

THE SPEAR CARRIER ©

by

Alec Cuddeback

FADE IN:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Cramped. In near-darkness. A tiny lamp on a dressing table provides the only illumination.

Small cracked table mirror. Stage makeup jars and powder.

The shadowy figure of ELDERLY TITO, sits at the table.

A knock at the door.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Ten minutes.

ELDERLY TITO

Okay.

Elderly Tito operates a laptop computer on the table. A website appears: "Opera Arias Without Voice."

He clicks on a selection.

A solo OBOE does the melancholy introduction to the aria "Una Furtiva Lagrima." The melody echoes off cement walls.

Elderly Tito sings along with the orchestral accompaniment.

INT. BERNARDI APARTMENT/PARLOR - DAY

Dark, heavy curtains block out the sun's rays.

An old phonograph PLAYS a recording of Mario Lanza, who sings "Una Furtiva Lagrima," the identical aria from the previous scene.

MARIA BERNARDI, attractive brunette, late-20s, relaxes in a rocking chair.

Maria listens, in a sad, dreamlike state.

She sighs, trudges to a window, and parts the curtains.

SUPER: "South Philadelphia - 1959."

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - DAY

Late afternoon. CHILDREN play stickball in the street. Dodge traffic as they run.

Maria leans out the open window of her old, five-story apartment building. She has an Italian accent.

MARIA

Tito! Tito Bernardi! Vieni! Papa
almost home! Come inside!

YOUNG TITO BERNARDI, 8, dark-hair, joins with the youngsters who play stickball.

He stops, glances up at Maria, and smiles.

YOUNG TITO

Si, Mama!

INT. BERNARDI APARTMENT/PARLOR - DAY

Little Tito enters.

He runs to his mother. They embrace.

A tear falls from Maria's eye and runs down her cheek.

She lifts Tito into her arms. Resumes her position in the rocking chair, with Tito on her lap.

Maria sighs. They both listen to Lanza. Tito smiles.

MARIA

Your uncle Carlo had such a voice.
You have talent in your family,
Tito. And brains to go far in this
country. If you try hard.

YOUNG TITO

Si, Mama. I try.

Maria continues to hold Tito and rocks him, back and forth.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - DAY

PIETRO BERNARDI, 30. a swarthy, powerfully-built man in dirty overalls, walks up the sidewalk.

Pietro lumbers from side to side, takes a gulp from a wine bottle he holds.

An angry scowl etched on his face, PEOPLE clear out of his way when he approaches them.

INT. BERNARDI APARTMENT/PARLOR - DAY

Pietro swaggers into the Bernardi apartment. Frowns and gives Maria and Tito a dirty look.

Maria hurries to the record player and stops it.

Pietro finishes the wine and stumbles into the kitchen.

Maria and Tito cringe. A beat.

Pietro emerges from the kitchen with another wine bottle. He glares at Maria and Tito.

PIETRO

Eh?! Why you so sad about?

MARIA

Mario Lanza die today, in Roma.

PIETRO

Ha! Good! I glad. Then, maybe no more record, eh Maria?

Pietro snatches the Lanza record off the phonograph. He smashes it against a table. It shatters.

PIETRO

And, maybe you no fill up my son's head with the dreams.

MARIA

Tito is my son, too, Pietro.

PIETRO

Basta!

He slaps Maria across the face with the back of his hand. She sprawls to the floor.

Tito's eyes widen. He helps his mother to her feet.

YOUNG TITO

Anselmo's papa says in America, you can be anything you want. Even President.

PIETRO

Anselmo's papa is fool. When you older, you work with me in mill.

MARIA

I want something better for my son. This is why we come to America.

PIETRO

Hmmph. It worse than in Napoli.

YOUNG TITO

Don't worry, Papa. I make you proud of me.

PIETRO

Ha. I no hold my breath, okay, mama's boy?

Pietro takes a swig from the wine bottle. He manages to stagger into the bedroom.

Both Maria and Tito heave sighs of relief.

MARIA

Go ahead and dream, Tito.

Maria hugs Tito. He kisses his mother.

EXT. NEW YORK METROPOLITAN OPERA - NIGHT - STOCK FOOTAGE

The old New York Metropolitan Opera. The Met.

SUPER: "Metropolitan Opera, New York"

EXT. MET OPERA ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Maria stands on the steps, by the entrance doors. She holds onto Tito's hand.

YOUNG TITO

I'm happy we are Americans, Mama.

MARIA

Si, Tito. But never forget, you are Italiano also. Always.

INT. MET OPERA - NIGHT

Dazzling. Lights. Glitter. Glamor. MEN and WOMEN in suits and evening gowns.

Maria and Tito watch the performance from high in the balcony section.

In the orchestra pit, the CONDUCTOR lifts his baton.

Transfixed, Tito's eyes sparkle. The music, SINGERS, and the moment fascinate him.

INT. BERNARDI APARTMENT/PARLOR - NIGHT

Pietro sprawls on a chair, drunk.

Maria enters with Tito and YOUNG ANNA, 2, wrapped in heavy baby clothes.

PIETRO

Where you been, Maria?

MARIA

I left a note on kitchen table. I took Tito to the opera in New York. Anna was at Mrs. Macri's.

PIETRO

I no see no note.

MARIA

Well, I show it to you --

Maria starts for the kitchen. Pietro grabs her arm.

PIETRO

I no see no note!

MARIA

Tito, take Anna to the bedroom.

Tito glares at the angry Pietro and hesitates.

Maria nods to him. He leaves with Anna.

INT. BERNARDI APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tito and Anna seek shelter in the dark bedroom.

They listen to SHOUTS from Pietro and Maria.

The shouts become louder. Anna's tiny eyes widen with alarm. Tito forces a smile.

He hugs Anna and tucks her into the crib.

The children flinch, when they hear a SLAP, followed by SCREAMS from Maria.

INT. BERNARDI APARTMENT/PARLOR - NIGHT

Maria lies on the floor. Pietro stands over her. Clenches his fists and sneers.

Tito rushes into the parlor. Maria struggles to her feet.

PIETRO

I know who give children the foolish ideas. But, who put the ideas in your head?

MARIA

I have a mind of my own.

PIETRO

Then, I beat ideas out!

Pietro strikes Maria across the face. She screams.

Tito grabs onto his father's arm with both hands.

YOUNG TITO

No! Don't hit Mama!

Amused, the burly Pietro throws off Tito like an insect. The youngster bounces off a wall.

PIETRO

You think you strong as old man, Tito? Ha! You gotta many years before you strong as me. Know what? I no think you make it. Mama's boy.

Maria helps Tito up.

The two stumble into the bedroom. Pietro laughs again.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - DAY

The Bernardi neighborhood.

Outside the apartment building, TITO, now 17, grown into a handsome, tall, strapping youth.

A skinny teenager, ANSELMO, runs to him.

SUPER: "1968"

TITO

What's the matter, Anselmo?

ANSELMO

I know you like the opera. See, there's this opera company in town. They need extras.

TITO

How much is the pay?

ANSELMO

No pay. But, you get to see the opera for nothing. How about it?

TITO

Sounds good. Sure.

ANSELMO

Be at the Civic Center by noon.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA CIVIC CENTER - DAY

A marquee outside the small auditorium proclaims: "Carter Newman Opera Company - Verdi's "Ernani," 3 P.M"

SUPER: "Philadelphia Civic Center"

INT. CIVIC CENTER/BACKSTAGE - DAY

Tito and Anselmo in medieval soldier costumes. SINGERS, MUSICIANS, and STAGEHANDS crowd the area.

BRIAN GOODARD, a wiry redhead in his late-20s, with gnarled hands, weaves through the people.

He nods to the two boys.

GOODARD

Hi, boys. I'm Brian Goodard. The stage manager. Also, prop man. Carpenter. And, janitor.

Tito and Anselmo laugh.

GOODARD

You're on stage with the chorus right off the bat. If you don't know the words, fake it.

A short CHORUS MEMBER has trouble with a long spear.

Goodard hands the heavy prop to Tito, who smiles. Goodard winks and hurries off.

CARTER NEWMAN, a plump man, 50, claps his hands for silence. Carter sports a posh British accent.

CARTER

Five minutes to curtain!

DOUGLAS PIERCE, 40, a round-faced, pear-shaped man with a large nose, elbows his way through the crowd of performers.

DOUGLAS

Make way for the principals!

Plump STEFANA MONACELLI, 40, tries to work her way through, but can't fit between a TENOR and a SOPRANO.

TENOR

Madame Monacelli, move sideways.

MONACELLI

With me, there is no sideways.

After more effort, The hefty woman pops through.

Handsome ROBERT DILL, 30, follows her.

Behind Dill: squat LUIGI INFANTINO, 45, gorgeous busty DOROTHY DENUCCI, 28, and FRANCES WOODCUTTER, 35, thin but still attractive.

All dress in costume.

Woodcutter turns to Infantino, who wears a heavy scarf around his neck.

WOODCUTTER

Well. If I felt I could not do justice to a role, I would cancel.

DILL

Poor darlin'. You'd have to cancel nearly every performance.

Woodcutter glowers at Dill.

He grins and nods to Tito, who responds with a half-smile.

GEORGE WALLER, 45, slinks in, a violin case under an arm. Behind him, FRITZ WURTZMAN, 70, with a heavy German accent.

Wurtzman taps Waller's head with a conductor baton, like a pesky woodpecker.

WALLER

But, Maestro. It is not my fault the taxi broke down.

WURTZMAN

You planned it. The plot to give me the heart's attack, so you take my job as maestro. I tell you before. You are conductor of company when I die or retire. Not to rush this. Patience!

He smacks the wooden baton over Waller's shoulders and breaks it. This angers the maestro.

WURTZMAN

Dumkopf! See what you do?

Waller shrugs his shoulders.

Wurtzman re-directs his ire at GIUSEPPE VALERI, 40, who stands six-foot-six and weighs three-hundred pounds.

Valeri is in costume and strokes his shaggy beard.

WURTZMAN

And you, Herr Valeri. Is the Italian bear going to sing soft enough so orchestra is heard?

VALERI

I sing like I eat. Big.

A stray CAT crawls up to Wurtzman.

He scowls at the animal and raises his thick eyebrows.

WURTZMAN

And, what is this, eh?

The cat turns its back on Wurtzman and Waller and deposits a long black turd on the floor.

WURTZMAN

So... Another music critic.

INT. CIVIC CENTER/STAGE - DAY

Tito, Anselmo, and EXTRAS in soldier costumes stand in the back row with a dozen costumed MALE CHORUS members. Behind them, the backdrop of a castle wall.

Anselmo's looks like he stumbled into the wrong century, but Tito seems to fit the part of medieval spear carrier.

Wurtzman conducts a twenty-five piece ORCHESTRA.

The male chorus accompanies Infantino.

Tito notices a stage flat about to fall.

About to draw the curtain at the proper musical moment, Goodard spots the wavering fake wall.

Tito thrusts his spear behind the brace. Holds it in place.
Infantino finishes his solo with the chorus.
Goodard closes the curtain at once. The AUDIENCE applauds.
Infantino glares at Goodard with anger.

INFANTINO

Goodard! Why you insult me? The
audience. She's no done clapping,
and you slam the curtain in my
face! Idiota!

Goodard dismisses Infantino with a wave of his hand and
hurries to the stage flat. Tito still holds the flat in
place with the spear.

Goodard pulls out the spear, and the flat collapses.

The flimsy wall FALLS where Infantino had stood. Goodard
places his hands on hips and stares at Infantino.

INFANTINO

Why you no be more careful, eh?

The singer storms off in a huff. Goodard scoffs in
frustration. Turns to Tito.

GOODARD

Gave the spear to the right guy.
Want a job as my assistant?

Goodard chuckles.

Anselmo dashes back onto the stage and leads Tito away.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - NIGHT

Sunset. Tito whistles a happy tune from the opera.

He notices a police car and ambulance in front of his
apartment building.

INT. BUILDING STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Tito bolts up the stairs. He passes a POLICEMAN and a MAN
in a suit.

INT. BERNARDI APARTMENT/PARLOR - NIGHT

Tito hurries inside. Finds his father Pietro in the rocking
chair, opposite two DETECTIVES and a POLICEMAN.

Pietro's chin droops.

MRS. MACRI, 60s, and ANNA, now 11, rest on the sofa. Anna
weeps, and the older woman consoles her.

DETECTIVE #1
Who's this?

PIETRO
My son, Tito.

DETECTIVE #2
There's been an accident, boy.

TITO
Accident? Where's Mama?

PIETRO
She fall down steps.

DETECTIVE #2
Your mother's dead, son.

TITO
What? No. It's a lie!

DETECTIVE #1
Your mom and dad had an argument.
She ran out and fell down the
stairs.

TITO
Mama? Dead?

DETECTIVE #1
I think we have the facts pretty
much in hand. Probably won't
trouble you again. I'm sorry, Mr.
Bernardi.

The lawmen leave the room.

Mrs. Macri consoles Tito. Pietro glares at her.

The woman strokes Anna's hair. Rises from the couch and
exits the apartment in a hurry.

Anna runs to Tito. Buries her head in his chest and cries.
Tito glowers at Pietro.

PIETRO
What you look at?

TITO
She never fell down the stairs.
You pushed her... You murderer.

PIETRO
Watch how you talk, mama's boy.

Pietro bursts out of the chair. Fumes with anger.

He advances toward Tito and Anna.

PIETRO

Only... Your mama. She dead. So,
you no mama's boy no more. Come to
work in mill everyday, like me. No
more school. No stupid dreams.

Tito's rage grows. He takes a step toward Pietro.

The two stand face-to-face. Tito's clenches his fists.

ANNA

Tito, no.

PIETRO

You think to fight papa? You still
only seventeen. Maybe you tall...
But, it take more to make a man.

Pietro pounds on his own chest with his fist.

PIETRO

It take something in here. And,
you no got it, mama's boy.

Anna tries to shield Tito from Pietro.

ANNA

No, Papa. Please?

Pietro backhands Anna.

The eleven-year-old stumbles back, onto the sofa.

TITO

Bastard!

Tito explodes.

He charges Pietro like a mad bull and butts his head into
the big man's mid-section.

The two hit the wall. Tito bounces off and staggers to keep
his balance.

Pietro falls down, the wind knocked out of him.

He gasps, recovers, and scrambles to stand.

The big man grabs Tito by the collar. Throws him into the
wall, head-first.

Tito crumples onto the floor in a heap.

Pietro flashes a fiendish grin. He picks up Tito and smacks
him square on the jaw.

Tito reels across the room.

PIETRO

Now, Papa gonna show you he still
the boss.

Tito tries to catch his breath.

Pietro grabs him, but Tito unloads a roundhouse right. The
punch finds Pietro's lower abdomen.

Pietro bellows like a walrus. Doubles over in pain.

Tito winds up. Delivers a tremendous blow to Pietro's nose.

Blood spurts from Pietro's nostrils. His eyes glaze over.

Anna gapes in alarm.

Tito throws an uppercut, right from the floor. His knuckles
crunch underneath Pietro's chin.

Pietro's eyes roll back. He keels over. His head bangs
down on a heavy table, which splinters.

Pietro lies sprawled on the floor, on his side. Blood oozes
from an ear.

A beat of silence.

Both Tito and Anna stare down at Pietro's still form. He
doesn't appear to breathe.

Tito reels back and steadies himself with a hand on a chair.

Anna rushes to the fallen Pietro. Puts her ear to his
chest. And listens.

Anna lifts her head and stares at Tito, fear in her eyes.

ANNA

Tito... Papa doesn't breathe...
He's dead.

TITO

Holy mother... I didn't mean to --

Anna and Tito freeze when there's a KNOCK at the door.

MRS. MACRI (O.S.)

Hello? It's Mrs. Macri.

Tito nods to Anna and gestures to the door.

The young girl opens the door to Mrs. Macri, who scurries in
and sees Pietro on the floor.

MRS. MACRI

Mio Dio. What on earth happened?

ANNA

Papa is dead.

MRS. MACRI

Tito... You? I just phoned police.
I heard you argue and fighting. I
was afraid for you.

ANNA

What do we do?

TITO

I gotta get out.

INT. BERNARDI APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tito tosses clothes into a small tote bag at a furious pace.

Mrs. Macri and Anna enter.

MRS. MACRI

You can't leave your sister. It
was accident, yes?

TITO

Who's gonna believe that? Not the
cops. Not after what's already
happened here.

ANNA

I go with you.

TITO

I can't drag you into this. They'd
catch us anyway. By myself, I got
a chance. Mrs. Macri, take care of
her. Please?

Mrs. Macri nods yes. Tito dashes out of the bedroom.

INT. BERNARDI APARTMENT/PARLOR - NIGHT

Anna and Mrs. Macri trail behind the frantic Tito.

He peers out the parlor window.

TITO

They're already here. I'll go out
the back.

Anna gazes at the motionless Pietro. She weeps.

TITO

I'll come back for you, Anna.

ANNA

Please, Tito. Stay.

Tito hugs her.

TITO
I can't. Goodbye, little sister.

Tito opens the door. Turns to glance at Anna one more time.

Anna continues to cry.

Tito brushes away a tear, then runs out into the hallway.

Anna's weeping intensifies. Mrs. Macri strokes her hair and comforts the little girl.

EXT. BERNARDI APARTMENT HOUSE/REAR - NIGHT

Tito descends the final rung of the fire escape ladder.
Jumps down to the pavement.

A POLICEMAN appears around the corner.

Tito breaks into a run.

POLICEMAN
Hey, you! Stop!

The Policeman gives chase.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA CIVIC CENTER - NIGHT

Darkness in the small auditorium.

Tito carries his little bag of clothes.

EXT. SIDE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

A large storage van parks alongside the curb.

Four young MEN take sets and props through a set of double-doors and load them into the vehicle.

Brian Goodard checks off items on a clipboard. Tito approaches him.

GOODARD
Hey, it's the spear carrier.

TITO
Everybody gone?

GOODARD
It's just me. First in, last out.

He takes note of Tito's bag, which bulges with clothes.

GOODARD
Running away from home?

Goodard chuckles. Then, notices Tito's grim look.

GOODARD
Oh, I see. And, where do you
intend to run to?

TITO
I thought I could go with you.

GOODARD
With me? Ha, ha!

Tito's solemn face convinces Goodard that he doesn't joke.

GOODARD
You're serious?

TITO
You offered me a job, sort of?

GOODARD
I was sort of kidding. What's the
matter, troubles at home?

Tito nods. Goodard raises his eyebrows.

GOODARD
Pretty bad ones, huh? Nothing you
can't straighten out?

Tito shakes his head.

GOODARD
Well, looks like we're finished
here. Come, take a ride with me.

Two of the men shut the back doors of the truck. Goodard
gives some money to each of them.

Goodard and Tito climb into the vehicle.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

PASSENGERS scurry in and out of the terminal.

EXT. TRAIN BOARDING AREA - NIGHT

PASSENGERS and REDCAPS load luggage and freight onto the
train. Carter Newman and Dill stand around and observe.

Tito and Goodard walk along the train and reach the group.

Dill carries a score of "The Barber of Seville" by Rossini
under his arm.

Carter eyes Tito.

CARTER
What do we have here?

GOODARD

Our spear carrier from this
afternoon? He wants to join us.

CARTER

I am Carter Newman. Founder of
this menagerie. This is Bob Dill.

Tito shakes hands with Carter, then Dill.

DILL

What's your name, kid?

Tito freezes for a moment. He spots Gioachino Rossini's
name on the opera score.

TITO

It's... Rossi. Jack Rossi.

DILL

How old are you?

TITO

Eighteen.

The men raise their eyebrows in a skeptical manner.

DILL

You sure about that?

Tito nods yes.

CARTER

You are aware, Mr. Rossi, that we
travel all over the country?

TITO

Yes sir. Mr. Goodard told me.

CARTER

Presently, bound for Williamsport.
Then, Erie. Pittsburg... Probably
not return here for several years.

DILL

No family here?

TITO

My parents are dead. I'm on my
own.

GOODARD

You did promise me an assistant.
He could work with me. And double
as an extra.

CARTER

That is for the maestro to decide.
And his sleeping quarters?

DILL

If you don't mind sleeping on the floor for the time being, you can bunk with me.

GOODARD

We can't offer you more than room and board. A few bucks a week spending money. That's all.

TITO

That's not all. There's opera.

CARTER

Smashing. Well, there it is. Welcome. Go with Bob, he'll show you around.

Carter turns and steps aboard the train.

TITO

Thank you, Mr. Newman.

DILL

Call him Carter. Everybody does.

Goodard checks on freight as it loads.

Dill puts his arm around Tito's shoulder in a fatherly manner and leads him onto the train.

INT. TRAIN/PASSENGER CAR - NIGHT

A handful of PASSENGERS in the car, most from the opera troupe. Half of them sleep.

Tito takes a seat beside Dill, across from Carter and Goodard. Dill nods and smiles at Tito.

Woodcutter and Infantino speak to each other in soft tones and whispers.

Woodcutter glares at Denucci, who snoozes a few seats away.

WOODCUTTER

(under her breath)

... bitch...

The huge bass Valeri and the large soprano Monacelli position themselves across from each other. Each occupies a seat designed to accommodate two normal-size persons.

Valeri tilts his head back and snores.

Monacelli grabs a pillow. Covers Valeri's face with it, until the man can't breathe.

Valeri awakens with a great snort. And sees Monacelli, who fakes being asleep.

CARTER

(to Tito)

You shall find a unique collection of characters here. Not merely a group of artists. More like a family, Right Bob?

DILL

Yeah. The Addam's Family.

The door to the passenger car opens. MARILYN CAMPBELL, 25, a pretty redhead, storms through it.

ALBERT CAMPBELL, mid-40s, follows his wife.

Marilyn eyes blaze with anger as she whisks past, which seems to spark Dill's interest.

CARTER

Maestro Wurtzman and I started the company twelve years ago. Several of our troupe have gone on to other opera houses. Even to the lofty New York Metropolitan Opera... Unfortunately, one had to return.

Dill grimaces at this remark.

CARTER

Romances have blossomed. And faded. There have been some six marriages. And one divorce.

He focuses on the Campbells.

CARTER

So far.

Marilyn opens the door to the next car, dashes through, and slams the door in Albert's face.

Albert sighs. Blushes when he realizes people watch.

Witnesses of the marital squabble turn away.

The red-faced Albert retraces his steps and scurries through the opposite door.

After a beat, Dill hands a key to Tito.

DILL

I may be a little late tonight.

Dill hurries in Marilyn's direction.

Valeri chuckles. Monacelli rolls her eyes in exasperation.

INT. TRAIN/DILL'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

Bed turned down. A door leads to a bathroom.

Tito scans a collection of reel-to-reel audio tapes on a shelf, next to a tape recorder.

Tito chooses a tape and threads it through the machine. Pushes a button. And listens.

INT. TRAIN/DILL'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Tito sleeps on the floor. A blanket covers him.

Outside, a man and woman GIGGLE.

A soft RAP at the door wakes Tito.

He wraps the blanket around him and opens the door a crack.

Dill and Marilyn wait in the hallway. Tito hesitates.

DILL
(whispers)
Well, come on kid, let us in.

Tito obeys. Dill and Marilyn enter.

Dill appears a bit tipsy, but Marilyn wobbles back and forth, very drunk.

The teenager spies several unfastened buttons on Marilyn's blouse. Flashes of her bare breasts cause Tito to stare, then dart his eyes away.

Tito's dilemma amuses Marilyn. She smirks.

DILL
This is Marilyn. She's our
coloratura. Marilyn, Jack Rossi.

Tito nods. Marilyn giggles. Dill takes Tito aside.

DILL
Look, kid. Hate to do this to you,
but hey --

Marilyn crawls into bed and under the covers. She seems accustomed to the procedure.

DILL
This gal's hot to trot. Can you
find somewhere else to bunk
tonight?

TITO
Tonight? It's almost morning.

Dill thinks a moment. Ushers Tito to the bathroom.

DILL

Stay in there, okay? Try not to
make a lot of noise.

Marilyn throws a pillow to Tito.

The teenager waggles his head with disbelief and disappears
into the bathroom.

INT. TRAIN/DILL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tito spreads a bath mat on the hard bathroom floor and lies
on it. He tosses about, restless and irritated.

Once he appears calm and settled, the door opens.

Marilyn steps inside. Naked.

Tito bolts upright. Prepares to leave, but Marilyn motions
for him to stay.

Marilyn ignores Tito, plunks down on the toilet, and pees.

Tito rolls over to avoid gawking at her, but, Marilyn
reaches out and pokes him in the side.

MARILYN

Hey? Hey, you?

Tito tries to look Marilyn straight in the face, instead of
at her body.

MARILYN

You think my thighs are too big?
Be truthful.

TITO

Uh... They look okay to me.

Marilyn kisses Tito on the forehead.

MARILYN

You're sweet.

Tito turns his back again.

Marilyn finishes and leaves. Tito heaves a giant sigh.

INT. TRAIN/DILL'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

Dill and Marilyn, underneath bed covers, giggle.

A loud, persistent POUNDING at the door.

Dill and Marilyn re-surface from beneath the covers.

ALBERT (O.S.)

God damn it to hell, open up, Dill!
I know my wife's in there!

The pounding at the door continues. Dill and Marilyn panic.

INT. TRAIN/DILL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tito listens, on his knees, ear pressed against the door.

Dill opens the door and bangs it against the youngster's head with a thud.

DILL

Sorry, kid. I need your help.

Tito wraps the blanket around his body.

Dill leads him into the main compartment.

INT. TRAIN/DILL'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

Dill escorts Tito to the edge of the bed.

He grabs Tito's blanket and pulls it off.

Tito, in jockey shorts, tries to cover himself.

Marilyn, still in bed, giggles.

Albert continues to bang on the door.

Dill motions Tito toward the bed.

TITO

What?

DILL

Get in and shut up. Marilyn, hide under the covers, don't move. Come on, kid. Do this for me?

With great reluctance, Tito obeys. He slides under the covers next to Marilyn, who disappears underneath.

Dill throws Tito's blanket over them and rumples it.

Marilyn reaches up and pulls Tito closer to her. The youngster yelps.

Dill opens the door, and an angry Albert storms inside

He sees Tito in Dill's bed and stops in his tracks.

DILL

Now you know my little secret.

ALBERT

But, I thought Marilyn was --

DILL

In here? Marilyn?

Dill snickers.

Albert, who puts his hand to his head, confused. Tito covers his eyes.

ALBERT

Someone said she was with you.

DILL

She just needed a shoulder to cry on, that's all. I'm sure if you go back to your compartment, she'll be there when we pull into Williamsport. She's probably with one of the girls. And they're telling each other what bastards we men are.

ALBERT

Oh. Yeah, that's probably it --

DILL

So, Albert, let's forget this whole thing, alright?

ALBERT

But, this --

DILL

And, I won't mention to anyone the things Marilyn told me about you.

ALBERT

Things?

DILL

Yes, of course, Albert. Your perverted sexual practices. You know, the Wesson oil, the whipped cream. The gerbils.

This confuses Albert even more. He's about to speak.

DILL

Shh. Don't worry, Albert, your secrets are safe with me. Now, go to bed... Unless, you'd care to join us?

ALBERT

Huh? Uh, no. No!

Albert rushes out the door. Dill watches him gallop down the hallway.

Dill shuts and locks the door.

He pivots to Tito and Marilyn, who pokes her head out from the bed covers.

Tito jumps out of the bed.

The youngster grabs the blanket and wraps himself with it.

Dill hugs him.

DILL

Thanks, kid. You saved my life.

TITO

Now, everyone's gonna think I'm
some kind of... homo!

Marilyn titters, and Dill gives out with a boisterous laugh.

DILL

Look, kid. You know it's not true,
I know it's not true, and
Marilyn... Well, what do you think,
Marilyn? Is it true?

MARILYN

Not from what I felt under the
covers, Bob.

She giggles again.

Tito's eyes bug out. Dill laughs.

After a while, Tito laughs too. He punches Dill playfully
on the arm.

Dill yanks the blanket off and exposes Tito in his
undershorts again.

All three stop their laughter for a second.

Dill points at Tito and guffaws.

Tito grabs a pillow and smacks Dill on the head with it.
Dill snaps at Tito with the blanket.

DILL

Now, get back in the bathroom. So
I can screw this lady's brains out.

The remark intrigues Marilyn, who puts a hand to her cheek.

DILL

Unless, of course... you'd care to
stay and watch?

Tito blushes. Runs back into the bathroom. Slams the door
behind him.

Dill heads to the bed and Marilyn. Crawls under the covers.

DILL

Good kid, huh? Now, where were we?

He and Marilyn kiss.

INT. COLUMBUS AUDITORIUM/INT. WINGS - DAY

Carter and Pierce relax in the front row and overlook the small stage. Wurtzman rehearses the Orchestra.

SUPER: "Columbus, Ohio Auditorium"

Tito watches from the wings. He shows off a full mustache.

Singers perform onstage, in 18th century costumes.

Pierce stands up on occasion to point out stage direction.

Denucci wears a tight, low-cut gown. Her bosoms spill out. Dill can't keep his eyes off Denucci's breasts. He misses his cue.

Wurtzman stops the Orchestra. Glares at Dill, who has a sheepish grin.

WURTZMAN

Why? Why? Why must the
concentration be lost with you,
Herr Dill?

PIERCE

Oh, he's concentrating, all right.

Pierce jumps onto the stage with surprising agility.

He glides to Denucci and points to her breasts.

PIERCE

Can't you do something about those?

Denucci blushes. Crosses her arms to cover her bosoms.

VALERI

What you want her to do? Pop them
like balloon?

Some of the troupe laugh. Pierce glares at them.

First violinist Waller stands up in the pit.

WALLER

Perhaps we could hit the downbeat a
bit more forte, to help Mr. Dill?

WURTZMAN

Sveinhundt!

The elderly conductor hurls his baton at Waller.

It misses him by inches and sticks into the wall of the orchestra pit.

Waller attempts to dislodge the baton. But, it breaks off.

Wurtzman rolls his eyes.

WURTZMAN

Gott in himmel.

Wurtzman pulls out a new baton from a case.

CARTER

May we proceed with rehearsal?
Douglas, Margaret should be here
momentarily. I'm sure you two can
fashion a lace bodice for Miss
Denucci.

Carter jogs through the auditorium rear door.

Pierce turns to Denucci.

PIERCE

At the end of the scene, exit
downstage right.

DENUCCI

Which scene?

PIERCE

Ahrrrrr!

He stalks off the stage. Woodcutter turns to Denucci.

WOODCUTTER

Perhaps you can exchange those cow
udders for brains, Dorothy.

DENUCCI

Frances, you jealous bitch. No one
would want to touch those tiny
pimples of yours you call tits.

Woodcutter shifts away from her.

Dill leans in to Denucci.

DILL

Dorothy, when will you need to...
enhance your voice again?

DENUCCI

You know my needs. It's purely to
help vocal performance. I'll
require your services, probably in
Des Moines. Des Moines, for sure.

DILL

Dorothy, that's weeks away.

DENUCCI

I know you, Bob. You won't be
lonely.

Goodard turns to Tito.

GOODARD

Bob Dill is a great lover of women.
As many as he can get. And, as
often as he can get them.

Carter re-enters the auditorium.

He escorts RENATA FALIERO, a red-haired beauty in her
mid-20s, with alluring eyes and an outstanding figure.

Renata carries a cello case and wears a black evening gown
slit far up the side, that reveals a long, curvaceous leg.

The two reach the orchestra pit and stop.

All eyes focus on the stunning Renata. Especially Dill's.

CARTER

Attention, people! After tonight's
performance, we lose the services
of Irving Feldman. He takes his
cello virtuosity to the Cleveland
Orchestra.

Applause from those on stage.

Orchestra members tap wooden bows on music stands.

FELDMAN, in the pit, rises and acknowledges the ovation.

CARTER

We wish him well. And, welcome our
newest member, Miss Renata Faliero.
A graduate of Oberlin College.

More applause.

CARTER

She has been in the Dayton Chamber
Quintet the past four years.
Renata, please join Maestro
Wurtzman.

Renata enters the pit. Shakes hands first with Wurtzman,
then Waller.

She takes her place beside Feldman. Extracts her cello from
its case.

Feldman notices tiny parallel cuts on the body of the cello.

Renata checks out the men in the orchestra and onstage.

FELDMAN

Miss Faliero. What are those marks
on your instrument?

RENATA

(after a beat)

Notches.

Renata puts the cello in place, between her legs.

She wraps her exposed leg, bare to the thigh, around the
base of the instrument in a suggestive manner.

It stuns Dill.

VALERI

If I only were cello.

The rear door of the auditorium bursts open.

MARGARET NEWMAN, Carter's round, middle-aged wife, barges
in. She is red-faced.

CARTER

Margaret!

She ignores him. Motions toward the doorway.

Three teenage BOYS, short with slight builds, enter.

GEOFFREY, 22, the Newmans' long-haired hippy son, follows
the trio.

A couple of ONLOOKERS enter the theatre.

GEOFFREY

Hi, Pop.

Margaret and her entourage trot toward Carter.

She and Carter hug. Carter embraces Geoffrey.

CARTER

Sorry I missed commencement --

MARGARET

Look! I asked for men. I got
midgets. Costumes won't fit them.

CARTER

Dear wife. Simply take them in.

MARGARET

And take them out when I get
regular-size people?

CARTER

Margaret, such is our lot. We depend on local schools and music teachers for extras and chorus members. It costs nothing. And, relatives buy tickets.

Margaret calms down. Forces a smile.

Carter addresses orchestra and singers. Indicates Geoffrey.

CARTER

My son Geoffrey. A recent graduate from Kent State University. He plans to travel with us for a bit. Until he finds himself.

Geoffrey waves. Climbs onstage and shuffles into the wings.

WURTZMAN

We are now ready to resume the rehearsal, ya?

Carter waves him to proceed.

Backstage, Geoffrey and Tito exchange nods.

The onlookers glance at each other.

ONLOOKER #1

Who wrote this opera?

ONLOOKER #2

It must be Mozart. You know, because of the costumes.

INT. TRAIN/DILL'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

Dill in bed. Tito sleeps on the floor, blankets around him.

Tito wakes up. Gazes across the room.

BEGIN TITO'S ILLUSION

A ghostly apparition of his eleven-year-old sister Anna appears. She holds her arms out to him and pleads.

Tito reaches for her.

The image changes.

To the terrifying specter of Pietro Bernardi.

PIETRO

Hey, mama's boy! Ha, ha!

Tito recoils from the eerie phantom of his father. Sweat drips from his forehead.

He shuts his eyes for an instant.

END ILLUSION

INT. TRAIN/DILL'S COMPARTMENT

Tito exhales a deep breath.

Dill wakes up.

He watches Tito tighten the blankets around him, open the compartment door, and leave.

IN. TRAIN/PASSENGER CAR - NIGHT

Tito wanders in. Empty, except for Geoffrey and Valeri, who play cards.

They glance up.

VALERI

Trouble with the sleep?

Geoffrey sets down his cards in triumph.

GEOFFREY

Gin.

VALERI

Maledizione. Ancor. Geoffrey, you again win.

Tito sits beside the two. A beat.

GEOFFREY

How long you been with Pop's company?

TITO

About nine months.

GEOFFREY

Nine months of opera. Jesus... I like rock and roll myself.

Valeri scoffs at this remark.

TITO

Really? Why are you here, then?

VALERI

He runs away.

TITO

Runs away from what?

GEOFFREY

The bourgeois working class.
Fascist politicians. Antiquated
social and sexual mores... What do
you think of rock and roll?

TITO

Like Elvis Presley?

GEOFFREY

No. Not that crap. The Rolling
Stones. The Beatles.

TITO

Oh.

GEOFFREY

Times are changin', man. Stuff's
happening. Music, politics... Sex.

Tito shrugs his shoulders.

GEOFFREY

You need an education in the
university of life, my friend.

Dill enters. He wears a bathrobe.

DILL

What are you two degenerates
talking about?

GEOFFREY

Rock and roll... Don't get me
wrong. Opera's okay. Just doesn't
have the energy. Rock and rollers
put out a hundred percent. Can you
say the same for opera?

DILL

Let me tell you something, buster.
Singing opera's a two hour workout.
You sweat like a pig. Gut hurts --

GEOFFREY

You make it sound athletic.

DILL

Well, it isn't dainty. I know
singers who shoot out a spray of
saliva when they sing. Like a damn
fountain. You can tell where
they've been by the puddle.

TITO

That's disgusting.

DILL

And, you always worry about something. Worry about hitting a high note. Piss off the conductor, you worry he'll rush the orchestra, when you come to that high note, so you won't hit it right. Worry if your mouth's too dry, too wet.

Valeri waves him off, moves down to another seat and attempts to sleep.

DILL

You got a wad of mucus, want to clear it out. You worry if you hack it up, you'll give yourself a sore throat. If you sneeze, you think it's a cold.

TITO

So, why do it?

Dill leans over to Tito.

DILL

'Cause. When you do it right, singing opera's the closest thing to sex.

This gets Valeri's attention. He gawks at Dill, along with Tito and Geoffrey.

INT. MINNEAPOLIS BACKSTAGE - DAY

A empty backstage.

SUPER: "Ordway Center, Minneapolis"

Two male VOICES SING the Beatles song "Eleanor Rigby", accompanied by a single CELLO.

SINGERS

(sing, O.S.)

"Ah, look at all the lonely people."

Infantino leads Wurtzman backstage. The conductor listens.

INFANTINO

See? They make the blaspheme of this place, with the rock and roll. Abominazione.

Wurtzman leaves. Infantino flashes a wicked smile.

INT. REHEARSAL AREA - DAY

A large room with risers to accommodate orchestra or chorus. A deserted piano fits in a corner.

Tito, Geoffrey, and Renata gather around a music stand.
Renata accompanies Tito and Geoffrey with her cello.

The two youngsters sing "Eleanor Rigby".

Dill admires Renata's beauty.

Singers, musicians, and stage personnel from the troupe hang
out in the room.

Wurtzman enters. Livid.

The performers continue to sing and play. One-by-one, they
notice Wurtzman.

Silence. Wurtzman struts toward the trio.

WURTZMAN

So. You like the rock und roll,
eh?

GEOFFREY

It's our time off. We --

WURTZMAN

Silence!

The conductor examines a piece of sheet music on the music
stand. Sneers.

WURTZMAN

The Beatles... There will be no...
Beatles in this opera company!

GEOFFREY

But, Maestro. This is good.

WURTZMAN

Nein! I decide what is good. Now,
all you. Out. Schnell. All but
you, Herr Rossi.

A nervous Tito stays behind. The others leave.

Wurtzman wanders over to the piano.

WURTZMAN

You was singing high part, eh?
Sing this note. On "ah."

Wurtzman plunks out a note. Tito sings it. Strong. And,
on pitch.

Wurtzman snorts. Examines Tito like a blue-ribbon bull.
Pats the youngster's chest.

WURTZMAN

Ya. Good wind capacity.

TITO

Sure you don't want to look at my teeth?

Tito flashes his pearly whites.

Wurtzman pries apart Tito's jaw. Inspects his throat.

Tito snaps his jaw shut. Just misses Wurtzman's fingers.

WURTZMAN

The wide upper palate. Good sounding board... Youngster, you have got the voice. Use it. I teach.

Wurtzman claps his hands three times.

WURTZMAN

Waller? Here will you be.

Waller appears, like a genie from a bottle.

WALLER

Yes, Maestro?

WURTZMAN

Get on piano. We rehearse.

WALLER

Rehearse? Now?

WURTZMAN

Now. We give the singing lesson.

Waller stations himself at the piano. Stretches his hands and cracks his knuckles. He warms up on the keys.

WURTZMAN

First lesson. The breathing. This is key. Maximum contraction of diaphragm. Expansion of rib cage when we take in the air.

He demonstrates. Tito tries to mimic him.

WURTZMAN

Nein. You push down. Let air out. And, hit off hard palate.

Tito does, and sings a note.

WALLER

Very nice.

WURTZMAN

Silence... Waller. Play this note, at top of scale.

Wurtzman plunks out a key on the high end of the piano. Waller plays the scale.

WURTZMAN

And you, Herr Rossi. You will sing the scale. If you can, ya?

Tito belts out the notes. They soar, with a bell-like ring.

WURTZMAN

Good God. He sings as if he knows not how difficult it is.

Tito repeats the scale. Descends downward. His voice cracks about half-way down.

WURTZMAN

That we fix. A song you must learn.

TITO

How about...

(sings)

"Guarda il mare come bella"...

Waller locates the proper key to the Italian song, "Torna A Sorrento". In sync with Tito, he accompanies him throughout the tune.

One-by-one, others drift in and listen to Tito SING.

Infantino and Woodcutter hang by the doorway.

She turns her nose up, and he wrinkles his brow, as they share looks of derision.

Tito sings well. A loud voice. Too loud. His voice breaks and cracks with a high-pitched yelp.

Infantino and Woodcutter smirk.

Tito continues to sing. The volume of his voice seems ready to shatter the window glass.

He makes eye contact with his audience, one at a time.

First, Tito looks at Goodard, who gives him a thumbs-up.

Then, Tito's eyes focus on two magnificent breasts that belong to Dorothy Denucci. She winks at Tito.

With added encouragement, Tito dares to stare at the curvaceous Renata. She responds and wets her lips.

Dill whispers to Denucci. She smiles and nods. He mumbles to Geoffrey, who grins.

Tito's attention shifts to Pierce. The fussy stage director fiddles with a handkerchief and giggles to himself.

Infantino and Woodcutter pout.

Margaret Newman strolls in with Carter. He hugs her, and they give Tito polite bows.

Dill gestures and points to outside of the room.

Tito nods at Dill. Finishes with a robust high note.

Everyone applauds. Except Infantino and Woodcutter.

Dill whistles. Indicates again for Tito to join him.

Tito receives backslaps, handshakes, and congratulations. Even Maestro Wurtzman salutes him.

The youngster works his way through the group of well-wishers and reaches Dill.

DILL

You got a lady hot for you. It's Dorothy. She wants you.

TITO

She does?

DILL

Better hurry. When she wants it, she's got to have it now.

He leads Tito into the hallway, then points to a room down the hall.

DILL

In there. You got protection?

TITO

Protection? What, a gun?

DILL

No. Protection. Against having babies, you knucklehead.

Dill reaches into his pocket. Places something in Tito's hand and closes it.

DILL

When the time comes, take it out.

Dill shoves Tito to the door.

The young man lets out a slight whimper and enters the room.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

A single light in the room casts dark shadows.

DENUCCI

Come closer.

Tito creeps toward a bare-backed figure, which snuggles on a day bed. The shadow turns to meet him.

Not the sexy Dorothy Denucci. But, a bare-chested Geoffrey. He fakes a woman's voice, falsetto.

GEOFFREY

Ready when you are, sweetie.

Giggles from Denucci, who hides in another part of the room.

The rest of the lights in the dressing room turn on.

Dill waits in the doorway.

Tito opens his hand and discovers what he holds. A midget-size Tootsie Roll candy bar.

Dill's group roars with laughter.

Others from the troupe peek into the room.

They all laugh. Even Tito chuckles a bit. Rolls his eyes at Dill.

DILL

Just a dress rehearsal, kid.

TITO

Okay. I owe you one.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

A train CHUGS away from the terminal. Snow falls.

INT. TRAIN/PASSENGER CAR - NIGHT

Tito relaxes next to Pierce and Waller. Wurtzman sits in front of them.

The maestro holds court. Dill and Denucci observe.

WURTZMAN

(to Tito)

Remember, youngster. No sudden increase or decrease in air pressure from mouth.

WALLER

Excellent, Maestro. Well put.

WURTZMAN

Waller. The remark is totally patronizing... I like it.

He returns his attention to Tito.

WURTZMAN

Too much pressure, tone is shrill.
Too little, it is dim. Dull.

DILL

Dull. Like Des Moines. Right,
Dorothy?

Dorothy blushes. Pierce turns to Waller.

PIERCE

So, the surgeon tells him, "To save
your life, we had to remove half
your brain." Patient says, "That's
alright, Doc, I'm a tenor."

INT. DENUCCI'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Denucci, in costume, takes a seat at the makeup table and
checks herself in the mirror.

She opens a jar of face cream.

Screams and shrieks.

A dead rat resides in the jar.

Denucci backs away from the table. Continues to scream.

Carter and Dill burst through the door. Denucci points to
the jar.

The two men peer inside.

CARTER

Oh, my stars.

DILL

Holy shit.

Others enter the dressing room.

Dill removes the jar. The others react in typical fashion.

GEOFFREY

Gross, man.

CARTER

Alright. Nothing more to see.
Everyone back to their places.

Carter leaves with the others. Tito and Geoffrey remain.

GEOFFREY

Are you alright, Dorothy?

DENUCCI

Yes... Just frightened. I'm okay.
Thank you, Geoffrey.

Woodcutter sticks her head through the door.

WOODCUTTER

Why, Dorothy. Someone said you were screaming about something. I figured you were just vocalizing. Are you alright, dear?

Denucci frowns at Woodcutter.

DENUCCI

If I find out you did this, I'll rip your tits off.

WOODCUTTER

My, my. Temper, Dorothy. You might strain your voice. And, wouldn't that be a shame?

Dorothy charges Woodcutter. Tito and Geoffrey restrain her.

Woodcutter grins and departs.

INT. DES MOINES BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Between acts. Hustle and bustle. Tito and others haul sets and props.

SUPER: "Des Moines Civic Center"

Dill stumbles in.

Underneath the top half of his hunchback Rigoletto costume, a fake hump hangs loose at his waist.

TITO

Here, Bob. Let me help you.

DILL

Thanks, kid... I love Des Moines.

Tito unfastens the top of Dill's costume. Reaches inside. Repositions the fake hump around Dill's shoulder. But, neglects to tighten it, on purpose.

The hump fits back in place, but still droops.

The house lights dim. Marilyn joins Dill. She wears a hooded costume.

Geoffrey pulls the operating ropes and parts the curtain.

Tito snaps the costume together. The hump continues to protrude from the back.

INT. DES MOINES STAGE/ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

The final act of Verdi's "Rigoletto". Set in a riverfront roadhouse, on a stormy night.

Infantino, Valeri and Denucci interact inside the roadhouse.

Dill leads the hooded Marilyn to the window, at a corner of the roadhouse.

Dill's hump lowers.

MARILYN

(whispers)

You're losing your hump.

Dill whirls around to look.

The fake hump twists and slides down. Stops at his chest.

Dill's character sports a kind of cyclops bosom. It sticks straight out from the middle of his chest.

The AUDIENCE cackles with laughter. The opera continues.

The performers sing, and Dill attempts to shift the hump. He maneuvers it around. And down.

Dill's Rigoletto displays the world's largest behind.

The audience howls, giggles, and enjoys the show.

A CHILD turns to her FATHER.

CHILD

Daddy? Is it okay to laugh?

INT. DES MOINES BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Tito and Geoffrey watch from the wings. The music swells to a dramatic moment.

Dill, Marilyn, and Denucci sing. The bass Valeri bellows.

WURTZMAN

Louder! Louder the orchestra! I
can still hear the bass!

Tito chuckles to himself.

TITO

Gotcha, Bob.

INT. TRAIN/PASSENGER CAR - DAY

Tito, Dill, Renata, and Pierce sit.

PIERCE

Stage director tells the baritone,
"If the soprano holds the note too
long, bite her on the lip." So, he
does. Next day, the soprano sends
the director a note. "Can't sing
tomorrow. Have rabies."

A POLICEMAN steps into the car.

Tito squirms. Turns his head toward the window.

RENATA

Jack, how are the lessons coming?

DILL

I'm coming, Renata.

Renata rolls her eyes.

TITO

He says --

The policeman passes him and continues down the aisle.

Tito sighs.

TITO

He says I sing too loud.

RENATA

I hear Maestro pokes you, to get you to breathe right.

Dill leers at Renata.

DILL

I could handle some heavy breathing. And a little poke.

RENATA

I'm sure with your equipment, "little" is accurate.

This draws a groan from Dill. "Ooos" from Tito and Pierce.

INT. SALT LAKE CITY BACKSTAGE - DAY

A 1970 calendar tacked up in the wings advertises "Salt Lake City Music Lovers' Shoppe."

Tito and Pierce study a set drawing on a clipboard. Dill joins them.

DILL

Douglas. Ever have to shout "Bang" when a prop gun wouldn't go off?

PIERCE

Once... I got a better story. "Don Giovanni", final act. He's being lowered into Hell. Damn elevator jams. His head and shoulders are stuck above the trapdoor.

DILL

Huh.

PIERCE

Someone from the audience screams,
"Oh, my God! Hell is full!"

All laugh.

TITO

Bob. Carter said I can have a real
singing part in Denver. A few
lines. Ruiz in "Trovatore."

DILL

Uh uh. It's out.

PIERCE

Out? What do you mean?

DILL

Keep it under your hat. I hear
some rich old bag in Denver wants
to sing "Butterfly". Big bucks.

PIERCE

Typical.

DILL

I guess the company needs the
money.

Tito hangs his head in disappointment.

DILL

Don't worry, kid. You'll get your
shot. Come on, I'll show you
something to cheer you up.

INT. SALT LAKE CITY STAGE HALLWAY - DAY

Dill leads Tito past various dressing rooms.

He gestures for Tito to eavesdrop at a door.

INFANTINO (O.S.)

Disgraziato! Imbecile! Figlio di
cane!

DILL

Infantino. Cusses himself out
before he sings. Every time.
That's how the asshole prepares.

Wurtzman shuffles in and interrupts.

WURTZMAN

Herr Dill. And, why did you not
sing with the others at dress
rehearsal this morning? Something
wrong with voice?

DILL
Nope. I sounded great.

Wurtzman knits his brows, puzzled by the remark.

WURTZMAN
But, you sang not the single note.

DILL
I heard in my head how it will
sound this afternoon.

WURTZMAN
Achh.

Wurtzman covers his ears with his hands in frustration and stalks off.

Dill gives Tito a playful punch in the side.

Geoffrey hurries over to Tito and grasps his arm. Dill continues on.

TITO
What's up?

Geoffrey shushes Tito. Escorts him through an "exit" door.

INT. BOILER ROOM - DAY

Dank. Dark. Dusty. A couple of old folding chairs.
Geoffrey and Tito slink.

Geoffrey plunks down on a chair and grins. Digs into his pants. Pulls out a marijuana cigarette.

TITO
Is that? I'm leaving.

Geoffrey tugs on his shirt.

GEOFFREY
What are you afraid of? Cops?

Tito freezes. Tenses up.

TITO
(nervous)
Uh, no... Of course, not.

Geoffrey lights the joint. Sucks in the smoke.

Cautious, Tito takes the joint. Handles it like a lit stick of dynamite. Copies Geoffrey and takes a deep drag.

GEOFFREY
Singer's lungs. Good.

Tito exhales the smoke. He coughs.

Geoffrey laughs. Tito sits. He hands the joint back.

The door opens.

It's Renata. She opens her mouth and fakes surprise.

Geoffrey hides the smoldering joint behind his back.

Tito and Geoffrey have guilty looks on their faces. Renata smirks at them.

RENATA

Shame on you two. I smelled it on the stairs. You dogs. Didn't even offer me any.

GEOFFREY

You? You smoke?

Renata hunkers down beside them.

RENATA

You think all I did at Oberlin was play cello and fuck? Give it here.

Geoffrey obeys. Renata takes a hit.

TITO

Renata. Is it true about those marks on your cello? That you... That you carve one for every time you... You know?

RENATA

No, I don't know... Say it. Say it. A notch for every guy I, what?

TITO

Fuck?

Dill appears in the doorway. Chuckles at the trio.

DILL

What did I stumble onto? Hell, I smelled that shit all the way upstairs.

Tito coughs. The trio heads for the door.

RENATA

Well, the show must go on.

The three march past Dill. He stifles a grin.

INT. SALT LAKE CITY BACKSTAGE - DAY

Tito's group joins other troupe members.

Carter sniffs the air. Glares at Geoffrey, shakes his head, and leaves the backstage area.

SUPER: "Salt Lake City Auditorium"

Tito clears his throat and hacks.

Infantino studies him. Tito suffers a coughing fit.

Woodcutter whispers to Infantino. His eyes light up.

More members of the company wander in.

Infantino focuses on a YOUNG MAN who arrives. The Italian puts an arm around his shoulder and takes him aside.

INFANTINO

You the one who sing the part of
Parpignol today, eh? You like to
make ten dollar?

YOUNG MAN

Really? They said it didn't pay
anything --

INFANTINO

No, no. I not pay you to sing. I
pay you not to sing.

Infantino hands him a bill.

INFANTINO

Here is ten dollar. Go home.

YOUNG MAN

I've got friends coming to see me.

Infantino gives the Young Man another bill.

INFANTINO

Here, five dollar more. You tell
them not to come, okay?

The youngster concentrates on the money in his hand.

Infantino shoves the Young Man away and grins.

He takes hold of Carter's arm, as he passes.

INFANTINO

Carter. I forget. I take the
phone message for you. Young man
to sing Parpignol. He sick.

CARTER

Oh... Well, it's only one line.
Geoffrey can handle it.

INFANTINO
Or, Maestro's new pupil do it?

INT. SALT LAKE CITY STAGE - DAY

The second act of Puccini's "La Boheme." The set is an open-air Parisian cafe.

Principal singers relax at tables.

Tito dresses as a clown. Gives a nervous cough.

He anticipates his musical cue. Belts out his one line, as loud as he can.

TITO
(sings)
"Ecco i giocattoli di Parpignol!"

His voice cracks badly.

The AUDIENCE gasps. Both Infantino and Woodcutter smile.

INT. SALT LAKE CITY BACKSTAGE - DAY

The troupe, half-in and half-out of costume, mills around. Tito leans against a back wall and mopes.

Woodcutter walks by. Stops. Turns to Tito.

WOODCUTTER
Well. If it isn't Jack Ro... ssi!

She makes her voice crack on the first syllable of his last name. Tito cringes, as Infantino enters.

INFANTINO
Jack Ro... ssi!

He and Woodcutter giggle. Two other troupe members join in and cracks their voices on purpose.

INFANTINO
Ro... ssi!

The four laugh.

Dill stalks in. Grabs Infantino around the throat. Lifts him off the ground.

DILL
Feel like laughing now, asshole?!

INFANTINO
(chokes)
No.

TITO
Let him go, Bob.

Dill obeys.

Carter and Wurtzman stroll into the backstage area and interrupt the altercation.

CARTER
Gather 'round, people! I have
something to tell you!

The rest of the troupe wander in and encircle Carter.

Dill puts an arm around Tito's shoulder and offers solace to the depressed youngster.

CARTER
I have two brief announcements.

The troupe listens with interest.

CARTER
First. Another alumnus of our
troupe has reached the pinnacle.
Herbert Downs is now at the Met in
New York. Second chair bassoon.

Dill reacts with a grimace.

CARTER
Second announcement. Our next city
is Denver, to perform "Figaro",
"Ernani", and "Trovatore."
However. A wealthy patron has
requested to sing the part of
"Madama Butterfly."

The troupe groans.

CARTER
We shall substitute it for
"Trovatore." The lady also
requests only half the orchestra
play. The rest shall have the
evening free.

Orchestra members "ooh" and "ahh".

DILL
Hey Carter. Let's give the old bag
a microphone. Wouldn't want the
piccolo to drown her out.

WURTZMAN
List of cast and orchestra is
posted on wall.

He points to a piece of paper tacked on a wall.

Members flock to it and check the names.

Denucci reads the list. Her eye widen in surprise.

She goes over to Carter.

DENUCCI

I've been singing Suzuki all this season. But, you've got Frances Woodcutter down for the part.

CARTER

Frances asked me. And, Maestro Wurtzman feels you may be too overpowering for the Denver lady.

DENUCCI

Is this true, Maestro?

WURTZMAN

Ah, well... Ya.

Woodcutter grins like a Cheshire cat. Denucci approaches her and sneers.

DENUCCI

Frances, you conniving bitch. Stop sucking up to Carter and Maestro.

WOODCUTTER

Suck this.

Woodcutter gives Denucci the finger.

The hot-blooded Italian explodes into a rage. Yanks Woodcutter's hair back.

GEOFFREY

Cat fight! Cat fight!

The two women roll around on the backstage floor.

The diminutive Wurtzman attempts to intercede.

WURTZMAN

Stop it! Ladies!

Wurtzman becomes a sandwich between the two. The trio rolls around. Pierce turns to Goodard.

PIERCE

It makes one think of two dogs fighting over a bone.

INT. TRAIN/PASSENGER CAR - NIGHT

Denucci inspects her reflection in a compact mirror. Tries to cover up a couple of minor scratches.

Woodcutter has a makeup kit in front of her. She works on a huge bruise on her cheek.

Margaret applies an ice pack to Wurtzman's black eye.

INT. DENVER REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

Waller on piano. Wurtzman presides over Tito. The maestro's black eye improves.

TITO

I don't understand, Maestro.

WURTZMAN

The reason you crack note was the note was in passagio. The break in voice. Where voice shift from chest to head.

TITO

I can hit notes lots higher than that. But my voice has trouble --

WURTZMAN

Trouble not in here.

He points to Tito's throat.

WURTZMAN

Trouble in here.

He taps Tito's head.

WURTZMAN

You worry you not hit note. So sing louder. Too loud! With no support.

TITO

I want people to hear me.

WURTZMAN

They hear you, ya! They hear voice crack, like Swiss yodeler on mountaintop. Sing softer. With support. The voice is big enough not to force.

He whacks Tito on the shoulder.

INT. DENVER AUDITORIUM - DAY

Dress rehearsal of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly."

Goodard, Pierce, and Tito put sets together. A WORK CREW repairs part of the theatre in the rear.

SUPER: "Denver Auditorium"

Onstage, a middle-age FAT WOMAN dresses as Madame Butterfly. Woodcutter as the maid Suzuki, stands by her.

Wurtzman conducts from the pit. The Fat Woman launches into a high NOTE, which resembles a train whistle.

WURTZMAN

Nein, Madame! The voice is not bad, but you must hit notes delicately. You try once again?

The woman nods. Belts out the high note again. The FOREMAN of the work crew advances to the stage apron.

FOREMAN

Excuse me, ma'am. Want to ask you not to sing that note again. My men have knocked off for lunch twice already.

Tito finishes his work.

Geoffrey and Dill enter at the rear of the theatre.

Dill motions for Tito to join them.

Goodard nods for Tito to leave, and Tito bounds off the stage. Geoffrey has a glum look.

GEOFFREY

I'm leaving tomorrow. After that episode in Salt Lake, Pop thinks it's best.

DILL

We're all taking him out for a bon voyage party. Let's bolt. We got two taxis waiting. Come on. You and I gotta be back by eight.

INT. RESTAURANT/BAR - DAY

Lunchtime CROWD of locals, plus several from the troupe.

Tito drinks soda. The others imbibe alcohol.

DILL

I can't believe that fucking Downs. Playing at the Met.

DENUCCI

Bob. How'd you manage to get yourself kicked out of there?

DILL

For what we're doin' right now, darlin'.

TITO

You made it to the Met?

DILL

Right to the New York Metropolitan
Opera House, yessir.

Both Dill and Denucci become more and more drunk.

MONACELLI

Goodness! How much do you have to
drink to be ousted from the Met?

DILL

A lot... My wife helped things
along. Plus, makin' it with the
assistant manager's girlfriend
didn't hurt either.

GEOFFREY

You're married?

DILL

Was. For six years. Got a ex-wife
and two daughters in Louisville.
I'd come back from a tour and find
the toilet seat up. Knew something
was fishy... She was screwin'
around. So, I started screwin'
around worse. Drinkin' and
shenanigans. That got me booted
out of every decent opera house in
the world.

RENATA

You ever get to see your daughters?

DILL

Naw, she's hid away.

He takes another drink. Denucci struggles with depression.

DENUCCI

Let's put some life into this dive.
There's a piano. Somebody play.

Renata saunters over to a vacant piano in a corner of the
bar. Takes a seat and PLAYS.

Geoffrey, Tito, and Monacelli stand around the piano and
listen. The other patrons offer polite applause.

DILL

Buy a ticket!

GEOFFREY

Come on, somebody sing.

RENATA

How about you, Jack?

TITO

You serious? Want me to embarrass myself in front of strangers?

RENATA

Like you say. They're strangers. What the fuck do you care?

Renata performs the intro to the aria "Amor Ti Vieta".

Tito tries to leave, but Monacelli blocks his way. She pushes him toward the piano.

An elderly male CUSTOMER sits with a young, beautiful GIRL. He bends over to the girl.

CUSTOMER

It's a love song. The man tells her, "Your eyes say you love me, though your lips say you don't."

RENATA

(to Tito, as she plays)
Don't try to bring down the damn ceiling. Sing it like a pop song. Like Sinatra. Croon it, man.

Tito agrees. He sings the short aria. Caresses the notes.

Renata smiles. Nods approval to Tito and encourages him. The crowd listens, attentive.

The elderly Customer strokes the young girl's hand. She is charmed by the old gentleman.

Tito completes the aria. Flawless. The crowd cheers. Whistles. Crazy with applause.

A PATRON approaches with a camera. Tries to take a photo of Renata and Tito.

Tito turns his head when the flashbulb pops.

He hustles back to Dill and Denucci at their table.

The young girl looks up at the elderly Customer. A romantic look in her youthful eyes. The man's eyes twinkle.

GIRL

Oh, grandfather. It's so lovely.

She hugs the old gentleman. He responds.

Renata bows to the customers who applaud. She follows Geoffrey and Monacelli to Dill's table.

Dill pats Tito on the back.

DILL
Great job. Now, you sound like a
singer, not a shouter. But, what's
with the camera shyness?

Tito lowers his head.

Dill grabs the nervous young man around the shoulders.
Spins Tito around to face him.

DILL
How come?

TITO
I dunno what you're talking about.

Dill gazes at Tito, curious.

DILL
Don't bullshit me, kid... Your name
isn't Jack Rossi, is it?

RENATA
Bob!

DENUCCI
Don't browbeat the boy.

DILL
Is it?

TITO
(a beat)
No... But, it's Jack Rossi now.

GEOFFREY
How come you gotta use a fake name?

Tito sighs.

TITO
I did something terrible. I had to
get out of Philadelphia. Now, I
can't go back.

RENATA
I can't believe you could do
something that bad.

TITO
Bad enough so I left behind the
only person who really loved me.

GEOFFREY
You can't go back and try to clear
things up?

TITO

Don't you think I'd do it if I
could? I pray to God, one day I'll
be able to.

His friends sympathize. Renata pats Tito's hand and tries to comfort him.

Dill takes another drink from his cocktail.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The sun sets. Tito and the others coax the drunken Dill and Denucci toward a taxi.

Geoffrey and Tito shove Dill inside, then Denucci.

Monacelli climbs in the front seat. Geoffrey sits on her bountiful lap.

Renata joins the others in the rear.

No more room in the taxi, but Tito attempts to squeeze in. The taxi DRIVER helps him cram inside.

Tito presses against Renata, who seems to enjoy the close contact. He raises his arms up to the ceiling and tries to create more space.

The driver manages to shut the door.

RENATA

You okay, Jack?

TITO

No problem. Just like the subway.

INT. DENVER BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Pierce and Goodard check on costumed PERFORMERS who wait to go onstage.

Goodard sneaks a peek at his watch and purses his lips.

INT. DILL'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Renata and Monacelli stand, while Denucci sits.

They watch Tito and Geoffrey try to pour the drunken Dill into his costume.

Dill steadies himself against a wall, with Denucci inebriated as well.

Goodard enters. Sighs and frowns at Dill's drunken state.

GOODARD

Son of a bitch... Bob, I can't cover for you this time. There's nobody here to replace you.

DILL

(slurred speech)

Who's replacin' who? I'm fine!

GOODARD

Uh huh. Carter promised to kick your butt out if he ever caught you drunk again.

Dill hiccups.

DILL

Won't be the first one to do it.

GODDARD

Curtain's in ten minutes. Do what you can to sober him up.

Goodard shakes his head and leaves the room.

GEOFFREY

Any coffee around?

MONACELLI

I'll look.

She hustles out.

Tito and Geoffrey manage to dress Dill for his part.

RENATA

(to Tito)

Go ahead, get into your costume. I'll put his makeup on.

Tito grabs a costume off a hanger. Pulls it over his regular clothes. Renata rolls her eyes.

Geoffrey drags Dill to the dressing table. The drunken Denucci crawls into a corner of the room.

Renata grabs a handful of stage makeup cream and slaps it onto Dill's face.

DILL

Oh, baby. I like it rough!

Monacelli re-enters.

MONACELLI

No coffee.

GEOFFREY

If he throws up, it might snap him out of it.

RENATA

Good idea. Stick your finger down his throat.

GEOFFREY

Me?

TITO

Let me in there.

Tito lowers his finger down Dill's gullet. Nothing.

RENATA

Geez. Didn't even gag.

GEOFFREY

Deep throat.

Renata frowns at Geoffrey.

RENATA

Stand him up.

They yank Dill to his feet. He wobbles.

RENATA

I know the way to take a guy's mind off everything else.

DILL

Ooo.

RENATA

Sorry, Bob.

Renata plants her knee in Dill's groin. Dill bellows like a wounded walrus.

GEOFFREY

Holy shit.

Dill's body stiffens.

He cycles through several false starts, but won't vomit.

He staggers around the room. The others try to stay out of his way.

TITO

Come on, Bob. You can do it.

GEOFFREY

Let 'er rip, big guy.

Dill overcomes the urge to throw up. He belches. The others groan in disappointment.

The drunk Denucci kneels.

Vomits onto the floor.

MONACELLI

Oh, my.

This eliminates the last obstacle.

Dill explodes. Throws up beside Denucci.

GEOFFREY

Coed barfing.

INT. DENVER BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Geoffrey, Renata and Tito adjust Dill's costume.

Dill still looks a bit tipsy.

DILL

Thanks, guys. Renata. I don't know how I'll ever be able to repay you. But, I'll sure try.

RENATA

Shut up.

They push him onto the stage.

INT. DENVER BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - LATER

Tito and other performers hurry offstage. Renata waits in the wings.

TITO

Looks like Bob's okay now.

RENATA

Come with me. I want to show you something I found.

INT. DENVER BACKSTAGE/LADDER - NIGHT

Renata climbs a small ladder. Tito follows.

INT. DENVER STAGE - NIGHT

The Fat Woman as Butterfly and Infantino as Pinkerton sing the famous love duet.

INT. ATTIC STAGE - NIGHT

Tito and Renata enter an attic with a sleeping bag on the floor. And a toilet.

INT. DENVER STAGE - NIGHT

The Butterfly and Pinkerton duet continues.

INTERCUT ATTIC/STAGE

Renata sprawls onto the sleeping bag.

Tito leers at her.

She smiles. Motions for him to join her.

Tito obeys. They embrace. Kiss. Passion erupts.

The love duet on the stage intensifies. Infantino and the Fat Woman sing belly-to-belly.

Naked, Renata and Tito explore their bodies.

The sensual music swells.

Tito thrusts himself into Renata, and she responds. Grinds her hips.

The music builds toward a passionate climax. Flaming fury rises between Tito and Renata.

Everything BURSTS in a tremendous eruption, for Tito and Renata, as well as the opera.

Infantino and the Fat Woman hit the high note. The climax.

Tito cradles Renata.

They cuddle in the afterglow.

EXT. TRAIN - NIGHT

It rattles through the countryside.

INT. TRAIN/CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Denucci observes Dill and Woodcutter, at a door. Dill and Woodcutter kiss. Dill leaves.

Woodcutter enters the room.

Denucci watches Dill walk to another compartment.

INT. TRAIN/DILL'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

Dill steps in. Tito lies spread-eagled on the bed. Clad in his underwear.

He now displays a full beard.

Exhausted, he grins from ear to ear.

DILL

You dog. How long has it been going on? Months?

TITO

Love... is wonderful.

DILL

No, kid. Sex is wonderful. 'Cause that's what you've been having. You're just another notch on Renata's cello.

TITO

She says our thing is only temporary... But, she comes back for more.

DILL

Maybe it's the beard? Or maybe, you're just a damn stud?

A KNOCK on the door.

Dill opens it. Denucci stands there.

DILL

Geez, is it time for me to tune your pipes again, Dorothy? Wait in your room. I'll get there in an hour or so.

Dill laughs. Denucci doesn't.

She pushes on Dill's chest. Forces him into the room.

This catches Tito off-guard. He grabs some clothes and heads for the bathroom.

DENUCCI

(to Dill)

You son-of-a-bitch. I can't believe you fucked Woodcutter.

Dill's face reddens with embarrassment.

DENUCCI

I saw you coming out of her room. Didn't look like you two were discussing music.

DILL

Just primin' the pump for you, darlin'.

DENUCCI

I don't think that will be necessary anymore, Mr. Dill.

She leaves and slams the door behind her.

DILL

I wonder what Marilyn's up to.

INT. TRAIN/CORRIDOR - DAY

Tito whistles, as he heads down the hall. Wurtzman intercepts him.

WURTZMAN

Herr Rossi. I have example. The baby cry all night, but does not lose voice. Singing much like the crying. See?

TITO

Yes. I remember... Hearing my sister cry.

WURTZMAN

Ya, ya, no family reunions... Your voice improve much lately. We have now the emergency.

TITO

Emergency?

WURTZMAN

In Spokane tomorrow, you must sing Rodolfo. Herr Infantino already excused for family reasons. No other tenors available. You know part, ya?

TITO

Oh... Sure.

WURTZMAN

Good. Because, we have not time for rehearsal.

Wurtzman leaves.

Tito's face becomes ashen white.

INT. TRAIN/RENATA'S COMPARTMENT - DAY

Tito barges into the room.

Dill and Renata share the bed, fully-clothed. They kiss, then notice Tito.

DILL

Oh... Hi ya, kid.

Renata lowers her eyes to Tito.

RENATA

I told you it was only a temporary thing.

Tito starts for the door. Hesitates.

He clenches his teeth. Grunts. And sighs.

Tito strides to Dill and slaps his face. Dill sets his jaw and displays a stoic expression.

TITO

You bastard... I need your help.

Dill laughs.

TITO

Luigi's not singing "Boheme" tomorrow. Maestro says I am.

DILL

Wow! Well, that's great, kid.

TITO

All I know is the aria. Some of the first and second act.

DILL

Look, there's time. We'll help you study the rest. You'll learn.

TITO

What if I go into a panic?

Dill grabs Tito under the chin. Squeezes his hand tight, until the youngster winces in pain.

TITO

Hey!

DILL

Goddamn it, I'm not gonna let you blow your chance.

RENATA

Bob!

DILL

I swear. You crack one time. Or, forget one fucking note. And, I'll bust your skull. You'll be more afraid of me than any fucking audience. Right?

TITO

Okay.

He loosens his grip on Tito.

DILL

Let me grab the score.

Dill bounds out of the room.

Tito rubs his chin, then glares at Renata.

RENATA

Jack, I'm sorry... I just didn't
know how to break it off.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Tito sings the aria "Che Gelida Manina" from Puccini's "La Boheme" throughout.

This time, Tito sings the tune without shouting.

A. Renata plucks notes on her cello in her room.

B. Backstage. Renata and Monacelli run Tito through the music.

C. Tito studies, while he eats breakfast in a restaurant.

D. Infantino scrambles into a taxi.

E. Tito in costume, waits backstage with Dill.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. SPOKANE ARTS CENTER/STAGE - NIGHT

The sparse artist grotto in the first act of "La Boheme."
Half-lit. Tito sings to Monacelli.

SUPER: "Spokane Arts Center"

Tito finishes. The AUDIENCE applauds with great enthusiasm.

Wurtzman winks at Tito from the pit.

INT. SPOKANE ARTS CENTER/BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Dill, Valeri, and Goodard nod to each other in approval.

EXT. SPOKANE ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

Tito and others mingle in front of the arts center.
Wurtzman lectures Tito.

WURTZMAN

Watch for cold and damp weather.

WALLER

Yes. It's not wise to go outside
right after singing.

WURTZMAN

Svein! Who gives the lesson now?

He returns to Tito.

WURTZMAN

Herr Rossi. Now, you study even harder. And, sing all you can.

CARTER

That's enough, Fritz. Allow the young man one evening to celebrate.

WURTZMAN

Hmmpf.

Wurtzman turns away. Dill puts his arm around Tito.

DILL

I'm glad I didn't have to beat the shit out of you, kid.

Tito grins.

DILL

One more thing. Get used to having your picture taken.

Tito nods with reluctance.

JAMES CLEVELAND, a 40-year-old in a suit, approaches Tito.

CLEVELAND

You Jack Rossi?

This stuns Tito. His reaction amuses the others.

RENATA

Jack. Your first fan.

Cleveland pulls Tito away from them.

DILL

Hey, what's the deal?

CARTER

Stop! This is an outrage.

Cleveland holds his hand out and motions the others away. He flashes a badge.

CLEVELAND

Back off! I'm Agent James Cleveland. Federal Bureau of Investigation.

GOODARD

F.B.I.?

CARTER

What do you want with him?

CLEVELAND

I said, back off!

They obey and converse among themselves.

Cleveland escorts Tito to a car, parked beside the curb.

Wurtzman takes a defiant step toward Cleveland's vehicle.

WURTZMAN

Nazi.

INT. CLEVELAND'S CAR - NIGHT

The two climb into the back seat. A nervous Tito sweats.

TITO

How'd you find me?

CLEVELAND

How'd we find you? How do you think? The letters.

TITO

Letters? What letters?

CLEVELAND

Don't play dumb with me, son. We know you're corresponding with Geoffrey Carter. We found your letters at his place.

TITO

Geoffrey? What's he got to do with what happened in Philly?

CLEVELAND

Philly? Listen. This guy was dealing dope in three states. But, Pennsylvania ain't one of 'em.

Tito calms down. Takes a deep breath.

CLEVELAND

Did he write you from any address besides the one in California?

TITO

I only got two letters from him. Both from California.

CLEVELAND

Any mention of another place?

Tito shakes his head no.

CLEVELAND

Ok, that's all I need from you. As far as anything else you may have done, frankly, I don't give a rat's ass... I'll talk to the boy's mother and father now. That's all. You're free to go.

Tito grips the door handle.

Cleveland grabs the youngster's hand. Leans in to him. Tito flinches.

CLEVELAND

I liked your singing tonight.

Tito breathes a sigh of relief. Forces a smile.

TITO

Thanks. I appreciate it.

INT. DALLAS AUDITORIUM/BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

A cast list posted on a wall reveals Luigi Infantino in the role of Manrico in "Il Trovatore". Jack Rossi cast as Ruiz.

SUPER: "Dallas Auditorium"

INT. DALLAS AUDITORIUM/DILL'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Dill and Tito in costume. They hear Infantino SING next door. He hits a stratospheric high note several times.

DILL

Luigi's nervous about the high-C in the next act. That's nine in a row he's hit... Somebody from Albuquerque Opera is in the audience. Looking for a house tenor. I almost hope the bastard gets it. He can take Frances Woodcutter with him, too.

TITO

But, you fucked her.

DILL

So what? She's a bitch. And, I fuck everybody.

TITO

If Luigi's so nervous about it, why not leave out the high-C?

DILL

Sometimes, I don't think you know shit about opera. Kid, leaving out a high note is like pullin' your dick out before you cum.

INT. DALLAS AUDITORIUM/INFANTINO'S DRESSING ROOM | NIGHT

Infantino in costume. Vocalizes. He tries the stratospheric high note again. This time, his voice breaks. Again and again. He cracks every time.

INT. DALLAS AUDITORIUM/DILL'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

DILL

Ha! I can't wait to hear him crack onstage. He's lost it.

INT. DALLAS AUDITORIUM/STAGE - NIGHT

A packed AUDIENCE watches Infantino sing his aria. Tries the elusive high note. His voice breaks.

Wurtzman urges the orchestra louder.

Tito enters with the Chorus. They accompany Infantino.

Terror in Infantino's eyes. Tito notes this.

INT. DALLAS AUDITORIUM/BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Dill and Valeri listen from the wings.

VALERI

He has not the high-C.

DILL

He's got one more comin' up. He'll croak like a frog.

INT. DALLAS AUDITORIUM/STAGE - NIGHT

Tito and the male chorus sing. The music builds to the dramatic conclusion of the scene. And the final high-C.

Infantino, his back to the Audience, prepares for the high note. Sweat pours down his face.

Tito hides behind a bulky chorus member, which obscures him from the Audience.

Tito blasts out the high-C. Like a trumpet.

Infantino glances at Tito, bewildered.

The Italian turns and faces the audience.

He mouths the high-C, while Tito sings the sustained note. Spectators explode in wild applause, as the scene ends.

INT. DALLAS AUDITORIUM/BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Dill and others gawk at the scene's conclusion, incredulous.

VALERI

Never I hear Luigi sound so better.

DILL

That's 'cause it wasn't Luigi.

Dill confronts Tito when he steps off-stage.

DILL

It was you, wasn't it? Why?

Tito shrugs.

Applause dies down. Infantino comes in, gapes at Tito in a curious manner, then passes by. Dill stares at Tito.

EXT. DALLAS AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Tito, Dill, and others file out of the auditorium.

Infantino and Carter stand at the theater marquee. They talk with another MAN.

The WIFE of Infantino holds hands with her husband, with three small CHILDREN beside her.

DILL

Look at that. Luigi's got a wife and kids. They actually seem to like the asshole.

Infantino's wife and children hug him.

Carter shakes his hand.

Tito gazes at Infantino's daughter. A little girl, about Anna's age when Tito left.

TITO

(to himself)

Anna.

Tito's remark confuses Dill, and he raises an eyebrow.

The Infantinos and the man climb into a taxi.

Carter walks to Tito and Dill. He smiles.

CARTER

Now, he shall be able to bring his mother and sister here from Italy. He leaves tonight for Albuquerque... You are my lead tenor now, Mr. Rossi.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - DAY

A taxi pulls to the curb.

Tito steps out. He wears a suit. Clean-shaven, older. More mature.

Super: "Philadelphia - 1974"

Tito's old neighborhood. Torn down. New high-rises. Building underway on other impressive structures.

A "Nixon's The One" campaign poster hangs on a temporary wooden construction wall.

Tito peers through the taxi window and addresses the CABBIE.

TITO

This can't be right.

CABBIE

Yeah. Fourth and Euclid. Like you told me.

TITO

But, it's all gone. People used to live here... I lived here.

CABBIE

Where ya been, buddy? They tore down those tenements three years ago. Urban renewal. That's what Nixon calls it. I hope the asshole gets impeached.

The Cabbie reacts to Tito's depressed demeanor.

TITO

I was looking for someone.

CABBIE

A lost love? Hey, I'm your man. I got a friend in the Hall of Records. C'mon. I'm practically part bloodhound.

EXT. RECORDS BUILDING - DAY

An old, impressive structure.

Tito paces back and forth, alongside the cab.

The Cabbie trudges out of the building. Lingers down steps to Tito.

CABBIE

We looked everywhere. Only thing under Anna Elizabetta Bernardi was a birth certificate.

TITO

That's it?

CABBIE

No marriage, welfare history, death certificate. Not even a dog license. But, my pal checked on that lady, your babysitter.

TITO

Mrs. Macri?

The Cabbie holds up an index card.

EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY

A nursing home in the suburbs.

RESIDENTS stroll through the pastoral setting. Some relax on park benches or at tables.

The Cabbie leans against his parked taxi.

INT. NURSING HOME HOSPITAL WING/CORRIDOR - DAY

A NURSE escorts Tito.

They stop in front of an open doorway to a room.

NURSE

Try not to excite her. She had a rough night.

INT. NURSING HOME HOSPITAL WING/MACRI'S ROOM - DAY

The Nurse and Tito enter a room with two beds.

A semi-conscious LADY occupies the first bed.

Tito gasps.

NURSE

That's not her. Here she is.

She leads Tito to an old Mrs. Macri in the next bed. Pillows prop her up.

The elderly woman appears alert.

NURSE

You have a visitor, dear. An old friend.

Tito bends in to Mrs. Macri.

TITO

Mrs. Macri? It's Tito.

MRS. MACRI

Tito?... Oh, Tito!

The old woman grabs onto his arm.

NURSE

She knows you.

TITO

You remember my sister, Anna?

MRS. MACRI

Anna?

She strains to remember.

MRS. MACRI

Anna... Yes, Anna.

Tito's eyes widen.

TITO

My sister Anna. Where is she?
Where did she go?

MRS. MACRI

Anna. She leave, go away.

TITO

Where? Where did she go?

Mrs. Macri face changes to a blank countenance. She smiles at Tito.

MRS. MACRI

I saw your papa the other day.
Your momma, too.

Tito's jaw drops. He turns to the nurse.

TITO

(whispers)

They're both dead.

NURSE

The poor dear makes up stories.
Sometimes, she seems to make sense.
Then, just as quickly, it goes out,
like turning a light switch.

Tito kisses Mrs. Macri on the cheek.

EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY

A tearful Tito reaches the taxi. The cabbie sympathizes.

CABBIE

Bad news, huh? Listen, women ain't
worth it, buddy. Do what I do.
Throw yourself into your work.

TITO

My work?

CABBIE

Yeah. You'll forget about her in
no time.

TITO

I guess... It's all I got left.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A. The name "Jack Rossi" in an opera program.
- B. FANS mob Tito for autographs.
- C. Poster: "Carnegie Hall. Rossi Sings. Sold Out."
- D. Tito visits YOUNGSTERS in a children's hospital.
- E. Records, tapes, CDs of Rossi recordings.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. MET OPERA STAGE - DAY

Rehearsal day. SINGERS and ORCHESTRA.

SUPER: "Metropolitan Opera, New York"

An older Tito walks onstage with an IMPRESARIO, to the
orchestra pit.

IMPRESARIO

Always a pleasure to have you at
the Met, Mr. Rossi... We have a new
orchestra member who wishes to meet
you. An old friend.

Tito scans the musicians at the orchestra pit. His eyes
stop at the cello section.

He recognizes Renata Faliero.

Twice as many notches on her cello. Hair a bit gray. Her
sexy figure intact.

Tito greets Renata, who grins at him.

TITO

Renata. You made it.

RENATA

How are you, Jack?

Tito bends down. They kiss.

TITO

Been a long road. Congratulations.

RENATA

Guess who's in Hartford Sunday night? Carter Newman's company.

TITO

No kidding?

RENATA

Doing "Tosca" at a high school. Are you free?

TITO

I'm afraid I have plans.

RENATA

C'mon. Tell your groupie she has to wait another night.

Tito laughs. A beat.

TITO

Okay. I'll see what I can do.

INT. HARTFORD STAGE - NIGHT

Small high school auditorium. The AUDIENCE occupies fewer than one-quarter of the seats.

Tito and Renata watch a performance of Puccini's "Tosca".

JANICE O'CONNOR, 60 and overweight, takes the role of Tosca. Stereotype of the fat soprano.

A young BARITONE plays the part of the villain Scarpia.

Fritz Wurtzman conducts in the pit. He appears ancient. George Waller remains first violinist for the orchestra.

TITO

I can't believe Wurtzman is still alive. He must be ninety.

Onstage, the close of Act Two. Scarpia's office. Tosca stabs and murders Scarpia, who lies motionless.

O'Conner sets a lit candle beside the "dead" man. Whirls around. The bottom of her dress catches on fire.

The audience shrieks.

The "dead" Baritone Scarpia leaps up, in a bizarre, unexpected resurrection.

He runs to O'Conner and beats out the flames.

O'Conner doesn't appreciate the treatment. Takes a swing at the Baritone.

The sparse crowd howls.

An early curtain mercifully falls and covers the debacle.

Tito and Renata share chuckles.

INT. HARTFORD BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

WORKMEN scurry around between acts.

Carter Newman, fifteen years older, with white hair, paces in the wings.

A young STAGE MANAGER jogs in.

STAGE MANAGER

The boys from the school just got here. They're getting in costume.

CARTER

And, we've had no rehearsal with them. Lovely.

STAGE MANAGER

Relax. I told one of them to watch the maestro for a cue. The mini beach balls are being glued right now. They look just like cannonballs.

Tito and Renata enter with Wurtzman and Waller.

The Stage Manager nods to them, then exits the area.

CARTER

Jack Rossi! Renata!

The two hug Carter.

CARTER

What a marvelous surprise! I apologize for the performance... We are so close to shutting down. Barely survived last month. Playing school auditoriums. Relying on a stipend from that witch, Madame O'Conner... She pays the bills. Struts around like Mussolini. Without her, I'm afraid we fold... Perhaps it's best Margaret is not alive to see it.

TITO

Oh. I'm sorry, Carter.

The Stage Manager rushes back in. Breathless. Panicked.

STAGE MANAGER

It finally happened. Liberatore's passed out. Drunk.

CARTER
Again. Good God!

WURTZMAN
He was already staggering around
stage like wino.

STAGE MANAGER
What do we do? We have no
Cavaradossi for the final act.

CARTER
I shall make an announcement. Go
on in his place and read his lines.

STAGE MANAGER
What? People will want their money
back.

Carter shrugs his shoulders.

TITO
Wait a second, Carter. Why don't I
do the last act for you?

CARTER
But, you sang a matinee yesterday.
No, you must not do it.

TITO
Don't be silly. What's one act?
You took me in. You and Maestro
discovered me. Gave me my start.
Let me do this for you.

The haughty O'Conner waddles up to Carter.

O'CONNER
Mr. Newman. I have suffered the
final insult in this company.
Tonight is my farewell performance.
I'm pulling the plug. Taking my
money with me.

WURTZMAN
Ach. The final nail in coffin.

O'Conner turns to the Stage Manager.

O'CONNER
You. Place those mattresses
properly, you incompetent moron. I
was bruised when I jumped in
rehearsal. Idiot.

She stalks off. Carter shakes his head. A beaten man.

TITO

It's okay, Carter. We'll give them
a third act to remember.

INT. HARTFORD STAGE - NIGHT

Renata watches from the wings.

Carter stands in front of the curtain. The small audience
buzzes. He clears his throat.

CARTER

Ladies and gentlemen. I regret to
tell you... Signor Liberatore is
unable to sing anymore this
evening.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE

You can say that again.

The crowd titters. Carter summons his courage.

CARTER

He has recently returned from
Indonesia. And suffers from a case
of malaria.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE

Looks more like a case of Jack
Daniels to me.

More chuckles. Carter holds up his hands for quiet.

CARTER

However. An alumnus of our troupe
has volunteered to sing Cavaradossi
in Act Three. The world-famous
tenor... Mister Jack Rossi.

The spectators cry out in surprise, then applaud with
tremendous enthusiasm.

Carter walks off the stage.

A beat later, Wurtzman brings his baton down.

INT. HARTFORD BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The Stage Manager leads in six confused, young men dressed
as SOLDIERS.

Five carry fake rifles. The last, a young MAN WITH SWORD.

STAGE MANAGER

Okay, once more. March in, stage
left. The conductor will point.
You, lower the sword. You guys
fire. Then, you wait and exit with
the principals.

MAN WITH SWORD
Principals...?

The Stage Manager leaves. The young men gape at each other, still unsure.

INT. HARTFORD STAGE - NIGHT

The inner courtyard of a castle.

Towers and parapets reach upwards.

A pile of black mini beach balls that substitute as cannonballs stack beside a fake-looking cannon.

On the other side of the set, a small jail cell.

Tito in costume as Cavaradossi, sings a melancholy aria.

A proud Renata watches Tito continue the aria.

Maestro Wurtzman smiles from the orchestra pit.

The sparse audience in the auditorium listens, attentive. The beauty of Tito's voice mesmerizes them.

INT. HARTFORD BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Carter watches from the wings. O'Conner creeps in.

O'CONNER
Hmmp! He's not so great.

CARTER
Madame O'Conner, shut up. That, in case you do not recognize it, is singing.

O'Conner issues a quick inhale, speechless.

She recovers, then glowers at Carter.

INT. HARTFORD STAGE - NIGHT

Tito finishes the aria in triumph.

The tiny audience erupts with crazy applause. Gives him a standing ovation, complete with "Bravos" and whistles.

Renata smiles and claps with enthusiasm.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The Stage Manager and a STAGEHAND come through a wide door labelled "Gymnasium."

They wheel out a trampoline.

INT. HARTFORD BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The two position the trampoline over two mattresses in back of a flat.

The Stage Manager drapes blankets over the trampoline and camouflages it.

STAGE MANAGER

This'll give the old bitch a lift.

INT. HARTFORD STAGE - NIGHT

Tito as Cavaradossi stations himself in the castle courtyard with a JAILER.

O'Conner's Tosca observes from the other side.

The jailer leaves. The reluctant soldiers march in and take their places.

Tito snaps to attention.

SOLDIER #1

Hey. There's two of 'em. Which do we shoot?

MAN WITH SWORD

Hell if I know.

SOLDIER #2

It's called "Tosca" ain't it? Shoot the lady.

Wurtzman points to the young Man With Sword.

MAN WITH SWORD

Get ready, guys.

He lowers his sword. The others point their guns at a very surprised O'Conner.

The stage rifles fire with an authentic BANG!

Tosca does not fall. The Soldiers realize they shot the wrong character. Silent panic.

TITO

Bang!

He collapses onto the stage. The crowd laughs. The soldiers gawk at each other.

SOLDIER #2

Let's get the fuck outa here.

SOLDIER #1

How do we do that? Where do we go?

MAN WITH SWORD

He said exit with the principals.
Looks like that guy's dead. See
where she goes.

O'Conner sings and wades through the final measures. Checks the fallen Tito.

Soldiers trail behind her.

They kick the pile of mini cannon balls by accident.

The disguised beach balls bounce around. Some dribble into the pit. Others bound into the Audience.

Three minor CHARACTERS enter, and the opera continues.

O'Conner climbs the castle steps to the top of the parapet.

The Soldiers continue to follow her.

The three minor characters freeze in amazement, and the Soldiers ascend the stairs of the castle, just steps behind a distraught O'Conner.

She reaches the top of the parapet and pauses.

O'CONNER

(sings)

"O Scarpia. Avanti a Dio!"

At the dramatic conclusion of the opera, O'Conner's Tosca turns her back on the spectators and leaps from the castle parapet. To the character's apparent death.

O'Conner hits the camouflaged trampoline.

It flings her upward.

O'Conner springs into the air, above the castle battlements. In full view of the incredulous, flabbergasted Audience.

The large lady vanishes below the set for a moment, then reappears and vaults beyond the level of the parapet.

O'CONNER

Help!

The pattern repeats, and she continues to hurl skyward again and again.

She rises above the set in various poses. Upside down. Right-side up.

The audience howls in hysterical laughter.

O'Conner kicks and claws the air like a drowning person.

The more O'Conner struggles, the higher the trampoline propels her.

Even Wurtzman laughs.

One final predicament. The young volunteer Soldiers linger onstage, partway up the castle battlements.

They gaze down at the three minor characters below them. Stare at each other. Shrug their shoulders.

The men ascend to the top of the parapet.

They jump off, one-by-one.

O'Conner has company.

She and the soldiers bounce up and down on the trampoline. The crowd screams with glee.

INT. HARTFORD BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Carter tries to restrain himself and fights not to fall on the floor with laughter. Tears flow down his eyes.

He gestures to the Stage Manager, who grins and closes the curtain on the fiasco.

INT. HARTFORD STAGE - NIGHT

The audience applauds and guffaws.

O'Conner tumbles off the trampoline.

She catches her breath, then storms through the curtain to take her bows.

The audience roars with hilarious laughter.

O'Conner shakes her fist at the wings.

O'CONNER

You bastards!

She stomps offstage.

Tito takes his turn on the stage. Laughs change to enthusiastic applause.

He bows. The ovation builds and seems it will never stop.

Wurtzman motions with his baton.

Tito advances to the edge of the orchestra pit.

He leans over to Wurtzman.

WURTZMAN

Act one?

Tito agrees.

He steps back. Gestures to the spectators for silence.
They quiet down.

The orchestra repeats the introduction to the tenor aria
from Act One of "Tosca."

The audience recognizes it and applauds.

Tito waves his hand, calls for silence again. The small
crowd obeys.

Tito sings the romantic aria.

INT. HARTFORD BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Carter cries again. This time, sentimental tears.

INT. HARTFORD STAGE - NIGHT

Renata, Wurtzman, Waller, and members of the orchestra react
to Tito's beautiful singing.

He finishes, and the audience responds with insane applause.
Shouts. Stamps their feet.

Another standing ovation. Tito blows them a kiss. Makes
his way to the wings.

INT. HARTFORD BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The Stagehand and Stage Manager exchange high-fives and
congratulate themselves on the outrageous trampoline prank.

STAGE MANAGER

Victory!

Carter high-fives the Stage Manager and Stagehand.

Tito joins them backstage. He and Carter hug.

Waller escorts the elderly Wurtzman to the wings. They
greet Tito and the rest.

Renata enters. Everyone embraces.

Thunderous applause. Tito grabs a phone in the wings.

CARTER

I am afraid this is the end, Fritz.

WURTZMAN

It was a good run. Thirty years.

A very drunk LIBERATORE, mid-30s, staggers into the
backstage area, clad in underwear.

He hears the ovation. Raises his hands and acknowledges it.

LIBERATORE

Grazie, grazie. Thank you.

He takes two steps, falls, and passes out at Tito's feet.

Tito hollers into the phone, over the applause.

TITO

(into the phone)

I don't care what I've signed.

Give them back their money.

Promise a free concert. Buy back
the damn contracts.

The Stage Manager and Stagehand seize the drunk Liberatore by the arms and drag him away.

TITO

(continues on phone)

Herbert, you're my business

manager, not my wife! Arrange it!

I'm going to sing with this

company, for free... Maybe it'll

take a year... Till they get back

on their feet.

INSERT: A poster reads: "Carter Newman Opera Company Presents Jack Rossi in 'La Traviata', Santa Monica Civic Auditorium."

INT. LOS ANGELES REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

Waller on piano. Carter on the telephone. Wurtzman examines an opera score.

The young Baritone who sang Scarpia in the "Tosca" production, adjusts a music stand.

Beside him, GINA PALUMBO, a dark-haired beauty in her 20s.

SUPER: "Los Angeles"

Carter hangs up the phone.

CARTER

Mr. Rossi just left the orphanage.

When he arrives, we shall rehearse

the end of Act Three.

WALLER

Ms. Palumbo may want to go through

"Addio Del Passato."

WURTZMAN

Ach. She may, may she? And, who

is maestro, ya? I am not the

retired yet.

WALLER

Yes, Maestro.

WURTZMAN

Good.... We do "Addio Del Passato"
now. Without recitative.

Waller plays. Gina sings. A voice like an angel. And looks the part.

Tito creeps in, stands behind Gina, and listens to her.

He leans against a folding chair.

It collapses, hits the floor with a loud CLANG, and carries Tito along with it.

The music and singing stop.

CARTER

Jack!

Carter hurries to Tito and checks him.

Tito picks himself up and has a sheepish grin.

TITO

I'm so sorry for the disturbance.

GINA

Oh... It was nothing.

TITO

Nothing? Why, it was very rude.
Interrupting such a marvelous
voice. Miss, you sing beautifully.

CARTER

Jack Rossi, meet Gina Palumbo.

TITO

Yes, Carter told me about you.
Been singing in Germany?

CARTER

Ms. Palumbo won first prize at the
Saltzburg Verdi competition.

TITO

I'm honored to sing with you.

Gina's body quivers.

TITO

My dear, you're trembling.

CARTER

Ms. Palumbo, are you well?

GINA

Yes, yes... I'm... just a bit nervous. Meeting someone famous like you... singing with you.

TITO

Carter, can we take an early lunch? I'd like to show Ms. Palumbo I'm human after all.

She manages a smile.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Tito and Gina sit at a table and munch on sandwiches.

A young FAN approaches them. He holds a small notebook. Tito spots him from the corner of his eye.

FAN

You're Jack Rossi, aren't you?

TITO

Nobody else wanted the job, so I took it.

Gina chuckles.

TITO

You want an autograph? Come on, don't be shy.

The Fan hands the notebook to Tito. He signs it. Passes it on to Gina.

TITO

You'll want her autograph. She's going to be very famous, very soon.

She scribbles her signature. Returns the notebook to the young man.

He bows and leaves.

GINA

I heard you were at an orphanage this morning. That's so sweet. You do a lot of that. Is it because you have no children of your own?

TITO

I guess it's a payback of sorts. I don't like to talk about it.

His voice trails off, as his demeanor changes to sadness.

GINA

I made you sad. I'm sorry.

TITO

It's okay... How'd you know I don't have any kids?

GINA

Well... I guess, I'm a fan.

TITO

Very flattering... What else do you know about me?

GINA

One of your wives was a duchess. Does that make you a Duke?

TITO

Hell, the only Duke I ever heard of was Duke Snider. Or, Ellington.

She giggles.

TITO

Yeah, I've had great luck with marriage. Three marriages, three divorces. Batting a thousand.

GINA

What do you think of, when you're singing in front of thousands of people? Or millions on tv?

TITO

Hoping my fly isn't open.

GINA

I'm afraid I'm still a bit nervous singing with you. It's my big break, you know.

Tito pats her hand with affection.

TITO

You'll do fine. I can feel it.

INT. TITO'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Tito puts on his stage makeup. Sighs.

He reaches into a drawer. Pulls out a flask. Takes a long drink. His hand trembles.

A RAP on the door.

TITO

Come.

Gina enters in costume. Tito's hand continues to shake.

GINA

Jack, why are you nervous? I'm the one who should be a mental case. People come to see you, not me.

TITO

Exactly. People come to see me. To tell their grandchildren, "I heard Jack Rossi sing." Not, "he cracked on a high note." They expect miracles every time I open my mouth... I want to give them those miracles.

Her eyebrows lower with sympathy.

TITO

It's like what Caruso said. Other singers only have to sing one hundred percent. Caruso must sing one-hundred and fifty. Not that I compare myself with Caruso. But, I guess I feel the same way.

INT. SANTA MONICA CIVIC STAGE - NIGHT

Curtain calls. Tito, Gina, the Baritone, Wurtzman, and Carter in front of the curtain, take bows.

Thunderous applause from a packed AUDIENCE. Admirers toss bouquets of flowers at Tito's feet.

The applause swells. Tito escorts Gina forward, toward the stage apron and orchestra pit.

TITO

Go. Enjoy your success. This is for you.

He backs off and leaves Gina alone. She bows to the audience and acknowledges the ovation.

Gina returns to the others.

Wurtzman wobbles. The old man clutches his chest. He sinks to his knees, before Tito and Carter notice and grab him.

CARTER

Fritz!

Tito, Carter, and the Baritone help Wurtzman offstage.

INT. WURTZMAN'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The men carry Wurtzman and place him on a day bed.

Gina, Waller, and the Stage Manager come in.

TITO
Anyone send for a doctor?

WALLER
He's coming.

WURTZMAN
Nein... nein... no doctor... I am
dying.

He points to a small lockbox on his dressing table.

WURTZMAN
The box.

Waller grabs the box. Hands it to Wurtzman.

WURTZMAN
Well?... Open, fool.

He opens the lid, and Wurtzman reaches inside the box. His fingers tremble.

He pulls out a yellowed envelope and hands it to Waller.

Waller takes a letter out of it. Wurtzman nods to him.

WALLER
(reads)
"To Mr. George Waller. You see, I
had someone write this letter for
me, so I may get the English
right... By the time you read this,
you realize I will never retire.
By now, I am very ill or dead."

Gina holds onto Tito's hand. Tears in her eyes.

WALLER
(continues to read)
"For the many years I have been
cross with you, I always had
complete respect for you. As a
musician and as a man... You will
make a fine conductor. Remember
three things. Stay with popular
operas. Command respect from the
orchestra and singers. Even if you
must be unpleasant, as I have at
times. For, it is worth it in the
end. Finally... never argue with
Carter Newman in public. Better to
keep disputes between you secret.
He is a good man. Goodbye my
friend... Fritz Wurtzman."

Waller wipes away a tear.

Carter gazes at Wurtzman.

The maestro lies still. Carter feels for a heartbeat.

A DOCTOR enters.

He examines Wurtzman. Shakes his head in a negative manner and steps away.

CARTER
The maestro is dead.

Silence in the room for several moments.

CARTER
George? Maestro Waller? May I
talk to you outside? We must
discuss the rest of the tour.

Carter motions to the door. Waller has a look of shock on his face.

CARTER
Fritz would want it to be this way.

Carter and Waller exit. Tito and the others stare at Wurtzman's body.

TITO
Goodbye, Maestro.

EXT. SANTA MONICA CIVIC - NIGHT

The end of a gala night. Traffic meanders out of the parking lots.

FANS wait for the stage door to open.

A few ORCHESTRA MEMBERS, STAGEHANDS, EXTRAS, and CHORUS SINGERS exit. They brush past the crowd.

A somber Tito, Gina, and others walk out, at a slow pace.

A crowd gathers. They mob Tito. Obtain autographs from him, Gina, and the Baritone.

Carter, Waller, and the Stage Manager make their way through the herd of people.

The Baritone spots a young WOMAN on the outskirts of the crowd. He trots over to her, and they hug.

Tito and Gina board a limousine.

EXT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT

A party. Rossi posters hang on the apartment walls.

PARTYGOERS and FRIENDS gather around a pensive Tito.

Gina forces half a smile. She circulates among the people.

Carter and Waller engage in a friendly discussion.
The crowd around Tito thins out. Gina joins him.

TITO
I have to get out of here.

GINA
To where?

TITO
I dunno. Back to the hotel, I
guess. Ride there with me?

She nods yes.

INT. HOTEL/TITO'S SUITE - NIGHT

Tito enters with Gina.

TITO
Drink?

Gina shakes her head no. Tito reflects.

TITO
I'm remembering Maestro's letter.
Always looking ahead. He wanted so
much for everything to go on.

GINA
You helped the company go on. For
many years, according to Carter.

Tito moves behind a built-in bar. Produces a bottle of
chilled champagne. Opens it. Pours two drinks.

GINA
Not really time for celebrating.

Tito hands her a glass.

TITO
Carter wanted me to tell you. Next
performance is in San Diego, four
days off. So, there's time to go
to New York.

GINA
New York? What for?

TITO
I'm singing "William Tell" at the
Met. Madame Giuliani has taken
ill. The Met phoned Carter,
looking for a replacement. You
sang the role last summer in
Frankfurt. How about singing the
premiere with me. At the Met?

The news astonishes Gina. She takes a deep breath.

GINA

I'm shocked. I don't know what to say... Except, yes.

TITO

Isn't that worth a toast?

He lifts his glass. The two clink glasses and drink.

She kisses Tito. He kisses her. Gina takes Tito by the hand and leads him into the bedroom.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A. Tito and Gina in bed. They make love.

B. Backstage, both in costume.

C. Tito and Gina sing on the Metropolitan Opera stage.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. MET OPERA/STAGE DOOR - NIGHT

A mob scene. Tito and Gina sign programs. Work their way through the CROWD to a taxi.

Gina slides into the cab. An AUTOGRAPH HOUND pesters Tito.

SUPER: "Metropolitan Opera, New York"

A HAND shuts the taxi door before Tito can enter.

Pietro Bernardi.

He wears a heavy overcoat and floppy hat.

PIETRO

Hey, mama's boy.

Tito stares at Pietro. Gasps.

In the midst of the crowd, Tito's vision eliminates everything but the image of his father, Pietro.

Very much alive.

Tito stumbles. Braces himself against the taxi door.

Gina chats with the CAB DRIVER inside the vehicle and doesn't notice what happens.

PIETRO

Surprise to see me, Tito? Think maybe I ghost, eh?

His hair white, Pietro appears to be in robust shape. The brutish demeanor endures.

TITO

I... killed you... You were dead.

PIETRO

I alive now... You change lot,
Tito. But, father always know son.
I see your picture two years ago.

TITO

Anna. Where is she?

PIETRO

Anna? Ha!... I tell you. Meet me
tomorrow morning. Ten o'clock.

Pietro scribbles on a piece of paper. Hands it to Tito.

PIETRO

Here is address... Bring money.
Plenty money.

Pietro lumbers off. Smiles his evil smile.

PIETRO

Talk to you later. Mr. Rossi.

He blends into the New York City humanity.

Overwhelmed, Tito hangs his head.

INT. HOTEL/TITO'S SUITE - DAY

Morning. Tito, bare-chested on the couch.

Gina walks in, also bare-chested. They embrace.

Tito flashes a pensive expression. Gina bites his shoulder in a playful manner, but he does not react.

GINA

You're not very talkative this
morning. Have I done something to
upset you?

Tito forces a smile.

TITO

No. It's me. Something on my
mind. I have to go meet someone.

GINA

(jokes)

This isn't another woman you're
meeting?

Tito grabs Gina. Hugs her with passion.

TITO
You're all I'm interested in. I
could eat you up.

GINA
Good. In that case, I'll try to
keep your dinner warm.

TITO
Quite the sexpot, aren't you?

GINA
Hurry, or I may start without you.

She rubs against Tito's chest. They kiss.

GINA
Come back soon. With an appetite.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A greasy-spoon diner. Sleazy.

Tito enters. He wears sunglasses.

He seats himself in a corner booth, where Pietro waits.

Tito doles out a handful of \$100 bills in front of Pietro.

PIETRO
Hmm, not bad.

TITO
Why'd you let all these years go
by? All this time, I thought I
killed you.

PIETRO
You wanna to know what happens that
night? When I fall on table? That
night... I knocked out. Stop the
breathing for few seconds, maybe.
Maybe I just hold breath. Make you
think I dead, eh? Ha.

TITO
Anna... What about Anna? What
happened to her? You promised.

Pietro offers a sardonic grin.

PIETRO
You wanna see Anna? Good. I take
you to her.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Pietro hails a taxi. Climbs in. Whispers to the DRIVER.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Tito enters and sits next to Pietro.

TITO
Anna's here? In New York?

PIETRO
That'sa right, Mr. big shot. Anna
in New York.

TITO
I had a private investigator try to
find her for years. In
Philadelphia.

PIETRO
I see your picture in paper
yesterday. You and other singer.
Gina Palumbo. She beautiful. Nice
Italian girl, eh?

Tito glowers at him. Pietro chuckles.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Pietro and Tito stand by a simple grave marker.

It reads: "Anna Elizabetta Bernardi - Born July 23, 1957 -
Died April 11, 1980."

Tito gapes at his sister's grave. Stunned.

PIETRO
She move outa house when she
sixteen. Come to New York. Live
with couple guys.

Tito can't take his eyes off the grave.

PIETRO
She take lotta drugs. I surprise
she live so long, taking drugs.
That what kill her. Heroin
overdose.

Tears flow from Tito's eyes. He hunches his shoulders.

PIETRO
Maybe if she have brother to watch
over her, she be alive today, eh?

Tito cannot respond. Overcome with grief. Pietro smirks.

EXT. HOTEL EXCELSIOR - DAY

A stately Manhattan hotel. With a fancy awning and DOORMAN.

INT. HOTEL/TITO'S SUITE - DAY

A sullen and glum Tito totes suitcases from another room. Places them next to the door.

Gina joins him, a small makeup bag under her arm.

The doorbell RINGS. Tito swings the door open.

A BELLHOP wheels in a cart. He loads the luggage onto it.

Both Tito and Gina check through drawers, make sure they leave nothing behind.

Pietro appears in the doorway.

PIETRO

Hey, mama's boy.

Tito glances up and spots Pietro. He rolls his eyes.

GINA

Who's that, Jack?

Pietro bows to Gina.

PIETRO

Miss Palumbo, si? I am Tito's...
Jack's papa.

GINA

Oh. I didn't know.

TITO

(gruff)

What the hell do you want?

GINA

Jack!

PIETRO

Just wanna talk. A father talk to
son. Okay?

TITO

Gina, why don't you wait for me
downstairs. Get us a cab. This
won't take long... Please?

Tito's abrupt manner surprises Gina, but she obeys.

Gina leaves with the bellhop and luggage.

Tito closes the door behind them. Faces Pietro, who admires the skyline from the window.

PIETRO

Nice view, eh? Probably cost lotsa
money, room like this.

TITO

I suppose... Well, what is it? Why are you here?

PIETRO

Tito! Is any way to talk to papa? Can't I come, see son I no see in so many years?

TITO

Okay. You're here. I'm here. What do you want to talk about?

PIETRO

Well, since I see you yesterday, Pietro been think. Magazine, tv, they pay lotsa money maybe, for papa to tell story of big shot opera singer Jack Rossi.

TITO

Aha.

PIETRO

Story how Jack Rossi run out on papa and little sister, on night poor momma die... How Jack Rossi let sister rot away. Never come to see. He have big success. While sister turn into drug junkie.

TITO

You bastard.

PIETRO

Wonder how people feel about big star Jack Rossi, who fuck every... what you call? Groupie? Fuck every groupie he get hands on, while sister stick needles in arm?

TITO

I tried to find her.

PIETRO

But, you wait too long. No come back soon enough... I wonder what people who buy ticket to see you think, if they know?

TITO

So, you're here to blackmail me?

PIETRO

No insult me, Mr. Rossi. Mister big shot. We call it pensione. For old friend from past. To stay in past, no?

Pietro leans into Tito.

PIETRO

It be our little secret, eh? Un segreto tra padre e figlio. Just between papa and son.

TITO

And, what kind of papa are you? I should have done a better job, and really killed you.

PIETRO

Ha... I wonder what Miss Gina Palumbo think, eh?

TITO

Leave her out of this.

PIETRO

She think she fuck Mister big shot Jack Rossi. Not know she fuck Tito Bernardi. Who let sister to die from drugs... Maybe I go down to lobby, let her know?

Tito's temper builds.

He clenches his fist. Hesitates. Pietro grins.

TITO

Go ahead. She won't believe anything you tell her.

PIETRO

No?

TITO

I've heard enough from you. I got to catch a plane to California.

INT. HOTEL/CORRIDOR - DAY

Pietro and Tito face each other in the corridor.

PIETRO

It not matter I tell story to news?

TITO

I don't care if you plaster it on a billboard. Have an airplane write it in the sky... Don't you see, Papa? You were a big chunk of guilt around my neck. A ghost. Now it's like you really are gone... I wish I could bring Anna back. Momma too. But, I can't.

PIETRO

So, you no care what I do, what I say? That it?

TITO

Right. Nothing you say or do can affect me.

Tito heads for the elevator.

Pietro grabs Tito and spins him around.

PIETRO

You no care? Maybe you care about this, Tito. Your momma? You right about what happen that night.

TITO

What?

PIETRO

Yes. I push her. I hit her. Throw her down stairs. I kill your momma! Ha!

Pietro's cruel laugh reverberates in the corridor.

PIETRO

She scream like stuck pig. All way down stairs. Know what I do, Tito? I laugh! Ha, ha, ha!

Tito's anger explodes.

He shoves Pietro against the wall.

Pietro bounces off and attacks Tito.

A vicious fist fight ensues.

Tito and Pietro shift their battle down the corridor, next to a window at the end of the hallway.

A WINDOW WASHER works on a wooden portable scaffold outside the window.

Pietro barrels into Tito.

They crash through the window. Glass SHATTERS. The two spill onto the scaffold.

EXT. HOTEL/LEDGE - DAY

Tito and Pietro continue their struggle on the flimsy scaffold beside the ledge.

The window washer avoids them, steps through the broken window, and scrambles inside the hotel.

Pietro backhands Tito and pushes him into a metal rod that supports the scaffold.

The burly man smacks Tito's head against the metal.

He shoves Tito near the edge.

Tito backs up. Almost loses his balance, but recovers.

PIETRO

Mama's boy!

Pietro charges, tries to knock Tito off the scaffold and onto the pavement, six stories below.

Tito steps aside at the last moment.

Pietro trips. Grabs hold of a rope on the scaffold.

The rope twists and winds around Pietro's neck.

He attempts to pull off the rope. Loses his balance and tumbles off the wooden scaffold.

Pietro screams.

The rope slides through a pulley and falls with Pietro.

He plunges four stories. Until the rope pulls taut.

It hangs Pietro and snaps his neck.

EXT. HOTEL EXCELSIOR - DAY

Gina waits at a taxi stand by the hotel entrance.

She looks up.

Pietro dangles from the rope, twenty feet above her.

Tito stands on the scaffold and gazes down, with a blank, stunned expression.

This paralyzes Gina with silent horror for a moment.

A PASSERBY on the sidewalk points to the tragedy.

Gina shatters the air with a deafening scream.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Same setting as the first scene. The darkened room.

A white-haired, Elderly Tito, in his mid-70s, vocalizes with the recorded aria "Una Furtiva Lagrima."

He turns off the laptop. Gives himself one quick check in the mirror.

INT. PRISON STAGE - NIGHT

A small, raised platform stage consists of a dingy curtain behind an old piano.

An ACCOMPANIST in a suit makes his way onto the stage.

ACCOMPANIST

Now, for your listening enjoyment.
Mr. Jack Rossi.

Scattered applause. Elderly Tito walks in with heavy steps.

The Accompanist sits at the piano. PLAYS the introduction to "Una Furtiva Lagrima."

Elderly Tito sings. His audience. Fellow INMATES. All dress in drab prison clothes.

FADE OUT.

THE END