

# MAX-1

A COMEDY OF TENORS

9

*the producer! I was the Mayor of Cleveland! Now get the hell up here!*

*(He slams the phone down and starts to clean up the room, talking to himself as he goes.)*

The biggest concert in the history of opera, and I'm taking the cellophane off the cold cuts. What's this?

*(He picks up something from the buffet table and it turns out to be a whole tongue; he juggles it with disgust.)*

*Ahhhh!* It's a *tongue!* *Uhhh!* Oh my God. What's the matter with these French? They'd eat the wax off the linoleum if it had vinaigrette on it.

*(As he puts the tongue back on the table, there is a knock on the front door. Knock, knock, knock!)*

Come in!

*(He pulls the door open and MAX enters, out of breath. MAX is in his mid-30s.)*

Start

Max!

MAX. Mr. Saunders.

SAUNDERS. What took you so long?

MAX. No Tito yet?

SAUNDERS. Tito Merelli? Has he ever been on time in his life?

MAX. Sir, he is the most famous opera singer in the world.

SAUNDERS. And does that mean he gets to keep me waiting?

MAX. Well, sort of. Maybe his plane is late.

SAUNDERS. Well that would be a novel excuse. The last time he didn't show up was because of his drinking and womanizing.

MAX. Sir, I'm in rehearsal. You're paying an orchestra and it's downstairs waiting for me.

SAUNDERS. Max, I need some help up here! You were my assistant for *ten years*. Have you forgotten ten years of your life? Do you have amnesia or something?

**MAX.** No, sir. But now I'm an opera singer.

**SAUNDERS.** You're a what?

**MAX.** Oh no.

**SAUNDERS.** What are you again, Max? I must have missed it.

**MAX.** I'm a singer and you gave me a chance and-and now I have a career but we have a concert tonight in less than three hours and now I have to go back to rehearsal!

**SAUNDERS.** And I *want* you to go back to rehearsal, Max, as soon as you check all the *toilets* to make sure they aren't *filthy*, and make sure there's no more *underwear* lying on the floor, and *then find that jackass Tito Merelli!*

**MAX.** (*Picking up phone and clicking the clicker.*) I'm giving you three minutes, but that's *Ah, bonjour. Parlez-vous angl* – Oh, good. We're expecting Tito Merelli and his wife and they're arriving on –

**SAUNDERS.** Trans-America Flight 102 from Rome –

**MAX.** Trans-America Flight 102 from Rome, and we'd like to know if the plane is late. *Merci.*

*(He hands SAUNDERS the phone.)*

Hold this. I'll check the rooms.

*(He runs into one of the bedrooms.)*

**SAUNDERS.** (*calling to MAX*) Tito in Paris. Can you imagine? I'll bet he's out at the Follies Bergère, drinking champagne out of some filthy slipper.

**MAX.** (*offstage*) That's not fair!

**SAUNDERS.** Do you know what's riding on this concert, Max? My entire reputation's at stake!

**MAX.** (*offstage*) I know that, sir!

*(MAX buzzes out of the bedroom, across the room, and into the other bedroom.)*

That one's fine. The bed looks nice.

**SAUNDERS.** That's all he needs – a good bed so he can have sex with the maid and sleep through the concert.

**MAX.** (*offstage*) You shouldn't give him such a hard time. He's been a really good friend to me, and I think he's going through a sort of personal crisis.

**SAUNDERS.** Oh, no. The poor thing. Is he off his linguini? Can't drink his chianti fast enough?

**MAX.** (*entering*) I think he's starting to feel his age. I mean, he's almost as old as

*(stops himself)*

as some of the older opera singers who are still performing.

**SAUNDERS.** Really feeling your oats, aren't you, Max. Old man Saunders is heading over the hill, is that the idea?

**MAX.** No! No, no! I-I didn't mean –

**SAUNDERS.** I have fought to be in this position, Max. I've fought for thirty years, and now I'm producing the biggest concert in the history of Paris.

**MAX.** (*into the phone*) Hello? Yes I'm still here. Oh good! Thank you. *Merci.*

*(hangs up)*

His plane landed a half hour ago, so he should be here any minute, now I have to go, they're all waiting for me.

*(MAX runs out through the front door and is gone.)*

**SAUNDERS.** (*alone*) If I get through this week without a heart attack, it'll be a –...

*(He spots something sticking out of the sofa. He pulls on it and it's a brassiere.)*

Oh for God's sake. Why don't they just put a sign up: "Welcome to France, Fornication in Progress."

*(Knock, knock, knock! the front door)*

Max, would you stop horsing around! Just wait'll you see *this*.

*(He opens the door and the Merellis are there. TITO is the famous Italian opera singer and MARIA is his stunning wife. They're dressed with style,*

**Stop**