops for a moment and shows it to the audience. It reads: “March 9, 2020”. She smiles and exits.*

*Light rise more fully on an interior garden area at a B&B in Italy. There is a park bench right center and a small table with two chairs left center. JOHN sits at the table staring out. He’s thinking. After a few moments, JEAN, his wife, enters. The entrance to and from their room at the B&B is off-stage.*

What would you like for dinner?

JEAN

You don’t want to go out?

JOHN

Tonight? Do you think that’s wise? The city’s been nearly shut down for a week and most restaurants are closed anyway. This coronavirus thing is getting out of hand.

JEAN

Yeah, you’re right.

JOHN

So?

JEAN

Uh, whatever we have. Might as well eat it up since we leave for home tomorrow.

JOHN

How about scrambled eggs? We seem to have eggs on hand.

JEAN

That’d be great. Thanks.

JOHN

JEAN

Good. I've already started cooking them. Coffee?

JOHN

Uh, Sure. Need any help?

JEAN

No, I got it.

*(JEAN exits. JOHN thinks. After a few moments, JEAN re-enters with forks and a couple of cups of coffee.)*

JOHN

Thanks.

*(JEAN exits. JOHN is deep in thought, perhaps rehearsing something he's going to say. Moments later JEAN re-enters with two plates of scrambled eggs and sausage and takes a seat.)*

JOHN

No toast?

JEAN

All out of bread. I didn't pick up a new loaf since we'll be leaving.

JOHN

Smart.

*(THEY eat – in silence. JEAN pulls out her phone and begins playing a game, "Candy Crush" intently. A long silence.)*

JOHN

So . . . have you enjoyed the trip? *(silence)* I said, have you enjoyed the trip?

JEAN

Huh?

JOHN

Have you enjoyed the trip?

JEAN

Yes. It's been nice to see Italy.

JOHN

What have you enjoyed the most?

JEAN

Uh . . . Florence, I think.

JOHN

More so than Rome?

JEAN

Yeah, I think so. The art and architecture are amazing – in both places, but the Cathedral in Florence is . . . well, special, inside and out.

*(SHE returns her focus to playing Candy Crush.)*

JOHN

More so than the Sistine Chapel? Hmmm. What about the Coliseum? I mean that place is incredible.

JEAN

I know. But too many tourists. And I think of the violence of that place and . . . not my thing. And the traffic. Well, that's just crazy.

JOHN

Yes, it is. I loved driving through the countryside though. It was beautiful.

JEAN

I suppose. You took enough photos. Seems like we were stopping all the time.

JOHN

Well, every turn seemed to offer another amazing view. It's nice to be in Sicily now. A bit warmer during the day. *(No response from JEAN. Pause.)* Are you looking forward to getting back home?

JEAN

Uh huh.

*(silence.)*

JOHN

It's been a-once-in-a-lifetime trip. *(Pause. SHE continues playing the game.)* Jean . . . Jean . . . I think . . . we . . . our marriage . . . has run its course. *(No reaction from JEAN.)* I said, I think it's over.

JEAN

What?

JOHN

Jesus, you never listen! I'm trying to tell you something here. I know we've been together for a long time and I know we're not spring chickens anymore, but a little consideration would be nice.

JEAN

*(SHE sighs and looks up.)*

OK, OK, you have my attention.

JOHN

Look, I do my best to stay in shape. I even try to be playful on occasion, like when we were younger. I try to have a conversation but you're more interested in that damn game on your phone than you are in me or Italy. I don't even know why we came here.

JEAN

We came to celebrate our retirement. To see sights we've only dreamed about.

JOHN

Exactly, so why are you wasting your time playing that damn game?

JEAN

Well, we're having breakfast for dinner, there's nowhere to go, and we've been married nearly forty years, what do you expect?

JOHN

I expect not to be taken for granted!

JEAN

I don't.

JOHN

Yes, you do. *(beat)* Do you even remember anything about how you felt when we first met?

JEAN

Of course, I do.

JOHN

Really? Then, tell me. Tell me what you saw in me or why you fell in love with me.

JEAN

John, come on, this is stupid.

JOHN

No, it's not.

JEAN

Well, I . . . uh . . . I thought you were handsome and smart and . . . kind. You're a wonderful provider.

JOHN

And what about now?

JEAN

What do you mean?

JOHN

After all these years, what do you think?

JEAN

What do I think? You're my husband that's what I think.

JOHN

And what is that? A husband.

JEAN

John, I'm confused. What's going on here?

JOHN

Do you love me?

JEAN

Have I been transported to *Fiddler on the Roof*? Am I Golda? (*Doing her best Golda imitation. Singing.*) "Do I love you?" John, just stop it. This is silly.

JOHN

No, it isn't.

JEAN

Then what is it? (*Beat. Ah ha!*) You want a new car! A convertible. You've been talking about it for years.

JOHN

That would be nice, but no, I don't *need* a convertible.

JEAN

Are you having an affair?

JOHN

No.

JEAN  
*(Brief pause Then . . .)*

Oh my god, you're gay.

JOHN

No Jean, I am not gay.

JEAN

Are you having a post-mid-life crisis?

JOHN

What I'm having is doubt.

JEAN

About what?

JOHN

About us.

JEAN

What . . . what are you saying?

JOHN

Jean, this isn't working. I think we should get a divorce!

JEAN

What? Why?

JOHN

What we have isn't a marriage.

JEAN

I don't understand.

JOHN

What do you mean, "I don't understand"? My god, we barely talk anymore. Back home you watch TV in one room and I watch in another. We don't enjoy the same shows or the same anything. Conversation is a thing of the past. On that rare occasion when we do go out for dinner, we eat in silence. Our drives in the country? Silence. We don't really seem to have much in common or enjoy much of anything together. And we haven't exactly had the most romantic trip.

JEAN

Oh, and you're blaming me? Of course.

JOHN

Honey, all I am is a paycheck.

JEAN

Don't say that.

JOHN

But I am! You said it yourself, "I'm a provider."

JEAN

And you don't think I've provided? That what I've done all these years hasn't been work? That I don't share in the responsibility of our family?

JOHN

I'm not saying that.

JEAN

It sure as heck sounds like it.

JOHN

I'm sorry. (*sighs*) Honey --

JEAN

Don't "Honey" me!

JOHN

All right! (*beat*) Jean, I'm tired. Tired of the routine. Day after day, year after year nothing, I mean nothing changes. I thought maybe this trip might spark . . . something. But it's pretty much been the same ole, same ole. And when it comes to romance? Well, that's a thing of past.

JEAN

I'm sorry that menopause has stifled our sex life.

JOHN

I'm not talking about sex. I'm talking about romance, simple affection, a relationship. When was the last time we had a "date night"?

JEAN

I thought this whole trip was a date, "a second honeymoon" you said.

JOHN

Yeah. You, me and Candy Crush.

JEAN

Don't talk to me about Candy Crush. It's just a game.

JOHN

A game that gets a hell of a lot more attention than I do!

JEAN

My god, you sound like a child.

JOHN

It's not just Candy Crush. With every kid I've been moved one rung down the ladder. One, two, three, four. I love my kids and . . . I don't know, I guess it happens to everybody. But then comes a cat, one more rung. And then the dog and I'm at the bottom. The dog gets more attention than I do and you talk to him much more than me. I thank god we don't have fish. I'm the least important thing in our household! Marriage isn't just about being a parent – to kids or pets. WE are supposed to have a relationship and basically, we have nothing. There's nothing between us. We exist. We don't live. (*pause*) I get that maybe it can't be like when we first met. But then part of me thinks, why not?

JEAN

I bet I know which part.

JOHN

That's not funny.

JEAN

I didn't know you were so unhappy?

JOHN

Isn't that a sign of something? That you didn't notice?

JEAN

I don't know. Maybe. Why haven't you said anything before this?

JOHN

(*sighs*)

Because I shouldn't have too. And quite honestly, I was hoping that . . . something would change, that . . . that spark we once had would ignite on this trip. (*Beat.*) Hon . . . Jean, I love you, but . . . I'm not sure . . . I'm not sure I . . . *like* you anymore. If I would have met . . . (*gesturing to JEAN*) this person forty years ago, I'm not sure I would have fallen in love. I'm sorry, I know that sounds cruel . . .

JEAN

(*SHE does take a moment to let it sink in.*)

What time is our flight?

JOHN

9:00am.

JEAN

Well, we better pack and get some rest.

*(JEAN rises to exit. Lights fade.)*

*The sound of the boxing ring bell. The YOUNG WOMAN enters holding up a new sign – “Later that night”. SHE exits.*

*Lights rise more fully. JOHN enters, on his cell phone. He whispers as to not disturb JEAN or the neighbors.)*

JOHN

Son, I'm sorry, we won't be back tomorrow. I don't know when. They've shut down the entire country. Everybody is quarantined. No travel at all. Not even within the city, or to the airport. Yes, yes, we're fine. Have to get some groceries somehow, but we're OK. Yes, we have enough money. Nothing to do, so we we're not spending much. No, I don't have any idea how long the quarantine will last. Hopefully, not long. How are things in the states? Good. Hopefully, it'll by-pass the U.S. Yeah, OK. Love you too. Tell everyone we're fine and we'll be in touch. Oh, and would you get in touch with the kennel and tell them we may not be picking up the cat and dog anytime soon. Right, Luna and Charlie. All right. Love you. Bye.

*(JEAN enters with a pillow and blanket.)*

JEAN

Who were you talking too?

JOHN

Ben. Just wanted to update him. He'll tell the other kids and talk with the kennel folks in the morning.

JEAN

What did he say?

JOHN

He can't believe they're shutting down all of Italy. But, he says the President assures everyone everything will be fine in the U.S.

JEAN

And you believe the President?

JOHN

I know he's not the smartest guy on the block, but he's not stupid enough to lie to the American people about something like this.

JEAN

He only cares about his tan, his hair and of course, the stock market.

JOHN

Well, the stock market's been good to us. That's one reason we were able to come here.

JEAN

The stock market's been good to us? Have you taken a look at it today?

JOHN

No.

JEAN

Well, maybe you should. When we get back home we may have to be looking for work.

JOHN

I'm sure the President will be taking a close look at that and this COVID thing.

JEAN

This COVID thing? How many people have to die before he acknowledges the world has one big problem on their hands?

JOHN

I know. But, he's the President . . . of the United States. He wouldn't lie.

JEAN

He lies every day, about everything. Why should this be any different?

JOHN

Because lives are at stake!

JEAN

And you think - he thinks - lives are more important than the stock market or his ego?

JOHN

Of course.

JEAN

Oblivious, you're totally oblivious.

JOHN

Well, we have something in common.

JEAN

So right you are. (*JEAN tosses JOHN the pillow and blanket and begins to exit.*)  
You can take the bench.

JOHN  
Seriously?

JEAN  
Yes, seriously. Night.

JOHN  
Do you know how cold it gets at night? It's not summer.

JEAN  
*(exasperated)*

OK, take the sofa.

*(JEAN exits.)*

JOHN  
*(To HIMSELF.)*  
Son-of-a . . . idiot! What a friggin' idiot.

*(A violin is heard playing a romantic song from a distant balcony. JOHN reacts to it.)*

Oh, thanks. Thanks. Rub-it-in.

*(JOHN exits with his pillow and blanket as lights fade to a deeper, darker night.)*

*The boxing bell rings again. The YOUNG WOMAN enters with her sign – “One week later”.*

*As lights rise JOHN enters and sits on the bench. It's been a rough night. JEAN enters with a plate of eggs and sausage and a cup of coffee – for her. SHE crosses and sits at the table.)*

JOHN  
That smells good.

JEAN  
You can make your own.

*(JEAN takes her phone out of a pocket and begins to play Candy Crush. JOHN sighs, rises, and crosses to the kitchen off-stage. After a moment he re-enters with a cup of coffee and sits back down on the bench. JEAN notices.)*

JEAN

That's it? Well, I'll guess you'll lose a few pounds on your new adventure.

JOHN

Getting divorced is not an adventure.

JEAN

But full of new opportunities I suppose. By the way, I'll be filing a claim regarding your social security and I'll be expecting fifty percent of your pension and the house of course.

JOHN

Are you serious?

JEAN

Why is it you never think I'm serious? Of course, I'm serious. I've lived with you for more than fifty-percent of your life, I figure I deserve at least fifty-percent of your retirement.

JOHN

Jesus . . .

JEAN

Well what do you expect? I've stayed home being a mother and a wife for forty years and I should walk away with nothing?

JOHN

No, but –

JEAN

Don't "but" me. I was a nurse when we met. I could have had a career too if I wanted.

JOHN

I know. You're one of the smartest and most caring people I know.

JEAN

And devoted, devoted to you and our children.

JOHN

Don't forget Luna and Charlie.

JEAN

Don't press it John. When we get home the lawyers can figure it out.

*(Lights fade. The boxing ring bell is heard. The YOUNG WOMAN enters with a new sign - "Three weeks later." SHE exits.)*

*(Lights rise. Daytime. JOHN sits at the table. JEAN enters with a laptop or tablet.)*

JEAN

Did you see the news? Mass graves are being built here. The streets are empty. It's so quiet. It's like the end of the world.

JOHN

I know. It's hard to believe. It's everywhere. The virus is hitting all of Europe.

JEAN

And things aren't looking good back home either. Schools are being canceled. People are beginning to work from home. Ben and Jill are. John Jr.'s been laid off. Bobby's classes are online the rest of the semester.

JOHN

Seriously?

JEAN

Yes, John. Seriously.

JOHN

When did you talk to them?

JEAN

I talked to Ben last night and Bobby early this morning. John Jr. will get unemployment for a while and people will be getting a stimulus check but that won't remotely cover bills and this coronavirus isn't going away anytime soon. If the U.S. gets hit like Italy, I . . . I just can't imagine the numbers.

JOHN

Certainly, that won't happen. The President says it'll go away with the warmer weather.

JEAN

And you believe him? You're killing me. You're really killing me. *(SHE sighs.)* My god, the idea of a divorce is strangely more appealing every day.

JOHN

*He* doesn't seem to be afraid.

JEAN

Because he's a con-man! He thinks he's starring in a reality TV show and one day reality is going to hit him. Hit him hard.

JOHN

*He* doesn't wear a mask.

JEAN

And why do you think that is?

JOHN

Because he thinks the virus will go away this summer.

JEAN

Yes, there'll be a miracle! *(beat)* Look, he's isolated. He lives in a well-protected big white house, he has a medical staff at his beck-and-call, and he doesn't have to interact with the general public. And if he does, he's most often on a stage and they're in the audience not wearing masks I might add. And because he thinks he's invincible, they do as well. It's mind-boggling. Me? I'm scared to death every time groceries are delivered here. I mask up when I open the door, then scrub my hands and even the grocery packages afterwards. We just don't know anything for sure here. It's like an invisible death sentence.

JOHN

We'll be all right.

JEAN

How do you know?

JOHN

I don't. It's just a hunch.

*(From the opposite side of the stage a young couple enters. ROBERT and ELIZABETH.)*

JOHN

Uh, can we help you?

ROBERT

Sorry. Don't mean to intrude. We were kicked out of our hotel and were told to come here. There's an extra room in the back that's been provided. And an entrance in the back. So, we won't be invading your space.

JOHN

Oh, that's good. No offense.

ROBERT

None taken. We understand. Just wanted to check out the garden before we get settled.

JEAN

Where are you from?

ROBERT

England.

JEAN

I thought so.

ELIZABETH

We're newlyweds.

JEAN

Oh, that's sweet.

ROBERT

I'm Robert. And this gorgeous young woman is Elizabeth.

JEAN

Nice to meet you.

JOHN

Wait a minute. How do we know you don't have the virus?

ELIZABETH

You don't. We don't know either. But we feel fine. No symptoms at all. Honest.

JOHN

Oh, well, that's good. Good.

ROBERT

They're going to use the hotel we were in as a temporary morgue.

JEAN

That's terrible.

JOHN

And not likely to help business when this is all over. Not exactly "brochure" material.

*(Pause. They all look at JOHN. Beat.)*

ELIZABETH

The hotel worked hard to find rooms amongst people in town. They've been amazing. And the owners are very sweet.

ROBERT

When terrible things happen, people do come together don't you think? You Americans know something about that, after 9-11. We have faith that everything will be fine.

JEAN

We can only hope I suppose.

JOHN

You two must have been pretty young when 9-11 happened.

ELIZABETH

He was. I was just a twinkle in the eyes of mum and dad.

JOHN

*(JOHN looks at JEAN.)*

Just a twinkle? Sweet.

ROBERT

Well, we're going to get settled. We'll do our best to stay out of the way. Nice to meet you.

*(ROBERT and ELIZABETH exit.)*

JEAN

Well, they seem nice.

JOHN

Yeah, but I don't know, a strange couple in the same house?

JEAN

Their entrance is in the back totally separate from us. And they're on the second floor.

JOHN

They were just right here. Who knows if they're carrying or not?

JEAN

I'm sure they're fine. Otherwise the authorities wouldn't have sent them here. I didn't see any sign of symptoms.

JOHN

I guess. Perhaps we should set up a schedule regarding this garden area?

JEAN

That would be smart. Although if they stay on that side and we stay on this side we should be fine. Yes?

JOHN

I suppose.

JEAN

Want to go in and watch a movie?

JOHN  
Uh, sure. That would be nice. What's on?

JEAN  
*Marriage Italian Style. 1964.*

JOHN  
The Italians, always up to date.

JEAN  
*(Enticing HIM.)*  
Sophia Loren.

JOHN  
Oh, well, in that case. In Italian?

JEAN  
Of course.

JOHN  
Well, maybe I'll learn something.

JEAN  
Maybe.

*(As THEY exit, lights fade. A boxing ring bell is heard, although with a slightly lighter tone than before.*

*The YOUNG WOMAN enters carrying another sign.  
"Five days later." SHE exits.*

**(END OF SAMPLE)**