

**THE FIERY LOVE OF GOD**

By Dale Ahlquist

## Cast of Characters

12 Females; 12 Males; 1 Child (Female); 7 Either

<u>CATHERINE:</u>	A young noblewoman of Genoa.
<u>LIMBANIA:</u>	Catherine's sister.
<u>GIACCO FIESCHI:</u>	Catherine's brother.
<u>COUNT GIACCOMO FIESCHI:</u>	Catherine's father.
<u>FRANCESCA DI NEGRI:</u>	Catherine's mother.
<u>MOTHER SUPERIOR:</u>	Mother Superior of Convent of Santa Maria della Grazie.
<u>PIGEON:</u>	A friend of Catherine.
<u>GIULIANO ADORNO:</u>	Catherine's husband.
<u>AGOSTO:</u>	Member of the Adorno family.
<u>CARLO:</u>	Member of the Adorno family.
<u>LUIGI:</u>	Member of the Fieschi family.
<u>LORENZO:</u>	Member of the Fieschi family.
<u>AMALIA:</u>	A waitress.
<u>TOMASSA:</u>	Noblewoman of Genoa and cousin of Catherine.
<u>RONDA:</u>	Noblewoman of Genoa.
<u>SILVIA:</u>	Noblewoman of Genoa.
<u>BERNADINE:</u>	Noblewoman of Genoa.
<u>BIANCA:</u>	A Woman of Genoa.
<u>STANZA:</u>	Attendant to Catherine.
<u>PRIEST:</u>	A Priest associated with the convent.
<u>CHRIST:</u>	Figure in Catherine's vision.

MARIASTELLA:

Nurse.

DOCTOR:

The Doctor of the hospital.

THOBIA:

A little girl.

ETTORE VERNAZZO:

A lawyer of Genoa.

PATIENTS:

Seven patients in the hospital.

## Scene Breakdown

### ACT I

- Scene 1 — Santa Maria della Grazie
- Scene 2 — Catherine's Home, a Few Weeks Later
- Scene 3 — A Piazza, Several Months Later
- Scene 4 — Santa Maria della Grazie, the Next Day
- Scene 5 — A Tavern, a Few Months Later
- Scene 6 — Palazzo Sant'Agnese, Five Years Later
- Scene 7 — Palazzo Sant'Agnese, After Another Five Years
- Scene 8 — Santa Maria della Grazie, the Next Day

### ACT II

- Scene 1 — Pammatone Hospital, a Few Days Later
- Scene 2 — Pammatone Hospital, One Year Later
- Scene 3 — Pammatone Hospital, A Few Months Later
- Scene 4 — Pammatone Hospital, Two Years Later
- Scene 5 — Pammatone Hospital, the Next Day
- Scene 6 — Pammatone Hospital, One Year Later
- Scene 7 — Santa Maria della Grazie, a Few Months Later
- Scene 8 — Pammatone Hospital, a Few Months Later
- Scene 9 — Pammatone Hospital, a Few Years Later
- Scene 10 — Pammatone Hospital, Several Years Later

### Approximate Length

105 minutes

### Time

1400's

### Place

Genoa, Italy

Scene 7

Setting: Palazzo Sant' Agnese, after another five years.

At Rise: CATHERINE sits alone in her room.

(Enter STANZA)

STANZA

Excuse me, my lady.

CATHERINE

What is it, Stanza? I did not call for you.

STANZA

Yes, I beg your pardon. But there is someone here to see you.

CATHERINE

You know I do not wish to see anyone or for anyone to see me. Send him away.

STANZA

It is... a woman, my lady. And I told her you would not want to see her. But... I cannot send her away.

CATHERINE

Why can't you?

STANZA

It is your sister.

CATHERINE

(Pauses)

Limbania?

STANZA

Yes, my lady. She has come from the convent with special permission from the Mother Superior.

CATHERINE

(Long pause)

Send her in.

STANZA

Yes, my lady.

(Exit STANZA. Enter LIMBANIA, now dressed as a nun.)

LIMBANIA

God be with you, Catherine.

CATHERINE

Limbania...

(Pauses, an obvious conflict of emotion)

Why did you come? Is something wrong?

LIMBANIA

Yes...Something is wrong with *you*.

CATHERINE

(Taken aback)

You get permission to leave your cloister just to come and scold me?

LIMBANIA

It sounds as if you have been in a cloister of your own. You have abandoned the world, but not in a good way. You have just collapsed into yourself.

CATHERINE

(Sarcastically)

How nice to see you again, Limbania. You know...I once wanted to join the convent.

LIMBANIA

Did you? Is that really what you wanted?

CATHERINE

Perhaps...not. But as you say, I do this cloister business quite well. I would have been a natural as a nun. But now it's too late. I'm married.

LIMBANIA

And you still don't know what you want.

CATHERINE

Which did not prevent me from getting married. Of course, I didn't have much choice in that little decision.

LIMBANIA

Catherine, I understand that you feel like a pawn in someone else's game. And you have demonstrated that you are not going to play the game.

CATHERINE

You're saying I'm no fun.

(LIMBANIA laughs. CATHERINE reacts to her laughter.)

Oh, maybe I *am* fun.

(Pauses)

Limbania, what do you do all day?

LIMBANIA

Pray. What do you do all day?

CATHERINE

Is thinking about God praying? Because I think about God all day long and wonder why he would put me through this.

LIMBANIA

It seems that you are putting yourself through it, Catherine. You have locked yourself in this prison. No one else holds the key to that door.

CATHERINE

I did not choose this place. It was chosen for me by someone else. By my father, by my brother, by my husband, but ultimately by God!

LIMBANIA

There is no consolation in blaming God for your troubles.

CATHERINE

And what do you suggest I do instead of blaming God? Because I hope you came here for some other purpose than to tell me what my problems are.

LIMBANIA

I came here for a reason. I do have something to tell you. There is something that you should do.

CATHERINE

Well, what is it?

LIMBANIA

How long has it been since you have been to confession?

CATHERINE

What!?

LIMBANIA

It was a simple question.

CATHERINE

How dare you judge me!

LIMBANIA

I am not judging you. God is your judge.

CATHERINE

What have *I* done? I haven't done anything wrong. In fact, I haven't done anything at all! I haven't done anything for ten years except stare at these four walls! What do I confess? That I resent being in hell?

LIMBANIA

(Looks around)

You are not in hell. You are living in a palace. And out in the streets of Genoa there are people with no homes.

CATHERINE

Why doesn't God do something about it?

LIMBANIA

Why don't *you* do something about it?

CATHERINE

(Gets up, goes to the window, lifts drapery, looks out. Pauses.)

It has been years...

LIMBANIA

Since you went to confession?

CATHERINE

Since I even looked out this window.

LIMBANIA

And years since you have opened the window of your soul to God.

CATHERINE

(Pauses)

I have turned into a monster.

LIMBANIA

Come with me back to the convent.

CATHERINE

Limbania. You know it's too late for that. I am married. Supposedly. I cannot become a nun.

LIMBANIA

No, I don't mean that. Come to the convent with me and talk to our priest.

CATHERINE

(Stares out the window a little longer, and then turns to LIMBANIA)

Well, my sister, if you could take the trouble to leave the cloister to come here, I suppose the least I can do is return the favor.



(LIMBANIA smiles)

BLACKOUT

Scene 8

Setting: Santa Maria della Grazie, the next day. Chapel, near the confessional.

At Rise: LIMBANIA escorts CATHERINE in and then leaves. CATHERINE hesitates, then kneels on one side of a screen. The PRIEST sits on the other side.

CATHERINE

(Pauses. Deep breath.)

Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

PRIEST

How long has it been since your last confession?

CATHERINE

(Pauses. Another sigh.)

It has been ten years.

PRIEST

I see. Go ahead—

(MOTHER SUPERIOR rushes in and whispers something to the PRIEST. He nods and whispers something back to her. She exits.)

PRIEST

I'm sorry, my child.

CATHERINE

*You're sorry? I'm supposed to be confessing to you.*

PRIEST

There is an emergency. One of the sisters is very ill. To the point of death. I must go. I will be back. Continue your examination of conscience. After all, you have ten years to consider.

(He exits)

CATHERINE

Ten years of nothing.

(She stands and looks around. Everything is very quiet. After a long time, she bows her head and closes her eyes.)

Lord...Help me to know my sins.

(Suddenly the lights on the stage change to an intense red. She opens her eyes wide with great shock. An intense pulsating music swells up. A figure enters from across the stage. It is CHRIST carrying the cross. He wears a crown of thorns and is bloody and bruised. He slowly carries the cross to center stage, head down, and then stops, lifts his head and looks at

CATHERINE. She falls to her knees, overcome with emotion. Then he lowers his head again, continues across the stage and exits. The music stops and the lights return to normal. She falls on her face, weeping.)

BLACKOUT

INTERMISSION

ACT II  
Scene 1

Setting: Pammatone Hospital, a few days later.

At Rise: Enter RONDA, BERNADINE, SILVIA, TOMASSA, and finally, CATHERINE.  
She stands off to one side, looking around, while the others huddle.

RONDA

(To TOMASSA)

How did you get her to come?

TOMASSA

Well...I just asked her.

BERNADINE

That's all?

TOMASSA

That's all.

BERNADINE

You never asked her before?

TOMASSA

No.

BERNADINE

Why did you wait so long?

TOMASSA

It was not a question of waiting. I've been trying to see her for ten years. She finally agreed to meet. And then I didn't know what to say to her. So I...just asked if she wanted to join the Ladies of Mercy.

SILVIA

Did you tell her what we do?

TOMASSA

I told her we visit the hospital. I didn't really tell her much else.

RONDA

Well, I wouldn't know what to say to her either. I still don't.

(Enter DOCTOR)

DOCTOR

Ah, the Ladies of Mercy!

LADIES

Good afternoon, Doctor.

DOCTOR

We at Pammatone are so very grateful for your visits every month.

BERNADINE

We do what we can.

RONDA

It is a burden we bear gladly.

SILVIA

It is only right, you know, that we do something to help.

RONDA

Tomassa is quite the organizer.

DOCTOR

And Lady Tomassa, I see you have brought a new Lady of Mercy.

TOMASSA

This is my cousin, Catherine Adorno.

DOCTOR

(Shocked)

Cather—I never expected...

RONDA

None of us ever expected it, Doctor.

BERNADINE

But here she is!

DOCTOR

Well, I will let you do your errand. Mariastella!

(Enter MARIATELLA)

MARIATELLA

Yes, Doctor?

DOCTOR

The Ladies of Mercy are here.

MARIASTELLA

I will get the towels.

DOCTOR

Thank you, Mariastella.

MARIASTELLA

Here, my ladies.

(She hands each lady a towel. The LADIES then each visit a PATIENT's bed and hand the towel to the PATIENT. CATHERINE watches. They beckon her to do the same. She looks around. There is no one left to give a towel to.)

TOMASSA

Catherine?

CATHERINE

Is that all we do? Give towels to the patients?

TOMASSA

Well...yes...

CATHERINE

Can't we do any more?

RONDA

But Catherine, we're not nurses or anything.

BERNADINE

We come to the hospital to...to provide some cheer.

DOCTOR

Yes, the patients so appreciate the monthly visits from the Ladies of Mercy.

TOMASSA

(Aside to CATHERINE)

The reason the doctor is so appreciative and is fawning all over us is that we also donate money. That's the real reason for the visit. The towels are a ceremony.

(CATHERINE still looks around in a searching manner. She finally lays her towel on an empty bed.)

DOCTOR

Is something wrong, Madame Adorno?

CATHERINE

(She does not speak in a condemning or self-righteous manner. But honestly and charitably.)

These other beds. Why are they empty?

DOCTOR

We should be thankful that they are not all full.

CATHERINE

Not when there are so many sick people who need help.

DOCTOR

But Madame...what...how...?

CATHERINE

What are you asking?

RONDA

What are *you* asking, Catherine?

CATHERINE

I'm simply asking why there are not more patients here.

BERNADINE

How do you expect the hospital to go about collecting more patients?

CATHERINE

By going about and collecting more patients.

DOCTOR

What?

BERNADINE and RONDA

What?

CATHERINE

The streets of Genoa have plenty of sick and suffering and dying people. The only reason they are not in the hospital is that they are poor. We pass them every day and we look the other way.

DOCTOR

But Madame, it would be very costly for us to take in all those people.

CATHERINE

It costs us more to let people die when God has given us the opportunity to help them. We have no work to do here until we first do the work in the streets. We must go and look everywhere and find those who need help.

(The ladies look at one another uncomfortably)

RONDA

I think I liked her better when she never came out of her room.

BERNADINE

Me, too.

CATHERINE

Who will come with me?

TOMASSA

(Pauses)

I will, Catherine.

SILVIA

We should...probably...come...too.

(They follow her, wide-eyed and incredulous, as CATHERINE starts to leave. She stops. The other ladies continue to file past her and exit, but TOMASSA stops, too. CATHERINE turns and looks back at the PATIENTS in the beds.)

TOMASSA

What has happened to you, Catherine?

CATHERINE

I have seen something. I have seen...someone.

TOMASSA

Who? Who have you seen?

CATHERINE

(Pauses)

I have seen...myself. I have seen my own heart, and how full of sin it is. But now my heart has been wounded along with the wound in the heart of Christ.

TOMASSA

What...what does that mean?



CATHERINE

From now on: No more wound. No more sin.

FADEOUT