DYSPHONIA

By

Mario G. Lopez Jr.
FADE IN

INT. STAGE, OPERA THEATER - NIGHT

GIUSEPPE ROSSI, 50s, a heavyset man with passionate eyes steps to the front of the stage before a packed opera house.

The Conductor, ALEJANDRO, 60s, makes eye contact with Giuseppe and nods. He tips his baton and the Orchestra plays "Una Furtiva Lagrima" from Donizetti’s L’elisir d’amore.

Giuseppe SINGS in a rich tenor voice which instantly enraptures the AUDIENCE.

Sweat forms across Giuseppe’s brow. His lips quiver as his voice crescendos with the music.

The music hits its apex.

Giuseppe’s face reddens and the veins in his neck bulge.

Alejandro and the Audience inhale with sweet anticipation.

Giuseppe’s body rocks and sways. His voice strains and crackles ever so subtle.

Alejandro winces.

Giuseppe lays his hand on a prop rock for support but quickly regains authority of his voice.

Alejandro and the Audience breathe a collective sigh of relief.

Giuseppe completes the song fatigued.

The Audience rises to its feet and applauds.

Alejandro frowns and lowers his head.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The door bursts open and Giuseppe barges in with his assistant, ENRIQUE, 50s, in tow.

Giuseppe growls in an Italian accent.

    GIUSEPPE
    Please close the door.

Enrique does.
ENRIQUE
How was it?

GIUSEPPE
I was merda. Pure shit.

He sprays throat medication in his mouth when WALTER, 50s, enters the room. He wears a sleek tuxedo and a sleeker grin.

WALTER
Good show! You brought the house down.

GIUSEPPE
Don’t lie to me, Walter. Most theater directors would excoriate my performance. At least the expert ones would.

WALTER
Don’t be so glum. So you had trouble hitting a few high notes. You still rebounded brilliantly.

GIUSEPPE
That’s not what the audience thinks.

WALTER
What do you call the standing ovation after ‘Lagrima’?

GIUSEPPE
Pathos.

ENRIQUE (O.C.)
Excuse me, Mr. Worthington.

Enrique walks past Walter and hands Giuseppe a mug of hot cocoa capped with a mountain of whipped cream.

ENRIQUE
This will cheer you up, Mr. Rossi.

GIUSEPPE
Oh, thank you, Enrique. You’re an angel.

WALTER
Don’t drown yourself.
Walter leaves while Giuseppe sips his hot cocoa. He lowers his mug and a dollop of whipped cream clings to his nose.

EXT. STAGE DOOR, OPERA THEATER - NIGHT

A YOUNG GIRL, 18, waits by the door with a theater booklet. Giuseppe exits and sees her.

YOUNG GIRL
May I have your autograph?

GIUSEPPE
Absolutely.

He signs the booklet.

GIUSEPPE
Are you an opera aficionado?

YOUNG GIRL
Oh yes. I am a big fan of yours. I listen to all your albums.

GIUSEPPE
Oh, I didn’t know I had any?

He hands back the booklet and she looks at the autograph.

YOUNG GIRL
Hey, you aren’t Placido Domingo?

GIUSEPPE
I am Giuseppe Rossi!

He snarls and tromps past her when he stops and points at her feet.

GIUSEPPE
Look out!

The Young Girl almost steps on a RUSTY NAIL.

YOUNG GIRL
Ooh. Thanks, Mr. Rossi.

His snarl eases into a smile and he walks away.
INT. COCKTAIL PARTY, ELENA’S LUXURY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Giuseppe arrives at a deluxe apartment filled with TRENDY GUESTS. They give him a warm round of applause.

GIUSEPPE
Grazie, my friends, you are too generous.

The hostess of the shindig, ELENA, 50s, an aging sophisticate who conceals her age with as much makeup as possible, embraces Giuseppe with a big, sloppy kiss.

ELENA
My swain is as humble as he is a fantastic singer.

Giuseppe bows his head.

ELENA
Don’t be so modest, darling, we’re all so-called’s here anyway. And how was your performance tonight?

A smarmy young guest, JONATHAN, 20s, sidles up to Giuseppe.

JONATHAN
You missed it. Giuseppe nearly blew a "casket" during an aria.

ELENA
Don’t you mean a "gasket," Jonathan?

JONATHAN
No, I meant "casket." Giuseppe nearly died on stage!

Everyone laughs as Elena discreetly pulls Giuseppe away.

ELENA
Excuse us while I feed my beautiful tenor.

INT. DINNER TABLE, ELENA’S LUXURY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Giuseppe eats a mountain of food while Elena pours him wine.

GIUSEPPE
Grazie, mia regina.

She bends over and whispers in his ear.
ELENA
Try not to eat too much. You know how it makes you ineffective.

GIUSEPPE
You mean impotent? Stamp your worries-

He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a Medicine Bottle.

GIUSEPPE
I bring magic beans tonight.

She self-consciously adjusts her hair, which turns out to be a WIG.

ELENA
It’s nice to see that I still inspire you like before.

She frowns and walks away.

GIUSEPPE
Elena.

He sighs and shoves the Medicine Bottle back in his pocket.

INT. KITCHEN, ELENA’S LUXURY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Giuseppe peeks through the glass door and sees the kitchen empty. He sneaks in and eats greasy Italian sausages out of a chafing dish with his fingers.

Just as he stuffs a sausage in his mouth he gasps and grabs his chest in a fit of pain. He takes deep breaths until the pain is gone.

Giuseppe turns to leave and bumps into:

MYSTERY MAN, 40s, dressed in a red suit and with slicked back black hair. He sucks down a highball of scotch.

GIUSEPPE
Excuse me.

MYSTERY MAN
No fireworks?

GIUSEPPE
What?
Mystery Man
You're not drinking booze. No fireworks. With this crowd you need fireworks to char the senses in your brain.

Giuseppe responds with a haughty glance and walks past him.

Mystery Man
Yeah, okay. We'll talk later.

Giuseppe turns to face him.

Giuseppe
I doubt tha-

The Mystery Man is gone.

Giuseppe looks for him all over the kitchen.

Elena notices Giuseppe's strange behavior through the glass door and enters.

Elena
Giuseppe?

Giuseppe
He was just here.

Elena
Who?

Giuseppe
There was a man in here. He's wearing a red suit.

Elena
A man in a red suit? None of the guests here are that crass.

Giuseppe
I swear he was in here just a moment ago.

Elena
Well, obviously, there's no one in the kitchen wearing a red suit. You must have imagined him.

Giuseppe
I did not!
ELENA
No more drinks for you, darling. I don’t want a raving grandpa upsetting the party.

GIUSEPPE
Grandpa?

ELENA
Just mingle with the guests before you have a nervous breakdown.

He glares at her and leaves.

INT. LIVING ROOM, ELENA’S LUXURY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Giuseppe mills about and chats with several Guests when he catches Jonathan whisper to Elena in the back of the room. She blushes as Jonathan’s firm hand sneaks down and palms her saggy buttocks.

The Mystery Man leans over Giuseppe’s shoulder.

MYSTERY MAN
Oedipal, paraphilia, or just plain disgusting? What do you think?

Giuseppe’s cheek brushes with the Mystery Man’s.

GIUSEPPE
You!

He TACKLES him to the floor.

The Guests encircle the ruckus.

GIUSEPPE
Who are you? Speak!

He looks up and sees all the Guests stare at him.

Giuseppe looks in his arms and finds them empty.

The Mystery Man has disappeared.

Elena squeezes through the crowd and helps him up.

ELENA
Everybody, please excuse him. He’s had a few too many this evening.

Giuseppe laughs nervously and lowers his head in embarrassment.
INT. GIUSEPPE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A wall of pictures filled with images of Giuseppe in costumes from various opera productions grace the modestly furnished apartment.

Giuseppe and Elena enter the room with long faces.

ELENA
Would you like some tea?

GIUSEPPE
No. Just a little anisette.

ELENA
Very well.

She goes to the minibar and fixes his drink.

GIUSEPPE
I made a fool of myself at the party.

ELENA
It was your most compelling performance to date. Perhaps the NEA will bestow you with an honor.

She hands him a snifter of Anisette.

GIUSEPPE
I’m so tired. My voice struggles to keep up with the music. The company may want to replace me if they want to sell tickets.

She stands behind him and massages his temples.

ELENA
Your mawkish talk is boring, darling. If your voice can’t keep up then slow the fucking music down. Besides, you’re the company’s best singer. Don’t ever forget that.

He caresses her hand.

GIUSEPPE
Will you spend the night?
ELENA  
I’d love to but I have to adjourn the party.

She kisses him.

ELENA  
I’ll call you later.

She sees a stack of letters in the mail basket by the door.

ELENA  
Look at these bills, bills, bills. Oh, Giuseppe, what will you ever do without me?

She shoves all the Letters in her purse, except for one.

ELENA  
I don’t know what this one’s about?

She puts the one Letter back in the basket and leaves.

Giuseppe walks over to check it.

INSERT: LETTER

Addressed to ZANIPOLO ROSSI. Stamped in the corner of the letter: REFUSED, RETURN TO SENDER.

BACK TO SCENE

Giuseppe hangs his head and mutters:

GIUSEPPE  
Zanipolo.

He tosses the returned letter back in the mail basket.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The golden glow of the city lights fill the sky as Giuseppe steps onto the roof from the stairwell exit. He inches toward the edge of the building, his gaze lingers at the taillights of the cars which pass below him. He closes his eyes, rubs his throat, and VOCALIZES to the sounds of the city.
INT. WALTER WORTHINGTON’S OFFICE – DAY

Walter counts sales receipts behind his cluttered desk when Giuseppe barges into the room.

GIUSEPPE
Is it true?

WALTER
Calm down, Giuseppe. I’m only giving you the night off.

GIUSEPPE
Why? I’m not sick. My voice is fine.

WALTER
You think I’m happy about this? A full house paid to see you tonight.

GIUSEPPE
Then why are you pulling me?

WALTER
It wasn’t my idea.

GIUSEPPE
Whose idea was it?

ALEJANDRO (O.C.)
Mine.

Alejandro stands in the back of the room.

ALEJANDRO
I recommended pulling you tonight.

GIUSEPPE
Why?

ALEJANDRO
Walter, may I have a minute alone with him?

Walter sighs and scoops up the sales receipts off his desk.

WALTER
Fine. I’ll resume my business in the toilet. That’s where this company is headed anyway.

He leaves.
GIUSEPPE
Alejandro, we’ve been friends a long time. Why do this to me?

ALEJANDRO
Stop it with that. You know very well why. You almost collapsed on stage the other night.

GIUSEPPE
I wasn’t breathing properly. That will never happen again.

ALEJANDRO
It will happen again. You tire quickly and it disrupts your mechanics. To compensate this you exert yourself, and that is a problem.

GIUSEPPE
Then I quit.

ALEJANDRO
And do what with yourself? You will be hard-pressed to find work as an understudy let alone one as a featured tenor. If I intercede on your behalf it is for your own well-being.

Giuseppe crosses his arms and pouts.

ALEJANDRO
Giuseppe?

GIUSEPPE
Yes, I will take the night off.

ALEJANDRO
Good. We will have dinner. There is a new Italian restaurant that serves organic food only.

GIUSEPPE
You’re not working tonight?

ALEJANDRO
I too will take the night off and spend it with you.
GIUSEPPE
At least I won’t be alone.
(Grimaces)
Organic Italian food? That doesn’t sound good.

ALEJANDRO
Neither does your voice. So let’s go.

INT. HALLWAY, BACKSTAGE, OPERA THEATER - DAY
A group of FEMALE DANCERS huddle around ISABELLA, 30s, who types on a Computer.

Giuseppe and Alejandro leave Walter’s Office when Giuseppe notices the activity by the computer.

GIUSEPPE
Isabella, cos’è successo?

She responds in a lilting voice.

ISABELLA
My brother has finally contacted me from Nigeria.

GIUSEPPE
What’s he doing there?

FEMALE DANCER
He’s a missionary.

All the dancers COO.

FEMALE DANCER #2
And he’s gorgeous.

FEMALE DANCER #3
He can convert me anytime.

Giuseppe looks at the Computer Screen and sees that it’s a Social Networking Website.

GIUSEPPE
What’s this?

ISABELLA
It’s called Daisy Chain. You find friends and relatives on here just by typing their names.
FEMALE DANCER
I bet there’s hundreds of girls waiting to hear from you, Mr. Rossi.

Giuseppe’s face turns red as all the girls laugh, except Isabella, who feigns jealousy.

ISABELLA
Is that so, Giuseppe? Have you sown so many gardens that the Daisy Chain is endless?

GIUSEPPE
I’ve only one garden, and that is lost. Have a good show.

ISABELLA
Lucky you. I wish I had the night off.

INT. GOLDONI’S RESTAURANT – NIGHT

Giuseppe and Alejandro sit alone in a corner table at a cozy restaurant filled with antique Italian decor and lots of CUSTOMERS.

Alejandro enjoys his meal with gusto while Giuseppe frowns upon his.

ALEJANDRO
What is the matter? Don’t you like your tofu raviloli?

GIUSEPPE
This restaurant is a gourmand’s nightmare.

ALEJANDRO
Have some more wine.

He pours him a glass of Grape Juice.

GIUSEPPE
Why do you call it wine when you know it is grape juice?

ALEJANDRO
Sprinkle in a dash of salt and it will taste just like Merlot.
GIUSEPPE
Have you lost your mind?

ALEJANDRO
Giuseppe, you need to redact your taste buds. As your body adjusts to these positive changes your health will soon follow.

GIUSEPPE
But I am healthy.

ALEJANDRO
Not to sing you are not. If you wish to lead the life of a sybarite then do not expect to be a world renowned singer. Right now you’re better suited to perform at a karaoke bar than at La Scala.

GIUSEPPE
I said I will join a gym.

ALEJANDRO
Oh, but you will. Calisthenics and a proper diet will save your life, not to mention your voice. Now enjoy your wine and ravioli.

Giuseppe forces a ravioli in his mouth and chews on it like it were a live vermin. He then washes it down with "wine" and wrenches his face as if he were swallowing bleach.

Alejandro stares at him unmoved.

Giuseppe wipes his mouth and pushes his plate away.

GIUSEPPE
I am finished.

ALEJANDRO
There are eight more raviolis on your plate.

GIUSEPPE
I’m full.

ALEJANDRO
Bugiardo!

GIUSEPPE
Really, I’m not lying.
ALEJANDRO
You’re going to leave here and eat pizza. I know you.

GIUSEPPE
No, I’m not.

ALEJANDRO
Giuseppe, all those years of hard work and dedication in voice training is pleading with you to lose weight. I know this because I see it in your eyes every time you touch the stage. Am I wrong?

Giuseppe shakes his head.

ALEJANDRO
Then enjoy your dinner.

Giuseppe relents and eats another ravioli.

EXT. GOLDONI’S RESTAURANT – NIGHT

The Mystery Man in the Red Suit stands on the sidewalk and stares at Giuseppe through the storefront window.

He takes out a highball of scotch from his jacket and sips it as PEDESTRIANS walk through him like a Hologram.

The song "Quanto È Bella, Quanto È Cara!" PLAYS in the background.

The Mystery Man’s face contorts in laughter and disappears.

INT. STAGE, OPERA THEATER – NIGHT

Giuseppe continues to SING "Quanto È Bella, Quanto È Cara!".

He breathes smoothly and his voice burns with passion but sweat drenches his face like he’s run a marathon.

Alejandro observes him from the Orchestra Pit with a subtle smile.
INT. GIUSEPPE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Giuseppe watches in disgust as Alejandro throws out all the bottles of alcohol from the minibar.

The song "Ardir! Ha Forse Il Cielo Mandato" PLAYS in the background.

INT. STAGE, OPERA THEATER - NIGHT

DR. DULCAMARA, one of the more colorful characters in the Elixir of Love, teases Giuseppe with a bottle of love potion as they continue to SING "Ardir! Ha Forse Il Cielo Mandato."

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

A winded Giuseppe sits in front of his mirror.

Enrique arrives with a glass of green glop.

    ENRIQUE
    Sorry for the delay, Mr. Rossi. The juicer is out of order. You may need to use a spoon.

    GIUSEPPE
    I wish to drink it not eat it.

Enrique hands him a spoon regardless.

    GIUSEPPE
    Oh dear.

    ENRIQUE
    You will like it. It’s spinach, broccoli, asparagus, okra, green peas, and bananas.

Giuseppe shovels a spoonful of glop into his mouth and gags at the first swallow.

The song "Una Furtiva Lagrima" PLAYS in the background.

INT. STAGE, OPERA THEATER - NIGHT

Giuseppe continues to SING "Una Furtiva Lagrima" when his voice hits the high note perfectly.

Alejandro does a quick fist-pump.
Giuseppe completes the song with outstretched arms and the audience erupts into a standing ovation.

INT. BEDROOM, GIUSEPPE’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

An Electric Clock reads 9:00 p.m.

Giuseppe’s fast asleep when his eyes open and he immediately clutches his chest. He hyperventilates and pounds on his chest until his breathing returns to normal.

Giuseppe grabs a nearby telephone and dials.

On the other line answers:

JONATHAN (V.O.)
Hello.

GIUSEPPE
Elena?

JONATHAN (V.O.)
Oh. Hello, Guiseppe, it’s Jonathan.

GIUSEPPE
Will you put Elena on the phone?

JONATHAN (V.O.)
She’s rather occupied at the moment. Could she call back in ten minutes?

GIUSEPPE
No.

JONATHAN (V.O.)
Well, I’ll let her know–

Giuseppe hangs up on him in mid-sentence and leaves the phone off the hook.

The song "Prendi, per me sei libero" PLAYS in the background.

INT. STAGE, OPERA THEATER – NIGHT

Isabella continues to SING "Prendi, per me sei libero."

Giuseppe SINGS back to Isabella during her aria as she takes his hand and leads him across the stage. He struggles to keep up with her and has to use her shoulder for support.
INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

A row of treadmills whir smoothly with GYM MEMBERS in a neon-lit facility when a series of LOUD GRUNTS startles everyone in the gym. The grunts come from Giuseppe, who slow walks on his treadmill. He sweats an ocean as his tongue dangles above his chin.

Enrique stands by with an armful of towels and wipes Giuseppe’s face dry.

The song "Ei Corregge Ogni Difetto" PLAYS in the background.

INT. STAGE, OPERA THEATER - NIGHT

The entire cast continues to perform "Ei Corregge Ogni Difetto," the show’s grand finale before an ecstatic Audience.

Giuseppe cleaves to Isabella as their characters at the end of the show fall in love.

INT. CURTAIN CALL, STAGE, OPERA THEATER - NIGHT

The curtain rises and Giuseppe saunters on stage.

He bows gracefully to a boisterous reception.

In the middle of the theater sits the Mystery Man. He applauds apathetically as he rises from his seat and leaves.

Alejandro steps out of the Pit with his nostrils flared. He sniffs the air and casts a suspicious glance at the Audience.

EXT. OPERA THEATER - NIGHT

Alejandro pushes past the lobby doors and steps outside.

ALEJANDRO
Show yourself!

He scans the area but finds no one except a cardboard cutout of Giuseppe dressed as Nemorino, his Elixir of Love character, under the marquee.

The doors open and the Audience files out of the lobby.

Alejandro retreats into the theater when the Mystery Man materializes in holographic form behind Giuseppe’s cardboard cutout with a relieved look on his face.
INT. BACKSTAGE, OPERA THEATER - NIGHT
Champagne Bottles pop.
The Cast congregates around a cake that reads:
ELIXIR, FINAL PERFORMANCE.
Giuseppe and Isabella embrace.

    GIUSEPPE
    It was a delight.
    ISABELLA
    Wasn’t it?

He kisses her hand.

    ENRIQUE (O.C.)
    Mr. Rossi-

Giuseppe turns and kisses Enrique on the cheek.

    ENRIQUE
    Wonderful performance.
    GIUSEPPE
    Thanks, Enrique.

He watches Alejandro approach Enrique from behind and whisper in his ear. Enrique raises his eyebrows in alarm.

    GIUSEPPE
    Alejandro?
    ALEJANDRO
    Giuseppe.

He gives him a hug.

    ALEJANDRO
    You were marvelous. I’m proud of you.
    GIUSEPPE
    Grazie. What’s with you and Enrique?
    ALEJANDRO
    I need to speak to him alone. We’ll be right back.

He and Enrique leave.
GIUSEPPE
Alejandro, come back-

Walter pats him on the back.

WALTER
Good job, Giuseppe!

Giuseppe turns around and finds Walter accompanied by SEBASTIAN, 20s, a strapping Young Man who wears a full-length fur coat over a shirtless torso and leather pants.

WALTER
Allow me to introduce Sebastian Rispoli. He just arrived from Italy. He’s your new understudy.

GIUSEPPE
Italy?

Sebastian speaks to Giuseppe in an Italian accent.

SEBASTIAN
Mio idolo. I have studied you ever since I was a bambino.

GIUSEPPE
I am honored.

Sebastian drops to his knees and kisses Giuseppe’s feet.

Everyone gawks at the spectacle.

As Sebastian rises to his feet his fur coat opens and reveals a perfect set of six-pack abs.

All the women sigh in ecstasy.

ISABELLA
He’s a God.

Giuseppe roils in jealously as Walter hands him a champagne glass.

WALTER
A toast. To Giuseppe Rossi, opera’s last true warrior. May our company enjoy his talents until the Opera Gods seize his voice and make him a legend.

Sebastian touches Giuseppe’s shoulder and SINGS to him:
"Nessun Dorma" from Puccini’s Turandot.

Everyone in the room is mesmerized by his beautiful voice.

Tears of anger and admiration fill Giuseppe’s eyes.

He grabs a bottle of champagne and guzzles it empty.

INT. LIVING ROOM, GIUSEPPE’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Giuseppe stumbles into the apartment with a champagne bottle in his hand.

He falls to the floor in drunken laughter and stares at his opera pictures on the wall. He then hurls the bottle at the pictures and SMASHES several of them to the floor.

GIUSEPPE

Finito! Finito! Fin-

He SHRIEKS and grabs his chest.

His jaw locks, his eyes roll back, and he topples to the floor like a statue.

MYSTERY MAN (O.S.)

You’re right about one thing.

His eyes slowly regain focus and he resumes normal breathing. He lumbers to his feet and finds the Mystery Man on the sofa with a highball of scotch in his hand.

MYSTERY MAN

You are finito.

GIUSEPPE

What did you do to me?

MYSTERY MAN

Have a seat.

He holds up his highball.

MYSTERY MAN

Scotch?

Giuseppe lurches for the telephone and dials.

MYSTERY MAN

Don’t do that.
GIUSEPPE
(Into the Phone)
Police. I have an intruder...

MYSTERY MAN
You’ll only embarrass yourself.

INT. LIVING ROOM, GIUSEPPE’S APARTMENT - LATER
There’s a KNOCK on the door and Giuseppe opens it.
TWO POLICE OFFICERS enter.

POLICE OFFICER #1
Where is he?
The Mystery Man stands up from the sofa.

MYSTERY MAN
I’m here, asshole.

Giuseppe points at him.

GIUSEPPE
There he is. Arrest him!

POLICE OFFICER #1
Where?

GIUSEPPE
Right there!

MYSTERY MAN
Yeah, right here, you blind fuck.

The Mystery Man walks up to Police Officer #1 and steps into him.
The Police Officer shivers.

POLICE OFFICER #1
Is the air conditioner on?

Giuseppe blanches.

GIUSEPPE
No...it’s...not.

The Mystery Man’s holographic face smiles over Police Officer #1’s face.
MYSTERY MAN
Send them away, Giuseppe. We need to talk.

GIUSEPPE
Um...it’s fine. You can leave.

Police Officer #2 spots the smashed Champagne bottle and opera pictures on the floor.

POLICE OFFICER #2
Have you been drinking, sir?

GIUSEPPE
Yes.

Police Officer #2 leans into him menacingly.

POLICE OFFICER #2
Next time you call in a false alarm, I’m hauling you down to detox. Understand?

GIUSEPPE
Yes, sir.

The Two Police Officers leave.

GIUSEPPE
Are you the devil?

MYSTERY MAN
You mean Satan? No, I’m his representative, Mephistopheles.

MEPHISTOPHELES snaps his fingers and a lit cigarette materializes in his fingertips.

GIUSEPPE
Get out! I am a God fearing man. I do not believe in Satan!

MEPHISTOPHELES
Calm down and listen to me.

GIUSEPPE
Talk to someone else because I’m not listening.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Tonight you will die.

Giuseppe shakes his head defiantly.
MEPHISTOPHELES
It has been preordained.

GIUSEPPE
Preordained by who? Satan?

MEPHISTOPHELES
No. Nature. That terrible pain in your chest before I arrived? Heart attack. You were gonna die. You’re only still alive because of me.

GIUSEPPE
It can’t be?

MEPHISTOPHELES
It can if you’ve been ignoring the warning signals all this time.

Giuseppe rubs his chest and neck as the revelation sinks in.

GIUSEPPE
I’m going to heaven.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Not exactly.

GIUSEPPE
But I’m a God fearing man.

Mephistopheles sees a computer on top of an open roll-top desk and waves his hand at it. The computer screen turns on and the Daisy Chain Social Networking Website pops up.

MEPHISTOPHELES
You inquired about this website the other day, did you not?

GIUSEPPE
Yes.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Who are you looking for?

GIUSEPPE
My wife.

MEPHISTOPHELES
(Chuckles)
Your wife passed away six years ago. Don’t lie to Satan’s prince. I know when you’re lying.
GIUSEPPE
My son. I’m looking for my son.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Ah, Zanipolo.

Mephistopheles snaps his fingers and the Daisy Chain reveals a PHOTO of ZANIPOLO, 40s, a man with a gentle face and sad eyes.

MEPHISTOPHELES
You haven’t seen Zanipolo ever since you abandoned him, and your wife, thirty years ago.

Giuseppe crosses the room to the mail basket and lifts up Zanipolo’s Returned Letter.

GIUSEPPE
He keeps returning my letters.

MEPHISTOPHELES
That’s because your commitment to pursue an opera career was more important than being a father.

GIUSEPPE
That’s not true.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Bullshit. How could you perform all around the world while worrying about your young family at the same time?

GIUSEPPE
You’re wrong! I didn’t mean to abandon them.

Mephistopheles snickers.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Well, you did, didn’t you? Do you even remember his birthday? Or if he’s married? If he has children?

He snaps his fingers and PHOTOS of a YOUNG GIRL, 14, and a YOUNG BOY, 12, pop up on the computer Screen.

GIUSEPPE
My grandchildren! Oh, if only I can explain myself to him-
MEPHISTOPHELES
That bridge will never be
crossed. By the time Zanipolo
grants you an audience you will
have been long
dead. Reconciliation is over.

Giuseppe’s face flushes with anger.

GIUSEPPE
So why did you mention him?

MEPHISTOPHELES
You asked if you were going to
heaven? The answer is no. You
will go to purgatory and atone for
your sin of abandoning your family.

GIUSEPPE
If that’s true, then why are you
here?

MEPHISTOPHELES
To make a deal.

GIUSEPPE
You want my soul?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Not exactly. I want your voice.

GIUSEPPE
My voice? What for?

MEPHISTOPHELES
It’s an operatic
voice. Classically
trained. Powerful. Transcendent,
even. And I want it.

GIUSEPPE
And do what?

MEPHISTOPHELES
That’s my business.

GIUSEPPE
What do I get?

MEPHISTOPHELES
GIUSEPPE
I have all those things.

Mephistopheles gives Giuseppe’s meager apartment a once-over and smirks.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Where?

GIUSEPPE
Everywhere! I’m a successful opera singer.

MEPHISTOPHELES
You’re above average mediocre.

GIUSEPPE
Then what do you want with an above average mediocre voice?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Your voice is perfect. It’s the rest of you that’s flawed. You’re a fat drunk who never lived up to his potential.

GIUSEPPE
(Grumbles)
Get out.

MEPHISTOPHELES
All those wasted years. Now your opera company will soon replace you with an Adonis who sings like an Apollo. Even your lover Elena is replacing you with that asshole Jonathan. You will die forgotten and unacknowledged.

GIUSEPPE
Get out!

MEPHISTOPHELES
Okay, I’ll leave. But understand that you will never see me again.

He finishes his highball and tosses it over his shoulder. Giuseppe braces himself to hear the glass shatter but the glass disappears.

MEPHISTOPHELES
So long.

He proceeds to fade away.
GIUSEPPE
Wait!

Mephistopheles hovers before him in a ghostly image.

GIUSEPPE
I want my son.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Hmm? That could be a lot trickier than making you famous?

GIUSEPPE
I just want to talk to him.

MEPHISTOPHELES
It doesn’t mean he’ll forgive you.

GIUSEPPE
I know.

Mephistopheles tilts his head and considers it.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Deal. I’ll make it happen.

GIUSEPPE
How?

MEPHISTOPHELES
You let me handle it. Now go to bed.

He vanishes.

INT. BEDROOM, GIUSEPPE’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The curtains flutter in the wind as Giuseppe lies in bed with his eyes glued to the ceiling.

He crosses himself.

GIUSEPPE
Oh, God, what have I done?

He waits a beat when a sharp pain strikes his chest. His body goes limp, his face goes slack, and his eyes close.
EXT. HELL - UNKNOWN

The star-filled sky is dusky.

The ground is pure lava rock that extends infinitely into a blood-red horizon.

Giuseppe lies under a leafless tree and wears only a loincloth. Mephistopheles strides toward him in his red suit and a highball of scotch in his hand.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Welcome to hell.

GIUSEPPE
Is this really hell?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Shit yeah.

He motions toward the vast plains of rock and dust.

MEPHISTOPHELES
There are no pesky trees or lakes in hell. You could walk forever and not see a change in topography.

GIUSEPPE
It’s incredibly ugly down here.

MEPHISTOPHELES
You should reserve judgment until you’ve seen everything. Follow me.

He walks him toward a STEAMING FISSION.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Through here is the nether region. Now before we enter you should know that you may still return to your body. But you’ll be dead and your spirit will go straight to purgatory. If you choose to stay here you will be allowed to return to your body alive and well. You’ll be a transient and our pact will be consummated.

He extends his hand and Giuseppe hesitates.
MEPHISTOPHELES
You only need to take my hand.

Giuseppe yields and grabs his hand.
Mephistopheles leads him into the Steaming Fissure.

INT. NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN
The silver haze of steam obscures Giuseppe’s vision.
Mephistopheles squeezes his hand and tugs him down a craggy pathway enveloped in Stalactites and Stalagmites.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Look up.

Giuseppe looks up and sees the overhead rock formations slowly disappear and a VIOLET SKY open up in its place.
A breeze blows across his face.

GIUSEPPE
What’s that sweet smell?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Minion flesh.

The rock below Giuseppe’s feet turns into sand and he HEARS a RUMBLING SOUND up ahead.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Perfect timing. The Saturnalia is about to begin.

The sandy pathway leads to the edge of a canyon filled with a multitude of Bonfires.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Check out paradise.

He nudges Giuseppe toward the precipice where he sees:

INT. DEMON VALLEY, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

A sea of red skinned, short-horned, cloven-footed, curly-tailed, fleshy winged ANTHROPOMORPHIC DEMONS drink booze and have sex in the base of the canyon.
MEPHISTOPHELES (O.S.)
Welcome to Demon Valley.

GIUSEPPE (O.S.)
Those look like people.

MEPHISTOPHELES (O.S.)
Humans? Yes. Only their bodies are of the demon variety. Their skin is red, their bodies smooth, and their sexual urges are at a peak frenzy.

INT. NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN
Giuseppe notices a LAVA RIVER in the center of the Demon Valley.

GIUSEPPE
Is that lava?

MEPHISTOPHELES
It sure is.

GIUSEPPE
This can’t be hell? Where are the Nine Circles?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Up your ass.

He laughs as he pulls out another highball of scotch.

GIUSEPPE
What about the torture and suffering?

MEPHISTOPHELES
There’s only drinking and fucking down here.

GIUSEPPE
But you called them ’minions.’ They’re slaves?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Yes. Slaves to bacchanalia. They get drunk, have sex, get drunk, have sex. It’s hell!
GIUSEPPE
Then what’s heaven like?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Boring. It’s like this: Heaven is the spiritual. Hell is the carnal.

He points to the sky.

MEPHISTOPHELES
They deal with the mind.

He then grabs his crotch.

MEPHISTOPHELES
We deal with this. And you, Giuseppe Rossi, will never again have to swallow a "magic bean" to raise your beanstalk.

He spreads his arms and yells:

MEPHISTOPHELES
Minions!

All the Demons look up at him.

MEPHISTOPHELES
I have brought with me...music!

The Demons chant:

DEMONS
Music! Music! Music!

GIUSEPPE
Don’t you have music down here?

MEPHISTOPHELES
No.

GIUSEPPE
Why not?

Mephistopheles shrugs.

Giuseppe eyes him suspiciously.

GIUSEPPE
Why don’t you have music?
DEMONS (O.S.)  
Music! Music! Music!

MEPHISTOPHELES  
Listen to them. Their ears are aching to hear your voice. Technically "my" voice now. Go ahead and sing.

GIUSEPPE  
What shall I sing? Verdi’s "Ingemisco?" Or something from Gounod’s "Faust?" Perhaps Boito’s "Mefistofele" would be more apropos?

MEPHISTOPHELES  
Sing whatever the fuck you want.

GIUSEPPE  
Then I will change themes and sing "La donna è mobile" from Rigoletto.

MEPHISTOPHELES  
The song about the dead daughter?

GIUSEPPE  
It has nothing to do with a dead daughter. I mean, Rigoletto’s daughter does die in the end and he does sing "La donna...

The Demons clamor loudly for Music.

MEPHISTOPHELES  
Just sing the fucking song.

GIUSEPPE  
Where’s the orchestra?

MEPHISTOPHELES  
The Spectral Orchestra will perform as soon as you sing. Your, I mean, "our" operatic voice is the key to activate the music. Now sing!

Giuseppe steps forward and belts out the song.

The Violet Sky changes to LURID GREEN as ORCHESTRA MUSIC blasts out of it and catches up to Giuseppe’s aria.

Mephistopheles gasps in wonder at the sound of the music.
MEPHISTOPHELES
Ah, the Spectral Orchestra!

All the Demons grab each other and have insane sex when a BLACK CLOUD creeps overhead.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Yes! It’s working!

Giuseppe finishes the song strong and the Demons scream in an orgiastic furor.

The Black Cloud releases ACID RAIN on the Demons. Their flesh sizzles with the raindrops and they all lay on the ground in pure relaxation.

GIUSEPPE
What’s happening to them?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Acid rain. Their bodies absorb it like a sponge.

GIUSEPPE
Isn’t that painful?

MEPHISTOPHELES
There is no pain in hell. Only absolute pleasure. The sulfur re-energizes their bodies for more sex later.

GIUSEPPE
Shall I sing another aria?

MEPHISTOPHELES
No. You may return to your body...for now.

He snaps his fingers and Giuseppe disappears.

INT. BEDROOM, GIUSEPPE’S APARTMENT - DAY

The glare of the morning sun wakes up Giuseppe. He quickly checks his chest and breathes a sigh of relief.

The DOORBELL RINGS.
INT. LIVING ROOM, GIUSEPPE’S APARTMENT - DAY
Giuseppe opens the door. It’s Walter.

GIUSEPPE
Good morning.

WALTER
Good morning? Why haven’t you been answering your telephone? I was chewing needles over you.

GIUSEPPE
I overslept.

WALTER
So you haven’t heard the news?

GIUSEPPE
What?

Walter hands him a newspaper.

WALTER
Turn to page 30.

Giuseppe does.

INSERT: ARTICLE
Giuseppe Rossi Honored with the President’s Award.

BACK TO SCENE

GIUSEPPE
Is this true?

WALTER
Yes! You will sing at a gala for the President of the United States on live television. You are the first opera singer to ever receive such an honor.

Giuseppe steps back and relishes the thought.

GIUSEPPE
My goodness, Walter.

WALTER
This is wonderful news. What shall you sing?
GIUSEPPE
I don’t know? I’ll audition a few songs in the shower.

He hums several different songs as he waltzes to the shower.

WALTER
It’s a shame you received such great news on a day of mourning.

GIUSEPPE (O.S.)
What’s that?

WALTER
Nothing.

He turns the TELEVISION on.

INSERT: TELEVISION SCREEN

Multiple Breaking News:

Hurricane Slams Miami, Thousands Feared Dead.

Earthquake in Rajasthan, India, Casualties Unknown.

Volcano Eruption in the Congo, Hundreds Killed.

EXT. THE WORLD THEATER - NIGHT

PAPARAZZI and NEWS MEDIA line the Red Carpet as GUESTS in tuxedos and designer gowns stroll across it.

A limousine pulls up to the front of the theater. Flashbulbs pop and SPECTATORS CHEER as Giuseppe steps out of it dressed in a Tuxedo and a Top Hat. He poses with a robust smile and absorbs all the attention.

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)
Giuseppe Rossi has just arrived at the World Theater in Washington D.C., where in a few moments the President of the United States will present him with the President’s Award.

Schubert’s "Ave Maria" (Ellens dritter Gesang) PLAYS in the background.
INT. STAGE, THE WORLD THEATER - NIGHT

A spotlight shines on Giuseppe who performs Schubert’s "Ave Maria" before a capacity crowd. His voice sounds gentle yet emphatic.

The PRESIDENT’S AWARD, a giant gold medal, hangs around his neck and gleams like a beacon into the Audience.

INT. BOX SEATS, THE WORLD THEATER - NIGHT

A dapper man, CLAUDE VAN GHENT, 60s, sits alone with his elegant WIFE, 60s, perched near the stage.

They listen euphorically to Giuseppe’s Voice when Mephistopheles appears next to Claude and says in his ear:

        MEPHISTOPHELES
        I think he would make a wonderful addition, don’t you think?

Claude leans toward his Wife and whispers.

        CLAUDE
        I think he would make a wonderful addition, don’t you think?

His Wife nods enthusiastically.

Mephistopheles grins and disappears.

INT. OFFSTAGE, THE WORLD THEATER - NIGHT

The Audience applauds loudly as Giuseppe takes a reverential bow. He saunters offstage where Claude greets him.

        CLAUDE
        Excuse me, Mr. Rossi.

        GIUSEPPE
        Sì.

        CLAUDE
        My name is Claude Van Ghent. I am co-chairman of the IOC.

        GIUSEPPE
        The Olympics?
CLAUDE
Yes. I was in the audience with my wife watching you sing. I must say you were absolutely fantastic. I have never been so captivated in all my life.

GIUSEPPE
Grazie mille.

CLAUDE
Would you be interested in being the featured performer at next months Opening Ceremonies in Sochi?

GIUSEPPE
You are asking me to perform in front of the entire world?

CLAUDE
Yes.

Giuseppe steps back in awe of the offer.

CLAUDE
I know it’s sudden, but I believe you would make a wonderful addition to the opening ceremonies.

GIUSEPPE
I don’t know what to say? First this-

He strokes the President’s Award around his neck.

GIUSEPPE
And now the Olympics.

CLAUDE
If you feel the venue is too daunting I will completely understand.

GIUSEPPE
Can I think about it?

CLAUDE
By all means.

GIUSEPPE
Grazie.

He smiles politely and leaves.
INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

A HOTEL DOORMAN swings open the lobby door for Giuseppe as a crowd of PEOPLE stand and cheer his arrival.

A Banner which reads "BRAVO! MAESTRO ROSSI" hangs across an interior balcony.

Giuseppe sees the Banner and the People and bows his head in appreciation.

INT. ELEVATOR, HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

A Beautiful Woman, with olive skin and in a tight leather dress, DULCITA, 20s, waits by the elevator when Giuseppe arrives.

The Elevator Door opens and they both get in.

Giuseppe presses the button for his floor.

GIUSEPPE
Which floor, bellezza?

DULCITA
My name’s Dulcita.

GIUSEPPE
How sweet. Which floor was it?

DULCITA
Yours.

She steps back with her hands on her hips and smiles.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE, HOTEL - NIGHT

Dulcita tows Giuseppe toward the bed by his President’s Award while she kisses him passionately. He reaches for his suitcase and pulls out a medicine bottle.

DULCITA
What’s that?

GIUSEPPE
My "magic beans."

She takes it and tosses it away.
DULCITA
Those won’t be necessary.

She lays him on the bed and French kisses him.

Giuseppe’s face blazes with exhilaration. He touches himself and gasps.

GIUSEPPE
How did you do that?

She giggles as she pulls the bed sheet over them.

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE, HOTEL – NIGHT

Giuseppe stands next to the window in a bathrobe. He stares at the Washington Monuments in the distance when he HEARS Dulcita turn in her sleep.

He admires her curvaceous silhouette as a doleful expression sets in his face.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM, HOTEL – NIGHT

Giuseppe sits alone in a room filled with Computers. He visits the Daisy Chain Website and watches images of Zanipolo and his happy Family together on a beach somewhere.

MEPHISTOPHELES (O.C.)
Why didn’t you accept the offer to sing at the Olympics?

Giuseppe finds Mephistopheles behind him.

GIUSEPPE
When do I see my son?

MEPHISTOPHELES
These things take time. In order for that reunion to happen you’re going to need more exposure. I need your son to want to meet you.

GIUSEPPE
Well, think of another way, because my opera company is waiting for me.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Oh, about that. You’re going to have to quit.
GIUSEPPE
My opera company?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Giuseppe, you won’t gain any exposure singing with some chintzy opera company.

GIUSEPPE
But they’re my friends.

Mephistopheles shrugs.

MEPHISTOPHELES
If that’s how you feel, then don’t quit. I’m only trying to lure your son back into your world. I’ll influence him another way.

GIUSEPPE
Influence?

Mephistopheles points to his head.

MEPHISTOPHELES
I’ll get him right in here and make him my puppet. Don’t worry. You’ll have your son in no time.

GIUSEPPE
Don’t do that! Don’t...stay out of his head. I’ll quit the company.

Mephistopheles smiles to himself.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Good. You will call Claude Van Ghent from the IOC in the morning and accept his offer.

GIUSEPPE
How do I explain this to my colleagues?

MEPHISTOPHELES
You don’t have to explain shit. Just do it.

He vanishes.

Giuseppe sulks when Dulcita enters the room.
DULCITA
Who were you talking to?

GIUSEPPE
No one. I was, uh, doing some vocal exercises.

DULCITA
Then let’s go to bed.

He gets up and leaves with her.

INT. WALTER WORTHINGTON’S OFFICE – DAY

Walter and Alejandro are in the middle of a discussion when Giuseppe walks in.

WALTER
Giuseppe!

ALEJANDRO
How’s the good life?

GIUSEPPE
The good life’s good.

WALTER
Have a seat.

Giuseppe sits apprehensively.

ALEJANDRO
You okay?

WALTER
Okay? He’s on a roll. First the President’s Award to now the Olympics. Things can’t get any better.

GIUSEPPE
The past two weeks have been unreal.

He averts his eyes.

GIUSEPPE
I have something to tell you. I’ve decided to retire from the stage.

Alejandro scoffs and shakes his head.
WALTER
You---wha---retire?

GIUSEPPE
I only wish to sing on special occasions. My appetite to perform full-scale operas is gone.

ALEJANDRO
What you mean to say is that the good life has quenched your appetite.

GIUSEPPE
You don’t understand-

ALEJANDRO
I understand perfectly. You now found your wings and you can’t seem to spread them in here. So you need to fly away.

GIUSEPPE
But you have Sebastian to take my place. Wasn’t that the reason you brought him here in the first place?

WALTER
But he’s not ready to be the featured tenor.

GIUSEPPE
I am sorry.

ALEJANDRO
Giuseppe, don’t you ever forget that the only people who ever loved you are under this roof.

Alejandro gets up and storms out of the office.

WALTER
Giuseppe, I have been nothing but supportive of you for all these years. And now that the entire world has finally realized your greatness and is now esteeming you with the same gratitude that I’ve always felt for your talent, it really pains me to see you leave.
GIUSEPPE
You humble me with your kind words. But I am getting old, and this opportunity to perform as a soloist will not only be beneficial to my health but it could also lead to something very dear to me.

WALTER
What can be more dear to you than us, your family?

Giuseppe grits his teeth and holds back the tears.

WALTER
If that’s how you want it, then I wish you nothing but good luck.

He walks around the desk and hugs Giuseppe.

INT. BACKSTAGE, OPERA THEATER - DAY

Giuseppe exchanges hugs and kisses with his fellow Cast Members.

Isabella caresses his face.

ISABELLA
I’m going to miss you.

GIUSEPPE
Don’t make this goodbye any more painful for me.

Sebastian throws his arm around Giuseppe’s shoulders.

SEBASTIAN
Mio idolo, I am not ready to walk in your footsteps.

GIUSEPPE
Then make your own.

He shakes his hand and then turns to the other Cast Members.

GIUSEPPE
Ciao e buona fortuna!
EXT. STAGE DOOR, OPERA THEATER - DAY

Enrique opens the door and walks out with Giuseppe.

   ENRIQUE
   I will miss you, Mr. Rossi.

   GIUSEPPE
   Enrique, come with me. I’ll pay
   you more and you will travel all
   around the world.

   ENRIQUE
   I am too tired to work the road,
   Mr. Rossi. I will stay.

   GIUSEPPE
   Will you please tell Alejandro that
   I said goodbye.

   ENRIQUE
   I will.

   GIUSEPPE
   Take care.

   ENRIQUE
   You too. And don’t forget to break
   a thousands legs out there.

   ELENA (O.C.)
   He only needs to break one.

Giuseppe turns around and faces Elena.

   GIUSEPPE
   I’m still mad at you.

   ELENA
   Grow up, darling. You know why I
   did it.

   GIUSEPPE
   Do you love him?

   ELENA
   Jonathan’s a run of the mill Lucien
   de Rubempre. He’s a Lost Illusion.

   GIUSEPPE
   And you chose that over me?

Elena sheepishly shrugs.
EXT. SIDEWALK CAFÉ – DAY

Elena and Giuseppe sit under a table umbrella in a busy street.

ELENA
I watched you perform on television the other night. You were spectacular.

GIUSEPPE
My next performance is the Olympics.

ELENA
Now the whole world will finally hear your beautiful voice.

She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.

GIUSEPPE
What’s wrong?

ELENA
My cancer’s just as willful as me. The radiation is useless.

Giuseppe drops to his knees and buries his face in her hands.

ELENA
Giuseppe, please, control yourself.

GIUSEPPE
Mia regina! I don’t want to lose you.

ELENA
Please sit up.

GIUSEPPE
Come with me to Sochi. After I’m done we’ll travel to Tuscany and spend time at my cousin’s winery.

ELENA
I’d love to, darling, but I have a battery of treatments next week. I wanted to see you before you left.

Giuseppe lowers his head.
GIUSEPPE
Elena, I need to confess something that happened on my trip to Washington.

ELENA
No you don’t. Confessions at our age are for the priests. Besides, am I not still your muse, or was that just talk to seduce a lonely patron of the arts?

GIUSEPPE
You are my muse. Do you want to know why?

She nods.

GIUSEPPE
Back when I was out of work and no one believed in me, you did. You filled an emptiness inside of me and you reminded me of what I was born to do. So each time I sing on stage, I sing to you.

ELENA
And all this time I thought it was because I took care of all your bills?

GIUSEPPE
Who will take care of me now?

He lifts a strand of WIG HAIR off her brow.

ELENA
Giuseppe, I wish I could relive my life with you. Had I met you when I was eighteen, I might have learned how to love?

He kisses her mouth, but she doesn’t kiss back.

GIUSEPPE
Why didn’t you kiss me?

Her eyes fill with tears.

ELENA
It’s too late to learn now.
GIUSEPPE
But you’ve kissed me hundreds of times before?

She shakes her head.

ELENA
Oh, Giuseppe Rossi.

INT. GIUSEPPE’S APARTMENT – DAY

Giuseppe zips up his suitcase and heads for the front door. He sees his smashed opera pictures on the floor and hangs them back on the wall. A GROUP PHOTO of his Opera Company grabs his attention.

GIUSEPPE
Ciao.

He blows a kiss at the Group Photo and walks out.

INT. AIRPLANE – DAY

Giuseppe sits in the First Class section. He lays his ticket on the seat next to his and rubs his eyes.

DULCITA (O.C.)
Your ticket’s on my seat.

He looks up and finds Dulcita in the aisle.

GIUSEPPE
Dulcita. What are you doing here?

DULCITA
I’m covering the Olympics for a magazine.

She points to the press credentials draped around her neck.

GIUSEPPE
I didn’t know you were a journalist?

DULCITA
You and I didn’t really do a whole lot of talking before. Remember?

She motions for the STEWARDESS.
DULCITA
Could you bring me a blanket.

STEWARDESS
No problem.

She cuddles next to Giuseppe and rubs his thigh.

DULCITA
It’s going to be a long flight.

GIUSEPPE
Per favore, I don’t know if I can control myself?

The Stewardess returns with a Blanket.

STEWARDESS
Can I bring you anything else?

DULCITA
We’re good.

STEWARDESS
Enjoy the flight.

DULCITA
We will.

The Stewardess walks away as Dulcita spreads the blanket over Giuseppe’s lap.

DULCITA
Like she said, enjoy the flight.

She shoves her hand under the blanket while Guiseppe’s chest heaves with excitement.

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

LIMOUSINE DRIVERS wait by the curbside and hold PLACARDS filled with names on them.

Giuseppe and Dulcita step out of the terminal when a heavily bearded, GRIZZLED MAN, 40s, waves a Placard with Giuseppe’s name at them. He speaks with a Russian accent.

GRIZZLED MAN
Sir, welcome to Sochi, your car is waiting.

Dulcita grabs Giuseppe’s arm and pulls him aside.
DULCITA
We’re not going anywhere with him.

GRIZZLED MAN
Come, Mr. Rossi, you go with me.

GIUSEPPE
It’s okay, Dulcita.

MAN (O.S.)
Mr. Rossi!

A neatly dressed LIMO DRIVER holds a Placard with Giuseppe’s name on it.

LIMO DRIVER
Mr. Rossi, I’m to take you to the hotel.

Giuseppe looks at the Grizzled Man who fidgets nervously.

GRIZZLED MAN
You really should come with me right now.

DULCITA
He’s going nowhere with you! Security! Security!

GRIZZLED MAN
Your destination is wrong. Come with me before it’s too late.

DULCITA
Security!

The Grizzled Man scrambles away as SECURITY PERSONNEL chase after him.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Giuseppe and Dulcita sit in the backseat and gaze at the Sochi Cityscape when he turns to her.

GIUSEPPE
Who was that man?

DULCITA
(Chuckles)
My uncle. How should I know who he is?
GIUSEPPE
There was something earnest about him.

DULCITA
Do you want to go back and talk to him?

GIUSEPPE
No. I’d rather we ask the driver to take us downtown.

DULCITA
I just want to go to the hotel and rest. Fifteen-hour flights are an anesthetic on a person’s ass.

GIUSEPPE
But don’t you want to do a little sightseeing first?

DULCITA
Giuseppe, I have reservations at another hotel. If you like, I can always stay there.

GIUSEPPE
No, no. We’ll stay at mine.

He looks away and stares longingly at the City.

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

A BELLBOY, 20s, gently places luggage on the floor under Dulcita’s watchful eye.

Giuseppe lingers to the side with his face buried in a Newspaper.

She notices a CRUCIFIX dangle off the Bellboy’s neck and she immediately pushes him away.

DULCITA
That’s enough, just leave.

GIUSEPPE
What’s wrong?

DULCITA
This beast just threw my luggage on the floor. I have perfumes in there!
BELLBOY
I’m sorry. I thought I was careful.

DULCITA
No, you weren’t. Now get out.

Giuseppe hands him a tip.

BELLBOY
Thank you, sir. Again, I’m sorry.

He bows his head and leaves.

GIUSEPPE
I didn’t see him throw your luggage.

DULCITA
Of course you didn’t. You were too busy reading about yourself in the newspaper.

GIUSEPPE
You’ve been quite hostile ever since we arrived. What’s the matter?

DULCITA
My ass is numb, some wacko tried to kidnap us, some little jerk slammed my luggage on the floor. Why should I be hostile?

He walks over and gives her a kiss.

GIUSEPPE
How does that feel?

She simmers down and runs her finger down his chest.

DULCITA
It would feel better if we were lying down.

GIUSEPPE
Can I shower first?

DULCITA
As long as it’s with me.

He goes to the bathroom.

The telephone RINGS and Dulcita answers it.
DULCITA
(In the Phone)
Yes?...Mr. Rossi is indisposed and will speak to no one...I’ll let him know you called.

She hangs up.

GIUSEPPE (O.C.)
Who called?

DULCITA
My editor. I told him my new assignment is you.

GIUSEPPE (O.C.)
Ah! Then get in here and interview me.

She HEARS the Shower turn on and makes a quick telephone call.

DULCITA
(In the Phone)
Hello, we wish not to be disturbed. Can you patch all calls to voice mail... Thank you.

She pulls off her clothes and heads to the bathroom.

INT. FARMLAND - NIGHT

Giuseppe wears a farmer’s outfit while he feeds handfuls of FECES to a pigpen full of hungry SWINE.

Mephistopheles saunters over with a GOAT on a leash.

MEPHISTOPHELES
How’s the family?

GIUSEPPE
Oooh, they’re so hungry. It’s like they haven’t eaten in years.

MEPHISTOPHELES
That’s because they haven’t. Keep feeding them.

Giuseppe furrows his brow.
GIUSEPPE
What did you just say?

MEPHISTOPHELES
They haven’t eaten in years?

GIUSEPPE
No, before that.

MEPHISTOPHELES
How’s the family?

GIUSEPPE
Yeah.

He looks down and SCREAMS as the Swines MORPH into Zanipolo and his Family.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Talk about a shit-eating son.

The Goat BLEATS with laughter.

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - NIGHT
Giuseppe wakes up drenched in sweat next to Dulcita.
He climbs out of bed and gets dressed.

DULCITA (O.C.)
Giuseppe?

She rubs her sleepy eyes and sees him about to leave the room.

DULCITA
Where are you going?

GIUSEPPE
I need to get out of here.

DULCITA
Was it something I did?

GIUSEPPE
No. I just feel trapped. My mind can’t stop thinking.

DULCITA
Do you want to talk about it?
GIUSEPPE
You won’t understand.

She slides off the bed completely naked and opens the curtains. The Moonlight radiates her supple body.

DULCITA
Would you prefer I left instead?

GIUSEPPE
No.

He shuffles toward her as if magnetized by her beauty. She grabs him and strokes his chest.

DULCITA
You ever make love in the moonlight?

He shakes his head.

DULCITA
It’s like bathing in coconut cream. The skin feels silkier and the flesh tastes sweeter. Wanna try it?

He falls into her arms and she maneuvers him back to bed.

EXT. OLYMPIC STADIUM - NIGHT

A GOLF CART clears a Security Checkpoint and zips its way under the massive Stands.

Giuseppe’s wide body barely fits inside the Golf Cart as Dulcita sits up front with the DRIVER.

INT. BACKSTAGE, OLYMPIC STADIUM - NIGHT

Television Cameras and JOURNALISTS jockey for interviews with ATHLETES, MUSICIANS, and SINGERS.

Cameras and Journalists quickly descend upon Giuseppe while the Driver shields them away.

Giuseppe and Dulcita slip away from the Media and run into Claude Van Ghent and a small group of MULTI-ETHNIC CHILDREN.

CLAUDE
Maestro!
GIUSEPPE
My goodness, Claude, I never thought this would be so hectic.

CLAUDE
Welcome to the Olympics.

Giuseppe sees the Children and smiles at them.

GIUSEPPE
Who are your guests?

CLAUDE
They are the orphaned children of the recent tragedies in Miami, Rajasthan, and the Congo. I’m giving them a behind-the-scenes tour of the Olympics.

GIUSEPPE
Hello children.

They stare blankly back at him.

DULCITA
Giuseppe, I think it’s time to go.

GIUSEPPE
Just a moment. (He turns to Claude)
Claude, I would like these children to join me on stage?

CLAUDE
Oh, what a lovely gesture. But I think it’s up to them to decide.

The Children smile nervously at each other.

A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT approaches Giuseppe.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
You’re on in two minutes, Mr. Rossi.

DULCITA
Come on, Giuseppe, you’re up.

GIUSEPPE
What do you say, children? Will you join me on stage?
RAJASTHAN CHILDREN
HA!

CONGOLESE CHILDREN
OUI!

AMERICAN CHILDREN
YES!

EXT. STAGE, OLYMPIC STADIUM - NIGHT
The dark stadium sparkles with flashbulbs.
The Olympic Cauldron burns high in the sky.

PA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Ladies and Gentlemen, Giuseppe Rossi.
The Spectators CHEER as Giuseppe walks on stage with the Children. He stands before a microphone while the Children semicircle behind him.

GIUSEPPE
I dedicate this song to these Olympic Games and to the athletes who will compete in them. But I would also like to dedicate this song to these brave children who lost their parents in the recent tragedies in Miami, Rajasthan, and the Congo. May God bless them and may He protect their innocence always.

He SINGS "Celeste Aida" from Verdi’s Aida.
The Children look up at him in awe as the Spectators in the stadium are moved by Giuseppe’s rich voice.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT
An EMBALMER and his ASSISTANT take a break from their assignment and watch Giuseppe sing on a Black-and-White Television.

EMBALMER
This Giuseppe Rossi’s got one helluva voice.

His Assistant yawns.
ASSISTANT
Opera sucks.

EMBALMER
And so do philistines but I still tolerate their shitty taste in music.

ASSISTANT
How can you compare opera to rap?

EMBALMER
Exactly.

They get back to work on their assignment:

Elena Rudolf.

Giuseppe’s voice crackles over the monophonic television speaker as the Assistant shaves off the rest of Elena’s thinned hair, which floats onto the floor like feathers.

GIUSEPPE (V.O.)
(Song subtitled in English)
You are queen of my thoughts. You are the splendor of my life. I want to give you back your beautiful sky. The sweet breezes of your native land. To place a royal garland on your hair. To raise you a throne next to the sun.

The Embalmer tapes a NEW WIG onto her bald head.

EXT. STAGE, OLYMPIC STADIUM - NIGHT
Giuseppe ends the song in a flourish.

The Spectators cheer and applaud.

INT. BACKSTAGE, OLYMPIC STADIUM - NIGHT
A Female UNICEF Agent, NANCY CARTWRIGHT, 30s, watches the Children run back to her all smiles.

NANCY
You guys were great!

She hugs several of them as Giuseppe approaches her still winded from his performance.
NANCY
Hello, Mr. Rossi, I’m Nancy Cartwright with UNICEF. I want to thank you for bringing the children out on stage with you. You just made their trip absolutely memorable.

GIUSEPPE
It was my pleasure.

NANCY
Well, thanks again.

She rounds up the Children.

NANCY
Okay, guys, we’re going back to the hotel. Let’s make a straight line.

Dulcita grabs Giuseppe by the arm.

DULCITA
Time to go.

He pulls his arm away and approaches Nancy.

GIUSEPPE
Excuse me, Miss Cartwright. Would you and the children care to join me for dinner?

NANCY
I think you’ve done enough for them today.

GIUSEPPE
Really. It would be my honor.

Nancy turns to the Children.

NANCY
Children, Mr. Rossi wants to invite us to dinner. What do you say?

The Children cheer with excitement and Nancy turns back to Giuseppe.

NANCY
I guess we accept.
DULCITA (O.C.)
Giuseppe!

Giuseppe tows Dulcita away from the Children.

GIUSEPPE
Che cosa, Dulcita?

DULCITA
I want to go back to the hotel.

GIUSEPPE
You’ve kept me sequestered long enough. I want to go out.

DULCITA
Well if you think I’m a burden I can just leave?

GIUSEPPE
I would like you to join us for dinner. If you don’t want to come, then don’t.

She leans toward him and accentuates her deep cleavage.

DULCITA
But I only want to be with you.
(Whispers)
Under the moonlight.

GIUSEPPE
We will, after we have dinner with them.

DULCITA
Goodbye, Giuseppe. You just made a terrible mistake.

GIUSEPPE
What? Will you write an unflattering article about me?

She turns and walks away in a huff.

INT. FIVE-STAR RUSSIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MONEYED PATRONS watch in amusement as a fleet of RUSSIAN WAITERS pour out of the kitchen with trays loaded with Hamburgers and French Fries. The Waiters promptly serve the Children.

Giuseppe and Nancy sit alone near them.
NANCY
I’m surprised they serve hamburgers here.

GIUSEPPE
They don’t. I asked the chef to ground the filet mignon.

NANCY
This is going to cost you a fortune.

GIUSEPPE
No amount of money can relieve those children of their loneliness.

NANCY
You’ve taken quite a liking to them.

GIUSEPPE
That’s because the older you get the more you appreciate the purity of youth.

NANCY
Do you have children?

He grimaces.

GIUSEPPE
I have a son and two grandchildren.

NANCY
Why did you make that face? Are they okay?

GIUSEPPE
I have not spoken to my son in thirty years. And I have never met my grandchildren.

NANCY
I’m sorry to hear that.

GIUSEPPE
I was a very selfish man back then. I still am.

NANCY
What you’re doing for these children is not the act of a selfish man. Have you ever reached out to your son?
GIUSEPPE
I went to visit him on his thirteen birthday. I brought him a cake, presents, balloons. When I arrived at his mother’s house he demanded that I go away. His mother tried to change his mind but he wanted nothing to do with me. I stayed away ever since.

NANCY
Why did you stay away?

GIUSEPPE
The rejection hurt my pride.
(Shakes his head)
If I could only undo one moment in my life it would be that one.

NANCY
Early adolescents are a lot more forgiving than adults give them credit for. They’re at a reckless stage in their lives and they too hope to be forgiven for their juvenile misdeeds. With more persistence you could have won your son over. I can only hope you can find closure with him someday. If it’s any consolation these children consider you the world’s greatest uncle.

GIUSEPPE
At least it’s something.

TWO CHILDREN stand next to him and pose while a THIRD CHILD takes their picture. Giuseppe smiles to himself as all the Children laugh and giggle.

INT. BATHROOM STALL, FIVE-STAR RUSSIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT
Giuseppe sits on the toilet bowl and cries into a wad of tissue paper. His sniffles echo in the quiet room when a PATRON POUNDS on the stall next to his.

PATRON (O.S.)
Hey, keep it down in there!

GIUSEPPE
Excuse me.

He stifles his sobs when the bathroom door SQUEAKS OPEN.
Giuseppe HEARS FOOTSTEPS tap across the floor until a pair of Pointy Red Shoes appear below the door of his stall.

MEPHISTOPHELES (O.S.)
Giuseppe, you jerking off?

GIUSEPPE
What are you doing here?

MEPHISTOPHELES (O.S.)
I know if I was you I’d jerk off to Nancy and her plump ass right about now.

GIUSEPPE
What do you want?

The Patron POUNDS on the stall again.

PATRON (O.S.)
Hey, cell phones aren’t allowed in the restaurant!

GIUSEPPE
Will you please stop pounding on the stall.

PATRON (O.S.)
Turn off your cell phone and keep quiet, asshole!

MEPHISTOPHELES (O.S.)
What an annoying piece of shit.

Giuseppe HEARS the Patron’s DEATH GURGLE and the THUD of his lifeless body slump against the stall.

MEPHISTOPHELES (O.S.)
Now, where were we? Oh, yes. I need my voice right now. So if you could go to the hotel and sleep I would greatly appreciate it.

GIUSEPPE
I’ll go when I am finished having dinner with the children.

MEPHISTOPHELES (O.S.)
I said now.

GIUSEPPE
When I’m finished!
MEPHISTOPHELES (O.S.)
Listen carefully, Giuseppe: you can either be in bed in ten minutes or all twelve children will contract E. coli through contaminated filet mignon.

GIUSEPPE
But you can’t--

MEPHISTOPHELES (O.S.)
I can’t? Tell that to the prick in the stall next to you. Ten minutes.

GIUSEPPE
Wait!

The Pointy Red Shoes instantly disappear.

INT. FIVE-STAR RUSSIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Giuseppe hurries toward Nancy.

GIUSEPPE
Nancy, I apologize but an emergency has come up and I must go. I’ve settled il conto.

She gets up and shakes his hand.

NANCY
I’m sorry you have to leave so soon. It was really nice meeting you.

GIUSEPPE
Grazie.

He kisses her hand and walks away.

The Children look up at him and call after him.

Giuseppe lowers his head and never looks back.

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - NIGHT

The front door springs open and Giuseppe jumps into bed fully clothed. He pulls the covers over his head.
Mephistopheles materializes before the bed and rips the bed sheet off Giuseppe’s head.

Mephistopheles (O.C.)
The next time you disobey my instructions you will feel this:

He motions with his hand at Giuseppe’s head and Giuseppe’s eardrums EXPLODE out of his ears.

Giuseppe clutches his head and screams in pain.

Mephistopheles
That’s for not listening.

He then waves his hand over Giuseppe’s legs. Both Legs entwine into a Corkscrew as the leg bones CRUSH like Styrofoam. Blood squirts out of Giuseppe’s shoes.

Giuseppe
Please God!

Mephistopheles
Not God, Mephistopheles.

He snaps his fingers.

INT. NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

Countless Demons scream and moan and guzzle booze while in the throes of sexual frenzy.

Mephistopheles materializes with Corkscrew Shaped Giuseppe on top of the Canyon.

The Demons stop copulating and rise to their feet in unison.

Demons
Music! Music! Music!

Mephistopheles lifts Giuseppe by the armpits and drives his pointy feet into the ground. He twists him clockwise until he’s buried firmly before the Demon Valley.
MEPHISTOPHELES

Sing!

Giuseppe instantly SINGS "Largo al Factotum" from Rossini’s Barber of Seville.

The Violet Sky changes to Lurid Green and the Spectral Orchestra blasts its music at the Demons.

As he belts out the aria Giuseppe lowers his eyes and sees a pool of blood spread underneath him. He continues to sing with a terror-glazed expression on his face.

INT. GORGE, DEMON VALLEY - UNKNOWN

Black, thundering clouds engulf the sky. Acid Rain pours over the Demons who claw and ravish each other on the ground. Their bodies sear and steam in the Rain Water as it cascades off their demon flesh and flows toward the Lava River. As the Rain Water makes contact with the Lava River, an ELECTRIC CHARGE pulsates through it.

The Lava River radiates a BLOW GLOW.

EXT. LA PALMA, THE CANARY ISLANDS - NIGHT

An OLD FARMER with a flashlight walks his DOG along a dirt road surrounded by trees.

SUPERIMPOSE: La Palma, Canary Islands

He smells the air and stops. He looks up at the silhouette of a Mountain Range that suddenly trembles.

All the BIRDS in the trees scatter to the air.

The Old Farmer grabs his Dog and dashes away.

A GIANT VOLCANO EXPLODES as gas and lava pour out of it.

The night sky glows Lurid Green for a brief moment.

INT. NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

Giuseppe finishes the song.

Mephistopheles uncorks him and drops him on the ground. Giuseppe’s legs return to normal while Mephistopheles shoves both of his Eardrums back into his head.
MEPHISTOPHELES
Will you listen to me now?

GIUSEPPE
Yes.

While on his back he watches the Black Clouds evaporate and
the Acid Rain dribble its final raindrops upon the Demon
Forest.

GIUSEPPE
Why does it only rain down there
and not up here?

MEPHISTOPHELES
The rain falls upon the source
which creates it.

He points at the Demons.

MEPHISTOPHELES
They create it.

An ENORMOUS BLACK SHADOW looms over Giuseppe’s Body.

He shivers as a chill races down his back.

Giuseppe sits up and sees:

SATAN.

MEPHISTOPHELES (O.C.)
Giuseppe, this is Satan. He’s a
big fan of yours.

Satan, who looks like an eight-foot bat with large fleshy
wings, bows to him. He GROWLS something in Latin.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Satan would like you to know that
he enjoys your voice.

Giuseppe’s mouth trembles with fear.

Satan growls something else in Latin.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Satan would also like to hear a
little bit of Warren Zevon?

GIUSEPPE
Wh-who’s Warren Zevon?

Mephistopheles interprets the question to Satan in Latin.
Satan mumbles something to himself and NUDGES past Mephistopheles who scowls behind Satan’s back.

Mephistopheles
(Mutters)
Pardon me, master.

Giuseppe
What did Satan say?

Mephistopheles
He said you’re an asshole. Let’s take a walk.

INT. LAVA RIVER, DEMON VALLEY, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN
Demons dive into the lava and bathe each other with it. Mephistopheles guides Giuseppe alongside it.

Mephistopheles
This is where the minions heal.

Giuseppe
Is that lava?

Mephistopheles
Yes. It flows from the Earth’s core. It cures the demon flesh damaged in the Saturnalia.

Giuseppe sees a Demon with a gouged back miraculously heal with Lava.

Giuseppe
I noticed the Lava turn blue when it rains.

Mephistopheles
The rain water washes the filth off the demon bodies and runs off into the lava river. That’s the blue glow you see.

Giuseppe
Mephistopheles, about our deal?

Mephistopheles motions for silence and checks to see that they’re alone.
MEPHISTOPHELES
I would like you to sing a song I wrote.

He snaps his fingers and a SINGLE SHEET MUSIC appears in his hand.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Rehearse this when you are alone. No one is to hear, read, or comprehend this material. If you betray me I will punish you in the harshest manner possible.

He stuffs the Sheet Music in his Giuseppe’s jacket.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Giuseppe, you have become more famous than ever before. Soon your name will be synonymous with Pavarotti, McCormack, and Domingo.

GIUSEPPE
(Raises his voice)
When do I see my son?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Calm down. You’ll see him soon.

GIUSEPPE
That was the deal. Remember?

MEPHISTOPHELES
You don’t have to remind me of deals. I’m Mephistopheles.

GIUSEPPE
I don’t want fame, just my son.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Fine.

He grabs his head like a basketball.

GIUSEPPE
Let go of me!

MEPHISTOPHELES
Just close your eyes and watch.
EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

A bountiful farm filled with vegetables grace the pastoral landscape.

ZANIPOLO wears a farmers outfit and sits alone in a rustic patio. He eats a bowl of fresh olives while he reads a magazine with Giuseppe’s face on the cover.

Giuseppe and Mephistopheles appear next to him.

GIUSEPPE
Zanipolo!

MEPHISTOPHELES
He can’t hear you.

GIUSEPPE
This is all his?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Your boy owns one of the most prodigious farms in southern Italy. You should be proud of him.

GIUSEPPE
Look. He’s reading about me.

MEPHISTOPHELES
See? Exposure. I told you it was only a matter of time before he pays you a visit.

Zanipolo lays the magazine on his lap and closes his eyes.

GIUSEPPE
What’s he thinking?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Want me to find out?

He reaches for Zanipolo’s head.

GIUSEPPE
Don’t touch him! When can I speak to him?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Soon. Now remember, Giuseppe. Learn my music and sing it with the same ardor as you would any other opera song. I want it performed perfectly. Otherwise, you’ll be feeding your son...
He points over to the same pigpen full of Swine from Giuseppe’s nightmare.

METHISTOPHELES
....in there.

GIUSEPPE
No!

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

An alarm clock BUZZES.

Giuseppe wakes up and he immediately checks his legs and ears, which are now back to normal. He pulls out a CRUMPLED BULGE from his jacket.

It’s Mephistopheles’ Single Sheet Music.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

A mad rush of HOTEL GUESTS check out at the reception desk.

Giuseppe wanders through the lobby when he stops and notices the commotion.

The Bellboy from before hurries past him.

GIUSEPPE
Young man, what is happening? Why is everyone leaving?

BELLBOY
Oh, sir, haven’t you heard? The Olympics are suspended. You must leave immediately.

GIUSEPPE
Porca vacca! Why?

A FIGHT breaks out between Guests and the Hotel Desk Clerks. The Bellboy flusters and hurries toward the Melee.

Giuseppe sees the NEWS on the TELEVISION in the Lounge Area.

TELEVISION REPORTER (V.O.)
And more breaking news at this hour: a tsunami wave has just struck the coast of Cadiz, Spain killing scores of tourists and locals. The cause for the tsunami
TELEVISION REPORTER (V.O.)
is attributed to the unexplained
volcanic eruption in La Palma of the Canary Islands. This natural
disaster comes on the heels of the Central Asian SARS pandemic which has now crippled the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

Giuseppe’s knees buckle as Multiple Videos of Drowned Spaniards and of Dying Asians fill the television screen.

GIUSEPPE
Per l’amor di Dio.

He turns around and hurries to the elevator when:

A MASKED MAN grabs Giuseppe and drags him out of the lobby.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

The Masked Man lugs Giuseppe into a waiting VAN which promptly peels out down the street.

INT. VAN - DAY

The Masked Man holds Giuseppe down as the DRIVER looks back and slaps Giuseppe’s knee.

It’s Alejandro.

ALEJANDRO
Calm down, old friend. It’s me.

GIUSEPPE
Alejandro! What’s happening? I’m being kidnapped.

ALEJANDRO
No. You’re being rescued.

The Masked Man lets go of him and laughs.

GIUSEPPE
I know that laugh!

He reaches over and pulls off the Mask.

It’s Enrique.
GIUSEPPE
What are you doing here?

ENRIQUE
Sorry I was brusque back there, Mr. Rossi.

GIUSEPPE
Where are we going?

ALEJANDRO
Someplace where he can’t get you.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

HIEROMONK VITALY, a Russian Priest-monk, 40s, shuffles down a long aisle and unlocks the Church Door. He’s also the Grizzled Man from the airport.

He lets in Alejandro, Giuseppe and Enrique.

HIEROMONK VITALY
Was he spotted?

ALEJANDRO
No.

Hieromonk Vitaly locks the Church Door.

GIUSEPPE
I remember you. You tried to lure me away at the airport.

ALEJANDRO
That’s because he was trying to save you.

HIEROMONK VITALY
Welcome, Giuseppe. I am Vitaly, the Hieromnk of this parish.

Alejandro and Enrique walk toward the alter.

Giuseppe sees the Church empty and turns around to get away.

GIUSEPPE
Let me out.

ALEJANDRO
Giuseppe!

Hieromonk Vitaly blocks the door.
HIEROMONK VITALY
No.

GIUSEPPE
Let me go!

Alejandro pulls Giuseppe away.

ALEJANDRO
Calm yourself!

GIUSEPPE
What do you plan on doing with me?

ALEJANDRO
Protect you. Protect the world.

GIUSEPPE
How? You can’t stop him. He’s too powerful.

ALEJANDRO
You’re safe on consecrated ground.

Giuseppe sees a SHADOW float over his body and looks up.

Enrique hovers above him on ANGEL WINGS.

GIUSEPPE
Mi Dio!

ENRIQUE
Don’t blaspheme, Mr. Rossi.

GIUSEPPE
You’re an angel?

ALEJANDRO (O.C.)
Guardian Angels.

Giuseppe looks over and sees Alejandro’s ANGEL WINGS unfurl behind his back.

ALEJANDRO
You’re our assignment.

GIUSEPPE
Since when?

ALEJANDRO
When do you think? Since we first met you twenty years ago.
Giuseppe staggers toward a pew and has a seat. Hieromonk Vitaly sits next to him and admires Alejandro’s and Enrique’s wings.

HIEROMONK VITALY
Aren’t they beautiful?

GIUSEPPE
Are you one of them, too?

ALEJANDRO
Hieromonk Vitaly is a mortal. He has chosen to help us.

GIUSEPPE
You knew about Mephistopheles all this time?

ALEJANDRO
I wasn’t sure until the night he showed up at the theater. Then I knew it was going to be you.

GIUSEPPE
Why me? What did I do?

ALEJANDRO
Let me first tell you about the Spectral Orchestra.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

A nervous FEMALE SINGER stands at the precipice before a throng of Demons. She SINGS an R & B Ballad and the Demons instantly engage in sex.

Mephistopheles stands behind her and watches the sky.

ALEJANDRO (V.O.)
The Spectral Orchestra is the spiritual element of the universe. Heaven’s music. It once brought peace and harmony to the world. Until an angel with a beautiful voice befouled it with lust and death. Satan.

Satan stands alongside Mephistopheles and looks up at the empty sky.
ALEJANDRO (V.O.)
As punishment God made Satan’s voice gravelly and He then banished him from heaven. The Spectral Orchestra was forever denied to Satan. So when he and his minions wanted music they needed a special kind of voice to reactivate the Spectral Orchestra.

The skies remain silent and Mephistopheles kicks the Female Singer into the Demon Valley.

ALEJANDRO (V.O.)
They needed to find the One. The One who would bring music to the damned.

INT. NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

A ROCK AND ROLL SINGER growls out a heavy metal song but the skies remain quiet.

Mephistopheles trudges over and kicks the Rock and Roll Singer into the Demon Valley.

ALEJANDRO (V.O.)
Each singer would give up their voice, but it would not activate the Spectral Orchestra.

INT. NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

A BUBBLE GUM POP STARLET squeaks out a pop song at the Demons, who cover their ears in disgust.

Mephistopheles kicks her into the Demon Valley, but the Demons throw her back up at him.

Mephistopheles waves his hand at her and she disappears.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Heaven keep you!

INT. NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

A MALE BLUES SINGER stands at the precipice and HOWLS OUT "Werewolves of London."
Mephistopheles observes the skies which remain silent. He goes to kick the Blues Singer into the Demon Valley when Satan intervenes and SINGS along with his RASPY VOICE.

SATAN & BLUES SINGER
Aaahoo, werewolves of London. Aaahoo!

ALEJANDRO (V.O.)
They attempted every musical style they could think of...accept one. The obvious one.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Alejandro leans into Giuseppe.

ALEJANDRO
Opera. The music of the Gods. The signs betokened that Mephistopheles would seize an operatic voice, the most powerful voice there is. But it was unclear with whose? There are hundreds us all over the world with assignments such as yourself.

GIUSEPPE
Like myself?

ALEJANDRO
An aging singer desperate enough to trade his voice...in exchange for a lie.

GIUSEPPE
No, no, no. He promised I would meet my son.

ALEJANDRO
And you believed him? You believed Mephistopheles, the Devil’s prince? Your voice has brought destruction upon the world.

GIUSEPPE
That’s impossible?

ALEJANDRO
What happens when you sing for the demons?
GIUSEPPE
The music in the clouds would play
and then the acid rain would fall
on the demons. The river of
lava...it glowed.

The realization deadens Giuseppe’s expression as Alejandro nods.

ALEJANDRO
The volcanoes would erupt and
unleash the misery of hell into the
sky. You, your son, and the rest
of the world will perish any day
now.

He extends his hand.

ALEJANDRO
Give it to me.

GIUSEPPE
What?

ALEJANDRO
The sheet music.

Giuseppe fumbles it out of his jacket and gives it to him.

Alejandro reads it and gasps.

ALEJANDRO
Giuseppe, have you no idea what
will happen if you sing this?

Giuseppe shakes his head.

ALEJANDRO
Something worse than the
apocalypse.

Hiermonk Vitaly and Enrique read the Sheet Music.

HIEROMONK VITALY
Mephistopheles will seize control
of hell, and destroy it.

Giuseppe’s face lights up.

GIUSEPPE
But that’s a good thing!
HIEROMONK VITALY
And at the same time convert earth
into his new Inferno.

Enrique pats Giuseppe on the back.

ENRIQUE
No, Mr. Rossi, that’s not a good thing.

The Church Doors are KICKED DOWN and Mephistopheles stands
at the threshold.

Alejandro and Enrique shield Giuseppe.

HIEROMONK VITALY
I thought you lost him?

ALEJANDRO
We did. I don’t know how he found us?

MEPHISTOPHELES
Giuseppe.

Hieromonk Vitaly raises a Russian Orthodox Cross at
Mephistopheles.

HIEROMONK VITALY
You cannot trespass consecrated
ground!

MEPHISTOPHELES
Fuck you, slave.

Alejandro holds up the Sheet Music and tears it to pieces.

ALEJANDRO
Your work with Giuseppe is finished.

MEPHISTOPHELES
I beg to differ.

He snaps his fingers and Zanipolo materializes on his knees beside him.

GIUSEPPE
Zanipolo!

ZANIPOLO
Papa!
MEPHISTOPHELES
Say goodbye to your son.

Zanipolo clenches his throat and chokes on his own blood.

GIUSEPPE
Stop!

MEPHISTOPHELES
Then come and save him.

Giuseppe barrels past Alejandro and Enrique and rushes toward him.

Alejandro grabs him from behind.

ALEJANDRO
What did I tell you?

GIUSEPPE
But Zanipolo-

His eyes widen as he catches Mephistopheles smirk at him.

GIUSEPPE
Isn’t there.

Zanipolo stands up and TRANSFORMS into Dulcita. She flicks her forked tongue at Giuseppe.

DULCITA
It’s gonna be a full moon tonight, lover. And you’re all mine.

ALEJANDRO
You had sex with that succubus?

GIUSEPPE
Did you check out her body?

MEPHISTOPHELES
(Laughs)
She’s been Giuseppe’s shadow ever since we made our deal. You silly angels can’t keep him away from me.

He steps into the Church as claws protrude out of his fingernails.

HIEROMONK VITALY
You are on consecrated ground!

Mephistopheles shakes his head and points at Giuseppe.
MEPHISTOPHELES
I said we made a deal. So that
gives me the right to take him
back.

He leaps through the air and TEARS OUT Hieromonk Vitaly’s
throat with his Claws.

Enrique engages Mephistopheles and the two grapple each
other over Pews and against Church Columns.

Dulcita charges at Giuseppe but Alejandro KICKS her clear
across the church.

He grabs Giuseppe and escapes.

Enrique puts up a valiant effort against the much faster
Mephistopheles when Dulcita surprises him from behind and
KNEES him into Mephistopheles.

Mephistopheles unfurls his SCYTHE-SHAPED WINGS and SLASHES
them down upon Enrique’s body and splits his chest wide
open.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Giuseppe runs toward the Van, but Alejandro steers him away.

ALEJANDRO
Stay on foot! Go to the main
avenue and keep moving.

Giuseppe gasps for air.

GIUSEPPE
I’m tired. I need to stop.

ALEJANDRO
Don’t! If you do he’ll find you-

Mephistopheles TACKLES him from behind and SLASHES at his
face. Alejandro kicks him off and they engage in a vicious
hand-to-hand struggle.

Giuseppe makes a run for it but sees Dulcita SCREECH after
him through the air on her Fleshy Wings. He braces himself
for impact when:

Enrique flies over Dulcita with the Russian Orthodox Cross
in his hands and SPEARS it straight through her body.

She lands on the ground DEAD while Enrique lands on his
feet.
GIUSEPPE

Enrique!

Blood pours out of Enrique’s chest wound.

ENRIQUE

Run, Mr. Rossi.

He collapses and dies.

Giuseppe turns and runs toward a POPULATED STREET while Alejandro drives his shoulder into Mephistopheles’ gut and knocks him back against the Van.

EXT. CITY STREETS, SOCHI, RUSSIA - DAY

POLICE control the jam packed streets as RIOTERS swell in great numbers.

Giuseppe bumbles breathlessly against a wall of people on the sidewalk. He leans against a lamppost to catch his breath.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Alejandro and Mephistopheles fight on the church steps.

Mephistopheles again splays his sharp Wings and spins them at Alejandro’s head.

Alejandro ducks and leg sweeps Mephistopheles into a tumble down the steps.

He straddles Mephistopheles and pounds him repeatedly.

Mephistopheles laughs while his face gets beaten to a pulp.

ALEJANDRO

What’s so funny?

MEPHISTOPHELES

I found my fat boy.

Mephistopheles VANISHES as Alejandro punches the ground.
EXT. CITY STREETS, SOCHI, RUSSIA - DAY

Giuseppe watches in horror as LOOTERS SHATTER storefront windows and Rioters hurl rocks and bottles at the Police.

Teargas Canisters are launched at the crowd and Giuseppe chokes on the fumes. He sees the sky turn Lurid Green and SCREAMS.

Mephistopheles materializes behind him.

MEPHISTOPHELES
It’s time to go, Giuseppe.

GIUSEPPE
Get away from me.

MEPHISTOPHELES
I’m not going to ask you a second time.

GIUSEPPE
No!

MEPHISTOPHELES
I guess we’ll do this the hard way.

He approaches a RIOTER and whispers into his ear. The Rioter turns his attention to Giuseppe and stalks toward him with balled fists.

GIUSEPPE
Take me.

Giuseppe stands tall when the Rioter pulls out a Knife and STABS HIM multiple times in the chest and stomach.

Giuseppe falls to the ground face first and blacks out.

EXT. HELL - UNKNOWN

A dusty wind swirls over Giuseppe’s sprawled naked body.

He sits up and feels the bloodless slits across his chest and stomach.

Mephistopheles slinks toward him.

MEPHISTOPHELES
So...you’re one of us now.

Giuseppe feels his body.
GIUSEPPE
But I’m still human. I’m still a transient.

MEPHISTOPHELES
You’ll be dead as soon as all the blood gushes out of your fat belly.

He tosses him a loincloth from his jacket.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Cover up and let’s go.

INT. DEMON VALLEY, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

All the Demons gather below the precipice where a Mini-Stage made of chiseled lava rock stands.

Satan steps onto the Mini-Stage and the Demons howl at him.

He spreads his enormous wings that span as wide as an airplane’s wings and flutters them to a voracious cheer.

Satan flies off the stage and glides above his Minions. He then reaches out with his long, muscular arms and scoops up THREE FEMALE DEMONS off the ground and flies away with them toward the Lava River.

INT. MINI-STAGE, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

Mephistopheles steps onto the Stage with Giuseppe in tow.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Silence!

All the Demons shut their frothy mouths at once.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Look what’s arriving at this very moment.

He points to a LINE OF NEW DEMONS who file in from the Steamy Fissure down to the Demon Valley.

MEPHISTOPHELES
More fresh meat for you to relish, and more diabolical energy for us to control every single creature in God’s world.

The Demons ROAR.
MEPHISTOPHELES
But we need more rain. Endless rain. God’s world will fall to ruins and the Demon Valley will be more powerful than ever before.

The Demons raise their flasks of booze in the air and howl.

GIUSEPPE
You lie! You’re going to destroy them.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Them, and Satan. While he’s out there fucking his brains out the sky will explode like a volcano and rain tephra on him and all the other demons down there.
(Mutters)
And with the extra fresh meat I packed in the Demon Valley? All that energy is gonna fuck shit up.

He lets out a diabolical laugh.

DEMONS (O.S.)
Music! Music! Music!

MEPHISTOPHELES
Listen. They’re ready.

GIUSEPPE
But I don’t want to destroy the earth.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Giuseppe, who did you ever care about other than yourself? And who ever cared about you? Your son?

He shakes his head.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Now sing my song.

Giuseppe shakes his head and laughs.

MEPHISTOPHELES
What’s so funny?

GIUSEPPE
I never memorized your song. I don’t even know how it goes?
MEPHISTOPHELES
You just like doing things the hard way, don’t you? Don’t worry. I got this.

GIUSEPPE
How are you--

Mephistopheles RAMS his fist inside Giuseppe’s head.

Giuseppe screams in pain.

MEPHISTOPHELES
You feel my hand? You should cause it’s squeezing your brain. I’m going to feed your brain the lyrics and you’re going to sing them. Capisce? And a one and a two and a...

He closes his eyes and mouths the lyrics.

Giuseppe automatically SINGS Mephistopheles’ Song.

The Violet Sky morphs into Lurid Green and the Spectral Orchestra unleashes a FEROCIOUS ALLEGRO, a musical composition so fast that it sounds synthesized.

Black Clouds swell above the Demon Valley and a powerful wind knocks all the Demons to the ground.

Giuseppe’s Voice belts out a cacophonous melody as the Demons have rabid sex with each other.

The Black Clouds unleash Acid Rain onto the Demon Valley and washes dirt and sex off the Demons. The Rain Water streams into the Lava River and intensifies it into a Blue Glow.

INT. NOAA MONITORING STATION - DAY

A Large Electronic Board of the Earth lights up with tiny red dots.

SUPERIMPOSE: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Washington Monitoring Station.

SCIENTISTS scramble madly at the sight of the Board.

One of the Scientists, JESSICA, yanks her STATION CHIEF, VINCENT, away from the coffee machine.
JESSICA
Sir, you have to see this!

She drags Vincent to the front of the Board.

VINCENT
Is all that volcanic activity happening at once?

The Monitoring Station trembles and an EMERGENCY SIREN blares throughout the room.

Everyone ducks under a desk except for Jessica who runs to a nearby window and watches the sky turn Lurid Green.

INT. MINI-STAGE, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

Giuseppe’s SINGS faster and the Spectral Orchestra speeds its music fast forward.

The Acid Rain now converts into a FIREBALL (TEPHRA) STORM that SMASHES the Demon Valley into rubble.

INT. DEMON VALLEY, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

The sexual moans turn into Death Shrills.

A mad Demon scramble ensues as Demons are bombarded with Fireballs and destroyed upon impact.

INT. LAVA RIVER, DEMON VALLEY, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

Fireballs rip Satan’s Three Female Demon Lovers to shreds while Satan’s large, powerful body weakens and collapses under the onslaught.

INT. MINI-STAGE, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

Mephistopheles opens his eyes and watches all the Demons get torn to pieces by the Fireballs. In a fit of excitement he pulls his hand out of Giuseppe’s head.

MEPHISTOPHELES
Hell is mine!

Giuseppe STOPs singing as his eyes roll around in a daze.

The Spectral Orchestra goes SILENT and the Fireball Storm ends.
MEPHISTOPHELES
Shit, the music!

He grabs Giuseppe’s head and prepares to shove his hand back inside when Giuseppe rears back and knocks Mephistopheles to the ground.

Giuseppe runs up the sandy pathway and away from the Demon Valley.

INT. LAVA RIVER, DEMON VALLEY, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN
The final Fireballs land on Satan’s battered body. He realizes the attack is over and CRAWLS into the Lava River.

INT. NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN
Giuseppe’s feet sinks deeper with each step into the sand.
Mephistopheles catches up to him and PUNCHES him in the back of the head.

MEPHISTOPHELES
(Grumbles)
I don’t get you? I give you fame. I give you pussy. And in return you give me ingratitude.

He lifts Giuseppe over his shoulders and carries him back to the Mini-Stage.

EXT. CITY STREETS, SOCHI, RUSSIA - DAY
Teargas and colored smoke fill the air as Police in Riot Gear clash with Rioters in an all-out battle under the Lurid Green Sky.

Alejandro weaves his way around the combatants and finds Giuseppe on the sidewalk drenched in blood. He lifts him up and carries him away from the violence.

ALEJANDRO
Giuseppe, open your eyes! Open your eyes!
INT. MINI-STAGE, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

Mephistopheles slams Giuseppe onto the stage and rams his hand into the back of Giuseppe’s head.

    MEPHISTOPHELES
    Sing, you piece of shit! And a one and a two...

    ALEJANDRO (V.O.)
    Open your eyes!

Giuseppe opens his eyes and VANISHES.

Mephistopheles is left with his hand in the air where Giuseppe’s head had been.

    MEPHISTOPHELES
    Where the fuck did you go?

He looks up and sees the Black Clouds and the Lurid Green Sky fade away.

    MEPHISTOPHELES
    No.

The Violet Sky opens up.

INT. LAVA RIVER, DEMON VALLEY, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

Satan’s rejuvenated body SPRINGS out of the Lava.

He climbs out and spreads his massive wings.

Other injured Demons crawl across the smoldering land and into the Lava River.

Satan crouches and launches himself into the air like a missile.

INT. MINI-STAGE, NETHER REGION - UNKNOWN

Mephistopheles steps off the Mini-Stage and sees Satan fly toward him. He whips out a highball of scotch and knocks it back in one gulp.

Satan lands next to him and spreads his Wings.

    MEPHISTOPHELES
    Fuck you.
He then SLASHES them down upon Mephistopheles’ body and DICES him into pieces.

INT. NOAA MONITORING STATION - DAY

The Station no longer trembles.

Vincent sticks his head out from under a desk and watches all the tiny red dots disappear from the Electronic Board.

VINCENT
Look! The hotspots are decreasing.

The Scientists crawl out from their desks and cheer.

Jessica still stands by the window and watches the Lurid Green Sky fade away.

EXT. CITY STREETS, SOCHI, RUSSIA - DAY

Sunny skies brighten the smoky city as Rioters quietly disperse and Police restore calm and order.

Alejandro carries Giuseppe’s limp body in the middle of the street. He sees an AMBULANCE drive past him and he SHOUTS at it to stop. TWO PARAMEDICS get out and place Giuseppe onto a stretcher and into the Ambulance. Alejandro flies away just as one of the Paramedics turns around to ask him a question.

PARAMEDIC #1
(In Russian)
Where did he go?

PARAMEDIC #2
(In Russian)
Forget him.

PARAMEDIC #1
(In Russian)
But that was an angel!

PARAMEDIC #2
(Yells In Russian)
Quit eating the codeine tablets and let’s go!

They climb back in and speed away.
INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A RUSSIAN NURSE enters the room and pulls open the blinds. Sunlight fills the room and reveals Giuseppe asleep in bed. She checks the IV bags connected into his withered arm.

RUSSIAN NURSE
How are you this morning?

His eyes remain closed.

She strokes his cheek and he slowly opens his eyes.

RUSSIAN NURSE
I said good morning.

A RUSSIAN DOCTOR enters the room with a cheerful smile.

RUSSIAN DOCTOR
Good morning, Giuseppe. You look wonderful today.

Giuseppe drools onto his chest with glazed eyes.

RUSSIAN DOCTOR
Today is a special day. You have surprise guests waiting to see you. Anastasia will make you look like a million bucks!

He scoops back some of Giuseppe’s matted hair with his fingers.

RUSSIAN DOCTOR
Anastasia, will you please do your magic.

RUSSIAN NURSE
Certainly.

The Russian Doctor leaves while she fusses over Giuseppe’s appearance.

INT. HALLWAY, HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The Russian Doctor walks toward a FAMILY OF FOUR seated in the corridor.

RUSSIAN DOCTOR
Excuse me, sir.

A MAN rises to meet the Russian Doctor. It’s ZANIPOLO.
RUSSIAN DOCTOR
Mr. Rossi will be ready in a few moments. If all of you are ready?

He motions for Zanipolo and his WIFE, YOUNG DAUGHTER, and YOUNGER SON to follow him.

Zanipolo speaks in a thick Italian Accent.

ZANIPOLI
I will go alone.

RUSSIAN DOCTOR
Sir, I must inform you that Mr. Rossi is only alive by the mercy of God. He is very ill and may leave us at any moment.

He glances at Zanipolo’s Family.

RUSSIAN DOCTOR
I just want to make you aware of this possibility before you visit him alone.

Zanipolo shifts his eyes, conflicted as to what to do, when he finally turns to his eager Family.

ZANIPOLI
Venga con me.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Zanipolo and his Family enter. They gaze at Giuseppe and his powdered face and neatly combed hair. But his eyes are partially closed and his mouth hangs open.

Zanipolo crosses the room and stands next to him.

ALEJANDRO sits beside the bed in GHOSTLY FORM and watches Zanipolo stare at Giuseppe with a stern face.

Giuseppe’s hand inches toward Zanipolo. Zanipolo hesitates, but then clasps his Father’s hand.

Alejandro leans over and lays his phantasmal hand on top of theirs.

ALEJANDRO (V.O.)
It’s time for your encore.

Giuseppe’s eyes open wide and gaze upon Zanipolo.
INT. STAGE, OPERA THEATER - NIGHT

The theater is empty.

Giuseppe staggers onto the stage dressed in black tie.

The Footlights POP ON.

He sees no one and fidgets.

Enrique chases after him with a Powder Puff.

ENRIQUE
Mr. Rossi.

Giuseppe turns around and hugs him.

GIUSEPPE
How are you? Your chest?

ENRIQUE
I’m fine, Mr. Rossi, but we’re pressed for time. Here-

He dabs the Powder Puff on his forehead.

ENRIQUE
Too much glare on the head.

GIUSEPPE
Thank you, Enrique.

Enrique turns and leaves.

ELENA (O.C.)
Darling.

Giuseppe finds Elena on the edge of the stage. Her NATURAL HAIR swept back and her face radiant like a star.

GIUSEPPE
Mia regina.

They embrace.

GIUSEPPE
You look so beautiful.

ELENA
They have Max Factor up here. I’ll introduce you later.
GIUSEPPE
I miss you so much.

ELENA
I miss you too, handsome. Are you ready?

GIUSEPPE
No. I don’t want this to be my last song. I only want to spend time with my son.

She motions to the auditorium.

Giuseppe looks out and sees a THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY seated all by himself.

GIUSEPPE
Zanipolo.

ELENA
He’s looks lovely. Just like his father.

Zanipolo smiles at Giuseppe who smiles back nervously.

ELENA
Go on. Sing to him.

GIUSEPPE
I can’t. I am too scared.

ELENA
Your muse requests it.

She gives him a kiss and steps away.

Giuseppe looks down and sees Alejandro and his Orchestra materialize in the pit. The two friends exchange nods.

Giuseppe takes a deep breath and SINGS "È la solita storia del pastore" from Francesco Cilea’s L’arlesiana. It is a tender, melancholy song full of emotion and power.

He steps off the stage while he sings and approaches Zanipolo. He holds his son’s hand and turns to face Elena and the Stage. Giuseppe ends the song in a tearful goodbye.

Elena disappears.

Alejandro and the Orchestra disappear.

The Footlights SHUT OFF.
GIUSEPPE
Did you like it?

YOUNG ZANIPOLO
Si, papa.

GIUSEPPE
Do you forgive me?

YOUNG ZANIPOLO
Si, papa.

GIUSEPPE
I love you.

YOUNG ZANIPOLO
Ti amo troppo, papa.

Giuseppe HUGS him.

GIUSEPPE
Ciao.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Zanipolo leans over touches foreheads with Giuseppe, who lowers his eyelids like a curtain and drops his hand.

Alejandro raises his phantasmal hand and disappears.

Zanipolo’s Young Daughter comes to his side.

ZANIPOLO’S DAUGHTER
(In Italian)
What did he say?

ZANIPOLO
(In Italian)
What I needed to hear.

Zanipolo’s Wife and Son join them as they gather around Giuseppe’s deathbed.

FADE OUT