

# Chasing Icarus

The title 'Chasing Icarus' is rendered in a dark purple, elegant serif font. The word 'Chasing' is positioned above 'Icarus'. To the right of the text, there are three white feathers of varying sizes, some appearing to float. Below the word 'Icarus', there is a small, ornate quill pen with a gold-colored cap and a purple base, resting on a small puddle of purple ink.

An Electro-Baroque musical

**VIOLET: Music**

**YELLOW: Stage direction read aloud in video**

**Suggestion:**  
Women will be dressed in **magenta**.  
Men in **blue**.  
Castrati in **purple**.

**ACT 1 SCENE 1 - Opening Montage**

**Darkness. An orchestra starts tuning up. A soft glow illuminates a theater's auditorium. We see a large shadow projected: an androgynous figure, a singer warming up.**

**Il Divo**  
OOOOH...

**Split stage: the silhouettes of two children playing, Nero and Violante. A woman dressed in humble clothes enters.**

**Nero**  
Mamma!

**Mother**  
No/...

**Nero**  
/But I want to go to the theatre!

**Mother**  
You want to go to bed/...

**Violante**  
/But Nanny! Il Divo has come into town!

**Nero**  
He's a singer!

**Violante**  
Father said he's so good he's not human!

**Nero**  
I wanna see the non-human singer, mamma!

**Mother**  
I'm putting the light out and *you* to bed...

**Violante**  
Ok **(They snuggle in bed together.)**

**Mother**

You know your Lord father doesn't like you spending the night with us in the servant's quarters.

**Violante**

Only for tonight, Nanny! /

**Nero**

/Yes, mamma!

**Mother**

What will I tell the master?

**Nero & Violante**

*(The children hold each other tight)* Please!!!

**Mother**

I can't say no to you...

**Violante**

Yay!

*Mother erupts in a coughing fit.*

**Mother**

*(Tenderly)* Thank you for being such a good friend to my son/ ...

**Violante**

Sing us a lullaby, Nanny!

**Mother**

Very well...

*Mother tucks the children in for bed.*

**SONG: "NINNA NANNA" – Video 00:05:48**

**Mother**

Ninna nanna ninna oh  
Little one to bed you go  
Chase my voice across your dreams  
On a path of moonlight beams  
Don't you dally, don't you stray

Sleep your daily woes away  
When the morning sets you free  
Find your way back home to me  
Ninna nanna ninna oh

*She tucks them into bed.*

**Mother**

Don't you dally don't you roam  
Leave the flowers well alone  
They are all the Faerie King's  
And he's jealous of his things  
Ninna nanna ninna oh...

*She exits. Suddenly Nero and Violante bolt upright.*

**Violante**

Quick! It started already! Run!

**Nero**

I'm in my nightie / ...

**Violante**

/We don't have time, run!

*They sneak out the window. Suddenly... Lights up in the house! A rowdy 1700 Italian theatre.*

**Ensemble**

Viva! Viva!...

/

Il Divo! Il Divo!...

/

Blessed be the knife!...

/

Viva il coltello!...

*Light on the children, sneaking in, balancing on the wooden beams above the stage.*

**Nero**

Are we going to get in trouble?

**Violante**

Nero! Shush! It's starting!

*Lights up on stage: the curtains part to reveal Il Divo, our "Icarus", an imposing, androgynous figure in a sparkling gown, standing atop a tower. He kneels to grab a fistful of feathers from the ground. The audience holds their breath. The air stands still.*

**SONG: "ALL THE TREASURES" – Video 00:07:24**

**IL DIVO**

IN A LAND SO DARK,  
IN A TIME SO CRUEL,  
OVER STONE SO ROUGH  
A JEWEL!

CAST AWAY FROM HEAVEN  
AND MEANT FOR ME

DOWN DOWN DOWN...  
JOURNEY DOWN...

ALL THE TREASURES!  
ALL THE TREASURES OF THE WORLD ARE HERE!  
ALL THE TREASURES  
CALLING ME FORTH TO TOUCH THE SUN!

OOOHHH  
OOOHHH

*Il Divo spins and the feathers whirl and coalesce into wings on his arms.*

*Light on the children, spellbound.*

*Light shifts. A few months pass. Nero in the costume department of the Teatro Ducale, sat on a pile of gowns.*

*Violante enters, in a costume ten sizes too big.*

**Violante**

OOOHHH  
OOOHHH

**Nero**

*(Butts in with a melody variation)* LEH LEH LEH LEH!

**Violante**

That's not the right note!

**Nero**  
Sorry!

**Violante**  
If you do a variation, go higher! Higher is always better. Like this:

**Violante**  
LEH LEH LEH LEH!

**Nero**  
*(Stubbornly clinging to his own version)*  
LEH LEH LEH LEH!

**Violante**  
Your top is very good.

**Nero**  
Thanks, Maestro!

**Violante**  
It's a pity it will break...

**Nero**  
What?!

**Violante**  
Boys always break their voices.

**Nero**  
Does it hurt?

**Violante**  
Uh uh! It bleeds everywhere and then you wake up you're a man!

**Nero**  
I don't want that! Aren't you scared? Why aren't *you* scared!?

**Violante**  
My voice won't break...

**Nero**  
Why?

**Violante**

Because when I'm older I'm gonna be a castrato.

**Del Drago (OS)**

Violante!

*Nero runs off. Violante isn't fast enough.*

**Del Drago (OS)**

I told you you're not allowed in the costume department!

*Enter Del Drago.*

**Del Drago (OS)**

*(He takes Violante in, embarrassed)* Not again! *(He strips Violante of the costume)* You embarrass me! You need to stop it with this silly obsession for the opera! And trousers and breeches / ...

**Violante**

*/But you run the opera, papà / ...*

**Del Drago**

*/Why can't you just be normal, girl?! (Beat) Put your dress back on.*

*Scene changes to Mother working, singing to herself.*

**Mother**

If the King extends his hand,  
Tempts you to his eldritch land,  
Don't you answer, turn and flee,  
Find your way back home to me...  
Ninna nanna ninna...

*She breaks into a coughing fit. Enter Del Drago.*

**Del Drago**

How bad is it?

**Mother**

It's not for me that I'm worried. It's Nero. He... has nothing. No one, except the little lady... Will you take care of him?

**Del Drago**

I cannot bear the sight of another child going motherless. But... After my wife' passing,  
we barely have enough money to run the Ducale theatre.

**Mother**

*/Please, signore... (She cries)*

**Del Drago**

I heard him sing. He has talent. Rare talent. *(Beat)*. I know someone. A Maestro.

**Mother**

What are you saying?

**Del Drago**

Don't you want to give him his best chance?

**Ensemble**

VIVA!

**Cira**

Dearest Readers!

**Pera**

Roman ragers!

**Cira**

It's your gals! Cira/ ...

**Pera**

*/And Pera/ ...*

**Cira**

*/Coming at you hot/ ...*

**Pera**

*/Cause/ ...*

**Cira & Pera**

*/Life is bettah when you read Gazzetta!*

**Cira**

And as a special treat here today we have Maestro Porpora/ ...



**Pera**  
/Teacher to the stars!

**Ensemble**  
VIVA!

**Cira**  
Il Divo was your pupil, wasn't he?

**Maestro**  
My very best!

**Pera**  
Yaaaas!

**Cira**  
"Icarus" is only his debut, but Il Divo's name is on everyone's lips!

**Pera**  
Best soprano ever!

**Cira**  
He came, he ate/...

**Pera**  
/He left no crumbs!

**Ensemble**  
VIVA!

**Pera**  
We're so lucky to have *musici* in Italy, aren't we, Maestro?

**Cira**  
For all the foreigners who don't quite get the whole thing. How did *musici* come about?

**Maestro**  
Simply, the phenomenon of *musici*, vulgarly known as *castrati*, has flourished in Rome because of the Pope's wise ban on women singing in public.

**Cira**  
Of course we are not condoning castrating children!

**Pera**  
Ahahahah!

**Cira**  
It's illegal! / ...

**Maestro**  
/ And moreover punishable by excommunication! (*Beat*)  
*However...* Should a child happen to need surgery after... I don't know, falling from a horse, or being bitten by a boar... Then he might find his higher calling in music!

**Cira**  
And of course, no one knows where or by who this operation is practiced / ...

**Pera**  
*/However...* Should one need to perform such an operation / ...

**Cira**  
/What would it entail?

**Maestro**  
Various methods could be employed...

**SONG: "VIVA THE KNIFE" – Video 00:13:06**  
**Ensemble Viva, viva, viva...**

**Maestro**  
Those amongst you familiar with the castration of cattle might picture cuplike tongs heated to incandescence to achieve cauterization and remove the entire scrotum altogether.  
But really, all that would be needed is... a knife...

**Ensemble**  
Viva, Viva the knife!  
Viva, Viva the knife!  
Viva, Viva, Viva, Viva the knife!  
God made us in his image,  
Sin made us flawed,  
Which means: if you cut out Sin then Man is God!  
Viva, Viva the knife!  
Viva, Viva the knife!  
Viva, Viva, Viva Viva the knife!

**Maestro**

...The boys could be subdued to apoplexy by opium, or a vigorous pressing of the jugular vein...

**Ensemble**

WHEN NATURE IS MEDIOCRE MAKE A GOD!

**Maestro**

...Having been rendered more tender by the bath, the puerile parts...

**Ensemble**

VIVA! VIVA THE KNIFE!

**Maestro**

... And slicing alongside the entirety of the base...

**Ensemble**

VIVA! VIVA THE KNIFE!

**Maestro**

...Separate them from their nerves and vessels...

**Ensemble**

THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW THEIR NAME...

**Maestro**

...Fatalities are only very rare...

**Ensemble**

...DEFEAT DEATH, IMMORTAL FAME...

**Maestro**

...Could be worshipped by History! Like / ...

**Cira & Pera**

... / Il Divo!!!

**Ensemble**

Viva, Viva the knife!

Viva, Viva the knife!

Viva, Viva, Viva Viva the knife!

**Cira & Pera**

Blessed be the knife that brought us.  
A source of such delight!  
A song that's so refined!  
How many stars have had to come aligned  
To bring castrati to us all?  
If public love is something to go by  
They're in it for the longer haul...  
Surely such glory justifies a loss so small.

*Lights up on Mother playing with Nero.*

**Mother**

So, you like singing, uh?

**Nero**

Yes! I want to be just like Il Divo.

**Mother**

Why?

**Nero**

He looks so beautiful. And the singing is magical... And everyone loves him. So he never feels alone.

**Mother**

Do you feel alone?

**Nero**

Sometimes. But I've got you. And Vi. And all the fans I'll get when I'm famous!

**Mother**

Nero, promise me one thing. No matter what. You'll always stand tall...

*Maestro enters and takes Nero by the hand.*

**Cira**

Some detractors critique the restrictions on castrati.

**Nero**

Mamma?

**Pera**

They can't get married, boo ooh ooh/ ...

**Violante**

Nero...

**Nero**

Vi!

**Maestro**

/Musici are creatures devoted entirely to music! Could you imagine a life more sacred?

*During the last chorus we see Nero behind a screen struggling in the grip of looming shadows.  
They pin him down to a table. A flash of red.*

**Ensemble**

Not quite just a woman and not quite just a man...  
They're neither and therefore so much more than...  
Child of the angels, grace us with your voice!  
Child of the angels, we command you be our God!  
Child of the angels, shed your mortal coil and be a God!

**Cira & Pera**

Il Divo, yes, Il Divo is a God!  
Sing for us, Il Divo!  
Blessed be the child that turned to God!  
Viva the Knife!

**ACT 1 SCENE 2 - The Conservatorio**

*10 years later. Lights on adult Nero. He's practicing breath work, manuscript in hand. A Neapolitan boys' Conservatorio comes to life around him. It's chaos, boys throwing crumpled manuscript pages at each other.*

*Two students stand out, Remi and Aniello. They begin pelting the back of Nero's head. He doesn't react. Aniello steals Nero's manuscript. Nero chases him. Aniello crumples up the page and throws it to Remi. Remi dodges it, disgusted. It falls.*

**Remi**

Eugh! I don't wanna touch that! Don't want *my* balls to fall off, now!

*Nero kneels to get the manuscript. Remi stands on it. A little circle of students forms around them.*

**Remi**

Nero!... Little birdy told me... Is it true you haven't got the cash to go to Rome after graduation? / ...

**Aniello**

/But how are you going to get an agent?

**Remi**

And it's only two weeks until the ceremony...

**Aniello**

Life is so hard, isn't it? / ...

**Remi**

*(To Aniello, dripping irony) /Don't say "hard"! (Gestures to his own crotch) Insensitive...*

**Aniello**

Whoops.

**Remi**

Anyway, If singing doesn't work out, the brothel down the street is looking. I could put in a good word.

**Aniello**

Ew! How would that even work?

**Remi**

*(To Nero) My good friend here does have a point. I am curious. What does your kind do? You know, when / ...?*

**Aniello**

/When they're in the sack.

**Remi**

*(Patronizing)* Don't say "sack"! *(Pointing to his own crotch)* Sorry. Insensitive.

**Aniello**

Whoops.

**Nero**

I really wouldn't know, Remi.

**Aniello**

Yeah, you wouldn't...

**Nero**

When it come to the Amorous Arts, we all bow to your expertise. I believe it *must* exceed your musical skill. Yet again, we do know how devoted you are to your studies; the whole dorm can hear you practicing your right hand nightly between 11 and 11:05.

*Gasps from the students*

**Nero**

As they say: Keep it up! It's not all about talent. Oh! "Talent"! Whoops. Insensitive.

*Remi lunges at Nero. Aniello holds him back*

**Remi**

I'm gonna kill you, halfling!

**Aniello**

Wait, Remi! You can't roughen up the Conservatorio's musico!

**Remi**

If you get to sing, you're a *musico*. If you don't, you're just a boy without balls!

**ACT 1 SCENE 3 - The Announcement**

*Cira and Pera enter, with a long line of interviewees.*

**Cira**

Dearest Readers!

**Pera**

Roman revelers!

**Cira**

It's your gals! Cira/...

**Pera**

/And Pera/...

**Cira & Pera**

And it's that time again!

**SONG: "VIVA THE KNIFE" – Video 00:19:16**

**Ensemble Carnival!**

**Pera**

The new theatrical season has officially starteed!

**Ensemble**

**Carnival!**

**Cira & Pera**

*The time of year for theatre creators/...*

**Cira**

*/When all Opera Houses reveal their lineup.*

**Cira & Pera**

*When genius soars above its imitators/...*

**Pera**

*/And impresarios battle it out!*

**Cira & Pera**

*The Coliseum and all its gladiators  
Never got this much blood gushing!*



**Cira**

Three whole mad weeks of / ...

**Cira & Pera**

... / Revelling and

Jostling

And guzzling

And Gossiping...

It's the celebration with the greatest reputation!

It's sensational!

**Cira**

And as usual The Gazette will give you all the drama!

**Pera**

Cira! Isn't it funny how those we trash tend to close up shop?

**Cira**

I know, Pera! I guess in Art, as in Life, there must be winners and losers... And talking of losers!

*Enter Del Drago.*

**Del Drago**

Buongiorno!

**Cira**

Duke Del Drago, everyone.

**Pera**

The owner of the Teatro Ducale...

**Cira & Pera**

Fancy seeing you here!

**Del Drago**

Such a pleasure ladies! I've been looking forward / to talking to you...

**Cira & Pera**

Sure, no prob, so, now (/man):

You've had another crap year.

**Del Drago**

Well / ...

**Pera**

/No, for realsies!

**Cira**

Here are the comments from your last AIDA:

**Pera**

"So damn boring" /

**Cira**

/"Got me snoring" /

**Pera**

/"Won't be touring" /

**Cira**

/"Please just die!" /

**Pera**

/Ay ay ay! /

**Cira**

/Whole night sucked / ...

**Pera**

/Aida get / f\*\*\*\* ...

**Cira**

/Ahhhh!!!

Can you read the subtext?

**Cira & Pera**

Sorry for the snub... Next!

**Del Drago**

I'm bringing back Icarus!!!

*(Cira and Pera and ensemble gasp)*

Yes! The show that brought us fame

And changed the game

And shamed our (few) detractors.

That made Ducale into a household name / ...

**Cira**

/That was a while ago.

**Pera**

Like, 10 years...

**Del Drago**

I'm jujing it up!

I have hired the hottest young new writer in the continent/...

**Cira & Pera**

/Pietro Metastasio?!/

**Del Drago**

/Yes, the same!

*Metastasio appears in a cone of light.*

**Pera**

So handsome...

**Del Drago**

I had a think about how to make the show more "now"... And the original writers no longer being with us, I could think of no one better than this young genius. He's adding new verse! New songs!/...

**Cira**

/But! He's only had one hit!

**Pera**

Can he do it again?

*An uncomfortable shadow crosses Metastasio's brow.*

**Del Drago**

Ahahahahah! Of Course!

*Lights off Metastasio.*

**Pera**

And what about the money?!

**Cira**

These budget cuts don't lie/...

**Cira & Pera**  
/You're broke!

**Del Drago**  
I think you might have heard of my new financier...  
Olympia Orsini?

*Olympia appears in a cone of light. Cira and Pera gasp!*

**Del Drago**  
Our show will have the best that money can buy!

*Lights off Olympia.*

**Cira**  
Wait! Who is going to play the title role!?

**Pera**  
Il Divo is surely too old, no?

**Del Drago**  
Open casting! All the roles available! Including Icarus! A new star will be made by this role, just like Il Divo was. Several conservatorios and music schools are sending their best! / ...

**Cira**  
/But but but / ...

**Pera**  
/Will Il Divo be involved? / ...

**Del Drago**  
/All in due course... So? Will the Gazette support us?

*(Amongst themselves/Aside)*

**Pera**  
It could be a coup! /

**Cira**  
/It could all go wrong!

**Pera**

A phoenix's rebirth?/

**Cira**

/Or a swan song...

**Cira & Pera**

Either way,

We say... Ok!

Remarkable or

Farcical

We'll write a cracking article

It's shaping up to be a juicy carnival!!

It's the demonstration of the greatnesses of our nation,

It's sensational!

ACT 1 SCENE 4 - Inside the maze

*The Gazette is being distributed. One lands in Nero's lap. He reads it. He runs...*

**Nero**  
Maestro! Maestro!

**Maestro**  
Nero?/...

**Nero**  
/Ahhhh!/...

**Maestro**  
/What are you doing in my office!/...

**Nero**  
/It's happening!

**Maestro**  
What?

**Nero**  
Icarus! The Carnival! Icarus!

**Maestro**  
Ah/...

**Nero**  
/This is it. Do you think Il Divo will be there?/...

**Maestro**  
/Nero/...

**Nero**  
/I've had no way to travel to Rome and entreat agents on my own money, but maybe it was meant to be this way, this is better, cause if the school sends me I'll have more clout anyway and they have to see me... and Icarus, Icarus!/...

**Maestro**  
/Nero! *(Beat.)* There's only room for one student.

**Nero**  
Yeah.

**Maestro**

The faculty has given Remolo the slot. (*Beat*). I pushed for you. Relentlessly. But, Remi's mother has the committee in a vice. She is the school's sole financier. It wasn't an argument I could have won.

**Nero**

Remi is not even a music. Wouldn't the School rather send someone who can vie for the lead/ ...

**Maestro**

/This is nothing to you and your gifts. So, Remi gets the audition? Let him butcher it! As a tenor he'll never be able to aspire to being more a supporting role/ ...

**Nero**

/Remi has a home to go back to after graduation. I do not. My board lapses in two weeks. I can't stay here/ ...

**Maestro**

/I cannot possibly bring it up with the principal again. He's trying to replace me/ ...

**Nero**

/But you are the celebrity teacher/ ...

**Maestro**

/He thinks me old. No one is untouchable.

*Beat.*

**Nero**

I was ten when I met you. I was scared. You took me by the hand/ ...

**Maestro**

/Nero/ ...

**Nero**

/You took me by the hand and you said:... "It will be worth it". Will it?

*Beat.*

**Maestro**

Perhaps/ ...

**Nero**  
/Yes?

**Maestro**  
Remolo wouldn't share my carriage. He made his own travel arrangements. The school's boneshaker, thus, is all for me. I guess whomever I might host for the journey is no one's business but mine/...!

**Nero**  
/Oh Maestro/...

**Maestro**  
/I can take you. But I cannot guarantee you a slot as a performer. It would be up to you/...

**Nero**  
/Thank you! Thank you!

*Nero hugs Maestro vehemently.*

**Maestro**  
Practice. The Icarus aria itself, I'd say. You have a lovely flare for it

*Nero practices in his room. A young himself and a young Violante appear in his mind's eye.*

**Nero**  
Vi... What is an Icarus?

**Violante**  
Icarus was a boy who grew up stuck in a labyrinth.

**Nero**  
What's a labyrinth?

**Violante**  
A huge maze. You couldn't find your way out if you tried half your life. But Icarus was clever. He made wings of wax and feathers and escaped...in the sky...

*A shadow appears: Icarus. The shadow is the image of the star he wishes he could be. He overlaps it, fantasizing about being on stage.*



SONG: LABYRINTH" – Video 00:25:03

**Nero**

We feel this purpose when we've arrived  
A stream bursting out of us  
A silent promise we'll reach the ocean  
A push to get in motion

But the path it turns and turns and turns  
And the river bends and and coils and whirls  
In circles  
And you try to find your way in vain  
And you're back again, you're back again  
This is not a road  
It's a maze

But birds don't fear a wall  
Those with wings don't need to crawl  
Gods don't trip and fall  
They soar above it all

Above the labyrinth  
Above the labyrinth

And rules are made and rules are taught  
And rules take root within our minds  
And we start marching arranged in rows  
In clothes that someone else chose

So you cast my role, decide my worth  
And you chain me tightly to the earth  
A Prometheus unsung.  
Yes, it's true that men and women know  
That by nature they belong below  
But I'm neither, so, let me go...

Cause Gods don't fit down here  
Though gravity might pull them near  
They trace a new frontier  
Beyond the atmosphere

Above the Labyrinth  
Above the labyrinth

To feel the heaven's glow  
To bask into the dawn  
Your reason from the moment you were born  
Or born again  
At the age of ten...?  
Well, still regardless  
You've heard the call  
Just stand tall

Cause Gods don't Hesitate  
Fate is something they create  
So, open up the gate  
That's where all the treasures await  
Above the Labyrinth!

ACT 1 SCENE 5 - What is "Pretty"?

*The shadow of Icarus flies and enters a faded boudoir. Here we meet adult Violante. They are standing in their undergarments, fiddling with a corset. Suddenly they see a young themselves run in, with a young Nero in tow.*

**Child Violante/Child Nero**

ALL THE TREASURES OF THE WORLD ARE HERE  
CALLING ME FORTH TO TOUCH THE SUN...  
OHHH, LEH LEH LEH

**Child Nero**

Why are you so out of breath today?

**Child Violante**

It's this thing! It's suffocating me/...

*Violante undoes their dress revealing a corset.*

**Child Nero**

/It's gorgeous/...

**Child Violante**

/I can't breathe!!!/

**Child Nero**

/Why are you wearing it then?

**Child Violante**

Dad says girls have to get used to it young.

**Child Nero**

But you're/...

**Child Violante**

I know/...

**Child Nero**

/Girls cannot sing.

**Child Violante**

I've heard in certain places, like, not Rome places, they let everyone sing.

**Child Nero**

Where?

**Child Violante**

Vienna. Or London. Maybe I need to go there.

**Child Nero**

*(Worried)* How long does it take for a carriage to get from Rome to London?

**Child Violante**

It can't. It's across the sea.

*Nero sulks. Beat.*

**Child Violante**

Hey! I'll take you with me.

**Child Nero**

Yes?

**Child Violante**

Yes, dummy. We will be together always.

*The young versions exit.*

**Violante**

Oh oh oh oh...

*Adult Violante keeps humming the tune, their thoughts elsewhere. Violante looks in the mirror and starts pulling the corset tight, flattening their breasts, essentially using it as a binder.*

**Galatea**

Signorina!

**Violante**

*(Violante comes to)* Yes?

**Galatea**

You're tying the corset all wrong!

*(She starts undoing the top of the corset)*

When nature gives us melons... We must squeeze!

*She grabs the laces and squeezes their boobs up the corset. A cleavage appears.*

**Galatea**

Better. Now, for the dress. We must be perfect for your father's Carnival! On. Chop chop, now / ...

*She produces a frilly dress. Violante puts it on*

**Galatea**

Remember: "pretty" is not just looks. Pretty is:

**Violante**

"A state of mind..."

**Galatea**

A vocation! A *raison d'être*!

*Galatea produces a fan and slams it on Violante's chest.*

*Violante starts practicing a fan choreo, checking themselves in the mirrors. Throughout the number Violante fleets in and out of their own head. Slowly the reflections start climbing out of the mirrors and echo Vi's movements in grotesque faction.*

**Galatea**

From the top, signorina!

**SONG: PRETTY– Video 00:32:04**

**Violante**

La la...

**Galatea**

No, no! The open fan crosses slowly right to left That means come speak to me.

**Violante**

La la...

*Violante imitates awkwardly.*

**Galatea**

For a more coquettish stance, fan closed (*sharp snap*) to cheek left spells: "come hither!"

**Violante**

La la...

**Galatea**

Should the gentleman prove resistant, you should resort to “why won’t you understand me”. Like so. (*Switches fan to right hand*) frown at the fan. Frown at it!!!

**Violante**

Pretty?

What is pretty?

A set of rules,

An alchemy,

An exercise,

Like algebra,

A language,

Foreign...

Is this pretty? I’d say..

But *you* say *THIS* is pretty. Ok...

They say to trust your gut, but...

Your gut don’t make the cut, uh...

It doesn’t matter what it says.

A caterpillar doesn’t know beauty

Until it turns into a butterfly

So cover me in silk, it’s my duty

I’ll wait to emerge

Let the wrong me die...

I’M PRETTY!!! X2

La la la...

*We’re now going to jump ahead, but in the second part of the scene, Violante finds out their father, Duke Del Drago, has a plan. He has invited a parade of rich young suitors to the Carnival. Violante is to be paraded in front of them. They must be wed before the end of the year, so to help Del Drago repay the huge loan he took from Olympia Orsini to put on the revival of Icarus.*

*Violante finds the news unbearable and faints, the corset cutting the flow of oxygen to their brain.*

**ACT 1 SCENE 6 - Atop the tower**

*Enter Metastasio, making his way through a huge crowd.* **SONG: "PIETRO" – 00:34:16**

**Gazetteer 1**  
Pietro!

**Gazetteer 3**  
Pietro!

**Gazetteer 2**  
Pietro Metastasio!

**Gazetteer 1**  
Pietro!

**Gazetteer 3**  
Pietro, Is it true?

**Gazetteer 1**  
You re-writing Icarus?

**Metastasio**  
Excuse me/ ...

**Gazetteer 2**  
/What changes have you made?/ ...

**Metastasio**  
/I can't/ ...

**Gazetteer 3**  
/What needed to be changed?/ ...

**Metastasio**  
/Well/ ...

**Gazetteers**  
Pietro!/Pietro! / Pietro Metastasio!  
Give us a tiny snippet! Tiny snippet! Tiny snip/ ...

*Metastasio slams his door shut behind himself. A sigh of relief. But he's not alone.*

**Del Drago**

Hi/ ...

**Metastasio**

/Ah!/

**Del Drago**

/That was close.

**Metastasio**

Oh! You're here. Hiiii/ ...

**Del Drago**

/I was almost afraid they would get the new aria out of you.

**Metastasio**

What?

**Del Drago**

The new aria.

**Metastasio**

No! Never. No danger of that.

*Beat.*

**Del Drago**

Pietro?

**Metastasio**

Yeah?

**Del Drago**

You have written it?

**Metastasio**

Yeah?

**Del Drago**

The Carnival is tomorrow!



**Metastasio**

It's a troubled birth.

**Del Drago**

Well, deliver it *cesarean*! You know I put everything on the line to get Il Divo back!  
Olympia owns my soul.

**Metastasio**

I know/...

**Del Drago**

The fact he is considering coming back NOT in the title role... Can you even  
comprehend? You HAVE to write him a cracking song or we're done!

**Metastasio**

It's just... This show is iconic... Am I going to ruin it? They'll laugh me out of town...  
I'll never work again!

**Del Drago**

Get it together! You're Metastasio! A genius! The prodigy of Italian opera! You grab that  
little aria, you hear me?! You grab it! And you the write the crap out of of it! Tonight.  
Alright? Who's my good writer?!?

**Metastasio**

I am/...

**Del Drago**

/Yes you are! Go! Fly! Write...

ACT 1 SCENE 7 - Escape plans

*Metastasio moves to a harpsichord (hiding a loop pedal).*

SONG: "HUBRIS" – Video 00:36:05

**Metastasio**

*(Trying out rhymes)*

Child, from the world you've been exiled...

Been so long since you

Had smiled...

*Did smile...*

*Did smiled?*

Ugh! Muse! Little help here? Kinda need ya.

*During the sequence we see Metastasio conjuring figures: his inspirations. He leads them to the loop machine and gets them to each record a line. Each of them has movement associated to their line, which they repeat robotically. Throughout the song he rearranges them and couples and decouples them, giving new meanings to their movements.*

**Metastasio**

Start again. Lights up. Ancient Greece...

**Metastasio**

<<Sighs>>

Spotlight on Daedalus:

<<Bass line>>

Daedalus was a legendary artisan. His tools chipped away at reality, and revealed the wonders that Nature strives to hide.

<<Tu chi - Tu chi>>

Daedalus boasted he would build a labyrinth so complex not even the Gods could parse it out:

<<Claps>>

And they couldn't. So, as punishment, they trapped *him* inside it, together with his young son Icarus...

<<Le le le>>

But Daedalus can't bear to see his son languish atop that tower  
He grabs hundreds of feathers, dropped by the birds that come and go free, binds them  
with wax and fashions majestic wings...

<<Oh 1>>

And a second pair! And he appoints them to his son's shoulders...

<<Oh 2>>

He turns to Icarus and says... Hmm... He says...

*Split stage: Nero and Maestro in the Conservatorio.*

**Metastasio**

Child...

From the world you've been exiled...

But my genius runs too wild...

These quills are our salvation.

We'll soar above our station

/Why...

**Nero**

/Why?

Why would the school expel me?

**Metastasio**

We'll take to the sky

And fly/...

**Maestro**

/I told you/...

**Metastasio & Maestro**

/Never fly too high.

**Maestro**

But you didn't listen... And the sun burnt your wings right off...

<<Too high too high>>

**Nero**

Kicked out now? Graduation is in two weeks!

**Maestro**

You're leave the Conservatorio tomorrow/

**Nero**

/What did I do?!

<<Too high too high>>

**Maestro**

*/(reading)* "Due to the student making remarks that created an unsafe learning environment/..."

**Nero**

/What?/...

**Maestro**

/"And the jeering and bullying of the other pupils/..."

**Nero**

/Remi?/...

**Maestro**

"/Of this fine establishment"/...

**Nero**

That's the pot calling the kettle black!/...

**Maestro**

/I know, Nero/...

**Nero**

/He's trying to destroy me! Do something/...

**Maestro**

/Remi's position makes him untouchable. You should have learnt to pick your battles.

**Metastasio**

Hubris...

A sin...

A punishment comes to those who cross the line.

Hubris...

A sin...

A punishment comes to those who look beyond the confine.

*Lights off Nero and Maestro.*

**Metastasio**

Child

From

(Bar 4 to 15 it's a snooze, it's cheesy, it sucks)

But my genius

(Is taking a break, give me something, Jesus...)

These quills are our salvation

(They're not quills, they're feathers)

We'll soar above our station...

Wait! / ...

*Lights up on Violante and Del Drago in the mansion.*

**Violante**

/Wait!

**Metastasio**

Would he even say that? / ...

**Del Drago**

/How could you say that?! / ...

**Metastasio**

/That sounds like he is enabling him / ...

**Del Drago**

/I shall not enable this fantasy! / ...

**Violante**

/Papà! / ...

**Metastasio**

/‘Cause this song is about him cautioning his son against “Hubris” / ...

**Del Drago**

/Careful! / ...

**Metastasio**

/"Hubris" means going beyond human limits,  
Against divine rules / ...

**Del Drago**

/There are rules / ...

**Violante**

/I don't *need* to marry, papà / ...

**Metastasio**

/Icarus is hubristic 'cause he flies too close to the Sun,  
But humans can't fly full stop!  
So why would Daedalus say, dramaturgically, they should be flying at all?  
Is Daedalus hubristic?  
Is the metaphor hubristic?  
Is this whole bloody excuse for a story hubristic?  
Am I hubristic for daring,  
For thinking that I could figure this out?

**Violante**

/We can figure this out! If you sent me to Vienna / ...

**Del Drago**

/A woman of birth! Alone! / ...

**Violante**

/But I could sing there! And send money back! / ...

**Del Drago**

/What silliness! / ...

**Violante**

That would save the theatre just as well as selling me off!

*Shocked beat.*

**Metastasio**

Hubris...

A sin...

A punishment comes to those who cross the line.

Hubris...

A sin...

A punishment comes to him who built himself a shrine.

*Split scene: Nero and Maestro, Violante and Del Drago.*

**Nero & Violante**

It's up to you!

**Nero**

You could let me come to Rome and not tell them...

**Violante**

You could tell them I'm sick, or dead/...

**Maestro & Del Drago**

/Stop.

**Violante**

I'm good, papa... It's more than a pipe dream/...

**Nero**

/You're going to shatter my dream just like that?/...

**Nero & Violante**

/You can make it happen!/...

**Maestro & Del Drago**

/Enough!

**Maestro**

Remi somehow heard about our plan, to take you up in my carriage. He told faculty. They forbid it and they gave me a choice. It was me or you. I'm sorry, Nero.

*Exit Maestro*

**Del Drago**

I really thought you had left this childishness behind. You disappoint me, Violante. You

shame your mother's memory.  
*Exit Del Drago. Nero and Violante stay onstage speechless. Light back on Metastasio. He is now holding a bottle of wine and staring in the mirror.*

**Metastasio**

You suck.

You suck and you're a fraud.

A fraud with only *one* good show in him...

And now you're floundering...

Rhyming "hiM" with "flounderiNG"

While drunk.

You flunk.

And now the world will know...



**ACT 1 SCENE 8 - Building the wings**

*Morning after. The Conservatorio. Remi and Aniello.*

**Remi**

My man... take a look at this...

*They grab a note he's handing them.*

**Remi**

It was left in my changing room.

**Aniello**

*(Reading)* "If you need a little assistance hitting those high notes today, it would be my delight to lend a helping hand. Meet me in the reeds store room. I'll be waiting. Your intimate friend."

Woah! Is it that broad from last night?

**Remi**

What can I tell you... Time for a reprise.

**Aniello**

Your carriage for Rome is in twenty minutes/ ...

**Remi**

*/Business.* You mind yours. I'll mind mine...

*Remi wonders in. There is a girl in an elaborate dress facing away from him.*

**Remi**

Hello? You're not...

**Nero**

She told me a lot about you. I wanted to see for myself if the rumors were true.

**Remi**

What rumors?

**Nero**

They say you are quite... the leading man...

**Remi**  
That I am...

**Nero**  
Could I be the judge?

**Remi**  
Eager...

*He starts kissing her neck. She maneuvers him so that he is now in front of an open wardrobe. She quickly turns around and kicks him in the groin. He bawls over. She uses all her weight and pushes him inside the wardrobe. She quickly locks him in.*

**Remi**  
Hey, what the hell. Let me out! Let me out!

*The girl turns to face us for the first time, taking the hair off her face. Takes her wig off... it's Nero.*

**Remi**  
Let me out, you bawd!

**Nero**  
I guess being a real man comes with real disadvantages...

**Remi**  
What? Who's there?

*Nero chuckles and exits.*

**Remi**  
Open at once! Do you hear me! I'll end you!

*Sound of a carriage. Scene change.*

**ACT 1 SCENE 9 - A flight of fancy**

*Del Drago dressed in finery, anxiously pacing back and forth. A hubbub of voices and glasses clinking.*

**Ensemble**  
**CARNIVAL!!!**

**Pera**  
It's the big day!

**Cira**  
Let's see what Del Drago has to offer/ ...

**Cira & Pera**  
/Shall we?

**Ensemble**  
**It's shaping up to be a juicy Carnival!**

*Lights on Del Drago inside the Ducale, stressing.*

**Del Drago**  
Is everyone ready? Hello! Where is Pietro?...

*Lights on Il Divo with his back to the audience, preening in a mirror. Del Drago walks towards him. The lackey intercepts him...*

**Del Drago**  
Il Divo! Welcome. Your suite is this way/ ...

**Lackey**  
/No shaking hands with Il Divo.

**Del Drago**  
Oh, yes, Sorry.

*Il Divo gestures gently and whispers unintelligibly. The lackey interprets.*

**Lackey**  
The script. We're asking after the script.

**Del Drago**  
Of course! The writer is giving the last touches/ ...

**Lackey**

/We were due to receive it a month back/ ...

**Del Drago**

/Oh, but you know geniuses! Always striving for perfection! It was the very thing that made Mestastasio's Dido so trailblazing!

*Il Divo quivers.*

**Lackey**

Ah, yes. His one previous show.

**Del Drago**

*(To Il Divo)* Maestro Il Divo...

**Lackey**

Eyes up here *(pointing at themselves)*.

**Del Drago**

*(Fighting the urge to look directly)* If you have any reservations/ I can...

**Lackey**

/We had reservations. For dinner. But we're here, instead. *(Getting closer)* Il Divo accepted to come back to the show with the understanding that his involvement with this production would befit his legacy. And surely we don't have to remind you the contract is not yet signed.

*Beat. Il Divo stirs.*

**Lackey**

Suite that way, you said?

*Il Divo turns and exits. The lackey darts off after Il Divo. Del Drago alone.*

**Del Drago**

*(Under his breath)* Where the heck are you, Pietro?

**Enter Violante decked in a gown.**

**Del Drago**

Violante! At last! Quick! Your suitors are waiting.

**Violante**

Papa I was thinking/...

**Del Drago**

/Yes ,yes, very good. Come/...

**Violante**

/Papà/...

**Del Drago**

/Chest out! Bum back!

*Del Drago grabs Violante and opens the doors. The world lights up!*

SONG: "FANTASIA" – Video 00:45:23

**Ensemble**

EH OH, EH OH!

DANCE THE FANTASIA!

EH OH, EH OH!

EVERYONE IN GEAR!

STEP IN LINE (LINE! LINE!)

WE'RE MOVING POETRY!

WATCH US SHINE! (SHINE! SHINE!)

IT IS OUR DESTINY!

EH OH, EH OH!

DO THE FANTASIA!

(DUBSTEP) THEN TURN IT UP!

*Del Drago deposits Violante in front of a gaggle of young men.*

**Del Drago.**

Here you go! Danilo, Marco, Giovanni. Be good!

*Exits.*

**Suitor 1**

BUONGIORNO!

**Suitor 2**

HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

**Violante**

WELL. AND YOU?

**Suitor 1 & 2**

GREAT...

**Suitor 3**

HOW WAS YOUR...?

**Violante**

NO COMPLAINTS.

**Suitor 3**

GREAT!

**Violante**

YES...

**Suitor 1 & 2**

YOO OOH HH...

**Suitor 1**

(Fancy ) Like a drink? / ...

**Suitor 2**

/Such  
Lovely pink! /

**Suitor 3**

/Say! This place stinks. No?

**Violante**

It' my dad's...

**Suitor 3**

Whoops, my bad / ...

**Suitor 2**

I'm /struck by Cupid / ...

**Suitor 1**

/Struck with "stupid" / ...

**Suitor 2**

/Hey! / ...

**Violante**

*/You're too polite/ ...*

**Suitor 3**

*/Fight fight!/ ...*

**Suitor 1**

*(Offering an arm) /Thought we might?*

**Enter Nero, making his way through the crowd, looking around enraptured.**

*We also see Remi coming in from a separate entrance, disheveled and angry, having grabbed a later carriage. He's looking for Nero through the crowd.*

**Nero**

*Taken a right turn,  
That was the way!  
Now it is my turn.*

*Follow the golden thread  
You with the golden touch.  
I am transforming lead...  
Who knew the world could hold so much!*

*(He dances) And now we turn and turn and turn and turn/ ...*

**Violante**

*(They dance on the other side of the ballroom) /And we turn and turn and turn and turn...*

**Ensemble**

*EH OH, EH OH!  
DANCE THE FANTASIA!*

**Violante**

*...A set of rules...  
...An alchemy...*

**Ensemble**

*EH OH, EH OH!  
EVERYBODY CHEER!*

**Violante**

*...Like algebra...*

**Ensemble**  
GET ON POINT!  
HOLY GEOMETRY...  
ROCK THIS JOINT!  
IN PERFECT SYMMETRY!  
EH OH, EH OH!  
DO THE FANTASIA!  
(Dubstep) THEN TURN IT UP!

**Violante**  
...Let the wrong me die...

**Nero**  
...Fate is something I create...

*Metastasio comes in timidly, clutching a manuscript.*

**Metastasio**  
...Hubris.  
Ok.  
This is decent,  
I can show him this...

*The dance is interrupted by Del Drago calling for attention, hitting a glass.*

**Del Drago**  
A moment of your attention, please!

**Metastasio**  
Crap, I'm late.

*People stop dancing. Metastasio is stuck in the middle of the crowd, unable to reach the podium, he decides to wait.*

**Del Drago**  
Ladies and gentlemen...  
Buongior/no...

*Olympia barges on with "savior faire".*

**Olympia**  
/Guten morgen!  
Darlings!



**Del Drago**

Olympia Orsini everyone...

*Whistles and over-rapturous applause.*

**Olympia**

Darlings don't be naughty!

**Del Drago**

The one who made all this possible.

**Olympia**

That's so humbling. I'm humbled.

**Del Drago**

Yes... So...

We've got a lot in store/ ...

**Olympia**

/No, more than that!

We're sitting on some hot tea!

You've debated,

Speculated/ ...

**Del Drago**

/Restlessly waited

For a clue/ ...

**Olympia**

/Poor you!

You've been wondering...

You've been pondering...

**Del Drago**

You've been begging us for crumbs...

**Olympia**

Well, my darlings, roll the drums!

I am pleased to announce

Our first cast member

For the revival of Icarus:

My very good friend...

Il Divo, everybody!

*The curtains part. Il Divo arrives triumphantly and stands on stage... Il Divo takes the applause nonchalantly. Cut to: Violante in the audience, utterly spellbound.*

**Ensemble**

*...Viva...*

**Nero**

*...Soar above it all...*

**Violante**

*...Pretty...*

**Del Drago**

Il Divo is delighted to return to this opera so dear to his heart, but with a twist! For *this* time he will perform the senior role of Daedalus!

*Murmurs. Cira and Pera scribble furiously in the audience.*

**Olympia**

What about the other roles? Who's Icarus? Well...

*She claps her hands. Young singers line up.*

**Olympia**

We have talents from all the best conservatorios in Italy, lining up right now to take their slots for our first ever public audition!

**Del Drago**

All of you will help out our panel/ ...

**Olympia**

/Which includes me, Duke Del Drago and our very handsome writer: Pietro Metastasio... Where is Pietro?

**Metastasio**

/Nope...

*Metastasio tries to sneak away through the crowd.*

**Del Drago**

/Ahah, but for now, dance everybody! Drink! Be merry!!!

*Ensemble dances.*

*Pietro struggles to make his way though the crowd.  
Nero has found the booker. Remi arrives and sneaks behind Nero in a fury.*

**Nero**

A slot please! My name? / Remolo...

**Remi**

/ Remolo Chiaramonte Bordonaro.

*Nero turns to face Remi. Beat. Nero legs it.*

**Remi**

Security!

**Ensemble**

Eh oh, eh oh,  
Up! Up! Up! Up!

*Nero bumps into Metastasio skulking. Il Divo spots Metastasio in the crowd. A gesture, and the lackey makes a beeline for the writer, who notices and runs. Exit the lackey after him.*

**Ensemble**

Eh oh, eh oh,  
Dance the fantasia  
Eh oh, eh oh,  
Couldn't be more clear  
Keep the beat  
...(they do the robot)...  
And repeat!  
...(They do the robot again)...  
Eh oh, eh oh,  
Do the fantasia!  
Turn it up!  
Turn it...

*Il Divo alone. Violante pops up in front of him!*

**Violante**

Hi!

**Ensemble**

Up!

**ACT 1 SCENE 9 - Never meet your idols**

*Beat. Il Divo stares at Violante.*

**Violante**

I... Ehm... I... My name is Violante del Drago. My father is Duke del Drago... You know him, of course. What an honor!

*Beat.*

**Violante**

I am a big fan. Huge.

*Beat.*

**Violante**

I have seen you. As a child. I mean: *I* was child, *you* were Icarus... Ten years ago. It changed my life. I have been singing ever since...

*Enter the Lackey.*

**Lackey**

Damn. Didn't think writers would run so fast...

**Violante**

In fact, I've always always dreamed of singing for you.

*Beat.*

**Violante**

No?...

*Beat. Il Divo turns to leave.*

**Violante**

My father doesn't approve, but if you tell him I am good, maybe he'll let me sing/ ...

**Lackey**

/If I may cut in. My dear. What an irresponsible thing to say. And in front of Il Divo. I'm sure you'd want to apologize.

**Violante**

*(Eyes wondering to Il Divo)* I...

**Lackey**  
Eyes here.

**Violante**  
He would listen to you!

*Il Divo steps away. The lackey takes over.*

**Lackey**  
Dear. You do not need to show us your skills.

**Violante**  
No?

**Lackey**  
No. Il Divo has worked with female singers abroad / ...

**Violante**  
/Oh/ ...

**Lackey**  
/But it isn't your fault. The weakness of a woman's voice should be excused on account of the weakness of her sex. Enjoy the party.

*They exit. Violante is alone. The gaggle of suitors run in.*

**Suitors 1 2 3**  
Signorina! / Signorina! / This dance is mine!

***Violante runs.***

**ACT 1 SCENE 11 - My Own Other Half**

*Violante pushes past a waiter in an Icarus outfit. They find a changing room and get in. A rack of costumes behind them. They pace back and forth, struggling to breathe. They take their dress off and undo their corset quickly; forcing themselves to inhale. Suddenly they notice the Icarus costume hanging from the rack.*

**Violante**

*In a land so dark?*

*In a time so cruel*

*They throw it on feverishly and look at themselves in the mirror.*

**Violante**

*Over stone so rough*

*A jewel...*

*They conceal their chest with the costume and look satisfied in the mirror.*

**Violante**

*Meant for me...*

*They run to the rack. Breeches! They put them on while singing. A doublet! A wig! Looking for a jacket they noisily slide the line of costumes revealing, behind it, Metastasio in the act of downing a bottle of wine.*

**Violante**

*Woah!*

**Metastasio**

*Woah!*

**Violante**

*Didn't know anybody was in here!*

**Metastasio**

*(Shielding his face) Il Divo! I'm sorry! I can explain!*

**Violante**

*Pietro Metastasio?*

**Metastasio**

*(Squinting) You're not Il Divo?*

**Violante**

No! I am Violante. (*Wig off*) Del Drago.

**Metastasio**

What? You... No! The boss's... *daughter?*

**Violante**

Yes. Hi./...

**Metastasio**

/You sound just like Il Divo/...

**Violante**

/What?! Surely not/...

**Metastasio**

I really took you for a musicolo...

**Violante**

/Wow...

**Metastasio**

(*Realizing what he's said*) Oh! My apologies, signorina/...

**Violante**

/Thank you!

**Metastasio**

Thank you? Oh. Sure.

*Beat.*

**Violante**

You... You! YOU!

**Metastasio**

Me me ME?

**Violante**

YOU talk to my father! Big me up! Convince him!

**Metastasio**

Of...?

**Violante**

To let me sing abroad!

**Metastasio**

What?

**Violante**

You're the *it* poet! Your use of recitative to forward the plot reformed Italian melodrama!

**Metastasio**

Ah, ah, well/...

**Violante**

/He'd listen to you.

**Metastasio**

No offense, but your father is on my to-avoid list today...

*Motions to exit. Violante steps in front of him.*

**Metastasio**

/Dear. If I can spare another single soul the torment of a life in the Arts, maybe then I will have earned the right to get into Heaven.

*Beat. Violante can't stifle a guffaw.*

**Metastasio**

What?

**Violante**

Sorry, it's just...

**Metastasio**

What?

**Violante**

No, just... kinda flowery.

**Metastasio**

So much for "best poet in Rome".

**Violante**

That was poetry? It didn't scan *or* rhyme, so...



**DelDrago**  
Violante!

*Mestasio looks at the bottle, Violante looks at their clothes. "He can't see me like this!". They both make a beeline for the clothes rack, trying to hide. They push each other out of the way, they cannot both fit, they struggle. Enter Del Drago and catches them tangled. Vi puts the wig on.*

**Del Drago**  
(OS) Where is that girl? Violante!

*Sees them.*

**DelDrago**  
/You!

**Metastasio**  
Well...

**Violante**  
I...

**DelDrago**  
Pietro!?

**Violante**  
Uh...

**Metastasio**  
Eh...

**DelDrago**  
What's this?

**Metastasio**  
Oh...

**Violante**  
No!

**DelDrago**  
For the love of God/ ...

**Metastasio**

/I can explain! /

**Violante**

/I am sorry! /

**Del Drago**

/What are you doing in a closet with a musico?

*Beat. Awkward silence. Metastasio and Violante register. He thinks Violante's an actual castrato. They burst out in a large overcompensating laugh...*

**Metastasio**

Duke, this musico is my friend / ...

**Violante**

/Ribaldo Antonioni, sir. Mezzo soprano / ...

**Metastasio**

/He's helping me! Extraordinary voice / ...

*Violante hits a high note with gusto.*

**Metastasio**

/See! So similar to Il Divo's /

**Violante**

/I am Pietro's vocal reference!

**Metastasio**

We are hard at work!

*Violante hits another high powerful note.*

**Del Drago**

Charming... Excuse us (*taking Pietro aside*). You missed the announcement. Il Divo is looking for you. Put that down and come back, will you?

*Showing Metastasio out. Del Drago stops and turns to Violante.*

**Del Drago**

Oh! You don't happen to have seen a girl running this way, do you?

*Violante shakes their head vehemently.*

**Del Drago**

Well...Antonioni, mezzo, is it? Count yourself blessed you can never have daughters/...

*While Del Drago is distracted, Metastasio legs it.*

**Del Drago**

...Or writers! Excuse me. Pietro!!!

*Violante alone. They take a deep breath. "He didn't recognize me..."*

*Slowly the ensemble enters, the voices in their head start; only this time they sing with Violante in a harmonious way...*

**SONG: MY OWN OTHER HALF– Video 00:57:09**

**Violante**

ALL I'VE EVER HEARD IS "WAIT!" AND "HUSH!",  
"FLASH A SMILE", "SIT UP STRAIGHT" AND "BLUSH!" ...

FOR A MOMENT THERE THOUGH:

QUIET,

SILENCE,

NO MORE YELLING

AND I FELT THIS FEELING WELLING

Nope!

"BE A GOOD GIRL! DROP AND STAY!"

BITING BACK IS POINTLESS ANYWAY;

THERE'S A WAY AND THERE ARE RULES

BY MEN WHO DO KNOW BETTER...

BETTER FOLLOW TO THE LETTER...

YOU'RE JUST A DOLL IN YOUR OWNER'S HOME,  
SMILE FRESHLY PAINTED ON MONOCHROME  
BUT WHEN UNDER PRESSURE THE PORCELAIN  
CRACKS!

I'VE WAITED

SO LONG

TO GET OUT

TO BE READY

BUT MAYBE

I ALREADY WAS...

I AM MY OWN OTHER HALF,  
I AM MY OWN OTHER HALF,  
I'M DONE WITH DELIGHTFUL AND TWEE!

I AM MY OWN OTHER HALF,  
I'LL BE THE LAST ONE TO LAUGH  
AM I A SHE OR A HE?  
I'M JUST ME!

*Violante starts putting on different costumes, looking more and more androgynous.*

EVERY GIRL WANTS TO BE A PRINCESS;  
NO ONE CHOOSES TO REMAIN PRINCE-LESS:  
THEY'VE ALL BOUGHT INTO A CULT  
THAT PREACHES THAT FOR CERTAIN  
THEY'LL MEET "HIM"  
AND "Bam!" THAT'S CURTAIN...

I COULD NEVER MAKE MYSELF AGREE  
NEVER FELT LIKE IT APPLIED TO ME  
NOW I GET IT,  
WHY IT ALWAYS FELT SO DAMN EXHAUSTING  
WHY IT MADE ME CRINGE AND WINCE  
I'M THE PRINCESS, YES, BUT ALSO THE PRINCE...

OR WHT ABOUT NEITHER...

AND WHAT IF I'M PRETTIER  
LIKE THIS?  
AND WHAT IF I'M PRETTIER  
WITH ALL MY PARTS IN SYNTHESIS?

ALL OF THE WORLD  
MAY KEEP ON CALLING ME MISS,  
BUT WHAT AM I MISSING?!

"YOU'RE JUST A DOLL IN YOUR OWNER'S HOME,  
SWEET NEAT PETITE AND INCOMPLETE"  
BUT UNDER THE PORCELAIN THERE'S FLESH AND BLOOD  
IF I NEED A MAN TO BE WHOLE THEN I KNOW JUST WHO WILL DO

I AM MY OWN OTHER HALF!  
I AM MY OWN OTHER HALF!

I FOUND MYSELF FINALLY!

I AM MY OWN OTHER HALF!  
SIGNING MY OWN AUTOGRAPH!  
BEST ACTRESS... ACTOR!? NOMINEE!

OH, OH.  
I AM MY OWN OTHER HALF  
A MUTT, YES, BUT WITH PEDIGREE!  
MY NAME STRETCHED ACROSS THE MARQUEE!  
A TRUE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY CONTROVERSY  
THAT'S ME.

ACT 1 SCENE 12 - The Poet and the Muse

*Nero is still running away from security. He ends up on the stage of the Ducale. He sees a ladder. He climbs up. On the rafters he meets Pietro, downing his bottle.*

**Nero**  
Woah!

**Metastasio**  
Woah!

**Nero**  
Didn't know anybody was/ ...

**Metastasio**  
.../Can't a guy drink in peace? It's like the Sistine Chapel in here today, what happened to privacy!?!/ ...

**Nero**  
/I'm being pursued!

**Metastasio**  
Oh? Oh, no no no! Off you go!

**Nero**  
I can't!

**Metastasio**  
Find somewhere else!

**Nero**  
You find somewhere else!

**Metastasio**  
If they find you they find me and I've already been found once today!

**Nero**  
So?

**Metastasio**  
Go!

**Nero**  
No!

*They struggle. In the struggle, they bump the ladder. They watch it in a panic, as it falls to the ground with a mighty crash. Remi runs across looking for Nero.*

**Remi**

What was that?!? Guards!

*Nero and Meta squeeze against each other in a corner, away from the light. They hold their breath as steps pass by. An exhale of relief. Beat.*

**Nero**

So... Why are you up here?

**Metastasio**

Hiding.

**Nero**

From?

**Metastasio**

Them...

**Nero**

You snuck in too?

**Metastasio**

Uh?

**Nero**

To audition? Baritone?

**Metastasio**

No, no. I... I work here.

**Nero**

What is it you do?!

**Metastasio**

I have been asking myself that.

*Beat.*

**Nero**

You are fun.

**Metastasio**

Stay in this place long enough and you'll be too.

*Beat.*

**Nero**

What's wrong with this place?

**Metastasio**

*/(Grunts)/ ...*

**Nero**

I used to come here as a child.

**Metastasio**

Good for you.

**Nero**

You are so lucky! To work in the theatre? It's a vocation/ ...

**Metastasio**

*/It's a pain.*

**SONG: THE POEM – Video 01:02:57**

**Nero**

Have you ever watched  
The summer's raindrops flowing?  
At times you'll notice growing  
Weed and Rose together:  
From the same one weather  
The ugly and the good;  
And it's understood  
The garden is but one.  
The heart is one and only,  
Though grief and joy may fill it;  
Together how they thrill it  
When only I see you...

*Metastasio is taken aback and looks at Nero intently for the first time.*

**Nero**

An aria. Obviously. From Dido. By Pietro Metastasio. It's supposed to be about romance



and pain, but I sing it more like... There is this beauty in the struggle?

*Beat. Metastasio looks at Nero intently.*

**Metastasio**  
You struggle?

**Nero**  
Let's see... my Nemesis got me kicked out of school a week before graduation so I stole his carriage from Naples to get here in the off chance I could take his singing slot...

**Metastasio**  
*(Laughing)* You did what?

**Nero**  
But now he's chased me here so... I'll be damned if I ever get to sing.

*Beat.*

**Metastasio**  
You are kind of amazing.

**Nero**  
Thank you? What's your name anyway?

**Metastasio**  
Pietro Metastasio.

*Beat.*

**Nero**  
What?

**Metastasio**  
Coast is clear. Come.

**Nero**  
Uh?...

**Metastasio**  
You wanted to sing, didn't you? *(Beat.)*

**Nero**  
We... Hiding... No?

**Metastasio**

No more! I'm inspired! (*Beat.*) Now. How do we get down?

*Lights out. Scene change.*

**ACT 1 SCENE 13 - La Signora**

*We're going to jump ahead a bit. Metastasio takes Nero to the one person who can arrange an audition for him: the Almighty Olympia Orsini. The consummate host resists her setlist being altered at first... But with a little bit of charm...*

**Metastasio**

*/ After all, it is well known that you have the *best* eye. The discoverer of stars they're calling you! Isn't it amusing?*

**Olympia**

*...Well. What's the harm in one more!*

*Enters Remi.*

**Remi**

*Mother! The valet lost my music sheet. I am performing in five minutes!*

*Beat. Nero and Remi look at each other.*

**Remi**

*Ah AH!*

**Nero**

*Mother?*

**Metastasio**

*/ You know Remolo?*

**Olympia**

*/ You know my son? /*

**Remi**

*Mother!!!*

**Nero**

*We go to school together / ...*

**Remi**

*/ That's the one! / ...*

**Metastasio**

*/ Well, great! / ...*

**Olympia**

/Who? The little orphan?

**Remi**

Yes!

**Metastasio**

So good you're friends/ ...

**Olympia**

/The one that locked you in the closet and stole your audition.

*Beat.*

**Metastasio**

Oh...

**Olympia**

What were his exact words?

**Remi**

"Talent? Whoops!"

**Olympia**

Well, I hear he's *very* talented. So he should be a fair judge/ ...

**Nero**

.../Ma'am, I apologize, I/ ...

**Olympia**

*/(Tuts benignly)* What for? Truly *talented* people have no need for apologies...

**SONG: YOU CAN BUY TALENT– Video 01:06:06**

**Olympia**

THERE ARE THINGS THAT MONEY CAN'T BUY,  
EVERYONE IS STUCK WITH THEIR LOT;  
LIKE, BEAUTY, MANNERS OR TIME...  
SADLY YOU GOT WHAT YOU GOT.  
NOW, WE ALL COME UP SHORT IN AN AREA OR TWO,  
AND IN THAT I AM GUILTY AS CHARGED,  
BUT TO COPE ISN'T HARD IF YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO,  
AND I DO, AS I FOUND, BY AND LARGE THAT:

YOU CAN BUY TALENT.  
HONEY YOU LOOK CONFUSED, WHY?  
YES YOU CAN BUY TALENT!  
TRULY, MY PET, YOU SHOULD TRY:  
IF YOU FEED THE MASSES LIKE JESUS INTENDS  
I BET YOU WILL FIND THE APPLAUSE NEVER ENDS !  
YES, YOU CAN BUY TALENT,  
AND WITH TALENT COME FRIENDS.

**Olympia**

Maestro! Give this musico a slot!

**Nero**

Thank you! / ...

**Remi**

.../Mother!!!

**Olympia**

Remolo. Let's get the audience *ready* for our guest.

*Throughout the song we see Remi handing stacks of cash to audience members and whispering in their ears.*

**Olympia/DD**

Ladies and gentlemen! The audition is about to commence!

*She gathers people on stage. Young performers line up. Cira and Pera give out marks on placards to each after they have sung.*

**OLYMPIA**

YOU CAN BUY TALENT!  
THE SUBJECT OF ART IS SUBJECTIVE / ...

**YOUNG SINGER**

OOOH OOOH OOOH!

**OLYMPIA**

.../BUT IF YOU CAN BUY TALENT,  
PACKAGING'S VERY EFFECTIVE! / ...

**YOUNG SINGER**

OOOH OOOH OOOH!

**OLYMPIA**

.../WINE CAN TASTE FINE WHEN YOU DRINK FROM A JUG,  
BUT ISN'T IT BETTER IN CRYSTAL, YOU THUG?  
YOU CAN BUY TALENT  
AND WITH TALENT/...

**YOUNG SINGER**

OOOH OOOH OOOH!

**OLYMPIA**

.../THE RIGHT TO FEEL SMUG

AND I KNOW THIS FIRST HAND...

Back when I was young,  
A freulein in Berlin,  
I was a singer too!  
But it's hard to break in...  
Castings whiz you by,  
You get sadder and older,  
Unless you have a D cup  
And your name is Isolda.

WITH HER SICILIAN BLOND WIG AND VENETIAN FASHION...

I SHOWED UP EARLY TO PRACTICE MY SCALE  
THEN WHO WOULD I SEE IN THE LINE WITHOUT FAIL?  
(I) SPIED ROMAN VELVET FROM UNDER HER CLOAK  
AND CHOKED AS MY DREAMS STARTED GOING UP IN SMOKE  
SHE ALWAYS WOULD GET MY PART!  
THAT LOUSY CURSÉD TART!

AND SHE COULDN'T EVEN SING!

BUT ONE DAY AS SHE SCURRIED AWAY FROM ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL  
AUDITION, THE LIGHT OF A TORCH SPARKED OFF HER (VENETIAN GOLD  
CHAIN/ VENETIAN GOLDS/ FLORENTINE GOLD EARRINGS/ FLORENTINE  
GOLDS) RICOCHETED, HIT MY EYE AND...

I HAD AN EPIPHANY  
BITCH BOUGHT TALENT!  
SHE SNATCHED IT FROM ITALY  
SO I'LL BUY TALENT  
FOUND ME A SIGNORE ALL DRESSED IN BROCADE  
AND DEVELOPED A TASTE FOR PROSECCOS;  
HE IS UGLY AND DEAF BUT I NOW HAVE A MAID  
AND A BEDROOM SO LARGE THAT IT ECHOES!  
ME! A ROMAN MATRONA!

YET THE TRADE THAT I MADE FOR THE MAID, THE BROCADE,  
IS THAT MADE-IN-ROME-WOMEN DON'T SING...

...Ironic...

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT SWEETENED THE STING?  
A GARGANTUAN DIAMOND RING!

YOU CAN BUY TALENT.  
I DARE YOU TO LAUGH AT ME NOW  
YOU CAN BUY TALENT.  
GRAZIE, ISOLDE! CIAO CIAO!  
HELD OUT A TORCH  
BUT WAS DONE HOLDING OUT  
AND SO I PASSED IT ON TO MY LITTLE SPROUT...

COME ON BABY!

*Remi comes on and sings his part; he hits a bum note. Olympia corrects him. Moooooom!! He hits the correct note and belts higher. The crowd goes insane.*

**OLYMPIA**

Your turn, darling...

*Nero tries to sing. The corrupted crowd boos.*

**OLYMPIA**

YOU COULD BUY TALENT, BUT WE DON'T TAKE CHANGE  
KEEP DREAMING, MY LOVELY: IT'S OUT OF YOUR RANGE.

IT'S CUTE HOW YOU SHOOT FOR THE SKY

WELL DONE, NICE TRY!

TALENT IS NOT ABOUT GENIUS OR VOICE

TALENT IN ROME IS MY CHOICE!

YOU CAN BUY TALENT

I MEAN, YOU CAN'T BUY TALENT

AND SINCE YOU GOT NO TALENT...

BYE BYE!

*Actors freeze. We're inside Nero's head. (He sees Mother and child Violante in his mind's eye, smiling at him.)*

**SONG: LABYRINTH REPRISE– Video 01:12:30**

**Nero**

YOU HEARD THE CALL,  
JUST STAND TALL.  
'CAUSE GODS DON'T HESITATE,  
FATE IS SOMETHING THEY CREATE  
SO OPEN UP THE GATE  
THAT'S WHERE ALL THE TREASURES AWAIT

*People unfreeze, as Nero's song bleeds into the real world. Nero's runs circles around the original version of the aria. The crowd is silent.*

*Suddenly we hear clapping. People part to reveal... Il Divo! Gasps. The lackey joins in enthusiastically and the audience follows suit. Remi whimpers. Olympia is seething. Il Divo walks to shake Nero's hands, then leaves the room.*

*People start crowding Nero.*

*Metastasio looks on, proudly.*

*Enter Del Drago.*

**Del Drago**

Il Divo did what? That's never happened before! Extraordinary! Another friend of yours, Pietro?

**Metastasio**

Thank you, Duke.

**Nero**

Obliged.

**Del Drago**

What is the name?

**Metastasio**

Il Bambino. The prodigy child!

**Del Drago**

Catchy.

**Metastasio**

If I may, Duke? We have to capitalize on this... ruckus tonight.

**Del Drago**



Indeed... Well come into my office on Monday. We can discuss casting.

*Exit Del Drago. Nero is beyond himself. He hugs Metastasio. Lights shift. They are alone. They look at each other. Metastasio and Nero kiss.*

**ACT 1 SCENE 14 - Motherly Love**

*The end of the party. People stumbling drunkenly in the piazza outside the Teatro Ducale. Enter Remi, berated by Olympia (in her furs).*

**Olympia**

How could you?

**Remi**

Why is it my fault?

**Olympia**

You let him walk all over you! In the first place! And then you took your mess home!

**Drunk guest 1**

*...Dance the fantasia...*

**Olympia**

*(Shoves him)* Out of my way, darling!

**Remi**

I didn't know...!

**Olympia**

The mortification! I still feel it. I stood, smitten dumb, a statue of salt under their gaze. Cracking. Crumbling. Argh!

*She throws something at him. It hits a drunken guest.*

**Drunk guest 1**

Ouch!

**Olympia**

How dare you intercept my projectile?!?

**Remi**

What did you want me to do?

**Olympia**

I wanted you to be special!

*A little crowd is assembled in the piazza. They're... listening to a busker? The singer is shielded from our view.*

**Busker**

In a land so dark...

*Olympia elbows her way through the crowd.*

**Olympia**

I wanted you to be the best! Give you your best chance! Had it been for me... You'd be a beautiful musico. But no! We cannot mar the family name. Interrupt the legacy.

Extinguish the bloodline for the sake of... a stage dream!

Well look at where the family name is now!

What are all these people doing in *my* way!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!?????????

*Olympia notices a woman crying at the busker's beautiful music. Olympia pushes through and sees the singer.*

**Busker**

All the treasure of the world are here...

*Olympia looks spellbound. She smirks. Scene change.*

**ACT 1 SCENE 15 - Lovers**

*Nero and Metastasio, alone. It's getting steamy. Metastasio takes control. He reaches down in between Nero's legs. Nero recoils.*

**Metastasio**

What's wrong? You're ok? / ...

**Nero**

/It's just... I... I've never been... Touched... The scars...

**Metastasio**

Oh / ...

**Nero**

/I'm sorry / ...

**Metastasio**

/About?

**Nero**

You're disappointed. I'm going to... go...

**Metastasio**

Stop! Wait! Look.

*Metastasio takes a manuscript. He hands it to Nero.*

**Metastasio**

I started on a new song for Icarus. Read at the bottom.

**Nero**

"To il Bambino" ... A dedica?

*(Beat)*

"...Set ablaze in the sky for the world to see,

**Metastasio**

..."My Icarus".

*They kiss.*

**ACT 1 SCENE 16 - Enemies**

*Lights on Cira and Pera in the Piazza.*

**Cira**

Dearest Readers!

**Pera**

Roman rascals!

**Cira**

It's your gals! Cira/...

**Pera**

/And Pera/...

**Cira**

Bringing you/..

**Cira & Pera**

Gazette!

**Pera**

Carnival edition!

**SONG: VIVA THE KNIFE (REPRISE) – Video 01:17:12**

**Cira**

It is time to Kiki!

**Pera**

Ready to roast!

**Cira**

Who fell flat on their face?

**Pera**

And who did the most?

**Cira & Pera**

Looks like the Ducale made a splash.

**Cira**

They are back again.

**Pera**

Much like a rash.

**Cira & Pera**

This new singer sang Il Divo's own song.

**Pera**

Right of front of him too!

**Cira**

Could have gone so wrong!

**Cira & Pera**

Seems like his bravado's gonna pay.

COULD IT BE HE MIGHT BE HERE TO STAY?

NOVEL IDOL OF THE MATINEE...

HERE HE COMES AT LAST TO SAVE THE DAY

SO MAYBE

IL BAMBINO IS A GOD!?

*Scene changes. Metastasio, Nero and Del Drago in the office.*

**Del Drago**

There is an incredible buzz about you! Ticket sales for Icarus have already started!

**Nero**

I don't know what to say...

*Del Drago turns with a huge smile at Nero. He produces sheet and quill from his desk.*

**Del Drago**

Don't say anything.

**Nero**

Is that...?

**Del Drago**

/The contract...

*Nero slow-walks towards the contract... The ensemble unfreezes and starts circling Nero.*

**Cira & Pera**

WHAT WOULD I GIVE TO MELT INTO HIS ARMS!  
WHAT WOULD I DO TO SAMPLE OF HIS CHARMS!  
IF JUST TO VIEW HIM GIVES US SUCH A SHOCK,  
IMAGINE CHANCING ONE SQUEEZE OF HIS... AHHH!

**Ensemble**

A GREATER PANACHE  
THAN ANY BEFORE.  
THIS ONE IS A SMASH,  
WE'RE BEGGING FOR MORE, AHHHHH!

**Del Drago**

Thank God. At last. Oh, what a lucky find!  
How many stars have had to come aligned?!

**Cira & Pera**

GOD HE'S GOOD!

**Ensemble**

GOD HE'S GOOD!

**Cira & Pera**

SUCH BEAUTIFICATION  
AS RESULT OF MUTILATION  
IS SENSATIONAL!

**Del Drago**

Let me get my finest vino!  
We agree, no?  
Il Bambino is a God!

**Ensemble**

I'M SURE THAT IL BAMBINO IS A GOD!

**Del Drago**

All we need now is for Signora Orsini to sign...

*The Abbati point at Nero with extended arms. Suddenly Olympia appears disembodied in semi-darkness!*

**Olympia**

Ladies and Gentlemen! Do I have a surprise for you!? In *my* opera, Icarus, the leading role will be played by the revelatory newcomer... Ribaldo Antonioni!

*Lights on a figure next to Olympia, facing away from the audience in a triumphal pose. The Abbati flip around from Nero and point to the new arrival.*

**Ensemble**

...A GOD!

*The crowd flock to the new castrato.*

**Nero**

What?

**Ensemble**

...A GOD!

*The scenes merge. Ensemble still frozen with Antonioni. Olympia is in the office.*

**Del Drago**

Signora, what does this mean?

**Olimpia**

Darling! I found him performing in a dingy alleyway and it broke my heart! So much talent! I just had to discover him!

**Del Drago**

Perhaps you could have consulted the team before issuing a public announcement?!

**Olympia**

Whoops.

*Metastasio runs on stage.*

**Metastasio**

A full draft at last!

*? The new musico turns around. It's Violante!*

**Violante**

I'M PRETTY!!!



**Olympia**

So much of casting these days is just crowd's favorites, isn't it.

**Ensemble**

VIVA! VIVA THE KNIFE,  
VIVA! VIVA THE KNIFE!  
VIVA! VIVA! VIVA THE KNIFE!!!

*The Ensemble swerving around them, Nero and Violante stand on opposite sides of the stage.*

*Curtain.*

*End of Act 1.*

## Act 2

### ACT 2 SCENE 1 - METEORIC RISE

*Darkness. Suddenly a tight spotlight on Il Divo. He's singing gloriously, dressed as Daedalus.*

#### **SONG: HUBRIS REPRISE**

**Il Divo**

Hubris...

A sin...

*A punishment comes to those who cross the line.*

*Il Divo turns stage right to speak to an imaginary Icarus. No one is there.*

**Il Divo**

Child...

**Del Drago (OS)**

*(Cutting through somewhat pointedly) ...And Icarus comes in stage left...*

*A cone of light appears stage left, illuminating an empty spot. Il Divo turns around huffing and starts again.*

**Il Divo**

Child...

*From the world you've been exiled...*

*The spotlight moves from stage left to stage right. Il Divo has his eyes closed in a paroxysm of pathos. He doesn't track the moving spotlight.*

**Del Drago (OS)**

*(Not again!)...And Icarus walks stage right / ...*

*Il Divo opens his eyes and looks around furiously for the other spotlight, his singing getting increasingly irritated.*

**Il Divo**

Child...

Child?

Child!!!

*Il Divo throws a hissy fit and stops singing.*

**Lackey (OS)**

Stop!

**Del Drago**

*(Coming on stage)* Where is the stand-in?

*The lights come up. The Ducale theatre's stage, naked, mid-rehearsals. Remi jumps on stage, stepping into the second spotlight eagerly.*

**Remi**

Here!

*Enter Lackey, fanning Il Divo.*

**Lackey (OS)**

Il Divo simply cannot work in these conditions!

**Remi**

*(Trying to seize his chance to stand out)* Oh oh oh oh / ...

**Lackey**

/Who starts rehearsals without a full cast?! / ...

**Del Drago**

/Maestro / ...

**Lackey**

/What is Il Divo supposed to do without an Icarus? / ...

**Remi**

*(Squawking, trying to reach soprano notes)* /Oh oh oh / ...

**Del Drago**

/The schedule being what it is, we decided to go ahead and start with you while the rest is being finalised / ...

**Lackey**

/We open in three weeks! / ...

**Remi**

/Leh leh leh leh! *(Cracks)*

*Metastasio comes on stage.*

**Metastasio**

Maestro, we are sorry. The little casting accident is just proving to be a tad *sticky*/...

**Del Drago**

*(Stifling a nervous breakdown)* / Backtracking from an erroneous public announcement / ...

**Metastasio**

/ But I've just come from seeing Signora Orsini / ...

**Del Drago**

*(Spiraling)*.../Getting the creative team to all agree on one performer / ...

**Metastasio**

/ We're talking... / ...

**Del Drago**

/ And the press!!! / ...

**Metastasio**

/ About what is best for the show. And we are really close to a very satisfactory solution / ...

**Remi**

/ *Leh leh leh leh!*

*Beat. Il Divo walks to Remi. Remi beams at him. Il Divo slowly shakes his head: "No." Exit il Divo.*

**Lackey**

One or the other, Il Divo doesn't care. Sort it out. Yesterday.

*Exit Lackey. Lights off.*

*Lights up on the ensemble. Cira and Pera in the aisles, in the audience.*

**Cira**

Fellow readers!

**Pera**

The gossip is intense!

**Cira**

Two young singers/

**Pera**

/Il Bambino and Antonioni/ ...

**Cira**

/Have made quite a splash by being in contention/ ...

**Pera**

/For the role of a lifetime/ ....

*Nero and Violante are on opposite sides of the stage. The interviews span time and space.*

**Cira**

What are your thoughts towards il Bambino?

**Pera**

Any animosity?

**Cira**

Bitterness?

**Pera**

Rage?!?

**Nero**

Not at all/ ...

**Violante**

I myself am a huge fan/ ...

**Nero**

/Of his work...I find him/ ...

**Violante**

/...Remarkable!/ ...

**Nero**

/...Inspired! Never had I/ ...

**Violante**

/...Heard pianissimos interpreted with such volume!/  
/ ...

**Nero**

/...Realized Pergolesi was meant to be interpreted microtonally/...

**Violante**

/...A brash mezzo forte for the whole hour is such a bold artistic decision/...

**Nero**

/...The three quarter-tone variations Antonioni brought to it (*chef's kiss*)/...!

**Violante**

/Rare! /

**Nero**

/Special! /

**Violante & Nero**

/Really *nice*!

*Beat.*

**Cira & Pera**

(*Relishing the drama*) Oooooooooohhh....

**Cira**

The catfight is on everyone's lips...

**Pera**

We can't get enough!

**SONG: METEORIC RISE (SoundCloud available)**

**Cira & Pera**

Hey lo! Look at the sky, wow!  
Is that a comet streaking the blue?  
It's two!  
One will shoot up and *Pow Pow*!  
The other will crash  
And certainly dash  
Their hopes of a flashy debut.  
It's a meteoric rise...  
It's a meteoric rise...  
Meteoric rise!

*Shouts. Nero runs in.*

**Metastasio**

What have you done?

**Nero**

I just stood up during his solo...

**Metastasio**

And?

**Nero**

Nothing/...

**Metastasio**

/Nero/...

**Nero**

.../I sang it back at him.

**Metastasio**

At Sunday Mass?

**Nero**

/My *Magnificat* was better/...

*A priest runs out enraged, Violante in toe. Nero and Metastasio leg it.*

**Priest**

Get him out of my church!

**Violante**

That little...

*DURING THE FOLLOWING VERSE:*

*Nero is singing to his fans. He takes a sip of water. He coughs and sputters. Violante steps out from the crowd, removing a hood from their face, chuckling and holding a bottle of horse piss.*

*Nero sees Violante and chases them OS in a rage.*

**Cira & Pera**

Hey lo! A new constellation,  
 Two baby stars have come into view  
 Oh, what a sad situation:  
 There's only one lead  
 And both of them need that standing ovation...  
 Too bad that dreams don't always come true  
 It's a meteoric rise...  
 It's a meteoric rise...  
 Meteoric rise!

*Throughout this next sequence we witness the fans running after Nero and Violante. Nero and Violante try to enjoy the attention, but the sabotage attempts on each other skyrocket: (1: Nero singing at a concert, he lifts his arms to the sky and his pants fall down, revealing Violante sniggering nearby holding a pair of scissors. 2: Violante is signing autographs in the square and a cart deposits horse manure nearby, Nero laughing in the corner...)*

**Cira & Pera**

Their rabid fans are stealing their styles/...

**Fans**

*(I love you!)*

**Cira & Pera**

They're screaming as they faint in the aisles/...

**Fans**

*(A fan punches another!) Ouch!*

**Cira & Pera**

They wait in single file for miles,  
 And smile all the while, they're two bricks shorter...  
 They mob the carriage carrying the stars,  
 They send love letters from behind bars,  
 Each single dame... / They're all aflame!  
 And men the same... / They know no shame!  
 Their claim to fame's their names sung out *Molto Forte*...  
 Meteoric rise!

*Enter Nero and Metastasio. Nero is distraught.*

**Nero**

I was so close/...



**Metastasio**

/We'll fix it/ ...

**Nero**

/There's always something/ ...

*Metastasio kisses Nero.*

**Metastasio**

/Stop doing stupid crap. Leave it to me

*Metastasio stares ominously at Violante across the stage. He knows. He resolves.  
Exit Nero. Enter Del Drago. Metastasio walks towards Del Drago. Del Drago walks towards  
Metastasio excitedly, holding a stack of papers.*

**Del Drago**

Pietro! / ...

**Metastasio**

/Duke/ ...

**Del Drago**

/I have news! / ...

**Metastasio**

/Me first. I have the solution to our problem. It might shock you/ ...

**Del Drago**

/Maybe there's no problem!

**Metastasio**

What?

**Del Drago**

So what if opening night has been detained  
Somewhere in purgatory?  
And the production seems to be delayed? /

**Metastasio**

Uh!?

**Del Drago**  
/You say this is drama?  
So is theatre/ ...!

**Metastasio**  
/Well/ ...

**Del Drago**  
.../Come! A  
Little bloody fun,  
A classic! Grecian-made./

**Metastasio**  
/You can't be serious/ ...

**Del Drago**  
/So what if this old tiff is turning gory?

*Violante Slaps Nero OS. A scream. Metastasio jumps. Del Drago doesn't budge.*

**Del Drago**  
What if I haven't been at home in weeks?

**Metastasio**  
About that... How's your *daughter*/ ...?

**Del Drago**  
/For the first time ever we are in the spotlight!  
And the best thing seems to be...  
The publicity is free!!!

**Metastasio**  
Duke, Antonioni really is/ ...!

**Del Drago**  
(*Waving the papers*)/We're sold out. The whole run.

*Beat.*

**Metastasio**  
We aren't even open yet.

**Del Drago**  
We're looking into extending! We're a hit, Pietro. A hit!!!

*Del Drago hugs Metastasio fiercely, prancing around. Metastasio is stunned. Can he go ahead with his plan now?...*

**Del Drago**

You were going to tell me something?

**Metastasio**

Who? Me? Tell? You? What? No. Nothing.

*Aniello enters. He is distributing the Gazette. First job out of school. He is lifeless and depressed. Remi, the Maestro and Olympia appear to say their bit, disembodied in darkness.*

**Aniello (& Remi)**

Hey lo, look at the sky, wow,  
Is that a comet streaking the blue?  
It's two/...

**Cira & Pera**

/Woo ooh!  
Everyone wants a bite now:

**Maestro**

I did recommend 'em...

**Remi**

He was my best friend---

**Olympia**

... 'nd remember *I* found them, thank you!

**Cira & Pera**

Meteoric rise...

**Remi, Maestro, (Olympia)**

You might hear otherwise,  
But you must realize:  
They're all lies.  
There is no one as happy as I  
At their (his)  
Meteoric rise!

**Cira & Pera & Del Drago**

As you take to the skies,  
Very often you must  
Leave some in the dust,  
Just shy of your  
Meteoric rise!

*Scene change. In the Teatro Ducale.*

**Del Drago (OS)**

Just a little delay! / ...

**Lackey**

/No!

*Enter Il Divo, lackey behind him carrying several packed suitcases from the dressing room.*

**Del Drago**

One week! Or two! / ...

**Lackey**

/Unacceptable!

**Del Drago**

Opening night isn't that urgent! We'll get more time to rehearse!

*Il Divo stops and points at Del Drago without looking. Lackey squares Del Drago down, struggling to appear authoritative under a mound of packages.*

**Lackey**

Il Divo will not attend one more day of rehearsals until this is sorted. The casting of Icarus will be announced this coming Saturday. Or else.

*Exit Lackey and Il Divo.*

**Metastasio**

Are we ready to go ahead?

**Del Drago**

If we pick one, the other's fans will boycott us.

**Metastasio**

It's a bloodbath.

*Beat.*

**Del Drago**

Wait! A bloodbath. A duel!

**Metastasio**

Duel???

**Del Drago**

A singing spar between the two of them! And we let the world decide! That way no one can pin the blame on me/...

**Metastasio**

/But Il Bambino is/...

**Del Drago**

/It's essentially a public audition! But one that costs five shields a ticket. And boosts our sales. This is genius! I am a marketing genius!

*The ensemble coalesces into a clamoring audience in the piazza. A stage is being set up. Nero and Violante appear as challengers on ether sides.*

**Ensemble**

Meteoric rise!

Meteoric rise!

Meteoric rise!

**ACT 2 SCENE 2 - THE DUEL OF THE CENTURY**

*Nero and Violante stand in front of each other on stage, clutching scores in hand and glaring across the stage. The air stands still: an honor duel with musical guns. Thick tension. Cira and Pera act as celebrants, super serious and glum.*

**Pera**

Present your weapons.

*Nero and Violante hand over the scores. Cira and Pera inspect them. They hand them to the conductor.*

**Cira**

Very well/...

**Pera**

/Take your places/...

**Cira**

/To the tune of Icarus' most famous aria/...

**Pera**

/Only one shall emerge with his life!

**SONG: ALL THE TREASURES REPRISE**

*During this reprise Nero and Violante try to outdo each other in trills and high notes. Suddenly Nero veers into his characteristic melodic embellishment from childhood.*

**Violante**

Weak!

**Nero**

Excuse me?

If you do a variation, you might as well do a high one. Higher is always/ better...

**Nero**

.../Higher is always better...

*A glimmer of recognition. They test each other. Their voices naturally flow together into the same old cadenza, in an emotional swell. Suddenly, it's real. They recognize each other. Light changes. Time stands still.*

SONG: STORIES UNTOLD (SoundCloud available)

**Nero**

And once upon a time there were  
Two children intertwined: him, her.  
When ever after came  
It was not what they'd intended.

**Violante**

And once a upon a time, way back,  
They wondered off the beaten track,  
They lost each other then,  
And their roaming never ended.

**Nero**

The flowers of the Faerie King/...

**Violante**

/The joy they feel each time they sing/...

**Nero**

/No, nothing can repay the cost/...

**Violante**

/Of what they thought they lost...

*Back in real time on stage, Nero runs and hugs Violante, burying his face in their costume.*

**Violante**

I thought I would never see you again...

**Nero**

I... What... What are you doing dressed like/...?

**Violante**

*/(Covering up)* Ahahah! Ladies and gentlemen. You came expecting guts and gore...  
Instead you are being witness to... I am really not sure how to explain this...

*Back in their head.*

**Nero**

A different tale.  
A story untold.  
Where rules of this world  
Don't have any hold.  
No fairytale dream...

**Violante**

...No damsel or knight...

**Nero & Violante**

...It's all in our hands;  
Who knows what they'll write.

*The end of the chorus blossoms into a diegetic duet on stage. Sound of applause on the scene change.*

*An instrumental swell. Nero and Violante dance.*

*Time passes: We see Nero and Violante doing activities together and enjoying each other's company.*

*Lights off Violante. Enter Metastasio holding the gazette. Nero is getting ready and is distracted.*

**Metastasio**

*(Testing) Hey.*

**Nero**

*(Looking in the mirror, distracted) Hey.*

**Metastasio**

The Gazette is going crazy, eh?

**Nero**

Hm hm...

**Metastasio**

*(Fishing) "Who are they?" "How do they two knew each other?". Eh eh.*

**Nero**

Hmmm...

*Metastasio gets closer. He kisses Nero's neck.*

**Nero**

Pietro, I'm on my way out.



*Nero motions to exit.*

**Metastasio**

Where?

**Nero**

Dinner party.

**Metastasio**

Will Antonioni be there?

**Nero**

Hm, hm...

*Lights off Metastasio. Scene change. Montage as Nero and Violante sing. They are making up for lost time, playing games as if they were still children. They haven't moved on.*

**Violante/**

Living suspended between  
What is and what might have been.  
We are dreaming too hard  
For a future too tender,  
A past far away  
That we barely remember,  
And yet, we will never forget...

**/Nero**

Trying to rearrange  
Things that won't change...  
Dreams live on  
But happy endings  
Only come  
When you let go...

**Nero & Violante**

A different tale,  
A story untold,  
A version of us  
Unbound and bold/Unfit for the mold!  
Those children we knew  
May seem very far,  
But in another tale  
That's just who we are.

*Enter Cira and Pera.*

**Cira**

Il Bambino and Antonioni have not been seen in public for over a week!

**Pera**

Our sources tell us the singers spend all their time in private together, best of friends!

**Cira**

What a turn of events!

**Pera**

What a scoop!

**Cira**

What a mystery!

*Metastasio alone, nursing a bottle, back in the habit. Enter DD and Olympia.*

**Del Drago**

Pietro have you spoken to / ...?

**Olympia**

/ Antonioni! Antonioni!!! / ...

**Del Drago**

... / Or Il Bambino?

**Metastasio**

Nope.

**Olympia**

Ingrate! How dare they cavort together against me!

*Exit Olympia.*

**Del Drago**

Still taking no calls?

**Metastasio**

Nope.

**Del Drago**

They went and canceled the duel, but I've already booked the casting announcement party Saturday! Il Divo is not going to be happy! Did they just forget about us?!

*Exit Del Drago*

**Metastasio**

Yep.

*Scene change. Nero and Violante are in a tavern room, privately eating olives, totally comfortable with each other*

**Nero**

Go again...

**Violante**

We met in... Calabria/...

**Nero**

*/You're from Calabria! We met in Naples/ ...*

**Violante**

*/We met in Naples, in a now disbanded choir, doing Monteverdi/ ...*

**Nero**

*/I think Vivaldi, let's go with Vivaldi, Vivaldi is more now/ ...*

**Violante**

*/Stop changing it!*

*Violante throws an olive at Nero. He catches it with his mouth.*

**Nero**

Do you think people liked us better when we hated each other?

**Violante**

For your sake I hope not. I would have totally won that duel.

**Nero**

Nu-uh!

**Violante**

Duh...

**Nero**  
Oh, yeah?!

**Violante**  
Oh, you wanna go? You wanna go?

*They jokingly puff their chests at each other, doing silly warm ups and gargles like pugilists stretching before a match. They are about to sing, when...*

**Olympia (OS)**  
Darling! Yoo oohhh!

**Nero**  
Orsini?

**Olympia (OS)**  
Are you in there, Antonioni? Are you there, Pucci Pucci Pucci???

**Violante**  
Candle! Get the candle!

*They snuff the candles. Beat.*

**Nero**  
Has she gone???

*Three massive knocks almost smash the door down. Nero lets out a whimper.*

**Olympia (OS)**  
I heard that!

**Violante**  
Hide!

*They scramble. Suddenly Olympia's face pops in the window frame, looking feverishly in. They freeze in uncomfortable positions.*

**Olympia**  
Darliiiiing...

**Violante**  
Don't move. She reacts to movement.

**Remi (OS)**

Mother, this is the fourteenth tavern today. He's not here!

**Olympia (OS)**

To the next then! If he wants be on stage, he will bloody well let himself be found!

*Steps walking away.*

**Violante**

Phew.

**Nero**

She's not wrong, you know. The whole world is waiting for us.

**Violante**

To what? Go out and finish that silly duel? Why is there only one lead in this freaking show anyway?

**Nero**

Wait! I got it!

**ACT 2 SCENE 3 - STIPULATIONS**

*Enter Del Drago, Olympia, Remi. Metastasio. Del Drago's office. Metastasio is looking uncomfortably at Violante, but is conflicted and doesn't dare give away that he knows.*

**Olympia**

What!?!

**Violante**

*(Reading)* "...Antonioni and Il Bambino hereby stipulate to be cast *together* in the show/..."

**Nero**

Duke?

**Metastasio**

/You want to join your contract?/

**Olympia**

Madness!!!

**Violante**

*(Reading)* ".../To combine their artistic strengths to make Icarus a masterpiece for the ages/..."

**Olympia**

Lunacy!

**Del Drago**

I think we should consider it!

**Olympia**

AHHHH!!!

**Del Drago**

But Signora, the profits!/...

**Remi**

/I don't understand. Who is going to play who?/

**Del Drago**

*(Pointing to Remi)* Why is he here?

**Violante**

/There are options/...

**Nero**

/Yes! There's Icarus... and *(beat)*.../...

**Del Drago**

/The cow-faced guy!

**Metastasio**

The minotaur?

**Del Drago**

Always said he should get a song.

**Nero**

You're the writer, Pietro!

**Metastasio**

Yes, I am/ ...

**Violante**

/See, I thought: Icarus could have a brother...

**Metastasio**

*(Incensed at the audacity)* A brother?

**Del Drago**

Yes!

**Metastasio**

What!?

**Del Drago**

/You know greek myths. They're all cousins who bonked each other's mothers/ ...

**Metastasio**

/Oh gods/...

**Del Drago**

*(Suddenly emphatic)* And maybe they are all in the Labyrinth: Daedalus, Icarus and the brother. And there's only enough material for two sets of wings. And so Daecarus/ ...

**Metastasio**

/Daecarus?/...

**Del Drago**

/...The brother! Keep up! Tells Icarus: "You take them". "No, you take them", "No, you!  
You! *You...* were meant to fly...!"

**Metastasio**

You should write it.

**Olympia**

This is absurd. My vote is for Antonioni! Only.

**Del Drago**

I vote for both of them!

**Metastasio**

I vote for Il Bambino.

**Remi**

I vote for / ...

**Del Drago**

/Shut up.

*Scene change. Lights stay on Nero, Violante and Metastasio. Metastasio watches the two walk away, in a rage,. He is about to approach the privately, but is then called back by Del Drago. Lights off Metastasio.*

**Nero**

What do you think... ?

**Violante**

I underestimated the burning hatred that woman is capable of / ...

**Nero**

/I know! Let's get Il Divo on our side!

**Violante**

Uh...?

**Nero**

They cannot deny him.

*Lights off Nero and Violante. Lights on Olympia and Remi.*



**Olympia**

It's slipping through my fingers!

**Remi**

Mother/...

**Olympia**

/Shut up!!!

**Remi**

But I might have an idea/...

**Olympia**

/Bah! You? You know what your problem is? Your mediocrity. I even got you that job as a stand in. And? Have you gotten ahead? At all?

**Remi**

Maybe being on stage is not for me/...

**Olympia**

/You tell me!

**Remi**

Mother, listen/...

**Olympia**

You listen! One way or another, he's going to be in the show. *Ist das Klar?!?* He's going to win! It's as if I paid for my own public humiliation.

**Remi**

Does *he* have to lose for *us* to win?

**Olympia**

What?! Speak sense now...

**Remi**

The problem is... As a mere financier you don't get creative control. Maybe I could change that for us.

*Scene change.*

NOTE: We're currently making cuts and writing a new song sung by Il Divo at the party meant to underpin and join the different sections.

**ACT 2 SCENE 4 - High Altitude**

**SECTION 1**

*A blast of music. Cira and Pera appear.*

**Cira**

Tonight is the night!

**Pera**

When the feeling's right!

**Cira**

It's the great launch party at Del Drago mansion. Il Divo is performing and / ...

**Pera**

The casting of Icarus will be announced at last!

*The party comes to life. We see all our characters on stage. Del Drago is stuck receiving guests.*

**Del Drago**

*(Talking to someone OS)* Hi welcome! Take a seat It will be a great night (if we make it through alive)

What's in store? Ahah! Wouldn't you like to know?! (I certainly would...) *(Seeing Olympia across the room)* Lady Orsini!!! Please, we need to tal / ... Oh, hi, Cardinal, welcome! Yes! Of course the show is God-honoring! We are very devoted here at the Ducale, Reverent! Prayerful! (Prayers are all we've got to go by at this point...)

\*\*\*

**SECTION 2**

*Enter Nero and Violante as Antonioni.*

**Violante**

We set up the whole Occidental Hall as Il Divo's private dressing room. He'll be getting ready in there.

**Nero**

I'll go to him.

**Violante**

He's not... friendly.

**Nero**

Do we have another option?

*Nero sneaks. Tries to get to Il Divo's chambers. Meets the lackey.*

**Lackey**

And where do we think we're going?

**Nero**

I am here to speak to il Divo.

**Lackey**

Il Divo doesn't see fans.

**Nero**

I am not a fan. I mean I *am* a fan. But I am also Il Bambino.

**Lackey**

Il-Ba-Who?

**Nero**

Il Bam... One of the singers. In the show. *(Beat)* He clapped for me.

**Lackey**

Yeah. No. If you're a performer, as you claim, you'll certainly be aware of the importance of pre-show quiet time...

**Nero**

Just/ ...

**Lackey**

/Il Divo treasures it/ ...

**Nero**

I/ ...

**Nero**

/He's mid-warm up/ ...

**Lackey**

/Only a/ ...

**Nero**

/Thank you for your understanding!/ ...

*The lackey manhandles Nero. Exit Nero, plotting.*

*Il Divo's hand appears stage right, gestures gently. Lackey runs to him. Il Divo whispers. Lackey goes to the MD/conductor in the pit.*

**Lackey**

Tonight Il Divo will be starting from bar 80. Scrap the first few pages. Nix the *Da capo al Coda* on 168. And the whole piece in G minor. Yes a tone down. I don't care if the orchestra doesn't have the sheets. You're musicians. Do music thingies. Wave your stick, wave your stick, go...

*Music flourishes. Il Divo's song starts. Nero approaches Violante.*

**Nero**

I couldn't get past that beast.

**Violante**

What then?

**Nero**

I'll try in between sets.

\*\*\*

**SECTION 3**

*Nero and Violante in conversation. Enter Metastasio, bottle in hand.*

**Metastasio**

*(To Nero)* Do I finally get to speak to you?...  
*(Sees Violante)* Oh! Together. Of course. Well, lucky me!...

**Nero**

Pietro? / ...

**Metastasio**

/You are unbelievable, girl...

**Violante**

I beg your pardon, Signor! / ...

**Metastasio**

/You're trying this? Truly?

**Nero**

Pietro, calm down!

**Violante**

You have me confused with someone else/...

**Metastasio**

/Thought about maybe changing the moniker you created in front of my own eyes?  
"Antonioni ..."Del Drago"/

**Nero**

/Oh God.

**Metastasio**

By all means, saunter in last minute, change my script, roll the dice with my soul as the  
ante, and ruin me!

**Violante**

Ruin you? You said my voice was extraordinary/

**Nero**

When?!

**Metastasio**

/You know what they'll do to me if they found out? The press, Cira and Pera, heck, the  
Vatican would be down on all of us in minutes! I'd be finished!!! Step down/...

**Nero**

/Pietro, no!/...

**Violante**

/Or else?

**Metastasio**

I'll expose you.

**Nero**

How do you even know each other?/...

**Metastasio**

*(Exploding)* /How do YOU know each other?!?

*Beat.*

**Violante**

You are a hypocrite.

**Metastasio**

Hypocrite? Me? No matter how you gild it, you will never be the real thing. Only ever but a sham.

**Cira and Pera (OS)**

Antonioni! Yo-ooh! It's time for your interview!

**Antonioni**

I/...

*Antonioni is whisked away from Cira and Pera. Exit. Nero and Metastasio face off tensely.*

\*\*\*

**SECTION 4**

**Olympia**

I had this dream, Duke! This silly little dream that one day I would put my stamp on the world of theatre/...

**Del Drago**

/Signora! The announcement is in less than a few hours! We must decide/...

**Olympia**

/If not a singer, then... An impresario!/...

**Del Drago**

/And that you *are*/...

**Olympia**

/That in my late years languishing away as a bored, dissatisfied, and exceedingly *wealthy*, heiress, I'd find a little theatre, to lavish with love and lush and cash/...

**Del Drago**

/A wonderful dream that!/...

**Olympia**

/Heaps of cash! Till the end of days/...

**Del Drago**

/Yes! Yes!/...

**Olympia**

/Oh, then what a heartache! To feel rejected. Tossed aside. My contribution discarded/...

**Del Drago**

/Signora! We are friends!/...

**Olympia**

/Friends? Ah! My heart overflows at the word, darling! But... how can I be sure? I feel I need a token of your friendship to be sure/...

**Del Drago**

/Sure!

**Olympia**

Because when I'm not sure... I get tense. Tight. My purse... puckers.

**Del Drago**

What could I give?

**Olympia**

Just something to make me feel secure in place here. If I had that I feel I could even give in to this silly request of double casting.

**Del Drago**

Anything...

*Beat. Olympia smizes. Enter Remi.*

**Olympia**

Remolo, darling. Come in and tell the Duke *your* idea.

\*\*\*

## SECTION 5

**Nero**

Why are you attacking her?

**Metastasio**

Why are you protecting her?

**Nero**

Vi is special to me.

**Metastasio**

I can see that.

**Nero**

Pietro... You don't really think/...

**Metastasio**

/It's been a while I have been the least of your priorities./...

**Nero**

/Vi is an old friend! Like a sibling! You are letting some insecurity/...?

**Metastasio**

/Do not make this about me. This is about you.

**Nero**

Me?

**Metastasio**

Who even are you, anymore? You whittle your days away of *fetes*, you swan about, you prance, you pose/...

**Nero**

/I... am just having some fun/...

**Metastasio**

/Chasing mediocrity/...

**Nero**

/For the first time ever I'm getting a taste of what I deserve, some joy/...

**Metastasio**

/Oh so, you're happier without me?

**Nero**

/I am *with* you/..

**Metastasio**

/Am I not good enough for you?

**Nero**

/I am sorry if/...



**Metastasio**

*/I was the one to see your beauty. Delicate, fragile, melancholic beauty. Would the rest of the world have seen it without me? No! I gave you wings.*

*Beat.*

**Nero**

Do you need me to be broken in order to love me?

*(Beat.)*

Who is the sham here?

*Metastasio runs and kisses Nero. Nero responds, then tears himself away.*

**Cira and Pera (OS)**

Il Bambino! Yo-ohh-ooohhh! It's you, now!

*Nero steps away. Violante makes a beeline for Metastasio. Enter Del Drago, Olympia and Remi.*

**Del Drago**

*(To Olympia)* My daughter must be in her chambers. She'll be delighted to have a reason to join us! Violante!!!

*Violante panics. They look at Metastasio, then run off.*

\*\*\*

**SECTION 6**

*Enter Del Drago, dragging Violante. They look disheveled from not having had time to put on female clothes properly. Olympia is waiting.*

**Del Drago**

Here she is!

**Olympia**

*(Jumping when seeing her)* Oh God! I mean "Oh, good"! Good. Dear?! Have you met my son Remolo? Remi, step forward. Bow / ...

**Remi**

*/I can do it myself, mother / ...*

**Olympia**

*/Shut up! Be a gentleman! Baisemain!*

*He leans in to kiss Vi's hand. Olympia whacks Remi.*

**Olympia**

No lip contact! More passion!

**Del Drago**

We'll leave you to it!

**Olympia**

Like we rehearsed!

**Violante**

Father? What is...?

*DD and Olympia exit. A second later Olympia's face pokes through a potted plant, as she spies in on the couple.*

\*\*\*

## SECTION 6.5

*Violante is stuck with Remi.*

**Remi**

So...

**Violante**

So...

*Beat. Olympia from the vase motions for Remi to get it together. At the same time Nero runs by, escaping Cira and Pera; Violante flails to attract his attention. Nero notices them and is shocked. He mouths: "What are you doing dressed like that?". Remi and Violante snap back together.*

**Remi**

Your father runs the Ducale!

**Violante**

Yes.

**Remi**

Cool. I am myself a singer.

**Violante**

Oh.

*(Beat.)*

**Olympia**

*(From the plant)* Don't be boring! / ...

**Remi**

*(Turning sharply)* Mother! / ...

*Nero and Violante snap to each other. Nero mouths: "Why are you with him". Vi mouths: "help!". Remi and Violante snap back. Awkward chuckle. Enter Del Drago and starts speaking to Olympia behind the plant.*

**Del Drago**

Signora! I cannot find Antonioni!

**Olympia**

Oh, darling! We must tell him of our happy resolution!

*Exit Del Drago and Olympia. Violante panics.*

**Remi**

Now we're actually alone...

*Nero steps in and drops a tray to attract Remi's attention.*

**Remi**

You!

*Nero gestures at Violante to leave. Violante legs it.*

\*\*\*

## SECTION 7

*Enter Violante (running to get changed). They clock Metastasio in the corner, nursing a bottle, looking completely destroyed. They accost him.*

**Violante**

A sham, uh?  
What is a sham?  
You're a words-person. Answer me!  
Is my voice subpar?  
No.  
Is my appearance unbelievable?  
Clearly not!  
Then why could I not be in your show? When you yourself admitted I would belong!

**Metastasio**

/I/...

**Violante**

/Wanna know what a sham is?  
This is the sham! Me as a doll, composed, paraded and traded, sold to the highest bidder. Suffocating under a crust of porcelain because God forbid I inconvenience the world with my real face. Me asking for permission to exist/...

**Metastasio**

/I can say/...

**Violante**

/This is the sham! You, at the top the world, hoarding everything, holding the gate shut in fear I might come to taste a sip of what manna you have/...

**Metastasio**

/I know/...

**Violante**

/This is the sham! The hiding, the posturing, the endless masquerade, the tireless contortions to make things appear palatable and proper... The face *you* put on in front of the world/...

**Metastasio**

/I know/...

**Violante**

/This! Is! The! Sham!!!

*Beat.*

**Metastasio**

I'm sorry.

**Violante**

Don't you dare...!... Oh...?

**Metastasio**

*I am a sham.*

*Metastasio cries drunkenly. Violante is taken aback.*

\*\*\*

## SECTION 7.5

**Metastasio**

Everything I touch... everything... turns to chaos.

**Violante**

You? The great genius to whom a generation bows? The great Pietro Metastasio.

**Metastasio**

Trapassi.

**Violante**

What?

**Metastasio**

Pietro Trapassi.

**Violante**

I don't understand.

**Metastasio**

I was eight when I was adopted. My mentor was a lawyer. A rich man. He heard me spitting verses in the piazza. always made a few shields like that. I was good even then. Good enough for the Roman Elite, he said. What wasn't good enough, was having a peasant's name. Trapassi. He wanted something more classical... Grecian.

My father didn't mind losing the name. Go with him, Pietro, he said. Do as he commands. Don't let me down, Pietro. He's your only chance to amount to anything in life. Stop crying, Pietro. Be a man.

And so the little Metastasio got an education; and showed up to all the parties A tiny, cute canary, snap your fingers and hear him chirp, so melodious, such a little prodigy.

I remember thinking: when I grow up I will be able to do as I please. But when my mentor died... I kept on with the verse. It was all I knew, I suppose.

And I can't stop chirping, see. Because the moment I do... I'm just Trapassi again.

**Metastasio (contd.)** A lad from the streets that got lucky, no matter how I gild it. See? I shouldn't even be talking to you, milady.

**Violante**

I don't care about that. Never have. You're a damn good poet.

**Metastasio**

See, you too care about the poet more than the man.

**Violante**

Your self indulgence is something else!

**Metastasio**

Excuse me?

**Violante**

Trapassi, Metastasio... One does not exist without the other. Like: Antonioni for me... Antonioni hasn't killed Vi. Antonioni isn't Vi hiding. Antonioni is Vi... coming out. A safe space. The Trapassi boy will always still be there. Spitting out verses in the piazza like he used to. Stop questioning whether he deserves to.

*Beat. They gaze at each other. Olympia crosses the stage.*

**Olympia**

Antonioni, darling, where are you!?!?

*Violante starts running to get changed Enter Del Drago. Violante hides*

**Del Drago**

Where is that girl? Violante!

*Violante runs off panicked. During the next music sequence we see her getting changed super quick and being bounced in between Olympia and Del Drago manically.*

\*\*\*

## SECTION 8

*Split scene. Remi and Nero on one side. Del Drago and Violante as Antonioni on the other.*

**Nero**

What do you want with her?

**Remi**

Me? With her? Nothing. It's just a little / ...

*Split stage: Vi now as Antonioni speaking with Del Drago.*

**Del Drago**

/ A little business, and the whole situation will be solved!

**Violante**

*(As Antonioni)* Great! How?

**Del Drago**

Signora Orsini has conceded to your demands of casting both of you. On condition of / ...

**Remi**

/Uniting business and family / ...

**Del Drago**

/My daughter has struggled to find a husband. Signora Orsini's son, Remolo is / ...

**Remi**

/ A willing pawn / ...

**Del Drago**

/Eligible / ...

**Remi**

/But a pawn who will own the theatre.

**Nero**

You and vi... Signorina Del Drago?!

**Violante**

Marriage?!

**Remi**

Mother and I get 50% of the theatre.

**Del Drago**

The Ducale gets a producing partner forever. We're in luck.

**Violante**

*(Aside)* I am fucked.

**Remi**

You are fucked, halfling.

**Nero**

Stop calling me that. I am not yours to mock anymore.

**Remi**

You're fucked, *Nero*.

**Nero**

*"Il Bambino"!*

**Remi**

Really? Even after I run the Ducale? You might get a role in *this* opera, but I'll make sure it will be your last one. Forget the Ducale. Forget every other theatre in Rome. I will use every ounce of my clout to poison your name.

*Beat.*

**Remi**

If you get to sing, you're a *musicista*. If not...

*Lights off Remi and Nero. Enter Olympia and speaks to Violante and Del Drago.*

**Olympia**

I cannot find the bride-to-be! My poor Remolo has been left hanging for entire minutes!

*Violante is shocked and exits, forgetting to get changed, still dressed as Antonioni. Exit Nero.*

\*\*\*

## SECTION 9

*Il Divo's song comes to a halt. Nero walks aimlessly in the party. He stumbles in a quiet corner. He hears noises. Nero peeks and sees Il Divo recovering from the performance. He eavesdrops.*

**Lackey**

Do you think you can keep going, Maestro? Is the voice shaking again?

*Il Divo pants.*



**Lackey**

I will inform the conductor we will skip the coloratura section. People will be none - the wiser...

*Il Divo whispers*

**Lackey**

No, I wasn't inferring you have anything to hide... You are just as glorious as when...

*Il Divo glowers.*

**Lackey**

Just... Ignore me... I... will... uh...

*Exit Lackey. Beat. Il Divo turns and almost sees Nero. Nero hides.*

\*\*\*

*Violante walks aimlessly, still dressed as Antonioni. They down a glass. They sway. They are getting tipsy. They clock Remi, looking for Violante in the crowd. They sit next to him.*

**Violante**

So, you're a singer?

**Remi**

Beg your pardon?

**Violante**

You're a singer?!!

**Remi**

Yes. Am. Was.

**Violante**

I do like opera, myself.

**Remi**

Obviously...?

*Beat.*

**Violante**

What? Shy all of a sudden? Thought we had to get to know each other... As father says.

**Remi**  
Father?...

*Violante realizes and freezes. Enter Metastasio. He swoops in.*

**Metastasio**  
Yes! Gerolamo Antonioni de la Penna! I know him well! Antonioni's father is a noble from Calabria. Is he not?

**Violante**  
(*Coming to!*) Precisely!

**Remi**  
Why would he want us to get to know each other?

**Metastasio**  
Well, he is a great admirer of the Chiaramonte Bordonaros.

**Violante**  
Who isn't!

**Metastasio**  
Right!

**Violante**  
He has long sought for me to get acquainted with Roman nobility.

*Beat.*

**Remi**  
Naturally. After all, you'll be one of my singers soon. If I can find that girl...

*Exit Remi.*

**Metastasio**  
We make a good team.

**Violante**  
You didn't give me away.

**Metastasio**  
No.

**Violante**

Are you going to?

**Metastasio**

No.

**Violante**

Why?

*They stare at each other. We hear hints of the Hubris choir voices here laying the character of Icarus on Violante like they did for Nero in Act 1 during the poem.*

\*\*\*

*Nero is about to approach Il Divo, when suddenly. Del Drago steps up with Olympia and stops the festivities.*

## **SECTION 10**

**Del Drago**

Attention everyone!

**Olympia**

The moment you've been waiting for, darlings!

**Del Drago**

Antonioni. Il Bambino. Step forward.

*Nero and Violante step forward solemnly. Beat.*

**Olympia**

After a long, hard-fought campaign of auditions.

**Del Drago**

We finally have reached an amicable decision... *(Beat)* Antonioni and Il Bambino... Are *both* in the show!

*Beat. Then public erupts in cheers. "How?" "Who?" "What will they play?". Nero and Violante shake hands publicly. They whisper.*

**Nero**

What about Pietro?

**Violante**

We talked... He's alright. We're good.

**Nero**  
We are?

*They hug. Fans cheer. Viva/ Meteoric rise resounds. The crowd parts. Il Divo steps forward, preceded by the Lackey.*

**Lackey**  
What is this?

**Del Drago**  
Il Divo! Let us introduce you to your co-stars!

**Lackey**  
Oh. And pray what roles will they fill?

**Del Drago**  
Icarus and his brother Daecarus...

*Del Drago points at one for each role. Olympia disagrees and mouths to him: "The other way round!"*

**Lackey**  
*A novel* interpretation...

**Del Drago**  
Isn't this exciting? The old guard *and* the new generation! On stage together! Three bright stars! Will scorch the face of Rome with their combined *shared* light!

**Il Divo**  
No.

*The world stands still.*

**Il Divo**  
One.

*Il Divo retreats. Beat. The lackey is taken by surprise, then scrambles after Il Divo.*

**Lackey**  
You heard Il Divo! These are our conditions.

*The crowd goes silent. Scene change.*

ACT 2 SCENE 5 - Harder to breathe

*Nero and Vi absorbed in thought. It didn't work...*

**Violante**

Things being what they are...

**Nero**

Yes.

**Violante**

It doesn't need to be the end.

**Nero**

No, of course...

*Beat.*

**Violante**

/You can still find another show.

**Nero**

/You can still sing in your own time... Oh?

**Violante**

In my own time?

**Nero**

You want to go ahead?

**Violante**

Well... I have Orsini on my side, it just makes sense I would get... But Nero, you've got a following now. You will find another role/...

**Nero**

/Another...? Vi... You know I have been in your corner. But. Have you given thought to what is going to happen to Antonioni once you are married?

**Violante**

I/...

**Nero**

/Aren't you only setting yourself up for more and more pain the further on you go.

**Violante**

What are you saying?

**Nero**

Isn't it safer to quit now?

**Violante**

Quit? How can I quit this? This is who I am. This is who I've always been/...

**Nero**

/Vi/...

**Violante**

I can no more quit this than a fish the water or a bird the air. This my nature. Being a *musico* is my/ nature...

**Nero**

/There is nothing natural about being a *musico*. Do you know what it means to be me?  
To really be a eunuch? You could never/...

**Violante**

/Nero/...

**Nero**

It means looking in the mirror to watch your skin succumbing to jaundice more and more every day.

It means not being able to run and play with the boys in the Conservatorio, lest you fall and break your porcelain-brittle bones, which will probably snap before you reach forty.

It means waking up every day since you were ten and irrationally checking your body for signs of surprise mutilation that someone could have perpetrated upon you in your sleep.

It means knowing. If you don't sing. You are nothing/...

**Violante**

/You are so much/...

**Nero**

/I am nothing! Without Icarus I have nothing.

**Violante**

And without Antonioni I have nothing. I thought you understood.

*They stare each other down, both hurt. Light shift. Violante alone. Enter Metastasio.*

**Metastasio**

What is wrong?

**Violante**

I am alone.

**Metastasio**

What makes you say that?

**Violante**

There are people who you think understand you... But... Nobody ever truly does.

**Metastasio**

Can you really blame someone for not understanding you, Violante Antonioni Del Drago? You are a mystery. A chasm. Deep dangerous reaches. Fearsome, steep, and jagged. A wayfarer searching your paths is sure to be shred bloody with each step along the ways of you. And yet... with each painful cut you inflict one gets one step deeper to discovering his true self. I don't understand you. But... I know you. Like you know me.

**Violante**

Now, *that's* poetry.

*Metastasio and Violante get closer. The tension is palpable... Then they break off. Lights off Violante, but lights stay on Metastasio. He feels confused and guilty. Enter Nero.*

**Nero**

Pietro... I am sorry...

**Metastasio**

*(Facing away)* I am too.

**Nero**

...For having taken you for granted.

*Nero hugs Metastasio from behind.*

**Nero**

I think Vi will see reason.

**Metastasio**

What?

**Nero**

Eventually. "Rose and weed together [...] born of the same weather" (*Beat.*) Must we always wound somebody, to get what we want?

*Metastasio turns around.*

**Metastasio**

Must we indeed?

*Metastasio kisses Nero.*

**Nero**

You should write a poem about that.

*Exit Nero. Metastasio is stuck in the middle.*



**ACT 2 SCENE 6 - Love Triangle**

*Nero, Violante and Metastasio all step on separate sides of the stage.*

**SONG: BLACK AND WHITE (SoundCloud available)**

**Metastasio**

Zeus, the king of the gods,  
Took dozens of lovers:  
Female and male, he did not have to choose;  
The story's compelling, but as for this mortal  
There's no way of telling which way he should go.  
He can dictate another man's fate  
In his poems, but his own remains loose...

One is the chariot of dawn  
Pouring light into my vision;  
One is the dusk which swallowed my world  
With its whispers, cruel, delicious.  
One is a tender awakening,  
One is a slumber of crazy dreams...  
How can you pick between day and night?  
But how could I live in perennial twilight?

Between black and white,  
Choose what's right!  
Shades of gray don't make for good decisions...  
Between black and white,  
Ink and page...  
Final drafts necessitate excisions.

**Violante**

One or the other  
Or nothing at all;  
Either neither...  
Running through choices,  
Torn between paths,  
And never any wiser.  
Forever stitching chasms.  
Forever bridging wounds.  
But what if both "neither" and "either" are wrong?  
Both "one" and "the other" belong?

Between black and white  
Wrong and right  
All the shades  
One canvas couldn't hold in.

Between black and white  
Wrong and right  
Have it all  
The reds the blues, the golden.

*Metastasio and Violante go to each other. They look into each other's eyes. They kiss.*

**ACT 2 SCENE 7 - Alone in the sky**

*Metastasio, Violante and Nero freeze after B&W. Light shift. Enter Olympia, giving a public announcement to Cira, Pera and crowd. Del Drago enter on the other side, talking to Nero.*

**Nero**

What do mean “You didn’t get the part”?

**Olympia**

After Il Divo’s suggestion... We decided to part with Il Bambino due to artistic differences...

**Del Drago**

I am sorry...

**Olympia**

Antonioni will be absolutely spellbinding as Icarus...

**Nero**

I want to see Antonioni...

**Violante**

I am honored to spearhead such an important landmark of Italian theatre. I hope I will do it justice...

**Nero**

I need to see Pietro...

**Del Drago**

He doesn’t want to see you...

**Meta**

Every poet deserves a muse, right? Antonioni is my inspiration...

**Nero**

I need... I...

*Lights shift. Only Metastasio and Violante remain. in private. Nero walks in in a rage. They do not notice him. They kiss. Nero stands stunned.  
Lights off on Metastasio and Violante. Nero alone.*

SONG: LIMINALITY (SoundCloud available)

**Nero**

I am the work of God  
And I am the work of men.  
I was neither born nor created.  
I'm coming of age forever,  
Maybe...

Liminality,  
The threshold to where?

They say, at the crossroad  
Between Sky and Earth,  
Between night and day,  
You'll sometimes meet the Lord  
Or the Devil...  
They're wrong.  
Heaven and Hell are for those with a choice;  
I wonder in here forever.

Liminality...

*Time shift montage*

*Nero vocalises whilst observing Violante and Metastasio living the life he thought his. They have a beautiful whirling romance. They are bonding through the Icarus rehearsals. They are happy.*

*Time goes by.*

**Nero**

I must have strayed off the path  
Or maybe this is my path?  
Is it me?  
Am I worth abandoning?...  
I just have to learn to stand tall.

*Exit Nero.*

**ACT 2 SCENE 8 - The view from above**

*Remi and Violante (in female clothing) in a room.*

**Violante**

So I heard the wedding has been postponed.

**Remi**

How?

**Violante**

The production is just taking so much of my father's attention...

*Light shift, mini flashback: Del Drago and Violante as Antonioni a few days earlier (Violante turns around and puts on the voice and only part of the costume.)*

**Violante**

I require you here! Every day! For the whole time!

**Del Drago**

But I/ ...

**Violante**

/How could you entertain the thought of organizing a wedding whilst the show is running!?!/ ...

**Del Drago**

/Do you really need me/ ...?

**Violante**

/Your private life will have to wait! /

**Del Drago**

/Yes! Apologies!

*Back to present. Violante takes off their disguise and talks to Remi.*

**Violante**

Apparently Antonioni is somewhat high maintenance.

*Remi glares suspiciously.*

**Violante**

But you know, good things come to those who wait...

*Exit Remi.*

**Violante**

Like leaving this city and never seeing your face again.

*Scene change. Later.... Violante into the dressing room.*

**Violante**

Pietro! Have you seen my score?!

**Metastasio (OS)**

No!

**Violante**

What?!

**Metastasio (OS)**

No! Check in my desk. I think I have the original manuscript in there somewhere!

*Violante goes to the desk and slides it open, taking out a stack of papers. They suddenly notice something...*

**Violante**

"To Nero,

My heart away from my chest..."

"...Set ablaze in the sky for the world to see,  
My Icarus."

*Violante reflects. It dawns on them.  
Light shift: Later... Enter Metastasio.*

**Violante**

Why did you never tell me?

**Metastasio**

Nero doesn't matter to me.

**Violante**

He matters to me! You turned me into a villain. I took you from him/ ...

**Metastasio**

/No one owns my art or my heart.

**Violante**

I hurt him!

**Metastasio**

You had no qualms taking Icarus from him / ...

**Violante**

/You gave it to me!

*Beat. Violante's countenance becomes gelid. They dig, pointedly.*

**Violante**

What are your plans? When the show is finished?

*Beat. Metastasio hesitates.*

**Violante**

When I marry Remi I can't keep being Antonioni. You'd lose your muse. So? Let's run away together.

**Metastasio**

What?

**Violante**

Let's elope. Go where we can both do what we want. And be together.

**Metastasio**

... My career is here. I...

**Violante**

I see (*beat.*) You know... You once told me you were a sham. I do see it now.

**Metastasio**

Vi/...

**Violante**

/No. only one person calls me that. And they're gone.

**ACT 2 SCENE 9 - Close to the Sun**

*Black out. Voices in the dark.  
"Indiscretion! Torrid! Outrage! Can it be true? A woman? On stage?"  
The sound of the mob grows.  
Del Drago backstage. Enter Metastasio.*

**Metastasio**

What is going on? The auditorium is under siege?

**Del Drago**

*(Trying to keep calm)* Eh! Opening night. We are the show of the reason. This is completely normal / ...

*Meta peaks through the curtains. A blast of angry sound!  
"Woooooh" "Show us tits!" "Give us the singing girl!"*

**Metastasio**

Completely normal indeed...

*A bottle crashes. Enter Olympia.*

**Olympia**

I guess this is what they call a *smash* hit...

*Enter Cira and Pera.*

**Cira**

Stop the show!

**Pera**

Stop the show! Now!

**Del Drago**

What is the reason for this? / ...

**Olympia**

/Stop the show? / ...

**Del Drago**

/How did you make it backstage? / ...

**Olympia**

/Don't be silly darlings!



**Cira**

We are not asking, Signora.

**Pera**

You are all in great trouble.

**Del Drago**

What on Earth/...?

**Cira**

/It has come to our attention that you may be hiding a woman amongst your performers.

**Del Drago**

Ludicrous!

**Pera**

But true!

**Cira**

We have our informers!

**Metastasio**

Why would we ever do that?

**Cira**

Word has spread. The papal council won't look kindly on this.

*Enter Violante, already in costume ready to go on.*

**Del Drago**

And who just would be? This she-thespian in our midst?

**Violante**

Is everything/...?

**Cira & Pera**

/Ribaldo Antonioni!

**Del Drago/Violante**

What?!

**Cira & Pera**  
Sinner!/Minx!

**Olympia**  
How dare you accuse my star?

**Cira**  
If the show goes on tonight the consequences will be dire!

**Olympia**  
Now, this is frankly too much, darlings. I would hate to have to withdraw my support from the Gazette's for publishing such libel/ ...

**Pera**  
/Silence!

**Olympia**  
What?!?

**Pera**  
This is beyond some saucy tidbit the Gazette would ever care to publish! / ...

**Cira**  
/We are here as officers of morals and customs of the State of his Holiness/ ...

**Pera**  
/This is nothing less than the dissolution of the glue that holds our society together! / ...

**Cira**  
You surely know the penalty for going against Vatican State Law / ...

**Pera**  
/We carry an excommunication bill with the stamp of Pope Clement XI.

**Del Drago**  
But... It simply isn't true! Show them! Show them it isn't true!

*Beat.*

**Del Drago**  
Antonioni.

*Beat. Violante removes make up and a piece of costume. A gasp!*

**Del Drago**  
Violante?

**Cira & Pera**  
The daughter?

**Del Drago**  
This whole time? (*Beat*). You are in so much trouble! (*To Olympia*) Did you know?

**Olympia**  
Preposterous!

**Del Drago**  
(*To Metastasio*) Did you?

*Beat.*

**Metastasio**  
Of course not.

**Cira**  
You put/...

**Pera**  
/Your own daughter in the show?/

**Violante**  
/This was my doing! My father would have not allowed this had he known.

*Beat.*

**Cira**  
This cannot escalate any further...

**Pera**  
It would be best for all if this unfortunate situation went away...

**Cira**  
To avoid any further scandal...

**Del Drago**  
Thank you! We'll cancel the performance.

**Cira**

People will wonder why...

**Pera**

Rumors might spread/ ...

**Del Drago**

/We'll squash them! Leave no trail! With the help of the Gazette, of course.

**Metastasio**

We could easily fake Antonioni being called abroad/ ...

**Del Drago**

/And she shall get married to Remolo immediately!

**Olympia**

I can arrange for a lavish engagement party by next week. Business as usual. No one will suspect...

*In the kerfuffle, Violante silently gathers the remainders of their costume. They look at the curtains. Then slowly, with dignity, make their way out onto the stage, unobserved by the others. The audience erupts in applause and whistles. The orchestra starts playing the first few notes of "All the Treasures". The gauge realize Violante has left...*

**Del Drago**

What? No!!!

*Violante starts singing as Icarus.*

**Violante**

Ohhh...

Ohhh...

Leh leh leh leh...

*As they sing they take off their costume and appear in feminine undergarments in front of the whole world to see. Then, we're in their head...*

**Violante**

A caterpillar doesn't know beauty  
Until it turns into a butterfly

...

I'm pretty...

*Black out.*

**ACT 2 SCENE 10 - I Touched the Sun**

*Several months later. Del Drago and Olympia in the Theatre's balcony, observing the hubbub of the audience walking in. It's "Icarus' " final performance. The air is heavy with things unspoken.*

**Olympia**

It has been a good run. Three extensions?

**Del Drago**

Four. If you count September. The longest running show in Rome's history.

**Olympia**

Well... Our leads are special. And Metastasio's work here is... His best yet. Really deserves the accolades.

**Del Drago**

Off to Vienna, last I heard. Writes for the Court, no less. Chamber pieces, mostly.

**Olympia**

Clever darling. He will do well there.

*Beat.*

**Del Drago**

The most celebrated theatre in town.

*Beat.*

**Olympia**

Sure, we had a little snag at the beginning. Thank gosh his Holiness is an old family friend/...

**Del Drago**

/Yes/...

**Olympia**

/A rather costly snag, too. The clergy can drink, I tell you. It's all that holy wine. They train themselves for years/...

**Del Drago**

/Did you truly never know? About... her?

*Beat.*

**Olympia**

I... suspected. Her facade had chinks. Remi, of all people, had come to me with concerns.

*Beat.*

**Olympia**

I told him to shut his mouth.

**Del Drago**

It wasn't you who gave her away?

**Olympia**

Perhaps I'm just a sentimental fool. I just couldn't stand in the way of a girl's dream of singing on the stage. And singing she did. No one can say she didn't.

*Beat.*

**Del Drago**

She was extraordinary wasn't she?

*Del Drago breaks down crying...*

*Meanwhile: Backstage. Il Divo and Nero finishing their make up in their changing room. Then, out of the blue, Il Divo talks.*

**Il Divo**

Excellent work.

**Nero**

*(Taken aback. Il Divo is speaking?)* Oh? Thank you. You mean last night? My acciaccaturas are getting smoother....

**Il Divo**

I mean... Getting here.

*Beat.*

**Nero**

Yes?

*Beat.*

**Il Divo**

A female almost took our place. You claimed it. Back where it belongs. I am praising you for it.

**Nero**

You don't think... I had anything to do with exposing her?

**Il Divo**

You are here. She in exile/...

**Nero**

/ A lucky break that truth would out.

*Beat.*

**Il Divo**

We have to keep vigilant. We have to protect ourselves. In other cities, soprano roles are being taken by women. In France they call our very existence barbaric. Rome will be our last bastion.

**Nero**

Surely our music is immortal.

*Beat.*

**Il Divo**

This will be my last performance. I haven't told the press yet. And if *you* do, I'll deny it. But... All things of beauty... They don't last forever.

*Il Divo touches his throat. It looks like he might be saying goodbye to an old, abusive lover.*

**Il Divo**

And in our case much less than that.

*Beat.*

**Il Divo**

Anyway. You must be perfect. They love to love you, but they'd love to hate you more. (*Turning back to the mirror*) You came in early on my line in scene three. You were flat on the glottal attack of the third descant in bar eighty-seven. And... You're still switching up the lyrics in the recitative. You say "maze" for "labyrinth" and "labyrinth" for "maze".

**Nero**

Are they not the same thing?

**Il Divo**

Oh! Oh. Oh. A *labyrinth* is a puzzle, something you try to get out of.  
 A *maze* is where you are trying to reach the center. Going inward. Spiritual pilgrimage.  
 Find your truth. And all that. (*Beat.*)  
 Fix it, will you?

*Exit Il Divo.*

*Nero Alone. Slowly he puts the last touches on. He stands up and walks towards a closed curtain, with the soundscape of an anxious audience waiting on the other side.*

*Curtains open. Nero slowly turns to the stage. The public is clamoring. The curtains come up and silence fill the theatre.*

*At some point during the song, Violante appears and joins Nero. We do not know where they are, but they appear comfortable, radiant: they are wearing androgynous **YELLOW** clothes. They join Nero in the song.*

**SONG: I TOUCHED THE SUN (Soundcloud available)**

**Nero**

I touched the sun.  
 I was the one.  
 Alone and proud,  
 Me.  
 I touched the sun;  
 This is the feeling when you've won  
 Everything...

I touched the sun.  
 Why should you run  
 When you have grown  
 Wings?  
 I touched the sun;  
 My life has only just begun.  
 Hasn't it?

Blazing through the air,  
 Glorious, unaware  
 High as I will ever be,  
 Men and women know



They belong below;  
I am neither so I soar...

I touched the sun.  
Wasn't it fun?  
Wasn't it all  
I was promised?  
I touched the sun;  
And even though I've come undone  
It was worth it...  
Wasn't it?

Tumbling through the air,  
Blinded by the glare,  
Now, unmasked for you to see.  
Look, the drama's real;  
Sudden grand reveal:  
Even angels kneel to gravity...

*Characters start filtering in. Are they thoughts or their real selves?*

**Metastasio**

Hubris,  
A sin/...

**Violante**

/A set of rules/...

**Metastasio**

/Against divine rules/...

**Violante**

You can't change the rules...

**Mother**

/Don't you stray/...

**Nero**

/And rules/...

**Metastasio**

/Don't you cross the line/...

**Mother**

*/Find your way back home to me/ ...*

**Nero**

*/Take root within your mind/ ...*

**Violante**

*/You can't change who you are...*

**Nero**

*Maybe my wings were too fragile to hold me this high*

**Violante**

*It's somewhere inside you.*

**Nero**

*But why give a child wings? You know that he's going to try*

**Violante**

*Let it guide you.*

**Nero**

*He takes off, you cheer on, you bedeck him with halos and crowns,*

**Mother**

*Find your way back home to me.*

**Nero**

*Yet you know as he rises that soon he will come crashing down.  
Maybe all actors are shadows unfit for the day,*

**Violante**

*All the treasures...*

**Nero**

*As the light melts the wax of our makeup and wings right away;*

**Violante**

*All the treasures of the world...*

**Nero**

*And I stretched for a star, but was merely a moth to the flame.*

**Nero**

They've always been here...

**Nero**

Was that burning ambition itself the inhibition that melted my feathers; so how can I  
blame/ ...

**Violante**

Calling me forth to touch/ ...

**Nero & Violante**

/The sun!

**Nero**

Crumbling in the air,  
Hurting, unprepared,  
Down he comes: the boy who flew!  
Then, suddenly, as I fall,  
I hear the ocean's call:  
It's waiting to embrace me like mothers do...

**Nero & Violante**

So I let myself fall!  
Let yourself fall!  
Is it the creak of the boards  
Or just my heart breaking,  
The sound that rewards  
Mistakes I'm still making?  
But now comes my last curtain call  
So take me, because after all  
I'm yours...

*Fine.*