

Murder, They Wrote | Play Excerpt

La Tosca by Victorien Sardou: Act IV, Scene 4

Spoletta appears at the door

SPOLETTA: Should I go get Cavaradossi?

TOSCA: Oh, no! No!

SCARPIA: *(to Spoletta)* Wait!... *(he approaches Tosca, who recoils, and addresses her)* You have one minute to make up your mind!

TOSCA: *(cowering on the sofa)* It's all over! ... Everything is against me! ... It's over!

SCARPIA: *(whispering in her ear)* Well?

Silence.

TOSCA: *(after a pause, in a weak voice)* Yes!

She bursts into tears, and presses her face into the cushions on the sofa.

SCARPIA: *(standing up)* Captain, I've changed my mind. The executioner can go to bed. We will not hang Cavaradossi, leave him in his cell.

Spoletta turns back to the policemen who accompany him, and at his command they depart. He alone remains in the room.

TOSCA: *(quietly, to Scarpia)* I want him freed immediately.

SCARPIA: *(just as quietly)* Calm down, Tosca! We need to be more subtle than that! Here is the prince's order, which I must obey. *(showing her the paper)* My only choice in the matter is the means of execution, and we will turn that to our advantage. To everyone—excepting this man, my trusted servant—Cavaradossi must appear to be dead.

TOSCA: And you promise that afterwards... you'll help him escape?

SCARPIA: This is the order I will give. *(to Spoletta)* Spoletta, close the door! *(Spoletta does so)* Now listen carefully! Cavaradossi will not be hanged, but shot by firing squad... *(Tosca jumps up)*...in the courtyard of the Castel Sant'Angelo, just like we did with Palmieri.

SPOLETTA: So, Sir, an execution?

SCARPIA: A fake execution... Exactly like you did for Palmieri!

SPOLETTA: I understand perfectly, Sir.

SCARPIA: Get twelve men from your company, and load their guns yourself—but powder only, no bullets, and do it very carefully...

SPOLETTA: Yes, Sir.

SCARPIA: Cavaradossi will be told exactly how to play his role. He will be led to the platform, with no witnesses present but you and your men. The firing squad will shoot and he will fall to the ground as though dead. You yourself will check the body to confirm that he is dead, and that there is no need to finish the job with a pistol; then you will dismiss your men. Then, with a cloak over his shoulders and a hat pulled down over his eyes, you will lead Cavaradossi out of the castle and into the carriage which the lady here will have waiting. You'll climb into the carriage with him, and it will carry you to the city gate, which will be opened for you on my order. Once outside the city walls you'll leave them to go their own way and you will return home. I'll take care of everything else. Understand?

SPOLETTA: Yes, Sir!

SCARPIA: The guns...?

SPOLETTA: I will load them myself. Should I go do it now?

SCARPIA: Not yet! Let him wait.

TOSCA: *(in a low voice)* I want to see him, and tell him myself what we've agreed on.

SCARPIA: Very well. *(to Spoletta)* The lady may move freely about the castle and leave when she pleases. Place a man at the bottom of the stairs, he will lead her to the prison. Only after she has spoken with Cavaradossi and gotten back to her carriage will you proceed with the execution... as I explained...

SPOLETTA: I understand, Sir.

SCARPIA: Then go... Don't forget any detail. I am not to be disturbed unless I call.

Spoletta salutes and leaves, closing the door, which Scarpia immediately locks.

Murder, They Wrote | Play Excerpt (CONTINUED)

La Tosca by Victorien Sardou: Act IV, Scene 5

As the door slams shut and the bolt rattles into place, Tosca shudders and rises shakily to her feet.

SCARPIA: (*sitting back down on the couch*) Is that everything you wanted?

TOSCA: (*weakly, her voice trembling*) No!

SCARPIA: What else?

TOSCA: (*with great effort*) I want a letter of transit, which will assure us safe passage out of Rome and out of the Papal States.

SCARPIA: Fair enough!

He goes to the writing desk. Tosca approaches the dinner table and, with a trembling hand, takes Scarpia's wine glass. As she raises the glass to her lips she sees on the table a sharp knife.

SCARPIA: (*reading aloud what he has written*) "To whom it may concern: allow Madame Floria Tosca and the gentleman who accompanies her to freely leave the city of Rome and the Papal States. Signed, Vitellio Scarpia, Chief of Police of Rome." Satisfied?

He hands her the paper, which she stares at with lowered gaze. He stands beside her, very close. Tosca, pretending to read, places the glass back on the table and begins to move her hand slowly toward the knife.

TOSCA: Yes, fine.

SCARPIA: Well then, I get my reward! (*coming forward to embrace her.*)

TOSCA: Here's your reward! (*She plunges the knife into his heart.*)

SCARPIA: Oh! Curse you! (*He falls onto the sofa.*)

TOSCA: (*with a ferocious laugh*) Finally! It's done! At last! At last! Oh, it's done!

SCARPIA: Help me! I'm dying!

TOSCA: As you should, assassin! You put me through a long night of torture; now it's my turn! (*She leans over him, staring*

him in the eyes.) Look me in the eyes, you scoundrel! See me exult in your agony! And you, you coward, here you are dying at the hand of a woman! Die, animal! Die desperate and mad! Die!... Die!... Die!...

SCARPIA: (*on the sofa, grabbing the knife. He and Tosca face each other over the back of the couch, and he says in a strangled voice*) Help me! Help!

TOSCA: (*rising and going toward the door*) Scream all you want! Your blood will choke you! No one can hear you!

Scarpia makes one final effort to rise. Tosca leaps toward the sofa and grabs the knife again. They lock eyes for another moment, he dying, she full of fury. Scarpia falls back onto the sofa, groans, and slips to the floor. She places the knife on the table, coldly.

TOSCA: At last! (*She moves the candle to look at Scarpia's face. He dies.*) Now I absolve you.

Without taking her eyes off Scarpia, she wipes her fingers on the edge of the table cloth. She takes a water pitcher, dampens a napkin, and tries to wipe a spot of blood off her dress, then tosses the napkin to the floor beside the fireplace. She goes to the mirror, takes a candle, and fixes her hair.

TOSCA: And to think that a whole city used to tremble before him! (*In the distance bells begin to sound reveille.*) The bells! Dawn!... Already?

She crosses between the table and Scarpia's dead body, then blows out the candle nearest her. She takes the transit papers from the table and slips them into her dress. She listens at the door. She is about to walk out, but sees one candle is still burning. She relights the other candle and places them both on the floor on either side of the dead body. She spots a crucifix on the wall, takes it down, and places it on Scarpia's chest. She stands, opens the door quietly, and slips into the dark hallway. She listens carefully, then closes the door just as the drums in the citadel begin to sound.

Murder, They Wrote | Libretto Excerpt

“Vedi, le man giunte io stendo a te!”/“Io tenni la promessa”

(Track 1 or MOoD clips 23–24)

Someone knocks at the door

SCARPIA: Chi è là?

SPOLETTA: (*entering in a hurry*) Eccellenza, l'Angelotti al nostro giungere si uccise.

SCARPIA: Ebbene, lo si appenda morto alle forche! E l'altro prigionier?

SPOLETTA: Il cavalier Cavaradossi? È tutto pronto, eccellenza!

TOSCA: (*to herself*) Dio m'assisti!

SCARPIA: (*to Spoletta*) Aspetta. (*softly, to Tosca*) Ebbene?

Tosca nods, then bursts into tears and presses her face into the cushions on the sofa.

SCARPIA: (*to Spoletta*) Odi...

TOSCA: (*interrupting him*) Ma libero all'istante lo voglio!

SCARPIA: (*to Tosca*) Occorre simular. Non posso far grazia aperta. Bisogna che tutti abbian per morto il cavalier. (*indicating Spoletta*) Quest'uomo fido provvederà.

TOSCA: Chi m'assicura?

Who goes there?

Your honor, Angelotti killed himself as soon as we arrived.

That's just fine. Hang his dead body from the prison gate. And the other prisoner?

The Cavalier Cavaradossi? He is all ready, your honor!

God help me!

Wait. And so?

Listen...

I want him freed immediately!

We still have to put on a show of it. I can't be so obvious. Everyone needs to think that he has died. We can trust this man to make it happen...

How can I be sure?



John Macfarlane's designs for Scarpia's costume

Murder, They Wrote | Libretto Excerpt (CONTINUED)

SCARPIA: L'ordin ch'io gli darò voi qui presente. (*turning to Spoletta*) Spoletta: chiudi. (*Spoletta closes the door quickly and comes back to Scarpia.*) Ho mutato d'avviso... (*Scarpia gives Spoletta a meaningful look. He nods his head to indicate that he has guessed Scarpia's meaning.*) Il prigionier sia fucilato. (*Tosca jumps up*) Attendi... Come facemmo del conte Palmieri...

SPOLETTA: Un'uccisione...

SCARPIA: (*right away, with marked intention*) ...simulata! Come avvenne del Palmieri! Hai ben compreso?

SPOLETTA: Ho ben compreso.

SCARPIA: Va'.

TOSCA: (*who has been listening closely, interrupts*) Voglio avvertirlo io stessa.

SCARPIA: E sia. (*to Spoletta, indicating Tosca*) Le darai passo. Bada: all'ora quarta...

SPOLETTA: (*with a knowing nod*) Sì. Come Palmieri... (*He exits. Scarpia listens as Spoletta's footsteps die away. Then his features and demeanor turn lecherous as he approaches Tosca.*)

SCARPIA: Io tenni la promessa...

TOSCA: Non ancora. Voglio un salvacondotto onde fuggir dallo stato con lui.

SCARPIA: Partir dunque volete?

TOSCA: Sì, per sempre!

SCARPIA: Si adempia il voler vostro. (*Scarpia goes to his desk.*) E qual via scegliete?

TOSCA: La più breve!

SCARPIA: Civitavecchia?

TOSCA: Sì.

I will give him his orders right here in front of you. Spoletta, shut the door. I've changed my mind.

The prisoner will be shot. But wait...Just like we did for Count Palmieri.

An execution...

...a fake one! Just like what happened to Palmieri. You understand?

I know just what you mean.

Go.

I want to warn him myself.

Go ahead. Let her through. Just watch: at four o'clock...

Yes. Just like Palmieri...

I kept my end of the bargain...

Not yet. I want passports so that I can flee the country with him.

You really want to leave?

Yes, forever.

Your wish is my command. Which road will you take?

The shortest!

To Civitavecchia?

Yes.

As he writes the transit papers, Tosca approaches the dinner table and, with a trembling hand, takes Scarpia's wine glass. When she raises the glass to her lips, she notices on the table a sharp knife. She glances at Scarpia, who is focused on his writing, and very cautiously reaches toward the knife, takes it and hides it behind her as she leans against the table. She never takes her eyes off Scarpia. He finishes writing, places the seal on the letter, and then turns toward Tosca, opening his arms to embrace her.

Murder, They Wrote | Libretto Excerpt (CONTINUED)

“Io tenni la promessa”

(Track 2 or MOoD clip 24)

SCARPIA: Tosca, finalmente mia!... *(His lustful boast suddenly changes into a terrible scream—Tosca has plunged the knife into his chest)* Maledetta!

TOSCA: Questo è il bacio di Tosca!

SCARPIA: *(with a strangled voice)* Aiuto! Muoio! *(He sways on his feet and tries to grab Tosca, but she steps back, horrified.)* Soccorso! Muoio!

TOSCA: *(with hatred in her voice)* Ti soffoca il sangue? *(Scarpia tries to pull himself upright, grabbing the sofa.)* E ucciso da una donna! M'hai assai torturata!... Odi tu ancora? Parla!... Guardami!... Son Tosca!... o Scarpia!

SCARPIA: Soccorso, aiuto! Muoio! *(Choking on blood, he makes one final effort to rise, then falls back, dead.)*

TOSCA: *(leaning over Scarpia)* Muori dannato! Muori, Muori! È morto! Or gli perdono!

Without taking her eyes off the dead body, Tosca goes to the table, takes a carafe of water, and, wetting the tablecloth, uses it to wipe off her fingers. She gazes into the mirror and fixes her hair. She remembers the transit papers. She searches for them on the desk but can't find them. She looks around—then she sees them, in Scarpia's clenched hand. She kneels down, lifts his arm, takes the papers, and lets his arm fall, limp and lifeless, back onto the floor.

TOSCA: E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma!

She heads toward the door, then thinks for a moment and goes to take the two candles that stand on the mantelpiece and lights them at the candelabra on the table, which she then extinguishes. She places a lighted candle at each side of Scarpia's head. She looks around once again, takes a crucifix from the wall, and, carrying it solemnly, kneels to place it on Scarpia's chest. Drums sound in the distance. Tosca rises and walks out of the room, carefully closing the door behind her.

Tosca is finally mine!

Damn you!

This is Tosca's kiss!

Help! I'm dying!

Help me!

I'm dying!

Are you choking on your own blood?

Killed by a woman!

You tortured me so much! Can you still hear me? Speak!

Look at me! I am Tosca, Scarpia!

Help! Help! I'm dying!

Die, you devil! Die! Die!

He's dead! Now I forgive him!

All of Rome covered before him!