

Mozart CB 43

sprang full out from behind a cloud, and spilled its merciless light all down me! He saw clearly who it was. And there was nothing for it but to *greet* him – cheerfully! . . .

[SALIERI *takes off his hat and gives a ghastly smile, and a bow.* MOZART *mimes, as before.*]

With a gesture of pure *relief*, he flung open the casement and called down.

MOZART: *Signore!* . . . Oh how wonderful! . . . Come up! . . . *Come up!* [*Inventing joyfully*] Come up, come up and join the fun! There's nothing to eat, not even a bun! And alas and alack, there's nothing to drink. But bottles and bottles and bottles of ink! . . . [*He giggles delightedly.*] Ascend, if you please!

SALIERI: [*To audience*]. Will-less, I climbed his stairs with stone feet. [*Faintly the rising and falling scale passage from the Overture sounds in repetition, and to this hollow music SALIERI moves slowly upstage. MOZART moves also. They face each other. The music fades.*]

He was waiting at the top.

MOZART: A thousand welcomes, sir. Enter, if you please, the Palazzo Amadeo! [*He gives a courtly flourish, indicating his room. SALIERI "enters" it, looking around him.*]

SCENE 16

MOZART'S APARTMENT

SALIERI: Now for the first time I saw the place to which I had consigned him. A filthy chamber in total disorder. Empty bottles everywhere – discarded linen – and across the floor an inky pavement of fresh manuscripts, stirring in icy gusts from ill-fitting windows. . . I knew *at once* what these must be! . . . As for his face, it held a look I'd never seen before – not madness at all, but some deep-possessing physical *sickness!*

MOZART: Tell me, my friend – what are you doing here so late? It *is* late, isn't it?

SALIERI: I can see you. I've been concerned . . . Let me ask what *you* are doing. Surely not working at this hour?

MOZART:

SALIERI: [*Indicating the floor*]. Well, what's all this?

MOZART: Nothing! Just silliness . . . A new piece.

SALIERI: [*Sharply*]. The Requiem! *It's the Requiem* – isn't it?

MOZART: [*Defensively*]. I know. It's stupid. That Messenger isn't real – you told me and I believe you. All the same, there's no point in taking chances, is there? If he suddenly appeared, and there was nothing for him, I'd look foolish. Mind you, it's not nearly finished. Time was when I could have finished a Mass in a week. Not anymore . . . To be exact, I'm feeling very poorly.

SALIERI: [*Concerned*]. My friend!

MOZART: It's true. My body hurts all day – my joints, my head . . . And I know why! [*Confidentially*] I've been poisoned.

SALIERI: Poisoned?

MOZART: They say the Masons poison people who offend them! [*In panic*]. I didn't mean that! . . . [*Defiantly*]. I'll tell you one thing, though. If he comes too soon, that Messenger, I'll say it to his face: "Tell your Master from me, if He takes me too quick, there won't be a Mass – so there!" He can hiss at me all he likes.

[*Pause*]

SALIERI: [*Carefully*]. My friend, what are you saying?

MOZART: Isn't it obvious? [*Pause*] It's for me. Myself. . . . It's ordered. I am to write my own!

[*Pause*]

There's no need ordering a Requiem if no one's going to die! You know, the worst thing is denying me proper time. That shames me. I've never done that in my life – offered unfinished work.

[*SALIERI looks at him astounded.*]

I wonder, sir, if you could oblige me – take look at it, just a page or two, and tell me if it's worthy. You see, I don't know anymore. Everything's leaving me. Now the *sounds*: They're running away! My hand is tired – it's written too much – it can't catch the notes now . . . The Kyrie's finished – you only need read that.

[*He picks a few pages of manuscript off the table.*]

Kyrie the first theme – Eleison the second: both together make a double fugue. My father would've approved that at least. He'd say, "Only you, my boy. Only you could have done it!" . . . Please

[*Urgently he proffers the page. Reluctantly SALIERI takes them and sits to read. Immediatly he begins the opening of the Requiem Mass. Over this MOZART speaks.*]

Oh, it began so well, my life. Once the world was so full, so happy. All the journeys – all the carriages – all the rooms of smiles! Everyone smiled at me once – the King at Schonbrunn: the Princess at Versailles – they lit my way *personally* to the keyboard! Papa bowing, bowing with such joy! . . . "Chevalier Mozart, my miraculous son!" . . . Why has it all gone? . . . Was I so wicked? . . . [*Outraged*] *Why must I go?*

[*SALIERI is reading the score with increasing disturbance. Suddenly he crumples the paper. Instantly the sound stops. He sits, deeply shaken and alarmed.*]

[*Watching him, in panic.*] It's bad, isn't it? It's bad!

SALIERI: [*Slowly*]. Bad? . . . It will help the ages to mourn.

MOZART: [*Fervently*]. *Oh grazie . . . Grazie, Signore!*

[*He reaches out in gratitude, and freezes.*]

SALIERI: [*To audience*] What could I say In my shaking hands I held a terrible contradiction that only Art can show. Something *immortal* – yet stinking of *death*. *Indestructible* – and yet *rotting!* [*He gives a faint gasp.*] Suddenly I was seized by an over-whelming horror!

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