

Canzone

Fiziana La Melia & Christian Vistan



Libretto

by Claire Seddes Bailey

UNIT 17

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Scene: Mattress flick

**(Lover in bed waits
for one who doesn't return)**

**On the budded shelf
a lamp flicks yellow on
and black at night.**

**I left a strand or two
on the fitted sheet.
Maybe fundamentals
of the stain; maybe
a mattress morning.
Anyway**

**I got out of bed and didn't
turn back to make it
Left the sheet exposed**

**Maybe you saw my hair,
maybe you didn't. I wanted
to smell you on the sheets
when I came home, but the calendar
was the size of the bed
and I had to hurry to meet
Miriam for her birthday.
We had coffee in the morning
drinks at night**

**Later I laid on the calendar instead of the bed.
I didn't want to be there without you
It was less lonely to lie there with the squares
and appointments**

**reminders of the friends and people
I was to meet, places that needed
me. Falling asleep, I kept my hand
on the date, tapping my finger
to the tick of the clock.**

**I woke out-of-breath, alarm
singing, and searched and searched
for my handwriting
on the square of today**

**pushing back the covers
every which way.
It was dark and I couldn't see a thing.**

**Then the sun came up a little
and I saw it was the fitted sheet
I was on, I was stained, the calendar
was vertical across the room**

Scene: Wrong Equinox

(Vernal tidings gone awry;

**the beat at the start of the changing tide when
one wave comes in just a little too far, then another
and another)**

**Birds fluffed their chests and flew up and down in
panicked vertical lines**

Cats stood stock still and yowled

**The town's best fortune-teller lay in the town
square and cried**

**Mary-making-soup let her stock boil dry watching
the sun rise and set**

Lois-in-bed pulled up the covers, filled with dread

Astronomers knocked on Church doors

**Susan muttered to Kelly who muttered to Francis,
who wiped her hands on her apron**

The Easter Bunny came and went

**People rushed about, too distracted to notice any
eggs**

Then Easter came and the eggs had gone off

Everyone went for their chamber pots

missed the Church service

"Wrong equinox," Gregory said at last

to empty pews.

Scene: Sleepover in a borrowed bed

**(Friends cat-sit for a friend of a friend,
stain the couch before bed)**

**When they woke, Bea said
she'd dreamt all night of the stain
and went downstairs to check if it had lifted.**

**Fifi drifted. In dream, lifted her head from the pillow
and locked eyes, through the window,
with a teenager mowing the lawn.**

**"There's no one home," the teen said,
turning towards another person in the yard.
"We can be as loud as we want."**

**Bea returned, said the stain remover
had worked, and that another part
of her dream had been friends saying**

**that this one guy had drunk
"4 out of 5 bottles of wine."
The mattress sagged. Between alarms,**

**the cat meowed. Fifi moved
from the dream window to the real window
with shore-rhythm. Linda,**

**whose house it was, said if the cat
makes noise in the morning,
all she wants is heavy petting.**

Scene: Calendar during rain

**(Trenchcoated figure
is watched by other commuters.)**

**He rushes to the station,
umbrella in hand. Long limbs
make diagonal lines against the rain.
One cannot make out his face;
he moves fast and pulls
hat to brow. Fat
droplets splat our**

**lashes, down-casting
lines of sight. Squinting,
we see him run onto
the platform, leap, and
slip between train doors.
Through the train's yellow
window we catch him dripping**

as he reaches for his watch.

Scene: Making the bed

**(Mattress, Fitted Sheet, Sheet, Duvet, Throw,
Pillow, Pillow and Blanket discuss methods for
tracking time)**

**MATTRESS: Think feathers drifting in and out of
frame, eventually piling on one another in thick
rectangles.**

**FITTED SHEET: Blanket of snow, the first
covering-over of surfaces.**

**SHEET: No—look to the turning of orbs, the light
of one day pressed against another, the flattening
and lengthening of shadows on the ground.**

**DUVET: Count. Assign it to someone, decide on a
number, divide the hours to match the names of
planets, ask the clock to tick and count it.**

**SHEET: When the tip of the obelisk's shadow hits
the foot of the bed, a new year starts.**

**FITTED SHEET: The frozen shape of a yard or
stretch of sidewalk, at first light, untouched—the
day snow makes across the city a thousand beds.**

THROW: Easy—flock going south for the winter.

**PILLOW: Foil wrapped around a potato, into the
oven—baking time—and when it's soft—**

PILLOW: Not a potato, a beet—

**MATTRESS: Wind firing fast and slow then set-
tling, kicking up again at new year.**

BLANKET: Hot, cold, hot, cold, hot, cold

DUVET: Night, day, night, day—make a mark each time the sun goes down.

PILLOW: Okay, beet, and when the steam rises from the foil—

SHEET: The orb turns, the shadow goes clockwise, stars get back to the pictures they were making last year.

PILLOW: When the root gets round, red, and hard below, and the leaves big and green above.

THROW: Two holidays, one for the flock going south; the other for its return.

BLANKET: Hot, cold, hot, cold, light

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