

(Also in the room is a tin wash bucket with cleaning tools sticking out of it and a stack of folded towels. Clearly the maids didn't do a very good job of finishing their work.)

(The time is late afternoon on a beautiful fall day.)

(As the curtain rises, the room is empty and we hear an excerpt from Act Two of Puccini's La Bohème — the section towards the end of Musetta's waltz where all the voices intertwine with passion — coming from a radio in the corner.)

(After a beat, Henry Saunders hurries in through the front door. Saunders is in his early fifties and wears a business suit. He looks around the room, exasperated, then he turns off the radio and dials the telephone.)

(When the phone is answered, he speaks French with the misplaced bravado of a man who continues to believe the encouragement of his high school French teacher.)

SAUNDERS. *Bonjour. Je suis Henry Saunders. Oui, c'est moi. C'est vrai, c'est moi. C'est vrai. S'il vous plaît, je veux parler avec Monsieur Max, le ténor. Merci. J'll wait.*

(He sees the wash bucket and picks it up with distaste; into phone.)

Max! Get up here! I don't care if you're rehearsing, I need some help. The concert starts in three hours and Tito isn't here yet. And look at this place. Nothing's ready for him! There's all this food to put out, we need to check the bathrooms to make sure they're clean, you know the French, and oh my God, the maids have left some underwear on the floor.

(He picks up panties and hose from the floor and stuffs them into his pocket.)

What kind of hotel is this?! Yes I know I chose it, but I shouldn't have to stuff underwear into... Because I'm

the producer! I was the Mayor of Cleveland! Now get the hell up here!

(He slams the phone down and starts to clean up the room, talking to himself as he goes.)

The biggest concert in the history of opera, and I'm taking the cellophane off the cold cuts. What's this?

(He picks up something from the buffet table and it turns out to be a whole tongue; he juggles it with disgust.)

Ahhh! It's a tongue! Uchh! Oh my God. What's the matter with these French? They'd eat the wax off the linoleum if it had vinaigrette on it.

(As he puts the tongue back on the table, there is a knock on the front door. Knock, knock, knock.)

Come in!

(He pulls the door open and MAX enters, out of breath. MAX is in his mid-30s.)

Max!

MAX. Mr. Saunders.

SAUNDERS. What took you so long?

MAX. No Tito yet?

SAUNDERS. Tito Merelli? Has he ever been on time in his life?

MAX. Sir, he is the most famous opera singer in the world.

SAUNDERS. And does that mean he gets to keep me waiting?

MAX. Well, sort of. Maybe his plane is late.

SAUNDERS. Well that would be a novel excuse. The last time he didn't show up was because of his drinking and womanizing.

MAX. Sir, I'm in rehearsal. You're paying an orchestra and it's downstairs waiting for me.

SAUNDERS. Max, I need some help up here! You were my assistant for ten years. Have you forgotten ten years of your life? Do you have amnesia or something?