

THROUGH BONAVIA, OR
THE SIMPLE TRUTH

A Play in Five Acts

By Ken Yoshikawa

SCRIPT SAMPLE

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Plot of the play

The Simple Truth is a play in development. It's spine centers Ethelia, the princess of Bonavia - a country victim to Illyrian imperialism of Count Orsino's Illyria. Confronted with the oppression of her people, the grief of her father's recent death, and her brother's obsession with power, her failed attempt at justice causes her to challenge her brother to a wrestling match to determine the fate of the Kingswood, the fateful forest, high in the interest of all parties. She then flees the palace into the Kingswood where she is received by witches. Provided a profound spiritual breakthrough, she chooses to confront her brother, dissolve the crown, renounce her power, promising the wealth of her family to be redistributed to the people, therein causing a civil revolutionary war. Her brother physically retaliates against her person (offstage) sending her into a nightmare from which the witches must spiritually retrieve her. Brought back, she returns with the landslide of her people's favor, unseating her brother, completing her promise of revolution. But will it last?

Through the drama of Bonavia, we follow the exiled Antonio and the agent sent to retrieve him, Callido. Antonio is recalled to Bonavia by Queen Mother Herona to guide the beleaguered young King. On the way he falls in love with the messenger, and lives to protect a long held secret.

Notes:

As in the tradition of period five act plays a la Shakespeare, please gender bend/break to your hearts content. The Porter for instance has no intended gender. Concertina is easily genderqueer. And anyone else, regardless of present pronouns, is fair game for your imagination. I think it awesome to experiment and explore and see what different combinations may evoke and satisfy in different audiences. Please feel free to shift pronouns and make yourself at home.

Cast of Characters

Ethelia:	(16-30) Princess of Bonavia, sister to Leonardo
Dozen:	(30-50) Her trusted bodyguard
Leonardo	(16-30) New King of Bonavia, brother to Ethelia
Herona:	(40-50) Queen Mother of Bonavia. Mother to Eth & Leo
Luthenas:	(50-80) Once a fool, now an arbiter of law
Grimaldo:	(40-60) A Lord of Bonavia
Sola:	(20-40) A woodswoman, and a witch
Nouni:	(60-80) An old witch
Concertina:	(15-20) A poor butcher, a young witch
Porter:	(20-40) A foolish porter of the palace
Antonio	(35-55) Exiled war hero of Bonavia
Callido	(20s) A messenger from Bonavia
Farmer:	(30-50) A Farmer who cuts down a tree
La Segá:	(30-50) A contractor from Illyria
Commoners, Lord, Guards, Messenger, Knights, Steward, Nurse Lumberhand, Sailor, Musicians, Ghouls	
Violence:	Dreamer, Also Ethelia
Silence:	Timeless demiurge, Also Dozen
Time:	Timeless demiurge, Also Porter
Play:	Timeless demiurge, Also Luthenas
Enough:	Timeless demiurge, Also Nouni

ACT I

Scene iii

Setting: In the Palace

(Enter LUTHENAS and Queen Mother
HERONA from within, PORTER from
the door)

PORTER

The gate's a dam, your honor, presently
Withholds a flood: both who the Princess' cause
Support and those of vested opposition;
She stands out-door attended by her train
Though few of count, their confidence belies
An army in their bold sincerity.

LUTHENAS

Delay them.

PORTER

Surely, yet.

LUTHENAS

Appraise the crowd,

Invent the means!

PORTER

I fear my station makes
Inopportune to jest where only hinge
Is fair. Aye but a hinge, I: rusty hinge.

LUTHENAS

Then stick! Enjoin thy fate to try! Go to.

(PORTER exits)

LUTHENAS

Brief scene, I seek your secret word, Herona.
Where is the King? The globe seeks audience.

HERONA

Into the Kingswood I did shadow him
Where oft he played adventures as a child,
And by those forest falls today, under
The coldest currents scarred the man his wits;
He sat before the falls, there whipped himself

While wailing on how his own blood stained not
The waters that ran on from where he planted.

LUTHENAS

Did you not run to him, embrace him bloody?

HERONA

Afraid in my own pity for his show,
I thought to join his misery, but heard
The feet and rustle of the common folk
Whose track I interceded with myself;
So led them back, abandoning his shame
To drench alike my name in cowardice.

(The door smashes open)

LUTHENAS

Best steel our talk, momentum drags our breath.

(Enter ETHELIA, DOZEN, SOLA,
PORTER)

PORTER

I tried! I really tried: Miss Prince but blinked
Upon my jig and saw; mock not, 'twas ordered;
Withstanding that I gave my best banter,
A knocking jest - I thought it fit - perhaps
To wrestle arms, but I admit no brawn
As such attending her, though I did so,
Admit them - in - not by intention, failed;
I failed; but wrestle we did not; bless me
My arm: it's still here in my socket, aye,
The door as well; but I should check in case
It needs repair; Ya, damn, I spared my arm
Many a sour night alone.
She proved much more a wall than I:

LUTHENAS

A hinge,

PORTER

That's me, of late repair.

LUTHENAS

Indeed, begone.

(PORTER leaves)

ETHELIA

We are on time, sweet Luthenas: no door
Forever stops the gravity of justice,
So shall proceed, lest all the house collapse.
Dear Mother, to your grace, as I am thine;
Bohemia may tender half my blood,
But where my father walked the land has changed,
And must remain.

HERONA

I do commend your course
To serve your virtue's voice.

ETHELIA

I see no King.
Will you appraise the scales, old arbiter?

LUTHENAS

We know a dragon's coat's the finest fetter!

ETHELIA

Art thou to patchwork in the robes of law?

LUTHENAS

If not to cuff then it may matter not,
Best add to where it's tattered or made absent,
Restore its dignity but daintily.
You bring a suit as well?

ETHELIA

A stimulus
Of gold to give hereafter those who hear
You shape an answer when I ask you to,
Or shear with punishment in dearth of wit.

SOLA

Can we find justice from this quiz?

DOZEN

Tis cringe,
I fear but this will take forever.

LUTHENAS

Mark,
This nonsense is eternal firmament,
Though brief our confident interpretations;

So left to it to right the answer, which
By this my nonsense hand unmakes itself,
Adjustable in prayer, not surrender,
But brief applause.

ETHELIA
In but a single clap?

LUTHENAS
Infectious, one deserved may many make;
Struck true a single knock can bear the door down,
As you know.

ETHELIA
Tis but a door.

LUTHENAS
And this but play.
Shall send your rooms the bill for carpentry,
Or fast forget in fair, as you've forgot
Our sock and speak, our jolly pitter-pat?

ETHELIA
Applause is all he needs - a long stuck habit -
So drown him in it. There on! How do you!

(They applaud LUTHENAS)

LUTHENAS
Though once a fool, persist I further yet,
What makes me then to judge, but when put on?
These robes are land your father walked; his footprints
Upon my sleeve remain; his laws my love,
A fool in honor by his will made fit;
Un-idle in his idol ere my wits
From Saturn's eye to Pluto shuffle off.
If jest is perturbation's sweet relief
Then coxcomb too can stitch and button it.

ETHELIA
I only ask a faithful ass to sit
His derriere upon the chair in there.

LUTHENAS
My cheeks blush peach knowing I failed you not,
For in your youthful years you caught the wit!
I merely carry fabric on my haunches;
And so I ask your royal highness stand

My wit and your role in the trial.

ETHELIA

I shall.

(Enter separately MAGNIFICOES,
LORD, and LA SEGA. Then FARMER,
hands bound, attended by GUARDS)

ETHELIA

See here arrives the grit between my teeth.

FARMER

Well here's a place, so clean yet full of shit.

DOZEN

It flays me to endure his disrespect.

ETHELIA

Comes not Grimaldo?

LORD

Ah he works an errand.

ETHELIA

My friends, more than myself this fight will value,
So line the ranks of simple condemnation
To please enjoin the truth to consequence.

DOZEN

We shall, your grace.

SOLA

As we have well rehearsed.

LUTHENAS

Aye finally, all met to start the show;
Advancing past bureaucracy, the cause
Of this law's gathering: a hand-felled tree,
The trial of which we enter in to measure.

LORD

And here we will await the seat's ruling!

(Exit LUTHENAS, ETHELIA, SOLA,
DOZEN, FARMER, GUARDS,
MAGNIFICOES)

LA SEGA

We have no ticket to this theatre?

LORD

Our place of judgement is a private cove.

HERONA

Signior La Sega, with each service rendered
Your hospitality is our first gift.

LA SEGA

I tire of this rigmarole; take clear,
Orsino's two demands that will be met,
Which to the King I will administer.

LORD

My Lady, sure he cuts the matter quick,
But there were dancing hips did catch his eye.

HERONA

There is no corner of enjoyment left
Without the pride of skill to apprehend it.
Why to the grind of business against taste
Or smell of the fiori blanket air?

LA SEGA

It struck me, viewing each the lovely beauties,
If as a soldier I did spike their uncle,
Or father, brother, cousin in our time
Asea of fulsome martian disagreements;
I knew not what facet did please me more,
The present candy or the past dessert,
Together they did stir in me great humor,
That business pins to pleasure in my fortune.

HERONA

You menace courtesy, Signior, mark soft;
We do attend to cure our enmity.

LA SEGA

Then ask of our demands.

HERONA

We know already.

LA SEGA

No, ask, for in delay I sample fear,
Suspecting pox affects your surety,
Make it my next rehearsal for the King.

HERONA

Why then - dear guest - say for Illyria
What are the two demands of Bonavia?

LA SEGA

To harvest the ripe virgin of your woods,
And see returned the Phoenix that was stolen
With he who took it cunningly from us.

HERONA

We have no bearing on Antonio.

LA SEGA

Yes, yes, the well loved exile

(Re-enter LUTHENAS, ETHELIA,
SOLA, DOZEN, FARMER, GUARDS,
MAGNIFICOES)

LORD

They return,

And quickly.

LUTHENAS

Mama mama, melodrama!

Receive this my pronouncement punishment,
For hearing it is half the execution.
A quiet document, before the stamp,
So dryly holds itself; the ink is red
Poised heavily to mark the thirst of Death,
Who stalks the times, dry-lipped, anticipating
The taste of life, which sweetens when its threatened.

ETHELIA

Pray give the man his fate you dotty jot!

LUTHENAS

The candor of the King was loving life:
You're guilty, that is fair; and by our laws
Your life, consumable, and that would fair
Become if well equated to the action.
The throne feeds not upon your blood today;
Forgoing cruelty for common good,
The throne of half your flock will now sequester
To feast those honoring his memory,
The hungry poor whom he would want to feed.

ETHELIA

Hear justice, well appointed to the deed!

FARMER

Not my goats! Take my eyes, my fingers, but spare my sweet goats!

LUTHENAS

Progressing this, you shall be educated
To maximize the use of land you have;
May knowledge and experience wash off
The bitterness administered, with time.

ETHELIA

A fair met tack and tenor for the crime.

FARMER

A spade and pointed here! A vile level between your powers - and well measured,
quietly - between your rancid hearts! I see only shuckers harvesting an oyster. The
rigging of a blasting iron with a bucket o'er me. A bull pen and a pecking spree. You
only mine ire from the lowest when you slit me of my sweet goats, making
ramshackle of their soft shoulders: Frankl and Popsy, Mustardtin and Vachu:
murderers; I say, murderers and lazy teeth!

(Enter GRIMALDO with King
LEONARDO: head wet and gowned in
the royal robing with a flower)

GRIMALDO

At last, I've found our ready royalty.

LUTHENAS

We've finished.

GRIMALDO

You'd deny this gift he brings?

LEONARDO

I picked a flower for you mother, see;
I had to make a choice, so the rest of us,
Uh, we will need to just enjoy the one:
I don't know what it's called: 'tis best unheard;
There's peace, a playful ray of ignorance:
A wink, just one so that you know I know.
This bloom, like I, receives its birthright hues
And strives to match what all that came before't,
To surely dry and wither in its keeping,
Past beauty's apex, memory, past care;

I won't just give it to you; never mind,
It's yours as I have said; it matters so.
Unless I am mistook and it does not,
For what can matter in our final dust?

HERONA

My son, where have you been? Your hair is wet.

LEONARDO

I sought my father in my father's falls;
I heard a whisper, coldly, in deluge
But 'twas not him, I know it better now.
Inverting, took a duck for but a gander
Discovered I had ended underwater;
More fit a crown it feels to me: to us.
Be never captive to your own reflection
But meet it with all your mistaken self:
It shall not last so long as you keep dancing!
Make swift a drunken volta! Have at thee!

LUTHENAS

That I of all am stressed to see a dance hall;
Young King, a clothespin for your merry woes.

LEONARDO

A teacher! Teacher! Call, my hand is up.
I'll have my answers, model pupil, I;
Could grief not mar a golden jar? Say no,
We've heard it all before, there's nothing new here;
Keep well the pose - I'll be your fool, what say you?

LUTHENAS

Where bubble these enthusiasms from,
That juxtapose your office to your soul?

LEONARDO

Remain, I cherish you; and keep your welcome;
Be absolute diluting memory
As I return to running on the stones.
Remember that, nuncle? Cartwheels in session.
I broke my ankle and my favorite toy.
Our robe may mold from all these drivelings,
For shame, 'tis not the way to keep a gift;
Quick, off, to keep our father, lest I warp
His mould with my comportment.

HERONA

Bunny tiger,

Keep tight the robe your father left behind;
Embracing you, as I. What may I say
Before our vivid congregation? Breathe.

LEONARDO

Mock not, I breathed before and presently.

ETHELIA

Hear me my brother.

LEONARDO

Gentle sister, speak.

ETHELIA

Use well this grief of love to wash away
The strains of new responsibility.
Observe this opportunity to keep
His living will alive in prosecution.
Conclude the matter with your crown's approval,
And I will exercise unto the atom
Such care to turn the Earth and place you where
Abundant kindnesses may root and sooth you.
Else give the choice to me, and I will keep
His loving signature upon the matter.

LEONARDO

What matter, say?

LUTHENAS

A well earned confiscation
From the encroacher.

LEONARDO

An encroacher!

FARMER

Bah!

We are a bunch of name callers today, your highness, cockroaches and the rating of
some freshling enemy.

LUTHENAS

One indignacy propelling many more,
Creatively, no doubt. He will be loud.

LEONARDO

Grimaldo synopsisized the scene for me. Why did you do it?

FARMER

Your majesty, I -

LEONARDO

It's cool. Look me in the eyes. You scared? Why did you cut the tree?

FARMER

I need the wood.

LEONARDO

Fair. Why?

ETHELIA

What's this?

LEONARDO

I'm on the path.

ETHELIA

You walk too wide.

Dear mother, steer his lens to better focus.

HERONA

Let him deduce his way.

LEONARDO

Again, I ask, why so?

FARMER

My flock increased, so must my pen.

LEONARDO

Why?

FARMER

My Lord, I'd have to ask the goats.

LEONARDO

In any goaty conversation I'd be blessed. But why to govern goats? Why breed and keep and sweat to be repeated and increased?

FARMER

They make me happy. Silly eyes.

LEONARDO

Art happy?

FARMER

I was, but I am falling now.

LEONARDO

For shame! The penalty of your goats, for your supposed mistemperment?

FARMER

That's so.

LEONARDO

My dude! How are you! Bring it in. Look here. Is it not sad how complicated answers too often leave us all unsatisfied! Why hold this man, to clench his jaw beneath a public ceiling, who could be chewing leaves under the sun?

FARMER

Your highness I am thinking of my goats.

LEONARDO

We smell your thoughts, they wake me to the cause.

FARMER

It's what I have, it's all I have. With these walls on my chances, my crops and product of my herd will stay but a puddle.

LEONARDO

We hear thy plaint against us, so believe
Our sour spirit soon will be relieved
Amidst the freshest air you know so well.

ETHELIA

What fantasy is this? Take hold, denounce!

LEONARDO

This guy, no! This is my guy, both my hands,
My cadre, my key, the rich salt of nations!
Unbind his noble dusted hands. Do it.
Relief for you, for me, and for the work.

FARMER

Let mercy rain!

LEONARDO

I feel it everywhere.

ETHELIA

This single choice can make ill precedent:
For shame, denounce him!

LEONARDO

Pardoned and reversed.

Humility becomes my governance.

HERONA

He moves.

LUTHENAS

I'm bound.

LEONARDO

Take on my robe, sir.

(LEONARDO removes his robe and puts it on the FARMER in a flourish. His back is covered in two terrible streaks of blood)

ETHELIA

Blood!

LUTHENAS

Blood! Two peeking gaps of blood.

HERONA

My boy!

LEONARDO

My noble father was a forester,
And I'll a farmer be. I bleed; you bleed.
We are made holy.

LUTHENAS

Woe stampedes his reason.

ETHELIA

Unsound reveals the spirit of my house.

DOZEN

I fear no king though he may fear myself.

LEONARDO

Fear not, my friend, their flimsy whispering;
We choose the dressing of our character.

FARMER

My back is sticking.

LEONARDO

Better for your posture.

It fits! Such timeless fashion. Have a spin!
Regalia make weak habiliment
For laboring, but for the hour a King.
Fine costume and the contents of my veins:
Not yet ingredients for leadership,
Though now a fight erupts between our eyes
And what we know. I'll give the final part,
Myself, to follow zealously.

(LEONARDO kneels before FARMER)

ETHELIA
Stop here,

You're playing genie with society
Without a curtain or consent, to flaunt
Mobility that only you may give,
That when you bash the lanes of people's lives
The leverage of your privilege becomes
A horror to behold.

LEONARDO
We used to play,
We wrestled, threw each other to the floor,
To laugh while leapfrogging our victories,
Ate such cold strawberries we squealed our teeth.
What happened to those merry holidays?
Be sweet with me again or split my heart.

ETHELIA
I am resolved in matters of this crown,
Hold no ambition but to clarity;
I wish to serve us all with all myself.
I won't abandon you to hold alone
Our warring cleaving home, our Bonavia.
So speak these words; the burden is to share.
'I mark the verdict with my solemn word'

LEONARDO
But cease to pour such acid in my ears!
You tell me to incriminate someone
Who's done no wrong, but what some law insists;
And by that suit imply he axed the King:
Such vicious metaphor, and clever too.

ETHELIA
Cross not this line.

LUTHENAS

Heed yet her certainty!

LEONARDO

I will be granted my authority!

LUTHENAS

Your every right entitles you your stance,
But every word dethrones you from my heart.

LEONARDO

What would you then, I do?

LUTHENAS

Be quiet. Stop.

LEONARDO

Markst not my greasy funnel into hell?
More effort will be supernumerary.
Be quiet, thee! Desist manipulations:
But soft, an eye.
Is this peace?

LUTHENAS

What terrible quiet.

DOZEN

Best leave, my lady.

LEONARDO

Stay yet. We must our recent lord inquire the will of what now.

FARMER

I'm content for my goats.

LEONARDO

Noble! How many were marked, your highness?

FARMER

Fourteen.

LEONARDO

Then each goat's near demise deserves a log!
So, fourteen trees for you.

FARMER

How generous!

LEONARDO

And to our foreign friends, whose clammy debts
Are poised to shell our house, does our forest
Provoke your salivation to in turn
Relieve your strict embargo?

LA SEGA
Fervently,

As we applaud the winter into spring.

ETHELIA

O raving sphinx! O hollow buzzard: zounds!
Where comes this evil, gaping avarice?

LEONARDO

Oohoo, have I been eaten up by evil?
Despair! I'm swallowed! Everything destroyed!
Not greed, but good, it will advance our health.
Your wrath, however, is a disappointment
Upon your famous virtuosity.
I'm not one blind to goodly compromise,
Aye for our love we shall spare half the gift
Our legendary father well conserved
Unto the careful hand of our dominion;
But I dissolve his petty-bozo law
Which only sabotages our new life.
Acknowledging the cost of these resources
We will erect a temple to the Goddess
And honor well her sacred gifting grounds.
By every right conferred to me, so be it.
Come say this game was never fun to play,
For where is there most joy but in the winning!

ETHELIA

You are a fool.

LEONARDO

As any who are wise,
And value action over apathy.

ETHELIA

A pocket full of air for me to speak!
If all your life is but a game, then mark,
A challenge, purposeful and reckoning:
If we as children rule then shall we fully;
We wrestled once, and shall again; one week
This challenge, best three bouts, whose victory
Decides the Kingswood's legal destiny:
What say you, Leonardo! Fool or coward?

GRIMALDO

Your highness, neither fool nor coward, please
Make laughter at this tillymockery,
And move on the decisions you have made.

LEONARDO

She calls my spirit! True and royal sport.
I have been craving proper entertainment;
And fit container for our family's stakes!
Dear sister doffed my underestimation;
Know well I'll never miss that mark again.
But see we have two packets of business,
The greater of our deal Illyrian
Which to this fateful duel I can commend;
The lesser of, this farmer's trial winnings,
I must deliver on or be a coz'ner,
What say you, dear?

ETHELIA

I swear...

LEONARDO

How now red cheeks!

ETHELIA

Dear Mother, what will you allow this claw?

LEONARDO

Appealing to the sweetest safety, ha!
Go on, tell all dear mother, lacrimosa.

HERONA

There is a pace at which we must make movement,
And unto change there is a deeper wisdom.
We all are too grief-struck in bitterness,
That if in such a game we are to play,
So play and take what we are offered best.

LEONARDO

A deeper wisdom, mother, from your rule.
There have it, sister, princess, diddle-dee.
Have you no other card? A single word? No?
It is accepted. Come I'm sure the judge
Will draft this challenge into legalese?

LUTHENAS

I will apply my craft.

LEONARDO

Come now, old bird,

This is the greatest show, your element,
To master the event in view of all!
A week of games and passions til the day!
I'll see you!

ETHELIA

Let's away.

DOZEN

Prepare a path!

LEONARDO

Ah there she flies with her accoutrement.

SOLA

[*Aside to ETHELIA*] Ignore him.

LEONARDO

To distance, then! Say bye, buhbye!

SOLA

[*Aside to ETHELIA*] I don't know where your speed may go, but may I offer my company and direction that can, in sooth, receive this misery.

ETHELIA

[*Aside to SOLA*] I must from loveless law depart. Lead on.

(Exit ETHELIA, SOLA, and DOZEN)

LEONARDO

So fast and quick apart, love. Have you loved?

FARMER

Aye,

BOTH

My goats.

LEONARDO

Then be away, and all.

(Exit FARMER, GUARDS,
MAGNIFICOES)

LA SEGA

Young King, you've made a chicken of our promise
To pool our fortunes on a risk of hands.

LEONARDO

Signior La Sega, worry not, I'll win.

LA SEGA

I showed for a new profitable shift,
Whose interest we have waited long to meet;
A slicing sequel does await us twain,
Should I report back home unsatisfied.

GRIMALDO

In preparation for your match, my liege,
We may yet draft allotments on the outcome,
Which in the meantime week will serve us well.

LEONARDO

Yes, come esteemed visitor, tomorrow,
We'll balance each our brains on allocations,
Weighing each share a careful loving value.
Til then may all our splendor keep you well.

GRIMALDO

We shall make excellence of paltry hours.

(Exit GRIMALDO, LA SEGA, and
LORD)

LEONARDO

I need a trainer, mother. Where's Antonio?

HERONA

We sent for him the day your father died.

LUTHENAS

Herein we wait upon our ace, our centaur,
To train your highness to your victory.

LEONARDO

I am on fire, almost to forget
The near-breach of your loyalty to me,
Old bird; pray never toss my flag again.

LUTHENAS

I am yours.

(Exit LEONARDO and HERONA. Enter
PORTER)

PORTER

Now I observed the strangest train of faces
At once in funeral and festival.
Have we a comedy or tragedy?

LUTHENAS

If only we could know today, we may
To choose to stay or run now far away.

(Exeunt)