

CARUSO

A new Screenplay

By Tom Attea

FADE IN:

INT. – VILLA RINI B PARTY – NIGHT

Livorno, Italy – a warm August evening in 1918. We're attending a party at the sumptuously furnished seaside villa of Rina Giachetti, the lovely and unusually patient fiancé of Enrico Caruso. She has come here from Florence for the summer, without Enrico, who's still in America; it has, in fact, been three years since he's been back to Italy. Yet we hear Caruso's authentic voice in the background and see that it's coming from a gramophone on which spins a 78-rmp record.

CUT TO:

TWO SHOT – RINA AND DR. PIERALLINI

Rina – a dark-haired, elegantly dressed, and flirtatious woman in her 30's – is off in a secluded corner with Dr. Galileo Pierallini, her lung specialist, who has developed a hardly controllable amorous interest in her.

DR. PIERALLINI

(trying to kiss her)

How much longer are you going to wait for him?

RINA

I've been doing that most of my life. So your guess is as good as mine.

Caruso's younger son, Enrico Caruso, Jr., age ten, known by his nickname Mimmi, peeks in from the edge of the doorway. He sees Rina and the doctor, but they still haven't noticed him.

DR. PIERALLINI

But, Rina, don't you understand? I love you. I'd marry you tomorrow.

RINA

You have one thing in common with Enrico. When you get close to a woman, you start to pant. Now, be a good little pet and remember – I'm engaged.

She slips away from him and is startled to see Enrico, Jr., looking at her with puzzlement.

RINA (CONT'D)

Mimmi, what are you doing? You're supposed to be in bed.

MIMMI

I know, Auntie Rina.
(points to table of desserts)
But this is where the cookies are.

She shakes her head, takes his hand, and leads him to the table, where she gives him two cookies and motions him off to bed. He dashes off with his treasure.

CUT TO:

BALLROOM – THE PARTY – NIGHT

Rina makes her way among her guests. She carries herself in a confident, graceful way, befitting her stature as a prima donna who has performed in the great opera houses of Europe. It has now been three years since she retired from the stage, maybe due to vocal difficulties but just as likely to the start of her relationship with Caruso, who insisted on being the only one in the family to sing professionally.

Attendance at the soiree is limited to her close circle of friends, all rather young and obviously well-to-do – not so much fellow artists but lawyers, doctors, and businessmen with their glamorous and not infrequently catty wives. We also get our first glimpse of her stepmother, Teresa, a pretty woman in her late forties, who is busy seeing to it that the needs of the guests, in terms of food and drink, are being met by the servants. Guido, Rina's father, a thick-featured, mustached, and confident man of about 60, is playing cards with three other gentlemen and sipping wine with his usual gusto.

The CAMERA picks up Rina, chatting with friends – among them the handsome mayor of Livorno, Malenchini, the blustery General La Chantain, and the Fontanellas, an attractive couple about Rina's age. The signora is wearing quite a revealing evening gown, and Signor Fontanella is dressed in the well-starched formal attire of the time.

MAYOR MALENCHINI

When the recording's over, you've got to play another one.

GENERAL LA CHANTAIN

There's just no other voice like Caruso's.

SIGNORA FONTANELLA

(to Rina)

But doesn't listening to them make you miss him even more? He's been in America so long.

SIGNOR FONTANELLA

About three years now, right?

RINA

Yes.

SIGNORA FONTANELLA

Did you set the date for your wedding yet?

RINA

We're going to when he gets back.

GENERAL LA CHANTAIN

That should be soon. The Kaiser's finally near defeat, and transatlantic travel is finally getting safe.

Dr. Pierallini enters in time to hear the last comment.

DR. PIERALLINI

Hasn't the ocean been safe for months?

Attorney Levi, a handsome young man, enters.

ATTORNEY LEVI

Rina, how about singing for us? I'll accompany you.

RINA

I might. If you're lucky.

ATTORNEY LEVI

I love her voice.

(to her)

You never should've quit opera.

DR. PIERALLINI

You know the reason. The great Caruso can't stand the competition.

RINA
What would you like to hear?

CUT TO:

INT. – PIANO ROOM – NIGHT

Rina starts to sing one of Mimi's arias from La Boheme, with Attorney Levi providing the piano accompaniment. She does a beautiful job, and her guests show their appreciation.

DISSOLVE:

THE FRONT DOOR

Rina is saying goodnight to the last of her guests. Only Dr. Pierallini remains.

DR. PIERALLINI
(tentatively)
Am I supposed to leave like everyone else?

RINA
I should make you. You were very bad tonight.

DR. PIERALLINI
I was just more in love with you than usual.

RINA
That's a very good excuse. How about a nightcap?

CUT TO:

INT. – RINA'S APARTMENT B DAY

It's the following morning. Mimmi, dressed in knickers, is sitting on a windowsill, gazing out. Rina enters, in an attractive everyday dress.

RINA
Mimmi, why so serious?
(goes to him)

MIMMI

Papa was supposed to be here for
the whole summer, and now it's
almost over.

RINA

I'm sure he misses us as –

She's interrupted by a sudden commotion coming from the direction of the front door. Her father, Guido, dressed more casually, in a dark sports jacket, enters with a newspaper. He is deeply upset. Teresa, in a long everyday dress, who has been trying to hold him back, follows, grasping desperately for the paper.

TERESA

Guido, don't! Please!
(sees Rina and stops)

RINA

(rising)
What's wrong, Papa? Teresa?

Guido is too distraught to speak. Rina crosses to him and takes the paper. REVERSE over her shoulder.

HEADLINE: ACARUSO MARRIES AMERICAN WOMAN!@

REVERSE. We see her react. The news devastates her.

GUIDO

I'm sorry, Rina.

TERESA

How could he do such a thing?

MIMMI

What's going on, Auntie Rina?

Rina raises a trembling hand to her face and lets the paper drop to the floor.

GUIDO

I'm the one who's to blame. If I hadn't told him
to marry you after your sister hurt –

RINA

(she squeezes his arm)

– Please, Papa, don't go into that. It turns out that she was right. He's a woman's man. A terribly disappointing woman's man. And, as it turns out, I'm just not the woman.

TERESA

You're still young and beautiful, dear. And you can have any man you want.

RINA

I agree totally.

(makes an effort to gain control of herself)

So why don't we all just move on with our lives? I certainly intend to go on with mine.

She turns from her father and walks to a photograph of Caruso. Quietly and with great resolve, she turns it toward the wall. Then she strides out of the room, breaking into tears at the last moment.

GUIDO

If he was here, I'd shoot him in the head.

TERESA

Oh, stop it, Guido. You loved him like a son.

GUIDO

But my daughters – now the son of a bitch has wrecked both of their lives.

CAMERA picks up Mimmi, who's looking at the headline, perplexed.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – CARUSO HOME IN NAPLES – DAY

TITLE: "20 Years Earlier."

We're on a narrow street in a poor neighborhood of Naples, where the colorful but faded tenements yawn toward one another. This is the where Caruso was born and spent his early years. We see him now, a husky young man in his early twenties, dressed in slacks

and a half-open shirt, moving quickly along the street toward the small two-story, yellow building where he now lives with his father and stepmother. Very excited, he pulls open the door and hurries up the narrow stairs to the second floor.

CUT TO:

INT. – CARUSO HOME – DAY

He enters the small, plainly furnished apartment and spots his father, Marcellino – a heavy-set, bald man of about 50, with a thick moustache. He is at the sink, washing automobile grease from his hands. His second wife, Maria, an attractive woman who's quite a bit younger, is preparing a pasta dinner.

CARUSO

Papa, Maria, I've been booked to sing at the Teatro Bellini!

MARCELLINO

(unimpressed)

Really?

CARUSO

Yes, in La Traviata, right here in Naples. Isn't that great? Aren't you excited?

MARCELLINO

Why? To see you make an ass of yourself.
(throwing aside his hand towel)
Enrico, you'll starve as a singer.

CARUSO

That's what you say, Papa. But this isn't just another engagement to sing in church or a café. I'm booked to sing Alfredo in La Traviata – here in our hometown. Tell him, Maria, it's wonderful! Fantastic! Incredible!

MARIA

Don't try to get me involved. I'm not your mother.

MARCELLINO

Smart woman, Maria. Stick to the cooking like a good little wife.

MARIA

Eh, Marcellino? How about closing
your big mouth?

MARCELLINO

So how much are they paying you?

CARUSO

Well, that's not the point. I'm just starting
out and B

MARCELLINO

– How much?

(goes to him; helpfully)

Listen, son. You have great mechanical
aptitude. You can be a first-rate mechanic,
just like me.

CARUO

Never as good as you, Papa. You love it.
I hate it. I find out every day when I work
at the factory. You should be more like Mama,
God rest her soul. She'd hug me and kiss me
and tell me to go there and sing like an angel.

MARCELLINO

Would she? I wouldn't be so sure.

CARUSO

Ah, Papa, come on. Cheer up! And say
you'll come to hear me. I can get you a
free ticket. And bring Maria. I'll get two
free tickets!

MARCELLINO

The day I do that I'll have my head examined.
Wash your hands. It's time for dinner.

CARUSO

OK, OK. You just don't know how lucky
you are.

MARCELLINO

Lucky?

CARUSO

That's right. I'm going to make so much money
you can retire.

MARCELLINO

(to Maria)

He tells himself fairy tales and believes them.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – TEATRO BELLINI, LOBBY – NIGHT

A crowd has assembled for the performance. We see Marcellino arrive and work his way to the ticket counter, where he seems to have a disagreement with the ticket agent.

CUT TO:

MARCELLINO AND TICKET AGENT

MARCELLINO

What do you mean, I have to pay? I told you,
my son ...

(points to poster with Caruso's
name on it)

... Enrico Caruso, is singing here tonight!

TICKET AGENT

Sorry, no exceptions ...

(sarcastically)

... Mr. Caruso.

MARCELLINO

Va bene!

(reaches for wallet)

You win. I'll pay!

CUT TO:

THE SAME

Caruso arrives and is surprised to see Marcellino in the lobby.

CARUSO

Hey, what are you doing here?

MARCELLINO

What do you think? I came to hear
the voice that's going to feed and clothe
you for the rest of your life.

(holds up ticket)

And I had to buy a ticket.

CARUSO

No, no, come with me. I'll –

MARCELLINO

– Forget about it! But since I'm a paying customer,
you better at least sing in tune B or I'll boo and hiss
like everybody else.

(makes a hissing sound
in Enrico's face)

CARUSO

(waves hand in front of nose)

Papa, too much garlic.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – THE STAGE – LA TRAVIATA – NIGHT

Caruso is singing the famous drinking song, “Libiamo ne' lieti calici...” Our actor can lip sync to the real recording or sing the aria himself. CAMERA pans the audience and picks up Marcellino, who's puzzled that the other members of the audience appear to be enjoying his son's singing. Then he begins to enjoy the performance himself.

CAMERA picks up the conductor, Mugnone, an intense, somewhat rakish-looking man in his late 40s. When the aria concludes, the audience bursts into applause with shouts of “Bravo!” Mugnone raps his baton on the podium to indicate his approval. Marcellino stands and joins in with enthusiasm.

MARCELLINO

(finally standing and clapping)

Bravo, Enrico! Bravo!

(turns to person beside him and
points to stage)

That's my son!

CUT TO:

BACKSTAGE B CARUSO=S DRESSING ROOM

Caruso is removing his makeup, when there is a knock at the door.

CARUSO

Come in.

The conductor, Mugnone, comes in.

MUGNONE

Good work, Caruso.

CARUSO

Thank you, Maestro. But I'll do even better the next time.

MUGNONE

(takes a seat)

I'm sure you will. But listen. I'm scheduled to conduct at the inauguration of the new opera house in Palermo. How would you like to come along and sing there?

CARUSO

Do I like pasta?

(hugs him)

Thank you!

MUGNONE

Good. Then I'll sign you to sing La Gioconda – in fact, a dozen La Giocondas.

CARUSO

A dozen? Ah, how can I thank you? But may I ask, how much I'll be paid?

CARUSO (CONT'D)

Maybe a little more than tonight, so I can eat and have a roof over my head?

MUGONE

I'm sure we can work something out. But remember, Caruso, you have to build a track record. The truth is, you should be paying me for the opportunity!

DISSOLVE:

INT. – TEATRO MASSIMO, PALERMO B REHEARSAL BREAK – DAY

During a break in the rehearsal, Caruso is having a flirtatious conversation with a lithe and lovely young ballerina.

CARUSO

You know, beautiful, you dance so wonderfully I almost forget to sing.

BALLERINA

You just love to kid around.

CARUSO

No, no, it's true. You take over my entire mind.

BALLERINA

You're so cute.

She gives him a little kiss, as Mugnone enters with his attractive, but apparently bored, wife. He notices Caruso's flirtation with a trace of resentment. The ballerina becomes embarrassed at his gaze.

MUGNONE

(to ballerina)

Good afternoon, Anna!

BALLERINA

(little curtsy)

Good afternoon, Maestro Mugnone.

MUGNONE

(turns his gaze on Caruso)

Can you tear yourself away long enough to rehearse the second act?

Caruso indicates his eagerness to oblige, excuses himself to his female diversion, and follows Mugnone, who casts a stolen wink at her and then continues out of frame.

CUT TO:

INT. – REHEARSAL B LA GIOCONDA – DAY

Caruso is rehearsing an aria of the Duke's from the second act of La Gioconda, and Mugnone is conducting. We only hear a snatch of the song when Mugnone looks up to the side, troubled. REVERSE: He notices that his wife, in the balcony, is flirting with a number of young men. He stops the orchestra and turns to her with exasperation.

MUGNONE

(calls out)

Maria, stop acting like a whore!

She grows falsely serious. He raps on the podium and raises his arms. At the downbeat, the lights go down, the music begins, and we ...

DISSOLVE:

INT. – PERFORMANCE – LA GIOCONDA – NIGHT

Caruso in the evening's performance of the opera. The music continues, and he sings the complete aria, Mugnone conducting. There is great applause.

CUT TO:

BACKSTAGE – AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Caruso is just leaving the theater with the ballerina on his arm. Mugnone enters alone and notices them.

MUGNONE

Caruso.

CARUSO

Yes, maestro.

MUGNONE

Come here.

(to ballerina)

Tonight, you danced like a dream, floating

on the air.

BALLERINA

Thank you, Leo.

CUT TO:

TWO SHOT - MUGNONE AND CARUSO

MUGNONE

Keep your hands off her, OK?

CARUSO

Why? I like –

MUGNONE

– So do I. Got it?

CARUSO

Oh, I didn't know.

MUGNONE

If you want, I'll give you my wife. Now, I don't know why, but I found you another great engagement – this time at Livorno.

CARUSO

(hugs him)

Thank you! I sang well tonight, huh?

MUGNONE

Very well. But you need to work on your high notes. You're still not in complete control of them. Technique, technique, and –

CARUSO

– more technique. I know. I'm working on it.

MUGNONE

Good. Now, some more advice about women. Apparently, you need it.

(reaches into pocket)

At Livorno, you're going to sing opposite the

most beautiful woman I've ever known.
(takes out photo)
Ada Giachetti.

Caruso admires the photograph.

CARUSO
Hey, you have good taste. How does she sing?

MUGNONE
The same way she looks. Like an angel. But she's married. So hands off. Got it?

CARUSO
(admiring the photo)
Yes, Maestro.

CUT TO:

EXT. B STREET IN LIVORNO – DAY

Caruso is jauntily walking up a street of fashionable houses in the lovely seaside town of Livorno. He is dressed very simply, with a paper bag under his arm, in which he still carries all of his worldly belongings. He pauses before one particularly nice villa and checks the address against a note. Satisfied that he has found his destination, he walks toward it.

CUT TO:

EXT. – GIACHETTI HOUSE – DAY

An elderly woman dressed as a servant opens the door. She and Caruso converse briefly and she lets him in.

CUT TO:

INT. – GIACHETTI HOME – DAY

Caruso is pacing in the reception area, admiring the lavish furnishings, when Giuseppina Giachetti, the 60ish mother of Ada and Rina, enters, dressed simply but elegantly.

GIUSEPPINA
Signor Caruso, welcome. I'm Ada Giachetti's mother, Giuseppina.

CARUSO

Nice to meet you, Signora.

GIUSEPPINA

How can I help you?

CARUSO

I just stopped by to meet Ada.

GIUSEPPINA

Oh, I'm sorry but she's not here now.
She's out shopping with my younger
daughter, Rina.

CARUSO

Oh.

GIUSEPPINA

They'll be back for dinner. Would you like
to join us?

CARUSO

(kisses her hand)

I'd be delighted.

(he bows, inadvertently tilting
the bag with his clothes in it.

Pieces of clothing fall out onto
the floor; as he gathers them up)

Excuse me.

(points to bag)

My temporary suitcase. I left my expensive
leather one on the train.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – GIACHETTI HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A large and elegantly furnished dining room, with servants in attendance. Caruso is dining with the Giachetti family. CAMERA picks up, in addition to Giuseppina, Guido, her husband, and the lovely sisters who will become two of Caruso's great loves, Ada and Rina. Ada, like her sister, is a dark-haired and well-endowed beauty. She is now

twenty-three but already quite a successful diva. Her manner toward Caruso is somewhat haughty. Rina, now seventeen, is all innocent infatuation.

Caruso himself seems to be involved in the same enchanted confusion in which we find ourselves, and for a very evident reason. Other than their difference in age, Ada and Rina look remarkably alike. If it weren't for the age difference, we would, in fact, think they must be twins. Caruso is getting the first taste of the delightful improbability that will take up many years of what will turn out to be a very complicated love life. The first intimation of the coming tangle of relationships occurs when Ada, though reserved toward him, notices Rina's lively attraction to him with more than passing interest.

ADA

Mugnone tells me you sing quite well?

CARUSO

To tell you the truth, he's right. In fact, I've never known him to be wrong. And he says you sing like an angel.

GIUSEPPINA

You should see her reviews.

GUIDO

Never a bad one, right, Ada?

ADA

I wouldn't go that far, Papa.

(to Caruso)

My parents are my greatest fans.

How about your reviews?

CARUSO

They're excellent. And getting more excellent all the time.

ADA

You have to let me read them sometime.

CARUSO

(turns to Rina)

What do you do, Rina?

RINA

I'm a student – at the Conservatorio Cherubini.

CARUSO

Oh, a musician, too?

GUIDO

She's a wonderful soprano, like Ada.

CARUSO

(to Rina)

Will you sing for me sometime?

RINA

If you sing for me, too.

Caruso's and Rina's eyes meet for a moment.

GIUSEPPINA

Where are you staying, at a hotel?

CARUSO

(at a loss)

Yes, but I haven't picked one yet.

GUIDO

Then you should stay with us.

Rina's interest seems enlivened by the prospect, while Ada appears a bit exasperated.

GIUSEPPINA

We have more than enough room.

CARUSO

Thanks for the offer.

(looks at both sisters; smiles)

I accept.

ADA

Mother told us about your paper suitcase.

Did you bring it?

He tries not to appear insulted.

CUT TO:

EXT. – BALCONY – NIGHT

Caruso and Ada are talking on the balcony.

CARUSO

Mugnone told me you're married. But where's your husband?

ADA

In Fiume, where we live, working. He's a banker.

CARUSO

Oh, a wealthy man. Do you love him?

ADA

Can you tell me what that has to do with singing?

INT. – PIANO ROOM – DAY

Rina and Caruso are in the rather grand piano room. Rina is playing as she sings. Her voice is beautiful but her interpretation is still a bit tentative. Caruso stands by, listening, as she concludes.

CARUSO

(applauds)

Bella voce, Rina! Bella voce!

RINA

Thank you, Enrico.

She stands and finds herself close to him. Their eyes meet.

CARUSO

And bella signorina.

(strokes her cheek lightly)

So soft. And what a lovely sparkle you have in your eyes.

RINA
(uncomfortable)
Really?
(slips away)
I know what. Let's go for a
bicycle ride.

CARUSO
(close-up, surprised)
A what?

RINA
(voice over)
Come on, silly. It's fun!

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – COUNTRY ROAD – DAY

Caruso and Rina are riding bicycles along a country road. They have picnic preparations. Rina is giggling, delighted to be with him. He's not steering as steadily as he might.

RINA
How long since you were on a bicycle?

CARUSO
Since I was born. I hate exercise,
every kind of exercise.
(winks at her)
Except maybe one.

RINA
You're so naughty.

CARUSO
No, I'm a normal man.

RINA
Just keep pedaling, will you?

The front wheel of his bicycle gets caught in a rut and he loses control.

RINA

Be careful!

He crashes by the side of the road. She stops her bike and goes to him.

RINA (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

CARUSO

I think so.

RINA

(holds out hand)

Let me help you up.

He rises and they're very close.

RINA

Back on your bike.

CUT TO:

PICNIC

She and Caruso are having a picnic under a tree, with a pasta salad and wine.

CARUSO

Pasta and wine, music and love – what more
can a man ask for? Are you really as innocent
as you're acting?

RINA

I'll have lots of years to be sophisticated, won't I?

CARUSO

You steal my heart, you know that? Hey,
how would you like me to make a sketch
of your very pretty face?

RINA

Don't tell me you draw, too?

CARUSO

Oh, just little things I dash off. I'll
show you.

(he picks up a napkin and
removes a pencil from his
pocket)

Just sit there and look at me. That's
right. Don't take your eyes off me.

She attempts to do so but bursts out laughing.

CARUSO (CONT'D)

Rina, come on, now. Be serious.

RINA

All right. Here.

She looks at him, and he begins to sketch quickly.

DISSOLVE:

CARUSO

(with finished sketch of her)

What do you think? Beautiful, huh?

RINA

Oh, I love it! Thank you so much.

(gives him a quick kiss on
the cheek)

CARUSO

You're welcome. A blue sky, flowers
everywhere, and you're the loveliest
of all.

He moves toward her, and she stands up.

RINA

No, no, Rico.

CARUSO

Rico? I like that. Don't you like me?

RINA

I didn't say that.

CARUSO

Then how come you're up there and I'm
down here?

RINA

Because we just met, you big flirt. Come on,
time to go!

He reconciles himself to disappointment.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – GIACHETTI HOME – NIGHT

Caruso follows Rina down a hall, playfully. He gets closer and wants to kiss. She turns her face away.

CARUSO

Just one little kiss before bedtime.

RINA

I'm sorry.

CARUSO

(suddenly relents)

OK. Goodnight.

(turns to leave; gives her a
little wave)

RINA

Wait.

CARUSO

Why? You don't like me. But me – I could
fall in love with you.

RINA

Oh, sure. And I could fall in love with you.

CARUSO

You could? Tell me more.

RINA

That's not the point.

CARUSO

Then what is?

RINA

It's pretty basic. I want to be married before, you know. I'm just saying I think marriage –

CARUSO

– Marriage? Who said anything about that? I just wanted a little kiss.

RINA

Oh, sorry.

CARUSO

I didn't mean to hurt you. But aren't you kind of young to be thinking about marriage?

RINA

Am I?

CARUSO

Yes. And so am I. I've got so much to do before I even consider that.

RINA

Actually, so do I. I'm leaving soon, anyway.

CARUSO

Where to?

RINA

Back to school. It's time for finals.

CARUSO

At least, stay long enough to hear me sing with Ada.

RINA

Sorry. Can't.
(gives him a light kiss)
Goodnight.

She turns and hurries down the hall.

DISSOLVE:

INTERIOR – REHEARSAL – DAY

The stage of the opera house where Caruso and Ada are scheduled to sing. They're rehearsing a song from La Gioconda. He's singing mezzo voce, as he always did at rehearsals, and Ada is struggling to hear him. She finally grows impatient.

ADA

Can you please sing louder?

CARUSO

Of course, I can. But I always rehearse mezzo voce.

ADA

How do you expect me to perform with you if I can hardly hear you?

CARUSO

It's not usually a problem.

ADA

Maybe at the level you're accustomed to. Excuse me.

(she turns toward the conductor)

Can we talk?

CUT TO:

ADA WITH THE CONDUCTOR

Ada approaches the podium where the conductor, Vittorio Podesti, stands. He's a thin, handsome man with salt-and-pepper hair, dressed in casual black clothes.

PODESTI

What's up?

ADA

You know as well as I do. Caruso's voice is just too small.

PODESTI

But, Signora, I'm sure at the performance –

ADA

– I'm not going to perform with a weak tenor like that. I want him replaced.

PODESTI

If you won't take my word, remember what your friend Mugnone says about him. Come on, give the guy a chance. If he bombs, he's out.

ADA

All right, Maestro Podesti. One performance! And don't invite too many critics.

CUT TO:

INT. – OPERA STAGE – PERFORMANCE – NIGHT

Caruso and Ada sing part of a love duet from La Traviata. The performance is thrilling. Ada is enchanted, and, apparently, so is he. Wild applause.

DISSOLVE:

BACKSTAGE

The performance is over. Caruso is leaving. He sees Ada, dressed to leave. She's wearing a sexy dress and a large-brimmed black hat that curves down close to her eyes. He looks at her uncertainly. She smiles and puts out her arm.

ADA

Let's walk home together.

CUT TO:

EXT. – SEASIDE STREET – NIGHT

They're strolling along, with moonlight on the ocean.

ADA

I'm sorry I had my doubts about you. You have a glorious voice.

CARUSO

Thank you. I admire the way you sing, too.

They stop and he looks at her.

CARUSO (CONT'D)

So beautiful and talented. Tell me, why is it when I meet a woman I could love, she already belongs to someone else?

ADA

Rina doesn't.

CARUSO

She's very nice, but still a kid. I'm talking about you.

ADA

Thank you. But, as you say, I belong to someone else. And don't try to make me forget it. You almost could, you know.
(kisses him softly)

CARUSO

Tell me more about that.

ADA

What's the point? I could never leave him. I want you to know that.

CARUSO

What's he got that I haven't got?

ADA

I'm not talking about him. I have a little son to think about.

CUT TO:

INT. – GIACHETTI HOME – DAY

Caruso is standing, looking at an open newspaper, and Ada is lying on the couch. Other newspapers are scattered about. They are in a mutually ebullient mood.

CARUSO

(with newspaper)
 Good news! The reviewer had two ears.
 He says I'm "an artist with a brilliant future."

ADA
 Congratulations. What's he say
 about me?

CARUSO
 It's a rave.
 (a bit difficult for him to admit)
 "Divine voice. Captivating presence.
 Impeccable technique."
 (hands her the paper)
 Here. Read it yourself.

ADA
 Don't be jealous, Rico. I've studied
 with the best.

CARUSO
 I've had some great teachers myself.

ADA
 That may be so. But not the first-rate
 schooling I've had. Well, you're going
 to have it now.
 (stands and gives him
 a small kiss)
 Because I'm going to teach you,
 if you can swallow your pride long enough
 to learn. What do you say, handsome?

CARUSO
 I'm always willing to learn, especially
 from such a beautiful teacher.

ADA
 Good.
 (she takes his hand)
 Then let's get started, shall we?

She leads him to the piano and sits down.

ADA

Ready?

CARUSO

Go ahead.

ADA

(strikes a note)

Sing it, Caruso!

He sings the note.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – OUTDOOR CAFÉ ON THE OCEAN - DAY

Caruso and Ada are having lunch with an enthusiastic impresario.

IMPRESARIO

I really like the way you two do Traviata.

ADA

Actually, so do we.

CARUSO

Thank you, maestro.

IMPRESARIO

So here's the deal. I'm going to put on a new production of Puccini's La Boheme and I'd like you to do Rodolpho and Mimi?

ADA

We'd love it.

Caruso takes her hand.

IMPRESARIO

(to Caruso)

Well?

CARUSO

What do you think? Just looking at her

makes me want to sing.

IMPRESARIO

Great. There's just one sticky little problem. I need the publisher's permission for you to sing Rodolpho, and they tell me they still haven't heard about you.

ADA

They will, trust me.

IMPRESARIO

I'm sure of that. But we need a quick fix. Puccini lives near here. I'll set up a meeting.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – BOARDWALK, WITH THE SEA BEYOND – DAY

Caruso and Ada are standing at the railing of the boardwalk.

CARUSO

So what's Puccini like?

ADA

A divine composer. And you and he have a similar passion.

CARUSO

What?

ADA

Let me put it this way. If you start to talk about women, you'll never get around to singing.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – PUCCINI'S HOME – DAY

It's a lovely lakeside villa.

CUT TO:

INT. – PUCCINI'S STUDY – DAY

The two are being shown into Puccini's study by a maid. The room is large, with a black upright piano near a high vertical window that looks out onto the lake. Puccini, still a very handsome, relatively young man with black hair and a moustache, is sitting at the piano. He sees them and rises. The maid departs as he comes toward them.

IMPRESARIO

(kisses Puccini's hand)

Thank you for seeing us, maestro. This is Caruso,
the young singer I told you about.

PUCCINI

Welcome, Signor Caruso.

CARUSO

Thank you, Maestro Puccini. I'm a
great admirer of your work.

PUCCINI

Good for you. But then who isn't?
Let's see if you can live up to your billing.
Do you know anything from my Boheme?

CARUSO

The romance.

PUCCINI

Excellent.

CARUSO

But I'd rather not put in the high C. I'm still
working on it.

PUCCINI

(as he crosses to the piano)

No problem. If you look at the score,
I've indicated the singer can decide to
go for it or not.

CARUSO

Oh, sure, but it's the custom –

PUCCINI

(sits at piano)

– Forget the custom. Most tenors sing the

whole thing badly because all they're thinking about is hitting the high C. Sing it well, and I don't give a damn about one note.

(to impresario)

Have a seat.

IMPRESARIO

Thank you.

(sits on a nearby chair)

PUCCINI

Ready?

CARUSO

Yes, maestro.

Puccini turns to the piano and begins to play the accompaniment to "Che gelida manina," or "How cold your hands are." Caruso starts to sing, clearly to outdo himself. The impresario watches to see if he can detect Puccini's response. The aria reaches its conclusion, and Puccini rises from the piano.

PUCCINI

(embraces Caruso)

To hell with the high C! That was magnificent!

(to impresario)

I know you'll take all the credit, but I think God himself sent him to me.

IMPRESARIO

So he has your permission to –

PUCCINI

Not only to sing it, but to keep on singing it until he dies.

(to Caruso)

And to sing it with Ada Giachetti?

PUCCINI (CONT'D)

(taps Caruso on the shoulder)

How lucky can you get?

DISSOLVE:

INT. – THE GIACHETTI HOME – DAY

Caruso arrives. Ada greets him.

ADA

How did you do? I've been so nervous.

CARUSO

(bows and tips his hat)

How about a kiss for the new Rodolpho?

DISSOLVE:

INT. – OPERA STAGE – PERFORMANCE – LA BOHEME – NIGHT

Caruso and Ada begin to sing a duet from the opera. Camera pans the audience, and we find among its members a delighted Puccini.

CUT TO:

EXT. – GARDEN, GIACHETTI HOME – DAY

Caruso and Ada are sitting on a white wrought-iron bench. Ada reads a newspaper review aloud.

ADA

(reading)

“Caruso surpassed all our expectations. It is impossible to give a better rendition of the role of Rodolfo.”

(puts aside paper)

Your notices are getting almost as good as mine.

CARUSO

Thanks.

ADA

Am I a great teacher or what?

CARUSO

Yes, but remember I had something to do with it.

ADA

Oh, don't be so touchy. We were great together!

CARUSO

I agree. You bring out the best in me, dear.

ADA

I do?

CARUSO

Especially when it comes to the love scenes. I'm falling in love with you, you know that, don't you? So here's the question. Despite the circumstances, is there any chance you could fall in love with me?

ADA

Is that a fair question?

CARUSO

What do you mean?

ADA

Because, my sweet, you already know the answer, don't you?

He takes her in his arms and kisses her. She resists for a moment and then kisses him back passionately.

ADA

Oh, Enrico, Enrico ...

CARUSO

I love you, Ada.

ADA

I love you, too. But –

CARUSO

– Don't say it, Ada. We could have a lifetime of happiness together. A lifetime!

They lie down, continuing to kiss passionately.

Sound of steps on the garden path. They look up, startled. REVERSE. Rina has just arrived. Seeing their lovemaking, she throws her hand to her mouth, emits a sigh of great pain, and runs off. Caruso stands up, flustered, and Ada sits up, righting her clothes.

CARUSO

Oh, hell. Where did she come from?

ADA

Who knows? I guess she's back from school.

CARUSO

Give me your hand.
(helps her up)

ADA

Thank you, dear. Don't worry. She'll get over it. She's only a child.

CARUSO

I'll see what I can do.

He heads after her.

CUT TO:

EXT. – PORCH – DAY

Caruso catches up with Rina, who's in tears.

CARUSO

Rina, please. Don't be hurt.

RINA

Oh, don't touch me!

She pulls herself away from him and runs off, as Ada arrives.

ADA

Don't worry. I'll have a talk with her.

DISSOLVE:

RINA=S BEDROOM – DAY

Rina is lying on the bed, sobbing. Ada enters and sits on the edge. She pats Rina's head to comfort her.

ADA

Now, now, little girl mustn't be too upset.

RINA

Oh, no, not at all!

ADA

I'm sorry, Rina, but a lot has happened since you left.

RINA

No kidding!

ADA

Well, you have to face it. Enrico loves me and –

RINA

– Loves you? Oh, come off it!

ADA

Believe it or not, he does. And I love him.

RINA

But you're already married.

ADA

Do we have to go into that?

RINA

I loved him first, and you know it.

ADA

Maybe you did. But how long did you know him? You have years and years to find a man who's right for you.

RINA

Oh, go away, will you? Just go away!
You stole him from me, and you know it!

Rina continues to cry as Giuseppina enters.

GIUSEPPINA

What happened?

ADA

She saw Rico and me kissing.

GUISSIPINA

Oh, God in heaven! Let me talk to her.

ADA

All right, Mama.
(rises; to Rina)
I'm sorry you're upset.

Ada strides out, and Giuseppina sits down next to Rina.

GIUSSEPINA

You love him, too, don=t you?

RINA

Since the first time I saw him.

GIUSEPPINA

Well, what are we going to do? We can=t make
two of him.

RINA

Don=t joke, Mama. He=s the first man I ever loved.
And she stole him from me! What's she going
to do, leave her husband?

GIUSEPPINA

God only knows.

RINA

I can=t stay here anymore. I just can=t.

GIUSEPPINA

But this is your home, dear.

RINA

I'm sorry. I need a place of my own.

GIUSEPPINA

We'll talk to your father about it. I promise.

Giuseppina gives her a kiss and then she gets up to leave.

GIUSEPPINA

(looks up)

Tell me, God, how can such a nice man
cause so much trouble?

CUT TO:

HALLWAY – DAY

Caruso is looking out the window. Ada is with him. Giuseppina enters.

GIUSEPPINA

Ada, I want to talk with you.

Ada looks at Caruso, as if it's her inconvenient duty to comply, and then moves away from him.

CUT TO:

ROOM – DAY

GIUSEPPINA

She wants to leave home.

ADA

That's ridiculous.

GIUSEPPINA

Is it? Do you expect the poor little girl
to wake up every day and watch you two
making love?

ADA

I'm sorry, Mama. I didn't plan it this way,
you know.

GIUSEPPINA

But you didn't go out of your way to prevent
it, either. Ada, what are you thinking?
You're a married woman, with –

ADA

– Gino and I don't have anything in common.

GIUSEPPINA

You knew that when you married him.

ADA

Did I? Oh, what's it matter, anyway?
Rico and I are in love, and that's that.

GIUSEPPINA

Since when is it love, Ada? I thought it was only,
you know ...

ADA

What can I tell you? One night we were
singing together and it happened.

GIUSEPPINA

But what kind of future can you have with him?
You can't divorce Gino. The church forbids it.
Not to mention Italian law.

ADA

Mama, if life were simple, it wouldn't be nearly
as interesting.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – GIACHETTI HOME, HALLWAY – DAY

Rina is dressed to leave and has a suitcase. Caruso has stopped her in the hallway.

CARUSO

Please, Rina, at least, before you go, talk to me.

(almost like a child)

You see, I'm very confused. It's true. I love
Ada. But sometimes I think maybe I love you, too.

RINA

You're impossible, Rico, do you know that?

CARUSO

At least, we can be friends, huh?

RINA

We should have been a lot more than that.
And you know it.

(kisses his forehead)

Good-bye, you funny guy.

CARUSO

I'll miss you.

RINA

If you miss me enough, send me a note. It's not
as if I'm leaving the country.

She turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. – DOORWAY – DAY

Rina is saying good-bye to Guido and Ada. Giuseppina is there but she is dressed to accompany Rina. Caruso enters and stands by Ada's side. He gives Rina a little, almost childlike wave goodbye. She turns and starts down the steps.

GUIDO

(to Giuseppina)

Make sure the apartment you pick for her
pick is safe.

GIUSEPPINA

(waves him off)

Don't worry, Guido. I know what to do.

She joins Rina, and Guido closes the door.

GUIDO

Not one, but two gorgeous daughters.
It's enough to make a man crazy.

(to Caruso)

Can I talk with you?

(to Ada)

Don't worry. I won't kill him, yet.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – GUIDO'S STUDY – DAY

Caruso is sitting in the chair opposite Guido's desk, and Guido is pacing.

GUIDO

I want to blame you for this mess, but how can I? If I found myself in a house with two beautiful women when I was your age, I'd get in the same kind of trouble. Time should heal Rina. But Ada – listen to me. She talks big, but she's very sensitive – an artist, like you. And I don't want to see her hurt. Do you honestly love her?

CARUSO

I'd marry her tomorrow.

GUIDO

You know that's impossible, at least, in Italy. But what more can you say? I like you, Caruso. You're like a member of the family. I'll keep my fingers crossed for you and Ada

CARUSO

Guido, let me tell you something. I love this whole family!
(hugs him)

INT. – GIACHETTI HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

ADA

Why did you tell Papa you'd marry me?

CARUSO

Because I would.

ADA

But –

CARUSO

– It's time to tell your husband about us.

ADA

Let's talk about it tomorrow.

(gives him a kiss)

CARUSO

But what happens when the opera season is over?

ADA

We'll still be in love, that's what.

(she kisses him)

Always in love.

CARUSO

I don't want to share you.

ADA

Oh, you're too cute. Stop being so possessive. I have to go home for the winter, to see my little Lelio.

He flops onto the bed, malcontent.

CARUSO

How can I fight that?

ADA

Just accept it. Rico, does life have to be perfect for you to be happy? Isn't it enough that what we have is beautiful? So beautiful, my love. Give me time, and I promise I'll do what I have to.

CARUSO

How much time?

ADA

I can't wait too long. I seem to be pregnant.

CARUSO

You are?

She nods yes.

CARUSO

(kisses her)

Ada, you are going to be mine! I'm so happy I can't tell you. But then how can you be with Gino?

ADA

He's an egomaniac. He'll think the child is his, until I tell him the truth. Now, promise me you'll keep our little secret for now. And how about a kiss for the mother of your child?

DISSOLVE:

INT. – HORSEDRAWN CARRIAGE – CARUSO AND ADA – DAY

He is accompanying her to the train station. He looks out at the passing city, instead of at her. She breaks the uncomfortable silence.

ADA

You can always come to Fiume for a visit.

CARUSO

I need to work. My reviews were a lot better than my pay. And soon we're going to have another mouth to feed.

ADA

You should go to Milan, where the opera season is longer. In fact, we should eventually move there.

CARUSO

If we could afford an apartment that's big enough.

ADA

I'll talk with my parents when I get back.
They'll want to help.

CUT TO:

TRAIN STATION – DAY

Caruso and Ada are on the platform.

ADA
(gives him one last kiss)
Till we're together again, love.

She boards the train. The camera moves in on his face as he watches it depart. A tear breaks from one of his eyes.

LAP DISSOLVE:

INT. – OPERA STAGE – PAGLIACCI – NIGHT

Caruso made up in his signature role, the clown, Canio, in Pagliacci, a similar tear still flowing from his eye. We hear his voice sing the aria, "Vesti la giubba," or "Dress Like A Clown."

DISSOLVE:

INT. – BOTTI HOME, FIUME' – TWO SHOT – ADA AND GINO – NIGHT

Gino Botti, Ada's husband, is a banker, and their home reflects his success. We open on a tight shot, as Gino slaps her.

GINO
Whore! What do you mean,
the child's not mine?

ADA
How dare you hit me!

GINO
Who's is it? Come on!
(strikes her again)
Who'd you sleep with?

ADA

The man I love, that's who!

GINO

Love? What the hell do you mean?

ADA

You heard me. I want a separation.

GINO

Don't even think about it. You're not going to disgrace me. I have my reputation to think about.

ADA

How would you like everyone to know who you really are? A man who beats his wife.

GINO

You drove me to it.

ADA

There's no excuse. None. If I can't have a separation, I'll just leave.

GINO

You do that, and you'll never see your precious Lelio again.

ADA

What do you mean?

GINO

You heard me. You leave me, you'll never see him again.

ADA

You selfish bastard! You know what. You deserve to be alone. If you thought about something besides making money, this would've never happened.

GINO

If you think about it at all, ask yourself how you're going to live. You'll never get another cent from me.

ADA

I just want a separation.

GINO

But, Ada, don't you understand, I love you. I love you.

ADA

You're pitiful, you know that?

GINO

(grabs her)

Ada, please, don't leave me.

ADA

Let me go. I said, take your hands off me.

He pushes her away.

GINO

If you leave me, and I'll never give you and your lover a moment of peace! I'll make you pay! I'll make you pay for every second you're with him!

ADA

It's a little late for threats, isn't it?

CUT TO:

INT. – CARUSO APARTMENT – MILAN – DAY

We hear the crying of a newborn baby. The CAMERA pans to Caruso, as the midwife presents the baby to him. He tickles it.

CUT TO:

BEDROOM – ADA IN BED WITH BABY, CARUSO BESIDE HER – DAY

ADA

I'm glad it's a son. He'd be a nice brother
for my Lelio.

CARUSO

One day we'll work that out. I made sure
Botti won't bother us anymore.

ADA

How?

CARUSO

I gave him what he understands: money.
What should we name the little one?

ADA

What do you think?

CARUSO

How about Enrico, Jr.?

ADA

I don't know if I can stand two of you.
What about Rodolpho? After the opera
we fell in love in.

CARUSO

(testing it)
"Rodolpho?" I like that.
(kisses her; talks to baby)
But I will call you Fofu for short.
Fofu Caruso. It even rhymes!

CUT TO:

EXT. – MILAN, A STREET – DAY

Caruso and Ada are walking along.

ADA

We should start to schedule some performances
together.

CARUSO

No, no. Now, you have to be a good
mama and take care of our baby and
the apartment.

ADA

Don't be silly, Enrico. I'm a singer.
Mama and Rina will help with
Fofo.

CARUSO

From now on, in this household,
I do the singing.

ADA

What about my career? I have a lot of
good years left.

CARUSO

You have a brand new career, my love.
You're Mrs. Caruso, legal or not.

He leans over and gives her a kiss. We can see she is not happy with the restriction he has placed on her.

INT. – CARUSO APARTMENT B DAY

Giuseppina is sitting in a chair in the living room, holding the baby. Rina looks on.

RINA

Let me hold him, Mama.

GIUSEPPINA

(stands)

Sit down first.

(Rina sits and she hands her the baby)

Be careful.

RINA

Oh, he's so cute. I adore him.

ADA

I'm so happy you came. How long can
you stay?

GIUSEPPINA

As long as you need me.

RINA

I have to leave soon. Didn't Mama tell you?
My operatic debut is in April.

ADA

(with some difficulty)
Really? That's wonderful, Rina. What role?

RINA

Michaela in Carmen. Won't
you and Rico come?

ADA

We wouldn't miss it.
(bends over and gives her
a kiss)
Congratulations!

Caruso arrives, removing his hat.

CARUSO

Ah, Rina, you make a beautiful mother.
(gives Ada a kiss)
Hello, dear. I have great news.

ADA

What?

CARUSO

I'm booked to make my debut at La Scala.

RINA

Oh, that's great, Rico!

ADA

(with more difficulty)
Congratulations, darling.

GIUSEPPINA

Rina's going to make her debut soon,
too, in Carmen.

CARUSO

Good for you!

RINA

I'm so happy! Ada said you'd come.

CARUSO

We wouldn't miss it.

ADA

(to Caruso)

In what role, dear?

CARUSO

Rodolpho.

ADA

Oh. Well, maybe one day you and
Rina will sing it together.

CARUSO

(going past her comment)

And guess how much I'm getting paid for
the season? \$50,000 lire.

RINA

That's incredible. Do you know
who's conducting at your debut?

CARUSO

Toscanini!

(to Ada)

Great, hunh?

DISSOLVE:

INT. – REHEARSAL – LA SCALA – DAY

Caruso, dressed in casual clothes, is singing something from La Boheme, in mezzo voce.
The music stops abruptly, and we hear a stern voice address him.

TOSCANINI

(over)

Caruso!

CARUSO

Yes, maestro.

REVERSE: Toscanini, now younger than the legendary conductor he will become but quite handsome. His hair is now black, streaked with gray, and he is wearing a trim black shirt.

TOSCANINI

A little stronger, from the chest, especially the high C.

CARUSO

With pleasure. But at the performance.

TOSCANINI

I need to hear it now; or one of us won't be at the performance.

CARUSO

But, Maestro Toscanini, I always rehearse mezzo voce.

TOSCANINI

Not for me, you don't. How do you expect me to judge anything accurately? Now, once again, full voice, and no cheap falsetto on the high notes.

Caruso prepares to comply but with an evident lack of pleasure.

INT. – CARUSO APARTMENT – NIGHT

Caruso enters, looking tired. Ada sees him.

ADA

Enrico, you look terrible. What happened?

CARUSO

(throws hat aside)

Toscanini made us rehearse

the whole opera like a real performance.

ADA

On the day of your debut? That's crazy.

CARUSO

Tell it to Toscanini. I need to lie down.

She takes his arm to support him.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – CARUSO'S DRESSING ROOM - LA SCALA – NIGHT

He is dressed for his role, lying on the couch. There is a knock at the door.

STAGE MANAGER

(off)

Five minutes, Mr. Caruso.

CARUSO

(obviously still tired)

Thank you.

BACKSTAGE – NIGHT

Caruso is making his way to the stage. Toscanini, dressed to conduct, passes him.

TOSCANINI

I expect great things, Caruso.

CUT TO:

INT. – LA SCALA – PERFORMANCE – NIGHT

Caruso is doing his best, but it's apparent he's tired. Toscanini does not look especially pleased. We conclude after a brief but painful excerpt.

CUT TO:

INT. – CARUSO APARTMENT – DAY

Caruso tosses the newspaper aside.

CARUSO

Dammit!

ADA

The review has nothing to do with you, Rico.

CARUSO

My name's in it, isn't it?

I'm just one more tenor who ...

(quotes)

... "didn't live up to expectations."

Feel my forehead, Ada. Do you think I have a fever?

ADA

(puts her hand on his forehead)

You're burning up. Come to bed.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – CARUSO APARTMENT – LIVING ROOM - DAY

Giulio Gatti-Casazza, the elegant director of La Scala, is pacing in the living room. Caruso enters in his bathrobe.

GATTI-CASAZZA

How are you feeling, Caruso?

CARUSO

Rotten. What's up?

GATTI-CASAZZA

I've had to cancel the production of Tristan und Isolde. The lead is sick. Everybody's sick.

CARUSO

You've got that right, Giulio. What are you going to do?

GATTI-CASAZZA

Substitute La Boheme.

CARUSO

Not with me in it. I already bombed once.

GATTI-CASAZZA

I don't have anybody else.

CARUSO

I need to feel stronger.

GATTI-CASAZZA

You've got to do it. Trust me.

You'll do fine. You just had first-night jitters.

Caruso takes hold of the back of a chair; he knows he's got his work cut out for him.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – LA SCALA – PERFORMANCE – LA BOHEME – NIGHT

Caruso performs as Rodolpho once again. Antonio Scotti, a handsome and well-known baritone, is singing with him. This time, we get to hear a complete aria. CAMERA picks up Toscanini conducting, who now seems as pleased as he can manage. The audience is listening with apparent delight. Ada is there, showing concern.

CUT TO:

CURTAIN CALLS

Caruso takes his bows, to unrestrained applause and "bravos!" CAMERA pans the audience, where we find Ada applauding, and then moves on to Toscanini at the podium, who is clapping appreciatively, baton still in hand. Ada is relieved.

CUT TO:

WINGS

Caruso is in the wings, waiting to take another bow.

SCOTTI

Magnificent, Caruso! The best tenor I've heard in years!

CARUSO

Thanks, Scotti.

Toscanini joins them.

SCOTTI

(to Toscanini)

He went for the high C's so fearlessly
I was afraid for him.

TOSCANINI

And hit them.

(to Caruso)

You did much better.

SCOTTI

We've got to tell the Met about him.

TOSCANINI

New York? You're right.

All three head out for another bow.

CUT TO:

INT. – HORSEDRAWN CARRIAGE – NIGHT

Caruso and Ada are on the way home.

ADA

If you get to go to America, I want to come.

CARUSO

I wouldn't go without you, dear. You're
my wife, aren't you?

(he gives her a kiss)

DISSOLVE:

INT. – CARUSO'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

He is removing makeup. A knock at the door. A production assistant opens it.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Man here to see you by the name of Gaisberg.

CARUSO

What's he want?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Says he's from a gramophone company.

CARUSO

Send him in.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Yes, sir.

He turns and motions for Gaisberg to enter. A small, diffident man, wearing glasses and a suit comes in, hat in hand.

GAISBERG

Mr. Caruso?

(holds out hand)

Gaisberg. Fred Gaisberg. I enjoyed your singing tonight. You've got the greatest voice I've ever heard.

CARUSO

Thank you.

GAISBERG

I'd like to record it.

CARUSO

Record it? How can you do that?

GAISBERG

Ever heard of the gramophone? We make what is called a record. More people will hear you than any other singer in history.

CARUSO

Any money in it?

DISSOLVE:

PRODUCTION MONTAGE – CARUSO'S FIRST RECORDING SESSION

CAMERA covers the recording session: Caruso singing into the large, cone-shaped “microphone,” Gaisberg at the controls, the wax recording cylinder. Then a 10-inch record, at 71.29-rpm, spinning, with a red label. On it is Caruso’s first recorded song – the Verdi aria, “La donna mobile.”

CUT TO:

SERIES OF 10-INCH RECORDS

Close shot of the first records released of Caruso’s voice, all Red Label, among them some of the most popular arias in the repertoire: “Questa o quella,” “Celeste Aida,” “Una furtive lagrima,” and “E lucevan le stele.”

CUT TO:

INT. – CARUSO APARTMENT – LIVING ROOM – DAY

Caruso is having his first meeting with Emil Ledner, a European impresario in his 50s, who will become his exclusive manager. Caruso is reading a document; it’s his first contract with the Met.

LEDNER

We just need to cover one detail, due to the size of the advance the Met is offering.

CARUSO

What is it?

LEDNER

Some people there think there still might not be enough interest in you to bring in an audience for forty performances.

CARUSO

I’ll tell you what, Mr. Ledner. If there isn’t, I’ll let them off the hook before they know it.

Ledner takes a pen from his suit pocket and offers it to Caruso, who takes it and signs the contract.

CUT TO:

CARUSO APARTMENT - DAY

Caruso is showing the contract to Ada.

CARUSO

Ada, I never thought I'd see so many lire in my life.

ADA

Who did?

CARUSO

Hey, what if we give up this apartment and buy a house in the country?

ADA

I'd love to. But when will we go there?

CARUSO

During the off-season.

ADA

Do you think you're ever going to have one anymore?

CARUSO

I'll always make time just for us, Ada, especially the summer.

ADA

Good. I know of a wonderful old estate we can get a good deal on.

CARUSO

Where?

ADA

About ten miles outside of Florence. It belongs to my father, but he wants to sell it, because it needs a lot of work. You'd love it there.

CUT TO:

CARUSO APARTMENT – ANOTHER ROOM

Caruso and Ada are having a disagreement with Fofo.

FOFO

I want to go to New York, too.

ADA

We want you to come. But it's too long a trip for a boy your age.

CARUSO

You love Auntie Rina. You can be with her.

ADA

She's got a busy performance schedule now.

CARUSO

We can always ask.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – STOCK SHOT - SHIP STEAMING INTO NEW YORK HARBOR

It passes the Statue of Liberty.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – HOTEL – NEW YORK – DAY

Their bags are being moved into the hotel suite. Pasquale Salmonelli, a trim banker in his 40s, is there, as are the stiffly proper maid and valet.

SALMONELLI

What do you think?

CARUSO

Ask my wife, Pasquale. She's the expert.

SALMONELLI

Mrs. Caruso, do you like it?

ADA

Yes, thank you.

SALMONELLI

Good, good. I did my best for you.

CARUSO

You did well.

(to the maid)

Now, life is very simple. You do everything you can for my wife.

(to the valet)

And you do everything you can for me.

(gestures to include Ada)

And we'll do everything we can for you. OK?

DISSOLVE:

INT. – HOTEL BEDROOM – NIGHT

Caruso and Ada are in bed.

CARUSO

Americans are different than I thought they'd be. I like them. They're nice.

ADA

Maybe that's because they know who you are.

CARUSO

So what? That makes me want to sing for them even more.

ADA

If I get an invitation to sing while we're in America, I want to accept it.

CARUSO

Come on, Ada, be a good wife and give me a big kiss. We're together! What else matters?

ADA

You better get some sleep. Tomorrow's
your big night.

CUT TO:

INT. – OPENING NIGHT – THE METROPOLITAN OPERA

We are at the old Metropolitan Opera House. The performance is about to begin. Heinrich Conried, the director, is backstage, as is Antonio Scotti, dressed in a suit, not for performance.

CONRIED

I'm depending on you, Caruso. You're
my most important new artist.

SCOTTI

Relax, Heinrich.
(to Caruso)
Knock 'em dead.

The lights dim and the overture begins.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – OPERA STAGE – PERFORMANCE – RIGOLETTO – NIGHT

We see Caruso on the stage, performing an aria of the Duke's. CAMERA picks up the orchestra, conductor, and audience. At the conclusion of his singing, there is great applause.

DISSOLVE:

STAGE – BOWS

The cast takes its bows, Caruso among them. Sustained applause.

CUT TO:

BACKSTAGE

Caruso is being congratulated by Conried, Scotti, and Salmonelli.

CONRIED

Splendid, Caruso.

SCOTTI
You lived up to your billing.

LEDNER
(to Conried)
I think we can stop worrying about
forty performances now, right?

CARUSO
Thank you, thank you all very much.

REVERSE: We see Ada arrive and she and Caruso embrace.

CARUSO
Well?

ADA
Loved it, darling.

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL ROOM – DAY

Caruso is pacing about, while Ada looks at the review in The New York Times.

CARUSO
Do you think it's good or bad?
Come on, Ada, be honest.

ADA
I think it's OK.

CARUSO
OK?

ADA
Well, it is a front-page review. That's something.

CARUSO
Yeah, everybody will read it. How about what
Aldrich says about me?

ADA

(reading snatches)

“Purely a tenor,” “large power.”

CARUSO

(quoting)

“Inclined to take on the ‘white’ quality in the upper ranges.” Maybe I should resign. What do you say?

ADA

Everybody at the Met loved you.

I think you should just give yourself time to settle in.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE – PERFORMANCES AT THE MET

We see Caruso in a variety of roles. The audiences grow increasingly appreciative. He takes his curtain calls with more and more pleasure. We see some headlines that rave about him. “Great Young Tenor at Met.” “Caruso Wows New York!” “Met Signs Caruso for Second Season!”

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL SUITE – DINING ROOM – NIGHT

The Carusos are entertaining at their hotel suite. At the dinner table we find, in formal attire, Conried, Scotti, and Salmonelli, all with lovely, jewelry-bedecked women, and a newcomer, Marziale Sisca, the ebullient publisher of the New York Italian-language newspaper, La Follia di New York, with his charming wife.

CONRIED

(raises a champagne toast)

To Caruso. May you grace the Met with your voice for many seasons!

CARUSO

Thank you. What more could a singer ask?

SISCA

Can I have a photo for my Italian language newspaper?

CARUSO

Sure. Only I'm out of them right now.
But I have an idea.

(he grabs a napkin and
takes a drawing pencil from
his pocket; he quickly makes
a self-portrait and hands it
to Sisca)

What do you think?

SISCA

How about one every week?

CARUSO

Come on. They're just things I dash off.
I don't have any formal training.

SISCA

My readers will love them, I promise you!

SCOTTI'S DATE

Antonio says you sing better than anyone.

SCOTTI

Tenors only. I'm the world's best baritone.

SCOTTI'S DATE

I know that, cute stuff.

(to Caruso)

Will you sing for me later?

Caruso seems a bit too entranced by the young woman for Ada, and she steps on his foot under the table.

ADA

He never sings at parties.

CARUSO

I'll play one of my records
for you after dinner. How's that?

SCOTTI'S DATE

I'd love it.

DISSOLVE:

CLOSE SHOT

Caruso's hands as he places one of his records on the turntable. His voice fills the air, and we enjoy a bit of the aria as we watch the record spin. CAMERA moves back to take in his appreciative dinner guests, who applaud at the conclusion.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – CARUSO APARTMENT – BEDROOM – NIGHT

He and Ada are in bed.

ADA

I wish you wouldn't pay so much attention to other women.

CARUSO

Please, Ada, you know you're the only one for me.

ADA

And don't ever forget it. By the way, I've been meaning to tell you. There's not going to be as much extra room at our new home in Italy.

CARUSO

Why? Did part of it fall down?

ADA

We're going to have another baby.

CARUSO

(leans over and kisses her)

Ada, you make me so happy! We have a beautiful life, you know that?

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – LE PANCHE – DAY

The Carusos have just arrived at Le Panche, and their bags are being unloaded from the hired car that brought them. Guido, Giuseppina, Rina, Fofo, and Roberto De Sanna, a handsome man in his 40s, who is the director of the prestigious San Carlo Opera House in Naples. He is also Rina's boyfriend. There are profuse "welcomes."

CARUSO

(holds out his arms)

Fofo! Come to Papa!

FOFO

(in Caruso's embrace)

Papa!

(goes to Ada)

Mama!

RINA

Welcome back!

(to Caruso)

We read all about you. Congratulations!

CARUSO

Thank you.

RINA

(refers to De Sanna)

You know Roberto.

DE SANNA

(puts out his hand)

Roberto De Sanna. The director of the San Carlo Opera House.

CARUSO

Nice to meet you.

(shakes his hand)

DE SANNA

Very nice to meet you. You're the talk of the opera world.

CARUSO

Thanks. How have you been, Rina?

RINA

Very well.

DE SANNA

She's been getting great reviews wherever she goes.

RINA

He's so nice.

(gives him a kiss)

We're in love.

ADA

That's nice.

CARUSO

Then you have to stay for dinner.

RINA

No need to worry about that. He's staying with us.

As they head for the car.

CARUSO

(to Fofa)

Guess what, Fofa? Your Mama brought you a present from America.

FOFO

What?

ADA

A new playmate.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – BEDROOM – DAY

Caruso is sitting beside the bed, looking at Ada, who has just given birth to the new child.

CARUSO

Maybe this one can be Enrico, Jr.
What do you say?

ADA

Is there room enough in the world for
two of you? All right, dear.

CARUSO

Good.
(tickles the infant)
But I'll call him Mimmi.

ADA

I like the sentiment. But you can't call him that.

CARUSO

Why not?

ADA

After the female lead in La Boheme.

CARUSO

No, no, I wasn't referring to that. I mean,
our little one.

CUT TO:

EXT. – BACKYARD – CARUSO AND ADA - DAY

Caruso and Ada are sitting in the backyard. It's a beautiful day, in the waning light. She has Mimmi in her arms.

CARUSO

We've had a wonderful summer here,
haven't we?

ADA

Great. I want to go back to New York
with you.

CARUSO

But now you have two little ones to
take care of.

ADA
 We can find a good nurse. Mamma and Rina
 will help out again, too.

He takes her hand and pats it.

CUT TO:

INT. – MET STAGE – CARUSO IN PAGLIACCI – NIGHT

Dressed as Canio, the clown, he bangs the base drum. The CAMERA pulls back. He sings from Pagliacci. Great applause.

CUT TO:

HEADLINES – NEW YORK NEWSPAPERS

“CARUSO MAKES TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO THE MET!” “CARUSO: KING OF
 TENORS.” “THE WORLD’S GREATEST TENOR!”

CUT TO:

INT. – CARUSO HOUSE – NEW YORK - DAY

The Carusos have rented a house in Manhattan. They’re sitting in the living room. The maid enters.

MAID
 Mr. Conried is here.

CARUSO
 Please, show him in.

ADA
 Do you know what he wants?

CARUSO
 He sent me a note about Nellie Melba.
 She’s not feeling well.

He shakes his head, as if he doesn’t know, as the maid shows Conried in.

CONRIED

Ah, Caruso, Ada. Good to see you.

CARUSO

Have a seat. How's Nellie?

CONRIED

Still sick. That's why I'm here. We need a replacement you're comfortable with.

(to Ada)

Ada, you sang Boheme with him in Italy, didn't you?

ADA

Yes. We were great together, weren't we, dear?

CONRIED

Do do you think you could step in? I'll pay you very well. \$2,000 a night.

ADA

Oh, I'd love to.

(to Caruso)

What do you think, dear?

CARUSO

Ada, you haven't sung Boheme for years.

ADA

Come on. I can do it in my sleep. You know that.

CONREID

Good. Then it's settled.

CARUSO

No, no.

CONREID

What do you mean?

CARUSO

It won't work.

ADA

Please, Rico. Just this one time.

CARUSO

You're my wife.

ADA

But, Rico, please –

CARUSO

– I think we have an understanding, don't we,
Ada?

(to Conried)

You'll have to find someone else.

CUT TO:

INT. – THE MET – STAGE – CARUSO IN LA BOHEME – NIGHT

He is singing with a woman who isn't the best partner. CAMERA picks up Ada in the audience. She is terribly sad.

CUT TO:

EXT. – THE MET - NIGHT

Caruso and Ada are walking home from the opera house.

ADA

I could have sung Mimi better.

CARUSO

I know that.

ADA

Then why didn't you let me?

CARUSO

I didn't want anybody to think you
got the role because you're my wife.

ADA

What do you mean? You're not the
only one with a great track record.

CARUSO

You're right.
(reaches into pocket)
I have a present for you.
(holds out money)

ADA

What? Money?

CARUSO

Two thousand.

ADA

Keep it.

CARUSO

I'll give it to you every performance.

ADA

Just go to hell.

CUT TO:

INT. – CARUSO HOME – BREAKFAST TABLE – DAY

He and Ada are still dressed in their robes.

CARUSO

I've got an offer to sing with Rina in London.

ADA

Really? Isn't that wonderful?

CARUSO

Come on, Ada. It's OK. She's singing all over Europe now.

ADA

And what do you want me to do? Sit in the audience and watch you perform together?

CARUSO

Ada, it's only opera.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – RESTAURANT – LONDON – DAY

Caruso, Ada, and Rina are having a bite together.

CARUSO

I hear De Sanna resigned.

RINA

He got fed up with the politics.

CARUSO

How come he lets you travel all over without him?

RINA

Didn't Ada tell you? We broke up.
No big deal. I knew there were limits.
He's married.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – STAGE, COVENT GARDEN – MONTAGE, THREE LOVE SCENES – NIGHT

Caruso and Rina perform love scenes from Aida, Madame Butterfly, and Tosca. Their passion grows, as CAMERA reveals Ada in the audience, quite uncomfortable with what she must observe.

CUT TO:

OPERA STAGE - BOWS

Caruso and Rina are taking their bows. Rina is presented with a bouquet of flowers.

CUT TO:

WINGS

Caruso and Rina, waiting to take another bow.

CARUSO

You sang like an angel, Rina.

RINA
Thank you, Rico. You know, I
still love you. Sorry, I can't help it.

They look at each other. He takes her hand, and they head out for another curtain call.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – CARUSO HOTEL SUITE – DAY

The plush Caruso apartment in London. Caruso enters with Rina.

RINA
Where's Ada?

CARUSO
Out shopping.

RINA
Should I be here without her?

CARUSO
She's your sister, isn't she? You're
allowed to visit.

RINA
Is anybody else here?

CARUSO
No, I gave the staff the afternoon off.
(turns to her)
How could you love De Sanna?

RINA
I needed someone, didn't I? You know
how I feel.

CARUSO
(moves closer)
You really still –

RINA
– That's what love's supposed to be,

isn't it? Forever?

She puts her arms around him, and he puts his around her.

CARUSO

But what about Ada?

RINA

What about her? I loved you first,
and she knew it. I should've always
been the one in your arms. You were
my first. I'm stuck with that. And so
are you.

He can't resist and kisses her. They grow passionante.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – BEDROOM – DAY

Caruso and Rina are in bed, making love.

RINA

Oh, Rico, I've waited so long for this.
So long. I love you, I love you,
I'll never stop loving you.

CARUSO

I love you, too, Rina.

Door opens. Ada enters.

ADA

(not yet seeing)
Rico? Where are you, dear?

They sit up, shocked. She sees them.

RINA

(pulls up the sheet)
Oh, my God!

ADA

What the hell is going on here?

RINA
 (works up her courage)
 Sorry, Ada, I love you, but it's my turn.

ADA
 Is it really?

RINA
 About time, isn't it?
 (gives him a quick kiss)
 See you at the performance.

Rina quickly gathers up her things and strides out. Ada and Caruso are left staring at each other.

CARUSO
 I'm sorry, Ada. I'll –

ADA
 – With my own sister? Don't even talk to me.

CARUSO
 I'll make it up to you. We'll go back
 home and I promise –
 (reaches out to her)

ADA
 – Leave me alone.
 (sits down on bed and
 begins to weep)
 You have no conscience. Do you
 know that? No conscience at all!

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – BELLOSQUARDO – DAY

A large estate known as Bellosquardo. It is at Lastra a Signa, just outside of Florence, and contains a sumptuous villa. The chauffeur, Cesare Romati, a handsome, well-built man, opens the door of the car. Caruso and Ada get out. Ada's and Romati's eyes meet.

CARUSO
 (to chauffeur)
 Wait here Romati.

(to Ada)
It's a present for you. What do you think?

ADA
(not as thrilled as he would like)
It's big. I'll say that much.

CARUSO
Come on. I'll show you. It's a fantastic
new home for you and me and the kids.
(takes her hand and leads
her to it)
We'll have a terrific summer here.

DISSOLVE:

MONTAGE – SUMMER ACTIVITIES

A series of shots that show the Carusos at Bellosguardo for the summer. Caruso working in the garden. Ada painting and Caruso setting up an easel next to her and painting along with her. Caruso practicing with a rehearsal pianist. Ada playing with the children. Amid the shots, we pick up a shot or two of Romati, who seems to have a growing interest in Ada.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – BALCONY – NIGHT

Caruso and Ada are on the balcony at night. He puts his arm around her.

CARUSO
We'll be back in New York soon. Just the two
of us.

ADA
Will we?

CARUSO
Of course. What do you mean?

ADA
I don't think I'll go this year.

CARUSO

Why not? You love New York, don't you?

ADA

I'm just tired, Rico. Tired of it all.

CARUSO

Tired of what?

ADA

Our situation, and all the uncertainty
that goes with it. It's time for us
to be married.

CARUSO

What do you mean? As far as anybody
knows –

ADA

– I mean legally.

CARUSO

You know as well as I do that Italian
law –

ADA

– The hell with that. We should apply for
American citizenship and –

CARUSO

– give up our Italian heritage? And what
about the church?

ADA

They've all stood in our way long enough.
Haven't they, Rico?

CARUSO

I'll ask my lawyer to look into it.

ADA

I want an answer now. Yes or no?
Or you can go to New York by yourself.

CARUSO

But, Ada, that means we'd be apart for seven or eight months.

ADA

You can always invite Rina.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – CAR – DAY

Romati is driving Ada along the dirt road to town.

ROMATI

Your husband is a great man. I can't believe you let him go to America alone. I hear there are lots of beautiful women in New York.

ADA

Please, just drive.

ROMATI

At the same time, I cannot see how he can leave such a beautiful woman here alone. Someday, if I get lucky, I'll find somebody half as pretty. I'm not just a chauffeur. I have dreams.

ADA

I'm sure you do.

ROMATI

I'm an airplane pilot. Do you know that? And someday I'm going to open a flight-training school. Did you ever fly?

ADA

No, and I never intend to. How can you just go up in the sky and not think you're going to crash back down?

ROMATI

Why? Because I'm a first-rate pilot.

ADA

Good luck.

ROMATI

I don't need luck. I just need money.
Flying is the new thing. I can't tell you
how many people are going to want to
become pilots. And I'll be there to teach
them.

The car goes on, with Ada lost in thought.

DISSOLVE:

NEW YORK – MONTAGE

Caruso is leading the life of the carefree bachelor. He winks at a member of the opera company backstage, and she smiles back. Next, he's having dinner with her. Then a close shot as he kisses her. Now we see him with another woman on his arm, who he is taking shopping along Fifth Avenue. We include a shot of him on the Met stage, performing. Last, we see him with the young girl Scotti brought to dinner the previous year. He's in bed with her.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – MET OFFICE – CARUSO SIGNS A CONTRACT – DAY

Conried shakes his hand.

CONRIED

Great work, Caruso. See you next season.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – SHIP'S CABIN – DAY

The Captain of the ship is giving a telegram to a priest. The priest resigns himself to a sad task he must perform.

CUT TO:

INT. – CARUSO'S CABIN – DAY

He has just let the priest in.

PRIEST

Mr. Caruso, I've got something very sad to tell you. Your father passed away.

(hands him the telegram)

I'm sorry, my son.

CARUSO

It's just like when my mother died. I wasn't there and never saw her again. I'll never see Papa, either.

(breaks down)

And I can't live in peace because I'm with a woman who's not legally mine. If I die, my children won't inherit anything, because they were born outside the law.

The priest tries to console him.

INT. – CARUSO APARTMENT – LONDON – NIGHT

Caruso and Ada are having dinner, butlers and maids in attendance.

CARUSO

I want to go home to visit my father's grave, but I can't even do that. The King will be at the performance. And how can I disappoint all the people who bought tickets?

ADA

Let's talk about something important. Have you thought about what I asked you?

CARUSO

What do you mean?

ADA

Getting married.

CARUSO

Ada, I can't talk about that now.

ADA

I want an answer.

CARUSO

Not now, for God's sake. Let's get ready to go.

ADA

Sorry. I don't feel well. I better stay home.

CARUSO

Don't you want to meet the King?

ADA

What for?

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – ROYAL ALBERT HALL – NIGHT

CUT TO:

INT. – SAME – THE STAGE – AIDA – NIGHT

Caruso performs in Aida. Camera picks up the King in a box.

CUT TO:

CURTAIN CALL

Great applause for Caruso.

CUT TO:

THE KING'S BOX

Caruso is shaking hands with the King.

KING

May I express my condolences for the loss of your father and thank you for singing here despite your time of grief.

CARUSO

Thank you, your majesty.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – CARUSO APARTMENT – NIGHT

He arrives home.

CARUSO

(removing his hat)

Ada, I'm home. Hey, you should have
been there. The King was very thoughtful.

(no response)

Ada?

A butler shows up.

CARUSO (CONT'D)

Where's my wife?

BUTLER

She left for Italy, sir.

CARUSO

Italy? Did she leave a note?

BUTLER

Not to my knowledge.

Caruso hurries out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. – CARUSO BEDROOM – NIGHT

He's packing furiously.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – BELLOSGUARDO – DAY

Caruso arrives by taxi and gets out. He motions for the cab to wait.

CUT TO:

INT. – THE SAME

He enters, looking for her.

CARUSO

Ada? I'm home. Where are you?

CUT TO:

EXT. – GARDEN – DAY

Caruso is looking for Ada outside. He comes across the gardener, Emilio Tani, who seems to be the lone inhabitant of the estate.

CARUSO

Emilio, have you seen my wife?

Emilio shakes his head yes but is almost in tears.

CARUSO (CONT'D)

Where is she?

EMILIO

I'm sorry to tell you. She ran off with the Romati.

CARUSO

With the chauffeur? You've got to be kidding?

TANI

No.

CARUSO

What about my son? Where's Mimmi?

TANI

They took him, with his nanny.

CARUSO

What about Fofo?

TANI

I don't know. She forgot this.
(holds up jewelry box)

CARUSO

Her jewelry?
(takes it)

TANI

She asked me to hold it while she fixed her hat and scarf but Romati honked, and she ran to the car without it. Later, she wired me to send it to her.

CARUSO

Send it where?

TANI

The train station in Nice.

CARUSO

Thank you, Emilio.

Caruso runs to his study and removes a revolver from the drawer of his desk. He puts it in his pocket and heads for the door. He hurries past Emilio on the way to the taxi.

EMILIO

Be careful, Mr. Caruso.

CARUSO

I'll kill him the son of a bitch!
(to taxi driver)
Hurry. I want to get my other son.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – BOARDING SCHOOL – DAY

Caruso, with a day's stubble of beard, is crying on the shoulder of a priest.

CARUSO

Thank God Fofu is still here.

Fofu enters, now age ten. Caruso rushes to him and hugs him.

CARUSO (CONT'D)

(hugs him)

Come to Papa. Mama left us. She took your
brother and left us. But we're going to find her.
(to priest)
I'll bring him back when everything's settled.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – TAXI – DAY

CARUSO
(to driver)
The train station, on the double.

FOFO
Papa, why did Mama leave us?

CARUSO
You're a big boy now, so I'll tell you. When I
was in America, I got a letter saying she was
having a man-and-woman thing with the
chauffeur, Romati.

FOFO
I don't understand.

CARUSO
Don't worry. We'll get her to come back.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – HOTEL AT NICE – DAY

A taxi pulls up to the hotel. Caruso gets out with Mimi.

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL LOBBY – DAY

Caruso is crossing the lobby. He sees a newsstand. The headline reads: "CARUSO'S
WIFE RUNS OFF WITH CHAUFFEUR!"

CARUSO
I'll kill the son of a bitch!

He rubs his face with consternation and then buys a copy.

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL ROOM – DAY

Caruso is in his bathrobe, looking out the window. He has his arm around Fofo.

CARUSO

We know they're here somewhere, Fofo. I'm going to make some phone calls.

(points)

See that park? Your brother might be there with the nanny. Go there and see. But be careful.

FOFO

What do I do if I see him?

(goes for the door)

CARUSO

Just hurry back and tell me. All I need now is to lose you, too.

Fofo departs, and Caruso picks up phone.

DISSOLVE

INT. – HOTEL ROOM – DAY

Caruso is at the door, handing a message to a bellboy. He closes the door and rubs the back of his neck. Just then the door opens and Fofo enters, dragging Mimmi, now four years old and in tears. Miss Saer, a nanny in her forties, has Mimmi by the other arm.

FOFO

Papa, look what I found.

CARUSO

(springs to his feet)

Mimmi! Thank God! Good work, Fofo.

He hugs Mimmi, who doesn't seem to recognize him and continues to cry.

CARUSO (CONT'D)

Mimmi, it's your daddy. Don't
you recognize me?

MISS SAER

He was too young when you left.

CARUSO

You're right.

(to Mimmi)

Let me introduce myself. I'm your father.

Mimmi cries even harder.

CARUSO

Stop crying.

(slaps him)

I said, stop crying!

MISS SAER

Don't hit him! He's confused. And,
frankly, so am I.

CARUSO

You're right. I'm sorry, Mimmi.

Thank you for letting Fofo bring him.

MISS SAER

Let him? He took him. I just don't know
what to do. I could lose my job.

CARUSO

You don't have to worry about that, if you
just listen to me. I know where she is, and I
sent her a message. She'll be here any minute.

Loud knock at the door.

CARUSO

Quick. Take the kids into the bedroom
and don't come out until I tell you.

MISS SAER

Oh, my.

CARUSO

– Just do as I say. Hurry up.

(to children)

You two stay quiet. Do you hear me?

He helps lead them to the bedroom and closes the door. Then he takes a quick look around the room and heads for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. – DOORWAY – ADA – DAY

He opens the door, and Ada storms in.

ADA

Where's Mimmi?

CARUSO

Safe.

(closes door)

We need to talk.

ADA

Just give me the child. There's nothing to talk about.

CARUSO

But, Ada, I love you.

ADA

And how many other women?

CARUSO

Please, Ada, you're the only one for me.

ADA

Sure, I am.

She heads for the bedroom.

ADA

Mimmi! Where are you?

CARUSO

He's not here.

She opens the door and looks around.

ADA

Mimmi! Mimmi!

She comes back out.

ADA (CONT'D)

I want the child now. I have my rights.

CARUSO

Just come back and everything will be fine.

ADA

It's too late for that. Besides, I found someone else.

CARUSO

Romati? The chauffeur? Do you know how crazy that is?

ADA

Your affairs aren't? How about the Monkey House?

CARUSO

A total lie.

ADA

And Rina? That was a lie, too? And what about all your other affairs? Do you even know how many you've had?

The bedroom door opens quietly. The kids and Miss Saer peek out.

CARUSO

I'm through with that. From now on, there's only you, Ada. Only you.

ADA

Who are you kidding?

CARUSO

(shows her newspaper)

Look at this. It's a disgrace. We've got to patch things up.

ADA

Just tell me where the child is.

CARUSO

(falls on his knees)

Please, Ada, forgive me. Forgive me, and come back to me, to me and the children. Think about the children. They need a mother.

ADA

What do you think I'm here for.

(pushes him away)

I want the child. You and I are finished.

CARUSO

But, Ada, I love you, I love you.

ADA

You're wasting your time. The sooner you figure that out, the better.

CARUSO

(rises slowly, his face turning hard)

Fine, Ada. But, I promise you, if that's the case, you'll never see the children again. And I'll kill Romati like a dog.

ADA

If you only knew how silly you sound. I'm calling a lawyer.

She turns and leaves, slamming the door. He runs to the door and opens it.

CARUSO

Ada! Come back! Please, come back!

He gives up hope and turns back to the room, as the kids come out and see the painful grimace on his face. This expression will become part of his Pagliaccio character.

FOFO

Dad? Mama –

CARUSO

– She’s gone, Fofu. Mimmi. I tried everything.
(embraces them)

I’ll be everything to you. Your father
and your mother. Everything! I promise you!

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Caruso is dressed in a suit and hat. He goes to the bed, where Fofu is still asleep.

CARUSO

(with new confidence)

Fofu, get dressed. We’re going to go get Mama.

As Fofu wakes up, he sees Caruso take a large revolver from he suitcase and put it in his pocket.

FOFO

What’s that, Papa?

CARUSO

A present for Romati. Come on, hurry.

He puts the gun in his suit pocket as Miss Saer enters, with Mimmi crying.

CARUSO (CONT’D)

What’s wrong with Mimmi?

MISS SAER

He misses his mother.

CARUSO

He won’t for long.

(holds up a note)

I know where she went. Fofu and I are going
to get her. You stay here with Mimmi.

(to Fofu)

Come on!

CUT TO:

INT. – TAXI – DAY

Caruso and Fofo are in a taxi, speeding along the streets of Nice. He puts away the paper with the name of the villa where Ada and Romati are supposed to be.

CUT TO:

EXT. – VILLA – DAY

The taxi pulls up to the villa.

CARUSO

(to Fofo)

Wait here. I'll get her.

He gets out of the car and heads for the door. He knocks. No answer. He turns the knob. It's open. He enters, drawing his gun.

CUT TO:

INT. – VILLA – DAY

The elegant foyer. He looks about. No one is there. He decides to go on a silent hunt. He goes on to look in the living room and the dining room. Then he goes up the stairs. He finds a bedroom door ajar and kicks it open. Then he goes to another bedroom door. It's closed. He opens it slowly. Still no one. His shoulders sag.

CARUSO

Dammit!

He turns to leave, putting his gun away.

CUT TO:

EXT. – VILLA – TAXI – DAY

Caruso is getting back in the taxi.

FOFO

Did you find her, Papa?

CARUSO

She already left. But don't you worry. We'll get her back.

(to driver)

To the hotel.

The taxi pulls out, turns around, and heads back in the direction from which it came.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – HOTEL ROOM – DAY

Caruso and Fofo enter.

MISS SAER

What happened?

CARUSO

She was gone.

FOFO

He has a gun.

MISS SAER

A what?

CARUSO

Fofo!

FOFO

I'm sorry, Dad. But I'm worried.

MISS SAER

That's very dangerous, Mr. Caruso. Don't do something you'll regret later. I want you to give it to me.

CARUSO

No, thanks.

MISS SAER

But think of your children. You're all they have now. Do you want to end up in jail?

And what about your career?

(holds out her hand)

You can have it back when all this is over.
Come on, give it to me.

He takes the gun out and gives it to her.

CARUSO

You're right. I must be out of my mind.
(breaks down)
What am I going to do?

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL - LIVING ROOM – DAY

Caruso is with the children and Miss Saer.

CARUSO

We know Mama will come back but we have
to wait till she wants to. Meanwhile, we
have to think about us.

(to Fofa)

I'll take you back to school. That's where
you belong.

(to Mimmi)

And you're going back to London with Miss
Saer.

FOFO

What about you, Papa? You'll be alone.

CARUSO

Don't worry. I'm a big boy. Anyway, I
have to go back to America soon. But I'll
be back home as quickly as I can, and we'll
all be together again.

He hugs them.

CUT TO:

NEW YORK – MONTAGE – CARUSO SUFFERING ALONE

We see him walking along Fifth Avenue, looking out the window of the hotel, lying in bed, trying to read the newspaper, at which point he turns and beats the pillow with his fists.

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL – CARUSO WITH MALE SECRETARY – DAY

Caruso is near his secretary Bruno's desk.

BRUNO
(holds out letter)
Looks like it's from your wife.

CARUSO
(takes it)
Really, Bruno?

He opens it and begins to read it. REVERSE to see the note: "Dear Enrico, I left Romati. I'd ask you to forgive me, but we both know it's your fault. I need money. Or I'm going back on the stage. Let me know. Your friend, Ada."

He crumbles up the letter with apparent suffering.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – NEW YORK – SUITE AT THE HOTEL KNOCKERBOCKER – DAY

He is trying to vocalize with a piano accompanist. He breaks down.

ACCOMPANYIST
Want me to come back tomorrow?

CARUSO
No, no, give me a moment, Sal. I'm just
a little tense.

CUT TO:

INT. – RESTAURANT – CARUSO AND SCOTTI – NIGHT

Caruso is crying like a baby.

SCOTTI

You've got to get hold of yourself,
Enrico.

CARUSO

How? I still can't believe it. The wife of the most famous tenor in the world, and she runs off with the chauffeur.

SCOTTI

I agree. It's crazy. But come on. You know as well as I do, there are plenty of other women out there.

CARUSO

Yeah, yeah, but trust me. There's nobody like Ada.

He takes out a cigarette holder, puts some cotton in it, then a cigarette and lights up.

SCOTTI

(points to cigarette)

You've got to stop that. It can't be good for your voice.

CARUSO

I don't have a choice. It helps me relax. This and aspirin – that's all that's getting me through life these days.

SCOTTI

Take it from me, there's only one cure. It's a man's fate. You need another woman.

CUT TO:

INT. – DEPARTMENT STORE – DAY

Caruso is shopping for a wallet. He is smoking again, as we will often find that he is from now on. A pretty young girl is waiting on him.

CLERK

(taking wallet from counter)

What about this one, Mr. Caruso?

CARUSO

It's very nice looking. But not as nice-looking as you.
(he winks at her)

CUT TO:

HEADLINE:

“CARUSO SUED BY SALES CLERK FOR BREACH OF PROMISE!”

CUT TO:

INT. – PARTY – NIGHT

Caruso meets Miss Meffert, an attractive lady in her twenties, while at a party.

MEFFERT

I love the way you sing, Mr. Caruso.

CARUSO

Thank you. I love the way you look.

CUT TO:

HEADLINE: “SOCIALITE SUES CARUSO FOR BREACH OF PROMISE!”

CUT TO:

INT. – LAW OFFICE – DAY

Caruso with attorney.

ATTORNEY

Mr. Caruso, can I give you some advice?
Please, stop telling every woman you meet
that you want to marry her. Just date like
everybody else, OK?

Caruso nods his head yes. He seems very sad.

CUT TO:

INT. – BACKSTAGE – CARUSO’S DRESSING ROOM – NIGHT

He is spraying his throat and trying to clear it. He forces himself to cough up brown stuff until his throat is clear. His wardrobe assistant looks on.

CARUSO

They say my voice is darkening. They're lucky I still have a voice.

(vocalizes a syllable)

La, la, la, la! Good enough. I'm ready to sing. Except I have a terrible headache. Get me some more aspirin.

WARDROBE ASSISTANT

But you just took four of them.

CARUSO

And I'm about to take four more.

The assistant gets a bottle and hands it to him. He takes four more aspirin and holds out his arms. The wardrobe assistant helps him into his outfit for his role as the clown Canio in Pagliacci.

CUT TO:

INT. – THE STAGE – PAGLIACCI – NIGHT

Caruso performs Canio's aria "Vesti la giubba," this time in full, as we note that he has found new autobiographical depth in the role. His pain and sorrow are terribly real. CAMERA reveals that Toscanini is conducting and expressing some concern for Caruso.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – HOTEL HALLWAY – DAY

He is walking down the hall the next day when he sees Ada coming toward him, accompanied by a short man with a beard.

ADA

What do you mean, not answering my letters?

He turns and tries to get away. They go after him.

ADA

Stop trying to get away. I need money.

CARUSO

Leave me alone. You've already done enough damage.

ADA

Not until you agree to some kind of support. I am, in case you forgot, the mother of your children.

CARUSO

You should have thought about that before you left us.

GIANNI

You better listen to her, Caruso. Or she'll sue.

CARUSO

Who the hell is this twerp?

ADA

He's my friend.

GIANNI

Gianni.

He tries to evade them and starts to work his way back to his suite.

CARUSO

Get the hell away from me or I'll pound you into the ground.

GIANNI

And I'll sue you, too. Who do you think you are? Your wife has rights, you know?

CARUSO

(opens his door)

Does she?

(to Ada)

Not one cent. And, unless you leave the hotel, I'll have you thrown out.

He struggles to close the door on them and succeeds. She starts to bang on it.

ADA
Open this door! Do you hear me?
Open it!

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL LOBBY – DAY

Ada and Gianni are being led out by hotel security.

ADA
Leave me alone! I'm his wife!

GIANNI
His wife! Did you hear that?

SECURITY OFFICER
Sure you are.
(ejects them)
And stay out. Or I'll have you both arrested.

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL SUITE – DAY

His secretary, Bruno, enters with a note.

BRUNO
Ada sent you another note.

CARUSO
Why can't she just leave me alone?
(takes note and reads it)
She wants to talk.

BRUNO
Do yourself a favor and take your lawyer.

INT. – RESTAURANT – MEETING WITH ADA – NIGHT

Caruso is sitting at a dining table with Ada. He has brought his long-suffering lawyer along.

CARUSO

You can have the money, if you promise to leave me alone.

ADA

Hey, not a problem.

CARUSO

I also want you to agree never to sing in New York.

ADA

Really? Don't tell me you're still afraid I'll cast a shadow over your star?

LAWYER

There's already been enough bad publicity. Do you agree or don't you?

ADA

Do I have a choice?
(to Caruso)
I want my jewelry back.

CARUSO

No way.

ADA

Why not?

CARUSO

It was part of our life together.
(becomes emotional)

LAWYER

I'd take the money if I were you. It's a very generous offer, especially considering he was never really married to you. Why, do you know how many men would pay alimony to a woman

they were never married to?

ADA

Fine. I accept.

(to Caruso)

Before I go, I want you to know why I couldn't go back with you when you found me in Nice. Romati is connected to the Mafia, and he told me he'd have you and the children killed if I left him.

ATTORNEY

That's sound pretty far-fetched, lady.

ADA

I just wanted you to know. I realize we're finished. Maybe one day you'll forgive me. I'm trying to forgive you.

He takes her hand.

CARUSO

I'm sorry, Ada. You hurt me too much. And I can't let myself be made a fool of again.

ADA

That makes two of us.

(stands)

Goodbye, Rico.

CARUSO

Take care, sweetheart.

ADA

You, too.

She turns and leaves.

LAWYER

Cheer up. You're finally free of the bitch.

CUT TO:

INT. – MET STAGE – CARUSO IN AIDA – NIGHT

He is struggling to sing “Celeste Aida” but he’s not in good voice.

CUT TO:

INT. – MET OFFICE - IMPRESARIO AND TOSCANINI – DAY

Caruso is meeting with Gatti-Cazzati, who has become the director of the Met. Toscanini is also present.

TOSCANINI

What’s wrong, Caruso?

GATTI-CAZZATI

You’re obviously having vocal problems.
Is this why I came all the way from La Scala?

CARUSO

I’m sorry. I don’t think I can finish the season.
Too many damn personal problems.

TOSCANINI

I can hear it in your voice.
(to Gatti-Cazzati)
He needs a break.

GATTI-CAZZATI

All right. But I want you back here next
season.

TOSCANINI

And in good voice. Get lots of fresh Italian air.
And stop smoking so damn much. It’s a
crime against your voice.

CUT TO:

INT. – DOCTOR’S OFFICE – MILAN – DAY

The doctor finishes looking down Caruso’s throat.

CARUSO

What do you see?

DOCTOR

Nodes. You've been straining your voice,
haven't you?

CARUSO

You should only know how much.

DOCTOR

They have to be removed, if you want to
sing again.

CARUSO

What are the chances I'll be as good as new?

DOCTOR

I can't make any promises. I can only operate.

CUT TO:

INT. – HOSPITAL ROOM – DAY

Caruso is in bed, recuperating, but smoking. The doctor is heard coming down the hall. Caruso quickly snuffs out the cigarette. The doctor enters and sniffs the air.

DOCTOR

Smoking again? Very intelligent. Is your life
so devoid of pleasure that you have to kill
yourself to have a little fun?

CARUSO

I'm sorry.

DOCTOR

Don't be sorry. Quit. Now, let's
have a look.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – BELLOSGUARDO – NIGHT

Caruso goes to the piano and sounds a note. He tries to sing but does not achieve a good result.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – BELLOSGUARDO – THE GARDEN – DAY

Caruso is in the garden, walking with Guido Giachetti.

GUIDO

I want to talk to you like a son. We all regret what Ada did. But we have to go beyond that. It's time for you to settle down again.

CARUSO

I will when I find the right woman.

GUIDO

Don't you know who that is?

CARUSO

What do you mean?

GUIDO

My other daughter.

(smiles)

Am I a good father or not?
Rina's still single, and do you know why? Because she still loves you. I think you know that. She'd make a good wife, Caruso, and your children couldn't find a better mother. We'd have a real family again. What do you say?

They embrace.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. – SEASIDE – LIVORNO – DAY

Caruso and Rina are walking along the beach in Livorno.

CARUSO

Your father thinks we should get married.

RINA

Is he the only one?

CARUSO

How about you?

RINA

Don't try to turn things around, Rico.
I want to know what you think.

CARUSO

I think maybe I picked the wrong woman.
What do you say you and I get married?

RINA

Oh, Rico! I never thought you'd ask.
I love you so much!

They embrace and kiss.

CARUSO

I love you, too, sweetheart.

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL BALLROOM – ENGAGEMENT PARTY – NIGHT

We are at a lavish engagement party at Montecatini, an elegant resort a few miles from Florence. Caruso has given it to announce his intention to marry Rina. A number of musical celebrities are there, including Puccini.

CARUSO

Thank you for all coming. As you know,
we've invited you here to celebrate a very
happy occasion and make it official.

(puts his arm around Rina)

I'm going to marry the love of my youth,
the woman who has loved me more years ...

CARUSO (CONT'D)

... than I can say, the one and only, the lovely
and talented Rina Giachetti.

Great applause. He kisses her.

CUT TO:

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

“CARUSO TO MARRY WELL-KNOWN SOPRANO!”

CUT TO:

INT. – BELLOSGUARDO – DAY

Caruso is with a recital pianist.

CARUSO

OK, let's give it a shot.

Pianist hits a note. Caruso sounds it.

CARUSO

(smiles)

Not bad, huh? Let me tell you something.

Nothing makes a man want to sing like
being in love.

Rina enters.

CARUSO (CONT'D)

Rina, I can sing again! Listen.

(to accompanist)

Go ahead.

The accompanist starts to play an aria, and Caruso sings it with delight.

DISSOLVE:

INT. – BELLOSGUARDO – CARUSO'S OFFICE – DAY

He is reading a note which upsets him. Rina enters.

RINA

What's wrong, darling?

CARUSO

Nothing.

RINA

Come on, tell me.

CARUSO

A note from Ada.

(hands it to her)

She says if we get married, she'll kill us both.

RINA

(looks at it)

The bitch. Can't she just leave us alone?

CARUSO

It doesn't matter. I'm sure she doesn't mean it.

RINA

Let's hope not. We still have to set a date for the wedding, my love.

CARUSO

We will, next summer, as soon as I get back. I promise.

RINA

Do we have to wait that long?
She's to blame. I know that.

CARUSO

Oh, be happy, dear. Summer will be here before you know it.

CUT TO:

INT. – BELLOSGUARDO RINA – DINING ROOM – NIGHT

The family is at the dining table. Caruso has made a glass harmonica and is playing the melody from "Vesti da Guibba" on it to the delight of his children. When he is done, all applaud.

CARUSO

Thank you, thank you. It's is always a pleasure

to perform for my lovely family.

CUT TO:

INT. – BEDROOM – NIGHT

He and Rina are in bed.

RINA

I wish you could stay a little longer. We're so happy.

CARUSO

But if I wait any longer, I might not be able to go at all. Sailing on the ocean is getting more dangerous all the time.

RINA

The war's just starting.

CARUSO

Rinuccia, do you want me to take an unnecessary risk?

RINA

No.

CARUSO

Or to miss the entire Met season?

RINA

It's too important to you. I wish I could go with you.

CARUSO

It's too dangerous now. As soon as the war's over, OK?

RINA

This place is too big to keep up while you're not here. I'm going to take the children to Le Panche and wait for you there. All right?

CARUSO

Good idea. I'll miss you, darling!

They embrace.

RINA

I'll miss you, too. Every minute!

CUT TO:

INT. – NEW YORK – HOTEL SUITE – DAY

Caruso is with his secretary, smoking. He rubs the back of his neck.

BRUNO

Not feeling well, Mr. Caruso?

CARUSO

It's these damn headaches. Give me some aspirin.

BRUNO

(reaches into desk drawer)

Yes, sir. Right here.

(pours him two)

Are you going to be OK for tonight?

CARUSO

I'll be fine.

(indicates bottle of aspirin)

Order more, will you?

CUT TO:

INT. – MET STAGE – PERFORMANCE – NIGHT

Caruso is performing in La Traviata. CAMERA picks up Dorothy Park Benjamin – a beautiful blonde socialite – in a box. She seems entranced by him and leans over to say something to a female friend.

CUT TO:

INT. – CHURCH – A CHRISTENING – DAY

Caruso is at a christening, with a group arranged around a baptismal font. Dorothy Park Benjamin is also there. Their eyes meet. She smiles at him. He winks back.

CUT TO:

EXT. – CHURCH – DAY

The christening is over, and the crowd is walking out of the church. Caruso and Dorothy Park Benjamin are close to each other. Caruso walks over to her.

CARUSO

Hi, there. I couldn't help noticing such a lovely woman. Do you mind if I ask what your name is?

DOROTHY

Dorothy, Dorothy Park Benjamin.

CARUSO

Caruso, Enrico Caruso.

DOROTHY

I know that. Who doesn't?

CARUSO

You're very kind. Would you like to have lunch with me tomorrow?

DOROTHY

A lot. I'm such a big fan.

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL SUITE – DAY

Caruso enters, in a jaunty mood. His secretary looks up.

BRUNO

Well, look at you. Why so happy?

CARUSO

Why else? Amore, Bruno! I just met a beautiful, wonderful woman.

BRUNO

Here we go again. Just be careful, all right?

CUT TO:

EXT. – OUTDOOR CAFÉ – DAY

Caruso and Dorothy are having a bite together.

DOROTHY

I have a confession to make.

CARUSO

You do?

DOROTHY

Don't let it go to your head, but do you know why I was at the christening?

CARUSO

You know the baby's parents, like me.

DOROTHY

Not really. I knew you'd be there.

CARUSO

How did you know that?

DOROTHY

Oh, a friend told me. And do you know what? I asked her to get me an invitation.

CARUSO

Very tricky, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Aren't you glad?

CARUSO

If you only knew how glad.

CUT TO:

INT. – NIGHTCLUB – NIGHT

Caruso and Dorothy are sitting at a table at a nightclub. Romantic lighting. Music. Dancing.

CARUSO

You mean you've never been married?

DOROTHY

Not even once.

CARUSO

You want to know the truth? Neither have I.

DOROTHY

Oh, come on. You've got kids and everything.

CARUSO

But I never went down the aisle.

DOROTHY

I'm impressed. But I'm much worse than you.

CARUSO

I doubt that. What do you mean?

DOROTHY

I guess you'll think I'm awfully innocent, but I've never even been in love.

CARUSO

Oh, come on, how's that possible for such a beautiful woman?

DOROTHY

You'd know if you knew my father. He's *tres* strict. Off I went to boarding school when I was five. And, ever since my mother died, my role in life has been to take her place.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Well, you know, not that way. Just to take care of him.

CARUSO

You have a good nature, you know that.

DOROTHY

Thank you.

(looks at him, eyes aglow)

Do you know I find you absolutely irresistible?

CARUSO

(takes her hand)

I like that. I've never known a woman like you, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Oh, I'm sure of that. The question is, what do you think of me?

CARUSO

I think I like you. In fact, come here.

She leans forward and he kisses her.

CARUSO

I like you very, very much.

CUT TO:

INT. – PARK BENJAMIN HOME – NIGHT

Dorothy is serving her father dinner. He's a very stiff and proper man in his sixties.

PARK BENJAMIN

Marry a singer? I won't allow it.

DOROTHY

But, Daddy, he's not just a singer. He's the most famous opera singer in the world.

PARK BENJAMIN

What does that matter? A singer is a singer.

DOROTHY

But I'm in love with him.

PARK BENJAMIN

You'll get over it. I insist that you do.
Now, be a good little girl and pour me
another cup of coffee.

CUT TO:

EXT. – LE PANCHE – DAY

Rina is sitting on a bench in the garden and looks very sad. Guido goes up to her.

GUIDO

Is something wrong, Rina?

RINA

(holds up the note)

I just got this from Rico. He won't be back
for the summer.

GUIDO

(sits down beside her)

Don't be too sad. He'd be here if
he could. It's the war, and we can't do
anything about that.

CUT TO:

EXT. – CENTRAL PARK – DAY

Caruso and Dorothy are strolling in Central Park.

CARUSO

I'm not a big Catholic, in a church-going
way, but my family is. It's an Italian tradition.
They wouldn't understand if I married a Protestant.
Would you convert for me?

DOROTHY

I'd do anything for you. You know that.

CARUSO

Now, you've really given me something

to think about. I'm crazy about you,
do you know that?

CUT TO:

INT. – LE PANCHE – DAY

Rina is walking inside the villa, in the room where, at the beginning, she read the headline telling her of Caruso's marriage to Dorothy. She is with Dr. Pierallini.

DR. PIERALLINI

I deserve an answer, Rina. How long do you
plan to wait for him?

RINA

How should I know? Maybe the rest
of my life.

DR. PIERALLINI

Come off it. It's time to stop and think about
me. About us.

RINA

You're so faithful, just like a good little
pet, aren't you?

DR. PIERALLINI

Look who's talking.

CUT TO:

INT. – HOTEL LOBBY – NEW YORK – DAY

Caruso and Dorothy are sitting on a loveseat, and he is consoling her.

DOROTHY

Father won't come. It's no use.

CARUSO

I'll try to talk with him.

DOROTHY

It won't do any good. He's made up

his mind.

CARUSO

What are we going to do?

DOROTHY

What do you want to do?

CARUSO

I still hear wedding bells.

DOROTHY

Funny, so do I.

CUT TO:

INT. – RESTAURANT – DAY

Caruso is having lunch with Scotti.

SCOTTI

I know Dorothy is beautiful. But what about Rina? She loves you, and, unlike this innocent girl, she's a woman of the world, of our world, not to mention incredibly beautiful.

ENRICO

I know all about Rina. Maybe too much.

SCOTTI

What do you mean?

ENRICO

I've been getting letters.

SCOTTI

Oh, I didn't know that.

ENRICO

Yeah. No signature but guess what? I don't want to be made a fool of again, especially by another Giachetti sister. Can you imagine the publicity?

SCOTTI

Don't want to. But this Dorothy,
she's – how can I say it as your friend?
She's kind of unexciting.

CARUSO

What the hell's wrong with that? If you want
to know, she's just what I'm looking for. In fact,
she's exactly what I need.

SCOTTI

How's that?

CARUSO

I know you'll think it's silly. But I just
want a woman I can call my own.

SCOTTI

Well, pal, I don't know if that's possible
or even desirable. But, hey, if that's
what makes you happy, go for it.

CUT TO:

INT. – MARBLE COLLEGIATE CHURCH – WEDDING – DAY

It's summer, in mid-August. Caruso and Dorothy Park Benjamin are at the altar, before
the minister. Scotti is serving as best man.

MINISTER

I hereby pronounce you man and wife.

Caruso and Dorothy kiss.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR – CHURCH – DAY

Friends throw rice on them as they exit.

CUT TO:

INT. – NEWSPAPER HEADLINE – DAY

“CARUSO MARRIES AMERICAN SOCIALITE!”

CAMERA pulls back and shows it lying on the rug at Le Panche, in the room where Rina and then Mimmi first saw it.

THE END