

LUKA

Did you call me?

VINCE

Yeah! Listen: do me a favour. Don't sing.

LUKA

You don't like singing?

VINCE

I like *good* singing.

LUKA

My singing isn't good?

VINCE

Nope.

LUKA

Well goodness. I always assumed I could sing.

(surprised)

A man spends his life thinking he can do things, but it takes others' opinion to set him straight.

VINCE

(Laughing with delight.)

Glad to be of service!

TERRY

One minute you're bored, now you're laughing...

VINCE

Fuck off, you parasite.

LUKA

Who's bored?

VINCE

I am!

Re-enter the BARON.

LUKA

There now! I just met a girl in the kitchen, crying over a book. I asked her what was wrong, and all she could say was that "it's so sad!". Reading sad things on purpose! How people choose to pass their time!

THE BARON

(re: ANASTASIA)

She's an idiot.

VINCE

Hey Baron! Had your medicine?

(medicine, obviously, meaning booze)

THE BARON

Yes I have.

VINCE

Still thirsty? What would you say to splitting a bottle of rye?

THE BARON

What do you think? Of course yes. What's the catch?

VINCE

Not much. Just... get on the floor and bark like a dog.

THE BARON isn't sure what to make of this.

THE BARON

What? Seriously?

VINCE

Yep. Bark. I wanna see a fancy cunt like you barking. Remember when you first got here? You thought you were so much better than everyone.

THE BARON

So what if I did?

VINCE

So that's why it'd be funny to see you bark like a dog. Come on, bitch. Bark for us!

THE BARON

(pride stung, but wanting that rye)

If I did, how does that make you feel better knowing how fucked up I am now? Wouldn't it have been funnier if you made me bark before?

TERRY

That would have been better.

LUKA

That's true!

TERRY

There's no difference between any of us. We're all the same. You're just fuckin' with one of us, Vinny.

LUKA

Yes, we're all equal. Tell me: why do they call you the Baron? Are you truly a Baron?

THE BARON

(re: LUKA)

Who's the old guy?

LUKA

Are you a land baron, or an aristocrat?  
 (a joke)  
 Or like the Red Baron, you fly airplanes!

THE BARON

I'm not... really... they just call me that.

LUKA

(Laughs)  
 I'm disappointed! I've never met a baron - not even a slightly damaged one!

VINCE

(Laughing.)  
 He got you, Baron!

THE BARON

Everyone has their day.

LUKA

This way of life you've found, my friends...

TERRY

...chaos from sun-up to night.

THE BARON

(tired old reminiscence)  
 I remember the good life in my estate on the Bridle Path;  
 lying in bed until eleven, having my coffee brought to me.  
 The greatest of times.

LUKA

Yet we are all just men! You can live in memory if you like,  
 but in the end we're all just men. We're all born, we all  
 die. People get wiser, and busier, but they live worse and  
 worse, dreaming of a fantasy future.

THE BARON

Where'd you come from, old man? You have a lot of opinions!

LUKA

Who, me?

THE BARON

You homeless?

LUKA

We're all homeless, my friend. This whole world is full of  
 people waiting to go to their true home.

THE BARON

Yeah, but do you have ID? SIN card? Health Card?

LUKA

(After a slight pause.)

Are you a policeman?

VINCE

(Delighted.)

That's it buddy, don't take his shit.

TERRY

Score a point for the old man!

THE BARON

(Taken aback.)

I'm just wondering. I haven't got those things anymore either. Reminders of a past life.

TERRY

Bullshit...

THE BARON

Well, none of it's worth anything.

LUKA

None of these things are good for anything at all...

VINCE

Baron, let's go down to Alfie's.

THE BARON

Lead on! Goodbye, old man... you're a piece of work!

LUKA

Tell me who isn't, friend...

VINCE

(impatient.)

Let's go!

VINCE exits, followed by the BARON.

LUKA

Is it true that man is a Baron?

TERRY

In Canada? I doubt it. Story is he had a job on Bay Street and a big place up in Rosedale. Then he did a stretch for fraud or something and his wife fucked off with his cash. The Baron's a name he got in the joint and it stuck, eh. His old life comes out now and then, but he's one of us.

LUKA

Class! It's like chickenpox: you get over it, but it leaves its mark...

TERRY

He's a good dude. Just don't get him talking about the old days.

RISHAAN enters, drunk and angry. He carries a battered guitar missing strings.

RISHAAN

(raucous)

Hey! You guys! Is my aunty here?

TERRY

Fuck Rishaan! Keep it down!

RISHAAN

Sorry! Sorry! I was just... I didn't mean to...

TERRY

What's up?

RISHAAN

Nothing! I just... FUCK!

TERRY

Settle down dude. What happened?

RISHAAN

I just got kicked out of 51 Division. That fuckin pig Walker told me, "I don't wanna see you busking again," just because I had a couple of drinks.

TERRY

And you don't have a permit?

RISHAAN

Yeah, well, that too. But he just hates me because he thinks I'm a fuckup. Thinks he's better than me? There's nothing he could give me I'd take. That guy could say 'hey, here's fifty bucks and a case of beer' and I'd throw it in his face. 'Hey, here's a million'.

(Sways, belligerent)

Don't want it. Not from you.

ANASTASIA comes out of the kitchen and stands in the door shaking her head at RISHAAN.

LUKA

(Good-naturedly.)

Ah, friend, why not take a rest?

TERRY

Jesus, Rishaan.

RISHAAN

(Taking LUKA's advice, lying on the floor.)

'Strue. I want nothing. I like to drink and to sing. Does that make me so bad? That bastard tells me to

(imitation)

"get out of the subway station or I'll throw you in overnight," but the next second he asks about my aunty.

(imitation)

"Did Sunita ask about me? Tell your aunt hello!" I should go jump in front of a streetcar. That'd show him. She'd hate him then! Nothing! I want nothing!

ANASTASIA

(frightened)

No, Rishaan...

RISHAAN

(On his knees before her.)

Oh! Anastasia! I don't really mean it! I just had a few drinks and...

FRÉDÉRIQUE opens the door sharply and enters.

ANASTASIA

(In a loud whisper.)

Shit!

FRÉDÉRIQUE

(To RISHAAN. Another strong Québec accent.)

You!

RISHAAN

(charmingly)

B'jour madame! Don't get mad...

FRÉDÉRIQUE

I tell you to stay out of 'ere.

RISHAAN

Madame Frédérique... I thought I'd come in to play a song. Would you like one?

FRÉDÉRIQUE

(Seizing him by the shoulder.)

Get out!

RISHAAN

Wait! No wait! I can play you a nice song! Let me play your favourite song...

FRÉDÉRIQUE

I don't want to 'ear, you little prick. I know you've been talking about me up and down ze neighbour'ood! If I see you back 'ere again... *Tabernak!*

RISHAAN

Okay! I'm going!

FRÉDÉRIQUE

(To TERRY.)

Don't let 'im back in 'ere again. Get it?

TERRY

What am I, your security guard?

FRÉDÉRIQUE

You're 'ere on my charity, don' forget. 'ow much you owe me?

TERRY

(Calmly.)

Never thought to add it up...

FRÉDÉRIQUE

You wan' me to?

RISHAAN

(Pokes his head back into the door.)

Madame Frédérique, I'm not afraid of you! Not afraid!

He runs away. LUKA laughs.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

Who are you?

LUKA

I'm nobody! A traveller. A pilgrim.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

A pilgrim, eh? For the night or longer?

LUKA

A night to start?

FRÉDÉRIQUE

(hand out, demanding)

ID?

LUKA

(evasive)

Well, yes...

FRÉDÉRIQUE

Show me.

LUKA

It's probably in my bag somewhere.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

Traveller, eh? Too proud to say 'omeless?

LUKA

(With a sigh.)

No need to be so cruel.

FRÉDÉRIQUE edges towards VINCE'S 'room'. RISHAAN pokes his head back in again.

RISHAAN

(Whispering.)

Has she gone?

FRÉDÉRIQUE

(Turning on him.)

Mother fucker!

RISHAAN gives a scream and disappears. ANASTASIA and LUKA laugh.

TERRY

(To FRÉDÉRIQUE.)

He's not home.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

Who?

TERRY

Vincent.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

Did I ask if 'e was?

TERRY

You were looking.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

To see if t'ings were tidy, okay? Why's nobody sweep out ze room yet?

TERRY

It's the Actor's turn.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

I don' care 'oose turn. What if 'ealth and safety show up? They'd shut zis place down in ten minute, zen you'd all be on ze street.

TERRY

The only way health and safety's coming down here is if you invited them.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

An' I wouldn't lose a minute's sleep.

Glances into the kitchen. To ANASTASIA, looking at a bruise on her face.

What 'appen to you? Did dat Baron 'it you again?

ANASTASIA looks hesitantly at her, but FRÉDÉRIQUE turns away before she gets an answer.

Look, somebody clean up 'ere. Anybody see my sister?

ANASTASIA

(lying defiantly)

Nope.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

And 'e... 'as 'e been 'ere?

TERRY

Vince? Yeah, he went down to the bar.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

Which? Alfie's or ze Buffalo?

TERRY

One of 'em.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

(with a roll of the eyes)

Useless. Did Vince get a new burner number? 'is old one doesn' work any more.

TERRY

How often do you think we're calling each other? The only people around here with phones are the bosses, the thieves, and the dealers. Do I look like any of them?

FRÉDÉRIQUE

You don' want me to say what you look like. T'anks for not'ing.

TERRY

Now you mention it, Camille was here. Brought in the new guy. Ran off when she got a message.

FRÉDÉRIQUE

Did I ask for 'er itinerary? Look, just clean ze place. Now.

Storms out of the room.

TERRY

Fuckin' awful woman.

LUKA

She's very serious!

ANASTASIA

Can you blame her? Anyone who puts up with a husband like hers...

LUKA

Oh! She is married to the owner? And her sister is the young woman who brought me in?

ANASTASIA

That's it. One big happy family.

TERRY

Pah! She's not forced to be with him! And she doesn't seem to have any issue with spending his money.

LUKA

Does she always storm around like that?

TERRY

Yah, that's how she is, especially when she can't find Vince.

LUKA

What can Vince do for her?

TERRY

Once upon a time, when they were fucking, anything she wanted. He's bored of her now but didn't bother letting her know.

LUKA

It's amazing how people scheme: punishing others while they risk themselves! Truly, there's no order to life.

TERRY

Everyone wants a bit of order, but not everyone's cut out for it. Hey, 'Stacey' - clean up, you heard the lady.

ANASTASIA

Don't call me that. And she told you to do it. D'I look like y'r servant?

(pause)

I gotta go score.

TERRY

Avoid Moss, I saw cops all over earlier.

LUKA

(to ANASTASIA)

Why would you do that to yourself? A moment ago you were crying, and now you want drugs?

ANASTASIA

(Loud.)

I get high, I turn tricks, and I cry... that's all I got!

TERRY

(reflective)

That's all.

LUKA

But why? You must get something from it.

ANASTASIA remains silent, shaking her head.

Nothing? Ah, what hope is there in this world? What can we possibly do?

(hopping up)

Let me help. Where's the broom?

TERRY

Behind the door in the hall.

LUKA goes to find the broom. TERRY turns to ANASTASIA.

Hey!

ANASTASIA

What?

TERRY

Why'd Fréddy freak out at Rishaan?

ANASTASIA

He was talkin' shit in the Buffalo last week.

TERRY

What's new?

ANASTASIA

Yeah but this time he was sayin' Vince had moved on to her sister.

TERRY

Isn't that exactly what he did?

ANASTASIA

Fuckin' drama, man. I can't handle it. I gotta get outta this city.

TERRY

Where'd you go?

ANASTASIA

Might hitch home to Belleville. Take my chances.

TERRY

You aren't wanted anywhere, not even in Belleville. None of us are.

ANASTASIA shakes her head. Gets up, and slowly exits.

STAN WALKER, a local uniformed policeman, enters. LUKA comes in after him with a broom. WALKER looks at LUKA. LUKA holds his gaze.

WALKER

Do I know you?

LUKA

Do you know everyone?

WALKER

Well, I like to think it's my job to know everyone in Moss Park. I've never seen you around before.

LUKA

Yes, I'm new to the city. And Moss Park isn't the whole world: there's a few other places too!

Goes into kitchen.

WALKER

(Over to TERRY.)

There are worse places, eh. Moss is like a little community. Just now I was coming out of the Dollarama and saw that kid Rishaan standing in the middle of Sherbourne screaming at cars not an hour after I'd let him walk from the holding cell: damn miracle he wasn't killed. I had to bring him back to the precinct to cool off.

(strangely hurt)

Cursed me out something fierce.

TERRY

You coming to the game tonight?

WALKER

I... think so. How's Vinny?

TERRY

Fine. Carrying on as usual. Nothing's changed.

WALKER

Carrying on?

TERRY

More power to him.

WALKER

(Doubtfully.)

You think?

LUKA goes into the passage with a bucket in his hand.

What's all this I'm hearing at Alfie's?

TERRY

People talk a lot of shit at Alfie's.

WALKER

I mean about Vince. And Frédérique.

TERRY

Oh, I heard it at the Buffalo.

(shift)

No idea what you mean, officer.

WALKER

Come on, Terry, you know what I mean. Don't see me as a policeman right now: I'm your friend.

(no reaction)

Come on, everyone knows, just tell me.

(no reaction)

Don't lie to me!

TERRY

How can I lie with my mouth shut?

WALKER

Look, I knew Vince and Frédérique were involved, but now I'm hearing Camille too? You know what trouble that will cause around here. Look, I really couldn't care less, but...

(SUNITA comes in.)

If it's going to cause shit with Moretti, I'd like to know in advance.

(noticing SUNITA. He is sweet on her.)

Oh! Sunny Sunita! It's you!

SUNITA

Ah, my handsome policeman!

(to TERRY, talking about WALKER)

Terry, you should have heard how this man talked to me outside the Good Shepherd today! What a flirt!

TERRY

(ribbing WALKER)

Make him take you to a fancy restaurant! Spend his cop money!

WALKER

(loving it)

Yeah! Spend my money!

SUNITA

Cheeky bugger! Don't you be getting any ideas: I got burned one time already. No more thank you very much! One husband is too many!

WALKER

Who said anything about husband? Just one dinner!

SUNITA

That's not the point! When my *gaandu* bastard husband die I never think I could get happier, even if it mean I had no home, no money. To marry him they send me so far from my home, and after all that I have nothing. But I was so happy he was gone even though it lead me to the shelters. Better than marriage.

WALKER

I've told you before - if your husband was violent, you should have told the police. We would have helped you.

SUNITA

I complain to God for seven years. No one listen.

WALKER

In Canada domestic violence is against the law: you had the right to report him. Here, the only place for fighting is at the rink!

LUKA leads in ĀN.

LUKA

Here we go, my dear. A few more steps and you can warm up. Fancy leaving you out in that chill! Where would you like to go?

ĀN

(She doesn't respond to his words, just his intention, in Mandarin.)

*I want to lie down here.*

SUNITA

(teasing)

She's happily married you randy dogala!

LUKA

She's very weak, creeping along the passage, holding the walls, moaning. Why was she alone?

SUNITA

Well, your majesty, the servants are on their tea break so we didn't notice...

The others laugh.

LUKA

Yes, make fun, but I still wonder how a human is so neglected? No matter who, everyone is valuable.

WALKER

(joining in to chide)

She needs to be looked after: if she dies, you'll get inspectors in here and they might find out I've been looking the other way. Think of the paperwork!

LUKA

A very good point, Sergeant.

WALKER

(flattered)

Y-yes, although... I'm not quite a sergeant yet.

LUKA

But you carry yourself so well!

Noise and scuffling in the passage. Loud cries coming from a fight. It sounds brutal. A woman screams for help. WALKER barely moves.

WALKER

Just another day in paradise, eh?

TERRY

Living the dream!

SUNITA

Go out there!

WALKER

(reluctant)

Okay, okay! No real point, though: let 'em get it out of their system. All I get for wading in are a few loose fists and a stack of paperwork. Better they resolve it themselves.

TERRY

(Getting up.)

Write a letter to the Mayor.

MORETTI cries out, throwing open the door.

MORETTI

Walker! Get out here and do your fuckin' job! It's  
Frédérique...! She'll kill her! Come on!

WALKER and TERRY rush into the  
passage. LUKA looks after them,  
shaking his head. The others listen  
to the sounds. We hear CAMILLE's  
voice clearly.

SUNITA

O Lord!... that's poor little Camille!

LUKA

Who's fighting?

SUNITA

Frédérique, beating on her sister.

LUKA

What's to be done?

SUNITA

Maybe we will get lucky and they kill each other. Coming?

LUKA declines. SUNITA leaves,  
leaving LUKA and ĀN alone. The  
sound of fighting continues  
outside.

ĀN

(Mandarin)

*Wen Li, bring me some water.*

LUKA

I don't know your language, my dear. What is your name?

ĀN

(Mandarin, staring at LUKA)

*... It seems to me... your eyes ... remind me of my father's  
... my dear father... gentle like him... and kind...*

LUKA

Rest now, my dear. Warmth will do you some good.

LUKA smiles kindly at her. The  
sound of the fight continues  
outside.