

PIZZA WARS

By Megan Orr

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CHARACTERS (4M, 4W; 14 extras)
(In order of appearance)

PAPA (NICCOLO) MARIANO: Age 50; runs a successful Pizzeria as both businessman and cook; tall, broad; dark eyes, hair, and mustache; intelligent, hard-working, friendly, well-liked; always smiling; everyone who comes into the Pizzeria seems to know him; very proud of his family and of his heritage; came to Philadelphia as an immigrant when he was twenty; thick Italian accent

MAMA (MARIANA) MARIANO: Age 45; helps Papa run the Pizzeria; known for her incredible "secret sauce;" long dark hair, dark eyes, dark complexion; a robust, red-cheeked, "healthy-sized" woman; an excellent cook who can never let anyone leave hungry; everyone's "Mama;" came to Philadelphia as a young bride of 15; thick Italian accent, but not as thick as Papa's

VICTOR BERTINI: Age 48; Papa Mariano's good friend and lawyer; dark eyes, hair, and mustache; dark, thick eyebrows; somber, stoical, deep-voiced; a Eugene Levy-type; eats lunch everyday at the Pizzeria for half-price; orders the same thing everyday; his favorite food is pepperoni; thick Italian accent

TONY (ANTONIO) MARIANO: Age 24; Papa's younger and "favorite" son (according to Tony); born in the US; works as a waiter and busser and occasionally as dishwasher (but hates it) in the Pizzeria; dark hair and eyes; a baby face; outgoing, carefree, cheerful, charming, but lazy, hates hard work, and has a tendency to let other people do his work for him; single and enjoying it; a flirt

BERTO (ROBERTO) MARIANO: Age 26; Papa's elder son; born in the US; works as a salad/dessert cook, dishwasher, and occasionally as waiter (but hates it) in the Pizzeria; dark hair and dark complexion; rarely clean-shaven; intelligent, intense, hard-working, but more withdrawn than his outgoing younger brother; after six years of dating, engaged to be married to Adriana DeGarmo on June 15th; having a difficult time giving up bachelorhood; also has a difficult time with mother-in-law Michelle, who prefers Tony to Berto

DANIELLE BERELLI: Age 21; a college junior who is putting herself through school by working as a nighttime waitress at a coffee shop; often spends her lunch hour in the Pizzeria with her books because she secretly has a crush on Tony; pretty, but not in a stand-out way; chin-length, curly blond hair and wire-rim glasses; a good listener, intelligent, sweet, soft-spoken, well-read; a good student who is studying to become a nurse

ADRIANA DEGARMO: Age 25; engaged to be married to Berto; stunningly beautiful; friendly, sweet-tempered, and generally very understanding; appreciates Berto's intense, quiet side; can be overly sensitive at times and lets her mother run her life; waited patiently for many years for Berto to finally ask her to marry him; good friends with Tony as well; a blossoming singer and actress

MICHELLE DEGARMO: Age 48; Adriana's mother; as outgoing and as talkative as her daughter, but has a tendency to be loud, to blow everything out of proportion, and to speak her mind freely; controlling, air of affectation; hates to see Adriana and Berto show affection and won't allow it; wary of her incommunicative, brooding son-to-be; prefers Tony's flattery and charming ways; a former actress and singer whose sole goal in life now is to manage her daughter's life and career

Various DINERS:

DINER ONE (male; serious) - speaking part

DINER TWO (male; "Bruce"; a jokester) - speaking part

DINER THREE (female) - non-speaking part

DINER FOUR (female; "Mrs. Pamatessa"; concerned) - speaking part

DINER FIVE (male; "Mr. Pamatessa"; matter-of-fact) - speaking part

DINER SIX (male; "Mr. Mannetti") - speaking part

DINER SEVEN (male; laid-back) - speaking part

DINER EIGHT (female) - non-speaking part

DINER NINE (male) - non-speaking part

DINER TEN (female) - non-speaking part

PAINTER

THREE "COOKS" (*approx. age 11 or 12*)

THE SET

Set instructions

All of the scenes occur in Papa Mariano's Pizzeria. To enter the restaurant, a person may enter from one of two doors, one at downstage left and one at downstage right. The space between the doors is the restaurant's window front. For staging purposes, the doors and the window are imaginary. A counter with stools stretches across the majority of upstage, and four round tables with chairs are set up around the rest of the stage, two on each side and staggered so that both tables may be easily viewed by the audience (See Stage Lay-out Charts in Appendix). The kitchen (offstage) may be entered from one of two doors set upstage at the end of either side of the counter. The decor of the restaurant is classic Italian, with plenty of red, white, and green. Tables are covered with red-and-white-checked tablecloths. The shelf on the wall behind the counter is lined with clear, corked, glass jars of different sizes and shapes containing bright red and green (preserved) vegetables. Above the shelf is a wide sign with "Papa Mariano's Pizzeria" written across it in large, red or green letters (a neon sign would be best, if possible).

Dinner-theatre option

The subject matter of this play naturally lends itself to the dinner-theatre genre. In this case, the audience/diners will sit at tables that look identical to the tables in Papa Mariano's Pizzeria but are actually set slightly back from the tables that are used in the play.

Three-course Meal

Recommended serving times and items include a salad at the beginning of Act I, pizza or some other Italian main course at the beginning of Act II, and dessert at the beginning of Act III. Between Acts, non-active cast members or waiters and waitresses may remove plates, refill glasses, and bring out the next course.

Four-course Meal

Recommended serving times and items include appetizer or soup at the beginning of Act I, Scene 1; salad at the beginning of Act II, Scene 1; pizza or some other Italian main course at the beginning of Act II, Scene 3; and dessert at the beginning of Act III, Scene 3. Between Acts and scenes, non-active cast members or waiters and waitresses may remove plates, refill glasses, and bring out the next course.

*Plastic cutlery may easily be used rather than metal, if desired.

Lighting instructions

Only standard indoor lighting is needed; fade in and outs occur only at the beginnings and endings of each scene.

PIZZA WARS
by
Megan Orr

Time: Early April

Setting: Papa Mariano's Pizzeria in the Italian section of Philadelphia known as "Little Italy"

ACT I, SCENE 1

SETTING: Papa Mariano's Pizzeria (see set description p. 2 and Stage Layout Chart in appendix)

Lights rise on a bustling restaurant scene. MAMA stands beside a table of diners, a bowl of spaghetti sauce in her hands, asking them if they'd like a little more sauce. TONY easily shifts from waiter to busser and back to waiter, stacking all his dirty dishes on the stage right side of the counter. His charming smile never wavers. BERTO occasionally pops out of the stage right kitchen door, his brow furrowed deep in thought, takes an armload of TONY's dishes, and returns to the kitchen quickly. PAPA stands behind the counter talking loudly and gesturing broadly to some diners sitting on the stools. One of the diners is VICTOR.

PAPA: . . . and so . . . and so I told him, "You no make a fun of my family o' you no eat a here."
And he never eat here again. Because a family, that is what is important, no?

(Just as PAPA is finishing speaking, MAMA leaves diners and crosses to behind the counter beside PAPA.)

MAMA: Bravo, Papa! Bravo! I am proud to have such a man as my husband. More dipping sauce, anyone?

DINER ONE: I'll take some more. That's some of the best pizza sauce I've ever tasted. Think you could give my wife the recipe?

MAMA: *(serving him)* Sorry. It's an old family secret.

(MAMA turns to VICTOR.)

MAMA: *(cont'd)* More sauce, Victor?

VICTOR: Ah, no. No more sauce for me. But perhaps you have a few more pepperoni to spare, yes?

PAPA: But, Victor, your pizza is already covered in pepperoni. Why, I cannot even see the cheese!

VICTOR: Pepperoni, it's . . . it's a good stuff.

MAMA: *(shrugging)* If it's a pepperoni he wants, then it's a pepperoni he gets. I'll be right a back.

PAPA: Oh, and Mama? Could you make a me some pepperoni pizza as well?

MAMA: Of course, Papa, of course. Coming right up.

PAPA: Thank you, Mama.

(MAMA exits through upstage right kitchen door. PAPA turns to the diners, as if speaking confidentially.)

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PAPA: (cont'd) Now she, she is a good wife. A very good wife. And her pizza sauce! (He kisses the tips of his right hand fingers and spreads them away from his face.) Magnifico!

(Just as PAPA finishes speaking, TONY swoops by the counter, drops off his stack of dishes, and moves back toward one of the tables at downstage right, pulling a waiter's notepad from his pocket. PAPA watches the action with a furrowed brow.)

PAPA: (cont'd) Hmm . . . Excuse a me, boys. I have a some business to attend to.

(PAPA grabs a dishtowel from the counter and, wiping his hands off, moves from behind the counter to downstage right. TONY has already begun taking the orders of DINERS TWO and THREE.)

TONY: All right. Two slices of the Italiano Supremo, no olives. And for you, ma'am?

PAPA: Tony? Tony, may I have a word with you?

TONY: (surprised) Papa, I'm in the middle of taking an order here.

PAPA: That is okay. I know what they're having. The usual, right, Bruce?

(DINER TWO nods and DINERS TWO and THREE hand their menus to TONY. PAPA places his hands on TONY's shoulders and directs him toward his stack of dirty dishes on the counter.)

TONY: Wow, Papa! You *do* know everybody in town!

PAPA: Ah, well. When you have been in business for thirty years, you will know everybody in town too. *If* you are still in business.

TONY: What do you mean, Papa?

PAPA: Tony, look at this mess. You know where dirty dishes are supposed to go. In the back. To the dishwasher. Why do you leave them here all over my nice clean counter?

TONY: Well, Papa, Berto and I worked out a deal.

PAPA: A deal?

TONY: Yeah. Berto, you know how he hates serving. Doesn't like to talk to people. So I told him I would do all the serving if he did my dishes for me. We split the tips and everything is all right, right?

PAPA: Wrong. Tony, I want my children to be obedient to their Papa—

TONY: But, Papa—

PAPA: --and so when I give you a job to do, I want to see it done right.

TONY: But, Papa—

PAPA: Now I want you to take all these dishes back to the dishwasher.

TONY: Yes, Papa.

PAPA: And, Tony?

TONY: Yes, Papa?

PAPA: Obedience means no interrupting.

TONY: (with a sigh) Yes, Papa.

(TONY sets the menus on the countertop and stuffs his waiter's notebook into his apron pocket. He takes an armload of dishes.)

PAPA: And while you're back there, Tony, send Berto out, would you?

TONY: (glumly) Yes, Papa.

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(TONY exits through stage right kitchen door just as MAMA reenters stage left kitchen door, a plate of pizza and a stick of uncut pepperoni in her hand.)

MAMA: Ah, there you are, Papa! Here is your pizza. Sit! Sit down and eat!

PAPA: Yes, yes, I will, Mama. I will. In just a moment.

(PAPA slowly takes a seat on a stool at upstage center, facing the audience. His movements reveal that he is not feeling as young as he used to. He looks as though he is very deeply contemplating an idea. Meanwhile, MAMA sets PAPA's plate of pizza down on counter at upstage right. She then crosses to upstage left side of counter, pulls out a knife and wooden cutting board, and turns to VICTOR.)

MAMA: Now just how much a pepperoni did you want, Victor?

(VICTOR's eyes light up and he reaches for the stick of pepperoni.)

VICTOR: Yes. I think that would be enough right there.

MAMA: *(shocked)* You mean you want the entire thing?

VICTOR: *(takes the pepperoni)* Thank you very much, Mama Mariano.

MAMA: You're . . . very welcome. But, Victor, the next time you order a pepperoni pizza . . .

VICTOR: Yes, Mama?

MAMA: Just make sure you specify no pizza.

(MAMA shakes her head and begins to put the knife and cutting board away. BERTO, wearing a long, stained white apron, pops his head out of the stage right kitchen door.)

BERTO: Papa? Tony said you wanted to see to me?

PAPA: Ah! Berto. Yes. We must talk. Come over here and sit next to your Papa.

BERTO: But, Papa, I've got lots of dishes to do.

PAPA: Don't worry about the dishes. Tony will take care of them.

BERTO: *(raising an eyebrow)* You sure about that?

(BERTO wipes his hands on his apron and takes a seat on a stool next to PAPA. MAMA exits into kitchen through upstage left.)

PAPA: Berto, why do you no like a to talk to people? The people here, they are very nice people.

BERTO: Yeah, I know, Papa. It's just . . .

PAPA: It's just a what?

BERTO: It's just a lot harder to find time to think when you always have to talk.

(PAPA reaches for a pitcher of ice water on the counter and pours himself a glass. TONY again enters stage from upstage left kitchen door and resumes taking orders upstage left from DINERS FOUR and FIVE.)

PAPA: And what sort of things do you think about, my son?

BERTO: Oh, I don't know. All sorts of stuff. Ways we could speed things up in the kitchen or a new pizza topping we could try putting on the menu . . .

PAPA: You always think about the restaurant?

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BERTO: *(smiling sheepishly)* You know I don't, Papa.

PAPA: Ah, yes. I am sure you spend a good many thoughts on that beautiful young fiancée of yours. And that is all right, Berto. It is good to think of her often. It will make your love for her grow stronger. But, Berto, sometimes there are things going on here in the restaurant that need your full attention. We cannot give our customers poor service because you want to think about your Adriana.

BERTO: *(with a sigh)* I know, Papa. I guess I've just never been much of a talker.

(Suddenly the table at upstage left bursts out laughing. TONY has just finished telling a joke. TONY resumes taking orders with a grin.)

BERTO: *(cont'd)* *(wryly)* Unlike some of us.

(MAMA reenters from upstage right kitchen door. She stops suddenly upon seeing the untouched plate of pizza and casts a disapproving look at PAPA.)

MAMA: Papa! Your pizza! It's a getting cold!

PAPA: All right, Mama, all right.

(PAPA slowly stands. DANIELLE enters downstage left and takes a seat at the downstage left table, setting a thick nursing book on the table beside her. She studies the menu, shifting shy glances from the menu to TONY and back again.)

PAPA: *(cont'd)* We will finish this talk another time. But for now, why don't you tell Tony that I want him to do dishes while you take orders for a while, all right?

BERTO: *(with a sigh)* All right, Papa.

PAPA: That's a good boy. You'll do fine.

(PAPA, water glass in hand, crosses to the upstage right side of the counter and takes a seat. MAMA pushes the plate closer to him and hovers over him. BERTO, with a sigh, begins untying his apron as he exits upstage right kitchen door. TONY walks over to DANIELLE's table at downstage left.)

TONY: *(smoothly)* Hello there. My name's Tony, and it appears I'll have the pleasure of serving you today. Can I get you something to drink?

DANIELLE: Uh, yes. I'll . . . I'll take an ice water.

TONY: *(makes a note on his notepad)* Ah! The healthy choice. But what else should I expect from someone studying to be a nurse?

DANIELLE: *(surprised and flattered)* How . . . how did you know?

TONY: *(winking)* Your books.

DANIELLE: *(looking down sheepishly)* Oh.

(TONY leans on the back of the chair across from DANIELLE, gazing at her charmingly.)

TONY: You seem very familiar. Have we met before?

DANIELLE: No, I . . . I don't think so. I do come here a lot, though. Usually I . . . sit over on the other side. By the window.

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(BERTO reenters from upstage right kitchen door, fumbling with the strings as he tries to tie on a waiter's half apron. He crosses to TONY. MAMA collects a few dirty dishes from some nearby tables and exits upstage left kitchen door.)

TONY: Ah, yes! I remember seeing you now. And always studying so hard. Do you...have a name or will I have to resort to calling you the Study Bug forever?

DANIELLE: *(smiling shyly)* My name's Danielle.

TONY: *(reaching out his hand to shake)* A pleasure to meet you, Danielle.

(DANIELLE extends her hand and TONY quickly kisses it instead of shaking it. She smiles and looks away embarrassed. BERTO suddenly taps TONY on the shoulder. TONY turns.)

TONY: *(cont'd)* *(to BERTO)* Yes?

BERTO: *(awkwardly)* Uh, Tony, Papa wants us to . . . uh, switch places for a little while.

TONY: What do you mean? I already took all my dishes back.

BERTO: I know. But Papa wants me to take orders for awhile, so you'll . . . have to go do dishes.

TONY: Oh, come on! You know I'm a much better server than you are.

BERTO: *(shrugging)* Papa's orders. I don't like it any better than you do.

(TONY glares at BERTO for a moment.)

TONY: Fine.

(TONY slams his notepad against BERTO's chest and stalks back to the kitchen through upstage right door. BERTO fumbles with the notepad.)

BERTO: *(to DANIELLE)* Uh, let's see. One water, right? Give me just a second.

(BERTO begins moving toward the counter just as ADRIANA and MRS. DEGARMO enter the restaurant through the downstage right door. ADRIANA calls to BERTO from across the restaurant, holding up a brown paper bag.)

ADRIANA: Berto! There you are! Wait until you see what we've found!

BERTO: *(looks up)* Adriana?

(ADRIANA rushes over to BERTO. MRS. DEGARMO follows behind at a stately pace.)

ADRIANA: Oh, Berto! Mama found the most perfect material for my dress! Wait until you see it!

BERTO: *(somewhat unenthusiastically)* Wow. That's . . . that's great, Adriana.

(ADRIANA and BERTO meet at center stage in front of the counter. BERTO leans in to give ADRIANA a hug. MRS. DEGARMO quickly steps between them from behind.)

MRS. DEGARMO: Now, now! You know how I abhor public displays of affection. *(to BERTO)* Good afternoon, Roberto.

BERTO: *(rolling his eyes)* Good afternoon to you too, Mrs. DeGarmo.

ADRIANA: Mama, may I show Berto the material? Please?

MRS. DEGARMO: Oh . . . all right. But do so quickly or we'll be late for our pedicure appointment.

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ADRIANA: Yes, Mama. *(to BERTO)* Wait until you see it!

(ADRIANA twines her arm through BERTO's and leads him to DANIELLE's table at downstage left. MRS. DEGARMO watches them go with little interest then looks around the restaurant with disgust. BERTO suddenly pulls away from ADRIANA and backs up toward the counter, reaching for the pitcher of ice water and a couple of glasses.)

BERTO: Uh, Adriana, I'm . . . kind of in the middle of serving customers here.

MRS. DEGARMO: *(directing him back toward ADRIANA)* Now, Roberto. You take a look at that fabric my daughter is so eager to show you. I'm sure your customers will understand. A person only gets married once!

BERTO: Oh, all right. But it'll have to be quick.

ADRIANA: Of course! It'll only take a minute.

(ADRIANA smiles at DANIELLE as the two move the items on the table aside. ADRIANA brushes off the table and begins to pull white fabric from the brown bag. Flipping through his notepad, BERTO picks up a pitcher of ice water and begins to pour a glass. He checks his notepad again as he does so.)

BERTO: *(under his breath)* Okay. Ice water for table four, two lemonades for table two . . .

ADRIANA: *(spreads the fabric across the table)* See? Isn't it beautiful?

BERTO: Huh?

(At the sound of her voice, BERTO's head jerks up from the notepad and his arm shifts. Instead of pouring the water into the glass, he is now pouring the water onto ADRIANA's fabric. ADRIANA and MRS. DEGARMO gasp and speak simultaneously.)

ADRIANA: Berto!

MRS. DEGARMO: Roberto!

(ADRIANA quickly snatches up the fabric while BERTO yanks the pitcher away in shock.)

BERTO: *(setting the pitcher down)* Adriana, I'm . . . I'm sorry. I didn't mean to—

(MRS. DEGARMO snatches the fabric away from ADRIANA.)

MRS. DEGARMO: You thoughtless, thoughtless boy! How could you do such a thing?

BERTO: I'm sorry!

MRS. DEGARMO: Sorry? I'll tell you what is sorry! I think it's sorry that my poor daughter is marrying someone as . . . as sorry as you!

ADRIANA: Mama!

MRS. DEGARMO: Now, now, Adriana. I will handle this. *(to BERTO)* Six years my daughter waited. Six long years for you to finally ask her to be your wife. And this is how her patience is repaid? You ruin her dress?

BERTO: Mrs. DeGarmo, I swear, it was an accident!

(PAPA suddenly begins to cough, quietly at first, then increasing in volume. MAMA pokes her head in through upstage left kitchen door, then crosses to him in concern.)

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MRS. DEGARMO: Ha. The only accident was that Adriana met you before she met your sweet brother Tony. *(to ADRIANA)* I'm sure *he* wouldn't have been so clumsy. *(to BERTO)* And another thing—

(MRS. DEGARMO is interrupted by MAMA's sudden shrill cry.)

MAMA: Papa! Somebody help! Papa, he is a choking!

(Every head in the restaurant turns toward PAPA, who is grasping his throat in classic choking posture and coughing harshly and loudly. Several DINERS jump to their feet and run over to PAPA to "help," only getting in the way. The volume in the restaurant rises to a feverish pitch with MAMA's cries and diners responding in shock and fear. BERTO moves toward PAPA.)

BERTO: Papa, breathe! Breathe!

DINER ONE: *(to DINERS TWO and THREE)* It must have been the pepperoni!

VICTOR: *(to DINER ONE)* No! No, that's impossible! It . . . it couldn't have been the pepperoni!

(PAPA lets out several more guttural noises as BERTO pushes through the crowd.)

BERTO: Everybody step back! Let me through!

VICTOR: Berto, believe me, it wasn't the pepperoni!

TONY: *(suddenly pokes his head out of the upstage left kitchen door)* Hey! What's with all the noise?

(PAPA, still choking hard, falls off his stool onto the floor.)

DANIELLE: It's your father! He's choking!

TONY: Papa? Oh no! *(yanks off his apron and runs around the stage left corner of the counter to center stage)*

MRS. DEGARMO: *(to ADRIANA)* Oh good! Tony's here. Maybe something will actually get accomplished.

TONY: *(watching helplessly)* Berto! Do something!

(BERTO tries to lift PAPA so he can put his arms around his waist, but PAPA struggles uncontrollably.)

BERTO: *(to TONY; through gritted teeth)* I'm . . . trying! Go . . . call an ambulance!

TONY: An ambulance? Oh! Right!

(TONY races back around the left corner of the counter and pulls phone out from underneath counter. He begins dialing frantically. MAMA is now hovering over BERTO and PAPA. Others crowd in behind them. The lights begin to fade. PAPA slowly stops struggling. The diners on stage grow quiet.)

BERTO: Come on, Papa!

MAMA: Papa, breathe! . . . Papa? . . . Papa?!

(The stage goes black.)

VICTOR: I'm telling you, it wasn't the pepperoni!

End of Scene.

Do Not Copy

ACT I, SCENE 2

SETTING: Papa Mariano's Pizzeria (See Stage Lay-out Chart in appendix)

Lights rise. All the diners have left. MAMA is seated facing the audience at a round table near center stage. TONY is standing left of her, a comforting arm around her shoulder. BERTO, with a plastic bus bin, collects empty dishes from downstage right. VICTOR is still sitting on a stool at the stage-left side of the counter, his head resting on the countertop looking away from the audience. ADRIANA and MRS. DEGARMO talk quietly beside the stage-right side of the counter. Everyone is dressed in black, except for MRS. DEGARMO, who sports a stylish black and white striped suit with hat and gloves. She begins to remove her gloves as she speaks.

MRS. DEGARMO: (to ADRIANA) I must say, it was a very nice funeral at least. And I should know! I've been to my share of bad ones, but this one was very nice. And it gave me an excuse to buy a new outfit!

ADRIANA: Mother, really!

MRS. DEGARMO: (completely clueless) What?

(ADRIANA lets out an exasperated breath, shakes her head, and walks over toward BERTO. MRS. DEGARMO shrugs and continues to remove her hat. When she is finished, she carefully brushes off a stool, daintily takes a seat, pulls out a compact, and begins to powder her nose and reapply her makeup, keeping her busy for the majority of the scene.)

MAMA: (to TONY) What am I going to do now, Tony? What?

TONY: Don't worry, Mama. Berto and I will take care of you.

MAMA: But what about this place?

TONY: Well...maybe we can—

BERTO: (sets the bus pan down with a bang) We stay in business. Papa would have wanted it.

TONY: Well, Berto, that's a nice thought, but it might not be your decision to make.

BERTO: (eyes narrowing) What do you mean?

TONY: (stuffs his hands in his pockets, with a shrug) Papa might have left the restaurant to me.

BERTO: To you? Ha! That's a joke.

(BERTO turns back to his bus pan. TONY casually crosses to BERTO.)

TONY: Why? I'm the one with the people skills.

BERTO: (without looking up) And absolutely no business sense whatsoever.

TONY: Well, at least I was trying to get to know the customers, and not just hiding out in the back—

BERTO: (finishing his sentence) --working? Oh no. You never do that.

TONY: (ignoring BERTO) Besides, I was Papa's favorite son.

BERTO: (whirls around) Says who?

MAMA: (stands up wearily) Boys! Please! Your Papa has been buried only minutes, and already you two are fighting! I will not allow it.

(TONY moves away from BERTO.)

MAMA: (cont'd) There is only one way to settle this. We read the will.

(MAMA walks over to stage-left side of counter where VICTOR is still sitting.)

TONY: *(to MAMA, but looking at BERTO with a cocky expression)* Yeah. That's a great idea, Mama. Let's read the will.

(TONY follows MAMA to the counter. BERTO rolls his eyes and continues picking up dishes. MAMA gives VICTOR a businesslike tap on the arm.)

MAMA: Victor? Victor, wake up.

TONY: Mama, what are you doing? I thought we were going to read the will.

MAMA: *(turns to face TONY)* We are. Victor, he is the executor of your Papa's will.

TONY: *(incredulous)* Victor?

MAMA: Yes. Victor. He was not only your Papa's very good friend, but he is also a very good lawyer.

TONY: *(still incredulous)* Victor??

(MAMA turns back around to see VICTOR still sleeping.)

MAMA: Victor! Wake up!

(MAMA shakes VICTOR'S shoulder. VICTOR wakes suddenly and sucks in a deep breath of air. He grasps the countertop and looks around frantically.)

VICTOR: Wha--? What happened? Where did it go?!

TONY: What? Where did what go?

VICTOR: It was a right a here! I saw it! A giant pepperoni!

(TONY gives MAMA a dubious look.)

VICTOR: *(cont'd)* *(with a sigh of regret)* But it was probably only a dream. Ah well.

MAMA: Victor. It is time.

VICTOR: Time? Time for what? Ah, yes! It is time!

(VICTOR quickly jumps to his feet and picks up a briefcase that has been sitting on the floor beside him. Very businesslike, he walks behind the counter to the center, sets the briefcase down on the countertop, and begins to pull out papers. During the course of BERTO and ADRIANA's conversation, he also pulls out strange knickknacks and sets them up on the counter as though he is setting up his desk at an office. MAMA and TONY watch VICTOR curiously. TONY even tries to touch an item, receiving a hand slap from VICTOR. Meanwhile, BERTO, who paused to watch the waking of VICTOR, continues to slowly collect dishes. ADRIANA tentatively reaches out and touches his elbow.)

ADRIANA: Hey. Are you okay?

BERTO: Yeah. I'll . . . I'll be fine. I just want to get this place cleaned up and back in business. *(under his breath)* And the first order of business will be to fire my sweet brother Tony.

(There is a brief pause.)

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ADRIANA: Berto, do you really think your father left the restaurant to you?

BERTO: Well . . . yeah. Of course. I'm the oldest. Why wouldn't he leave the place to me?

ADRIANA: (*tentatively*) I don't know. I was just thinking . . . if the restaurant becomes yours, that probably means you'll be very busy. Even busier than you have been. Right?

BERTO: (*tiredly*) Adriana, I don't know. But, yes, most likely I'll be very busy.

ADRIANA: (*quietly*) Too busy to plan the rest of our wedding?

(BERTO pauses and turns to ADRIANA, a tired smile on his face.)

BERTO: Adriana . . .

(BERTO takes ADRIANA's hands in his.)

BERTO: (cont'd) You know nothing will ever be as important to me as you are.

ADRIANA: I know, Berto, but . . . it just seems like I never get to see you anymore. Our wedding is in two months, and there's still so much left to do . . .

BERTO: And it will all get done. I promise.

(BERTO shoots a quick glance at MRS. DEGARMO and leans in to give ADRIANA a kiss on the forehead. VICTOR thumps a stack of papers on the countertop, gathering them into a neat pile.)

VICTOR: (*loudly*) Attention, please! May I have your attention? It is now my great honor and privilege to read the last will and testament of my dear friend Niccolo Mariano. Please! May I have your attention?

MAMA: Victor. We are all listening.

VICTOR: Ah! Yes. I see. Very good. Well . . . then let us begin. (*pulls a pair of reading glasses from his suit pocket and puts them on. He begins to read the paper in his hands*) "I, Niccolo Luigi Fortunato Mariano the third, do hereby will and bequeath the following of my worldly possessions:" (*flips to the next page*) "To my dear second cousin Eduardo I leave my tool kit with the thirty-two bit drill, my coin collection, and my wax miniature of Richard Nixon that he always admired; to my kind neighbor Signor Vincenzo, I leave my hedge clippers and the materials to build that fence he always wanted but that I never had a chance to put up; to that nice boy who delivers the mail, I leave—"

TONY: Excuse me, Mr. Bertini? Are you on the right page?

VICTOR: What? (*looks down at the paper in his hands*) Ah! You are right! This is page thirty-five! Thank you, Tony. (*to MAMA*) Quite a bright boy you are raising. Very sharp. Would make a fine lawyer.

MAMA: Oh, why thank you. His papa always said he had a very quick wit.

MRS. DEGARMO: (*to ADRIANA*) There, you see! Sweet and intelligent!

BERTO: I'd hate to break up this meeting of the Tony fan club, but could we get on with reading the will?

VICTOR: (*gives BERTO a befuddled look*) And may I ask who are you? Some distant relative of Niccolo perhaps?

BERTO: (*deadpan*) I'm Berto. Niccolo's son. The older.

VICTOR: Oh, yes! That is right. I forgot he had the other son.

TONY: (*with a laugh*) Let's just hope Papa didn't forget!

MAMA: Victor, could you please just tell us what happens to the restaurant?

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VICTOR: Oh! Of course, of course! The restaurant. *(begins to frantically flip through his stack of papers that make up "the will", suddenly he slams his finger down on one of the pages)*
Here it is! *(silently skims the paper)*

BERTO: *(tensely)* Well? What does it say?

VICTOR: *(suddenly hugs the paper to his chest, tearfully)* Oh! What a sweet, wonderful man!

TONY: What? What does it say?

VICTOR: He is leaving me a year's supply of the pepperoni! How can I ever repay him?

BERTO: *(losing patience)* But what about the restaurant?

VICTOR: Oh, yes! The restaurant. *(again begins tearing through the papers)*

MRS. DEGARMO: Well, I know what I plan to do with this dump if Niccolo had the sense to leave it to me.

BERTO: You?? What in the name of all things decent makes you think my Papa would have left the restaurant to you?

TONY: *(playing devil's advocate)* What would you do with it?

MRS. DEGARMO: I would sell it.

BERTO: You would sell my family's restaurant??

MRS. DEGARMO: But of course. You don't really think I want my family name attached to a dirty little place like this, do you? Now, if it were a steel mill or an oil refinery . . .

VICTOR: *(finally pulls out a sheet)* Aha! Here it is!

MAMA: Thank goodness. Hurry and read it, Victor, before they tear each other to bits.

(Everyone turns and listens in rapt attention as VICTOR begins to read.)

VICTOR: *(with pomp)* Ahem. I will now read the end of the last will and testament of Niccolo Luigi Fortunato Mariano the third in which he states, "Finally and most importantly is the matter of my restaurant, Papa Mariano's Pizzeria. After thirty years of business, I have learned that there are many factors that make a restaurant successful. In passing along this restaurant, which has been the life and livelihood of my entire family, I have taken into consideration these factors and have chosen the person who I feel would be the best successor to my position as owner and manager of the restaurant. Therefore, I do will and bequeath Papa Mariano's Pizzeria to . . ." *(pauses for several seconds)*

BERTO: Yes?

TONY: Who is it?

VICTOR: I do not know. There is a blank.

TONY: A blank? But that's impossible! How could Papa have forgotten how to spell my name?

BERTO: Your name?

MAMA: Let a me see that.

(MAMA takes the paper from VICTOR and skims it. BERTO and TONY watch her carefully. VICTOR begins putting papers and "desk items" back in his briefcase.)

MAMA: *(with a knowing smile)* Ah . . . This makes perfect sense. Yes. This is just the sort of thing your Papa would have thought of.

BERTO: *(suspiciously)* What did he think of?

MAMA: Your Papa has an addendum to his will. I will read it. "In order to determine the best man to inherit the restaurant, Roberto Niccolo Mariano and Antonio Lorenzo Mariano will both participate in a contest. Papa Mariano's Pizzeria will be divided in half and each contestant will be the sole owner and manager of his half of the restaurant for three months. At the end of three months, the contestant who has made the greater profit will become the sole owner,

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proprietor, and manager of Papa Mariano's Pizzeria for all time." *(looks over at BERTO and TONY)* Well, that seems to be fair enough. What do you boys think?

(There is a moment of dead silence. BERTO and TONY appear to be in shock.)

ADRIANA: *(in a whisper)* Oh, poor Berto!

TONY: *(to ADRIANA)* Poor Berto?? What about poor Tony?

MRS. DEGARMO: *(to ADRIANA)* Yes. What about poor Tony?

TONY: And I was even Papa's favorite!

BERTO: *(whirls around on TONY)* All right. I've heard that just about all I can stand. No one ever named you Papa's favorite—

TONY: *(interrupting)* But Papa said—

BERTO: *(ignoring him; shaking a fist threateningly)* --especially not Papa! And if I hear you say so again, I'm gonna lay you out flat!

VICTOR: *(nervously)* I . . . think it is about time that I go. *(quickly closes his briefcase with a snap and strides to downstage left door)*

MRS. DEGARMO: *(to ADRIANA)* Such violent tendencies! I doubt he'd be a good influence on the children. Remember that before you marry him.

VICTOR: *(pauses just before exiting)* You will not forget about my pepperoni, will you?

BERTO: *(turns to MRS. DEGARMO at her comment, explodes)* And you! Why are you here anyway??

VICTOR: Ah . . . never mind.

(VICTOR quickly exits downstage left. BERTO crosses to MRS. DEGARMO at stage right side of counter.)

BERTO: *(to MRS. DEGARMO)* You're not a member of the family, you don't want your daughter to be, and you could care less about this restaurant. And since this is my half, you can just get up and move out!

TONY: Hey! Who said this was your half?

MRS. DEGARMO: Now calm down, Roberto. It's not that I don't want my daughter to become a part of your family. I just don't want her to marry you.

BERTO: Get out.

ADRIANA: *(quietly; hurt)* Berto!

MRS. DEGARMO: It's all right, Adriana. *(to BERTO)* Fine. Have it your way. I will leave. But where I go, my Adriana goes. Come, Adriana. Let's leave through Tony's half. I'm sure it will be much cleaner anyway.

(MRS. DEGARMO grabs ADRIANA's hand and leads her over to stage left and out the downstage left "door.")

TONY: Hey! Hello? I don't remember ever choosing sides here.

BERTO: You didn't. I did.

TONY: Well, what if I wanted this side?

BERTO: Tough luck. You can't always get what you want. Or I would have been an only child.

(MAMA steps between BERTO and TONY at approximately center stage.)

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MAMA: (*tiredly*) All right, boys. That is quite enough. I think it is time to make this contest official. Tony, would you please exit Berto's half of the restaurant?

TONY: Oh, all right, fine. (*walks over to stage left and crosses his arms*)

MAMA: Berto, this half of the restaurant is now your half of the restaurant. You may do with it as you see fit for the next three months.

(*BERTO nods curtly.*)

MAMA: (*cont'd*) (to TONY) Tony, this half of the restaurant will be your half of the restaurant for the next three months. You may treat it as your own.

TONY: All right!

MAMA: But just remember, you want your restaurant to succeed. Whoever brings in the most profit in three months will become the new owner of the restaurant.

BERTO: So who's going to keep track of the receipts?

TONY: Uh, Berto, I think we're old enough to handle our own.

BERTO: Uh-uh. No way.

TONY: What's the matter? Afraid of a little extra work?

BERTO: More like afraid of you cheating. I think Mama should keep track of how much money we bring in.

TONY: Oh, come on, Berto. Like Mama doesn't have enough to do in the restaurant already with all the cooking she does!

MAMA: Actually, Tony, I will have plenty of time to keep track of receipts. I am not a going to cook anymore.

TONY: What?! What do you mean you're not going to cook??

MAMA: I could not possibly do all the cooking for two restaurants by myself. And it would not be fair for me to choose only one of my sons. So, no, I am not going to cook.

BERTO: (*grinning*) Way to go, Mama.

TONY: But . . . how will I keep my restaurant open? I need your secret sauce! It's legendary!

BERTO: Bet you wish you'd spent more time back in the kitchen now, don't you?

TONY: Hmph.

MAMA: I am sure you will do a fine job, Tony.

TONY: Of course I will. Hey, I know what I'll do! I'll come up with a secret sauce of my own. Something so good it'll blow Berto's restaurant right out of the water!

BERTO: Yeah right.

TONY: It will! In fact, I'm going to get started on it right now!

(*TONY whirls around and takes a step toward upstage left kitchen door. MAMA places a hand on his shoulder to stop him.*)

MAMA: Well, right now, I think it would be good if we all went home and got some sleep. Tomorrow will be a busy day for you boys. You will need plenty of energy for your first day in business.

TONY: (*looking at his watch*) Oh, come on, Mama. It's only eight o'clock. It's too early for bed. Besides, it's not like we're going to be pouring concrete or something. We're just running a restaurant. How hard could it be?

(*BERTO grins knowingly. Stage lights go down.*)

End of Scene.

End of Act I

Do Not Copy

ACT II, SCENE 1

SETTING: Papa Mariano's Pizzeria. The next day, approximately ten o'clock in the morning.

Lights rise. A red or green crepe paper line has been taped down the center of the restaurant, separating BERTO and TONY's sides from one another. BERTO is behind the stage right side of the counter, kneading pizza dough. He checks his watch with a smug smile. Suddenly, TONY enters BERTO's half from downstage right, leafing through a thick book of Italian recipes. A doorbell rings as he enters, and TONY looks up at the "door" for a moment, puzzled, then shrugs and returns to studying his recipe book.

TONY: *(preoccupied)* Morning, Berto.

BERTO: Morning? Is that what it is? I thought it was nearly afternoon. You better hurry if you're going to get any dough rising before the customers come.

(TONY, paying little attention to BERTO, leisurely crosses the restaurant, his nose still buried in the book. He pauses briefly to observe the new crepe paper line, shrugs again, and continues to move toward the downstage left table.)

BERTO: *(cont'd)* And by the way, I don't want you coming in through my side anymore. You've got your own front door.

TONY: *(looks up)* Your door's closest to the house.

BERTO: *(with a satisfied smile)* Yep. I know.

TONY: So why can't I just use your door?

BERTO: Because. This is my restaurant. I'm in charge. And I don't want you in it.

TONY: Well, fine. If that's the way you want to play, then I don't want you coming into my side of the restaurant either.

BERTO: Fine with me.

TONY: But just remember whose side of the restaurant has the bathrooms.

(BERTO freezes. TONY takes a seat at the downstage left table and continues leafing through the recipe book. BERTO smacks a floury hand against his forehead and shaking his head back and forth.)

TONY: *(cont'd)* All right. Now to find a killer pizza sauce recipe.

(The bell on BERTO's downstage right door suddenly rings. BERTO looks up. A PAINTER dressed in overalls and carrying a bucket and paintbrush walks in. He sets the bucket down on the floor and the brush on top of the (closed) bucket.)

BERTO: Oh, hi, Hank. All finished?

TONY: *(calling out across stage)* Hey, Berto! What's with the bell?

BERTO: What? My doorbell? I put it in this morning. This way I'll know anytime someone comes in.

TONY: I'm warning you, it's going to get annoying.

BERTO: Nah. *(to the PAINTER)* So, is the window all ready?

PAINTER: Just finished cleaning it and I'm about to start the lettering. I wanted to check to make sure I got the wording right, though.

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BERTO: Oh, sure. Go ahead.

(PAINTER pulls a slip of paper out of his pocket. TONY perks up to listen.)

PAINTER: Okay. You want "Berto's Pizzeria" front and center in big red letters and then to the left of that "World-Famous Pizza" in green, is that right?

BERTO: Sounds good. Oh, and maybe you could add something below the center about daily specials.

PAINTER: Sure, sure. That's no problem. *(pulls out a stub of a pencil and scribbles something on the paper)* Anything else?

(TONY jumps up from his chair and crosses to BERTO and PAINTER.)

BERTO: Nope. I think that should about do—

TONY: Actually, when you get done with his window, I've got one right beside it I'd like to have painted.

PAINTER: Oh. Great!

TONY: I was thinking something like, "Tony's Pizzeria" in big green letters. And then off to the right, "Universe-Famous Pizza" in red. What do you think?

PAINTER: *(grinning)* I think I could do it.

TONY: Great. Oh. And I'll pay you double whatever he's paying you if you get my window done first. *(with a satisfied smile, crosses back to downstage left table.)*

PAINTER: Well! Sure thing! *(hurriedly pockets his paper and pencil and picks up his brush and bucket, with a sympathetic shrug)* Sorry, Berto. *(crosses to TONY's side and out the downstage left door)*

TONY: Good old Hank.

BERTO: *(wryly)* So what are you going to do when you get sued for false advertisement?

TONY: I'm sorry?

BERTO: *(skeptically)* "Universe-famous pizza?"

TONY: *(mysteriously)* It could be. We don't know what's out there.

BERTO: Come on, Tony. The only pizza you've ever made in your life is the frozen kind. Besides, you're not making any money that way, stealing my painter by outspending me.

TONY: It's just this once. People have to know where I am. *(smugly)* That's good business.

(TONY picks up his recipe book and exits through the upstage left kitchen door, whistling. BERTO watches him go, shaking his head. He gives an extra-hard punch to the ball of dough on the counter. The doorbell rings. ADRIANA enters downstage right, casting a furtive look over her shoulder.)

BERTO: Adriana! Boy, did I need to see you right about now! How did you get here without . . . you know.

(BERTO brushes off his hands on his apron and comes around the stage right side of counter. The two meet in front of the upstage right kitchen door, blocking its view from the audience. ADRIANA brushes the flour off BERTO's forehead.)

ADRIANA: *(playfully)* Mama's getting her weekly massage across the street, so I sneaked over. Did you miss me?

BERTO: Did I ever! And it's so good to see you without...you know.

ADRIANA: *(with a big smile)* I know.

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(BERTO and ADRIANA lean in for a hug. TONY suddenly enters from BERTO's stage right kitchen door, four silver mixing bowls in his hand.)

TONY: Now, now, now. Do I hear public displays of affection going on here? I'm sure I know someone who wouldn't like it!

BERTO: *(jumps back)* Tony?! Just what do you think you're doing in my half of the kitchen?

TONY: *(ignoring BERTO)* Good morning, Adriana. You look ravishing today. As always.

ADRIANA: Thank you, Tony.

BERTO: *(to TONY)* Well?

TONY: Oh, all right. You look ravishing today too, Berto.

BERTO: No! I'm waiting for you to answer my question! What are you doing in my half of the kitchen?

TONY: Oh. Just borrowing a few bowls. I've got about twelve different sauce recipes to try, but my half of the kitchen only has seven bowls. I was sure you wouldn't mind if I borrowed a few.

BERTO: A few??

TONY: Adriana, you wouldn't happen to have any favorite pizza sauce recipes, would you?

ADRIANA: Only your mama's.

TONY: *(with a dramatic sigh)* Yes. I know. I was afraid of that. *(backing up toward upstage right door)* Well, you two, I'd love to stay and chat, but some of us have work to do. After all, the grand opening is tonight. You should stop by, Adriana. It's going to be big! Good food, romantic atmosphere, door prizes . . . Oh! Wait a minute. *(pulls a flyer out from under the stage right side of counter and hands it to ADRIANA)* Here. Have a flyer. It's all on there.

BERTO: Hey! How did those get under there?

ADRIANA: *(looking at the flyer)* Wow! Look at all these door prizes! Tony, that's great!

BERTO: *(peers over her shoulder)* *(to TONY)* Door prizes? What kind of door prizes? How did you get door prizes??

TONY: Guess you'll have to come by tonight to see, won't you? Now if you two will excuse me. Adriana, I hope I'll see you tonight. *(exits through upstage right kitchen door with the mixing bowls, whistling)*

BERTO: Door prizes? How am I going to compete with that?

ADRIANA: Don't worry, Berto. You've got good food. I've tasted it.

BERTO: *(pacing)* Yeah, but that's not enough. If Tony's got door prizes, I've got to get door prizes!

ADRIANA: Berto, don't you think you're taking this grand opening a little too seriously?

BERTO: No! Adriana, I've got to win this restaurant! If I don't, there's no telling what Tony will do with it! He could . . . turn it into a fitness center for all I know!

ADRIANA: *(looking around the restaurant with interest)* A fitness center? Hmm . . .

BERTO: Adriana!

ADRIANA: Okay, okay! I'm sorry. It's just that I don't like to see you getting so uptight about all this.

BERTO: And I don't like the fact that you don't seem to care about what happens to my father's restaurant!

ADRIANA: *(after a moment's pause)* Berto, when the day's done, the restaurant will still be here. Maybe you should care a little bit more about whether I'll still be here. *(moves toward downstage right door)*

BERTO: Adriana, wait! I—I'm sorry. You're right. You're more important than this restaurant. Please, just . . . just give me another chance.

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ADRIANA: *(stops and looks back at him doubtfully, rubbing her forehead with a tired sigh)* Look, I . . . I have a meeting with a bakery today at four. You know, for the cake. It's over on Sixty-first Street. Do you think you could try to make it? Please?

BERTO: Yes. You bet! I've got a head start on things here anyway. We'll go do your cake thing at four, and I'll be back in plenty of time for the grand opening at six. How long do you think it'll take? Fifteen, maybe . . . twenty minutes?

ADRIANA: *(doubtfully)* Well . . . I don't know, Berto . . .

BERTO: I mean, how hard is it to pick out a cake? Don't worry. I'll be there.

ADRIANA: I hope so, Berto. I really hope so.

(ADRIANA gives him an uncertain smile and exits downstage right, the bell ringing after her. BERTO looks down at his watch.)

BERTO: Yikes! Time to make some food!

(BERTO hurriedly wipes his hands on his apron, picks up the bowl containing the ball of dough, and exits through the upstage right kitchen door. At the same time, TONY enters his half of the restaurant through the upstage left kitchen door. He has three bowls of sauce in his hands. He sets the bowls down on the counter and rubs his hands together.)

TONY: There. Three potentially lethal secret sauces. Berto, baby, eat your heart out! *(looks around the room)* Now all I need is a taste tester.

(The doorbell rings as DANIELLE enters from downstage right, a backpack slung over her shoulder. She looks up at the "door" and then over at the crepe paper line in surprise.)

DANIELLE: What's going on here?

TONY: Dana? Is that you?

BERTO: *(pokes his head out of the upstage right kitchen door, to DANIELLE)* Uh, hi. You need something?

(TONY rounds the stage left side of the counter and crosses to DANIELLE.)

TONY: *(to BERTO)* Sorry, Berto. She's one of mine.

(BERTO, looking disappointed, exits again.)

DANIELLE: One of yours?

(TONY takes DANIELLE's arm and leads her over to the stage left side of the counter.)

TONY: Yeah. My brother and I are having a contest to see who gets Papa's restaurant. This is my side.

DANIELLE: Oh.

TONY: Yeah. So if you ever want to eat here, just make sure to come through this door. *(points to downstage left)*

DANIELLE: Okay . . .

TONY: Hey! How'd you like to be my taste tester?

DANIELLE: Well, that depends. What do I have to taste?

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(DANIELLE sets her backpack down on the floor and takes a seat at the end of the counter, stage left. TONY crosses to behind the counter.)

TONY: Pizza sauce. I'm trying to come up with a new recipe.

DANIELLE: Why? Your mom's pizza sauce was awesome.

TONY: *(moaning)* I know. Believe me, I know! But she won't give me the recipe. So I have to come up with my own.

DANIELLE: Hmm . . .

TONY: *(pushes one of the bowls toward her)* Here. Try this. I call it, Viva Italiano!

(DANIELLE dips her finger in the bowl and brings it to her mouth. She immediately begins coughing. TONY looks on, disappointed.)

TONY: *(cont'd)* What? You don't like it?

DANIELLE: *(raspy)* Maybe you should rename it, Viva Red Pepper Flakes! Whew! That's hot!

(DANIELLE waves a hand in front of her mouth. TONY puts the bowl under the counter.)

TONY: Hmm . . . Maybe you're right. Here.

(TONY reaches for the pitcher of water and a glass, pours her a glass, and hands it to her. DANIELLE downs it.)

TONY: *(cont'd)* Okay. Now try this one.

DANIELLE: I don't know if I should. It may not be safe for my health.

TONY: Don't worry. This one's totally different. I swear.

DANIELLE: Well . . . all right.

(DANIELLE dips her finger in the second bowl and puts it in her mouth. She appears to be contemplating.)

TONY: Well? Is it better?

DANIELLE: Do you have a name for this one?

TONY: Yeah. Tony's Special Sauce. You like it?

DANIELLE: Well, it could be that I've just burnt off all my tastebuds, but to tell you the truth, this sauce doesn't really taste like anything. Tomatoes and water, maybe.

TONY: Then I guess that's not good enough to be called Tony's Special Sauce, huh? *(puts the second bowl under the counter and picks up the third bowl of sauce, studying it)*

DANIELLE: Probably not.

TONY: Well, this is the only other one that I didn't burn, so why don't you try this one?

DANIELLE: What's this one called?

TONY: *(flatly)* Pizza Sauce.

(DANIELLE dips her finger in and brings it to her mouth. She tips her head in thought. TONY watches her with his elbow on the counter and his head in his hand.)

TONY: *(cont'd)* I'm afraid to ask . . .

DANIELLE: It doesn't come close to your mom's, but . . . I'd say Pizza Sauce is passable.

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TONY: (*straightens*) Passable? All right! Thanks, Dana!

DANIELLE: (*smiling wryly*) No problem. But . . . my name's Danielle.

TONY: Oh. Right! Danielle. I knew that.

DANIELLE: Right. (*picking up her backpack*) I'll see you later, Tony.

TONY: Oh, hey! Tonight's the grand opening. You should come. Good food, romantic atmosphere, door prizes. Here. Here's a flyer. (*pulls a flyer out from under the stage left side of the counter and hands it to DANIELLE*)

DANIELLE: (*thoughtfully*) Romantic atmosphere, huh? Thanks. Maybe I will.

TONY: Think you could do me a favor and hand a few out on your campus?

DANIELLE: (*with a shrug*) Sure.

TONY: Great!

(*TONY reaches under the counter and pulls out a huge stack of green and red flyers. He hands them to DANIELLE. DANIELLE looks at them with eyebrows raised.*)

TONY: (*cont'd*) Thanks a lot, Danielle. I really appreciate it.

DANIELLE: Yeah. No problem.

TONY: See you tonight!

(*DANIELLE exits downstage left, awkwardly backing out while balancing the stack of flyers. As soon as she is gone, TONY lets out a deep breath and slumps against the counter. He looks at the third mixing bowl for a moment, dips his finger in, and tastes the sauce. He makes a disgusted face.*)

TONY: (*cont'd*) Passable? Who am I kidding? This stuff is horrible! (*shoves the bowl away and drops his head in his hands, a moment later, his head suddenly jerks up*) Hmm . . . (*pulls the telephone out from under the counter, sets the phone on the counter, dials, puts the receiver to his ear, and waits*) Hello, Mama? Mama, this is Tony. (*after a pause*) Yes, Berto and I are here at the restaurant. (*after a pause*) Well, I don't really know what Berto is doing, but, Mama . . . Mama I really need to ask you for a favor. (*after a pause*) No, I know you won't give me your secret sauce recipe, but Mama . . . Mama, I don't know how to make any sauce! (*after a pause*) What? You mean they make it like that? Why didn't you ever tell me about this before?! This is perfect! Mama, I've got to go, but, but thanks a lot! (*hangs up the receiver and quickly unties his apron*) Wow! Pizza sauce in a jar? Who knew?!

(Lights fade)

End of Scene.

ACT II, SCENE 2

SETTING: Berto and Tony's Pizzerias. Later that day, approximately five thirty in the evening.

Lights rise. The tables on both sides have been set with glasses, silverware, menus, and candles. The tables on Berto's side have red-and-white-checkered tablecloths and green place settings while Tony's side has green-and-white checkered tablecloths and red place settings. If possible, streamers or red, white, and green flags should hang in both sides of the restaurant. VICTOR is pressed against Berto's downstage right "door," looking into

the restaurant hungrily. BERTO enters from the upstage right kitchen door dressed in a white T-shirt and black pants with a red half-apron tied around his waist and carrying the water pitcher. He sees VICTOR and starts. He quickly sets down the pitcher on the counter, crosses to the downstage right “door,” and “opens” the door VICTOR is leaning against. The bell rings and VICTOR falls onto the floor.

BERTO: Victor! What are you doing out there? The grand opening isn't until six. I told you that at lunchtime.

VICTOR: *(miserably)* I know.

BERTO: Well, how long have you been out there?

VICTOR: Since lunchtime.

BERTO: Victor!

VICTOR: What? Berto, I *need* the pepperoni! For thirty years I come here when your Papa was alive and for thirty years he gave me the pepperoni pizza. Every day, every lunch for thirty years! *(as an afterthought)* And always at half price.

BERTO: Victor, I know! I was usually the one making your pizza, remember? But, Victor, I . . . I can't serve pepperoni anymore. Not since Papa . . .

VICTOR: *(stricken)* You mean, not ever?

BERTO: *(shaking his head)* I'm sorry, Victor.

VICTOR: But . . . what am I going to do? Where am I going to get the pepperoni?

BERTO: I don't know. Maybe you can buy it at the store or something.

VICTOR: No! It will never be the same! I must have the pepperoni on my pizza here!

BERTO: Victor, I'm sorry . . .

VICTOR: *(desperately grabbing BERTO by the shirt)* Your brother! Perhaps he will give me the pepperoni, yes?

BERTO: *(picking VICTOR's fingers off his shirt)* I don't know. You'll have to talk to him.

VICTOR: Yes! I will.

(VICTOR tries to push past Berto into the restaurant through downstage right “door.” BERTO catches VICTOR's arm.)

BERTO: But *not* until the grand opening. *(begins “closing” the door)* We've both got a lot of work left to do so you'll have to wait until then. It's just another half hour.

VICTOR: But, Berto—

BERTO: *(forcefully; speaking through the “crack” in the nearly closed “door”)* We'll see you later, Victor. At six o'clock.

VICTOR: I will never survive!

(BERTO moves back toward counter. VICTOR lets out a drawn-out moan and slumps to a sitting position beside the door. BERTO, hearing him, rolls his eyes, walks back to the door, and opens it again.)

BERTO: All right, all right. You can come inside and wait.

VICTOR: Oh! Thank you so much!

(VICTOR gets up quickly and follows BERTO in. BERTO turns.)

BERTO: But no pepperoni!

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(VICTOR lets out a short, pained moan and slumps into a chair at the downstage right table. He puts his head down on the table and covers his face with his arms. BERTO returns to filling the water glasses on the counter. After a moment, he looks back down at VICTOR, concerned.)

BERTO: *(cont'd)* You want something to eat?
(Without looking up, VICTOR waves BERTO away with a moan.)

BERTO: *(cont'd)* *(shrugging)* Okay. Suit yourself.

(BERTO continues filling glasses. The doorbell rings, and TONY breezes in downstage right. He is wearing a black suit, white shirt, and red tie. He is adjusting his cuffs as he enters, crossing to his side of the restaurant, stage left.)

TONY: Evening, Berto!

BERTO: Tony! What have I told you about—

(TONY stops as BERTO addresses him.)

TONY: I know, I know. Look, it's the last time. I promise. I'm in kind of a hurry.

BERTO: Yeah. I guess I'd be in a hurry too if I hadn't spent any time in the kitchen all day.

TONY: Time in the kitchen? You've got to be kidding. *(looking over BERTO's clothes)* Nice outfit, by the way.

BERTO: Thanks. At least I won't get my best suit splattered with pizza sauce.

TONY: Good. Neither will I.

(TONY crosses to his side, stage left, picks up the candle lighter on the downstage left table, and begins lighting candles. BERTO watches him, obviously dying of curiosity. Finally, he rolls his eyes, sets down the pitcher of water, and crosses to TONY's side.)

BERTO: All right. I give up. Just how do you plan to serve food in this restaurant of yours if you never step into the kitchen?

TONY: *(with a sigh, stops lighting the candles, and puts a hand on BERTO's shoulder)* Berto, sometimes I wonder how we could possibly be related. It's all about knowing where your strengths and weaknesses are. Though my culinary skills may not be so hot, I am an excellent server, so I plan to spend all my time out here serving the diners.

BERTO: Yeah, but serving them what?? I haven't seen you make any food today!

TONY: Well, I haven't.

(TONY turns BERTO toward his upstage left kitchen door.)

TONY: *(cont'd)* Berto, allow me to introduce you to a few new friends I've recently acquired. *(loudly)* Hey, boys? Do you think you could step out here for a minute?

(One at a time, three young boys approx. eleven or twelve years old and dressed in full cook gear, including long white aprons and tall white hats walk out of upstage left kitchen door as TONY says their names. The first two boys are short and slim. The third, if possible, should be short and round. They form a line in front of the upstage left kitchen door and grin at the audience.)

TONY: (*cont'd*) Berto, meet Moe . . . Joe . . . and Slim.

BERTO: (*whispering*) Slim?

TONY: His real name is Bo. (*to the boys*) Thanks, guys. That'll be all.

(*The boys troop back to the kitchen. SLIM pauses before exiting to wave at BERTO. BERTO waves back uncertainly.*)

BERTO: (*derisively*) That's your cooking staff?? Is that even legal? I mean, look at them!

They're, like, seven or something! What are you paying them in—candy bars?

TONY: You're just jealous you didn't think of hiring any help. (*returns to lighting candles*)

BERTO: Hiring help?? First of all, how much help is *that* going to be? They don't even know what they're doing in there!

TONY: *Au contraire*. That Slim makes a mean plate of spaghetti and meatballs.

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