

SALIERI SIDE #1

[My one desire was to join all the composers who had celebrated His glory through the long Italian past! . . . Every Sunday I saw Him in church, painted on the flaking wall. I don't mean Christ. The Christs of Lombardy are simpering sillies, with lambkins in their arms. No: I mean an old candle-smoked God in a mulberry robe, staring at the world with dealer's eyes. Tradesmen had put him up there. Those eyes made bargains, real and irreversible. "You give me so—I'll give you so! No more. No less!" [He eats a sweet biscuit in his excitement.] The night before I left Legnago forever, I went to see Him, and made a bargain with Him myself! I was a sober sixteen, filled with a desperate sense of *right*. I knelt before the God of Bargains, and I prayed through the moldering plaster with all my soul.

[He kneels.]

"*Signore*, let me be a composer! Grant me sufficient fame to enjoy it. In return, I will live with virtue. I will strive to better the lot of my fellows. And I will honor You with much music all the days of my life!" As I said *Amen*, I saw His eyes flare. [As "God"] "*Bene*. Go forth, Antonio. Serve Me and mankind, and you will be blessed!" . . . "*Grazie!*" I called back. "I am Your servant for life!"

SALIERI SIDE #2

SALIERI: [*Carefully*]. A pity . . . It's somewhat small pay, to secure a post every musician in Vienna is hoping for.

CONSTANZE: What do you mean?

SALIERI: Is it not clear?

CONSTANZE: No. Not at all.

SALIERI: Another pity . . . A thousand pities.

[*Pause*]

CONSTANZE: I don't believe it . . . I just don't believe it!

SALIERI: What?

CONSTANZE: What you've just said.

SALIERI: [*Hastily*]. I said nothing. What did I say?

[*CONSTANZE gets up and SALIERI rises in panic.*]

CONSTANZE: Oh, I'm going! . . . I'm getting out of this!

SALIERI: Constanze . . .

CONSTANZE: Let me pass, please.

SALIERI: Constanze, listen to me! I'm a clumsy man. You think me sophisticated—I'm not at all. Take a true look. I've no cunning. I live on ink and sweetmeats. I never see women at all. . . . When I met you last night, I envied Mozart from the depths of my soul. Out of that envy came stupid thoughts. For one silly second I dared imagine that, out of the vast store you obviously possess, you might spare me one coin of tenderness your rich husband does not need—and inspire me also.

[*Pause. She laughs.*]