

TITO-1

14

A COMEDY OF TENORS
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(hangs up)

TITO. Is there a problem?

SAUNDERS. No. No, no. That was an exercise that Jacques and I do in case there ever *was* a problem, and he handled it brilliantly. But I think I should be going now to make sure that everything is running smoothly, the machine is in gear and *vroom* we're off!

(He runs out.)

(TITO sits with his head in his hands and moans.)

MARIA. Tito, what is a-with you?

TITO. I'm a-getting old, Maria. The stars a-fade. The lights a-go out.

MARIA. That's from *La Bohème*.

TITO. So what?! That's not the point! It used to be, the girls at the stage a-door, they were four a-deep. I sign autographs, they want to hug me. "Take a picture, Tito." "We love a-you, Tito." Now everybody want a-Carlo Nucci.

MARIA. Noo.

TITO. When I was young, maybe ten year old, I hear my own voice singing in a-church and it was so beautiful I say that's from a-God. I say thank you God, you are good man. After that, I sing everywhere, eh? Every opera house. Every concert. I'm a big a-star. But then, six month ago – I never tell you this before – I'm a-singing Donizetti and my voice a-crack on the high C. Just a-once, but everybody in the place, they look at me and go "Uh oh. He's a-getting old. It's a-good-bye Tito."

(sob)

I cannot live this way without respect and honor.

MARIA. That's from *Madame Butterfly*.

TITO. Maria!

MARIA. Tito, you've got to stop this. You're in a-you prime.

TITO. My prime. Puh. I am being tortured in dungeon.

MARIA. That's from *Tosca*.

Start

TITO. *Would you stop it!*

MARIA. But it's a-in a-you head! Your voice is just as good as ever! On the stage you got a-heart, you got a-soul! You still eat like a pig, but that's a-not new.

TITO. Pah.

MARIA. Hey. Nothing has changed! Except maybe you forget some things now and then.

TITO. I forget things? Me? Like what?

MARIA. It's a-not import. It makes no difference.

TITO. No! You tell me! I forget things. You tell me!

(She sighs.)

MARIA. It's my birthday.

TITO. Today?

MARIA. Yeah.

TITO. Today is you birthday?

MARIA. Yeah.

TITO. Uh-oh.

MARIA. Yeah.

TITO. Hmm. I guess that explain why I'm carrying this a-bag around.

MARIA. Tito?

TITO. You're right, I forget a-so much.

MARIA. Oh, Tito! Look at this! You remember! Hoo hoo! I open now, yes?

TITO. No, you're gonna wait till next Thursday. Friday.

MARIA. You're very funny. You're like a-Bingo Crosby.

(She opens the box and finds a brightly-colored scarf.)

Oh! It's a scarf! It's lovely, it's a-beautiful. Was it expensive?

TITO. Very.

MARIA. Excellent.

TITO. Hey. You want to celebrate? We got the bedroom, eh?

MARIA. Now? We just got here. We don't have our luggage yet.

TITO. You need luggage to make a-love?

MARIA. Well it might help. We got things in there.

TITO. Okay, fine, forget it.

MARIA. Hey, no. Don't be like this.

TITO. Like what? I'm a-fine. I gotta lay down anyway, take a nap. Us old people, we need to rest.

MARIA. Tito –

TITO. Hey, you want a younger man, you just gotta say so.

MARIA. Would you stop already! You are the best man I know, okay? And when our daughter get a husband, I hope he's just like you.

TITO. What has Mimi got to do with this?

MARIA. Nothing, I'm a-just sayin'.

TITO. Mimi get a husband in five year. Ten year. She's a baby.

MARIA. She's twenty-five years old.

TITO. Okay, *fifteen* year.

MARIA. She's a young woman. She's got a-urges.

TITO. Oh, sure. When she get to *puberty* you call me.

MARIA. Tito, she's past a-puberty. She's up to urges.

TITO. That's impossible! We sent her to boarding school in United States so she could be nice a-young girl and not get urges.

MARIA. Well she's got 'em, believe me.

TITO. How do you know this? Are you so smart?

MARIA. Because she talk to me. I'm her mother.

TITO. I'm not her father?

MARIA. 'Ats a-different.

TITO. What's a-different? My sister talk about urges with my Papa all the time.

MARIA. Your sister's only urge is to drive me crazy.

TITO. But she talk about it.

MARIA. That's not the kind of urge I'm a-talkin'! Women have needs, Tito. And sometimes more than you think.

TITO. More than *I* think? What, you got a man on the side for all the urges? Maybe you got two men. For urge a-one and urge a-two. 'Cause apparently I'm not doin' so good with number three!

MARIA. *Don't change the subject!*

TITO. *I'm a-not change!! The subject is Mimi, my daughter, my life, who is still a baby, and if any man even touch my girl, I'm gonna KILL HIM! And now I'm gonna take a NAP!!*

(TITO pulls the afghan off the sofa and walks into the master bedroom. MARIA follows him and they slam the door and they're gone.)

(However...when the afghan comes off the sofa, it reveals their daughter MIMI in the arms of a young man. They're both wearing very little – just underwear and barely that – and they're both disheveled. Obviously, they were fooling around before SAUNDERS first entered the room, and they've been lying there frozen, under the afghan, ever since. As the afghan comes off, they spring to their feet, still standing on the sofa.)

(Also, though MIMI is the Merellis' daughter, she was brought up in America and has an American accent, as does the YOUNG MAN.)

YOUNG MAN. Oh my God. Your father's going to kill me.

MIMI. I know he is. I told you we should go to a hotel!

YOUNG MAN. This is a hotel!

MIMI. I meant a hotel that doesn't have my father in it!

(in the bedroom, offstage:)

TITO. *I tell you Mimi is a good a-girl, she's the best a-girl, and she's gonna wait till she talk to her father!*

MARIA. *How do you know this?*

TITO. *Because if she doesn't, I'm gonna KILL HER!*

Stop