

# NINE

by  
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Based on the Broadway Musical "NINE"  
Book by Arthur Kopit  
Music and Lyrics by Maury Yeston  
Adaption from the Italian by Mario Fratti

Director: Rob Marshall

Final Script  
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INT. PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The flicker of film. Footage from a press conference.

GUIDO

You kill your film several times, mostly by talking about it. A film is a dream. You kill it writing it down, you kill it with a camera; the film might come to life for a moment or two when your actors breathe life back into it - but then it dies again, buried in film cans. Mysteriously, sometimes, in the editing room, a miracle happens when you place one image next to another so that when, finally, an audience sits in the dark, if you're lucky -- very lucky - and sometimes I've been lucky - the dream flickers back to life again. That's why I'm secretive.

REPORTER (O.S.)

So what's your favorite pasta?

GUIDO

Finally, a serious question.

Laughter. A word:

## NINE

INT. STAGE 5, CINECITTA - NIGHT

A huge soundstage. The STUDIO SUPERINTENDENT lets a man into the stage, turns on a working light.

SUPERTITLE: Cinecitta film studios, Rome, 1965

STUDIO SUPERINTENDENT

Good luck, Maestro.

Departing, he closes the soundstage door.

As the man crosses the shadowy stage, a dim shaft of light catches his face, weary, handsome, haggard. GUIDO CONTINI, the most famous film director in the world. In front of him:

AN ENORMOUS, DUSTY, MULTI-LEVEL FILM SET under construction. A complex maze of scaffolding, its unfinished, chaotic elements suggesting ancient ruins. Cracked stone facades, broken columns, open platforming, the skeleton of a grand staircase. A lighting grid, not yet hung, and a camera crane surrounded by a forest of studio lights on stands.

Guido sits at the table, lights up a cigarette and puts on his glasses. He looks at the plans, looks up at the stage, puts his glasses down and stands up, stepping over to the crane.

Guido, alone, cigarette hanging from the corner of his mouth, contemplates the studio, its turbulent set, in every sense a jumble of ideas.

Guido looks at the set in despair. He sits in the bucket seat of the crane, buries his head in his hands, overwhelmed.

THE FIRST OF NINE LOUD CHURCH BELLS CHIMES

GUIDO (V.O.)

Maestro, Maestro, Maestro Contini...  
How do you begin? How do you begin  
this thing? Page 1... Page 1... Page  
1... Page nothing...

In the distance, a figure approaches out of the darkness, the darkness of Guido's imagination. An escape from his tortured reality.

The figure emerges gradually, like a goddess. She is gorgeous, imposing, and seductive. She is CLAUDIA, his film star, his muse. When Claudia reaches Guido, she stops in front of him, takes his hands from his face, and kisses him. And with that gesture, the music swells, the lighting grid rises majestically into the air, the gritty soundstage transforms into something beautiful, transforms into the interior world of GUIDO'S FANTASY.

As Claudia moves away, more and more women slowly appear. They emerge from everywhere. These are the women from Guido's life, past and present. Women from his films, women he has loved, the sources of his inspiration and creative genius.

A grand OVERTURE unfolds. The most significant women in Guido's life are revealed, each with their own powerful entrance:

LUISA, his wife

CARLA, his mistress

LILLI, his costume designer and accomplice

GUIDO'S MAMMA, her spirit

STEPHANIE, a fashion journalist

SARAGHINA, a whore

A dark and glamorous dream. The women surround Guido and he loses himself and his anxiety in their collective embrace.

INT. STAGE 5, CINECITTA - DAY

The fantasy ends abruptly with A VIOLENT GRATING NOISE, as the studio's truck doors are yanked open, jolting Guido who is slumped in the crane seat. Harsh daylight penetrates the gloom. Too bright. He blinks, discombobulated, as a group of silhouetted figures approach with purpose. One of the figures is a well-fed, amiable character, DANTE. He is Guido's longtime associate and Producer. A younger, more ascetic figure accompanies him, sharp and birdlike. This is FAUSTO, an accountant. Dante speaks quickly and without obvious punctuation:

DANTE  
(walking)  
Guido! You're here.

GUIDO  
*Buongiorno, Dante.*

DANTE  
I've been looking for you all over the place. The set's coming along. How are you?

GUIDO  
*Bene, grazie, bene.*

Guido stands to greet him. They kiss on both cheeks.

DANTE  
*Bene. My God, you look terrible, better go to makeup, forget you've got a press conference?*

FAUSTO  
(discreetly, to Dante)  
He has no tie.

DANTE  
Yes, makeup and wardrobe.

He takes Guido's arm and they head towards daylight. Guido looks back at Fausto, who follows and with a look and a gesture asks Dante *who is he?*

FAUSTO  
(overlapping Dante)  
Signor Contini, I'm Fausto. Good morning, Signor Contini.

DANTE  
(interrupts)  
He's counting costs, you know. The  
Bank wants him here.  
(to Fausto)  
Don't speak to him, I speak to him.

FAUSTO  
Okay, I have some questions for Signor  
Contini.

GUIDO  
We all have questions for Signor  
Contini.

They head outside.

EXT. CINECITTA - DAY

Guido, Dante and Fausto hurry through the studio en route to the Production Offices. Behind them is a large poster of CLAUDIA, starring in Guido's last movie, a failure, *LA DONNA MODERNA* (The Modern Woman). As Guido passes he causes a mild stir, and many people nod deferentially, offer a *Maestro*, or *Dottore*. Guido nods.

FAUSTO  
Yes, but please, please, I think it's customary for there to be an approved script and budget before filming commences...

GUIDO  
Is he going to follow us?

FAUSTO  
It's not my intention to be difficult. Maestro, I am a huge admirer of Maestro Contini's movies, your early films are...everybody loves them and... I consider it a great honour for me to be here now... none the less, I need a script and a budget.

Neither Dante nor Guido respond. Fausto flounders. They make their way to the Production Offices. Everywhere signs for the movie, *ITALIA*.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICES, CINECITTA - DAY

A long corridor, bustling with activity. The trio heads down it. If a pretty girl goes by, and there are several, both Guido and Dante turn to look but without missing a beat of their solemn conversation.

As they progress into and through the open plan office, many of the crew look up and cluster around, trying to get Guido's attention, swelling the procession, interjecting with their urgent requests.

There are set models everywhere, in the process of being constructed, or painted.

JACONELLI, Guido's production designer, looks up from a model, hurries over. Nobody stops moving.

As a pretty girl passes between them, they all turn to look.

PIERPAOLO, Guido's young PA, has caught up with the procession. He has dozens of phone messages, sorting through them, as he walks alongside Guido, through a partitioned office -

PIERPAOLO

Where do you want your messages?

GUIDO

On my desk.

PIERPAOLO

There's no room on your desk.

- into the main office -

GUIDO

Under my desk. In the trash. *Non lo so.*

PIERPAOLO

(waving them at him)

Some of these are urgent!

GUIDO

(to Pierpaolo)

Get me a cigarette.

JACONELLI

(confidentially)

We will never be ready to shoot in ten days.

GUIDO

Jaconelli -

FAUSTO

(at the same time)

Not ready?!

GUIDO

(continues)

*Ascolta me.*

(MORE)

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
(he kisses Jaconelli on  
the cheek)  
Careful what you say. He's a spy from  
the bank.

Guido carries on moving through the office.

DANTE  
He's not exactly from the bank, Guido.

Now BENITO, Guido's Casting Director, moves towards  
Guido, Guido tries to duck away from him as they head  
towards Guido's office.

BENITO  
*Dottore, Dottore.* You have actors  
waiting for you in your office.  
Auditions all morning. You should see  
what I've found. I found two sisters.  
Look, they're right...

Guido turns through another partition, as they all  
besiege him with questions. Benito despairs.

BENITO (CONT'D)  
*Dottore, this way...*

Guido heads towards Wardrobe, goes straight through the  
door, swinging it shut, leaving the chaos behind him.

Dante blocks Benito.

BENITO (CONT'D)  
Maestro!

DANTE  
Not now. He's got the Press  
Conference.

INT. WARDROBE, CINECITTA - DAY

Guido comes through the door, blows hard from the  
barrage.

They're in Lilli's domain here, and a haven, always,  
for Guido. Part Edith Head, part Coco Chanel, Lilli is  
Guido's Costume Designer, no longer young, cranky,  
indomitable, sharp as a tack. She adores Guido without  
any sentiment. She's incapable of sentiment. Guido  
heads straight towards her desk, where she is cutting  
some fabric.

GUIDO  
I need a cigarette.

Dante comes in, closing the door behind him.

DANTE

He needs a shirt and tie, Lilli.

Guido sits up on Lilli's table, as Dante heads to Lilli's desk and picks up the phone to make a call.

GUIDO

I need a coffee and a cigarette.

He lies down.

LILLI

(unimpressed)

Answer a question, I'll give you a coffee. Answer another question, I'll give you a cigarette. And so on.

GUIDO

Actually and an aspirin.

Dante stands at Lilli's desk and looks at some drawings.

DANTE

(in the background, on the phone)

We're running late...

LILLI

(turns to Guido and lights a cigarette)

Calm down. Directing a movie is a very overrated job, we all know it. You just have to say yes or no. What else do you do? Nothing. *Maestro - Should this be Red? Yes. Green? No. More extras? Yes. More lipstick? No. Yes, no, yes, no, yes, no* - that's directing.

Lilli hands Guido the lit cigarette.

GUIDO

That's right: that's directing. And it doesn't seem to make a blind bit of difference, finally, what the answer is...

LILLI

So please, Guido, yes or no, do you want any costumes in this film?

GUIDO

Yes.

LILLI  
You see - simple!  
(handing him an espresso  
fetched by her assistant,  
ROBERTA)  
Might I know what period the movie's  
in?

Lilli glances at Dante who has edged closer to the table, he looks at the costumes.

GUIDO  
Yes, yes.  
(downs the espresso)  
Soon.

Lilli glares at Dante, ushering him away.

LILLI  
You know I don't allow producers in  
here.

DANTE  
Alright. Two minutes Guido.

Lilli is the only person who intimidates Dante. He leaves. Guido pulls out his own tie from his pocket.

Lilli walks round and takes the tie off him. Guido sits up. Lilli puts the tie round his neck.

LILLI  
He's gone. Have you written a word of  
the script?

GUIDO  
No.

LILLI  
Are you in a panic?

GUIDO  
Yes.

She ties Guido's tie for him.

LILLI  
Is Luisa going with you to the Press  
Conference?

GUIDO  
No. Nobody. Dante. And his spy.

LILLI  
You need to shave. You look terrible.

GUIDO  
(looking around,  
desperate)  
Why is there no fire escape in here?  
What if somebody needed to escape? I  
can't face these reporters. I have  
nothing to say.

LILLI  
You'll be fine. You're a world class  
liar, darling, go out there and lie  
for Italy, lie for *Italia*.

EXT. ROME - DAY

Guido is driving his Roadster through the streets of Rome. An Italian pop song of the day is playing on the radio as he speeds around the Piazza del Popolo. In front of him in the convoy is Dante with Fausto.

INT. GUIDO'S CAR - DAY

As Guido drives, he turns to see his MAMMA in the passenger seat. He's not remotely surprised. *She appears the way he remembers her.* Mamma is extraordinary.

GUIDO  
What the hell's wrong with me? I  
can't sleep. I can't think. I can't  
write. I can't breathe. My heart is  
racing. Am I dying, Mamma? I owe you  
flowers, I know. I'll come to the  
cemetery at the weekend. You should  
have let me bury you in Roma, Mamma, I  
could visit you every week. Don't  
look at me like that.

MAMMA  
(with kindly patience)  
Oh, Guido, Guido.

He stops at a busy intersection.

EXT. STREETS OF ROME / INT. GUIDO'S CAR - DAY

This is the Rome of *La Dolce Vita*, the Rome of Vespas, skinny ties, cool sunglasses, impossibly cool young people. A magnificent fall day, and the cafes are stuffed with the beautiful and chic.

MAMMA

This is your Rome, Guido. The world  
sees Rome the way you invented it.  
Your films did that.

GUIDO

(buoyed by her  
encouragement)

I miss you.

MAMMA

I miss you, too.

Guido is in his own world. The policeman raps on the  
bonnet of the car. Guido startles and pulls off, alone  
in the car.

Guido looks across as he drives. Mamma has gone.

EXT. HOTEL EXCELSIOR, VIA VENETO - DAY

The convoy comes to a quick stop in front of the Hotel  
Excelsior on the Via Veneto.

As soon as Guido gets out of the car, the waiting  
paparazzi snap his picture. Beautiful women look at  
him. Guido moves quickly by them.

Dante and the team hurry after him. Fausto tackles  
Dante.

And they hurry after Guido.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - DAY

A big suite. About fifty reporters, men and women, are  
in the room, and an array of microphones are on a  
coffee table next to a long couch. Excited chaos. A  
RADIO REPORTER narrates in the background.

RADIO REPORTER

And we're just waiting for the arrival  
of Contini...any moment now - Could  
this film put the Maestro back on top?

A few news cameras are filming. There's a buffet, and  
a bartender.

And Guido comes into the room, shaking hands, patting  
shoulders, grabbing a glass of champagne. Dante and the  
team follow him in.

RADIO REPORTER (CONT'D)

And here he is..!

DANTE

*Silenzio, per favore...* Thank you,  
thank you...

RADIO REPORTER

Dante, Guido Contini's long time  
producer, is about to speak...

DANTE

I want to say a few words from my  
heart. I am humbled and thrilled to  
be able to announce that I am  
producing Guido Contini's next film,  
*Italia*, which will star once again  
Contini's longtime inspiration, the  
international film star, Claudia  
Jenssen...

A stunning film poster is revealed -- Claudia Jenssen  
emerging from the Colosseum: CLAUDIA JENSSEN. UN FILM  
DI GUIDO CONTINI. ITALIA. Flashes. Excitement.

DANTE (CONT'D)

...we start shooting in ten days time  
in Cinecitta. That makes it one week  
from Monday.

(to Guido, handing over)

Thank you, Maestro, thank you very  
much. This is our ninth film  
together. Guido Contini.

GUIDO

Thanks for coming, everybody.

Pretending to leave, he heads towards the exit and  
kisses Dante on the cheek.

He returns to the couch. All the reporters fire their  
questions at once. The questions come on top of each  
other, and Guido covers his despair with an inflated  
energy. He takes his sunglasses off and signals to  
DINARDO, a harsh-looking woman.

DINARDO

Maestro Contini. Maestro Contini.

GUIDO

Yes.

DINARDO

*Grazie.* Maestro Contini, your new  
film is called *Italia*... big title.

Another journalist, Leopardi, vile - sitting next to  
her, egging Dinardo on - almost sniggers with contempt.

GUIDO

Actually, it's my shortest title yet.

DINARDO

But hardly a modest one.

GUIDO

Films are not modest. They cost too much, they take too long, and they involve too many people. So they should have grand titles.

DINARDO

And might you tell the press what the film is about?

GUIDO

Why? I still don't know what my last film was about.

LEOPARDI

(In a loud aside to  
DinarDO)

That was the problem. Nobody else did.

GUIDO

Of course I can tell you what my film is about...I can tell you the story, I can tell you who I am going to cast, the music I want to use, I can tell you everything... but... I... won't. I'm afraid that if I say anything, the word might get out to the Press.

General laughter in the room. He wins a round, but is clearly feeling the strain... Dante recognizes, steps in.

DANTE

Our next film will be exactly as it sounds. *Italia*. It's the very spirit of Italy - Italy as myth, Italy as a woman, Italy as a dream.

LEOPARDI

Is this true?

GUIDO

It sounds fantastic. I can't wait to see it.

He's still winning. Ignoring the question, he points to STEPHANIE, a gorgeous fashion reporter he recognizes from American Vogue. Flirtatious and charming, she wants him and he senses it.

STEPHANIE

Signor Contini.

GUIDO

Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

*Grazie*. Could you tell the fashionable women of America who your favorite designer is this year?

GUIDO

I'm less interested in the wrapping than what might be inside it.

REPORTER ONE

Signor Contini! You're a man of the world, yes? Educated in Britain, a home in Biarritz. With *Italia* is it fair to say that you've come home for good?

REPORTER TWO (O.S.)

(tries to interrupt)

What do you think of the New Wave in the French Cinema?

GUIDO

For good?

REPORTER FOUR

It's been a long time since you made a movie with your wife, do you plan on casting her in this new film?

Guido is spinning plates.

GUIDO

I told Luisa that when we got married I would never again make love to my leading lady.

REPORTER FOUR

But she hasn't worked at all since working with you.

Laughter. Everyone starts firing questions at Guido again. Another REPORTER asks a question.

REPORTER FIVE

But why are you being so tight-lipped about this film? It's a serious question. What's the big deal?

FANTASY:

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

We discover Guido, alone on the soundstage of his unfinished set. A retreat into surreality. He sits on the same couch from the hotel suite. He slouches, arms folded, legs crossed, with his hat pulled over his eyes.

GUIDO  
I WOULD LIKE TO BE HERE.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE. DAY

GUIDO  
You want me to be serious? In a Press Conference?

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

GUIDO  
I WOULD LIKE TO BE THERE

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE. DAY

GUIDO  
I thought I was the clown in this circus.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

GUIDO  
I WOULD LIKE TO BE EVERYWHERE AT ONCE  
I KNOW THAT'S A CONTRADICTION IN  
TERMS.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE. DAY

LEOPARDI  
Signor Contini. Artists do their best work before they're famous. Now you're famous. Without wishing to be negative - but your last two films, they're not, they were...

GUIDO  
Flops.

LEOPARDI  
Your word. Flops.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

GUIDO  
AND IT'S A PROBLEM, ESPECIALLY WHEN  
MY BODY'S NEARING FIFTY AS MY MIND IS  
NEARING TEN.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE. DAY

LEOPARDI  
I'm just asking if you're nervous?  
You seem nervous...

This stops Guido. He doesn't answer. We see a bead of sweat running down the back of Guido's neck.

Everyone waits.

GUIDO  
Excuse me?

LEOPARDI  
What I'm asking, Maestro, is have you  
run out of things to say?

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

As the number progresses, Guido gets up from his chair and begins to scale the enormous heights of his unfinished set, with great effort.

GUIDO  
I CAN HARDLY STAY UP  
AND I CAN'T GET TO SLEEP,  
AND I DON'T WANT TO WAKE TOMORROW  
MORNING,  
AT THE BOTTOM OF SOME HEAP  
BUT WHY TAKE IT SO SERIOUSLY?  
AFTER ALL, THERE'S NOTHING AT STAKE  
HERE - ONLY ME  
I WANT TO BE YOUNG.  
AND I WANT TO BE OLD.  
I WOULD LIKE TO BE WISE BEFORE MY TIME  
AND YET BE FOOLISH AND BRASH AND BOLD.  
I WOULD LIKE THE UNIVERSE TO GET DOWN  
ON ITS KNEES AND SAY, "GUIDO,  
WHATEVER YOU PLEASE,  
IT'S OKAY EVEN IF IT'S IMPOSSIBLE,  
WE'LL ARRANGE IT."  
THAT'S ALL THAT I WANT.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - DAY

STEPHANIE

I was wondering if you think there's a limit to what you can show in a movie.

GUIDO

What would you like to see that I haven't already shown you?

She smiles, he smiles back, lighting his cigarette.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

GUIDO

I AM LUSTING FOR MORE,  
SHOULD I SETTLE FOR LESS?  
I ASK YOU, WHAT'S A GOOD THING FOR  
IF NOT FOR TAKING IT TO EXCESS?  
ONE LIMITATION I DEARLY REGRET:  
THERE'S ONLY ONE OF ME I'VE EVER MET.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - DAY

Guido turns to the mantle. He grabs a bottle of whiskey, looks up into the large gilded mirror at his reflection. We see two Guidos.

GUIDO (V.O.)

I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ANOTHER ME TO  
TRAVEL ALONG WITH MYSELF.  
I WOULD EVEN LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SING A  
DUET WITH MYSELF.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

GUIDO

I WOULD LIKE TO BE HERE  
(SING ALONG WITH MYSELF IN A SONG)  
TO BE THERE (WALKING DOWN A LANE NOW),  
EVERYWHERE  
(EVERYWHERE)  
EVERYWHERE, THAT'S A CONTRADICTION IN  
TERMS  
I WANT TO BE HERE  
(WITH A COUNTER-)  
HERE (MELODY IN THE)  
HERE (TOP OF THE MORNING TO YOU GUIDO)  
GUIDO (GUIDO)  
GUIDO (GUIDO)  
GUIDO. ME (ME) ME!  
I WANT TO BE PROUST...

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE/INT. EXCELSIOR HOTEL - DAY

Amidst the chaos, Guido notices a waiter with a tray of glasses entering the suite through a hidden door in the wall. As the waiter passes, Guido slyly opens the door and sneaks out.

GUIDO (V.O.)  
...OR THE MARQUIS DE SADE.  
I WOULD LIKE TO BE CHRIST, MOHAMMED,  
BUDDHA  
BUT NOT HAVE TO BELIEVE IN GOD.  
AND YOU KNOW I MEAN IT WITH ALL OF MY  
HEART -  
IT'S THE END IF SOMETHING IMPORTANT  
DOESN'T START...

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

Guido continues climbing higher and higher.

GUIDO  
...I WANT TO BE YOUNG,  
BUT I HAVE TO BE OLD.  
WHAT I WANT IS A TALE OF SOUND AND  
FURY  
THAT SOME IDIOT WENT AND TOLD.  
I WOULD LIKE THE UNIVERSE TO GET DOWN  
ON ITS KNEES  
AND SAY, "GUIDO, WHATEVER YOU PLEASE,  
IT'S OKAY EVEN IF IT'S RIDICULOUS,  
WE'LL ARRANGE IT..."

INT. EXCELSIOR HOTEL - DAY

Guido slips through the hallway, down the grand lobby staircase, and escapes.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

GUIDO  
SO ARRANGE IT!

As Guido reaches the pinnacle of his Everest-like set, Guido's WOMEN appear on the different levels.

WOMEN  
ARRANGE IT!

GUIDO  
THAT'S ALL THAT I WANT!

EXT. ROME - DAY

Guido speeds away from Rome in his Roadster.

EXT. ROME ROAD - DAY

Guido's car passes by the remnants of an ancient aqueduct, with women from his fantasy draped around him, spilling out of his car.

THE WOMEN sing a musical flourish of praise to Guido.

WOMEN (V.O.)  
CONTINI, CONTINI, CONTINI, CONTINI...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - AFTERNOON

Now Guido and his women are in the countryside.

WOMEN (V.O.)  
CONTINI, CONTINI, CONTINI, CONTINI...

The car races over a hill, blurring the countryside, and we see the blue Mediterranean sea, and the pretty spa town of ANZIO.

EXT. HOTEL BELLAVISTA - DAY

WOMEN (V.O.)  
GUIDO!

The Alfa Spyder comes to a screeching stop in front of the gates of the entrance of an impressive looking Spa: GRAND HOTEL BELLAVISTA. The hotel has a slightly faded glamour, something that lifts it a little out of time. Guido's women are gone as the song ends.

SUPERTITLE: Bellavista Spa Hotel, Anzio, Italy

INT. LOBBY, HOTEL BELLAVISTA - DAY

Guido enters like a thief. He doesn't want to be recognised. He approaches the Front Desk, where an immaculate Desk Clerk, the urbane and wise DE ROSSI, waits to greet him.

GUIDO  
I need a room.

DE ROSSI  
Of course.

GUIDO

A suite.

DE ROSSI

Yes.

GUIDO

With a view of the sea. A balcony.  
Something with air.

DE ROSSI

All of our suites have air... let me  
just look for you.

GUIDO

I've come from Milano.

DE ROSSI

I understand.

GUIDO

On business. I'm a businessman. Busy  
busy busy.

DE ROSSI

(without looking up)

Would Maestro Contini prefer to  
register under a pseudonym?

GUIDO

(doleful)

Please.

DE ROSSI

(suggesting a name)

Signor Milano?

GUIDO

Why not.

DE ROSSI

(continuing to work)

Needless to say, I love your films.  
Guilty pleasure. Those early films.

GUIDO

Not the flops.

(anxious, confidential)

I need to see a doctor. Do you know  
one who's discreet...? I'd like to  
see him today, in my room, now, if  
possible.

DE ROSSI

Consider it done. Please.

GUIDO  
(takes the key)  
And I need to place a call. To my  
wife.

Guido writes the number on a piece of paper on the  
desk.

DE ROSSI  
You can take the call at the lobby  
phone over there.

INT. TELEPHONE KIOSK, HOTEL BELLAVISTA - DAY

Guido heads into the elegant Art Deco booth, pulls the  
glass door shut. The phone rings. He picks up.

INT. CONTINI HOME, ROME / TELEPHONE BOOTH - DAY

We intercut between the phone booth and LUISA in their  
apartment in Rome... Luisa knows every move of  
Guido's. She manages him very well, calm, dry and  
funny.

GUIDO  
Luisa, *tesoro*...

LUISA  
There you are.

GUIDO  
Is everybody mad at me?

LUISA  
Well, I'm mad at you. Where are you?

GUIDO  
I had to escape from the Press  
Conference.

LUISA  
I heard. Dramatic.

GUIDO  
Don't tease me. I'm sick, Luisa.

LUISA  
You're making a film. You make a  
film, you get sick. It's what happens.

GUIDO  
No, but this time I'm really sick. I  
can't breathe.

LUISA  
Are you by yourself?

GUIDO  
Yes, of course I'm by myself.

LUISA  
Then shall I come?

GUIDO  
Yes, please come, that's why I'm  
calling, please come straight away.  
That would be wonderful.

LUISA  
Okay.

GUIDO  
Great. Marvellous.

LUISA  
I don't know where you are.

GUIDO  
I don't know, some spa. Horrible. I  
just kept driving.

LUISA  
Well I can't come if I don't know  
where you are.

GUIDO  
(suddenly claustrophobic)  
And, actually, it's hardly worth it.  
I'll be home in a day or two.

LUISA  
(all too familiar )  
Yes, it's hardly worth it.

GUIDO  
But I do wish you were here.

LUISA  
Get some rest, take the waters, sleep,  
then come back here and make a good  
movie.

GUIDO  
I love you.

LUISA  
Get better.

INT. LOBBY, HOTEL BELLAVISTA - DAY

He hangs up, pensive. Goes straight back to De Rossi at the Front Desk, and scribbles down another number.

DE ROSSI  
Your doctor is on his way.

GUIDO  
(carefully)  
This number - if a woman answers you  
put it through to my room,  
otherwise...

De Rossi understands.

DE ROSSI  
It's a wrong number.

INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - DAY

...CLOSE-UP on Guido's eye, being held open by a DOCTOR. Guido is on the bed, shirt open. The Doctor examines Guido's eye while a heavy-set NURSE takes his blood pressure. The Doctor stands and turns to his case.

GUIDO  
What?

NURSE  
*Dottore.*

DOCTOR RONDI  
*Si?*

He walks round to her. The Nurse whispers to the Doctor. They look at the blood pressure gauge. Guido is disturbed by their conspiracy.

GUIDO  
What is she whispering? Is it my  
blood pressure? Is it serious? Am I  
dying?

DOCTOR  
(to the Nurse, not  
answering Guido)  
Check again.

The doctor, interrupting him, takes a tongue depressor from his kit.

The doctor, sits on the bed beside Guido, and takes his cigarette out of his mouth. He stubs it out.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
Stress. Exhaustion.

THE PHONE RINGS. The doctor is in the way of the phone. Guido desperately makes an attempt to reach it and can't. He's trapped by the doctor and by the nurse holding his arm.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
Your liver, your heart, your kidneys,  
they're all very cross with you,  
Signore.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"/INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - DAY

WE CUT TO A PAIR OF FULL BEAUTIFUL LIPS SINGING HIS NAME.

CARLA  
GUIDO...

DOCTOR  
Open wide.

Guido opens wide, gagging, as the phone continues ringing. Guido looks at the ringing phone, but the nurse has his arm in her grip as she takes his blood pressure for the second time. And the phone continues ringing.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
But you've come to the right place.  
There are a dozen mineral springs  
around the town...

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"/INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - DAY

NOW WE CUT TO A SUGGESTIVE LOOK FROM A HEAVILY MADE UP EYE.

CARLA  
GUIDO...

DOCTOR  
...the Roman emperors came here for  
the waters...

Guido lunges for the ringing phone, with the blood pressure cuff still on his arm, and picks it up. It is CARLA, at the perfect wrong time.

GUIDO  
(into the phone)  
*Pronto.*

DE ROSSI (V.O.)  
Signor Contini, it's the Signora.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"/INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - DAY

WE SEE ISOLATED IMAGES OF A SEDUCTIVE BODY: A LONG LEG  
IN SHEER BLACK STOCKINGS, A SHAPELY ASS, MAGNIFICENT  
BREASTS.

CARLA  
I WAS LAZING AROUND MY BEDROOM WHEN  
YOU CALLED AND AN IDEA OCCURRED TO ME  
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE WONDERING  
ABOUT, GUIDO...

GUIDO  
(coming back quickly to  
life)  
It's a very an important call, Doctor.  
I'm sorry, I have to take it. Private  
call.

DOCTOR  
As you wish.

FANTASY:

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

An enormous swathe of pink satin rakes across the  
scaffolding of Guido's unfinished set. Emerging from  
the highest point is a pair of long legs sliding down  
the lush fabric. She wears stockings, heels and little  
else. Bathed in hot light, Carla reveals herself from  
inside the sumptuous folds of satin.

CARLA  
WHO'S NOT WEARING ANY CLOTHES?  
I'M NOT!  
MY DARLING,  
WHO'S AFRAID TO KISS YOUR TOES?  
I'M NOT!  
YOUR MAMA DEAR IS BLOWING INTO YOUR  
EAR,  
SO YOU'LL GET IT LOUD AND CLEAR,  
I NEED YOU TO SQUEEZE ME HERE...  
AND HERE...  
AND HERE...

INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - DAY

The Nurse, still taking his blood pressure and  
listening to his pulse, is concerned about Guido's  
vital signs.

NURSE  
Doctor... His pulse... it's racing.

DOCTOR  
(to Guido)  
Is something wrong?

GUIDO  
What? Yes, yes. It's about my film.  
It's from the Vatican. Go ahead,  
Monsignore! Yes, yes, of course, I'm  
listening.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

Carla slides from the lush fabric onto a mirrored platform. As she sings, she writhes and undulates in a seductive display of sexuality. This is Guido's ultimate fantasy.

CARLA  
COOTCHIE, COOTCHIE, COOTCHIE COO.  
I'VE GOT  
A PLAN FOR WHAT I'M GONNA DO TO YOU,  
SO HOT  
YOU'RE GONNA STEAM, AND SCREAM, AND  
VIBRATE LIKE A STRING I'M PLUCKING-  
KISS YOUR FEVERED LITTLE BROW  
PINCH YOUR CHEEKS TILL YOU SAY "OW,"  
AND I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO SHOW YOU HOW,  
GUIDO.

INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - DAY

Guido trying to hide the effects of this phone sex from the Doctor and Nurse.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

Carla grabs onto two satin-covered ropes, suspended from the ceiling. She wraps herself in them, swinging and gyrating.

CARLA  
WHO WON'T CARE IF YOU COME TO ME TIRED  
AND OVERWORKED?  
I WON'T! BAMBINO,  
WHO KNOWS A THERAPY TO BEAT WHAT YOU  
CAN GET FROM ME?  
I DON'T!  
BUT THIS WILL HAVE TO BE ENOUGH FOR  
NOW,  
GUIDO,  
CIAO.

(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)

(spoken)

I love you, Guido.

Carla disappears in a cloud of hot steam that becomes the steam from an arriving train.

EXT. ANZIO, TRAIN STATION - DAY

And out of the steam... CARLA comes walking toward Guido, swinging her hips, with a PORTER behind her, pulling five bags on a wagon. Carla is dressed in her own style, which is not chic, but it's what Guido likes, a little too tight, a little flamboyant. She wears it with pride.

CARLA

Guido! Ciao!

GUIDO

(to himself, remembering  
how much work she is)

Carla.

(and now to her, covering  
his ambivalence)

Carla!

CARLA

I'm so happy to see you.

GUIDO

Carlissima.

She gives him a hug and a kiss, both too much for him in public.

CARLA

I missed you so much.

(they move off)

Are you happy I'm here?

GUIDO

Of course.

CARLA

But very happy? Or just a little happy?

GUIDO

Very happy.

She sees something in his face that worries her.

CARLA

What's wrong? You look very tired,  
very tired.

GUIDO  
(avoiding this, looks at  
her bags)  
Carla, all those bags for the weekend?

CARLA  
Yes, the Bellavista is a very  
fashionable place. You know I stayed  
there with my parents, during the war,  
it was full of Germans.

GUIDO  
Carla... I have to tell you... they  
found out who I am at the hotel--

CARLA  
No...

GUIDO  
... yes, horrible, but obviously we  
don't want to be followed by the  
press, so I found the most charming  
pensione for you, and it's right here.  
It's charming.

CARLA  
Here at the station?

EXT. PENSIONE FERROVIA - DAY

A small pensione across the street from the station.  
Carla sizes it up, and it's really not at all what she  
was hoping for, but she doesn't say anything.

INT. PENSIONE BEDROOM - DAY

Later, Carla, in silhouette, from behind. Wrapped in a  
sheet, she is looking out the window of the dingy room.  
The light from the pensione's neon sign spills in. They  
whisper.

GUIDO (O.S.)  
Close the curtains, it's too light in  
here.

Carla closes the curtains. They continue to whisper.

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
Perfect. Now, go into the corridor---

CARLA  
What?

GUIDO

Shhh! Yes, count to ten and come back in, and pretend you're in the wrong room, and I'm a complete stranger--

Carla sits on the bed facing Guido.

CARLA

I love your games!

She kisses him.

GUIDO

I'm here on business.

CARLA

Okay.

GUIDO

Go, go. Wait. Your face.

CARLA

What about it?

GUIDO

Get your makeup.

Guido switches on the light, puts on his glasses, and tilts the lamp shade up. He begins to pencil in a beauty mark and darken her eyes. He is meticulous about this, and precise, and takes his time to make it exactly as he wants it.

CARLA

I had a nightmare last night. We were in that little alley behind Piazza Navona, where I bought you that scarf, remember? The same one your wife bought you--

GUIDO

(probably doesn't)  
Don't move, Carla.

CARLA

When you wear it, I never know if it's hers or mine.

GUIDO

(not really listening)  
Uh-huh.

CARLA

So we were there, on the ground, naked, kissing, and we didn't care, and then my husband arrived and killed us both with a shovel! Poor Luigi!

(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)

He would never do that! He's so sweet.  
He speaks Latin! He knows all the  
Roman Emperors.

GUIDO

(still intent on his  
makeup job)  
Good for him.

CARLA

Perhaps there's a job for him in the  
movie--

GUIDO

Why not?

CARLA

You could work well together.

GUIDO

Beautiful. When you come in I want  
you to be my little savage.

CARLA

Yes.

GUIDO

(gesturing towards the  
door)  
Go, go.

Guido takes off his glasses and puts them on the side  
table..

CARLA

You think I am one of your actresses?

GUIDO

Hurry, please, Carla.

Carla gets up and takes Guido's glasses with her. Guido  
turns out the light and settles into his pillow, for  
the game. Carla looks at herself in the mirror.

CARLA

Oh, Madonna!

GUIDO

I'll pretend to be asleep.

Carla turns back to the mirror, she puts on Guido's  
glasses and turns back to him.

CARLA

What if I really found the wrong room?  
Would you be jealous?

GUIDO  
Could you do such a thing?

Carla teases him with a look that says, "Why not?"

CARLA  
(coyly)  
Hm! Who knows?

Carla goes into the hall and closes the door behind her. We HEAR the MATRON who runs the Pensione talking to her. While they talk, Guido removes a crucifix from the wall and puts it in the bedside drawer.

Now Carla comes back into the room, giggling, signaling for Guido to keep quiet.

GUIDO  
What happened?

CARLA  
(still giggling)  
It was the woman from the hotel. She wanted to give me towels.

GUIDO  
Come here.

CARLA  
Okay.

GUIDO  
What?

CARLA  
You are a stranger, I don't know you.

GUIDO  
Carla, just come here.  
(indicating her sheet)  
Be savage. Show me.

She crosses the room and climbs onto the bed and opens the sheet slowly, spreading her arms wide.

CARLA  
Excuse me! I've got the wrong room.

GUIDO  
Yes, you have. And I don't have the faintest idea who you are.

She throws herself on Guido, whose arms enfold her.

INT. PENSIONE BEDROOM - LATER

Carla is asleep, her bare back a thing of post-coital beauty. Guido sits on the edge of the bed, quietly getting dressed, filled with confusion and guilt.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE PENSIONE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Guido tip-toes out of Carla's room, shoes in his hand. He walks down the hallway, alone.

GUIDO (V.O.)

Page one, page one, page one...  
The figure emerges from the darkness  
like a goddess. She is Claudia, his  
muse...

INT. HOTEL, GUIDO'S SUITE - DAY

IMAGES OF CLAUDIA in his fantasy. Kissing him.  
Walking away...

GUIDO (V.O.)

She takes the man's face and kisses  
him...

Guido is surrounded by discarded bits of paper, an outline of *Italia*. An empty sheet of paper sits in his typewriter on his desk. He is not working on the outline. He is sketching a voluptuous woman...

GUIDO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...And with that gesture, he's  
suddenly inspired to write  
something... profound.

...he draws in the nipples on the woman's breasts.

Guido becomes discouraged. He tosses off his glasses and runs his hands through his hair in frustration.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

Mother of God, give me a sign.

He's happily distracted by the sound of vehicles arriving outside his window. He opens a slat in the shutters, looks down as a motor calvacade draws up. At its heart is an impressive luxury car.

EXT. HOTEL BELLAVISTA, POV FROM BALCONY - DAY

Hotel staff swarm around the vehicles which discharge a procession of religious, including an ANCIENT CARDINAL in scarlet robes and the CARDINAL'S SECRETARY. Priests follow as the Cardinal heads inside the hotel.

Guido is intrigued, hurries out of his hotel room.

INT. HOTEL BELLAVISTA LOBBY - DAY

As Guido hurries down the stairs, the Cardinal is being helped into the elevator. The CARDINAL'S SECRETARY is dealing with check-in formalities with De Rossi. Guido calls to him.

GUIDO  
Excuse me, father...

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
(turns)  
*Buongiorno.*

GUIDO  
His Excellency, the Cardinal, is he -?

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
(recognising Guido)  
Signor Contini!  
(starstruck)  
I am a big fan.

GUIDO  
I would very much like to speak to the Cardinal. Do you think he might grant me -

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
Is Claudia Jenssen with you?

GUIDO  
No.

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
Pity. His excellency is a big admirer of Signorina Jenssen.

GUIDO  
(explaining)  
I'm in need of some guidance, some pointers...

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
Do you think you could find a signed photograph of Signorina Jenssen?

GUIDO  
For His Excellency?

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
*Si.*

GUIDO  
I'm sure that would be possible...

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
Truly? What a pleasure. *Arrivederci,*  
Maestro.

He heads towards the elevator. Guido watches him go, then a voice calls out his name....GUIDO! Guido can't turn round. He knows that voice.

DANTE  
Guidino!

Guido hurries towards the elevator. The elevator doors close. Guido is trapped.

GUIDO  
I'm not going to ask how you found me.

DANTE  
Please - it's my job. A producer needs to know where his director is at all times...even to know the pensione where his mistress is staying...

GUIDO  
Oh God.

DANTE  
I understand, Guido. Rome is absolutely unbearable. The pressure. It's no good.

GUIDO  
Really? You understand?

He takes Guido by the arm and leads him to a stairwell.

INT. HOTEL BELLAVISTA - STAIRCASE - DAY

DANTE  
Of course I understand. Absolutely.

GUIDO  
You're not going to drag me back?

DANTE  
No. You're a genius and genius must be served.

GUIDO  
Thank you, my old friend.  
(Dante is guiding him)  
Where are we going?

DANTE  
You can't be in Rome. Okay.  
(heading towards the  
ballroom)

INT. GRAND BALLROOM, HOTEL BELLAVISTA - DAY

DANTE  
Rome will come to you!

Dante opens the door of the Ballroom to reveal a full PRODUCTION OFFICE, ART DEPARTMENT, COSTUME DEPARTMENT, CASTING OFFICE. The models, costumes, headshots, everything all in place or being put into place. An absolute beehive of activity. Guido is staggered.

DANTE (CONT'D)  
It's a fantastic place for you to focus. Everyone is here to help the movie. Everyone is here because they love you, Guido.

He stands watching Guido with genuine admiration as he sets to work with his team. Guido moves through the room avoiding specific questions from everyone. As he does so, Dante makes his way over to Guido with a magnificent girl on his arm.

JACONELLI  
(explaining his designs)  
Yes, with the flower and the glass and the arches of the Roman Empire...

DANTE  
Guido...you remember Donatella.

DONATELLA  
Ciao.

GUIDO  
(he doesn't, she's new)  
Ciao.

DANTE  
Donatella, you tested her.

DONATELLA  
I was very nervous. He probably doesn't remember. I was quite nervous.

GUIDO  
(distracted, taking it all  
in)  
No, I remember you. You were, we all  
enjoyed you, so to speak.

PIERPAOLO  
Maestro...

Pierpaolo, Guido's assistant, holds a telephone. Guido  
wants to know who it is.

PIERPAOLO (CONT'D)  
Claudia's agent...

Guido grimaces. Then takes the phone. He attacks the  
phone call with gusto.

GUIDO  
(listens to a stream of  
invective)  
Did she like the script?  
(gestures for Pierpaolo to  
light him a cigarette)  
No no no no - *impossibile* - are you  
telling me she didn't get the script?  
(shouting at Pierpaolo)  
Pierpaolo!

He takes the cigarette with a smile, and then without  
missing a beat starts barking at Pierpaolo.

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
Claudia didn't get the script! Send  
her another one. For Chrissake. Send  
her two!

PIERPAOLO  
(playing along)  
Yes, I'm sorry. Right now.

GUIDO  
*Cretino!*  
(back to Lombardo,  
listens)  
Yes, yes, that's what I say, people  
just don't realise - she's an actress  
as well as a star - I know Dante's  
dying to talk to you. A *dolpo*. Ciao.

He hands the phone to Dante, who's delighted to see  
Guido back on good directing mode.

DANTE  
Lombardo...

As Dante takes over, Guido walks away, heads towards Lilli and her domain.

INT. LILLI'S TEMPORARY OFFICE, BALLROOM - DAY

GUIDO

Yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap!

Guido leaps over the balcony and lies down on a table. Performance mode off. Lilli nods to Roberta to leave. Roberta puts down her work and clears the room quietly, leaving them alone.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

What are we doing here?

LILLI

I'm happy. I brought my swimsuit.

Lilli is working at a mannequin, hand-sewing some sequins on a costume. A red feathered boa is draped on the figure.

LILLI (CONT'D)

It was Luisa's birthday yesterday.

GUIDO

What? No. Oh please God. No. I spoke with her yesterday. She didn't even mention it. Give me a cigarette.

Lilli points to the one in Guido's hand.

LILLI

What's that?

Guido sees the costume.

GUIDO

What's that?

LILLI

It's for Claudia.

GUIDO

For which scene?

LILLI

Well I don't know which scene until I've seen the script, but she always likes something like this, or you do.

GUIDO

Looks like the Folies Bergere. It's wrong. Italian women don't wear those things.

LILLI

Don't knock the Folies Bergere...

Lilli tosses the boa over her shoulder as she continues pinning the costume.

LILLI (CONT'D)

...it brings back happy memories.  
That's where I learned my art. All  
those sequins, all those feathers.

(Still working)

And, you're wrong, you put Claudia  
in one of these for that nightclub  
scene in *Natura Morta*.

GUIDO

Why did people love that film?

Guido picks up a straw hat. Puts it on his head playfully.

LILLI

Oh Guido, don't. That's death. Every  
time we have to start again.

GUIDO

I'm trying to find it.

LILLI

You won't find it with your head  
jammed halfway up your ass.

GUIDO

Ashtray.

She produces one.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

Thanks. You were saying - my head is  
jammed up my ass.

LILLI

Halfway. I don't know. Why not dream  
up something entertaining, Guido?  
Something with music...with dancing...  
God knows, we could use a little *joie  
de vivre* around here...

Guido looks into the faded ballroom mirror behind her and sees...

FANTASY:

INT."SOUNDSTAGE"

...Lilli, draped atop an upright piano, the red feathered boa hangs from her shoulders. She places the same straw hat on her head.

The soundstage has been transformed into an impressionistic version of the Folies Bergere of the 1930's, with Lilli as its French Star. A spotlight finds Guido watching from the scaffolding of his unfinished set. The din of the theater audience fills the smoky atmosphere.

LILLI  
(singing and performing in  
a french accent)  
LE CINEMA TODAY IS IN A CRISIS  
DIRECTORS ARE SO EXISTENTIALISTES.  
THE MOVIES ARE  
NOT WORTH THEIR ENTRANCE PRICES  
IF NO ONE SINGS A LOVE SONG  
WHEN HE'S KISSED.  
LOVE CANNOT BE LOVE WITHOUT "LE  
SINGING,"  
A STRING, A CLARINET, A SAXOPHONE TAKE  
A LESSON FROM THIS OLD PARISIENNE  
AND THE FINEST ENTERTAINMENT SHE HAS  
KNOWN.

Behind a black scrim, ghostly images come to life. Apparitions that reveal themselves as exotic SHOWGIRLS barely covered in beads, sequins, and feathers. They descend the grand staircase.

LILLI (CONT'D)  
FOLIES BERGERE-  
WHAT A SHOWING OF COLOR, COSTUME, AND  
DANCING!  
NOT A MOMENT IN LIFE COULD BE MORE  
ENTRANCING  
THAN AN EVENING YOU SPEND  
AUX FOLIES BERGERE.  
FOLIES BERGERE,  
NOT A SOUL IN THE WORLD COULD BE IN  
DESPAIR  
WHEN HE IS GLANCING  
AT THE FABULOUS STAGE  
DES FOLIES BERGERE

The showgirls disappear. Lilli comes down from the piano and crosses onto the stage. The scrim rises. From every corner, more showgirls begin to enter.

LILLY	SHOWGIRLS
FOLIES BERGERE-	OOH LA LA
LA MUSIQUE, LA DANSE, LE	
SON, LA LUMIERE!	OOH LA LA
LES PETITS JOLIES SEINS DES	
BELLES BOUQUETIERES	OOH LA LA
SUR LA BELLE PASSARELLE DES	
FOLIES BERGERE,	OOH LA LA
PAS DE MYSTERE-	
LE SPECTACLE EST TOUT A	OOH LA LA
FAIT DECOUVERT.	
"ET PAS TROP CHER"	
VIENS CE SOIR AVEC MOI	
AUX FOLIES BERGERE.	

Lilli crosses onto the passerelle, and speaks directly to the audience.

LILLI (CONT'D)  
*Ah, Bon soir, bon soir, bon soir. Je suis la vedette des Folies Bergere. Vedette, it means 'star.'*

Lilli singles out guests at the lip of the stage:

LILLI (CONT'D)  
 Let me tell you. Last night I looked down at this table in the chairs you are sitting in now, and what did I see? A priest! And next to him?

Suddenly, she sees Young Guido in the audience.

LILLI (CONT'D)  
*Ahh, mon Dieu! Guido? Guido Contini? What are you doing here at the Folies Bergere? You naughty boy! You're only nine years old! But I'm glad you've come. Would you like to join me on stage? Yes. Come. Come, come, come.*

And she brings him onto the stage. The audience applauds. She addresses him as though he is Older Guido.

LILLI (CONT'D)  
 Feeling better? There's no room for hopelessness in here, is there, Guido?  
 (to the audience)  
 We must explain something to our young Guido. What do we want? Laughter! What do we want? Love! What do we want? Dreams! Let us not forget, Guido, *mon cher* -- That's our privilege - to entertain.

The number kicks into full gear with a rousing can-can. Young Guido finds himself swept into Lilli's intoxicating world.

LILLI AND SHOWGIRLS  
FOLIES BERGERE  
THE MUSIC, THE LIGHTS, AND THE  
LAUGHTER,  
THE ANSWER TO WHAT YOU ARE AFTER  
EACH NIGHT AT THE FOLIES BERGERE.  
FOLIES BERGERE

LILLI  
BY THE HEAVENS ABOVE, YOU WILL SWEAR  
THERE'S NOTHING RARER!

LILLI AND SHOWGIRLS  
THAN THE FOLIES BERGERE

Lilli crosses the proscenium. Her boa grows and grows until it stretches the length of the stage.

LILLI AND SHOWGIRLS  
(CONT'D)  
FOLIES BERGERE  
THE STAGE OVERFLOWING, AND GIVING A  
MUSICAL REASON FOR LIVING EACH NIGHT  
AT THE FOLIES BERGERE.  
FOLIES BERGERE...

LILLI  
TO YOUR MODERN IDEAS I COMPARE ONE  
DERRIERE!

LILLI AND SHOWGIRLS  
AT THE FOLIES BERGERE!

Lilli wraps her long boa around Young Guido. He and Lilli are lifted onto an art deco swing, flanked by two showgirls, that rises into the air. He is transported and inspired.

LILLI AND SHOWGIRLS  
(CONT'D)  
THE ANSWER TO WHAT YOU ARE AFTER,  
THE MUSIC, THE LIGHTS, AND THE  
LAUGHTER  
OF THE FOLIES BERGERE!

INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - NIGHT

We seem to be looking at the SET ON STAGE 5. But suddenly a HUGE HEAD dips into the shot and it's Guido contemplating a model of the set. He places a figure on the top of the staircase.

He moves round to the front of the model and places another figure on the top of the scaffold tower. He knocks it over.

Unconvinced, he sits down on the sofa. The coffee table is covered in head-shots. He finds the one of Claudia. Guido looks at it.

He lies back to write and finds himself in CLAUDIA'S LAP. She hands him a lipstick, smiles and strokes his hair. He starts to sign - "TO HIS EXCELLENCY.... " then paints his lips and kisses the photo himself. Claudia laughs.

INT. ANCIENT BATHS - DAY

Grottos and tunnels are thick with steam. Guido follows the Cardinal's Secretary.

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
The Cardinal is right this way.

The Cardinal's Secretary leads Guido to a private area, where the Cardinal is already soaking in a large tub of hot water.

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
(CONT'D)  
Your Eminence, Signor Contini is here.

The Cardinal's Secretary makes a gesture to Guido to get into the tub with the Cardinal. Guido gets in the water. The Cardinal looks hard at Guido and then makes his first pronouncement.

CARDINAL  
I like Charlie Chaplin.

GUIDO  
Me too.

CARDINAL  
A genius. What can I do for you?

GUIDO  
Do you believe in God?

The Cardinal's Secretary is shocked.

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
Signor Contini, please.

CARDINAL  
No, no, it's an honest question. Yes, I believe in God.

GUIDO

So do I.

CARDINAL

Are you a Catholic?

GUIDO

Oh yes, very much so. Not as much as I would like to be, not as much as you would like me to be, I'm sure, but certainly yes, I'm trying.

CARDINAL

Try harder.

GUIDO

Yes, yes. I will, I will. Your Eminence, I am not happy. I'm searching for something. I feel a sense of misery, of despair and --

CARDINAL

(interrupting)

I saw your films. Not the flops, the others, the good ones. But you think people need to see so much sex? It's not necessary. We can all imagine.

GUIDO

(laughing)

Excuse me - my films are what I imagine.

CARDINAL

Then your imagination has no moral training.

GUIDO

(nonplussed)

How do you train the imagination?

CARDINAL

The imagination is God's garden; don't let the Devil play in it. Teach our Italian women to be wives, not whores, don't make us look at filth and debauchery. Make us proud to be Italian...

Guido's head disappears under the water. The sound of the Cardinal's voice trails away...

MEMORY:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

SUPERTITLE: Pesaro, Italy, 1926

Young Guido, dressed in his school uniform, runs fast across the rough dunes with five boys from the village.

The boys head for a graffiti-covered defensive wall with barbed wire along the top, a leftover from the war.

They reach into pockets and extract small change, hand it to Young Guido, already the ring leader.

They crawl through a small opening in the wall and approach an abandoned bunker...

EXT. SARAGHINA'S BUNKER - DAY

...Young Guido takes a step forward toward the bunker, as the other boys fearfully take a step back.

                          YOUNG GUIDO  
                          (not loud enough)  
                          Saraghina.  
                          (louder)  
                          Saraghina.

Now all the boys join in.

                          BOYS  
                          Saraghina! Saraghina!

                          YOUNG GUIDO  
                          (loudest)  
                          Saraghina! Sa-ra-ghina!

A shadow moves inside the bunker. Now even Young Guido takes a step back, but the boys are taking three steps back.

And then she comes out. SARAGHINA is a gritty, earthy woman, with a powerful, voluptuous energy. She has darkened eyes and a beauty mark: she is clearly the model for the whore makeup on Carla.

She looks at the boys. She may be a crazy whore, but she's not an animal, she's just playing one for the boys, and they don't quite understand that she's having her own fun with them.

She takes a deliberate step. Young Guido stands his ground. She takes another step and holds out her hand.

Young Guido opens his hand with the coins.

She looks at the money. Is it enough?

But she grabs his wrist, and holds it, and then takes the coins.

She stuffs the money in her ample bosom and heads back to her bunker. She returns dragging an old broken chair, places it in front of the boys and sits, ready for the "show."

Saraghina scoops up the soft white sand in her hands and pours it over her body...

A dark vamp begins.

FANTASY:

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

Curtains of falling sand fill the soundstage.

Through the sand, we see Saraghina seated on the same chair from the beach. She speaks, surrounded by other WHORES in provocative positions on beaten-up chairs.

SARAGHINA

So, you little Italian devils, you want to know about love? Saraghina will tell you...and if you want to make a woman happy, you rely on what you were born with. Because it is in your blood.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

With a smile, she pulls her dress off her shoulders.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

SARAGHINA

(sings)

BE ITALIAN, BE ITALIAN.  
TAKE A CHANCE, AND TRY TO  
STEAL A FIERY KISS.  
BE ITALIAN, BE ITALIAN.  
WHEN YOU HOLD ME, DON'T JUST HOLD ME  
BUT HOLD THIS!

She grabs her breasts.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

She undulates her body. The boys watch and cheer.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

SARAGHINA  
PLEASE BE GENTLE, SENTIMENTAL,  
GO AHEAD AND TRY TO GIVE MY CHEEK A  
PAT,  
BUT BE DARING AND UNCARING.  
WHEN YOU PINCH ME, TRY TO PINCH ME  
WHERE THERE'S FAT.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Saraghina gets up on the chair, lifts her skirt, and begins to move her hips.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

SARAGHINA	WHORES
BE A SINGER, BE A LOVER	BE A SINGER, BE A LOVER,
PICK THE FLOWER NOW BEFORE	BEFORE IT'S PAST, BE
THE CHANCE IS PAST, BE	ITALIAN, BE ITALIAN.
ITALIAN BE ITALIAN	
LIVE TODAY AS IF IT MAY	
BECOME YOUR LAST!	

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Saraghina drops to the ground and playfully writhes in the sand. The boys are transfixed.

She gets up and heads towards the water. The boys follow, running.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

Saraghina and The Whores brandish tambourines. They begin a slow, rhythmic and sensual dance that builds into a wild and raucous tarantella.

We furiously intercut between the musical fantasy and the memory of the boys romping on the beach with Saraghina, across the sand and through the water.

SARAGHINA	WHORES
BE A SINGER, BE A LOVER,	BE A SINGER, BE A LOVER,
PICK THE FLOWER NOW BEFORE	BEFORE IT'S PAST.
THE CHANCE IS PAST.	

SARAGHINA  
BE ITALIAN, BE ITALIAN,  
LIVE TODAY AS IF IT MAY  
BECOME YOUR LAST!

WHORES  
BE ITALIAN, BE ITALIAN.

The whores dance.

The number ends.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Two PRIESTS are running down the beach, cassocks flapping.

The boys run. Young Guido tries to run away from the priests. They catch him and carry him away from the beach.

INT. ST. SEBASTIAN CHAPEL - DAY

Off-screen, a boys choir sings KYRIE.

The priests drag Young Guido through the school's chapel, past a tortured Christ hanging above the ornate altar, into the Principal's office.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Guido's mother is there with the PRINCIPAL (again, she appears the way he remembers her).

MAMMA  
I am ashamed of you, Guido.

YOUNG GUIDO  
But Mamma, what did I do.

PRINCIPAL  
Bring him here. That savage is the devil. God will punish you for your sins, now and forever.

The Principal produces a cane and starts to whip the boy remorselessly. Mamma looks away. Young Guido cries out as they punish him...

INT. PENSIONE BEDROOM - DAY

...and the cry is now in Guido's mouth, on top of Carla in the spasm of sex... He suddenly can't breathe... Carla is suddenly aware that he's not in ecstasy... He rolls over, recovers slowly. As always, immediately wanting to leave after the sex.

CARLA

What? What?

GUIDO

I can't breathe, I can't breathe.

CARLA

Guido, don't die on me! Can you imagine... poor Luigi! It would kill him.

GUIDO

(finding her ridiculous)

If I die it would kill your husband?

Guido shrugs the sheet off and sits up slowly. Carla kneels up and hugs him, kissing his back.

CARLA

No, that's not what I meant, Guidino. No. Where are you going?

GUIDO

I have to go to work. Carla, I can't breathe.

Guido stands up and picks up his shirt. He puts it on whilst they argue.

CARLA

Let me come with you.

GUIDO

It's impossible.

CARLA

Why?

GUIDO

Because it's impossible. Please.

CARLA

But why is it impossible? Look at your producer! He's married, he brings his girlfriend to work and nobody cares. Guido. Everybody knows about me. Why? Why won't you let me near you?

GUIDO

For the very same reason you don't want me to die on top of you. It's not fair to your husband. It's not fair to my wife.

CARLA

See, you're playing with me. You're twisting everything... Please let me come with you.

GUIDO

No.

Guido heads towards the door, still dressing.

CARLA

I'll be here waiting for you with my legs open.

Disgusted with himself, he leaves.

INT. TERRACE RESTAURANT, HOTEL BELLAVISTA - NIGHT

Glittering lights on the terrace. A view of the sea. A pop band and a dance floor. A slick Italian MALE SINGER performs QUANDO QUANDO QUANDO. People dance. The whole PRODUCTION TEAM is at a working dinner. Guido is at the end of the table, spilling ideas, struggling, struggling to make sense of *Italia* -

GUIDO

Let's say there were ten sequences, each one set in a different period, but played by the same cast, a man and a woman, a woman and a man...

(pours himself a glass of wine)

Something light and hectic - like Mozart would do it, like Figaro.

(to Lilli)

Like the circus...

DANTE

Claudia is going to be amazing.

BENITO

It sounds like a masterpiece.

FAUSTO

(hissing at Dante)

Dante, you see, he hasn't written a word...

DANTE

(defending his director)

The screenplay is first of all a map. That's a map.

GUIDO

Let's try to dig for something else.  
Maybe a group of people digging, with  
shovels, in the desert.

LILLI

Guido.

She nudges him. He looks across the restaurant to see  
his wife at the entrance looking for him...

GUIDO

Luisa!

He jumps up from the table and hurries towards the  
dance floor, genuinely happy.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR:

- as Guido is protective of Luisa... holding her back  
from the dinner table.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

I can't believe you came.

LUISA

The jungle drums said it was an  
emergency.

GUIDO

The jungle drums exaggerated just a  
tiny bit.

LUISA

Not entirely.

(with concern)

You haven't been sleeping.

GUIDO

I was dying, until just now. Come.

He pulls her into the middle of the dance floor. They  
start to dance.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

And don't think I forgot your  
birthday. When you get home, the house  
will be full of flowers...

LUISA

Am I already going home?

GUIDO

I hope not. Happy Birthday, my  
darling.

They move together, enjoying each other. She kisses him.

They walk towards the table.

AT THE TABLE:

DANTE  
(Seeing Luisa)  
Here she is. At last. Magnificent.  
You know Donatella?

LUISA  
I do now.

She leans across to kiss Lilli.

He sits Luisa down, goes to grab a bottle of champagne.

LUISA (CONT'D)  
(to Lilli)  
Thank you for calling.

LILLI  
(confidentially)  
You're saving the movie. Give him a  
good idea, for God's sake.

Luisa says hello to the rest of the gang, there are kisses, etc. as Guido returns and pops open the bottle of champagne.

GUIDO  
Let's drink a toast to Luisa's  
birthday.

LUISA  
(negating it)  
It was Monday.

DANTE  
Happy Birthday!

LUISA  
(not quite able to forgive  
him)  
Thank you.

GUIDO  
Happy Birthday.

Just then, the Cardinal's Secretary appears. Heads towards the table.

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
Maestro.

GUIDO  
(standing up to greet him,  
then turning to Luisa)  
Ah, Don Mario. Excuse me, darling,  
this is Don Mario. This is my wife,  
Luisa.

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
A pleasure, Signora.

LUISA  
Sit down, won't you, Don Mario?

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
Oh no.

LUISA  
Please.

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
I was telling your husband how much I  
admire his movies. Publicly, you know  
the Church condemns them - we have to -  
but we all love them.

(To Guido)  
Last year we did our own version of  
your *Il Vicolo* at the Christmas  
Party.

LILLI  
That I would pay to see.

GUIDO  
Luisa was in that film.

LILLI  
She was the best thing in the movie.

GUIDO  
It's true. It was your first part.

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
Of course! - you're Luisa Acari! Oh  
my Lord!

LUISA  
I was.

Music begins.

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY  
You can't stop being somebody.

LUISA  
Can't you?

CARDINAL'S SECRETARY

Well there's a good catholic wife for you, Guido, that's what they do - sacrifice. Still, Signora Contini, it must be a very exciting life for you...

Luisa looks to Guido. Close up on Guido.

FANTASY:

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

The restaurant table as well as the production team are transplanted onto Guido's unfinished set. They are surrounded by camera equipment, standing lighting units, etc. Luisa rises from her chair, distancing herself from the scene. The other characters, with the exception of Guido, freeze in a dimly lit macabre tableau.

Luisa contemplates her life with Guido.

LUISA

MY HUSBAND MAKES MOVIES  
TO MAKE THEM HE LIVES A KIND OF DREAM  
IN WHICH HIS ACTIONS AREN'T ALWAYS  
WHAT THEY SEEM-  
HE MAY BE ON TO SOME UNIQUE ROMANTIC  
THEME.  
SOME MEN RUN BANKS  
SOME RULE THE WORLD  
SOME EARN THEIR LIVING BAKING BREAD.  
MY HUSBAND.... HE GOES A LITTLE CRAZY  
MAKING MOVIES INSTEAD.  
MY HUSBAND SPINS FANTASIES,  
HE LIVES THEM, THEN GIVES THEM TO YOU  
ALL  
LIKE MICHELANGELO,  
HE PAINTS HIS PRIVATE DOME  
BUT CAN'T DISTINGUISH WHAT'S HIS WORK  
AND WHAT'S HIS HOME.  
SOME MEN SELL STOCKS  
SOME MEN PUNCH CLOCKS  
SOME LEAP WHERE OTHERS FEAR TO TREAD.  
MY HUSBAND, AS AUTHOR AND DIRECTOR,  
MAKES UP STORIES IN HIS HEAD.

As the number progresses, the world around Luisa disappears into a black void, leaving only herself, with Guido in the shadows. Luisa climbs the staircase.

LUISA (CONT'D)

GUIDO CONTINI, LUISA CONTINI:  
NUMBER ONE GENIUS AND NUMBER ONE FAN.  
(MORE)



Guido enters. He's fascinated by her. She's taken aback that he's in front of the camera and approaching her. He walks straight up to her and unties her hair. It's oddly intimate. He stands back to reappraise her.

GUIDO

Thank you.

LUISA

For what?

GUIDO

Thank you. For what I'm looking at.  
(walking away)  
Keep running.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

Luisa is now at the top of the staircase. She looks at Guido from a greater distance and descends the stairs.

LUISA

LONG AGO - SOMEONE ELSE AGO.  
HOW HE NEEDS ME SO,  
AND HE'LL BE THE LAST TO KNOW IT.  
MY HUSBAND MAKES MOVIES.  
TO MAKE THEM HE MAKES HIMSELF  
OBSESSED.  
HE WORKS FOR WEEKS ON END  
WITHOUT A BIT OF REST-  
NO OTHER WAY CAN HE ACHIEVE HIS LEVEL  
BEST.  
SOME MEN READ BOOKS,  
SOME SHINE THEIR SHOES,  
SOME RETIRE EARLY,  
SOME STAY UP TO DREAM AND MUSE.  
MY HUSBAND ONLY RARELY COMES TO BED -  
MY HUSBAND MAKES MOVIES INSTEAD.  
MY HUSBAND MAKES MOVIES...

INT. TERRACE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

In reality, Luisa sees Carla enter the restaurant. They look at each other. Carla tries to change direction, or look as if she's come to the wrong place.

...Luisa gets up abruptly.

LUISA

Excuse me, I suddenly feel very tired.

She hurries away. Guido senses something terrible is happening. He gets up and goes after his wife.

EXT. STEPS, HOTEL BELLAVISTA - NIGHT

Guido catches up to Luisa as she storms up the steps.

GUIDO

Luisa!

LUISA

I'm staggered by my own stupidity. I could vomit.

GUIDO

Luisa - will you please just tell me what happened?

LUISA

You open your mouth and a lie comes out.

GUIDO

What lie?

LUISA

Why am I surprised? - it's like breathing to you.

She walks away up the steps. Guido can only guess at what's happened. He heads back to the terrace restaurant...

INT. TERRACE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Guido comes back inside. Carla is seated at a table. She sees him and calls for him.

CARLA

Guido.

Raging, he grabs her and frogmarches her out the door.

INT. LOBBY, HOTEL BELLAVISTA - NIGHT

Guido pulls Carla through the lobby. She's humiliated.

CARLA

(trying to explain)

I was hungry. I'm tired of eating alone in that room.

GUIDO

There are plenty of restaurants.

CARLA

I wanted to see the hotel. I told you I came here with my parents when I was little. I didn't come to disturb you.

GUIDO

Well you certainly managed to.

CARLA

Why didn't you tell me Luisa was going to be here!

GUIDO

I didn't know she was here. She just turned up.

CARLA

Well, she could have warned you.

GUIDO

The only privilege my wife has these days is not having to warn me.

He walks over to the front desk, to the ubiquitous De Rossi.

GUIDO O.S

A taxi, please, for the Signora.

DE ROSSI O.S.

Right away.

Guido goes back to the suddenly vulnerable Carla.

GUIDO

Carla, you have to wait outside.

CARLA

Will you wait with me?

GUIDO

I'm in the middle of a working dinner with my colleagues.

CARLA

So why do I have to wait outside?

GUIDO

(shamed)

I'll find someone to escort you home.

He disappears. Carla walks towards the door, conscious of De Rossi. She's humiliated. De Rossi comes out from behind his desk, approaches her.

DE ROSSI  
(carefully)  
Signora, would you rather wait inside?

CARLA  
I'm going to walk. Please tell my  
friend I had to leave.

She walks away.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Carla walks along the road in the dark, stumbling  
along.

INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - NIGHT

Guido enters. The two single beds. Luisa is apparently  
asleep in hers. Guido sits on his bed. Glum.

GUIDO  
Apparently she's staying in some  
grotesque pensione next to the  
station.

Luisa doesn't move.

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
Luisa, if I'd invited her here, she  
would be staying in the hotel,  
wouldn't she? Think about it. I  
didn't even know you were coming.

LUISA  
(without opening her eyes)  
Very plausible.

GUIDO  
Because it's true.

Luisa turns on her bedside lamp and sits up in bed.

LUISA  
You told me it was finished.

GUIDO  
It is. Look, she was worried about  
me, she came to see if I was all right  
- which yes, is stupid but not, as far  
as I know, a crime, and hardly a  
mortal sin.

Luisa suddenly laughs, disconcertingly.

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
(smiles, insecure)  
What? What are you laughing about?

LUISA  
Nothing. If you could see yourself.  
(raising herself up  
further)  
I couldn't live with it - the  
absurdity of being you, the effort of  
having to hide and lie and cheat. It's  
exhausting, no wonder you've got no  
script, you're too busy inventing your  
own life.

GUIDO  
It's finished. It's finished.  
(and he is exhausted)  
If it wasn't before, it is now.

LUISA  
(lying back on her bed)  
Blah blah blah blah blah.

Luisa turns over, reaches to the bedside lamp and turns  
it off. Guido gets up and hurries from the room.

INT. BAR, HOTEL BELLAVISTA - NIGHT

Guido enters the bar, goes up to the bartender.

GUIDO  
Vodka.

A voice comes from behind him.

STEPHANIE (O.S.)  
I'll have one of those. *Due.*

Guido looks around, it's the Vogue Journalist from the  
Press Conference. Stephanie grins at him, infectious,  
full of flirt.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
Hi, Guido Contini. Stephanie, from  
Vogue, remember me?

GUIDO  
Yes, I remember very well, Stephanina  
from Vogue.

STEPHANIE  
So, coincidence. You being here. And  
me being here.

GUIDO  
(taking his glasses off)  
Amazing. May I take a cigarette?

STEPHANIE  
That was quite a performance. At the  
Press Conference. The Vanishing Act.

Guido takes a cigarette. The drinks appear. Guido  
produces some money.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
No, please, my treat.

GUIDO  
(paying)  
Please.

STEPHANIE  
*Grazie.*

GUIDO  
*Prego.*

STEPHANIE  
(eyeing Guido)  
I've seen all your movies.

GUIDO  
(lights their cigarettes)  
Really?

STEPHANIE  
Like a million times. They're the only  
movies that tell the truth about the  
modern world.

GUIDO  
And what truth is that?

STEPHANIE  
(thinks)  
Death of religion... Sexual  
revolution...

GUIDO  
I don't think religion is dead. And  
what exactly is the sexual revolution?

STEPHANIE  
That we can talk about later.

Stephanie crosses her legs. Guido looks down and sees  
her grey patent leather boot moving in time to the  
beat.

A RHYTHM BEGINS.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
You have such style. I always think  
that. That's the other thing I love  
about your movies.

GUIDO  
(appalled)  
Style.

FLASH: A SUDDEN HEAD TURN OF A MAN IN SHADES.

STEPHANIE  
Every frame is like a postcard.

GUIDO  
(appalled)  
Okay.

STEPHANIE  
It's great: you care as much about the  
suit as the man wearing it.

FLASH: A SUDDEN IMAGE OF MEN IN STYLISH SUITS.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
It's the Italian man in you: pays for  
your drinks, undresses you with his  
eyes...

FLASH: A SUDDEN IMAGE OF A WOMAN'S HIP THRUST.

GUIDO  
I hate that man.

STEPHANIE  
No! Style is the new content! It's  
what my readers love. They want to  
dress like Claudia Jenssen. They want  
to undress like Claudia Jenssen. They  
want to ride on a Vespa down the Via  
Veneto. They want to live in an  
Italian movie.

FANTASY:

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

The tiered levels of the unfinished set are covered  
with go-go girls in silver miniskirts. At the center  
of the stage, Italian male models in stylish suits and  
Ray Bans strut down a fashion runway.

Stephanie makes her entrance on the catwalk.

STEPHANIE  
I LOVE THE BLACK AND WHITE!  
I LOVE THE PLAY OF LIGHT!  
THE WAY CONTINI PUTS HIS IMAGE THROUGH  
A PRISM.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Guido lights Stephanie's cigarette.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

STEPHANIE  
I FEEL MY BODY CHILL  
GIVES ME A SPECIAL THRILL  
EACH TIME I SEE THAT GUIDO NEO-REALISM

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Guido and Stephanie share a laugh as she steals a sip  
from Guido's glass.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

Stephanie leads the men in a series of tight, rhythmic  
moves.

STEPHANIE  
I LOVE THE DARK AND HANDSOME GUYS  
WITH THEIR SKINNY LITTLE TIES  
DRESSIN' MOD, LOOKIN' OUTTA SIGHT!  
I LOVE TO WATCH 'EM AS THEY CRUISE  
WITH THEIR POINTY LEATHER SHOES  
WEARIN' SHADES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE  
NIGHT.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Stephanie rubs her leg against Guido's.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

STEPHANIE  
WHATEVER GUIDO DOES, IT MAKES ME SMILE  
HE IS THE ESSENCE OF ITALIAN STYLE.  
I LOVE THE GLAMOROUSLY LATIN WORLD  
THAT ONLY GUIDO CAN PORTRAY!!!

CONTINI'S CINEMA ITALIANO!  
I LOVE HIS CINEMA ITALIANO!  
HE MAKES ME FEEL WITH CINEMA ITALIANO  
(MORE)

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)  
MY LIFE IS REAL WITH CINEMA ITALIANO  
HE IS THE KING OF CINEMA ITALIANO!

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Stephanie whispers into Guido's ear, as she drops her room key into his pocket. He watches her hips swing as she walks out. Guido plays with her room key, deciding whether or not to follow.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

A long line of chic women replace the men on the runway, joining Stephanie.

STEPHANIE  
THOSE SCENES I LOVE TO SEE  
FROM GUIDO'S "P" "O" "V"  
THERE'S NO ONE ELSE WITH HIS UNIQUE  
DIRECTOR'S VISION.  
HIS ANGLES - WIDE AND TIGHT -  
EACH MOMENT FEELS SO RIGHT...  
DEFINES ITALIAN STYLE BY ONLY *HIS*  
DECISION!  
I LOVE THE SPEEDY LITTLE CARS  
THE HIP COFFEE BARS  
THE SLEEK WOMEN IN POSITANO...  
GUIDO'S THE ULTIMATE UOMO ROMANO!

STEPHANIE AND MEN  
CONTINI'S CINEMA ITALIANO!  
I LOVE HIS CINEMA ITALIANO  
GUIDO GUIDO GUIDO  
GUIDO GUIDO GUIDO  
GUIDO GUIDO GUIDO  
GUIDO GUIDO!

DRUM BREAK. The number heats up.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Guido exits the elevator, weary and ripe with self-disgust, and walks down the hallway to Stephanie's door.

Guido pushes open the door and drops her key in a bowl. He walks tentatively into the room and sits on her bed. The dressing room door is deliberately ajar.

Guido catches a glimpse of Stephanie undressing in a mirror.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

STEPHANIE  
DARK AND HANDSOME GUYS  
SKINNY LITTLE TIES  
SHADES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT  
SPEEDY LITTLE CARS  
HIP COFFEE BARS  
SLEEK WOMEN IN POSITANO...

STEPHANIE AND WOMEN	MEN
ECCO IL RE DEL	ECCO IL RE DEL
CINEMA ITALIANO	CINEMA ITALIANO
QUESTO O E IL	QUESTO O E IL
CINEMA ITALIANO	CINEMA ITALIANO
NELLA MIA ANIMA	

ALL  
NELLA MIA ANIMA  
NELLA MIA ANIMA  
CINEMA ITALIANO

BIANCO-NERO BIANCO-NERO  
BIANCO-NERO  
NERO-NERO

STEPHANIE  
CINEMA ITALIANO

WOMEN	MEN
BIANCO-NERO BIANCO-NERO	DARK AND HANDSOME GUYS
BIANCO-NERO	SKINNY LITTLE TIES
NERO-NERO	SHADES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT
	SPEEDY LITTLE CARS
	HIP COFFEE BARS
	MOD, LOOKIN' OUTTA SIGHT

ALL  
NELLA MIA ANIMA  
CINEMA ITALIANO  
NELLA MIA ANIMA  
CINEMA ITALIANO

CONTINI'S CINEMA  
ITALIANO!

Suddenly, Guido is sharing the runway with Stephanie, the go-go dancers, and the male models, soaking up the adoration as his idol-worshipping audience cheers and paparazzi flash. It's a party. Champagne Popping. Flowing.

Everyone is chanting Guido's name. Guido and Stephanie exit the runway, arm and arm...

INT. STEPHANIE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Guido feels consumed with self-loathing.

GUIDO

No.

He gets up from the bed and bolts from the room...

INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - NIGHT

...Guido enters his own suite. He sits down on Luisa's bed, curls round her and kisses her neck. Determined to commit to Luisa.

GUIDO

I love you Luisa.

After a moment she turns to him, her own hand seeks his.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

Can we please try to be close again.

The PHONE RINGS, shockingly loud. He kisses Luisa, then grabs the phone to silence it.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

*Pronto...*

EXT. PENSIONE FERROVIA - NIGHT

Guido arrives at the Pensione. The Matron is waiting at the door. Distressed.

INT. PENSIONE FERROVIA - NIGHT

As they walk down the hall -

GUIDO

Is the doctor still with her?

The Matron nods.

MATRON

Yes, he's in there. He's waiting for you. This way.

INT. PENSIONE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Guido goes in with the Matron to find her DAUGHTER pressing a cold compress onto Carla's head as she lies, feverish in the bed. DOCTOR RONDI is packing up his things.

CARLA  
(distant)  
You came.

GUIDO  
(taking her hand)  
I'm here.

Doctor Rondi is brisk. He nods to Guido that they go outside.

DOCTOR RONDI  
Signor Contini.

As Guido makes to leave -

CARLA  
Come back.

Guido reassures her with a gesture.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE PENSIONE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Guido and Doctor Rondi come out. Guido is concerned. Doctor Rondi writes out a prescription as he talks.

DOCTOR RONDI  
She took five or six pills, enough to make herself very sick. I understand she's your mistress.  
(Guido can't answer)  
This is a sordid business. You movie people, I suppose you don't consider yourself bound by morality...

Guido doesn't fight. Rondi hands him the prescription, picks up his bag, turns and walks away, leaving Guido leaning against the wall...

MEMORY:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Young Guido, alone and dressed in his school uniform, runs fast across the rough dunes.

MAMMA (O.S.)

Guido? *Dove corri?* Where are you running to?

INT. PENSIONE BEDROOM - NIGHT

... the door knob turns. Guido comes back into the room, indicates to the Matron and her daughter that they should leave.

GUIDO

Thank you. I'm going to stay with her now.

MATRON

If you need us for anything, just call, okay? Francesca, *andiamo*.

GUIDO

*Grazie.*

He sits on the side of the bed and puts his hand over hers.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

Carla, I should call your husband.

CARLA

No, he'll take me home.

GUIDO

What have you done to yourself? I'm not worth dying for, Carla.

CARLA

Don't be angry with me. Everything I do, I just want you to love me.

This comes out with enormous tenderness, as if she suddenly understands herself.

CARLA (CONT'D)

When you're not here with me, I'm still here. When you're in your life, making your movies, dancing with your wife - I'm still here.

Guido hears her. Knows what she's saying is true. She looks at him.

GUIDO

Ssshh. You should rest. We'll talk about everything in the morning...

He stands and pulls a sheet up over her.

CARLA  
(Clutching at him)  
Don't leave me. Don't leave me.

Guido lies down next to her, she turns to face him.

GUIDO  
Rest, rest. *Cara mia...*

FANTASY:

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

MAMMA (O.S.)  
...Caro, caro mio.

...Young Guido is scaling the unfinished set, as Mamma circles him from below. Hundreds of candles fill the darkness.

Mamma intercepts Young Guido as he jumps down from the spiral staircase and she swings him into her arms. She sings playfully.

MAMMA (CONT'D)  
GUARDA LA LUNA CHE BRILLA LASSU  
HOW THE MOON GLOWS  
AS IT SMILES OVER YOU  
WHEN YOU'RE DREAMING  
BLISSFULLY!  
DREAMING, FLYING FREE!

INT. PENSIONE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Guido attempts to comfort Carla.

CARLA  
My husband thinks I'm clever, that's the strange thing, because I'm not, well you know that, I spend too much time in my little brain thinking about you, about where you are, what you are doing, what you dream of.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

Mamma guides Young Guido through an allée of candles.

MAMMA  
OH, DREAM OF YOUR YOUTH  
WHEN I'M STILL BY YOUR SIDE  
DREAM OF YOUR MANHOOD,  
PRAY I'M THERE TO GUIDE YOU  
AND WHEN YOU GROW OLD  
(MORE)

MAMMA (CONT'D)  
HOW MY LOVE STILL WILL SHINE  
ALWAYS REMEMBER MY SON...  
YOU WILL ALWAYS BE  
MINE!  
YES, MINE!

She gently spins Young Guido, and - as he completes the turn - he is replaced by Older Guido. Mamma now waltzes with her adult son.

MAMMA (CONT'D)  
GUIDO  
SAI CHE TI VOGLIO BENE,  
FIGLIULO MIO,  
GUIDO  
DO YOU THINK THAT SO MANY  
WILL LOVE YOU  
AS I DO?

Mamma caresses Guido's face. Guido pulls away.

Older Guido watches, as Mamma takes Young Guido up the grand staircase.

MAMMA (CONT'D)  
GUARDA LA LUNA,  
SHE HANGS IN THE SKY  
BEAMING HER BLESSING  
TO MAKE YOU AND I KNOW THAT  
THIS ONE GOODNIGHT KISS  
WILL KEEP ALL YOUR LIFE  
PERFECT LIKE THIS.

Mamma sits on the steps with Young Guido. He rests his head in her lap.

Older Guido walks past them up the staircase.

GUIDO  
Hold on to me, Mamma. Don't let me  
wake from this.

He disappears into darkness.

INT. PENSIONE BEDROOM - DAY

Guido wakes. It's morning.

Carla looks very fragile as the first rays of sun touch the room. Him, too. He rubs his face, hears voices. He gets up, goes out to investigate.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE PENSIONE BEDROOM - DAY

Carla's husband, LUIGI, is talking with Matron on the landing.

Guido straightens himself up, approaches, as Matron retreats to leave them alone. LUIGI is a nice, dignified man. He's very anxious. He and Guido can't really look at each other.

MATRON

Excuse me.

She leaves.

LUIGI

Is she okay?

GUIDO

Yes.

LUIGI

I'd like to take her home.

GUIDO

Of course. I'm sorry.

(hapless)

She loves you, you know that, don't you.

LUIGI

She's my wife.

He walks into the room. Guido stands outside for a second, then turns to go.

INT. GUIDO'S SUITE - DAY

The door is open as Guido enters. He's confused, worried that Luisa has gone, perhaps. But then he sees a figure moving about in the dressing room, emptying a closet.

GUIDO

Darling?

Dante appears, stuffing Guido's things into a suitcase.

DANTE

We're going back to Rome.

GUIDO

(anxious)

Where's Luisa?

DANTE

Luisa? She's gone. She's had it with you.

(different tone)

And quite frankly, so have I. You drag a whole crew up here and then you just disappear.

(MORE)

DANTE (CONT'D)

I can't protect you anymore. And  
Claudia is in Rome. Makeup tests start  
today. Remember?

GUIDO

(sits)

I can't.

DANTE

You can't. You must. Don't sit down.

GUIDO

I need help.

DANTE

(still packing)

You've had help. You've seen the  
doctors, you've seen the priests,  
you've taken the cure.

GUIDO

I'm not cured.

DANTE

(decisive, no arguments)

That's enough! The movie calls, your  
star has landed. Fausto - take his  
things please.

Dante walks over to the door with the suitcase, passing  
Fausto. A Bellboy and a luggage cart stand in the hall.

DANTE (CONT'D)

(impatient,  
at the door)

Guido! *Andiamo!*

EXT. GATES OF CINECITTA - LATE AFTERNOON

Guido's Roadster approaches the gates. There are  
PAPARAZZI gathered for the arrival of Claudia, for the  
beginning of filming. They drive through, solemn faced,  
ignoring the press.

GUIDO (O.S.)

I need more time.

DANTE (O.S.)

Forget the script. Claudia's here now.  
She'll inspire you to do what you do  
best, write with your camera.

EXT. CINECITTA - LATE AFTERNOON

The whole energy of this return to Cinecitta is hectic, people wanting to work, equipment waiting to work, everybody and everything needing Guido's attention.

Guido drives towards the stages. Guido feels the pressure that the whole studio is gearing up for a movie that doesn't exist.

Guido is trying not to panic. He feels as if he's just arrived in prison camp. He drives fast and straight to Stage 4, and as they head towards the studio, they are immediately swamped. Pierpaolo has a hundred requests for Guido...

PIERPAOLO

Maestro, the screen tests are back from the lab. Will you watch them now?

DANTE

Tonight. We'll watch everything tonight and make some decisions.

PIERPAOLO

Design meeting? Production meeting?

DANTE

Tonight.

PIERPAOLO

Tonight.

Dante marches Guido towards the stage. Lilli joins them.

LILLI

Claudia says *where are you?* She's in fine form. Feisty.

GUIDO

(knows what that means)  
Okay.

LILLI

She asked if she could read my script as she didn't have one. I said I didn't quite have mine.

Lilli peels off and joins her assistant Roberta at a rack of costumes.

INT. INSERT STAGE, CINECITTA - LATE AFTERNOON

A couple of huge cameras are being prepared, some lights are being flown up into the grid, the LOADER is preparing the Clapper Board. The Loader has created a slate: ITALIA, CLAUDIA JENSSEN, HAIR AND MAKEUP TESTS.

The gang enters. Guido says a brisk hello to the crew, then leaves the set quickly. Finds the studio telephone behind the flats. He dials.

Guido waits. Luisa picks up the phone.

LUISA

*Pronto.*

GUIDO

Luisa, it's me. Please don't hang up.

(she doesn't respond)

I want you to be with me in the screening room tonight. I want to talk to you about the casting, about the script. Everything...

INT. INSERT STAGE/CONTINI HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

INTERCUT, LUISA at home, listening, inscrutable.

GUIDO

Otherwise I won't be able to start, I won't know what I'm thinking...

Luisa listens. Pierpaolo appears again, always the same, needs him to start.

PIERPAOLO

*Maestro.*

Guido nods, waves him away.

GUIDO

Are you there? Luisa?

LUISA

Go on.

GUIDO

I'm not asking you to let me come home, I just want you to come to the screen test tonight. Not for me, but for the movie. You always have, you always do.

Luisa puts down the phone.

Guido is in a mess.

INT. INSERT STAGE - EARLY EVENING

Guido walks forward and sits by the camera, as suddenly there's a commotion at the studio door, and Lilli and some of her assistants come through, silhouettes only, followed by a tall figure, who demands the space around her. As the others walk towards a holding area with costumes, and wigs and all manner of items, the woman, who is CLAUDIA, of course, simply walks into the light, her home, and stands there waiting for Guido.

She looks stunning and glamorous. The epitome of a Sixties movie star. Guido gets up and approaches Claudia.

Pierpaolo acts as First Assistant Director.

PIERPAOLO

Silence please. *Se gira*. And we are rolling.

Guido gets behind the camera and films Claudia's test.

GUIDO

Could you turn to the right please, Claudia.

CLAUDIA

Yes, I can turn to my right.

GUIDO

And can you turn to the left.

CLAUDIA

Yes, I can turn to my left.

GUIDO

Now just one slow turn for us.

CLAUDIA

(she turns around)  
Okay, one slow turn.

GUIDO

*Bellissima. Brava. Cut.*

PIERPAOLO

We've got it. Next costume please.

Makeup artists and costume assistants immediately surround her, loosening her hair.

Dante is thrilled. Fausto is also mesmerised. She's a star, that's the long and short of it.

And she's warming up for a fight with her director.  
Another litany of jibes, half-joking, but dangerous.

CLAUDIA  
Has anybody got a script? Script  
missing, handsome reward.... Lost, one  
script, title *Italia*. Can't make a  
film without it...

Lilli comes forward, puts a chinchilla fur coat on  
Claudia, adjusts her hair.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)  
So interesting to do hair and makeup  
for a part when you don't know what  
the part is.

Guido adores her, her spirit, her feistiness.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)  
(shrugs off the coat)  
No! I'm going back to my hotel now.

PIERPAOLO  
(anxious)  
But please, just a couple more  
costumes, Claudia.

CLAUDIA  
(to Guido)  
I'm going back to my hotel now, my  
darling, and when I there is a script,  
I'll read it and then we'll take it  
from there.  
(calls over to Lilli)  
I love the costumes, Lilli. They are  
beautiful.  
(back to the guys,  
sweetly)  
*Ciao Bello.*

GUIDO  
That's fair.

DANTE  
Claudia!

GUIDO  
(to Dante)  
That's fair.

DANTE  
Fair?

GUIDO  
I'll be back.

Guido races after Claudia, taking the chinchilla coat from Lilli with him. Opportunity for escape.

DANTE  
(calling to Guido)  
You've got dailies, Guido.

GUIDO  
I'll be right back.

DANTE  
(shouting)  
You've got meetings.

EXT. CINECITTA - NIGHT

Guido drives Claudia towards the gates, which swing open. The paparazzi are in waiting and swarm the car, flashbulbs popping, men clambering onto the car for a picture of the Star driving away with her Director. Lots of shouting and pleas, lots of remonstrations from Guido. They drive away, and are immediately followed by a posse of photographers on their mopeds and Vespas and little cars.

INT. CAR, ROME OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Guido's Roadster roars away, the paparazzi posse following. Guido glances at Claudia, loves having her in the car, she's such a class act. He's always inspired. He's driving fast but distracted by her.

GUIDO  
You look ravishing.

CLAUDIA  
You're not seeing me, you're seeing  
Lilli's wigs and makeup, I'm somewhere  
hidden underneath.

Guido's a good driver and weaves in and out of the traffic. So do the posse, but as the road opens up, they can't keep up with him and he manages to overtake a car, they speed after him.

EXT. MEDIEVAL LANES, TRASTEVERE - NIGHT

Guido stops the car by some narrow streets in the Trastevere, just south of the Vatican. They watch the photographers hurtle past in search of them.

They sit for a second.

GUIDO

It's good to see you.

CLAUDIA

I'm assuming that's code for *there's no script*.

Guido is exasperated.

GUIDO

Why is everybody so suddenly obsessed with the script?

Claudia listens. She's always seduced by the way he speaks, his passion. They fall in love with each other in every movie, that's the way of it. Guido lights a cigarette.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

Talk to the people who love you in our films, they're not interested in my script! They're interested in the way you turn your head, the way the camera looks past you to the moon... the way you smile a little as you cry, the way you really do blush for the camera - how?! -

(enough examples, sighs)  
who even knows, but whatever else it is, it's not my script.

Guido has no confidence in what he's saying anymore.

They get out of the car and begin to walk away. It's almost deserted here.

CLAUDIA

So Lilli says I'm playing a million different parts -

GUIDO

Not a million - you're the muses, the incredible women who made Italy what it is today, a country run by men - who are themselves run by women, whether they know it or not.

CLAUDIA

(teasing him)

So I'm the women behind the great men?

GUIDO

(trying hard to tell the truth)

The great women...

(MORE)

GUIDO (CONT'D)

In a way - yes - you have this man in the story and he's, he wants to take hold of everything, to devour everything, he can't let anything go, or, he doesn't want to, and he changes direction every day, because he's lost, he's dying, he's bleeding to death...

CLAUDIA

(deflating)

And these muses - they fall in love with the man?

GUIDO

Exactly! They fall in love with him.

CLAUDIA

(decisive)

I'd rather be the man.

GUIDO

What?

CLAUDIA

I'd rather be the man.

She grabs his hat, puts it on her head. Saunters down the road. He follows.

FANTASY:

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

CLAUDIA

IN A VERY UNUSUAL WAY,  
ONE TIME I NEEDED YOU,  
IN A VERY UNUSUAL WAY,  
YOU WERE MY FRIEND.  
MAYBE IT LASTED A DAY,  
MAYBE IT LASTED AN HOUR,  
BUT SOMEHOW IT WILL NEVER END.

EXT. MEDIEVAL LANES, TRASTEVERE - NIGHT

CLAUDIA

These women who come off their pedestals for a kiss - they're just fantasies.

GUIDO

No, you misunderstand...

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

CLAUDIA  
IN A VERY UNUSUAL WAY,  
I THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU,  
IN A VERY UNUSUAL WAY,  
I WANT TO CRY.  
SOMETHING INSIDE ME GOES WEAK,  
SOMETHING INSIDE ME SURRENDERS,  
AND YOU'RE THE REASON WHY,  
YOU'RE THE REASON WHY.  
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DO TO ME.  
YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUE.  
YOU CAN'T TELL WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ME  
LOOKING AT YOU.  
IT SCARES ME SO THAT I CAN HARDLY  
SPEAK.

EXT. MEDIEVAL LANES, TRASTEVERE - NIGHT

GUIDO  
She's his inspiration.

CLAUDIA  
I can't keep playing that part.

GUIDO  
I fall in love with you every time.

CLAUDIA  
When there's a camera between us.

GUIDO  
No.

CLAUDIA  
It's not a real person, Guido.  
(pointed)  
And this man you describe - he doesn't  
know how to love.

CLAUDIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
IN A VERY UNUSUAL WAY,  
I OWE WHAT I AM TO YOU.

EXT. PIAZZA WITH FOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Claudia heads towards a little Piazza with an ancient fountain in the centre of the square. The Piazza is empty except for a few cars parked where the entrances have been blocked off. Claudia steps up onto the fountain.

GUIDO

There was a time once, we were on location, some terrible hotel - and you were in the room directly above me and I could hear you walking about...

Guido sits down at the edge of the fountain.

GUIDO (CONT'D)

...and, all through the night, I wanted to rush up the stairs and hammer on your door until you opened.

CLAUDIA

And why didn't you?

GUIDO

I don't know. I don't know.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

CLAUDIA

SPECIAL TO ME IN MY LIFE,  
SINCE THE FIRST DAY THAT I MET YOU.  
HOW COULD I EVER FORGET YOU,  
ONCE YOU HAD TOUCHED MY SOUL.  
IN A VERY UNUSUAL WAY,  
YOU'VE MADE ME WHOLE.

EXT. PIAZZA WITH FOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Claudia leaves behind the hat on the fountain and moves closer to Guido. The music continues.

CLAUDIA

Maybe you should have knocked, maybe you should have knocked me right off the pedestal. I can't do this anymore.

She takes off her wig and diamond earrings.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)

This is me. And you have a wife who loves you.

She hands him the wig and the earrings. She kisses him.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)

I'll miss you. Wrong girl.

The music ends. Claudia turns and walks away.

INT. SCREENING ROOM, CINECITTA - NIGHT

A screen, the leader of a film reel, numbers counting down, the synch pop on 3, and Claudia appears on the screen, looking extraordinary from the hair and makeup test. People start to comment, all enthusiastically.

Guido gets a cigarette off Pierpaolo and lights up.

DANTE  
(to Lilli)  
Great work, Lilli... Wonderful  
costume...

LILLI  
Thank you.

DANTE  
...and the hair, makeup, fantastic.

Guido watches, sitting alone, he turns around as he sees someone come in the door, but it's Gianluca, not Luisa.

BENITO  
She has a beautiful profile.

DANTE  
Two great profiles.

FAUSTO  
She's a goddess.

DANTE  
And the back isn't too bad.

FAUSTO  
She came directly from Venus.  
Beautiful.

DANTE  
Fantastic. Guido? Really nice.  
Who's next?

BENITO  
Actresses.

DANTE  
Okay. Let's see the actresses.

The reel finishes. The lights come up, to excited chatter, he looks at Lilli a row or two behind him, she shrugs sympathetically.

The room goes dark, the next reel begins. Guido turns back to look at the screen.

During the reel, Dante is very decisive... shouts out, as the women appear.

They come on, one after the other, say their names. Guido gives them things to do. *Pick up the phone and argue with your lover. No, make him laugh. Make him want you. Walk towards the camera as if you were frightened. As if you were angry.* ON ELEANORA - very angry on the phone:

BENITO

If we like her, we have to call her agent right away. Everybody wants her right now.

DANTE

Well they can keep her.

BENITO

She's a very funny actress.

DANTE

She's peculiar. You don't like her Guido?

Next actress: ILARIA. Someone comes in the door. Guido turns and sees it's Luisa, sitting next to Lilli. She's come. He turns back to the screen.

Another actress appears. It's Donatella. Very nervous. She says her name. Guido instructs her. She tries the phone, she walks. She's not a natural.

Luisa finds the gentle humor in this situation. She looks at Guido. A little smile. He feels it like sunshine. He turns back to the screen.

DANTE (CONT'D)

She's nice.

FAUSTO

She's very natural.

DANTE

Even better. She's a bit nervous here. What do you say, Guido? Donatella's nice?

Another girl: ALESSIA. Very striking. Keeps looking out past the camera, getting sotto voce instructions from Guido. Her hair is in a chignon. She begins her improv, but Guido interrupts her, suddenly appears in front of the camera. Approaches her, and undoes the chignon, freeing her hair. She's beautiful and innocent. Guido says something to her, a whisper. But what he says and how he says it, the smile it provokes, goes like a dagger to Luisa.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Who's this? I thought we were looking for a blonde.

FAUSTO

She's too tall.

DANTE

Very tall.

BENITO

She's very beautiful.

DANTE

It's not the point. Guido wants the blonde.

FAUSTO

She's not bad, but -

DANTE

Shh.

FAUSTO

She's beautiful.

DANTE

She's too beautiful. For my tastes.

As the reel finishes... and the lights come up.

DANTE (CONT'D)

I don't know what Guido thinks. I think we are happy with Donatella. Donatella's better, isn't she?

GUIDO

Sure.

DANTE

(delighted, jumps up)

Great. Anyway, fantastic day, but we have to go home. We have a very, very busy day tomorrow. Thank you very much everybody. Thank you. Okay, well done.

The screening room empties, a lot of mutual congratulations on good work, especially to Lilli, and a hug or a handshake from almost everybody for Luisa. Lilli kisses her, leaves. Just the two of them now, husband and wife, several rows apart in the empty screening room.

GUIDO

It meant so much to us all. That you came.

(MORE)

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
(nothing from Luisa)  
What did you think? Did you like  
anybody or -?  
(nothing)  
Luisa?

FANTASY:

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

THE BEAT OF A STRIPPER'S DRUM.

A gloved hand emerges from behind a beaded curtain,  
beckoning. The curtain opens, revealing the silhouette  
of a figure bathed in red light.

Guido sits in an audience of raucous men who have  
filled all the seats around him. They start to whistle  
as if they were at some sleazy club. Guido squirms,  
trapped.

The figure steps forward. It's Luisa, tricked out like  
a seedy nightclub stripper.

LUISA  
YOU WANT MY LOVE?  
TAKE IT ALL  
YOU WANT TO WATCH IT ALL COME OFF?  
TAKE IT ALL  
COME ON NOW  
SHOW ME HOW  
YOU TAKE IT ALL...

INT. SCREENING ROOM, CINECITTA - NIGHT

LUISA  
Thank you.

GUIDO  
(encouraged)  
What for?

LUISA  
Thank you for reminding me I'm not  
special. You don't even see what you  
do, do you? Even the moments I think  
are ours, it's just you working to get  
what you want.

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

Luisa strips.



LUISA (CONT'D)

I WATCH YOU RISE!  
I WATCH YOU FALL!  
WHILE I AM STANDING  
WITH MY BACK AGAINST THE WALL  
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN  
TO FINALLY LEARN

YOU HAD THE WORLD  
YOU HAD YOUR FLING  
YOU WANTED MORE THAN EVERYTHING  
YOU GOT YOUR WISH  
YOU GOT YOUR PRIZE  
NOW TAKE IT RIGHT BETWEEN YOUR THIGHS  
YOU GRABBED FOR EVERYTHING MY FRIEND  
BUT DON'T YOU SEE  
THAT IN THE END  
THERE WILL BE  
NOTHING!

INT. SCREENING ROOM, CINECITTA - NIGHT

LUISA

You're just an appetite, and if you  
stopped being greedy you'd die. You  
take everything, and I'm empty.

Luisa gets up from her chair, heads to the exit door.

LUISA (CONT'D)

You know, I'm glad I came. I can see  
now... it's hopeless...

Luisa leaves. Guido is left alone.

The room goes dark as the screen tests, on a loop,  
start up again.

Guido walks into the flickering light of the  
projector...

GUIDO

What have I done? What have I done,  
Luisa?

INT. "SOUNDSTAGE"

...He sits silhouetted by the harsh white beams.

GUIDO

I CAN'T MAKE THIS MOVIE,  
THERE'S NO WAY THAT I'LL BEGIN IT.  
I CAN'T BEAR TO SEE THE CAMERAS ROLL.  
PROBLEM IS THE SUBJECT,  
THERE'S NO PLEASANT WAY TO TREAT IT.

(MORE)

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
THE PROBLEM IS THE AUTHOR'S LOST  
CONTROL.  
HOW I WISH IT DIDN'T HAVE TO BE SO,  
BUT WE CUT THE LOSSES--STARTING NOW  
STRIKE THE SET AND KEEP IT FOR SOME  
SIDESHOW.  
TELL THE CAST AND CREW THAT THEY CAN  
ALL GO.

Guido stands and walks towards the image on the screen.  
He violently rips the screen to the ground.

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
FIND ANOTHER GENIUS,  
I CAN'T BE ONE OR BECOME ONE.  
I CAN'T EVEN TELL HOW I'D BEGIN.  
HELP LUISA, HELP ME, HELP ME MAMMA,  
HELP ME SOMEONE.  
HERE'S A PLACE WHERE I HAVE NEVER  
BEEN.  
GUIDO OUT IN SPACE  
WITH NO DIRECTION,  
GUIDO AT A LOSS FOR WHAT TO SAY,  
GUIDO WITH NO INTERVENING ACTORS,  
GUIDO AT THE MERCY OF DETRACTORS,  
GUIDO HERE, WITH NO ONE ELSE BUT...  
NOTHING HOLDS TOGETHER  
NOTHING MAKES A BIT OF SENSE NOW  
IMPOSSIBLE TO GRASP OR UNDERSTAND  
HOW CAN I GO ON TO WATCH THE WHOLE OF  
MY EXISTENCE  
END UP BEING NOTHING THAT I PLANNED  
HAVE I LOST MYSELF AND ALL I WISHED  
FOR  
HAS MY LIFE BECOME A MINDLESS GAME  
GUIDO, I CAN'T STAND THE NAME OF GUIDO  
GUIDO, FOR GODSAKE,  
WHO IS THIS GUIDO?  
GUIDO HERE, WITH NO ONE ELSE BUT  
GUIDO...

Guido collapses to his knees.

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
(honest)  
I destroyed everything, Mamma...

Suddenly, his mother appears.

GUIDO (CONT'D)  
...I destroyed everything, I just...  
you make one wrong turn and then  
because of that, after it all the  
turns are wrong. And you are so far  
from where you wanted to be...and  
you're lost and then you're lost.

MAMMA

No one can help you find your way.  
(a beat)  
It's up to you, Guido. Up to you.  
Nobody else.

In Guido's face, a soulful recognition that what she's said is true.

INT. CINECITTA, STAGE 5 - DAY

A HUGE CRASH...

...A large piece of Guido's set comes crashing down.

Dante and Guido walk through the empty soundstage, leaving behind the set which is being dismantled by a group of construction workers.

GUIDO (O.S.)

Old friends, I have to come clean with you.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICES, CINECITTA - DAY

REALITY. Guido faces his production team. This is hard for him.

GUIDO

There is no movie. I can't pretend anymore. We have to stop.  
(nothing more to say)  
I'm sorry.

There is silence in the room.

EXT. CINECITTA, STAGE 5 - DAY

The metal soundstage door opens as Guido and Dante walk through and into the sunlight. Guido is defeated. He stops at his car and turns to Dante. Guido gets in his car. Guido drives away. Dante watches him go.

EXT. BEACH - ANGUILLARA - AFTERNOON

A cold wind blows. A lonely figure (GUIDO) walks along a deserted beach.

SUPERTITLE: Anguillara, Italy, 2 years later

EXT. BEACH CAFE, ANGUILLARA - AFTERNOON

It's the end of the season. Only a few customers left in the cafe, as the waiters close up for the day, pulling down umbrellas, stacking tables.

Guido's changed, bearded, hair longer and unkempt. Haggard. He looks out to sea, alone, as the waves crash to and fro. A newspaper sits open in front of him. Scribbles and heavy markings circle an ad for a theater production in Rome. Guido gets up at this moment, starts to leave, hesitates, takes the paper, folds it under his arm, and exits the restaurant.

He heads up the steps towards the promenade and we catch a glimpse of the profound regret in his eyes -

EXT. ROME, THEATER - NIGHT

Guido waits, nervous, in a doorway across the street from a theatre that's presenting the Pirandello play, DIANA E LA TUDA, starring LUISA ACARI.

Luisa exits the theatre with the company of actors, all of them plaited together in post-performance bonhomie.

Guido watches from a distance.

Luisa takes the arm of a handsome male, as they cross and head down the street.

EXT. ANGUILLARA STREETS - DAY

Guido and Lilli walk along the waterfront. People pass by occasionally. They talk -

LILLI

I'm glad she's acting again. I made her costumes for the play. She's funny.

GUIDO

She seemed so happy. I didn't want to interfere... Is she with anybody?

LILLI

Guido, she's my friend. I'm not her mother. I don't know. I expect so. Nobody likes to be alone. Promise me you're going to let me cut your hair and get rid of that awful beard.

GUIDO

I like to get about without everybody pointing at me.

LILLI

And where are you getting about?

GUIDO

Nowhere. Here. I walk. Just to be able to walk.

LILLI

Are you seeing anybody?

GUIDO

No, no. Nobody.

LILLI

(teasing)

Well, it sounds exciting. Walking around and not seeing anyone, growing a beard. I might come up here and join you.

GUIDO

Don't tease me, Lilli. My heart is -

LILLI

- I know.

GUIDO

I just miss her. I should have IDIOT tattooed on my forehead.

LILLI

Luisa certainly thinks so.

GUIDO

(grasping at this)

Does she? Did she really say that?

LILLI

Stop! I'm not going to act as a postman between you both. Come back to Rome. Make a movie. Go to work.

He sits. Lilli joins him.

GUIDO

No. Never. I've spent this time trying to learn something, Lilli, to not be the person who forgets about everybody else, the person who never grew up.

LILLI

You're such a dope, aren't you?  
Making movies wasn't your problem. You  
were your problem. Don't stop being  
a child. You'll never make another  
movie! Nobody wants that...  
especially Luisa.

She indicates the people who pass.

LILLI (CONT'D)

Guido - there probably isn't a single  
person passing by who hasn't been  
touched in some way by one of your  
movies. That's your gift. That's what  
you've been given. Use it. Just use it  
with some grace. For Chrissake.

GUIDO

(doubtful)

The only movie I could make now would  
be... I don't know... would be about a  
man trying to win back his wife.

LILLI

Sounds perfect.

(after a beat)

The costumes might not be so bad too.

FLASH: Lights from a makeup mirror. A glimpse of a  
female eye applying false eyelashes.

FLASH: A man of the collar applies pancake makeup,  
while a cigarette dangles from his lips.

Young Guido, 9, appears and whispers into Guido's ear.

YOUNG GUIDO

We're ready to begin!

INT. FANTASY DRESSING ROOMS

A surreal backstage, the cast of Guido's life, whores,  
models, schoolboys, priests, etc. A show about to  
begin.

The music of "Be Italian/Folies Bergere" plays and  
builds throughout.

People run past with props, lights, etc. Showgirls are  
hurrying. A beautiful confusion.

EXT. STAGE 5, CINECITTA - DAY

Guido pulls up in his car outside the soundstage. He stops the engine, and sits for a moment in silence. Summoning his courage, he gets out of the car. He is greeted by Pierpaolo. He seems to need and acknowledge his support. Pierpaolo is tender.

GUIDO

I can't remember how you do this.

PIERPAOLO

You'll remember.

INT. FANTASY DRESSING ROOMS

The camera moves through the backstage mayhem.

Mamma is in her dressing room preparing. Saraghina is sharing a dressing room with a Priest. He is helping with her corset. Carla and Luigi. Carla fixes her husband's hair. Claudia and Stephanie smoke and talk. Lilli adjusts her own, and other men's wardrobe.

INT. STAGE 5, FILM SET, CINECITTA - DAY

Guido is in his element again, locked in passionate discussion with an ACTOR and an ACTRESS. In his hand, an actual script. The set surrounding them is modest; a tiny bedroom with a single window and rumpled sheets. The vast film *Italia* has clearly given way to something smaller, and perhaps truer: the tale of a man and a woman.

GUIDO

I don't want to say too much. The first way that we kill our film is by talking about it. But this scene is about reconciliation. And within the scene I would like you to try and find your way to begin that journey back towards each other.

INT. FANTASY DRESSING ROOMS

Young Guido rushes by the dressing rooms.

YOUNG GUIDO

*Presto! Presto!* Take your places!  
*Andiamo! Andiamo!*

The dressing rooms begin to empty.

INT. STAGE 5, FILM SET, CINECITTA - DAY

From high above on the soundstage catwalk, Young Guido watches Older Guido at work.

GUIDO  
(Continuing to speak to  
his actors)  
Maybe it's the most important building  
block that we have to begin again...  
We start from the beginning each time  
and I feel today as if I'm starting  
from the beginning. We'll just keep  
asking each other questions, and don't  
look to me for the answers, okay?

On cue, Young Guido opens the door behind him and ushers in THE CAST OF GUIDO'S LIFE. They enter with a sense of anticipation and excitement and arrange themselves on the staircases and scaffolding that loom behind Guido. They are all dressed in angelic white.

But Guido is oblivious, focused instead on the task that lies ahead. He talks to his cameraman. Puts down his script. He takes off his jacket and hangs his glasses off his sweater, stands contemplating the set in front of him.

PIERPAOLO  
Maestro, should I call final checks?

GUIDO  
Yes.

PIERPAOLO  
Makeup, please! Final checks!

A LONG WIDE PAN reveals a tableau vivant looming behind Guido like a glorious choir, his every muse, his every inspiration. They watch him as he begins to work. A part of him now and forever.

Guido sits on the crane.

The soundstage door opens, and we see a small figure slip quietly onto the set. Tentatively, she steps through the shadows. It's Luisa. From a discreet distance, she watches her husband return to his gift.

Pierpaolo calls for silence.

PIERPAOLO (CONT'D)  
*Alora. Silencio per favore.* Silence  
please.  
(to camera)  
*Gyriamo. E alora motore!*

CLOSE UP ON THE CLAPBOARD. WORKING TITLE: NINE. DIR:  
G. CONTINI.

As the clapboard strikes.

CLAPPER LOADER

Slate.

At the last moment, Young Guido runs fast, down the  
maze of steps, across the soundstage and jumps onto the  
crane with Guido as it begins to rise. Luisa watches.  
As the last note plays, the crane soars higher,  
carrying Guido up and up.

GUIDO

ACTION.

CUT TO BLACK.