

Love is never keeping count

short play

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Scene 1

ANDRE is sleeping. MARIE-ANTOINETTE, in bed, looks at nothing in particular.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Oh my god my head hurts.

ANDRE (*wakes up*)

What time is it?... (*looks at the alarm clock, gasps*) It's already 8?!

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I should probably go outside today.

ANDRE (*gets up, goes to the bathroom*)

I don't get why you got up this early. You don't have anything to do.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I'm so tired.

ANDRE (*still in the bathroom*)

It's Wednesday today, right? (*pause*) I don't even have enough time to take a shower.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You know I've always been like this. When we met, I was already like this. You told me you liked it.

ANDRE (*comes back, beating around the bush*)

I'm not coming home tonight... I have a lot of work... I'm going straight from the office to the studio... I'll sleep there.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Do you still like it?

ANDRE (*getting dressed*)

Have you seen my socks?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Last night I dreamed that I went outside.

ANDRE

You're fine in here.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I felt fine out there.

ANDRE

It was a dream... *(he finds his socks)* Here they are!

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You're too good for me.

ANDRE *(smugly, with false modesty)*

Oh, no I'm not.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I'm serious. You take care of everything, you never ask me for anything... Aren't you sick of it?

ANDRE

You think I'd still be here?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I could get the groceries, at least. The bodega is two minutes away. It'd be a good start.

ANDRE *(coughs, he's finished getting dressed)*

Try to go back to sleep.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Did you find your socks?

ANDRE

I'm ready, I'm leaving. *(he kisses her)*

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

See you tonight!

ANDRE

Tomorrow!

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

What if I dropped by the studio to say hi tonight?

ANDRE

You can't.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Why?

ANDRE

Remember, I have lots of work to do.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I won't stay that long.

ANDRE (*getting miffed*)

Where did this obsession with leaving the house come from?... You're very tired right now, and you know how much time it'll take to recover.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You're right.

ANDRE

You'd better just go back to sleep.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You're right.

ANDRE

Good girl. (*he kisses her again*) I'll see you tomorrow.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE (*alone*)

Until tomorrow, my love. (*Exit ANDRE*) Where did I put my book?

Scene 2

Someone knocks on the door

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Come in.

MARIO enters

MARIO

The door was open.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Who are you?

MARIO

I was in the neighborhood, I don't know if I should have come up.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You'll see. I'm still in bed.

MARIO

I know.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I'm almost naked.

MARIO

There's a full moon tonight. *(pause)* I just crossed a guy on the stairs. He was leaving your apartment.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I think he's mine.

MARIO

It must be nice to be with someone.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

What do you think about him?

MARIO

Big man on campus.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Does that make you insecure?

MARIO

A little.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Do you think that he's luckier than you?

MARIO

Maybe today, but who knows about tomorrow. *(Pause)* Someone was waiting for him downstairs.

He takes out a voice recorder.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You're a spy?

He turns on the voice recorder. We hear voices and panting of a woman "Ah, oh, baby, yeah," etc.

MARIO

A woman.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

His secretary?

MARIO

She was wearing a tight, black dress, without sleeves.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

So then she wasn't his secretary.

MARIO

That's what I thought.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Tell me about her.

MARIO

It's complicated.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Come on.

MARIO

I don't want to hurt you.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Don't worry, you won't.

MARIO

Really beautiful.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE (*sincerely*)

Good for her.

MARIO

But it's not good enough.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Please, be honest with me.

MARIO

A long, tight, black dress, without sleeves.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You already said that.

MARIO

Not the length.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Did they seem close?

MARIO

Yes.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Did they kiss?

MARIO

With tongue.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

A long time?

MARIO

30 seconds.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Not bad.

MARIO

That's what I thought. (*He puts away his voice recorder.*) Afterwards, she took him home. She lives in a building near here. Right next door, in fact.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

And you?

MARIO

In the building across the street. I'd never act like he does.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You can't know.

MARIO (*slightly annoyed*)

I don't think you get how serious this is. He sleeps at her place practically every other night.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

He told me he sleeps at his studio. It's easier for him; it's quiet there and he can work and it's close to his office.

MARIO

Well, that's not true. He's sleeping with her. For almost ten years now.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

He's paying rent on that studio for nothing, then.

MARIO

Sometimes he goes there for a couple hours, when he's feeling guilty.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Poor thing!

MARIO

Yeah, well, there are worse things in life. *(He takes something out of his bag.)*

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

What's that?

MARIO

It's a telescope.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

It's long.

MARIO

You want to have a look?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Yes, I would.

MARIO

You're going to have to get up. *(She gets up. He opens the window. He gives her the telescope.)* It's over there.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE *(She looks.)*

What is it?

MARIO

Her apartment.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You can really see it.

MARIO

They're busy, you see.

(He takes out headphones and puts them on MARIE-ANTOINETTE. ANDRE and FERNANDA can be heard panting off-stage.)

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I can even hear them.

MARIO

I put in a bug.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

He's going to be so late to work.

MARIO

That's all you can say?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE *(closes the window and gives back the headphones)*

I have to ask you to leave.

(He puts away his things.)

MARIO

You need a moment alone?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Yeah.

MARIO

Are you going to make a decision?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Just thinking about it makes me tired.

MARIO

To decide is to progress.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Progressing is walking.

MARIO

Walking is good for your health.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Don't close the door when you leave.

MARIO

I'll keep you informed. Be strong! We'll fix this.

(He leaves and slams the door. MARIE-ANTOINETTE sighs.)

Scene 3

FERNANDA's apartment. FERNANDA and ANDRE have finished having sex. ANDRE gets dressed.

FERNANDA

What are you doing?

ANDRE

My meeting is starting, and I have to be there.

FERNANDA

No, not already!

ANDRE

Listen, we'll see each other tonight. Be patient.

FERNANDA

But I really want to...

ANDRE

You're kidding! We just did that.

FERNANDA (*begging*)

Just a little?

ANDRE

When will you learn that we don't have the same rhythm?

FERNANDA

Don't be modest.

ANDRE

I'm really late.

FERNANDA (*scolding*)

At least no one would ever feel smothered with you.

ANDRE

Tonight I'm all yours.

FERNANDA

Every other night isn't enough for me anymore.

ANDRE

Why are you like this all of a sudden?

FERNANDA

After all these years, we're still not living together!

ANDRE

It keeps us from getting in a rut.

FERNANDA

We're just in a different one.

ANDRE

What's wrong?

FERNANDA

You want me to respect you? OK. You need to spend half your time alone? OK. We don't sleep together every night? OK. You snore anyway. All I want is that when you grace me with your presence, you make sure that your batteries recharge faster. OK?

ANDRE

Are you bringing this up because you want me or are you just horny?

FERNANDA

What can I say?... When I'm about to climax, and I scream out a name, I never say the wrong one.

ANDRE

Were you as demanding before me?

FERNANDA

I don't remember anyone before you. You're my existence.

ANDRE

Seriously?

FERNANDA

How many women would accept not living with the love of their lives for ten years?
Especially when they're in the same city and there's no logical reason to live like that?

ANDRE

I'll admit I'm pretty lucky.

FERNANDA

Then show me.

ANDRE

I've already shown you.

FERNANDA

You aren't allowed to treat me like that.

ANDRE

Tonight I'll make up for it. I promise.

He leaves. She follows him yelling.

FERNANDA

Bastard! Cheapskate!... Bastard! *(she laughs to herself)* I think I'll go back to bed. *(She lies down on her bed)* Oof!

Scene 4

The door opens. MARIO coughs. FERNANDA is lying on the bed and can't see him

FERNANDA

I knew you'd come crawling back.

MARIO

You're wrong.

FERNANDA (*excited*)

Come on! You can see how easily I forgive and forget.

MARIO

Can I say something...?

FERNANDA

I forgot that you had such a powerful voice.

MARIO (*flattered*)

You really think so?

FERNANDA

It's funny how it's when I'm not looking at you that I become conscious of it.

MARIO

That's very interesting.

FERNANDA

That it is. Talk to me. Make love to me from behind, call me dirty names, abuse me, surprise me!

MARIO

I think you want me to be someone else.

FERNANDA

In a way.

MARIO

I'm not enough for you.

FERNANDA

Relax and play along.

MARIO

You're hiding something.

FERNANDA

Oh you're wearing me out. (*She turns, sees MARIO, and screams.*) Who are you? What are you doing here? How did you get in?

MARIO

Through the door.

FERNANDA

How dare you...?

MARIO

I was taken in by the game.

FERNANDA

Not entirely, apparently.

MARIO

What do you think of a woman who takes another woman's man?

FERNANDA

It happens all the time. Who's taking whose man?

MARIO

Either way, it's indecent.

FERNANDA

What?

MARIO

To have a relationship with a married man.

FERNANDA

Every wife has a husband.

MARIO

And what are you in all this?

FERNANDA

I'm the wife.

MARIO

Are you saying that you have your own husband?

FERNANDA

That's the whole idea of being a wife.

MARIO

And your husband knows?

FERNANDA

I hope he does.

MARIO

Then who's the man who just left your apartment, the one I saw you with earlier? You waited for him at his building and you kissed for thirty seconds.

FERNANDA

That's my husband.

MARIO

He has two wives?

FERNANDA

He was coming from his therapist's office.

MARIO

That's not what she says.

FERNANDA

Who?

MARIO

The quote unquote therapist.

FERNANDA

And what does she say?

MARIO

That he's her husband.

FERNANDA

She's lying!

MARIO

He's a monster! He convinced you that she was his therapist?

FERNANDA

Yes.

MARIO

And you didn't verify?

FERNANDA

No.

MARIO

It didn't seem strange to you that he was in therapy?

FERNANDA

Pfft, not at all!

MARIO

Is he really your husband? I mean... are you together... the ring and everything...?

FERNANDA

A ring on the finger isn't proof of anything. And those two, are they together?

MARIO

I never really asked her.

FERNANDA

You wanted to let her down easy. Obviously, I'm not worth the effort.

MARIO

Oh! I'm sorry!

FERNANDA

You're an amateur! (*She slaps him.*) You deserve that.

MARIO

You're a powerful woman.

FERNANDA

I make 120,000 dollars a year.

MARIO

You'll always be fine.

FERNANDA

That's obvious.

MARIO (*very excited*)

So you'd be better without him. Believe me, he doesn't deserve you. Nor her. You two should meet each other. Find a solution, a way to make him pay. I'll set up a meeting. What do you think? He can't be allowed to leave with impunity.

FERNANDA

Get out, now. My throat hurts.

MARIO

Tomorrow morning, 11 O'clock, Denny Park. She'll be there too.

MARIO leaves and slams the door.

FERNANDA (*alone*)

I didn't hit him hard enough.

Scene 5

The next morning, Denny Park.

FERNANDA

It's so quiet here. You'd think we're in the country.

MARIO

The children are at school.

FERNANDA

You know, I don't have much time.

MARIO

She won't be late. *(Pause)* Oh, there she is!

FERNANDA *(surprised)*

That's her?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE walks slowly, dragging her feet.

She doesn't seem very well.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE joins the group.

It's you?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE *(sighs)*

It's me. Hello.

MARIO

Hello. I'm Mario.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Marie-Antoinette.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE and MARIO look at FERNANDA, who doesn't introduce herself immediately.

FERNANDA *(rolls her eyes)*

Fernanda.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Can I sit down somewhere? (*She sits down on a bench.*) I don't get out much. I don't deal well with the air outside. It gives me hives.

FERNANDA

I thought you were born that way.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

It wasn't easy getting all the way out here. Leaving the apartment, getting out of bed.

FERNANDA

It's funny when your expectations meet reality. You make a mountain out of a molehill, that the other woman is so much more beautiful, smarter, that he had a good reason... but now it's fine.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Thank you.

FERNANDA

So you're not a therapist.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Oh no, I don't work. I wonder sometimes what I could do. (*Pause*) I feel like I've already met you.

FERNANDA

By proxy.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE (*laughs, too hard, like depressed people sometimes do*)

Ha ha ha! You're so funny! Ah, that's nice. It's been so long since I laughed that hard.

FERNANDA

Are you going to get divorced?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I'm not exactly married.

FERNANDA

What good news! Are you going to keep him? Are you going to cling to him?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I'm not really forceful.

FERNANDA

I see. (*pause*) I'm in charge when we're in bed. And I always want to do it. Him too. We're on the same wavelength.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I never take the initiative. No! Actually that's not true.

FERNANDA

You're probably passive-aggressive.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

That's it!

FERNANDA

Is he... entrepreneurial with you?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

It's practically non-stop. You know, it's my fault. I'm always in bed and I don't know how to say no.

FERNANDA

What do you want? Let me be frank, I'm not letting go.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I understand. I'm not going to fight, but I'd like to keep him.

MARIO

Oh no you can't be serious! You can't let him off the hook like this! Do you understand how far you'd push back women's liberation? It's degrading, it's humiliating, it's disgusting... You both deserve better than this.

FERNANDA

What do you care? I mean, really, it's weird how much you want to save us. You have ulterior motives, I can feel it.

MARIO

No, it's not that, I just want to help you. I'd be sorry to see a man waste the lives of two women as admirable as you are.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I don't think so. He loves me how I am. He accepts my condition, he doesn't care if I don't work. He takes care of everything.

FERNANDA

He fucks well. He doesn't follow me around 24/7, he leaves me alone. And now that I know I have a rival, it'll be even more exciting. I'll have stronger passions, like jealousy, suspicion, doubt, fear... So, really, thanks!

MARIO

You're kidding?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You wanted to save us, and you've succeeded. Bravo.

FERNANDA

Yeah, like I said, thanks.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE/FERNANDA

Good-bye.

They both leave laughing.

MARIO (*alone*)

What am I going to do?

Scene 6

MARIO's apartment. The doorbell rings, MARIO goes to open it impatiently. It's ANDRE. MARIO hugs him.

MARIO

I thought you'd never get here.

ANDRE

I don't have much time.

MARIO

Like always. Who are you going to sleep with tonight?

ANDRE

One or the other. Does it really matter to you? Don't you have something to tell me?

MARIO

I did it.

ANDRE

So?

MARIO

Failure.

ANDRE (*matter of-factly*)

They'll never leave me. If you can't accept that, you'll just be disappointed.

MARIO

And if you left them?

ANDRE

No, I could never do that. It would hurt them too much.

MARIO

But I don't want to share you anymore! I have nothing... just some crumbs, some hours, some minutes, but never whole nights.

ANDRE

I was always honest with you, I never hid anything. You should be proud. You're the only one who knew everything from the beginning. I trusted you, Mario, don't throw it all away.

MARIO

It's too hard.

ANDRE

You're greedy, a spoiled child, you never learned how to share. And you're a bad gambler too. I was straight-forward. I let you tell them about each other to show you how much I loved you and I was ready to accept the consequences. It was all or nothing. They could have united against me, thrown me out like the garbage, and gone on with their lives. But they didn't. Now you're the one who has to accept the circumstances.

MARIO

I can't. I can't do this anymore. If you really loved me, you'd do something.

ANDRE

Don't give me that, please. Even my wives don't cry like this, don't be gross.

MARIO

And if I told them about you and me?

ANDRE

Do you really think that would make them leave me?

MARIO (*cries*)

No.

ANDRE

You're too sensitive. Aren't we happy the way we are?

MARIO

And if I took them out? If I made them disappear from your life, would you like that?

ANDRE

I'd feel like I lost my two wings.

MARIO

And if I left, huh? What if I wasn't here anymore?

ANDRE

I'd lose my light.

MARIO

Oh, that's so pretty. So you really love me?

ANDRE

I really love all of you. Y'all are my equilibrium.

MARIO

What can I say to that?

ANDRE

Come give me some love, baby.

Scene 7

MARIE-ANTOINETTE's apartment. She has headphones on.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

It's too loud.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE turns down the sound. FERNANDA enters.

FERNANDA

Hey.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE (*surprised*)

Oh it's you. You startled me.

FERNANDA

The door was open.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Yes, that makes me feel safe.

FERNANDA

He's at home right now.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I know. They're having fun.

FERNANDA

How do you know?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Listen.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE puts the headphones on FERNANDA's head. She turns up the volume.

FERNANDA

Wow. That's them?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You haven't seen anything yet.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE gives FERNANDA a telescope.

FERNANDA

A telescope? You're awesome.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I bought it on the way home from Denny Park. We really fooled them. You were great. When I said that I thought we'd met... I thought I'd pee my pants.

FERNANDA

You too, you were perfect. Seriously! What did they think? That we'd disappear and let them live happily ever after?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

You want to take a look?

FERNANDA

I can't wait.

They go to the window. FERNANDA looks out.

FERNANDA

Wow! It's like we were over there.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

We're lucky to all live so close to one another.

FERNANDA

That's not by luck.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Do you mean that he did it on purpose? That he chose us to save time?

FERNANDA

You're so naïve.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE (*admiringly*)

You don't meet a man like that every day.

FERNANDA

If you did, we wouldn't still be with him.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

He knows how to do everything.

FERNANDA

He's gifted.

We hear men panting louder.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

I bet they're enjoying themselves.

FERNANDA

It sure sounds like it.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

A naked man can be so beautiful.

FERNANDA

And two are even better.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Aren't we lucky.

FERNANDA

So are they.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Do you think love is like that?

FERNANDA

Are you happy?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Yes.

FERNANDA

Do you feel free?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Yes.

FERNANDA

Do you still love your man?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

More than ever.

FERNANDA

Does it bother you that he sleeps around?

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Not really.

FERNANDA

If that's not love, then it's even better.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Whose turn is it tonight?

FERNANDA

Yours.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

What are you going to do?

FERNANDA

Don't worry about me. I don't have enough time alone.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Solitude is nice too, isn't it?

FERNANDA

Especially when you know that someone will take you in his arms the next night. Good night.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE

Good night. Leave the door open!

FERNANDA leaves