

# THE BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL CHANDELIER

by Ed Valentine

*At a four-star restaurant in Pompeii...  
beneath a gleaming crystal chandelier in the Ladies' Room...  
Flavia and Calpurnia find out they're sleeping with the same man.  
But the sudden eruption of Vesuvius forever changes these two society ladies,  
as imminent death impels them to reveal their REAL desires.*

## CHARACTERS (BOTH PLAYED BY MEN)

- FLAVIA:** Small. Brittle. On edge. Pops pills to keep herself together. Sleeping with Calpurnia's husband. Hates Calpurnia. Kind of.
- CALPURNIA:** Hates Flavia, too. Kind of. Higher up on the social scale. Grand. Formidable. Don't fuck with Calpurnia.

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# THE BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL CHANDELIER

## SETTING:

The Ladies' Room at a fancy restaurant in Pompeii.

A giant, crystal chandelier overhead.

Outside, the volcano Vesuvius stews and stews.

## CHARACTERS:

### **FLAVIA:**

Small. Brittle. On edge. Pops pills to keep herself together. Sleeping with Calpurnia's husband. Hates Calpurnia. Kind of.

### **CALPURNIA:**

Hates Flavia, too. Kind of. Higher up on the social scale. Grand. Formidable. Don't fuck with Calpurnia.

## Author's Note:

Let both roles be played by men in wigs and pearls.

Let the wigs be fabulous.

As arch, quick, and precise as possible: exquisite bitchery.

## **NEEDED:**

**SET:** It's a posh ladies' room. Little table downstage. Upstage, two plush or gilded chairs - or a chaise, maybe? Whatever's around.

**LIGHTS:** Most of the play: general wash. Some pretty colors?  
Special: Red light – Vesuvius.  
Special: Disco Mirror ball above (or offstage, if necessary).

**PROPS:** (Flavia) Purse. Lipstick. Pill bottle w 'pills.' Martini glass.  
(Calpurnia) Purse. Lipstick. Martini glass.

**COSTUME:** (Flavia) Pearls. Wig.  
(Calpurnia) Pearls. Wig. 1960's cat glasses, maybe? Or sunglasses?

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**SOUND:** Party noises or light music, off.

**LIGHTS UP:** FLAVIA stands at the vanity or little table. She faces downstage, crying while applying lipstick in the (unseen) ladies' room mirror.

FLAVIA (into the mirror:)

*Damn that man! Damn him! And damn you too, Flavia, you silly little fool... Falling for a married man. Why, you must be the stupidest woman in all Pompeii!*

(Slaps herself in the face.)

*There! Serves you right.*

(Slaps herself again:)

*There! There! And there! Oh, steady, Flavia, steady...*

(Takes pill bottle from her purse. Pops some pills. Big smile in the mirror:)

Much better! Now, fix your face and march right back into that restaurant.

(Takes lipstick again, begins to fix her face. From offstage, an explosion and a burst of red light: Vesuvius. FLAVIA shrieks and draws a jagged streak of lipstick across her cheek. CALPURNIA enters.)

CALPURNIA

*Flavia, darling!*

FLAVIA

Calpurnia Sagittus Secundus!

(Aside:)

*Sweet Jupiter - My lover's wife! But what's she doing in this restaurant?*

CALPURNIA

Darling Flavia - how marvelous to see you! And how brave of you to wear that dress again.

Kisses!

(Air kisses.)

Now, did I hear you shriek, dear, just before I came in?

FLAVIA

Me? Oh, perhaps just a weensy: I heard a terrible bang...

CALPURNIA

Just Vesuvius spouting off again. It's been puffing smoke all week.

FLAVIA

Do you think the rumors are true, Calpurnia?

CALPURNIA

Rumors?

FLAVIA

Surely you've heard the rumors: the volcano's about to erupt... the world's about to be destroyed...

CALPURNIA

...And Pompeii will melt, like cheese in a fondue pot?

FLAVIA

It's what the soothsayers say, when they say their sooth.

CALPURNIA

Poppycock: I defy augury! Dining alone?

FLAVIA

Yes. You?

CALPURNIA

No, I'm here with my husband. Surely you've met Magnanimus?

FLAVIA

Magnanimus? Why, let's see... well, perhaps I've met him, once or twice...

CALPURNIA

You must join us, then!

FLAVIA

Oh no, I couldn't -

CALPURNIA

I never take no for an answer! Good, then, let's have a look at you. Beautiful chandelier in this ladies' room, but not quite enough light. Let's turn it up a bit, shall we?

(Claps twice. The lights brighten a bit. CALPURNIA eyes FLAVIA; shrieks a little, clutches her pearls.)

*Flavia Minimus Vaginus!* Why, you didn't tell me you were in an accident!

FLAVIA

But I *wasn't* in an accident, Calpurnia.

CALPURNIA (Cutting:)

Oh: my mistake. So, Flavia, when did we last have the pleasure?

FLAVIA

I last saw you at that musical: that Aristophanes revival.

CALPURNIA

But which *one*? Nothing but goddamn revivals these days. Was it *The Birds*? *The Flies*? *The Frogs*?

FLAVIA

*The Hedgehogs*.

CALPURNIA

*The Hedgehogs*! No wonder I've forgotten: perfectly dreadful.

FLAVIA

I rather liked it.

CALPURNIA

Of course you would! But darling: that music - that staging - that dancing - ugh!

(A moment of mad choreography: Martha Graham meets *Cats* by way of *Mama Mia*.

Ends with a hedgehog face.)

Well, whenever it was, you looked so much younger, not the dusty mummy I see before me.

FLAVIA

Sweetheart, you're wrong. I am ageless - Ageless!

CALPURNIA

If by that, you mean 'too old to count,' of course, you're right. Tell me, Flavia: how's your love life? Still single?

FLAVIA

Not at all, Calpurnia! I've taken a paramour.

CALPURNIA

Realllly? Do tell!

FLAVIA

An older man. Handsome, distinguished. And rich.

CALPURNIA

Come on, tell me. Tell me his name.

FLAVIA

My lips are zipped, baby.

CALPURNIA

Come on - just a bitsy little hint?

FLAVIA

Oh, I wouldn't want you stealing him away from me, Calpurnia. And I'm sure you'd want to, when you hear about all the hot sex we have.

CALPURNIA

What a lucky girl! To find a man who doesn't mind all the weight you've put on!

(A beat. FLAVIA gives a brittle little laugh.)

FLAVIA

You know... you really shouldn't tease me so, Calpurnia. I could tell you something that would curl what little hair you have left.

CALPURNIA

What? What could you say to me?

FLAVIA

Let's take a moment and fix our faces, shall we?

CALPURNIA

A fine idea.

(They stand side by side, fix their faces in the mirror. A rumbling from offstage.)

FLAVIA gives a little shriek as before, messes up her lipstick.)

Nothing to worry about: just Vesuvius, I tell you. My, you're jumpy.

FLAVIA

Leave me be, Calpurnia.

(CALPURNIA sniffs, ostentatiously.)

What?

CALPURNIA

What's that terrible smell?

FLAVIA

What smell?

CALPURNIA

Smells like sulphur. Trying out a new douche?

FLAVIA

It's not *my* vagina: my vagina smells of hyacinths.

CALPURNIA

What do you use? Mine's Martha Stewart's "Twat."

FLAVIA

I wear "Secretion" by Danny Pintauro.

CALPURNIA

So that *is* where the sulphur smell's coming from, then.

FLAVIA

I'm sleeping with your husband, bitch.

CALPURNIA

Beg pardon?

FLAVIA

*I am sleeping with your husband.*

CALPURNIA

Your paramour – is Magnanimus?

FLAVIA

Not just my paramour. My sugar daddy. My hot sheets lover. My Italian sausage of desire. You don't please him in bed.

CALPURNIA

That's not true, that's not true!

FLAVIA

It is! I give him what he needs, what he craves. I know every trick, every turn, dear. And Magnanimus loves it. Loves it!

CALPURNIA

Not my Magnanimus!

FLAVIA

YES, your Magnanimus - How he moans! How he cries! And there's one other thing you should know, Calpurnia.

CALPURNIA

No more, no more...

FLAVIA

I'm having his baby!

CALPURNIA

Tramp!

Ice queen!  
FLAVIA

Slattern!  
CALPURNIA

Frigid!  
FLAVIA

WHORE!  
CALPURNIA

(CATFIGHT! Slapping, first; then a clawing, hair-pulling, rolling-around on the floor brawl. At the height of it, maybe when they're about to kill each other, there is a terrible explosion from offstage, the loudest yet. The women stop, stricken, horrified. They crouch together on the floor, looking offstage. They play the rest of the scene on the floor, until the moment indicated.)

Vesuvius!  
FLAVIA

Vesuvius!  
CALPURNIA

It's smoking -  
FLAVIA

Like a chimney!  
CALPURNIA

It's rumbling -  
FLAVIA

Like a freight train!  
CALPURNIA

It's hungry -  
FLAVIA

Like a bear!  
CALPURNIA

FLAVIA  
Is this the end, Calpurnia? Is this the end of Pompeii?

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