

VINE LEAF

Original Short Screenplay

by

Helio J. Cordeiro & Si Dunn

Helio J Cordeiro (WGGB #3020)

hjcordeiro@hotmail.com

Si Dunn

Sidunn@hotmail.com

VINE LEAF

FADE IN:

EXT. PRISON - NIGHT

SUPER: A PRISON SOMEWHERE IN ITALY

As a siren WAILS...

Two PRISON GUARDS frantically shine their searchlights along the prison's high walls and grounds.

A third Prison Guard runs up to Prison Guard #1, carrying a rifle.

PRISON GUARD #3

What is it?

PRISON GUARD #1

A PRISONER has escaped!

Prison Guard #1 resumes sweeping the walls and grounds with his searchlight. Prison Guard #3 readies his rifle.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The countryside is beautiful and calm. A typical Italian farm cottage sits far back in a field.

EXT. COTTAGE - BACKYARD - DAY

A pretty GIRL, about 10, is playing with a VINE LEAF, tossing it into the air and letting the wind catch it as it drifts down.

Her MOTHER, about 30, is hanging out clothes, including a man's shirt and trousers. She is not watching as...

A MAN in a prison uniform--the PRISON ESCAPEE--approaches the girl slowly. He is NINO BOLLA, mid-40s, a man who has wasted his life.

The young girl suddenly notices him and smiles innocently as she tosses the vine leaf into the air one more time.

Her mother is standing behind a sheet while she hangs up other clothes.

Suddenly, Nino moves quickly toward the Girl.

The Girl stops playing and looks afraid.

GIRL

MOM!

Her Mother pushes the sheet aside and instantly is terrified.

EXT. COTTAGE - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

As laundry FLAPS in the breeze...

And the Vine Leaf flutters upward, caught in an updraft...

There are SCREAMS from the Girl and her Mother.

Then, the only sound is of the wind FLAPPING and SNAPPING the sheet.

The man's clothing has disappeared from the clothesline.

EXT. COTTAGE - BACKYARD - LATER

One POLICEMAN covers the bodies while a second POLICEMAN writes down some notes.

Prisoner's clothes are crumpled on the ground, next to the two bodies.

EXT. CEMETERY - ANOTHER DAY

Several MOURNERS dressed in black are praying near two open graves. A PRIEST leads the prayer.

There are two coffins: a full-sized one and a smaller one!

A tearful OLD WOMAN is holding a black-and-white photograph. It is a picture of the young girl, smiling as if still alive.

As the prayer continues, the Vine Leaf flutters down from the air and lands softly on the top of the little coffin. It lies there for just a brief moment. Then a sudden gust of wind blows it upwards again.

The Vine Leaf disappears into the blue sky as...

The first shovel of sand drops onto the Girl's coffin.

EXT. VILLAGE - LATER

A scorching sun looms over a grim, isolated village. The village is surrounded by vineyards. The only sounds are of the wind and some birds flying overhead.

Several Women dressed in black are walking through the narrow streets, saying nothing as they pass...

EXT. TAVERN - DAY

A weathered and time-worn tavern.

A shepherd guides his sheep along the road in front of the tavern, going the opposite way.

INT. TAVERN - DAY

The TAVERN-KEEPER, a big man in his sixties wearing a beret, stands with his back to the tavern's front door. He is busy organizing some bottles of wine on the shelf.

The front door opens. A shadow spreads across the floor.

The Tavern-keeper turns to see who is coming in.

Nino, dressed in the stolen clothes, moves toward the bar. The stolen clothes are short and ill-fitting.

INT. TAVERN - MINUTES LATER

A trail of red drops appears on the floor.

The Tavern-keeper is carrying a saucepan filled with a red *Pomodoro* sauce and a big plate of steaming macaroni.

He puts the food down on a table, in front of Nino.

Nino is ravenously hungry. He eats quickly, gorging himself with the food. Wine is served, and he gulps it with no manners.

INT. TAVERN - LATER

Nino has finished eating. His table is a complete mess. He has consumed several bottles of wine.

Nino BELCHES.

The Tavern-keeper watches Nino with contempt as he cleans his bar counter.

INT. TAVERN - UPSTAIRS ROOMS/CORRIDOR - DUSK

The Tavern-keeper goes upstairs. Nino follows him.

They walk along a narrow corridor and stop in front of a door.

The Tavern-keeper opens the door and hands Nino a key.

The Tavern-keeper sees handcuff marks on Nino's wrist!

Nino doesn't waste any time. He slips inside and quickly closes the door in the Tavern-keeper's face.

EXT. BIG HOUSE - NIGHT

The Vine Leaf floats down and lands atop an iron gate outside the biggest house in the village. The Vine Leaf quivers slightly in the gentle night breeze.

An old truck and a big, black car from the Fifites are parked in front of the house.

INT. BIG HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A large dinner is being held in a family dining room.

At one end of a large dining table is DON GENNARO FOGLIA DI VITE, a fiftyish tub of lard. He is stuffing his face with gusto.

Two large THUGS--one is muscular and the other is tall, stand beside him silently, awaiting his orders.

Don Gennaro finishes chewing and tells the Thugs:

DON GENNARO

Okay, get them all to the party!

The Muscular Thug and Tall Thug leave the dining room quickly.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The two Thugs join up with a third Thug, who's short. They run toward the street.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

They stop in front of a small house. One of them bangs hard on the door. They pull out their guns.

The door opens. The three Thugs force their way in. Seconds later they exit, holding a SMALL, FRIGHTENED MAN by his arms and the scruff of the neck.

A WOMAN follows them out, desperately crying out his name.

WOMAN

SERGIO!

INT. ANOTHER HOUSE - NIGHT

A FAT MAN is snoring. Someone BANGS at the door. The Fat Man wakes up and gets out of bed, afraid. The BANGING is heard again. Now the door CRASHES IN.

The three Thugs enter the Fat Man's bedroom and advance toward him as he tries to hide.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - NIGHT

DOGS are BARKING loudly as...

The three Thugs keep their guns on the Small Man, the Fat Man and seven other Men as they walk beneath the glow of a streetlight. At the end of the street, the Thugs and their

nine CHOSEN MEN disappear into the darkness.

INT. TAVERN - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nino is snoring and sleeping in the stolen clothes. He is dreaming.

EXT. COTTAGE - BACKYARD - DAY (DREAM SEQUENCE)

The Young Girl tosses the Vine Leaf into the air. It goes up, and up, and up, seemingly forever as Nino watches.

INT. TAVERN - BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT TIME)

Nino suddenly wakes up, looking shaken. He pulls a knife under his pillow and hurries out of the room.

INT. TAVERN - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The Tavern-keeper is polishing a glass when Nino arrives. Nino holds his knife and approaches the Tavern-keeper. But the Tavern-keeper's dog GROWLS.

Nino hides the knife.

TAVERN-KEEPER

You must leave.

NINO

For what?

TAVERN-KEEPER

We all must leave. Don Gennaro's having a party tomorrow.

NINO

Don Gennaro?

TAVERN-KEEPER

Yes, Don Gennaro Foglia Di Vite. The king of wine!

NINO

Tomorrow?

TAVERN-KEEPER

Tomorrow night...

NINO

Where?

TAVERN-KEEPER

Here. But you'll have to leave! Nobody can stay, not even me. When the Chosen Ones arrive, we will have to be away from here.

NINO

And miss the party? Not me!

TAVERN-KEEPER

The party is only for the
selected people. The Chosen!

NINO

Fuck off! I'm one of them!

Nino grabs two bottle of wine and heads upstairs. The Tavern-keeper does not try to stop him.

TAVERN-KEEPER

Leave as soon as you can! I'm
warning you.

Nino ignores him.

INT. TAVERN - MAIN ROOM - MORNING

Nino enters the tavern, hiding his knife behind his back.

INT. TAVERN - LATER

Once again, there is a trail of red drops on the floor...

Nino comes out of the kitchen with a saucepan, spilling red
Pomodoro sauce.

He eats the macaroni and the sauce.

The tavern is empty. The Tavern-keeper has fled. His dog also
is gone.

INT. WINE CELLAR - LATER

Nino climbs down into the tavern's wine cellar and carefully
closes the door.

As he looks through the bottles of wine, the floorboards
above him suddenly CREAK. There is the sound of FOOTSTEPS.

Nino stops and waits, trying to not make a sound.

When it is quiet again. Nino grabs a bottle of wine and
crawls behind some bags of potatoes. He soon falls asleep.

EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

The old truck that was seen in front of Don Gennaro's house
now approaches and parks in front of the tavern.

INT. TAVERN - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The front door opens. The nine Chosen Men enter, guarded by
Don Gennaro's three Thugs.

Each of the Chosen has a Vine Leaf stuck to his chest, a badge of identity.

The nine Men look frightened.

Suddenly, a dozen WOMEN file through the front door. PROSTITUTES. They walk toward the Chosen.

INT. WINE CELLAR - NIGHT

Nino is awakened by MUSIC and NOISE upstairs.

He opens the wine cellar's door just slightly and peers out, looking amazed.

The Chosen, the Prostitutes and two of Thugs are all enjoying themselves, eating, drinking and dancing, while the Short Thug glumly stands guard.

INT. TAVERN - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Nino, unnoticed, climbs out of the wine cellar carrying two bottles of wine.

Nino hands the bottles to one of the Chosen, who looks startled. Quickly, Nino grabs one of the Prostitutes and starts kissing her and tearing off her clothes.

The Short Thug suddenly notices Nino and sees that he isn't wearing a Vine Leaf. He pulls his gun and moves towards Nino.

Nino is kissing the Prostitute and trying to force her to the floor. The Short Thug pulls him off of her.

NINO

What?

SHORT MAN

Hey *pesce*. Your vine leaf. Where is your vine leaf?

NINO

Vine what?

The Short Thug aims his gun at Nino's head.

Nino quickly looks at some of the Chosen and sees the vine leaves pinned to their shirts.

Frantically, Nino tries to act as if he had a vine leaf.

NINO

I've lost mine!

SHORT THUG

(to the other two Thugs)

Hey, guys, this *pesce* says he lost his vine leaf!

The party stops. Everyone stares at Nino.

Nino closes his eyes, obviously fearing he is about to die.

The Short Thug pulls Nino over to the Muscular Thug and the Tall Thug. They push Nino down onto a chair. As they WHISPER among themselves, obviously confused..

The Vine Leaf flutters in through an open window and lands softly on Nino's lap.

The Short Thug turns to Nino, about to shoot him, but stops when he sees the Vine Leaf on Nino's lap.

SHORT MAN

This bastard was joking with us.
Here's his vine leaf!

Nino opens his eyes and sees, to his amazement, that there really is a vine leaf on his lap.

NINO

(surprised)

Oh, shit! See? I didn't lose it.

The Short Thug grins and slaps Nino's back.

Nino sticks his leaf on his chest.

The party resumes.

INT. TAVERN - MAIN ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The three Thugs wake up the Chosen, one by one. They are all seem exhausted. The Prostitutes already have gone. Now the Thugs wake up Nino.

The Thugs guide the ten men out of the tavern.

EXT. TAVERN - EARLY MORNING

The old truck is still parked in front of the tavern. The Chosen and Nino climb into the back.

NINO

Where are we going now?

One of the Chosen answers sadly, bitterly.

CHOSEN #1

We are going to receive an
honor. The Vine Leaf honor.

NINO

Great!

Chosen #1 gives him a strange look but says nothing.

The old truck drives away from the tavern.

EXT. SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE - LATER

The truck arrives at an isolated spot in the countryside.

The Chosen Men get out.

The three Thugs march the ten Men, including Nino, toward a big hole that has been freshly dug in the ground. The Thugs line up the men at the edge of the big hole, facing away from it.

Nino whispers to another one of the Chosen.

NINO

Hey, buddy. What's this for?

CHOSEN #2

You'll see. Or maybe you won't.

His bitter, ironic tone is lost on Nino.

A car arrives. Don Gennaro Foglia Di Vite gets out and walks toward the line of men.

He stops close to them and eyes them one by one. He stops in front of Nino and stares at him with a gloomy expression.

Nino smiles at him.

Don Gennaro appears puzzled. His face shows he is trying to remember who Nino is. He looks at the vine leaf stuck to Nino's clothes.

Nino continues smiling.

Don Gennaro shrugs up and moves forward. He turns his back to the men, raises his arms and exclaims loudly.

DON GENNARO

Dear God, you have been merciful with me until now. Please see what I am about to do as a form of gratitude. I have given these men the greatest moment of their lives. Good wine, good food and good women! You see how good-hearted I am. When they arrive up there beside You, they will say "Don Gennaro Foglia Di Vite is a good man, God! Forgive him when he dies!" This is why I am giving them the Foglia Di Vite's family symbol. It represents our fortune. They all betrayed me, but I am letting them die with honor.

(crossing himself)

Amen!

THE THUGS
(crossing themselves)

Amen!

The other Men wearing Vine Leaves also cross themselves.

NINO
(finally understanding)

What?

Some of the Chosen turn to Nino with a surprised look.
Don Gennaro looks irritated.

NINO
What did you say about dying?

The Thugs look at Don Gennaro, awaiting his order.
Don Gennaro nods to them and gets into his car. He leaves
without looking back.

The Thugs take out their guns.

The others wearing Vine Leaves grow silent and look down at
the ground.

Nino stares at the guns.

NINO
(to the Thugs)
Hey, it's a big mistake! I'm not
supposed to be here!

He pulls off his Vine Leaf and tosses it aside. The Vine Leaf
catches the wind and flutters upward.

The Thugs point their guns at Nino and the other Men.

NINO
What the fuck are you doing?

They open FIRE.

All of the Chosen Men, and Nino, drop dead into the hole.

IN THE HOLE

The Vine Leaf flutters down and comes to rest on Nino's
crumpled body.

It stays in place and is covered when the first shovel of
sand lands on Nino's corpse.

FADE OUT.

THE END