

FORTE

(SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR)

Screenplay by

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Story by

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Inspired by true events

NOTE TO READER:

This version of the script is intended largely  
for an English-speaking audience.

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**OVER BLACK**

PAOLO (V.O.)  
When you think of a classical music performance, what pictures come to mind? Is it...

**SERIES OF SHOTS (VARIOUS CONCERT HALL STAGES)**

Energetic maestros conduct their orchestras. String sections play furiously. Tuxedo/gown-wearing pianists attack their keyboards with passion.

PAOLO (V.O.)  
Or is it...

An ELDERLY COUPLE asleep in their concert seats. CRICKETS.

PAOLO (V.O.)  
Either way, I'm not surprised. It's been that way for centuries. That's why my son and I wanted to do things differently.

**EXT. HISTORIC PARK - VERONA, ITALY - DAY (EDITED HOME VIDEO)**

ANDREA (8) - spirited and easily distracted - races across the grass to climb up onto a picnic table. The pigeons resting there take flight. Andrea twirls with outstretched arms. Smiling as he watches them fly off.

The worried voice of his mother comes from behind the camera.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Andrea! Be careful you don't fall.

ANDREA  
I wish I could fly, Mama.

PAOLO (O.S.)  
You want to be a bird and a piano player?

The CAMERA swings left. PAOLO (34), a restless dreamer, pushes a classical piano along a path. Winks at the camera. Behind him, in the near distance, an ancient ROMAN AQUEDUCT.

Mama turns the camera on herself - ELENA (39), frowns, good-naturedly.

ELENA  
Being a bird might be a more practical goal than being a busker.

**LATER - SERIES OF SHOTS (HOME VIDEO WITH MUSIC)**

Elena sets picnic food on the table. A proud Paolo and Andrea play piano together - Andrea's skill matching his dad's.

PAOLO (V.O.)  
 You see, the idea of playing a classical piano anywhere but on a concert stage was ridiculed by the establishment.

The three of them eat and drink and laugh at the table. A DOG runs up to greet them. Elena, afraid of dogs, jumps up onto the table. Paolo laughs. Andrea hugs the dog.

PAOLO (V.O.)  
 It was an old-school way of thinking I could not stand.

Elena scolds Andrea for climbing too high up a tree. Paolo turns the camera on himself. Proud of his daring son.

**LATER**

A small CROWD OF TOURISTS from the park gather to listen to Paolo and Andrea play an enchanting melody.

PAOLO  
 (boasts to the crowd)  
 My boy, he wrote this song. It's called 'Nostalgia'.

The crowd is impressed.

PAOLO (CONT'D)  
 One day, we will be the most famous buskers in the world. Just don't tell his mama.

The crowd laughs. Paolo pokes his tongue at the camera/Elena.

A DOG nuzzles Andrea. He stops playing the piano to play with the pooch. Paolo feigns outrage. The crowd laughs again.

ELENA (O.S.)  
 Our son belongs in a concert hall, not in the park like an animal.

**INT. PAOLO'S HOME OFFICE - DAY**

Paolo sits at his desk watching the home video on his computer. Joy in his eyes. Around his office are blueprints and architectural models - signs of his real job.

PAOLO (V.O.)

Looking back, Elena's words seem more like a warning now, but Andrea and I weren't listening. We were on a mission.

ON THE VIDEO: AN ANGRY POLICEMEN pushes through the crowd. He motions 'cut' - with one hand slashing across his throat - for Paolo to stop playing.

PAOLO (V.O.)

Little did I know the dangerous storm I had unleashed and how it would change our lives forever.

A doorbell CHIMES --

Paolo, his eyes still glued to the video, calls out to his wife in another room --

PAOLO

Can you get that, honey!

#### LIVING ROOM

Elena ignores it. She's captivated by a TV news report.

TV NEWS REPORTER

Climate Change protestors were arrested today during a rally in Verona when several dozen occupied the historic Piazza di Spagna in Rome. When asked for a comment, Aurelian Van Damme, Director of the Historical Site Preservation Union for the EU defended the Mayor's decision to make the arrests...

The doorbell CHIMES again. Annoyed, Elena heads for the front door with one eye still on the TV.

Curious, Paolo pokes his head out of his office, looking for Elena. He sees her, but he also sees on TV the stubborn, self-righteous AURELIAN VAN DAMME (65) speaking to a reporter --

VAN DAMME

The worthiness of the strikers' cause is not what this is about. The protestors were arrested for breaking a law that clearly states that demonstrations or performances are not permitted on sites of historical national interest.

(MORE)

VAN DAMME (CONT'D)

To allow such behavior would both  
damage and cheapen those areas.

Elena opens the door. There's a FEDEX MAN, envelope in hand.

FEDEX MAN

Un pacco per lei, signora

Excited, Elena signs for the envelope. Closes the door.

Paolo watches his wife. Her excitement makes him smile, but  
he's indulging her. He doesn't care as much.

PAOLO

Is it from the Academy?

Elena grins. Rips it open. Reads the letter. Her smile drops.

INSERT: It's from -- 'Il Conservatorio di Musica di Verona'

INSERT: (TRANSLATED) "...your son has not been accepted..."

Tear's fill Elena's eyes. Sensing the bad news, Paolo puts an  
arm around her. She brushes him off.

ELENA

This is your fault.

PAOLO

Sweetie. How is this my fault?

ELENA

If you had spent less time busking  
and more time networking..

That hurts Paolo.

PAOLO

I've done alright with him.

Distraught, Elena's patience runs out.

ELENA

You're an engineer who likes to  
play the piano! What doors do you  
think that will open up for him?

Paolo's face hardens. Elena throws her hands up, groaning  
with frustration.

Paolo's had enough. He grabs his car keys off a side table.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

**OUTSIDE - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS**

In the driveway - a HONDA SEDAN, and the WHITE VAN we saw in Paolo's home video. Paolo gets in the van.

PAOLO  
To pick up our son.

ELENA  
Why are you taking the van?

He doesn't answer. He starts the car. Puts on his seat belt.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
Don't you dare take him busking.

Paolo backs out of the driveway. Tires SCREECHING.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
You're going to end up in jail!!

With the piano in the back of his van, Paolo speeds away.

Leaving a worried Elena behind.

**EXT. PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY**

ANDREA (8) and other SCHOOL CHILDREN rush out the front doors and down the stairs of their school to waiting PARENTS.

**INT. PIANO VAN**

Paolo opens his passenger-side door. Andrea hops in.

ANDREA  
(Italian/subtitled)  
Why did you bring the van?

Paolo hesitates. A hint of anger, lingering.

PAOLO  
(Italian/subtitled)  
No reason.

Andrea digs into his backpack to remove a sheet of music.

ANDREA  
Papa, I wrote something today in music class. The teacher was mean, though. He wouldn't let me play it.

PAOLO

Why not?

ANDREA

He told me, "You are too busy writing your own stuff when you should be listening to my lesson." But Papa, his lesson was boring.

Paolo turns away, suppressing a smile.

PAOLO

You need to listen to your teachers and show them respect, son.

Andrea's shoulders slump in defeat. Only half convinced.

ANDREA

I guess so.

Paolo's heart breaks to see his son disappointed.

PAOLO

How about WE play your music?

Andrea lights up -- then frowns.

ANDREA

What about la Mamma? She said we shouldn't play outside anymore because we might get in trouble.

A determined Paolo steers the van into the flow of traffic.

PAOLO

Sometimes you have to break the rules if you want to make the world a better place, son.

ANDREA

And music makes it better?

PAOLO

Infinitely better.

Andrea smiles to himself, lost in thought for a moment.

ANDREA

So... does that mean I can break the rules and not eat my green vegetables if I don't want to?

Andrea grins at his papa, thinking he's got him trapped!