

(He looks around the room, confirming in an instant that TITO isn't there.)

MAX. *(over the music)* Maggie – !

MAGGIE. Shhh!

MAX. Did he call?!

MAGGIE. No. Now will you wait!

(MAX sighs. He looks at his watch. Then he notices MAGGIE's reaction to the music; she's swaying in rapture. The aria ends and MAGGIE falls backward)

RADIO ANNOUNCER. The magnificent voice of Tito Merelli, brought to you in honor of his live appearance this evening with the Cleveland Grand Opera Company-

(MAX turns off the radio.)

MAX. He wasn't on the train.

MAGGIE. Oh my God. He is so wonderful. When he does that last note, I almost can't breathe.

MAX. Maggie, he wasn't there!

(The phone rings. MAX grabs it.)

Hello?!...No, sir, I couldn't find him.

SAUNDERS. *(through the phone)* God dammit! Where the hell is he?!

MAX. *(to MAGGIE)* It's your father. *(into the phone)* I don't know! I looked everywhere. I asked the conductor. I had him paged. I – I – I'm sorry, I just –

(the sound of SAUNDERS hanging up)

Sir?...Sir? *(MAX hangs up)* He's gonna kill me.

MAGGIE. He will not. He'd have nobody to yell at. At least nobody who takes it the way you do.

MAX. Maggie, the man is two hours late! The rehearsal starts in *ten minutes!*

MAGGIE. He'll be here, Max. This is Tito Merelli. He's a genius. They just don't think like other people.

MAX. So what are you saying? He's a grown man and he can't tell time?

MAGGIE. I'm just not worried, okay? *(pause)* Oh, Max, just think of it. Tonight. The curtain rises and he walks onstage. And suddenly there's nothing else in the world but that...that *voice*.

(pause)

MAX. I can sing too, you know.

MAGGIE. Oh, Max – *(She laughs out loud.)*

MAX. I can! What are you – “Oh, Max.”

MAGGIE. You don't sing like Tito Merelli.

MAX. Not yet. Okay?

MAGGIE. You don't.

MAX. In your opinion. It's a matter of taste.

MAGGIE. It is not! I wish you wouldn't fool yourself. He's a star, Max. He sings all over the world. He's in *Life* magazine!

MAX. So is Mussolini.

MAGGIE. And he's very sensitive.

MAX. How do you know that?

(Beat. She realizes she's caught.)

MAGGIE. *(casually)* Because I met him. Last year.

MAX. You did? You never told me that.

MAGGIE. It was no big thing. When I was in Italy with Daddy, we went to La Scala and he was in *Aida*. Then afterwards we went backstage and...well, there he was, all by himself, behind the curtain. He was wearing a sort of...loincloth and his whole body was pouring with sweat. Anyway, he looked up and saw us and do you know what he did, Max. He kissed my palms.

MAX. Yeah. So what?

MAGGIE. It was romantic.

MAX. He's Italian! They kiss everything!

MAGGIE. Fine, forget it.

MAX. Meatballs. Cheese. Cold cuts.

MAGGIE. Max –

MAX. If it *moves*, they kiss it.

MAGGIE. *Max!*

MAX. So what else happened?

MAGGIE. Nothing. (*pause*) Of any importance.

MAX. Something else happened?

MAGGIE. Not really.

MAX. Something sort of happened.

MAGGIE. It wasn't important.

MAX. What happened!

MAGGIE. It was nothing! Oh – ! (*reluctantly, embarrassed*) ...I fainted.

MAX. You fainted?

MAGGIE. It must have been the heat and all the excitement. I remember thinking suddenly, my God, it's like an oven back here. And we were talking and he sort of... stared right at me, and then I...blacked out.

MAX. Oh great. I mean this is terrific. My fiancée meets this – this sweaty Italian guy and she keels over.

MAGGIE. From the heat! And I'm not your fiancée, Max.

MAX. Wait a minute. Did I ask you to marry me or not? Huh? Remember that? What did you – you black out during the proposal?

MAGGIE. I heard it, Max, and I said no.

MAX. You said you'd think about it.

MAGGIE. (*taking his hand*) Max. I'm just not ready yet. I want something special first. Something wonderful and romantic.

MAX. I'm not romantic? I don't believe this. What do you call a rowboat at three a.m., huh? Moonlight shimmering on the water. Nobody for miles.

MAGGIE. You lost the oars.

MAX. But it was fun! It turned out fun!

MAGGIE. We spent thirty hours in a rowboat, Max.

MAX. That's not the point!

MAGGIE. I haven't had any flings, Max.

MAX. Flings?

MAGGIE. Flings.

MAX. I've been asking you to fling with me for three years!
I begged you!

MAGGIE. I don't mean that! I just feel that I need some...
wider experience.

MAX. Oh. Sure. I get it. You mean like Diana.

MAGGIE. Diana?

MAX. Nedda. Soprano.

MAGGIE. Oh, her.

MAX. She's flinging her way through the whole cast. All the
men are getting flung out. You should see the guy who
plays Tonio. He's supposed to be evil. He can hardly
walk.

MAGGIE. Max –

MAX. He's limping now –

MAGGIE. Max, listen. Let's be honest. When you kiss me,
do you hear anything? Special?

MAX. Like what?

MAGGIE. Like...bells.

MAX. You wanna hear bells?

MAGGIE. I guess it sounds stupid, doesn't it?

MAX. Yeah. It does.

MAGGIE. Just forget it.

~~(a knock at the door)~~

~~SAUNDERS. (offstage) Max!~~

~~MAX. (to) Maggie –~~

~~MAGGIE. I said forget it!~~

~~(more knocking)~~

~~SAUNDERS. (offstage) Max!~~

~~MAX. Coming!~~

~~(MAX opens the door and SAUNDERS rushes in. Mil-
fifies, authoritarian and very upset.)~~