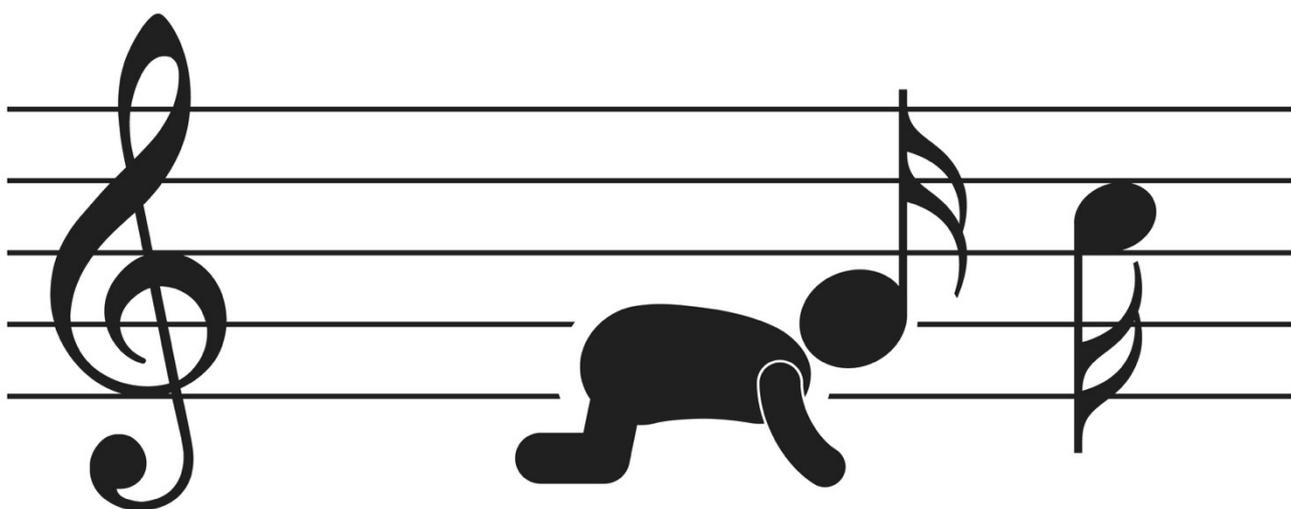


ANNETTE



**A FILM by
Leos Carax**

**ORIGINAL STORY by
Ron Mael & Russell Mael**

OPENING CREDITS

We hear the murmur of an audience getting seated before a show.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (CARAX)

Ladies and gentlemen,

We now ask for your complete attention.

If you want to sing, laugh, clap, cry, yearn, boo or fart

Please, do it in your head, only in your head.

You are now kindly requested to keep silent and to hold your
breath until the very end of the show.

Breathing will not be tolerated during the show.

So, please take a deep, last breath right now.

Thank you.

The audience takes a deep last breath.

SONG (first recorded human voice ever)

"Au Clair de la Lune"

PROLOGUE LOS ANGELES

EXT. THE VILLAGE MUSIC STUDIO - NIGHT



Traffic at night in front of the L.A music studio.

Waveforms, following sound, superimposed on picture.

INT. THE VILLAGE MUSIC STUDIO - NIGHT

IN THE CONTROL-ROOM:

A man (Carax), sitting behind the mixing console, waiting for something to start on the other side of the windowpane.

Close-up of VU meters on a mixing console: the needles react to offscreen sounds— instruments tuning up, feedback, amplifiers and mikes being plugged in and tested, chorus girl warming up, etc.

CARAX (*to his young daughter, Nastya, sitting behind him*)
 Tu viens Nastya?
 Ça va commencer.
 (*Into the mike*)
 So... May we start?

SPARKS (*offscreen*)
 So may we start?
 High time to start...

IN THE LIVE ROOM:

Starting the song "So May We Start?":
Hands on drums, hands on keyboards.

SPARKS
One, two, three, four!

SO MAY WE START?

SPARKS & CHORUS GIRLS
So may we start?
So may we start?
It's time to start
High time to start

Sparks put their coats on to go out of the studio.

They hope that it goes the way
—it's supposed to go
There's fear in them all but they
—can't let it show
They're underprepared but that
—may be enough
The budget is large but still
—it's not enough

INT. MUSIC STUDIO: CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Sparks leave the recording studio, still singing... and the Chorus Girls join in.

SPARKS & CHORUS GIRLS
So may we start?
May we start, may we, may we now start?
So may we start?

The main actors (Adam Driver & Marion Cotillard) join in, and sing along.

MAIN ACTORS, SPARKS & CHORUS GIRLS
May we start, may we, may we now start?
It's time to start
May we start, may we, may we now start?
High time to start
May we start, may we, may we now start?

EXT. MUSIC STUDIO - NIGHT

They leave the building and continue singing outside, walking on the sidewalk

MAIN ACTORS, SPARKS & CHORUS GIRLS

*We've fashioned a world, a world
—built just for you
A tale of songs and fury
—with no taboo
We'll sing and die for you
—yes in minor keys
And if you want us to kill too
—we may agree*

*So may we start?
 May we start, may we, may we now start?
So may we start?
 May we start, may we, may we now start?
It's time to start
 May we start, may we, may we now start?
High time to start
 May we start, may we, may we now start?*

Simon Helberg joins in.

MAIN ACTORS, SPARKS & CHORUS GIRLS

*So close all the doors and let's
—begin the show
The exits are clearly marked
—thought you should know
The authors are here so
—let's not show disdain
The authors are here and they're
—a little vain*

Chorus Boys, Carax and Nastya, join in here.
The actors and Sparks kneel down, as for a prayer.

ALL
Now...
*The music resounds and all
—the flames are lit
So ladies and gents, please
—shut up and sit
The curtains of our eyelids
—lazily rise
But where's the stage, you wonder
Is it outside?
Or is it within?*

*Outside? ... Within?
Outside? ... Within?*

They ALL stand up and start walking and singing again:

ALL

So may we start?

May we start, may we, may we now start?

So may we start?

May we start, may we, may we now start?

It's time to start

May we start, may we, may we now start?

High time to start

May we start, may we, may we now start?

(...)

Towards the end of the song, Adam and Marion change while walking and singing (trainees hand them their coat or jacket, a helmet, a wig, etc.)

Still singing, the other singers watch as:

—Henry McHenry (Adam) goes to a powerful bike parked on the sidewalk, puts his helmet on, and rides off

—The Accompanist (Simon) walks away down the street

—Ann Defrasnoux (Marion) gets in the back of a SUV (door opened by the driver). The car drives off.

SPARKS

Bye Henry!

NASTYA

Bye Henry, good luck.

SPARKS

Bye Ann... Bon Voyage!

CHORUS BOYS & GIRLS

Bye!... Bye-bye!... Good luck!... Bye-bye!

TITLE APPEARS (MOTION

LOGO) ANNETTE

1ST ACTLOS
ANGELES
(NOWADAYS)INT/EXT. ANN'S CAR THROUGH L.A. - NIGHT

Ann Defrasnoux is in the back of her chic car (the star soprano is being driven to the opera house where she is to perform). She bites into a red apple.

While Ann vocalizes, a Chorus (offscreen) sings:

TRUE LOVE A

*True love always finds a way
A way, a way
But true love often goes astray*

EXT. HENRY'S BIKE FREEWAY. - NIGHT

Henry is riding his large motorcycle on a L.A freeway.

The famous comedian is on his way to the theater where he is to perform his one-man show.

Astray, astray

INT/EXT. ANN'S CAR THROUGH L.A. - NIGHT

*True love always finds a way
A way, a way
But true love often goes astray
Astray, astray*

EXT. LOS- ANGELES / HENRY'S THEATER - NIGHT

Henry arrives at his theater, the Orpheum Theatre.
The billboards announce:

THE APE OF GOD / HENRY McHENRY / SOLD OUT

EXT. OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Ann arrives at the opera house, the modern Walt Disney Concert Hall.

On the gigantic frontage:

**THE FOREST
ANN DEFRASNOUX**

INT. HENRY'S THEATER: BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Henry, backstage, pacing the corridor as he's getting ready to go on stage. All he is wearing is a green toweling bathrobe (hood on his head), which makes him look like a boxer before the fight—especially as he seems very concentrated and does a little dance in front of a wall, boxing the wall.

But unlike any sportsman, he's eating a banana and smoking a cigarette at the same time. (It's all part of his pre-show ritual.)

Sporadically, he seems aggressive, almost angry.

We hear distant impatient cheering and clapping growing. And then the intro music to Henry's show.

HENRY (*mumbling*)
Yes, "laugh, laugh, laugh..."

INT. OPERA HOUSE: ANN'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Ann, alone in her dressing room, is getting ready to go on stage.

Lying on the floor, she's doing strange breathing exercises.

ANN
One, two, three, four five, six seven, eight, nine, ten...
One, two, three, four five, six seven, eight, nine, ten...

INT. HENRY'S THEATER: BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The ANNOUNCER and the FEMALE STAGE MANAGER are standing behind a mike stand.

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready?
No! No one is ever ready for... a mildly offensive evening with... The Ape of God! Here with his triumphal new show, the world infamous Henry McHenry!

Henry crushes his cigarette and banana in an ashtray.

Still in his bathrobe, he enters the stage through a glass corridor full of smoke.

INT. HENRY'S THEATER: ON STAGE - NIGHT

At first, we can hardly see him. Because of the semidarkness on stage, but mostly because of the dense smoke emitted by smoke machines.

On stage: a high stool with a mike and a glass of whiskey.

Henry, coughing, angry, grabs the mike on the stool.

HENRY (*mumbling to himself*)
This smoke... shit!

He loudly takes a sip of whiskey.

HENRY
What is this fucking smoke supposed to mean anyway?
I think I'm getting allergic to it.
Wish they'd use laughing gas instead, would make my life easier.
Or even better, cyanide gas.

Henry now faces the audience (the smoke dissipates). He seems ill at ease, hesitant, reluctant. (The public loves his unique blend of introversion and extraversion.)

He takes his time; he's in no hurry to make people laugh. He talks into the mike, his lips touching the mike, almost in a whisper.

HENRY
So... I'm here to make you laugh tonight.

AUDIENCE
Waooh!

HENRY
Yes, "Laugh, laugh, laugh..."
Not sure I can do it tonight.

AUDIENCE
Ooooooooooh...

HENRY
Not sure I should even try...
Making people laugh is a disgusting, deceitful trick anyway.

THE ZYGOMATIC RAP

HENRY

*Yes...
Why should I activate your ventromedial prefrontal cortex
So your fifteen facial muscles will contract
So your fucking zygomatic muscle will react
While your epiglottis half-closes your larynx
—CLAP!*

Yes, why the fuck should I?
Why should I make you...

Suddenly: lights! music! Chorus Girls!

Henry sings his (rock) refrain, with the Chorus Girls:

LAUGH LAUGH LAUGH (A)

HENRY & CHORUS GIRLS

*Laugh, laugh, laugh?
But don't make me, don't make me, don't make me
Can't stand to hear you
Laugh, laugh, laugh
'Cause You bore me, you bore me, you bore me*

*First, I'll make you
Gasp, gasp, gasp
But don't worry, don't worry, don't worry
You probably will not
Choke, choke, choke
Kick the bucket, kick the bucket,
Kick the bucket, kick the bucket.*

The music stops. The stage goes back to semidarkness.

While the audience claps and cheers, Henry takes a few pages (his contract) out of one his bathrobe pockets... studies it a few seconds...

HENRY

Hu... hum...
Well of course, I've heard the rumors too.
They say my show kills.
But relax, see my contract?
Save your breath.
Says so here: "Mr. Henry McHenry is not allowed to make the public laugh to death"

Henry pretends to hang himself with the mike.

HENRY
 Can't make your alveoli pop tonight
 No dislocated jaws, no belly explosions.
 However, asthmatics, keep your inhalers in position!

OK, READY, LAUGH!

HENRY
 Ok?!...

AUDIENCE
OK!

HENRY
 Ready?

AUDIENCE
READY!

HENRY
 Laugh!

AUDIENCE
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Henry stops the audience's singing, with a big wave of his arm (like a conductor).

HENRY
 Ok, shut up...

7B. INT. OPERA HOUSE: THE STAGE – NIGHT

A few seconds away from the beginning of the opera.

Ann, her back to the stage curtain that separates her from her public. She slightly bends over, in a prostrate posture. Shivering, hands around her elbows.

The curtain starts to open...

ARIA INTRO

6C. INT. HENRY'S THEATER: ON STAGE - NIGHT

We're back with Henry on stage. He's wiping his face with a tissue.

HENRY
 Yes, why... why did I become a comedian?

SO WHY DID I BECOME A COMEDIAN

HENRY

*To entertain some balding men?
To bring a touch of levity to tragic times?*
Not me

*To bring some joy to those who have none?
To cast a skeptical eye toward common knowledge?*
Uh uh

*To make you notice what you've always surely noticed
never noticing you noticed until I ask you:
"Have you ever noticed?"*
Hmm sure —but not only that

*To convey with a smile
these deep-seated feelings of hatred and humiliation
we all seem to be sharing, when...*

*All the Catholics hate the Muslims
And the Muslims hate the Catholics
And the Tutsis hate the Hutus
and everybody hates the Jews!*

The audience laughs and claps.

Henry goes to the high stool to drink more whiskey.

Someone in the audience yells:

So why Henry?!

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE
Yes, why Henry?

HENRY
Why?

And the audience starts talking/singing:

SO WHY DID YOU BECOME A COMEDIAN?

AUDIENCE
*Yes, why did you become a comedian?
For the money?
For the money?*

Henry takes a lighter and a few \$100 bills from his pocket.

HENRY

Oh no, no

'Cause I come from poverty and severity

And now have reached big money and obscenity

AUDIENCE

So why did you become a comedian?

For the fame?

For the fame?

Henry starts burning the \$100 bills.

HENRY

Oh no, no

Though fame is like a flame, glorious, superfluous

So nice being famous for being infamous

AUDIENCE

OK but why did you become a comedian?

Fear of death?

Fear of death?

HENRY

Oh, no, no

'Cause you see I have sympathy for the abyss.

...

A-B-Y-S-S!!! You illiterates!

That's why I must *never... never* cast my eyes towards the abyss.

He "casts his eyes" on a woman in the first row.

HENRY

Lady, that's quite an abyss you've got...

The lady nervously laughs.

AUDIENCE

So why... why did you become a comedian?

For the women?

For the women?

HENRY

Oh no...

OK, let me explain.

He walks to the back of the stage, lost in his thoughts.

INTROSPECTIVE 1

HENRY

You see, my serial pussy days are over
 Because, well... I've just met someone
 Someone so...
 It all went so fast
 I just moved into her tiny hidden palace
 —'cause, yes, she's a queen
 And now, I'm engaged

AUDIENCE

Oouh...

HENRY

I know, I know: marrying a girl when you're as
 young and green as me, it's like... swimming
 the Atlantic with a concrete block tied to your
 left testicle.

*Well yes now, I'm engaged
 Copped out in my early age
 So who, you ask, would marry me?
 Who would be the least likely?
 No, this ain't a joke so far:
 Yes, Ann Defrasnoux, the opera star*

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE

OH NO!

HENRY

*What? What's wrong, lady?
 Ann and me? —You disagree?
 What is it? —Blasphemy?
 Why? Is she too perfect?*

AUDIENCE

Yes, yes, yes!

HENRY

And I? Some loathsome insect?

AUDIENCE

Yes, yes, yes!

HENRY

OK... I'll accept that!

INT. ANN'S OPERA HOUSE: STAGE – NIGHT

Slow motion, Ann on stage, beautiful and spectral. She acts nervous and fearful, moving as if trying to escape from a frightening situation.

HENRY

First time I fell in love, woke up next to the girl...

INT. HENRY'S THEATER: ON STAGE – NIGHT

Henry, pacing the stage, lost in his thoughts.

HENRY

... rushed out to buy myself the biggest motorbike I could find,
and escaped, fast and far.

INT. ANN'S OPERA HOUSE: STAGE – NIGHT

Ann starts singing the Aria.

HENRY (*offscreen*)

But Ann the soprano has changed me,
I have changed...

How? I'm still not sure...

Time will tell...

What I see in her is obvious.

What she sees in me, hmmm, that's a little
more puzzling...

INT. HENRY'S THEATER: ON STAGE – NIGHT

The Chorus Girls get close to their mikes.

OPERA BOWS

HENRY

Wish that she could be here now

But she's at the opera tonight

Opera, where everything is... Saaaacred!

CHORUS GIRLS

A-MEN!

HENRY

First she dies and dies and dies

And then she bows and bows and bows

She'll be bowing now 'til dawn

Ann, dear, I love you so

But all that bowing's gotta go

Take a last bow—enough!

Make it seem more off the cuff

Audience laughing and clapping.

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE
But Henry, you didn't answer: why?

AUDIENCE
Yes, why did you become a comedian?
So why did you become a comedian?
Yes, why did you become a comedian?
Hey, Henry?

The music abruptly stops. Silence.

Henry, facing the audience, mouth touching the mike.

HENRY
Why?... I'll tell you why: to disarm people.
"Make them laugh"—it's the only way I know to tell the truth
without getting killed.

Lost in his thoughts, he turns his back to the audience and slowly walks towards the back of the stage.

HENRY
Anyway, every fuckin'....

The deep silence is suddenly broken by loud gunshots.
Screams of panic in the audience... as Henry, hit by each invisible bullet, staggers through the stage... He falls, "dead."

But after a few seconds, Henry slowly gets back on his feet.

Sounds of relief in the audience, and laughs.

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE
Henry, you bastard!

MAN IN AUDIENCE
Fuck you, Henry!

Henry picks up his mike.

HENRY
See, I too can die...and then.... bow
Ok, well, that's it for tonight!

AUDIENCE
Oh no, no, no!

HENRY

Oh yes, yes... 'cause I'm sick and tired of making you...

Lights! music!... Henry and the Chorus Girls sing:

LAUGH LAUGH LAUGH

HENRY & CHORUS GIRLS

Laugh, laugh, laugh

But don't leave me, don't leave me, don't leave me

Can't bear to hear you

Laugh, laugh, laugh

'Cause you bore me, you bore me, you bore me

But I need to hear you

Clap, clap, clap

Yes, I'm cocky, I'm cocky, I'm cocky

Want each-one-of-you to

Clap, clap, clap

Like a loony, like a loony, like a loony, like a loony

Henry throws his mike in the air.

He air-kisses the Chorus Girls and walks to the back of the stage. He drops his bathrobe to the floor, moons at the audience and leaves the stage.

Screams and claps from the crowd.

The Chorus Girls go on singing on their own.

CHORUS GIRLS

We promised that you'd laugh,

We promised that you'd laugh

We promised that you'd laugh, laugh, laugh, laugh

Laugh, laugh, laugh

'Cause he's Henry, he's Henry, The Henry

He didn't make you choke, choke, choke

Or kick the bucket, kick the bucket, kick the bucket

He needs to hear you

Clap, clap, clap

'Cause he's Henry, he's Henry, The Henry

Wants each of you to

Clap, clap, clap

The audience, now standing, claps and sings along.

EXT. HENRY'S BIKE ON L.A. STREET- NIGHT

Henry on his bike, riding fast.

CHORUS GIRLS

So let's hear it, let's hear it, let's hear it, let's hear it!

EXT. HENRY'S BIKE TO OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Henry on his bike going through a tunnel.

INT. INSIDE ANN'S OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

It is the end of the opera, and the very refined audience is clapping with great enthusiasm (but control) as Ann the soprano star "bows and bows and bows" on stage.

EXT. VIP EXIT ANN'S OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Henry drives past the public coming out of the opera.

As he slows down, approaching the *sortie des artistes*, he can see a crowd, flashes.

He parks, a bit away from the crowd. Still wearing his helmet, he watches from a distance:

Ann, surrounded by admirers and photographers, signing autographs. She notices him, and is visibly moved.

He comes down from the bike, and walks towards Ann.

She rushes through a few last autographs and, helped by security men, pushes her way through the crowd to go meet him (in her arms, a bunch of flowers offered by her admirers).

They grab each other's hands, eagerly, tenderly—but with some of the awkwardness of new lovers. Henry pulls up his helmet's visor, and they exchange a short kiss.

(They're both extremely shy people, but deal with their shyness very differently: she stays discreet, but complies politely with the basic rules of celebrity; he deals with his insecurity and anxiety by being provocative.)

While the photographers are taking pictures, calling their names, they exchange a few words, whispering:

ANN

How did the show go?

HENRY

I killed them... destroyed them... murdered them.

ANN
Good boy.

HENRY
And your "gig"?

ANN (with her shy smile)
I... *I Saved Them.*

HENRY
Well, you die so magnificently...
Honey, you're *always* dying!

PHOTOGRAPHERS (*Shouting*)
Ann! Henry!
How 'bout a smile!
Give us a smile!
Over here!... That's it!... Alright... Over this way!... this way...

HOW 'BOUT A SMILE

PHOTOGRAPHERS
How 'bout a smile, Ann?
Give us a smile, Ann!
How 'bout a smile, Ann?
Give us a smile, Ann!

Henry, please, in the frame!
In the frame, Henry!
Helmet off, Henry!
In the frame, Henry!
Helmet off, Henry!

Ann asks Henry (mutely and apologetically) to comply with the photographers. He then poses with her, clowning: he leans his face on her shoulder and closes his eyes—which embarrasses her, but she loves him so... He's like a kid in love.

PHOTOGRAPHERS
How 'bout a smile, please?
How 'bout a smile, please?
And give us a smile, please!
Give us a smile, please!

Henry, your helmet!
Take off your helmet!

Henry takes the flowers from Ann's hands and majestically throws them into the air.

EXT. FOREST AMONG CANYONS - DAY

Beauty and silence of nature (no dialog, no music).

Henry and Ann taking a lovers' walk in a forest, holding hands. Again, we feel the strong love and this touching shyness between them.

For a few seconds, they separate: he stops to light a cigarette. She goes on walking, slower. As he catches up with her:
slow POV TRACKING SHOT towards Ann's back (as she's walking)
—a feeling of sensuality (her naked neck, shoulders) and menace (is he going to hit her, strangle her?)

He puts his hand on her neck, and they resume their walk.

Now holding hands, both looking in different directions, they start singing:

WE LOVE EACH OTHER SO MUCH

HENRY

*We love each other so much
We love each other so much
We're scoffing at logic
This wasn't the plan
We love each other so much*

ANN

*We love each other so much
We love each other so much
Counterintuitive, baby
And yet we remain
We love each other so much*

HENRY & ANN

*Counterintuitive, baby
And yet we remain
We love each other so much*

EXT. ON THE ROAD - EVENING

They're driving back home on Henry's bike, racing through the night, Ann's arms lovingly embracing his torso.

HENRY & ANN

*We love each other so much
We love each other so much
So hard to explain it
So hard to explain
We love each other so much*

EXT. ANN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

They park the bike in the big garden in front of the house, and go towards the house, holding each other lovingly.

EXT. ANN'S HOUSE: POOL - NIGHT

Ann's house, above the pool. Behind the 1st floor bay window's curtains, we can see the shadow of the couple embracing.

INT. ANN'S HOUSE: BEDROOM - NIGHT

Henry is carrying Ann in his arms, from the window to the bed.

As they make love:

HENRY
We love each other so much

HENRY & ANN
We love each other so much

ANN
Speak soft when you say it
Speak soft when you say

HENRY & ANN
We love each other so much
Speak soft when you say it
Speak soft when you say
We love each other so much

The song ends with their (singing) orgasm outcry:

So much... so much... so much... so much... so much...

INT. ANN'S HOUSE: BEDROOM & BATHROOM - NIGHT

After Sex. Semidarkness. Henry is taking a shower.

Ann, still in bed, bites into an apple.

Henry re-emerges from the bathroom, in a black bathrobe. He approaches Ann, hands in the air in front of him—again as if he was going to strangle her, but this time playfully, impersonating a vampire in an old horror movie.

HENRY
Tickling time...

ANN
Hmm... No no no...

She tries to hide underneath the sheets... but Henry jumps on the bed, and starts tickling her.

ANN (*trying not to laugh*)
Henry!
No, no, no!
Henry please, not my feet, not my feet!
No, no, no!
Stop it!

Henry licks the sole of her feet. Ann can't help laughing.

They "fight"... They kiss each other...

SHOWBIZ NEWS (SBN) ON SCREEN

Images of Henry and Ann on their wedding day, on their yacht.

SHOW BIZ NEWS (TIED THE KNOT)

CONNIE O'CONNOR'S VOICE
Connie O'Connor here for Show Biz News, bringing you the latest on Anne and Henry's whirlwind romance: the two stars both at the pinnacle of their careers have officially tied the knot.

CHORUS
Tied the knot... Tied the knot... Tied the knot...

INT. ANN'S OPERA HOUSE – NIGHT

Before the beginning of the opera.

The musicians, in the orchestra pit, are tuning their instruments.

Ann's long-time piano accompanist (The Accompanist) is on the stage (behind the curtain), playing the piano and singing. He's a gentle man, but an ambitious one.

I'M AN ACCOMPANIST

THE ACCOMPANIST

*I'm an accompanist, I'm an accompanist
 I'm an accompanist for Ann, for Ann
 Ann's the one with the genius, the grace
 I'm the one with the technical expertise
 Ah, the tease, ah, the tease, of being so near, so far
 From the star, from the stars
 But someday I'll join them 'cause...*

*I'm a conductor, I'm a conductor!
 I'm a conductor, a conductor at heart!
 It's a temp job I'm doing
 This should only be seen as a means to an end
 In the end, in the end, I'll lead orchestras near and far
 Every bar, every bar, will bear my own signature*

*But I'm an accompanist, for the present, for Ann
 That's what I do
 I'm an accompanist, for the present, for Ann*

But now, let's listen to her sing...

The orchestra starts playing the dramatic intro to Ann's famous "Aria."

INT. HENRY'S THEATER: BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The orchestral intro overlaps with images of:

Henry doing his pre-show ritual (banana & cigarettes).

The opera's music gives these images (already seen almost identically in Henry's first show sequence) a whole different weight—a sort of tragic dimension.

INT. ANN'S OPERA HOUSE: STAGE - NIGHT

The orchestra finishes the intro while the curtain slowly opens.

The set is a forest at night, with fake stylized trees.

Ann appears: beautiful, spectral. She starts singing:

ARIA (THE FOREST)

ANN
*There's a chill in the air on this night
 Where is the moon, where is the starlight?
 Bearings lost, we're adrift on this night
 Where is the moon?
 Where is the starlight tonight?*

*Afraid, don't know why
Where is the moonlight?
Afraid, don't know why
Where is the starlight?
Afraid, 'fraid of you
Something about the look in your eyes*

The back of the stage opens up on... a real forest (at night).

Ann rushes toward the back of the stage...

EXT. REAL FOREST – NIGHT

... and enters the real forest... walking deeper and deeper into it as she sings, cold and frightened... Is she being followed? She's not sure...

ANN
*Hurry, dawn, I need help, I need light
Cut short the night, I am in danger
Though I thought that I knew him, I'm wrong
I don't know him, he is a stranger, tonight*

*Afraid, don't know why
Where is the moonlight?
Afraid, don't know why
Where is the starlight?*

Ann turns and starts to walk back towards the fake forest and the public.

*Afraid, 'fraid of you
Something about the look in your eyes*

INT. HENRY'S THEATER - NIGHT

ARIA TRANSITION

Slow motion: Henry's plays with his mike's cable as with a lasso.

IN A TUNNEL - NIGHT

ARIA TRANSITION

Henry on his bike:

—racing though the night in the tunnel

—close-up: his face behind the helmet; his eyes.

INT. ANN'S OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

BACKSTAGE:

Henry, helmet in one hand, crosses a long corridor (he passes opera technicians). Ann's singing becomes clearer and louder as he approaches the stage.

It's the end of the opera—the music is dramatic and poignant...

Henry is getting more and more tense, as if he was approaching with dread the scene of a terrible crime.

He stops near the stage (so he can see Ann performing without being seen by the public).

FINALE

ANN
I am Love!
A fickle thing a finite thing
I am Love!
Do not approach me!
 AAAAAAhhh...

Ann appears from the back of the stage, staggering, stumbling towards the front of the stage—her nightgown is soaked with blood. She's dying, singing her final lines on high, heartrending notes.

ANN
I was Love
A gruesome thing, a gruesome thing
I was Love
But now I'm dying
Dying, dying, dying, dying... dyyyyyying!

The Accompanist, at his piano, has noticed Henry's arrival: he watches Henry watch Ann.

Henry watching Ann singing/dying: hard to know what strong feelings he's experiencing—love and admiration for sure, but also some kind of anxiety, it seems.

Ann is dead. Thunderous applause as the curtain closes.

As Ann gets ready to bow on the other side of the curtain. She and Henry exchange short, intimate glances.

Henry then watches Ann bow to her exulting audience on the other side of the curtain (on control video screens).

AUDIENCE
 Bravo Ann... Bravo!... Brava!

I love you Ann!

SHOWBIZ NEWS

Paparazzi pictures of Ann, pregnant, walking in LA with Henry.

SBN (NEW BORN GIRL)

CONNIE O'CONNOR'S VOICE

And, in Show Biz News, anonymous sources report that the singing and laughter around the Defrasnoux - McHenry household will soon be drowned out by the cries of a newborn girl.

CHORUS

Newborn girl... Newborn girl...

INT. THE COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The couple asleep (long exposure shot).

Ann (now very pregnant) is asleep, totally still during the night. Henry, on the contrary, is very agitated.

HENRY'S VISIONS

INT. MATERNITY WARD - NIGHTMARE

A nurse hands Henry his new-born baby.

...Its face is made-up as a clown's!

INT. ANN'S OPERA HOUSE: ON STAGE - NIGHT

Slow motion: Ann, very pregnant, bowing on stage—her nightgown soaked with blood.

INT. THE COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The couple in bed, having sex. Ann is now 9 months pregnant.

INT. MATERNITY WARD - NIGHT

Ann is on the delivery bed, with Henry by her side. They are surrounded by the Doctor and Nurses.

Ann is taking deep, painful breaths.

ANN
Oh merde...

SHE'S OUT OF THIS WORLD (PART 1)

NURSES
Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in
(...)

THE DOCTOR & NURSES
Push Ann, push Ann
That's it!
Push Ann, push Ann
That's it!
(...)

Ann is in labor, panting. Henry is sweating profusely, even more than his wife. He seems not just worried about the delivery, but seized by deep personal angst.

Nervousness (and his sense of uselessness) makes him say something strange and inappropriate, with no intention of being funny:

Doctor, am I doing everything... right?

...which sends Ann into a fit of laughter... which triggers much stronger contractions...

NURSE
Yes, Ann!... yes, keep on laughing, that's great!

DOCTOR
She's coming!
She's coming!

Henry is visibly reassured by the fact that he has been useful.

The Nurses and the Doctor advise Ann at the same time now, singing:

DOCTOR & NURSES
Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in
Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in
Push, push, push, push, push, Ann
That's it! That's it!
Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in
Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in
Push, push, push, push, push, Ann
That's it! That's it!
(...)

DOCTOR
She's almost there!

Henry leaves Ann's side, to go see what's "going on."

HENRY
Shit Ann... she seems completely naked!

Ann has another howl of laughter...

NURSE
Yes, yes, yes!... Laugh, laugh Ann, laugh!

DOCTOR
Great Ann! Keep on laughing!

NURSE
Laugh, laugh, laugh, yes Ann!

DOCTOR & NURSES
There she is!

Henry cuts the umbilical cord, with a huge, frightening pair of scissors.

The baby passes from person to person...

It is like a real baby, but something makes it extraordinary, a subtle and indefinable strangeness. A mystifying little creature. A poetic baby.

SHE'S OUT OF THIS WORLD (PART 2)

DOCTOR & NURSES
She's out of this world!
Out of this world
Welcome to the world, Annette!
She's out of this world!
Out of this world
Welcome to the world, Annette!

Henry takes the baby and delicately places her on Ann's chest.

HENRY
She's out of this world
DOCTOR & NURSES
Out of this world....
ANN
Welcome to the world, Annette!
HENRY
She's out of this world
DOCTOR AND NURSES

Out of this world....

ANN

Welcome to the world, Annette!

2nd ACT

(A FEW MONTHS LATER)

LOS ANGELES & AT SEA

ELLIPSIS A: SECOND ACT

Henry seems changed. At times he shows a new anger; he drinks more. And strangely (after his daughter's birth), he has more and more morbid thoughts. Are his recent family life and happiness suffocating him? Is his "domestic bliss" in conflict with his work—his sense of comedy and provocation? Is he becoming jealous of his wife's growing success? He loves her, and the baby, but...

EXT. ANN'S HOUSE: THE POOL - DAY

The beautiful pool, with baby swim floats, an inflatable ball, etc.

Sounds of baby Annette babbling and laughing.

INT. THE COUPLE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

The couple in bed, asleep. The baby is between them, awake, calm. She slowly looks at one parent, then the other.

EXT/INT. ANN'S HOUSE: POOL & LIVINGROOM - DAY

Henry is in the garden, bare-chested, smoking a cigarette. The baby is lying asleep on his forearm. He makes slow movements, like a dancer exercising.

HENRY
This is a baby.
This is *my* baby.

FADE TO

EXT. THE CITY (LA) - DUSK

FADE TO

INT. ANN'S HOUSE: LIVING ROOM - DUSK

A glass: whiskey flows into the glass.

HENRY
Tonight, while she's singing and dying
I'm baaaaaby-sitting!

HENRY'S VISIONS

INT. ANN'S HOUSE: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Henry sitting on the sofa, his feet on a coffee table, watching TV with a glass of whiskey in hand.

*But suddenly, panicked, he looks for the baby... Where did he leave her? ... He stands up abruptly: yes, he was sitting on the baby!
(He was "baby-sitting").*

EXCERPT FROM KING VIDOR'S THE CROWD

A theater audience laughing their heads off.

FADE TO

INT. ANN'S OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Ann on stage, "dying" while singing:

...Dyyyyinnnnng!

FADE TO

EXCERPT FROM KING VIDOR'S THE CROWD

The theater audience laughing their heads off.

FADE TO

Ann on stage, bows, as she is acclaimed by her audience.

INT. ANN'S HOUSE: LIVING ROOM - DAY

Annette sleeping on Henry's forearms (he's drinking a glass of whiskey).

CALM BEFORE THE OPERA

CHORUS (offscreen)
*Something's about to break, but it isn't clear
Is it something we should cheer?*

Is it something we should fear?

HENRY'S VISIONS

IN ANNETTE'S ROOM - NIGHT

A big gorilla (hug plush toy) tenderly holding Annette in its arms. The baby is looking at the gorilla's face, at ease, babbling.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Annette's eyes open. She's in Henry's arms. He looks at himself and the baby in a mirror.

Henry's expression is pensive. He smiles at the baby—loving but solemn.

CHORUS (*offscreen*)
Something's about to break, but it isn't clear
Is it something we should cheer?
Is it something we should fear?

Henry is playing with the baby, gently moving her into different positions: on his forearm, in the palms of his hands, etc.

CHORUS (*offscreen*)
Something's about to break, but it isn't clear
Is it something we should cheer?
Is it something we should fear?

EXT. LOS ANGELES FREEWAY - DAY

Cars rushing on a freeway outside LA.

INT. ANN'S CAR ON FREEWAY - DAY

Ann, sitting in the back of the car: she seems tense, exhausted.

ANN (*Talking to her driver*)
 Oscar, I feel like sleeping now.
 Please wake me up before we get there.

DRIVER
 Sure.

She uses her steroid nasal spray, takes off her glasses and lies down on the back seat, vaguely watching TV news on the small TV monitor mounted into the headrest facing her:

Footage of Wildfires across California.

Ann tries to relax, eyes half-closed...

The driver, the freeway.

Ann is now asleep. The (low) sound of the news turns into a song.

ANN'S NIGHTMARE

SIX WOMEN HAVE COME FORWARD

CHORUS OF MEN

*Six women have come forward
Each with a similar story
Subjected to Henry McHenry's abuses
Witnesses to his violence*

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

A crowd of journalists facing 6 women sitting on a stage, singing into their mikes.

CHORUS OF MEN

*Why now?
Why now?*

THE 6 WOMEN

*Each of us has come forward
All with a similar story
Subjected to his abuses,
witnesses to his violence
And his anger,
his anger!*

6 SPLIT SCREENS: THE 6 WOMEN

CHORUS OF MEN

Six women have come forward

THE 6 WOMEN

*Each of us have come forward
Each with a similar story
All with a similar story
Subjected to his abuses
Subjected to his abuses,
Witnesses to his violence
And his anger, his anger*

INT/EXT. ANN'S CAR ON FREEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ann, awake now (but, as we'll soon understand, she's dreaming she's awake), looking at the news on the TV monitor, as hypnotized.

JOURNALISTS
 But why?... Why only now?
 Why come forward now?
 Why only now?... Yes why?
 Yes, why only now?

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - CONTINUOUS

Close-up of one woman after the other, singing:

WOMAN 1
I, I fear for Ann

WOMAN 2
*She must be warned
 McHenry is not
 not what he seems*

CHORUS OF MEN
Why? Why come forward now?

WOMAN 3
*So charming that I
 a woman with sense
 I quickly became
 a moth to a flame*

THE 6 WOMEN
A moth to a flame!

INT/EXT. ANN'S CAR ON FREEWAY / STUDIO - DAY

Ann, mortified, lies back on the seat and hides her face between her arms.

CHORUS OF MEN (Offscreen)
Six women have come forward

THE 6 WOMEN
*Each of us have come forward
 Each with a similar story
 All with a similar story
 Subjected to his abuses
 Subjected to his abuses*

EXT. HENRY ON HIS BIKE IN TUNNEL

SONG CONTINUED

On the road, some engine seems to be rushing towards the car... yes, a big powerful motorbike, rushing straight towards Ann in her car... We now recognize Henry, on his bike...

CHORUS OF MEN (OFFSCREEN) & THE 6 WOMEN
Witnesses to his violence

INT/EXT. ANN'S CAR ON FREEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ann's driver honks his horn. Ann suddenly straightens up to look at the road ahead. Her anxiety grows as she sees Henry on his bike about to collide with her car...

THE 6 WOMEN
And his anger, his anger

EXT. HENRY ON HIS BIKE IN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Henry speeding towards the car... the collision seems inescapable...

THE 6 WOMEN
His anger, his anger!

INT/EXT. ANN'S CAR ON FREEWAY – CONTINUOUS

We move back to day light.
Anne suddenly (really) wakes up, feeling lost.

INT. THE COUPLE'S BEDROOM - DAWN OR DUSK

Ann asleep, in bed (in a strange, morbid position).

Henry finishes getting dressed and goes out.

EXT. ON THE ROAD TO LAS VEGAS - EVENING

Desert. Henry speeding through the night on his bike.

HENRY'S VISIONS

ANN ON STAGE - NIGHT

Ann, dying again and again:

- leaping into the flames (as Norma in Norma)*
- strangled by Othello (as Desdemona in Othello)*
- stabbed by José (as Carmen in Carmen)*
- preparing to cut her own throat with a knife (as Cio-Cio San in Madame Butterfly)*
- dying of tuberculosis (as Violetta in La Traviata)*

- Annette, smiling.*

EXT. LAS VEGAS THEATER- NIGHT

Images of Las Vegas neon signs.

INT. LAS VEGAS THEATER: BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Before the show: Henry in his green toweling bathrobe, hood on.
We hear the audience (offscreen) clapping and cheering.

MUSIC INTRO

THE ANNOUNCER

And now, here in Vegas for the very first time...
The Ape of God! Mr. Henry McHenry!

As Henry heads towards the double door corridor filled with smoke, the Announcer gives him a tap on the shoulder—but Henry, taciturn, doesn't react.

INT. LAS VEGAS THEATER: STAGE - NIGHT

Henry exits the corridor and enters the stage, coughing.

AUDIENCE

Henry!

HENRY (*Coughing, angry*)
Fucking idiotic smoke!

He knocks violently on the backstage door, yelling at some invisible technicians.

Have you no sense of proportions?!

Having to be funny here... it's like trying to enjoy a blowjob in a gas chamber.

Laughter, but also a few boos...

Henry takes the glass of whisky on the high stool and starts drinking.

Someone in the audience shouts:

That was not funny Henry!

HENRY

You're right, not funny...

I'm so... too fucking tired...

I knew it, I should've cancelled the show tonight.

AUDIENCE

No, no, no!

HENRY

Yes, yes, yes...

You see, my house was broken into last night...

The bastards, stole all my jokes.

A few laughs. But Henry seems more and more tense.

HENRY

No, the truth is... now that I have my own soprano and baby...
not sure I have it in me anymore to make sad people laugh.

(He interrupts himself)

No, the truth is... this morning, something happened...I did a ...
no, no I can't say...

(He interrupts himself again)

No, the truth is I'm sick... Being in love makes me sick... Sick!

(He interrupts himself again)

Well, no...the *true* truth is...this morning, I ...

He moves closer to the audience, forgetting to keep his mike in place...

HENRY

... I killed my wife

MAN IN AUDIENCE

What? What was that?

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE

Louder, Henry!

MAN IN AUDIENCE

Can't hear you back here!

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE

Your mike Henry, your mike!

HENRY

...I killed my wife.

A few laughs, a murmur of dread. Everyone "knows" it's "a joke"... but:

1) it isn't funny

2) is it *really* a joke? Henry seems so devastated, in a daze.

HENRY

Yes, "laugh, laugh, laugh... Laugh, laugh, laugh"

So, I've said it: I killed my wife.

(...)

I didn't mean to... God knows I didn't mean to.

INTROSPECTIVE (B)

She woke up, so beautiful... She looked at me and smiled... That smile... She is... was a very shy person you see... and I know, I knew this shy smile meant she wanted to fuck... But this time, I pretended not to get it... And I kept on pretending and so she said it, ever so shyly: "Please Henry, fuck me Henry..." I could see the effort in her smile... for her to ask *that*... to say those *dirty words*... to be *wicked and bold*... So out of character... With that very shy smile I loved so much... But I couldn't answer, I couldn't meet her desire... 'Cause, yes, being in love makes me sick... sick! I had been sleepless all night, you see, suffocating, suffocated by love... A wreck... absolutely no desire left...

Some people in the (until now deadly silent) audience start to complain...

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE

Come on Henry, drop it please!

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE

Yeah...

HENRY (*Angry*)

What? Am I letting you know more than you care to know about me?

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE

Uh uh...

HENRY

About her? Sex? Death?

He lies on the floor, takes off his shoes.

Yes, no desire left, zero... So I was looking for something, anything to... "change the subject..." to spare us both this horrible, dreadful moment of rejection... That's when the idea came to me... I remembered how extremely ticklish she is, was... especially on the soles of her feet... So I thought: I'll

tickle her, to “change the subject...” So I grabbed her legs, both of her feet under my arms, and started to tickle them...

He vaguely pretends to tickle Ann’s feet.

HENRY

I could see in her eyes she understood it all... Why I was doing what I was doing... to “change the subject...” and it seemed impossible she would laugh this time... She was hurt, and ashamed, and sad, and confused... but I persisted, I tickled gently...

He starts to alternately mime himself and Ann.

He tickles gently... tickles stronger—then throws himself on the floor and "becomes" Ann: Ann lying on her back, fighting him, not wanting to laugh... starting to laugh a little...

HENRY (*with a woman's voice*)
"Stop it Henry..."

It wasn't working! So I tickled stronger...
I tickled madly, I tickled wild...

The whole performance (the miming, the female laughter coming out of Henry's body) is frightening—morbid, sexual, very upsetting. The audience is stunned, in dread.

Henry/Ann's laughter gets louder... faster... the note higher and higher... until it strikes a last long high (soprano) note —"the supreme spasm"— and abruptly ends... as Henry/Ann drops motionless on the floor... Terrible silence (on stage now, and in the audience). Henry/Ann leans over his wife, panicked, dazed... trying to wake the inert body... first gently... then shaking it wildly...

HENRY

Ann... ANN... ANNNNNNNNNNN!
NO NO NO ANN! ANNN! ANNN!
NO ! NO ANN! NOOOOO!

I had tickled her to death.

A few vague laughs, a few claps, hesitant boos.
Henry very slowly rises his face, devastated.

HENRY

I then tried to kill myself... the same way... tickling myself.

He vaguely mimes the act of tickling his bare feet.

But it didn't work...

A few scattered laughs in the deafening silence.

Henry stands back up, facing the audience.

HENRY
This is how I killed my wife.

And he bows.

AUDIENCE
That was sick!

Gradually, the audience seems to wake up... and starts to protest... more and more vocally.

AUDIENCE
You're sick!
Poor Ann!
Poor Annette!

HENRY
I sense some animosity
Am I right or is it me?

An angry group starts singing:

AUDIENCE
*You must've bitten
Something bitter
In your cradle!
Bitten, bitter, cradle!*

HENRY
So, why did I become a comedian?

But now the audience, in a fury, answers back:

You're not! You're not! Not anymore!

HENRY
So, why did I become a comedian?

While Henry goes to an audio device in a corner of the stage.

AUDIENCE
Asshole! Asshole!
Sick, sick, sick!
Boo!... Go home!

HENRY
Okay?... Ready?... Laugh!

He pushes a button on the audio device: we hear a (prerecorded) amplified audience singing-laughing (as in Henry's first act):

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

Henry waves at the audience to “encourage” their boos and insults.

The Announcer pushes the Chorus Girls on stage and turns off the audio device.

The Chorus Girls start singing in panic:

We promised that you'd laugh
We promised that you'd laugh
We promised that you'd laugh, laugh, laugh, laugh!

Laugh, laugh, laugh
'Cause he's Henry, he's Henry—The Henry
He didn't make you choke, choke, choke
Kick the bucket, kick the bucket, kick the bucket!

HENRY

OK everybody, thank you very much... but enough already!
 Have a goodnight!

He throws his mike in the air (much more aggressively than in his first show).

The mike lands on a table, hitting glasses and a champagne bucket.

Henry leaves the stage as the audience yells its hostility, and the Chorus Girls keep singing.

CHORUS GIRLS
He needs to hear you
Clap, clap, clap!
'Cause he's Henry, he's Henry, The Henry,
Wants each of you to
Clap, clap, clap!
So let's hear it! Let's hear it! Let's hear it! Let's hear it!

INT. LAS VEGAS THEATER: BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Henry, alone backstage: enraged, he starts singing as he goes through the labyrinthine corridors.

YOU USED TO LAUGH

HENRY

You used to laugh
But now you sure ain't laughing at me no more!

*You used to laugh
But now you sure ain't laughing at me no more!*

*What's your problem?
What's your fucking problem?!
What's your problem?
Your fucking problem?!*

*Do you think I care?
Do you think I care what you all think of me now?
Do you think I care?
Do you think I care what you wimps think of me now?*

AUDIENCE

*Henry, Henry we've had enough!
Henry, Henry we've had enough!
Henry, Henry we've had enough!
Henry, Henry we've had enough!*

HENRY

*What's your problem?
What's your fucking problem?!
What's your problem?
Your fucking problem?!*

Suddenly, Henry turns back and goes back on stage. The people from the audience are standing, facing the stage, still angry, booing.

AUDIENCE

*Henry, Henry we've had enough!
Henry, Henry we've had enough!
Henry, Henry we've had enough!
Henry, Henry we've had enough!*

Henry sings while pacing the stage with rage.

HENRY

*My dear public,
My dear public, you fucking headless beast!
You're makin' me sick!
You ruthless, unpredictable beast!*

AUDIENCE

*Get off, get off, get off the stage!
Get off, get off, get off the stage!
Get off, get off, get off the stage!
Get off, get off, get off the stage!*

HENRY

It's your problem?

*Fuck it's not my problem!
It's your problem?
Your fucking problem?!*

AUDIENCE

*Get off, get off, get off the stage!
Get off, get off, get off the stage!
Get off, get off, get off the stage!
Get off, get off, get off the stage!
(...)*

HENRY

*Well you better laugh!
Or I'll get the hell right off of this stage!
If you don't laugh
You're gonna feel, feel, feel the fire of my rage!*

HENRY & AUDIENCE

*We used to laugh
Fuck off, fuck off, fuck out of here!
Until we wised up, man you're sick as they come!
We used to laugh
Fuck off, fuck off, fuck out of here!
Fuck off, fuck off, fuck out of here!
But now we see you as you are, you are scum!
Fuck off, fuck off, fuck out of here!
You got a problem
What's your problem?
A big old problem!
What's your fucking problem!
You got a problem
You've got a problem!
A big old problem!
A big old proooooo-blem!*

EXT. ON THE ROAD BACK TO LA - NIGHT

Henry, riding his bike full speed through the desert, furious:

God damn it!... Fuck, fuck, fuck, FUCK!

EXT. ANN'S HOUSE SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Ann, in the pool, watching herself in a small mirror.

ANN

Henry, I'm worried about you.
I'm worried...

She lets herself go in the water, on her back. She swims a slow back crawl, while singing:

A GIRL FROM THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

ANN

*There was a girl from the middle of nowhere
Utterly plain, a little plump
She sang alone, in her bedroom
Wild acclaim from those four walls*

INT. COUPLE'S BATHROOM & BEDROOM - NIGHT

SONG CONTINUED

Ann drying her hair with a towel.

*But she didn't want to be there
She didn't want to be there
She didn't want to be there at all*

*She had the voice of a goddess
Strings, winds and horns
Inside her chest.*

She goes to the door, opens it, listens to make sure no one's near... then goes to open a drawer: hidden under her bras, a pack of cigarettes. She takes one.

*Hour after hour,
She would struggle
'Til her voice became
Her Royal realm*

She goes back to the bathroom... sits down on toilet... opens a window... lights her cigarette.

*Oh, she wanted just to be there
Only wanted to live there
Really wanted to live there—forever more*

On the toilet, she pisses and smokes.

*She headed west, the wild direction
No longer plain, no longer plump
The men were on her doorstep
Many men were on her doorstep
Her voice had brought her beauty and set her free*

She throws the cigarette in the toilet... wipes herself... flushes the toilet... washes her hands...

*But she never listened to those men who came and whispered:
 "You're a flame to me"
 —a flame to me, a flame to me, a flame to me
 She was a queen, didn't need a king who'd put her brand new
 palace in jeopardy
 —in jeopardy, in jeopardy
 A queen should never be a moth to a flame*

Ann, defeated, is lying down on her bed.

I have a wonderful gift, and a beautiful child
 People adore me, and I adore this man
 But... *something's wrong.*

A slight noise, coming from the door... Ann turns and sees baby Annette in the doorway: the baby, smiling, is taking her *first steps*...

ANN
Annette!

Ann goes over to her, shaking off her sad mood, moved. She stretches her arms towards the baby:

ANN
 That's it, Annette!
*Just keep right on walking
 One foot then the other*

EXT. AROUND THE POOL - NIGHT

The pool is beautiful at night, shining (underwater lights), with big floating toys on its surface.

Ann with the baby in her arms, singing "Lalala," while joyfully dancing around the pool... faster and faster... The baby giggles.

LA LA LA LA

ANN
*La, la, la
 La, la
 La, la
 La, la
 (...)*

Ann is now spinning like a whirling dervish, with the baby still in her arms. They spin until they fall to the ground, like drunk, laughing.

OUTDOOR POOL - CONTINUOUS

Ann now sitting near the pool, with the baby in her arms. They play tenderly together.

But their attention is snagged by a loud and menacing sound: the engine of Henry's bike slowing down as it approaches the house.

The powerful lights of the machine shine on Ann and the baby.

INT/EXT. ANN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Henry (is he drunk?) sings, as he rushes up the staircase and into the couple's bedroom:

MY STAR'S IN DECLINE

HENRY

What goes up

Must come down

My star's in decline

Ah!

Once profound

For a clown

My star's in decline

He steps outside the bedroom on the terrace. He can see: Ann with the baby in her arms, by the pool area. They are looking up at the window, at him, frightened.

SHOWBIZ NEWS**SHOW BIZ NEWS 3 (SUCCESS)**

Images of:

- The happy family: paparazzi picture of Ann and Henry standing with Baby Annette, smiling in the sun.
- Tension within the couple: paparazzi picture of the couple, looking sad, pushing Annette's stroller under the rain.

CONNIE O'CONNOR'S VOICE

Show Biz News announces that Ann, Henry, and baby Annette will travel on their yacht this week, evidently in the hope of saving the couple's marriage. Could the problems be due in large part to the growing discrepancy between their respective success? We wish them the best.

CHORUS

Respective success... Respective success...

EXT. AT SEA: YACHT - NIGHT

The slender yacht is caught in a turbulent sea. A storm is approaching.

A STORM IS ROLLING**IN CHORUS**

A storm is rolling in...
A storm is rolling in...
A storm is rolling in...
A storm is rolling in...

INT. INSIDE YACHT: SLEEPING CABIN - NIGHT

Ann is in a cabin with Annette, trying to calm her and put her to sleep with a song. While she sings softly, she tries not to show the baby her own growing anxiety: she feels the boat sway, and sees through the porthole the waves getting big, hitting the yacht harder and harder. And where is Henry?

ANN

I will calm the sea
Baby don't fear
I will stop the storm
Sleep, baby, sleep
The world revolves 'round you
My little innocent

Sleep a perfect sleep
I'm always here
Dream a perfect dream
And never fear
Thunder, rain nor lightning
My little innocent

Worried about the storm outside, Ann goes to the porthole. Big waves are violently hitting the glass. She resumes singing, trying to hide her anxiety from the baby.

All of the danger that I feel
I will dispel it with some magic
Alakazam, I'll change the reel!
Look at the happy family dancing

Ann turns back towards the baby: she is at last asleep.

We'll look back and laugh
That crazy night...
As we walk a path

*'Neath city lights
The lights will shine on you
My little innocent*

Ann takes a last look at the baby, then leaves the cabin.

INT. INSIDE YACHT: CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ann, searching for Henry through the cabins.

ANN
Henry! Henry!
Henry, where are you?

EXT. YACHT: DECK - NIGHT

Ann goes up to the deck.
Pitch-dark night, pouring rain, chaotic movements of the boat.

ANN
Henry?

No one there.

But suddenly, she's grabbed by two arms, from behind: Henry, drunk, soaked.

HENRY (*tenderly*)
Ann...

ANN
Are you drunk Henry?

HENRY
I'm not that drunk...
Let's waltz...

ANN
But... I'll kill my voice out here.
Henry, a storm is rolling in.

HENRY
I'm well aware of that my dear
... Let's waltz in the storm!

Henry forces Ann into a waltz, while the Chorus (offscreen) sings:

LET'S WALTZ IN THE STORM!

CHORUS

*A storm is rolling in...
A storm is rolling in...
A storm is rolling in...
A storm is rolling in...*

ANN

*Henry, you're drunk!
Henry, you're drunk!*

HENRY

*I'm not that drunk, I'm not that drunk
Hey, where's Annette? Where did she go?*

ANN

*Annette's asleep, she's safe below
Henry, you're not the man I know*

Henry grabs Ann again, forcing her to waltz with him again.

HENRY

*I'm not that drunk
I'm not that drunk
I'm not that drunk
I'm not that drunk*

ANN

*Henry, you're not the man I know
We'll catch our death in this rain
Henry, stop fooling around
We could slip, we could drown*

*Henry don't fool around
There's a storm, settle down
Careful, hey! What if we fell?
No one could survive this swell*

*You're quite drunk, let's calm down
When we're safe you can be a clown
What has gotten into you?
What has gotten into you?*

Ann holds onto Henry, her face against his torso—but he seems elsewhere, haunted.

ANN

*With this storm and this sea
I feel scared, look at me
Comfort me, hold me tight,
Oh, what a terrible, terrible night*

My voice, Henry!
Is nothing sacred to you?

She coughs, again and again.

Henry seems to "wake up," suddenly—surprised to see Ann trying to pull away from him. He forces her to get closer, gets violent.

HENRY
Oh, God knows everything is—to you!
Always trumpeting... values... The Sacred Values!
And then *dying, dying, dying!*
And then *bowing, bowing, bowing!*

INT. INSIDE YACHT: SLEEPING CABIN - NIGHT

Annette is awake. She holds her monkey plush very tight. She listens to what's happening out there on the deck.

ON THE DECK - CONTINUOUS

Henry forces Ann to waltz, faster and faster. The storm has gotten more violent, dangerously rocking the yacht now.

ANN
Henry stop it, stop it now!
We're gonna fall, gonna die!
What has gotten into you?

Think of Annette!

Ann is violently ejected by the centrifugal spin of the crazy waltz...

AAAAAH!

Henry, still swirling, like a drunken dancer, but alone now...
What happened?—how did Ann so suddenly disappear?

He tries to steady his body... falls on the deck. A huge wave hits him. And then he hears Ann's voice, coming from the sea, the waves, outside the boat.

ANN
Henry, help me
Pull me out
Henry, help me
Pull me out
Where are you?
Help, Henry, I'm almost out of air

Henry, horrified, dazed, paralyzed.

HENRY
There's so little I can do
There's so little I can do
There's so little I can do
There's so little I can do

INT. CABIN – NIGHT

Ann's dead body, underwater, passes in front of the cabin's porthole.

EXT. AT SEA: LIFE BOAT - NIGHT

The sea is now totally calm, and the rain has stopped.

Henry and Annette are on a little lifeboat. He is rowing, haunted, looking straight ahead. Annette (wearing a life jacket) is awake on his laps.

EXT. ON THE SHORE OF AN ISLAND - NIGHT

Father and daughter have washed up on the shore of an island.

As Henry is trying to warm up Annette's body, he starts singing to her:

WE'VE WASHED ASHORE

HENRY
We washed ashore, Annette
On some island, somewhere Your
mother's gone, Annette I'll take
care of you

Help is on the way, Annette
Someone's heard our calls
In the meantime, stars line up
They line up for you

Henry lies down on the sand. Annette stays sitting, facing the sea.

As the moon comes out from behind a cloud and shines down on the baby, the baby starts... to sing. Yes, the baby is singing, in a beautiful crystalline voice—and what she is singing is a wordless version of the “Aria” made famous by her mother.

BABY ARIA (THE MOON)

ANNETTE

ARIA

Henry looks at the baby, stunned. Drunk, dazed and exhausted, he lies back on the sand, closes his eyes, and laughs.

HENRY

Somehow, I'm imagining Annette is singing
 Just as the light of the moon lit her beautiful face
 How foolish! How very foolish I can be.
 Now, I can hear the... stars laughing at me!
 In the morning I'll be free of all these... hallucinations.

Clouds start to obscure the moon again. The Baby stops singing.

Henry has fallen asleep. The moonlight on Henry's body is shadowed by... The Spirit of Ann (wet, skin almost green, very long hair covered in seaweed). She is now standing above him. Turning around his lying body, sings in an uncharacteristically angry tone:

I WILL HAUNT YOU, HENRY!

THE SPIRIT OF ANN

*I will haunt you, Henry
 For the rest of your life
 Through Annette I'll haunt you
 Her voice will be my ghost*

*I am no longer Love
 I am now Revenge!*

The moonlight disappears again. The Spirit of Ann looks at Henry asleep
 ... then moves towards her daughter (asleep)
 ... then moves towards the water, takes a few steps inside the water

THE SPIRIT OF ANN

*I will haunt you, Henry
 I'll die day after day, after day
 I will haunt you, Henry
 Night after night, after night*

She disappears into the ocean.

FADE TO BLACK

3rd ACT

LOS ANGELES & AROUND THE WORLD (FALL)

INT. L.A. POLICE STATION - DAY

Henry appears before the police for questioning. He faces five policemen and women.

Each time the policemen have finished asking a question, they turn a crude light on Henry while he answers. They turn it off when it's time for another question—then back on again, etc.

WE ARE THE POLICE

POLICE

*We are the police and we have got some routine questions
You're not suspected but we have to ask some questions
It won't take long—how 'bout some coffee with your questions
It won't take long, we don't have very many questions
—Not many questions*

Can you describe the night and how your wife went missing?

HENRY

There was a storm and I looked up and she was missing

POLICE

And did you try at all to dive in and to save her?

HENRY

*The sea was rough and with Annette—how could I save her?
The storm was very strong there was no way to save her
And anyway, I had Annette, I had to save her
I had Annette*

POLICE

We've heard the rumors that you're somewhat of a raver Were there some problems between you that made you waver?

HENRY

That is an insult, I loved Ann, was always faithful!

POLICE

How about that "comic" piece in which you said you killed her?

Was that a prank, or something more, an aspiration?

HENRY

Everybody knows my acts are full of provocation!

POLICE

*Well that 'bout wraps it up, we sure are grateful Henry
It now seems clear to us there is no guilty party
It was an act of God, that is our firm conclusion
It was an act of God, and pardon the intrusion*

EXT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

Henry comes out of the building, puts on a hat and dark glasses, and walks away—avoiding glances from passersby who recognize him.

I'M A GOOD FATHER

HENRY

*Sure, I've sinned in all your eyes But
one thing you cannot deny is I'm a
good father, I'm a good father, I'm
a good father—am I?*

EXT. A TOY STORE - EVENING

Henry stops in front of a large toy shop: the window display shows a wide range of magic lamps, each lamp projecting its own enchanting world of light and shadows (stars, fishes, trains, water cascades, etc.)

HENRY

*My Annette will ask someday
Where is my mother? I will say that
I'm a good father, I'm a good father,
I'm a good father, but—she's gone*

INT. ANN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Henry climbs the main staircase (the big house now feels empty, without life). He's carrying a package wrapped in paper—a present for Annette.

HENRY

*I'm a good father, mother and father,
I'm a good father—am I?*

INT. ANNETTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He enters Annette's bedroom. The baby is in her little bed. Her nanny, CONSUELO, is sitting on a chair, facing the baby's crib (perhaps reading a story).

HENRY
Hi, Consuelo. How's my baby Annette?

CONSUELO
Much better, no more fever.

HENRY
Ah! Thank you so much.

CONSUELO (*getting up to leave*)
You're welcome, Mr. McHenry.

HENRY
See you tomorrow?

CONSUELO
Yes. Have a good evening.

HENRY
You too.

CONSUELO (*To Annette*)
Bye-bye my love.

Henry unwraps Annette's present. Annette, standing in her crib, is very excited.

HENRY
Oh, look at what I've got for you!
What is it? What is it Annette?
Oh, what is that?! Look at that!
Are you excited?

The present is a small magic lamp. Henry sets it on the baby's night stall. He plugs the lamp in: projected motifs of planets and stars start spinning across the walls and ceiling.

HENRY
Annette, isn't it magical that...

As the light starts shining on the baby's face, she starts singing again—her mother's "Aria" once more:

BABY ARIA (SHE'S A MIRACLE)

ANNETTE
Aria

Henry turns off the lamp: the baby stops singing—silence.
He turns the lamp back on: the baby starts singing again.

HENRY

*Unbelievable... amazing... It's really happening...
She sings, she's a miracle
When the light shines on her
Astounding... unbelievable... amazing
It's really happening, it's really happening... to me!*

INT. ANNETTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

LATER

Henry and Annette are both lying in the little crib. Henry is wide awake. Silence.

INT. CONDUCTOR'S CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

Ann's former Accompanist has achieved his aim and is now The Conductor of a large metropolitan symphony orchestra.

While conducting a rehearsal, he takes advantage of the musical piece's slow sections to sing a monologue:

THE CONDUCTOR

THE CONDUCTOR

It's a fast-changing world,
And I am now the conductor of the city's finest orchestra,
No longer the self-deprecating accompanist from such a short
while ago.
Ann would be proud of me.
I do have my suspicions, though about why she isn't alive.
And doubts too about something else but...
Excuse me a minute

As a loud musical section begins, The Conductor leads forcefully.
Then, when the music calms down again.

THE CONDUCTOR

Henry has invited me to his place tomorrow
To discuss a matter that he says concerns Annette and Ann.
As awkward as it is for me to attend, anything that concerns Ann
and the future of Annette is something that concerns me.
Excuse me one more time.

Loud music passage again. This one is louder and more energetic than the previous one. The Conductor leads forcefully, then goes back into his monologue.

THE CONDUCTOR

My love for Ann has never died.

Neither has my regret that our affair was only an affair.

I had been hoping for so long...

Then at a time when she was in despair,
we started an affair.

But the very next week she met Henry, and that was the end of it
—the end of me.

I'll always regret that.

I deeply miss her. Her warmth, her voice. I miss Ann

Excuse me!

Strong and brief last loud passage ending on a big final gesture of the Conductor.

INT/EXT. ANN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Henry, standing on the balcony, watches The Conductor's taxi enter the property.

The Conductor pays the driver, and walks towards the house.

Henry goes downstairs and opens the door for The Conductor.

THE CONDUCTOR

Hey Henry!

Henry takes him up the stairs, to Annette's room, singing:

SOMETHING THAT WILL BLOW YOUR MIND

HENRY

Thanks for coming by

My conductor friend

Got something to show you

That will blow your mind

Follow me upstairs

As a friend of mine

You deserve to see this

It will blow your mind

The Conductor is obviously anxious, wary of Henry.

HENRY

Careful with the stairs

Have no fear my friend

*I'm not gonna play
Any trick of mine*

INT. ANNETTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

They enter Annette's bedroom. Semidarkness. Annette is deeply asleep.

Henry closes the door behind the Conductor.

THE CONDUCTOR
Henry... What do you...

HENRY (*Low, so as not to disturb the baby*)
Shhhh!

Henry turns the little magic lamp on Annette....
And she starts singing.

BABY ARIA (CAN YOU EXPLAIN IT?)

ANNETTE
Aria

The Conductor, amazed.

HENRY
Can you believe it?

THE CONDUCTOR
I just can't believe it!

HENRY
Can you explain it?

THE CONDUCTOR
I can't explain it...

HENRY
Is it really happening?

THE CONDUCTOR
I don't know what to think...

HENRY
Is it really happening?

THE CONDUCTOR
I really don't know what to think...

HENRY
To us?

Henry turns the magic lamp off.

HENRY
 How 'bout a drink?

THE CONDUCTOR
 I need a drink...
 A strong drink.

INT. KITCHEN & LIVING-ROOM - NIGHT

Henry is pouring a drink. He hands the Conductor the glass of wine.

IT'S NOT REALLY EXPLOITATION

HENRY
*Here's my plan my sweet conductor
 We three travel 'round the world
 She performs with you conducting
 Backing her around the world*

*All the world deserves to see this
 It's our moral duty, right?
 Well, what do you think, Conductor
 Am I wrong or am I right?*

*If you would consent
 To be there for her
 Your fame will go greater
 Two hundred percent*

*We would tour the world
 Show her to the world
 Millions would go wild
 Cherishing the child*

THE CONDUCTOR
 This is really exploitation...

HENRY
 No, not really.

The Conductor follows Henry, through the living room, towards the pool.

THE CONDUCTOR
 Sure it is.

This is really exploitation.

HENRY
No, not really!

THE CONDUCTOR
Sure it is.

HENRY
*You know what my future looks like
From a money point of view
With the income from performance
She could have a future too*

THE CONDUCTOR
But you're exploiting her, Henry.

HENRY
No, not really

THE CONDUCTOR
You're exploiting Annette.

HENRY
No, not really!

*Please make up your mind
Please make up your mind
Please conductor friend
We cannot waste time*

The small magic lamp, spinning.

FADE TO

EXT. HENRY & ANNETTE ON BIKE: MULHOLLAND DRIVE - NIGHT

Henry on his bike, riding carefully on a road overlooking LA, with Annette sitting against his chest. He's singing:

EVERY NIGHT THE SAME DREAM

HENRY
*I have the same dream every night
Every night the same dream*

INT. HENRY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Only the bedside lamp is on. Henry, sitting on the side of his bed, sings while undressing. He takes sleeping pills.

*Adrift on an angry sea
And in a moment of rage and stupidity
I kill the one I love
Ann, forgive me
Ann, I beg you
Ann, forgive me*

He lies down under the covers.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Henry asleep. On the other (empty) half of the bed appears: Ann, lying by his side, awake. They don't touch. She watches Henry sleep.

ANOTHER NIGHT

Only the bedside lamp is on. Henry, sitting on the side of his bed, smoking and singing while undressing. He takes sleeping pills.

HENRY
*I have the same dream every night
Every night the same dream
She's here lying by my side
An exercise in futility*

He turns off the bedside lamp, and goes inside the bed.

*Did I kill the one I loved?
There's no forgiveness
Ann, I beg you
There's no forgive...
(He screams, like in a nightmare)*

On the other (empty) half of the bed appears: Ann, phantasmal. She slowly rolls her body to get closer to Henry... until her body "merges into" Henry's...

Sound of the bedroom opening (offscreen).

Ann has disappeared...

The Spirit of Ann enters the room and approaches the bed. The Spirit watches Henry asleep.

FADE TO BLACK

MONTHS LATER

Henry's look has changed: a cleaner haircut, a well-trimmed beard.

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

PREMIERE PERFORMANCE OF BABY ANNETTE

The green stage curtain is not open yet.

The Conductor conducts the orchestra.

A large audience sits in anticipation of Annette's first show.

Henry, standing behind the curtain, in the darkness of the stage. He's nervous, sweating.

Baby Annette, standing behind him on a small podium. She's barely visible in the darkness. She's holding her chimp plush tight.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

You've read about her

You've heard about her

But nothing will have prepared you for

The ANNOUNCER on the stage, facing the audience:

What you are about to see

Nothing will have prepared you

for what you are about to see and hear

Tonight, tonight

The curtain starts opening. The audience claps.

Henry is standing still behind his mike stand.

HENRY

Ladies and gentlemen

Welcome to the premiere performance of

Baby Annette, Baby Annette

I am Henry McHenry, I am Henry McHenry

While conducting from the orchestra pit, the Conductor nervously watches Henry.

Henry, also nervous, starts pacing the stage, mike in hand.

HENRY

Cynics among you may doubt that

what you are about to see is real,

That it is not faked in some way.

Let me assure you it is real.
Annette is a miracle.
Miracles do exist.

He walks to the back of the stage, and kisses Annette on the forehead. He grabs her toy chimp from her hands.

HENRY
*Without further ado, I introduce to you
Baby Annette, Baby Annette!*

He exits the stage.

The Conductor starts conducting the intro to Annette's "Aria."

The baby starts singing, slowly walking on the podium towards the audience.

The audience sits in stunned silence.

BABY ARIA (FIRST PERFORMANCE)

ANNETTE
ARIA

Backstage, Henry, sweating, is nervously watching the audience.

At one point, the baby magically rises in the air, floating above the stage and the audience, singing in levitation.

Kids in the audience are fascinated by Annette's performance.

INT. OTHER CONCERTS HALL

While the song is sung in its entirety, we cut to different performances, in different concert halls, TV shows, etc.—as Baby Annette gains lightning attention.

Different shots with Annette bowing.

AUDIENCE
Annette!... Annette!
Exploitation!... It's exploitation!
Bravo, Bravo, Bravo!
We love you Annette!

INT. ON TV, COMPUTERS, CELL PHONES

CLOSE-UP OF a video webpage: the view count of the video:

81 934 763

INT. AIRPORTS AND PLANE - DAWN / DAY / DUSK / NIGHT

Henry, Baby Annette, and the Conductor fly and perform around the world.

Baby Annette's crew (Chorus) sings with Henry (bodyguards, agents, secretaries, etc.).

As they all rush through different airports all around the world, they sing, along with Annette's fans:

WE LOVE ANNETTE!

HENRY

Annette and me and The Conductor are three!

CHORUS

*We're traveling 'round the world,
We're traveling 'round the world,
We're traveling 'round the world,
We're traveling 'round the world
(...)*

INT. PLANE - DAWN / DAY / NIGHT

Henry, Annette and the Conductor on their private jet.

The baby is asleep on the Conductor's lap.

Henry is drinking whiskey from tiny bottles.

PILOTS (SPARKS)

Ladies and gentlemen, please make sure your seats are in the upright position.

We'll be landing... *shortly*.

HENRY

Here in Madrid

FANS

We love Annette!

HENRY

Here in Paris

FANS

We love Annette!

EXT. AIRPORT TARMAC - DAWN / DAY / DUSK / NIGHT

Fans welcoming Annette in airports around the world.

HENRY
Here in London

FANS
We love Annette!
We love Annette!
(...)

FANS
Annette!
Annette!

NIGHT

Annette flying over major cities.

ANNETTE
ARIA

INT. AIRPORTS AND PLANE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

FANS
Bon voyage!
Bon voyage!
Bon voyage!
Bon voyage!
Bon voyage!

INT. AIRPORTS AND PLANE – DAY /NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

HENRY & CHORUS
We're traveling 'round the world,
We're traveling 'round the world,
We're traveling 'round the world,
(...)

FANS
Bon voyage!
Here in Mumbai
We love Annette!
Bon voyage!
We love Annette!
Bon voyage!
Here in Cuba!
We love Annette!

Bon voyage!
Here in Tokyo!
We love Annette
Bon voyage!
We love Annette
Bon voyage!
We love Annette
 (...)

INT. LUXURY HOTEL: ACAPULCO - DUSK

The Conductor is holding Annette in his arms. They're alone in the large suite's living room, facing the window that overlooks the bay of Acapulco.

We sense the Conductor's strong attachment to the baby.

THE CONDUCTOR
 What a beautiful, beautiful night, hum?

Henry breaks in, putting on his coat.

HENRY
 Hey, my friend, would you look after Annette while I go out and let off just a little bit of... steam?

THE CONDUCTOR
 Sure, Henry, I'll look after Annette.

Henry blows a kiss to Annette and leaves the suite.

A LITTLE LATER

The Conductor is at his keyboard, with Annette on his lap.

He starts softly playing the tune to "We Love Each Other So Much" (Henry and Ann's love song).

The baby listens intently and watches the Conductor's fingers move across the keyboard.

WE LOVE EACH OTHER SO MUCH (LULLABY)

THE CONDUCTOR
We love each other so much
So hard to explain it
So hard to explain
We love each other so much

We love each other so much
We love each other so much

*Speak soft when you say it
 Speak soft when you say it
 We love each other so much*

Annette has fallen asleep.

**INT. DIFFERENT NIGHTCLUBS IN DIFFERENT CITIES AROUND THE WORLD
 - NIGHT**

We see Henry in different clubs and bars, with women from different countries (Brazil, Japan, Russia).

ALL THE GIRLS

HENRY (with Brazilian girls)
*All the girls I see
 Look so great to me
 What amazes me
 Is what they see in me*

(With Japanese girls)
*All the girls I see
 In France and Italy
 Or here in Roppongi
 What do they see in me?*

(Dancing with Russian girls)
Am I handsome?—No

THE RUSSIAN GIRLS
*You're so handsome!
 Charming?—Well, so-so
 You're so charming!
 I'm a foreign guy
 So exotic!
 Rich and drunk, maybe that's why*

THE RUSSIAN GIRLS
*Hard to imagine
 All these fucking men
 Who hate themselves but
 Want us to love them!*

INT. CLUB / RESTROOM - NIGHT

Henry, drunk, finishes taking a piss, then goes to the washstand. He looks at his reflection in the mirror.

HENRY
All the girls I see

*Look so great to me
But... will I ever be
Lovable again?*

BACK IN LA WINTER

EXT. IN THE HILLS ABOVE LA - DUSK

A coyote, howling.

EXT/INT. ANN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Henry returns to his villa on his bike.

He parks the bike and, swaying, walks towards the house.

SO GLAD TO BE BACK HOME

HENRY
*I'm feeling just a little bit drunk
I'm feeling just a little bit tipsy*

Behind him, the heavy bike slowly falls on its side.
(Henry hadn't put the kickstand properly.)

Shit...

*Where, you might ask, did I go?
That would be none of your business!*

(Searching for his keys)
Where did I put my house keys?

The Conductor opens the door for Henry.
As always, he has looked after the baby while Henry was fooling around.

HENRY
*So glad to be back at home
Hey, Mr. Conductor friend, good to see you
Thanks for watching Annette
How is Annette?*

THE CONDUCTOR
She's fine.

Henry enters the living room, where Annette is sitting on the floor in pajamas, playing on a toy piano.

On his way to the kitchen bar, he pats Annette on the head.

HENRY
There's my little Annette
There's my little Annette
How's my little Annette?
How's my little Annette?

He starts pouring himself a glass of whiskey.

WE LOVE EACH OTHER SO MUCH (ANNETTE)

ANNETTE
La da di da da....

The baby (without any change in lighting, this time) starts singing softly... and she's not singing the "Aria," but a wordless version of "We Love Each Other So Much"—the love song Henry and Ann used to sing together.

Henry stops pouring his drink... listening to his daughter sing, haunted.

HENRY'S VISIONS

Images of Ann and Henry together, (holding hands, fucking, etc.)

Henry brutally interrupts Annette's singing and gets furious at The Conductor (Annette watches, puzzled).

HENRY
 How does she know that song?!

YOU HAD NO RIGHT!

You had no right, you had no right to teach her that!
You had no right, you had no right at all!

He then takes The Conductor outside, into the garden, so that Annette won't hear. He goes on singing, louder, with rage:

You had no right, you had no right to teach her that!
You had no right, you had no right at all!

That song was our song, Ann's and my song, that was our song!
That song was our song, Ann's song and mine!
That was our song... That was our song...

THE CONDUCTOR

No!
No, Henry, I wrote that song—for Ann.

HENRY
What?!

THE CONDUCTOR
So I had every right to teach it to my star pupil, Annette.

HENRY
Yeah, bullshit!

(Getting even more furious)
You'd think you were her father!
You'd think you were her father!
You'd think you were her father!

THE CONDUCTOR
Maybe... I am...
I think I am...

For once, the Conductor stands up to Henry. Henry almost collapses, dizzy...

HENRY
This can't be true!
This can't be true!

THE CONDUCTOR
Sorry Henry ...
You see, before you came along, Ann and I...

HENRY
This can't be true!
Could this be true?
(Leaning against a tree, singing to himself)
No one must know this, or I'll lose my daughter.
No one must know this, or I'll lose my child...

Slowly, he moves away from the tree, and walks back towards the house as he tells the Conductor:

Let's put Annette to bed, and then go by the pool and talk it over,
OK?

INT. ANNETTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Henry is tucking Annette in her bed. The Conductor is on the side of the bed.
(Strange sight, these two "fathers" putting "their" baby to bed).

Henry is about to kiss his daughter's forehead, but she turns her face away from him.

The Conductor kneels down, and whispers to Annette:

CONDUCTOR
Good night, Annette.

The Conductor and the baby exchange a silent gaze.
But Henry turns off the bedroom's light immediately.

EXT. AROUND THE POOL - NIGHT

The two men arrive at the pool.

The pool is now derelict: most of the underwater lights don't work (or only in intermittent bursts), the surface is swamped with dead leaves, and the floating toys are half deflated.

The two men start slowly walking along the pool—Henry staying menacingly close to the Conductor, as if sniffing at him.

HENRY
You see, my friend...

Suddenly, he “jokingly” pretends to push the Conductor into the pool.

MURDER OF CONDUCTOR

THE CONDUCTOR
Henry, don't fool around!
The water must be freezing
You wouldn't want me to drown, would you?

HENRY
I don't know...
What was I about to say...

CONDUCTOR
Shall we talk, as you'd asked
I can't stay, can you make it fast
Not to be impolite
But it's been a long, long night

But once again Henry pretends to push the Conductor into the pool
—more brutally this time.

THE CONDUCTOR
Hey Henry, no!
Stop fooling around!
You're quite drunk, let's both sit down
What is it you need to say?

Sit down, Henry!... Watch it, hey!

Henry has pulled out the chair the Conductor was about to sit on... the Conductor falls down on his back... then quickly and nervously tries to get up... but Henry violently drags his body towards the pool's edge...

Henry orders him to shut up (the baby is sleeping in the house:)

Shhhh!

THE CONDUCTOR
This isn't funny anymore!
Not the least bit funny anymore!

HENRY (*Shaking him violently*)
Shhhh!

THE CONDUCTOR
Get your hands off me...

HENRY
Shhhh!

THE CONDUCTOR
Get your hands off me!
What are you trying to do to me?
What are you trying... what are you trying to do to me?
Stop it... just stop it... just stop it, stop it, stop it
Ok, ok, ok, ok, ok, stop it...

HENRY
Shhhh!

Henry violently throws the Conductor into the pool: he kneels at the edge of the pool, so that the Conductor can't escape him.

When the Conductor tries to put his head out of the water, Henry pushes him back under water.

THE CONDUCTOR
*Henry, it's fr-freezing,
Henry, I'm g-going down
I won't tell a single soul
Even you can't be this c-c-cold*

So it was y-you, after all...

HENRY (*he pushes the Conductor back under water*)
No.
No.

THE CONDUCTOR

If only I had gotten Ann to love me more...

Henry strongly punches the Conductor's face.
The Conductor disappears under water.

HENRY

There's so little I can do

There's so little I can do

The Conductor's body, lying flat dead on the water.

THE CONDUCTOR (*voice over*)

If only..... I'd gotten Ann to love me more

HENRY

There's so little I can do

THE CONDUCTOR (*voice over*)

If only...

HENRY

There's so little I can do

THE CONDUCTOR (*voice over*)

If only...

Henry grabs the Conductor's leg and pulls the whole floating corpse to one side of the pool. He then pulls the corpse out of the pool, and carries it further in the darkness of the garden.

INT/EXT. ANNETTE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Henry, soaked, enters Annette's bedroom. The baby is in bed, in the dark. As Henry comes closer, he sees she's awake, looking at him.

HENRY

Annette, you're awake...

They look at each other through the darkness, in silence.

Then, calmly, silently, the baby pushes the magic lamp off the nightstand—the lamp breaks on the floor.

Henry, distraught, kneels down and starts picking up the broken glass.

HENRY (*whispering*)

Everything will be alright now.

I promise Annette...

SHOWBIZ NEWS

Images of: Henry and Baby Annette holding hands during a photocall.

SHOW BIZ NEWS (NEVER AGAIN)

CONNIE O'CONNOR'S VOICE

Connie O'Connor here for Show Biz News, with the shocking announcement that Henry McHenry has decided to end Baby Annette's singing career. Before they move to Europe, she will give one last performance, to be announced shortly... The baby will never perform again after that.

CHORUS

Never again... Never again...Never again...

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

It's the Hyper Bowl halftime show. A huge crowd is gathered for Baby Annette's last performance.

The ANNOUNCER is standing in a glass booth above the stadium, among a crew of technicians. Henry is standing next to him, nervous.

The Announcer sings, joined by a Chorus of footballers and cheerleaders, and a choir of little boys.

ANNOUNCER & CHEERLEADERS

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome

Welcome!

Welcome to the Hyper Bowl HalfTime Show

Waouh!

To the thousands who are here in attendance

Welcome!

And the millions that are watching at home

At home!

ANNOUNCER & CHORUS

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome

Welcome to the Hyper Bowl HalfTime Show

To the thousands who are here in attendance

And the millions that are watching at home

The Announcer and Henry start looking towards the sky.

Baby Annette, suspended on drones, descending from the sky. She greets the audience, waving her arms.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome our cherished... Baby Annette!

As you all know by now, this will be her last public appearance. So, ladies and gentlemen... Darkness... then a very sweet soft light. And then, for all eternity... Baby Annette!

The drones gently drop Annette at the center of the stadium, on the top of a high, green, monolith.

Rapturous applause from the crowd. The instrumental intro to “Aria” begins, in the darkness...

CHOIR BOYS

Baby Annette!

Baby Annette!

A huge spotlight slowly moves on Annette... but when it's time for her to sing, she does not sing... Silence.

ANNOUNCER

This is the largest audience that Annette has ever performed in front of, so some nervousness is completely understandable.

Ladies and gentlemen... Baby Annette!

Again: applause... instrumental intro to “Aria...” the spotlight slowly moving on Annette...

CHOIR BOYS

Baby Annette!

Baby Annette!

...but when it's time for her to sing, she does not sing... Silence.

In the glass booth: Henry has a nervous laugh.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen... please...

We ask for your patience. Baby Annette *is* a baby, after all...

Please, once again... Baby Annette!

Henry goes to sit down at one side of the glass booth. He lights a cigarette.

ANNOUNCER (*Not talking into his mike anymore*)

What the fuck is the little bitch doing?

The instrumental intro to “Aria” starts again...

CHOIR BOYS

Baby Annette!

Baby Annette!

Henry seems to deflate, about to collapse, not caring about anything anymore.

When it's time for Annette to sing, she does not sing.

The audience is getting very angry now.

After a few seconds of silence, Baby Annette whispers into her mike (her first words ever.)

BABY ANNETTE

Daddy...

The audience falls silent...

Daddy kills people.

FADE TO BLACK

4th ACT

COURTHOUSE & PRISON

EXT. ANN'S HOUSE: POOL - GREY DAY

Images of the pool, now empty, derelict, surrounded by police crime scene tape:

**CRIME SCENE
DO NOT CROSS**

TRUE LOVE B

CHORUS
*True love always finds a way
But true love often goes astray*

INT. POLICE STATION: INTERROGATION ROOM

*True love always finds a way
But true love often goes astray
Astray, astray
Away, away*

Time going by:

Henry sitting at the desk of an interrogation room, in semidarkness. The crude light of the desk lamp at times hits his face (as in during his previous interrogation scene with the police, “*We Are The Police*”).

He's changed quite a bit—seems older, puffed face.
The light goes off.

The crude light hits his face again: he has changed even more—heavier, a beard, longer hair, etc.
The light goes off.

INT. POLICE VAN - DAY

Henry, handcuffed, in prison uniform, seated in the back of the police van taking him to the courthouse—a mere shadow of his former self now.

EXT. OUTSIDE COURTHOUSE - DAY

Flanked by police officers, Henry walks towards the courthouse among the angry crowd singing:

HE IS A MURDERER

CROWD

*He is a murderer, he is a murderer!
There is no doubt at all that
He is a murderer, he is a murderer!
And he must pay the price and
Whether it's first degree, or less than first degree
The point is moot to us 'cause
He's still a murderer and, whether it's death or jail
We'll send him far, far, far away!*

*You are a murderer, you are a murderer!
You killed the one that we all loved
Near religiously, nearly religiously,
No more will she die for us
Who will now die for us, who will now die for us?
No one can take her place, but
You who despise us all, you who despise us all,
We will now tame, break and destroy!*

The police officers push Henry inside an underground parking.

REPORTERS

Henry, over here!... What do you have to say?...
The public has the right to know!

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom obviously used to be a theater or an opera house (it has an oval shape, with a balcony—now closed to the public).

The atmosphere is solemn as Henry takes the stand.

CLERK (*Woman with runny nose*)

Please, raise your right hand.

Henry McHenry, do you solemnly swear that you will tell the *truth*, the whole *truth*, and nothing but the *truth*, so help you God?

(She sneezes into her handkerchief)
Truuuuth!

HENRY

Yes.

The truth is... you remind me so much of my mother.

A murmur of disapproval in the audience—and a few laughs.
The Judge bangs his gavel, one time.

JUDGE

Mr. McHenry: this court won't tolerate effrontery!

Clerk, please, once again please.

CLERK

Please, Henry McHenry, do you solemnly swear that you will tell the *truth*, the whole *truth*, and nothing but the *truth*, so help you... (*Singing*) *God!*

Henry stays silent a few seconds—then mumbles:

No.

You'll kill me if I do.

Again, a murmur of disapproval in the audience.
The Judge bangs his gavel, three times.

Light and sounds in the courtroom slowly fade.

We can now only see Henry, everyone else in the courtroom is in darkness and completely motionless—as if time had stopped, except for Henry.

He stands up and, walking around the silent and dark courtroom (among the lawyers, people in the audience), he starts singing:

STEPPING BACK IN TIME

HENRY

Stepping back in time, I'd pull Ann aside,

"I'm so proud of you, I'm so proud of you"

Stepping back in time, I'd pull Ann aside,

"I'm so happy for you, I'm so happy for you"

Henry thinks he's heard Ann's voice singing... But he's not sure... No, it can't be...

HENRY

I'd say, "Ann, what gives me the most joy

Is to watch you, I'm a small boy

ANN

You're a small boy

Wide-eyed in my awe at your silken voice

I admire you, never tired of you"

Never be tired of you

Henry has heard Ann's voice again. Or is he imagining he did? Bewildered, he goes on singing while his eyes search for Ann through the darkness of the courtroom.

His search for Ann becomes more frantic... and he finally spots her in a mirror (the "real" her, not her angry Spirit) high above him—standing alone at the balcony, looking at him. Beautiful tender Ann... Henry hasn't seen her for so long.

She's moving around the oval balcony. He moves too so as not to lose sight of her, as he goes on singing:

HENRY

Teary-eyed, she'll say

ANN & HENRY

"I'm ashamed to see

That we both can't be, where we ought to be"

Crying, you will say

"It's so sad, you see

That we both can't be, who we ought to be"

Stepping back in time, I could step aside

Not allow my rage to be magnified

To a dangerous point where a rash act

What an impact, I can't grab back

ANN & HENRY

Now there's no more time, what a shame to see

That we both can't be, where we ought to be

No there's no more time, it's so sad to see

That we both can't be, who we ought to be

THE SPIRIT OF ANN

Henry!

The voice didn't come from Ann at the balcony, but from a few feet behind him...

Henry turns around, and faces (not sweet Ann but) the angry Spirit of Ann—coming from the dais right by the Judge (who's motionless and in the dark).

The Spirit moves closer to Henry.

COURTROOM SPIRIT

THE SPIRIT OF ANN

Henry. She won't be the one keeping you company in jail. I will!

Day after day after day...

Night after night after night!

YEARS LATER**EXT. ANN'S HOUSE: POOL - DAY**

At the bottom of the pool: muddy waters and toads, vegetation grown wild.

FADE TO BLACK**INT. PRISON: VISITING ROOM - DAY**

Henry in his prisoner's uniform, waiting for Annette's visit in the visiting room. He has aged quite a bit.

He is mumbling some incoherent logorrhea.

INT. PRISON: CORRIDORS - DAY

A PRISON GUARD is walking through the corridors of the prison, carrying Annette in his arms. She is 5 years old now—her hair longer.

INT. PRISON: VISITING ROOM - DAY

Henry, still mumbling.

INT. PRISON: CORRIDORS - DAY

The Prison Guard, still walking through the corridors with Annette in his arms.

INT. PRISON: VISITING ROOM – DAY

Henry stops his mumbling, and turns towards the door: through the glass panel, he can see Annette in the guard's arms. She is staring at him from behind the door.

The guard opens the door, and Annette enters the visiting room. She sits on a chair in front of Henry.

At first, father and daughter sit there, mute and distressed.

Henry is the first to break the silence:

Annette?... Annette?
You've changed so much Annette.

ANNETTE'S VOICE

Yes.

But the voice doesn't come from where Annette is sitting...
Henry's eyes focus on the other side of the room... he seems to be facing a tormented vision.

On the other side of the room: another Annette (a real little girl, in the flesh—not a puppet anymore) is standing, her back to the wall.

REAL ANNETTE

Yes, I have.

Although her voice is a little girl's voice, she now speaks with the words of a penetrating adolescent.

She approaches the table where Puppet-Annette is sitting in front of Henry.
She takes the place of the puppet.

Silence, then:

ANNETTE

You too have changed.

But at least, you're safe here, yes?

You can't drink and you can't smoke here, can you?

HENRY

...No... no I can't.

ANNETTE

And... you can't kill here, can you?

(No answer from Henry. She then has a shy smile.)

Hum... it was a joke...

HENRY

Hum, you are my daughter after all.

No. No more killing. Only time. "Killing Time." Have you heard that expression?

ANNETTE

No. But now, you have nothing to love.

HENRY

Can't I love you?

ANNETTE

No. Not really...

Henry tries not to show how hurt he is.

HENRY *(He looks at the clock on the wall.)*

Annette...
We don't have long.

He then starts singing—slow, low:

SYMPATHY FOR THE ABYSS

HENRY
*I'll sing these words to you
I hope that they'll ring true
They're not some magic chimes
To cover up my crimes
Annette, of this I'm sure:
Imagination's strong
And Reason's song
Is weak and thin
...We don't have long*

*I stood upon a cliff
A deep abyss below
Compelled to look, I tried
To fight it off, God knows I tried
This horrid urge to look below
But half-horrified
And half-relieved
I cast my eyes
Toward the abyss, the dark abyss*

Henry gets up, paces the cell as he goes on singing:

*I heard a ringing in my ears
I knew my death knell's ugly sound
The overbearing urge to gaze
Into the deep abyss, the haze!
So strong the yearning for the fall
Imagination's strong
And Reason's song
Is weak and thin
...We don't have long*

Annette violently throws her chimp plush towards her father.

For the first time, we see a real toughness in her expression. She bangs her little fist repeatedly on the table, as she sings:

*I'll never sing again!
Shunning all lights at night
I'll never sing again!
Smashing every lamp I see
I'll never sing again!*

*Living in full darkness
I'll never sing again!
A vampire forever!*

HENRY
*Annette!—no, no, no!
Annette, Annette no!*

For the first time, Henry sees his daughter but as *a real person, a real little girl* of flesh and blood. Father and daughter now sing in duet:

HENRY
I sang these words to you
ANNETTE
*Can I forgive what you have done?
I hoped that they'd ring true
And will I ever forgive mom?
Imagination's so strong
Her deadly poison I became
And Reason's song is never strong
Merely a child to exploit
Imagination is so strong
Forgive you both?
And Reason's song
Or forget you both?
So faint and shrill
To take that oath?
I stood above
The deep abyss
To take that oath?*

ANNETTE (Angry)
*Why should I now forgive?
Why should I now forget?
I can never forgive!
I can never forget!
Both of you were using me for your own ends
—for your own ends
Not an ounce of shame
the two of you, you're both to blame!
I wish that both of you were gone
Wish you were gone!*

HENRY
*No don't blame Ann
Wish you were gone!
Annette that's wrong
Wish you were gone!
No don't blame Ann
Both of you gone!*

Annette turns away from Henry, seeming to now sing to herself:

ANNETTE

But is forgiveness the sole way

HENRY

This horrid urge to look below

When all has gone so far astray

God knows I tried, to fight it off

Half-horrified, and half-relieved

Extract the poison from one's heart

And from one's soul, I can't be sure

I cast my eyes down the abyss

Annette turns to face Henry again:

Forgive the two of you or not

I take this oath

Sympathy for the dark abyss

Forgive you both?

I take this oath

Sympathy for the dark abyss

I take this oath

Forgive you both?

Or forget you both?

Don't cast your eyes

Down the abyss

I must be strong

I must be strong!

The guard steps inside the room.

GUARD

Time's up!

Henry grabs the child, hugs her. She doesn't resist his embrace, but doesn't commit to it either.

GUARD

No contact!

The guard steps in to separate them... but Henry hangs onto the child.

WE LOVE EACH OTHER SO MUCH melody

ANNETTE (*singing, sadly, to her father*)

Now, you have nothing to love

HENRY

Why can't I love you?

Can't I love you?

ANNETTE
Now, you have nothing to love

HENRY
 Can't I love you, Annette?

ANNETTE
*No, not really Daddy, it's sad but it's true:
 Now you having nothing to love*

Henry lets go of the child.
 The guard picks her up in his arms, and leaves the room with her.

HENRY
 Annette, my Annette...
 Never cast your eyes down the Abyss!

INT. PRISON: CELL / CORRIDOR - DAY

Henry goes to the closed door. Through the glass panel in the door, he can see Annette in the guard's arms, her face turned towards him.

The child is getting smaller and smaller, as the guard moves away in the corridor. She waves goodbye.

HENRY
*Goodbye Annette... Goodbye Annette... Goodbye Annette...
 Goodbye, Annette... Goodbye...*

INT. PRISON: VISITING ROOM - DAY

Henry moves away from the door.
 For a brief moment, his eyes catch the surveillance camera watching him... He immediately looks away.

HENRY (*mumbling*)
 Stop watching me...

He moves to one corner of the cell, rests his head on the wall
 (his back to the camera).

Last image: Annette's puppet and plush chimp, lying on the floor, motionless.

FADE TO BLACK

EPILOGUE**EXT. FOREST - NIGHT**

As the end credits roll: the cast and the authors of the film reappear as themselves (as in the Prologue), followed by the whole film crew.

They're all walking side by side in the dark, singing:

THE END**ALL**

*It's the end
So we bid you Goodnight
Safe journey home,
watch out for strangers*

*If you liked what you
saw —tell a friend
If you've no friends
—then tell a stranger
Tonight*

*Good night, one and all
Good night, one and all
Good night, one and all
(...)*