

Scene I.i.

[In the study of the house HENRY CAREY owns for EMILIA BASSANO and his London work. The study is Emilia's space, but HENRY really owns everything in it—including her. The back wall is a massive bookshelf filled with books. There is a small couch and side table and a large, wooden desk with a throne-like chair. Up right is the entrance to the study. Up left is the entrance into the rest of the house. The room has a sense of home and comfortability.]

Lights up on them at her desk, littered with papers and books. Everywhere you look, there is paper, crumpled and fresh. Stuffed in the couch, covering her desk, surrounding the desk. HENRY sits in the throne-like chair behind it, with EMILIA peering anxiously over his shoulder. He is reading an early excerpt of her future book of poetry – unfinished. This is a common routine for them. They read in silence for a minute, then...]

HENRY. *[Reads out loud.]* “You came into the world with our pain. Why should you disdain our being equals, free from your tyranny...”

[EMILIA smiles, proud, while HENRY shakes his head.]

Emilia, no man would ever wish to read this. It is far too...

EMILIA. Authoritative?

HENRY. Men-hating.

EMILIA. *[Groans.]* Men are far too sensitive when there is an insinuation of a lady on top, free to think poorly of men.

HENRY. You, my dear, are no lady. *[Attempts to joke, but he is really not a funny man.]* And I quite like you on top.

EMILIA. *[Ignores him.]* I am saying nothing that has not already been said by others.

[Draws herself up.]

Besides, I am not writing for men.

HENRY. *[Defending his opinion. Points to poem.]* This is not only incendiary and highly inappropriate, it is downright blasphemous.

[She moves to look at the papers she's written over his shoulder.]

EMILIA. How so? I do not mention God.

HENRY. You might as well have. The insinuation is obvious.

EMILIA. *[Scoffs and moves away.]* I mention men – not God. Believe me, there *are* differences between the two.

[He sighs at her antics. Lays the papers down.]

HENRY. No one would read this, regardless of which gender you are over-glorifying.

EMILIA. *[Turns to face him. Indignant.]* Women would.

HENRY. *[Stating the obvious.]* Women cannot.

[EMILIA turns away, annoyed.]

[With finality.] I encourage your writings. I always have. I find your passionate and overzealous political comments endlessly amusing – when it is done privately. This would only embarrass us both if I were to bring this anywhere.

EMILIA. *[Miffed.]* Well, it is not yet finished – so do not dismiss us yet. This is no different than the last piece you took to court.

[She yanks the papers from the table and goes to move away from the desk. He leans back in his chair and grabs her skirt, pulling her into his lap. She does not fight the move but is not very happy about it either. This is practically her job.]

HENRY. Come now. Do not be cross with me.

[He nuzzles her neck, trying to start something.]

EMILIA. *[Shortly.]* When must you leave? You have stayed here for a fortnight. Surely your wife is getting lonely.

HENRY. *[Sighs with male frustration.]* Now, I suppose...

[He pushes her not-so-gently off his lap and stands. She adjusts her skirts and does not meet his eyes.]

...if reading is all we are to accomplish today. *[He sighs.]* I have plans for the evening anyways.

EMILIA. *[Not bitterly.]* With your wife.

HENRY. No, I am with Lizzie this evening.

[He crosses to a traveling coat.]

EMILIA. Oh. Send her my love.

HENRY. *[Scoffs.]* I will do no such thing.

EMILIA. Why not?

[She turns to look at him.]

Elizabeth has always adored me.