

The Essence of Love

by

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Characters

Diana – mid 40's

Gemma – her daughter 19

Martin – mid 40's

Tom – his son 21

Abdul-Hamid – street vendor 50's

Voice of **young street vendor**

Synopsis of scenes

The action of the play takes place on two adjoining hotel roof terraces in Marrakech.

Scene 1 – 2.30 in the afternoon

Scene 2 – 10.30 the following morning

Scene 3 – 6.30 that evening

Scene 4 – 9.00 the following morning

Scene 5 – 5.00 that afternoon

Scene 6 – 10.00 that evening

Scene 7 – 4.00 the following afternoon

Scene 8 – 10.30 the following morning

Time – the present

Scene 2

10.30 a.m. The following morning. Gemma enters through the USL doorway. She carries a book. She sits and reads. Tom enters through USR doorway. He carries his drawing materials and an almost full bottle of water. He commences sketching. After a few moments Diana enters through USL doorway wearing her exercise outfit. She carries her bag.

Diana Here you are. *(To Tom)* Good morning, good morning.
Tom Hi.
Diana You missed your champagne yesterday.
Tom Yes... headache. Too much sun.
Diana Oh dear. Better today I hope.
Tom We'll see.
Diana We're going shopping later, aren't we Gem? Look around the markets – or souks as they call them here apparently. Now I won't disturb you if I practice my morning exercises I hope.
Gemma Mum, do you have to?
Diana Yes I do, my body is my instrument, I have to keep it in pristine condition.
Gemma Oh.

Diana commences her exercises which include vocal warm-ups. Tom eventually exits through USR doorway.

Diana Now look what you've done.
Gemma Oh.
Gemma Maybe he wants some peace and quiet.

Diana He's bored. Why don't you talk to him?
Gemma I have. He wants to be left alone, he told me.
Diana I don't believe you.
Gemma It's true – anyway, I don't want to talk to him, he's arrogant and conceited and extremely rude.
Diana Nonsense. You're far too judgemental of people – that's one way to stay a virgin all your life.
Gemma I am not a virgin. Oh!

Gemma exits through USL doorway.

Diana Gem, Gemma sweetie? Oh, why do daughters have to be so complicated!

Diana recommences her exercises. The voice of Abdul-Hamid is heard below.

A-H *(Off)* Gold bracelets, silver bracelets, amulets, talismans, lucky charms.
Diana *(Calling down)* Hello down there.
A-H *(Off)* Salam lady. You take a look?
Diana *(Calling down)* Why not.
A-H *(Off)* I bring.

Abdul-Hamid climbs up onto the terrace. He carries a bag.

Diana Greetings.
Diana Greetings.

Abdul-Hamid opens his bag. The inside of the bag extends to create a display with compartments filled with various items.

A-H Please, look. Bracelets, necklaces, rings. All good.
Diana May I?
A-H By all means.

Diana tries on a bracelet.

Beautiful. Try this.

Abdul-Hamid takes out a pendant and puts it round Diana's neck.

Diana Good?
A-H You see.

He takes a mirror from his bag and holds it up.

Diana Oh yes, that works.
A-H This.

He takes out a bracelet. Diana puts it on.

Good. Like wife of sultan. Ring. Moroccan love-stone.

Diana puts on the ring.

Diana I like that. That mirror's pretty too.
A-H For you.
Diana Ah, thank you. Okay... now how much?
A-H For everything, one thousand dirhams.
Diana One thousand, that sounds a lot.
A-H For you, special price, nine-hundred.
Diana Eight-hundred and fifty?
A-H Eight-hundred and seventy.
Diana Eight-hundred and sixty... seven?
A-H You bargain well. Deal.
Diana Deal. Oh...

Diana fetches her purse from her handbag. She takes out a handful of notes. She is confused.

A-H *(Taking notes)* Eight of these... six of these... and seven of these. Now, for beautiful woman and good customer, free gift.

Abdul-Hamid takes out a phial.

Love potion. Very strong.
Diana Oh.
A-H A few drops in the cup will awaken the sleeping lover.
Diana *(Sceptically)* Really.
A-H No want?
Diana I didn't say that. It's a gift is it? Then I'll take it. Thank you.

Diana takes the phial. Abdul-Hamid packs up his bag.

A-H You look million dirhams.
Diana Thank you.
A-H Allah be with you. Enjoy sunshine.
Diana I will. Ciao for now.
A-H Ah – ciao for now.

Abdul-Hamid exits the terrace by the way he came. Diana enjoys her purchases. She opens the phial and sniffs the contents.

Diana Love potion. He's probably just given me water.

Diana looks across to the adjacent terrace and notices Tom's water bottle. She crosses to the SR terrace. She looks through the USR doorway and then pours a few drops into the water bottle. She examines the water. She crosses back to the SL terrace.

(Calling) Ge –

*She hesitates. She smiles to herself and recommences her exercises.
She is struck but a sudden thought.*

Oh my God, what if it's poison! Fool Diana, fool! What am I thinking!

She makes to cross the divide again but Tom enters through USR doorway. He wears headphones and carries his portable music device. Diana turns her attempted cross into a leg stretch.

Tom Got your sounds?
(Speaking loudly) Yes it is.

Tom picks up his water bottle (containing love potion). He puts the bottle to his lips.

Diana I don't think that's a –

Tom drinks. He removes one headphone.

Tom What?

Diana Oh just... nothing...

Tom takes out the other headphone. He stares at Diana.

Tom Everything okay? Tom...?
Ah...

Gemma has entered through USL doorway. She has Diana's mobile. She hands mobile to Diana.

Gemma Lionel.

Diana Lionel?

Gemma You know...

Diana Oh, Lionel.

Diana takes the mobile.

(To mobile) Lionel darling, how are you?... No, I'm in Marrakech... Yes... Yes it is...

Gemma is aware of Tom's staring as she sits and reads her book.

Who's that, Tony Hogget?... Yes, I think so... Just a moment...

Diana exits through the USL doorway.

Tom Oh... Oh...

Gemma Sorry...?

Tom What's her name?

Gemma Are you talking to me?

Tom What's her name?

Gemma Mum?

Tom Her name?

Gemma Diana.

Tom Diana?

Gemma Yes.

Tom (To himself) Diana.

Gemma Is something...

Tom (To himself) Ah... Di-an-a...

Tom is lost in thought. Martin enters through USR doorway with his book. He wears sunglasses and moves slowly.

Martin Oh, is that you Tom? God knows what was in my drink last night. Hello there... is it...?

Gemma Gemma, yes.

Martin Ah.

Gemma Bad night?

Martin Yes. Something in the drink. Quiet one today I think.
Reading? Romances?
Gemma No, environment book.
Martin Ah. Good for you. I'm reading about the kings of
Morocco – very exciting.

*Tom has been considering his attire and checking his body odour.
He crosses to USSR doorway.*

All right Tom?

Tom exits through USSR doorway.

Gemma Is he...?
Martin Hm?
Gemma Okay?
Martin Tom? You know what I think he needs: a good holiday
romance.

Diana enters through USL doorway.

Diana Hello.
Martin Oh... hello.
Diana *(Concerned)* Everyone all right?
Martin Not me.
Diana Oh?
Martin Feels like I've been poisoned. Excuse me.

*Martin crosses to his chair and sits. Gemma mimes drinking
action. Martin removes his shirt.*

Diana Where's Tom?
Gemma He went inside. He's acting a little... strangely.
Diana Tom? Strangely?
Gemma He was just standing there going 'oh... oh'. He wanted to

know your name.
Diana My name? He knows my name.
Gemma He kept repeating it to himself: 'Diana... Diana'. He's
coming.

*Tom has entered through the USSR doorway. He has changed his
clothes. Gemma sits. Tom looks over to Diana.*

Tom Ha.
Gemma *(Whispering)* See.
Diana Changed I see.
Tom Yes... yes... changed.

Slight pause.

Um...
Diana Yes?
Tom Diana...
Diana Yes?
Tom Would you like to...
Diana Yes?
Tom Take a look at my...
Diana Yes?
Tom Art.
Diana Oh – yes... sure.
Tom Yes?
Diana Absolutely.
Tom Great.

Tom helps Diana across the divide.

Diana Oh... thank you.
Tom So... er... this is just a few of my... sorry I'm a little...
Diana Don't be nervous, I'm not a savage critic.

Tom shows drawings to Diana.

Tom Yes... Oh yes... Now that's... I like that...
Diana Yes?
Diana I do. Is that a fish there?
Tom No it's a – well it could be, if that's what you see.
Diana Oh I like what you've done here.
Tom Thank you.
Diana Now that's nice. I can see that one in my bedroom.
Tom You can.
Diana Absolutely.
Tom Take it.
Diana What?
Tom I want you to have it – for your bedroom. Please.
Diana Oh... thank you.
Tom Thank you.
Diana Well, these pictures Tom are very very...
Tom Perhaps we could... go for a walk.
Diana A walk?
Tom Together.
Diana Ah.
Tom I'd really like to... hear your ideas – what you think about... art... other things.
Diana I see. Well... sure.
Tom Yes?
Diana Okay. When? Now? Okay, I'll...
Tom I'll... meet you at the front of the hotel.
Diana Sure.
Tom Five minutes?
Diana Okay.

Diana crosses the divide. Tom exits through USR doorway.

Gemma Well?
Diana Well what?

Gemma Isn't he behaving a bit strangely?
Diana Not at all – he's a perfectly charming young man. One just needs to know how to talk to people – men. We're in fact going for a walk together.
Gemma A walk! What for?
Diana Why do people take a walk together. Honestly Gem. Right, need to change. I'll see you later.

Diana exits through USL doorway.

Gemma Oh!

Martin snores.