

THE POSTMAN

IL POSTINO

SCREENPLAY BY

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INT. MARIO'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - DAY

A man's hands hold a postcard showing a circa 1950 model convertible car. The man's hands turn the card over to some writing. There is the INDISTINCT CHATTER of FISHERMEN.

MARIO RUOPPOLO, a young man, sits on his bed looking at the postcard. He gets up and walks to the window.

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

Several fishermen disembark from a fishing boat docked in a small harbor. Two other boats with fishermen aboard are in the background.

A MAN and a BOY are on the shore as three fishing boats with fishermen aboard float by. A fisherman in one of the boats tosses a bow line to the man on the shore. The fishermen dock the boat and unload their catch as the man and the boy assist.

INT. MARIO'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

An old man, MARIO'S FATHER, takes some fresh fish out of a small basket and places them into a sink. Mario is seated at a table.

Mario's father operates a hand pump.

MARIO

No, there's no water, Dad.

Mario's father walks to the table and sits down next to Mario. A coffee pot and two metal cups are on the table, along with a bowl.

MARIO (cont'd)

It ran out this morning. I wanted to rinse my hands, too...All gone.

Mario's father and Mario touch the sides of the cups.

MARIO (cont'd)

Is it still warm?

Mario's father pours some milk from the cup into the bowl as Mario rubs his nose with his fingers.

MARIO (cont'd)

(sniffs)

I've got such a cold this morning.

Mario's father pours some coffee into the bowl. Mario wipes his nose with a handkerchief.

MARIO (cont'd)

It must have been the dampness on the boat. I only have to set foot on that boat...

Mario's father spoons some sugar from one of the metal cups into the bowl and picks up a piece of bread.

MARIO (cont'd)

Perhaps I'm allergic. Even if the boat's not moving the dampness gets to me. I don't know how you can stay on it all night and not catch a thing. The minute I get on....

Mario's father drinks the coffee and eats the bread. He takes the postcard from his pocket and shows it to his father.

MARIO (cont'd)

I've received a postcard from America, Dad. From Gaetano and Alfredo. This is America around the outside, and this is an American car. They say they're going to buy one, too. It's written here, "We're buying one," but I think they're joking, because they cost a load of money. But they say it's a rich country, where there's work, a country.... And we're still here, without water, while they're.... Forget it, never mind.

MARIO'S FATHER

Listen, Mario, you've never liked fishing.

MARIO

I've caught a chill.

MARIO'S FATHER

(overlapping)

Go to America or Japan if you want to, but get yourself a job. You're not a kid any more.

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

The fishermen repair their nets next to their boats, which have been pulled up onto the shore. A stairway leads from the harbor to some residences built into the side of a cliff, including Mario's house.

An OLD WOMAN in the window of a house places clothes on a line. Mario emerges from his house, picks up a bicycle and walks it up the stairs. He rides down the dirt road into town.

INT. CINEMA - NIGHT

Several people in the audience. The screen shows a title which reads:

THE WEEK IN THE NEWS INCOM

THE POET,
PABLO NERUDA,
IN ROME.

The screen shows a MOB OF PROTESTERS in a train station.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Central Station. A group of rowdy people has inconvenienced the travelers who crowd the station platforms every day.

A POLICE OFFICER grapples with a man and tosses him to the floor as protesters run about. Two more POLICE OFFICERS escort a YOUNG WOMAN through the station.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

These protesters are not drunkards nor the usual hot heads who protest just for the fun of it. They are a group of intellectuals, writers and journalists. Why have they joined together, shouting, disturbing the Police and Carabinieri?

Mario is in the audience transfixed. The movie screen shows a crowd of people on a train platform waving to PABLO NERUDA, a Chilean poet, and his wife, MATILDE. The Nerudas, arriving by train, lean out a window and shake hands with the people.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

The mystery is revealed when the train arrives. Pablo Neruda gets out at Rome station, the Chilean poet known throughout the world for his poetry and his communist ideas which have often got him into trouble, and for which he has now been exiled.

Neruda and Matilde emerge from the train as the crowd of people looks on. Another YOUNG WOMAN embraces Neruda.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

The poet appears to be well-loved in Italy, and, judging by the enthusiastic embrace of this woman, not only for his moral gifts.

Mario smiles with admiration. The movie screen shows Neruda and

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the young woman as Neruda looks at Matilde, who smiles. He helps Matilde off the train as they walk among the crowd.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
Women go crazy for his poetry, maybe because Neruda writes love poems, a topic which appeals to the female sensibility. But let's go back to our noisy crowd. The Home Office has accepted their protest by suspending the measures against Neruda requested by the Chilean government.

The movie screen shows the fishing village as residents mill about.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
The poet will remain in Italy on a wonderful island.

The audience members APPLAUD.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
He will not be able to leave without police authorization, but the island's beauty will make exile easier.

On screen, a fisherman repairs his net. A MAN IN THE AUDIENCE stands up and waves his cane.

MAN IN AUDIENCE
That's me!

The screen shows three fishermen playing cards at an outdoor cafe table as the movie camera pans left to DONNA ROSA, an old woman and the proprietor of the cafe, with an OLD MAN.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
The poet will have happy memories of Italy and her government which is hosting him in a place which will remind him of home.

The screen shows Neruda's small house in the mountains.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
This cozy house surrounded by nature will certainly make him feel at home.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

In front of the cinema, several patrons emerge, including Mario with his bicycle. Mario rides the bicycle down the street. He stops and looks at a notice pinned to the door of a post office:

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WANTED: TEMPORARY POSTMAN WITH BICYCLE.

Mario looks interested.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Mario walks his bicycle to the post office.

An OLD MAN PULLING A DONKEY enters as Mario puts his bicycle on the sidewalk.

OLD MAN WITH DONKEY
Let's go, let's go.

Mario enters the post office.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Mario enters through the front door with his bicycle.

GIORGIO the telegrapher, a middle-aged man, seated at a desk, holds a package and talks with a FEMALE CUSTOMER.

GIORGIO
You, Anita Scotto, are the sender.
This is your son's name, right?
(to Mario)
What?

MARIO
I've come about the job.

GIORGIO
Right, wait.
(to customer)
And this is the city. Are you sending
him capers?

FEMALE CUSTOMER
Many thanks.

The female customer looks at Mario as Giorgio puts the package on a table.

GIORGIO
He'll be pleased.

The female customer exits.

FEMALE CUSTOMER
Good-bye.

GIORGIO
Bye.

Giorgio stamps the package and looks at Mario.

GIORGIO
Are you illiterate?

MARIO
No, I can read and write. Not very
fast, but....

GIORGIO
Sit down.

Mario leans his bicycle against the desk. He sits down.

GIORGIO
I need someone to deliver mail to Cala
di Sotto.

MARIO
That's great. I live there.

GIORGIO
There's only one addressee.

MARIO
Only one?

GIORGIO
Everyone else there is illiterate.

MARIO
I am not illiterate, but still....

GIORGIO
Well then...it's all mail for signor
Pablo Neruda.

MARIO
The poet loved by women?

GIORGIO
The poet loved by the people!

MARIO
By the people, but also by women--I
heard it on the newsreel.

GIORGIO
All right, but most of all by the
people; he's a communist. Right? The
poet has received a mountain of
mail these last two days. Pedalling
with the bag is like carrying an
elephant on your back.

An OLD CUSTOMER enters and sits down in a chair.

MALE CUSTOMER
I'll wait here.

GIORGIO
I'll be right with you.
(to Mario)
The wage is a pittance, you know.
Postmen make do with their tips, but
with only one house.... At most it'll
pay for your cinema once a week.

MARIO
That's fine.

GIORGIO
It suits you, anyway. My name's Giorgio.

MARIO
Giorgio.

Giorgio stands, walks to a hat rack, and unhooks a postman's
hat and mail bag.

GIORGIO
I'm your superior, and you should call
me sir. But I won't hold you to it,
because I'm a communist too. And
remember...the poet is a great and
kind person. He deserves respect. You
say hello, you thank him--

MARIO
Sure.

GIORGIO
--if he tips you, you thank him again.

MARIO
Okay.

GIORGIO
Right?

MARIO
Yes, right.

Giorgio puts the hat on the desk and gives Mario the bag.

GIORGIO
This is your hat, this is your bag.
Today's the 15th, your first payday's
the 27th.

INT. MARIO'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Mario, wearing the postman's hat, is seated at the table,

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drinking coffee from a bowl with a spoon. His father sits next to him, eating.

MARIO'S FATHER

When do you start?

MARIO

Monday morning, 6:45 I open the shutters. Then the public comes later.

MARIO'S FATHER

Are you in uniform already?

MARIO

No, I'm just wearing the hat. That way it'll take its shape better, or I'll get a headache wearing it all day. The boss told me--it's a postman's trick. A little trick of ours.

EXT. CLIFFS - DAY

Mario, wearing his postman's hat and carrying the bag, rides his bicycle on a dirt road along the cliffs next to the sea. He stops, gets off his bicycle, and walks it up the drive to Neruda's house. Mario rings the bell on his bicycle.

EXT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/PATIO - DAY

Neruda emerges from his house through a front door and walks to the gate.

NERUDA

Good morning.

Mario doffs his hat and takes some packages out of his bag.

MARIO

Your mail.

NERUDA

Thank you.

Mario gives the packages to Neruda. Neruda searches through the mail. He looks at one of the letters and chuckles.

Mario hands him a pen and a receipt book, which he signs.

MATILDE (off camera)

Love?

NERUDA

Yes.

Matilde appears in the patio's doorway.

MATILDE

Love?

(in Spanish)

Hay algo para mi?

NERUDA

No, there is nothing.

Neruda walks to Matilde, holding a letter behind his back.

MATILDE

Oh, no?

NERUDA

No.

MATILDE

Oh, no?

They laugh. Matilde embraces Neruda and takes the letter.
They kiss.

Mario is both fascinated and shy. Matilde goes back into the house and Neruda follows. Neruda stops at the door and looks at Mario. Mario steps back.

NERUDA

Oh.

Neruda walks up to him and gives him some coins.

NERUDA (cont'd)

Thank you.

Mario doffs his hat.

MARIO

Thank you.

Mario picks up his bicycle and rides away.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Mario holds a stack of Neruda's letters as Giorgio works in the background.

MARIO

Another one from a female.

Mario turns one of the letters over and looks at it.

MARIO (cont'd)

Female.

He continues to check every piece of mail.

MARIO (cont'd)
Maria Conchita, female. Angela,
female. Jean Marie, is that male or
female?

Mario shows the letter to Giorgio.

GIORGIO
Female!

MARIO
I knew it!

Mario looks at another letter.

MARIO
This one too.

GIORGIO
Even the women are interested in
politics in Chile!

MARIO
I know, but all females...how come?

GIORGIO
Hey....

MARIO
Hm?

GIORGIO
What's Don Pablo...like? Is
he normal?

MARIO
As a person, as...? Normal. Of course,
he talks differently. You can tell
immediately from.... Know what he
calls his wife? "Amor!"

GIORGIO
No.

MARIO
Even if he's standing far away, they
call each other "amor."

GIORGIO
Really?

MARIO
He's a poet. That's how you can tell.

Mario turns another letter over and looks at it.

MARIO

Female.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Mario rides his bicycle along the road.

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mario enters through a doorway. Neruda and Matilde are in the dining room, kissing.

EXT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/PATIO - DAY

Mario steps out of the house, goes to his bicycle parked at the gate and rings the bell.

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Neruda and Matilde stop kissing. Matilde LAUGHS and Neruda SIGHS, walking to the door and wiping his mouth with a handkerchief.

EXT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/PATIO - DAY

Mario doffs his hat, then opens his bag.

MARIO

Good morning.

Neruda emerges from the house. Mario holds out some letters and Neruda takes them.

NERUDA

Thank you.

Neruda gives Mario some money.

MARIO

Thank you.

There follows an awkward pause.

MARIO (cont'd)

Excuse me...if you happen to need anything--milk, bread--I can--

NERUDA

No thank you. Matilde goes shopping every day.

MARIO

If ever she doesn't want to go out, you can ask me. I come here every day.

NERUDA
We don't need anything. Thanks anyway.

MARIO
I mean, if by any chance....

Mario doffs his hat and walks to his bicycle. He walks away, embarrassed.

INT. POST OFFICE -- DAY

Giorgio, seated, is working with some rolls of tape. Mario is reading a book of poetry by Neruda.

GIORGIO
And remember, Mario, you mustn't bother him with a lot of questions.

MARIO
I won't.

GIORGIO
It's forbidden to annoy customers with strange requests.

MARIO
I know, I won't annoy him. I'll only ask him to sign this book. That's all, so when I get paid I'll go to Naples and show all the girls that I'm a friend of Neruda, the poet of love!

GIORGIO
The poet of the people!

MARIO
Of the people, too.

INT. MARIO'S HOUSE/BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Mario looks at his reflection in a mirror as he holds up the book.

MARIO
Excuse me, could you sign it?
(clears throat)
Please, could you sign it?

EXT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/PATIO -- DAY

Neruda looking at the view on the porch. He cuts an onion with a knife. Mario watches him expectantly.

MARIO
Would you make it unique, maestro?

NERUDA

Uh? Oh, yes.

MARIO

Would you make it unique, maestro?

Mario offers his sleeve to Neruda, who wipes his hand on it.

MARIO (cont'd)

Here.

Mario gives Neruda a pen. Neruda starts to sign the book.

MARIO (cont'd)

My name's Mario Ruoppolo.

Neruda gives the pen back to Mario.

MARIO (cont'd)

(whispering)

Thank you.

NERUDA

And my mail?

MARIO

There isn't any.

Mario exits as Neruda turns to look at the view.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Mario is seated at the table looking at the book of poetry. Giorgio approaches.

GIORGIO

Come on, Mario, you should be happy.

MARIO

Happy? I told him quite clearly: Mario Ruoppolo.

Mario shows Giorgio the book.

MARIO (cont'd)

(reading)

"Regards, Pablo Neruda." It means nothing.

Mario puts the book down.

MARIO (cont'd)

You don't think he can cross it out and write it better? So you can see it's for me, that we're friends?

GIORGIO

Come on.

(chuckles)

Do you think he'd cross it out because you don't like it and write you another?

MARIO

Why not?

GIORGIO

Perhaps he did it on purpose because you bothered him.

MARIO

No I asked him...he was staring at the mountain.

GIORGIO

Exactly, you see?

MARIO

No, I know the mountain...but he was holding an onion.

GIORGIO

So you think a poet can't think when he's holding an onion, eh?

MARIO

When am I supposed to ask him then, if I can't ask him when he's peeling an onion?

GIORGIO

He's a busy man. He can't be running after people to make them happy.

Giorgio opens a drawer.

MARIO

Yes, but he's a communist.

GIORGIO

So what?

MARIO

Didn't you say that communists love the people?

Giorgio picks up a book of Neruda's poetry and walks up to Mario.

GIORGIO

Mario, don't make me annoyed!

Giorgio shows the book to Mario.

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GIORGIO (cont'd)
I bought a copy of the book.

MARIO
Hm.

GIORGIO
When you have the chance, with extreme
tact, ask him if he would sign it for
me.

MARIO
Sign it?

Mario holds up his book.

MARIO (cont'd)
Take this one then, "Regards, Pablo
Neruda."

GIORGIO
No, this is yours. He signed it for
you.

MARIO
I'm happy to let you have it.

GIORGIO
No!

INT. MARIO'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - DAY

Mario, seated on his bed, is looking at a map. He draws a line
down to Chile with a pencil and circles a word. Mario puts the
map down on the bed and picks up the poetry book.

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

The fishermen pull a boat onto the ramp.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

DI COSIMO, a well-dressed male politician, walks past several
men working with a hose connected to a tanker truck. A sign
over a cafe entrance reads:

WINE AND FOOD

Di Cosimo walks to the entrance of the cafe.

ETTORE
Mr. Di Cosimo, shall I empty all the
water?

DI COSIMO
All of it, all of it.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Di Cosimo enters through a doorway covered with a bead curtain.

DI COSIMO

'Morning.

Di Cosimo walks past Donna Rosa and TWO MALE PATRONS at a bar to a table.

CAFE PATRONS

Good morning.

Donna Rosa walks up to Di Cosimo.

DONNA ROSA

Mr. Di Cosimo, what can I do to thank you?
Your wreath was so nice.

Di Cosimo hangs his coat on the back of a chair and sits down.

DI COSIMO

Nothing, Donna Rosa. Just vote and get others to vote. Remember to use that little pencil of yours. And hopefully some of your customers will, too.

Mario is seated at a table, reading the poetry book.

MARIO

(reading)

"It happens that I go into the tailors' shops and the movies all shrivelled up, impenetrable, like a felt swan navigating on a water of origin and ash. The smell of barber shops makes me sob out loud. I am tired of being a man."

EXT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/PATIO - DAY

Neruda sits at a table, writing, as Mario looks on from the gate. Neruda chuckles.

Mario rings the bell on his bicycle.

MARIO

Mail.

Mario opens the gate as Neruda gets up and walks to him. Mario gives Neruda some mail as Neruda gives Mario some money.

NERUDA

Thank you.

MARIO

Thank you.

Neruda walks to the table and sits down as Mario looks on.

NERUDA

What's the matter?

MARIO

(confused)

Don Pablo?

NERUDA

You're standing as stiff as a post.

MARIO

Nailed like a spear?

NERUDA

No. Immobile like the castle on a chess board.

MARIO

Stillier than a porcelain cat.

NERUDA

"Elementary Odes" isn't the only book I've written.

Mario smiles.

NERUDA (cont'd)

I've written much better. It's unfair of you to shower me with similes and metaphors.

Neruda peruses the mail.

MARIO

(confused)

Don Pablo?

NERUDA

Metaphors.

MARIO

What are those?

Neruda gets up and walks to the doorway as Mario starts to follow.

NERUDA

(chuckling)

Metaphors? Metaphors are...how can I explain...when you talk of something comparing it to another.

Mario walks to the doorway and looks at Neruda in the living room.

MARIO
Is it something you use in poetry?

NERUDA
Yes, that too.

MARIO
For example?

NERUDA
(chuckling)
For example...when you say, "the sky weeps," what do you mean?

MARIO
That it's raining.

NERUDA
Yes, very good. That's a metaphor.

MARIO
It's easy then!

NERUDA
Mm-hm.

MARIO
Why has it got such a complicated name?

NERUDA
(sighing)
Man has no business with the simplicity or complexity of things.

MARIO
Excuse me, Don Pablo, then I'll go....
I was reading something yesterday.
"The smell of barber shops makes me sob out loud." Is that a metaphor too?

NERUDA
No, not exactly.

MARIO
I liked it too, when...when you wrote: "I am tired of being a man." That's happened to me too, but I never knew how to say it. I really liked it when I read it. Why "the smell of barber shops make me sob?"

NERUDA
You see, Mario, I can't tell you in words different from those I've used.

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NERUDA (cont'd)

When you explain it, poetry becomes banal. Better than any explanation, is the experience of feelings that poetry can reveal to a nature open enough to understand it.

Mario nods.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Mario rides his bicycle on the road, exiting.

INT. MARIO'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - DAY

Mario, at the window, reading the poetry book. He closes the book and rubs his face. He looks out his window at the ocean.

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Neruda carries a bottle of olive oil and a bowl of flour to a table as Mario sets down some letters. Neruda selects one of the letters.

NERUDA

Will you open this, please?

MARIO

Who, me?

Neruda steps out of the room. Mario picks up the letter and opens it.

NERUDA (off camera)

Yes.

MARIO

I should open it?

NERUDA (off camera)

Yes! My hands are dirty.

Neruda re-enters through the doorway and walks up to Mario, who shows him the letter.

MARIO

It's written in...it's foreign. Is it more important than the others?

NERUDA

Yes, it's from Sweden.

MARIO

What's so special about Sweden?

NERUDA
The Nobel Prize for Literature.

Neruda picks up a bowl of eggs.

MARIO
A prize then?

NERUDA
If they give it to me I won't refuse.

Neruda goes out onto the porch, and Mario follows.

EXT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/PATIO - DAY

Neruda sets the olive oil bottle down next to some bowls and cooking ingredients. Mario emerges from the house.

MARIO
Why? how much money is it?

Neruda picks up an egg, cracks it open, and places it into the bowl, then adds other ingredients to the mixture.

NERUDA
171,135 Swedish krona.

MARIO
I've no idea—is that a lot?

NERUDA
Lots and lots!

MARIO
Then you'll get it.

NERUDA
There are candidates with a better chance than me this year.

MARIO
Why?

NERUDA
Because they've written important works.

Neruda sits down at the table and stirs the mixture with his hands.

MARIO
No, you'll get it, I'm sure.

NERUDA
(chuckling)
Thank you.

MARIO
Shall I open the other letters?

NERUDA
No, I'll read them later.

MARIO
Are they love letters?

NERUDA
What a question! Don't let Matilde hear you.

MARIO
I'm sorry, Don Pablo. I only meant....
I'd like to be a poet, too.

NERUDA
No, it's more original being a postman—you get to walk a lot and don't get fat. We poets are all fat.

MARIO
Yes, but...with poetry I could make women fall for me. How...how do you become a poet?

NERUDA
Try and walk slowly along the shore as far as the bay and look around you.

MARIO
And will they come to me...these metaphors?

NERUDA
Certainly.

EXT. SHORE - DAY

Mario walks along the beach with a reflective expression.

INT. MARIO'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mario and his father are seated at the table. Mario is holding the poetry book. Mario's father picks up a pot and drinks from it.

EXT. SHORE - DAY

Neruda walks along a secluded beach with high cliffs. He stops and looks at the surf.

Mario, carrying his mail bag, follows.

MARIO

Don Pablo?

Neruda spreads a towel on the ground as Mario gives him a letter. Mario adjusts his hat.

NERUDA

Mario, can you send someone to see about this problem of water?

MARIO

Have you got water?

NERUDA

No, that's exactly the problem.

MARIO

That's no problem at all!

NERUDA

Why? Is it normal?

MARIO

It's normal. You've run out of water up at the cistern. Do you use a lot of water?

NERUDA

No, just what I need.

Neruda sits down on the towel.

MARIO

Then that's too much. Because...it runs out all of a sudden because the water-supply ship comes only once a month, so the water gets used up. We've got...they've been saying we'll get running water for ages, "You'll have running water." But...

NERUDA

And you don't protest?

MARIO

What do we say? My father swears every so often, but...only to himself.

NERUDA

There are people who, with a strong will, manage to change things. It's a pity. This place is so beautiful!

MARIO

Think so?

NERUDA

Yes. Sit down.

Mario sits down next to Neruda.

NERUDA (cont'd)

(in Spanish)

"Here on the island, the sea, so much sea.

(continues in Italian)

It spills over from time to time. It says yes, then no, then no.

In blue, in foam, in a gallop.

It says no, then no.

It cannot be still. My name is Sea, it repeats,

Striking a stone but not convincing it.

Then with the seven green tongues, of seven green tigers,

Of seven green seas,

It caresses it, kisses it, wets it,

And pounds on its chest, repeating its own name." Well? What do you think?

MARIO

It's weird.

NERUDA

What do you mean, weird? You're a severe critic.

Neruda takes off his shirt.

MARIO

No, not your poem. Weird...Weird...how I felt while you were saying it.

NERUDA

How was that?

MARIO

I don't know...the words went back and forth.

NERUDA

Like the sea, then?

MARIO

Exactly--like the sea.

NERUDA

There, that's the rhythm.

MARIO
I felt sea-sick in fact.

NERUDA
(chuckling)
Sea-sick.

MARIO
Because...I can't explain it, I felt
like...like a boat tossing around on
those words.

NERUDA
Like a boat tossing around on my
words?

MARIO
Yes.

NERUDA
Do you know what you've done, Mario?

MARIO
No, what?

NERUDA
You've invented a metaphor.

MARIO
No.

NERUDA
Yes, you have!

MARIO
No.

NERUDA
What do you mean, no?

MARIO
Really?

NERUDA
Yes! Uh-huh.

MARIO
But it doesn't count...because I
didn't mean to.

NERUDA
Meaning to is not important. Images
arise spontaneously.

MARIO
You mean then that...for example, I

CONTINUED

MARIO (cont'd)
don't know if you follow me...that the
whole world--

NERUDA
Mm.

MARIO
Right?

NERUDA
Mm.

MARIO
The whole world, with the sea, the
sky...with the rain, the clouds--

NERUDA
(interrupting)
---now you can say etc. etc.

MARIO
Etc. etc. The whole world is the
metaphor for something else? I'm
talking crap.

NERUDA
(chuckling)
No, not at all. Not at all.

MARIO
You pulled a strange face.

NERUDA
Mario, let's make a pact. I'll have a
nice swim--

Neruda stands and takes off his pants.

NERUDA (cont'd)
---and ponder your question. Then I'll
give you an answer tomorrow.

MARIO
Really?

NERUDA
Yes, really.

Neruda takes off his hat and walks into the sea.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Mario parks his bicycle, takes a letter out of his bag, and
walks to the cafe entrance. The old man with the donkey walks
by. A poster on the wall reads:

CONTINUED

CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRACY

INT. CAFE - DAY

Mario, holding a letter, walks through the doorway, to the bar, and sets down his bag. Mario holds up the letter and looks at it, then sets it down.

BEATRICE RUSSO, a beautiful young woman, stands next to a table soccer arcade machine. Mario looks at her, and she turns to meet his glance. She makes a beckoning gesture with her head.

Mario goes over and begins playing the soccer game with her. They sneak glances at each other as they play. Beatrice wins a point, bends down, picks up the ball, and continues to play. Again, Beatrice scores, bends over and picks up the ball. Mario watches her as she plays. Another point for Beatrice: game over.

Mario looks down. He smiles and reaches into his pants pocket for a coin, and all the coins fall out onto the floor. As he picks them up, Beatrice takes the ball out of a slot and puts it into her mouth.

Mario holds out a coin. Beatrice leans forward and spits the ball out. Mario is stunned. Beatrice walks to the counter, picks up a towel and wipes a glass as Mario picks up the ball.

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mario knocks on the glass. Neruda, wearing a bathrobe, walks to the door and opens it.

MARIO
Don Pablo, good morning.

Mario enters through the door.

MARIO (cont'd)
I've got to talk to you.

Mario steps past Neruda and sets his mail bag on the couch.

NERUDA
It must be very important. You're snorting like a horse.

Mario sits down on the couch.

MARIO
It's very important. I've fallen in love.

NERUDA

Nothing serious--there's a remedy.

MARIO

No, no remedy! I don't want a remedy, I want to stay sick. I'm in love, really, really in love.

Neruda, seated against a table, drinks coffee.

NERUDA

Who are you in love with?

MARIO

Her name's Beatrice.

NERUDA

Dante.

MARIO

Don Pablo?

NERUDA

Dante Alighieri. He fell for a certain Beatrice. Beatrices have inspired boundless love.

Mario reaches down and picks up a pen off a table.

NERUDA (cont'd)

Mario?

Mario starts to write on his hand with the pen.

NERUDA (cont'd)

(chuckling)

What are you doing?

MARIO

Writing down the name Dante. Dante, I know, but Alighieri...has it got an "h" in it?

NERUDA

Wait, I'll write it for you.

MARIO

Thank you.

Neruda writes on Mario's hand.

NERUDA

There! Alighieri....

Neruda sits down next to Mario.

MARIO
I'm madly in love.

NERUDA
You've already told me that, but what
can I do about it?

MARIO
I don't know, if you can help....

NERUDA
But I'm an old man.

MARIO
I don't know, because...I suddenly saw
her in front of me.

NERUDA
Mm.

MARIO
I stared at her but I couldn't utter a
word.

NERUDA
What? you didn't say anything to her?

MARIO
Not much. I watched her and fell in
love.

NERUDA
Just like that? In a flash?

MARIO
No, I stared at her for ten minutes
first.

NERUDA
And she?

MARIO
And she said...

INT. CAFE -- DAY -- MARIO'S FLASHBACK

Beatrice at the counter, washing dishes.

BEATRICE
What's up, never seen a woman before?

Mario, seated at a table, reacts and takes off his hat.

MARIO
What's your name?

BEATRICE
Beatrice Russo.

MARIO
(whispering)
Beatrice Russo.

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mario and Neruda.

NERUDA
And you?

MARIO
I couldn't think of anything to say.

NERUDA
Nothing at all? You didn't say a word?

MARIO
Not exactly nothing. I said five words
to her.

NERUDA
Which were?

MARIO
I said, "What's your name?"

NERUDA
And she?

MARIO
And she: "Beatrice Russo."

NERUDA
"What's your name?" are three words.
And the other two?

MARIO
Then I repeated Beatrice Russo.

Neruda covers his face with his hands.

MARIO (cont'd)
Don Pablo, if...I don't want to bother
you, but...can you write me a poem for
Beatrice?

NERUDA
No.

Neruda gets up and walks through a doorway into the kitchen. He then picks up a bag from a chair and exits through a patio door.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

Neruda, holding the bag, looks at the sea. Mario, pushing his bicycle, follows.

NERUDA

I don't even know her! A poet needs to know the object of his inspiration! I can't invent something out of nothing.

Mario holds up the little white ball.

MARIO

I've got this little ball, which Beatrice put in her mouth. She's touched it.

NERUDA

So what?

MARIO

It might help you. Look, Poet, if you make all this fuss over one poem, you're never going to win that Nobel Prize!

NERUDA

Mario, pinch me and wake me from this nightmare!

MARIO

What am I supposed to do? No one else can help me. They're all fishermen here! What am I supposed to do?

NERUDA

Fishermen fall in love too! They are able to talk to the girls they love. To make them fall in love, too, and marry them. What does your father do?

MARIO

He's a fisherman, naturally!

NERUDA

He must have spoken to your mother to get her to marry him.

MARIO

I don't think so. He doesn't talk much.

NERUDA

Come on, give me my mail.

Mario takes some mail out of his bag and gives it to Neruda.

CONTINUED

Neruda takes some money out of his pocket and holds it out to Mario.

MARIO

Thank you, but I don't want it.

Neruda puts the money in his pocket and exits.

EXT. MARIO'S HOUSE - DAY

Mario enters and looks out the window. Several fishermen work near a docked boat.

INT. MARIO'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mario, looks out his window. He holds the white ball up to the moon and looks at it. He draws a circle on a piece of paper.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Beatrice walks down a set of stairs leading from the residency above the cafe. She greets a LITTLE BOY.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Mario's open hand has writing on it, which reads:

DANTE ALIGHIERI

Mario closes his hand. Beatrice enters from the stairway, and approaches some customers seated at a cafe table.

BEATRICE

Do you want something else?

CAFE PATRON

No, thanks.

Beatrice exits as Mario looks on.

MARIO

Beatrice, your smile spreads like a butterfly....

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Neruda, wearing pajamas, opens the front door to Mario.

NERUDA

Fallen out of bed this morning?

Mario takes a package out of his bag and gives it to Neruda.

MARIO

I came earlier because.... I saw this, it looks important.

NERUDA
You're right, it is important.

Mario enters.

MARIO
And then...there's something else I've
been meaning to give you, but kept
forgetting.

Mario takes a bottle of liquor out of his bag and sets it down
on the table.

NERUDA
Hm.

Neruda removes a tape recording cartridge from the package.

MARIO
I'll put it here, Good-bye.

Neruda walks to his desk and opens a drawer.

NERUDA
Wait a minute. I've got something for
you, too. Here.

Neruda picks up a leather-bound writing notebook and gives it
to Mario.

NERUDA (cont'd)
It might be useful for your metaphors.

Mario smiles and looks admiringly at the notebook.

Neruda sits down at the desk, which has a recording machine and
a microphone on it. Neruda CLEARS HIS THROAT and starts to
place the cartridge in the recorder.

MARIO
Is it a radio?

NERUDA
No, but it's like a radio.

Neruda points to the microphone.

NERUDA (cont'd)
You speak into here, and this repeats
what you say.

Mario sits down on the couch.

MARIO
You speak into it and it repeats what
you say?

NERUDA

Yes.

Neruda pushes the cartridge into the recorder.

MARIO

How many times?

NERUDA

As many times as you want. But you mustn't exaggerate. Even the most sublime idea seems foolish if heard too often.

Neruda flips a switch on the recorder. The recorder plays music.

NERUDA (cont'd)

Listen.

MARIO

Uh--huh.

ANTONIO

(over recorder)
(in Spanish)

Neruda turns off the recorder.

MARIO

Good news?

Neruda removes the cartridge from the recorder.

NERUDA

When I was Senator of the Republic, I went to visit Pampa, a region where it only rains once every 50 years--

Neruda picks up another cartridge off a shelf and places it into the recorder.

NERUDA (cont'd)

--where life is unimaginably hard. I wanted to meet the people who had voted for me. One day, at Lota, there was a man who had come up from a coal mine. He was a mask of coal dust and sweat, his face contorted by terrible hardship, his eyes red from the dust. He stretched out his calloused hand and said, "Wherever you go, speak of this torment. Speak of your brother who lives underground, in hell." I felt I had to write something to help man in his struggle, to write

CONTINUED

NERUDA (cont'd)
the poetry of the mistreated. That's
how "Canto General" came about. Now my
comrades tell me they have managed to
get it published secretly in Chile,
and it's selling like hot cakes. That
makes me very happy.

Mario smiles.

NERUDA (cont'd)
And so....

Neruda picks up the microphone and speaks into it.

NERUDA (cont'd)
(into microphone)
(in Spanish)

Mario hears his name mentioned, and points to himself
questioningly.

Neruda gets up and carries the microphone to Mario.

NERUDA (cont'd)
I told them I'm here with a friend who
wishes to say hello and tell them
something nice about this beautiful
country.

MARIO
No.

NERUDA
Yes.

Mario takes the microphone, but speaks into the recorder.

MARIO
Good morning.

Mario looks at Neruda.

NERUDA
No, in there.

Mario speaks into the microphone.

MARIO
(into microphone)
Good morning.
(to Neruda)
Something nice about the island?

NERUDA
Yes, One of the wonders of your
island.

MARIO
Beatrice Russo.

NERUDA
(laughing)
Yes. Very good.

MARIO
Okay.

Neruda takes the microphone from Mario and places it on the desk.

NERUDA
Now let's go to the inn and meet this
famous Beatrice Russo.

MARIO
Are you joking?

Neruda unbuttons his pajama shirt.

NERUDA
No, I'm serious. Let's have a look at
this girlfriend.

MARIO
Mamma mia! Pablo Neruda and Mario
Ruoppolo at the inn. She'll faint!

Neruda is on the patio, putting on a cap. He stops and looks in at Mario, who is still sitting on the couch.

NERUDA
Well? What is it now?

Mario gets up from the couch.

MARIO
Don Pablo, when I get married to
Beatrice Russo, will you be my best
man?

NERUDA
Listen, first let's have a drink, then
we'll decide.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Neruda and Mario ride their bicycles down into town.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Mario and Neruda stand next to their bicycles, as Neruda takes off his cap and wipes his head with a handkerchief and Mario picks up his bag. TWO BOYS emerge from two stairways and run about. Cafe Patrons are seated at tables in front of the cafe.

BOY #1

Gennarino, wait. I'm coming too!

Neruda and Mario walk toward the cafe and stop as Mario takes off his hat and Neruda wipes Mario's head with the handkerchief. A MOTHER enters and walks down a staircase to one of the boys and grabs his arm.

WOMAN #1

Domenico, come here or I'll thrash you!

The mother and the boy go, up the stairway.

MALE PATRON #1

Look who's here. Neruda!

Mario and Neruda enter through the doorway and walk across the cafe. Beatrice is working in the background, and several patrons are seated about.

NERUDA

Good morning.

MARIO

Morning. Hi!

Beatrice walks across the cafe to Mario and Neruda seated at a table.

BEATRICE

What will it be?

NERUDA

A glass of red wine, please. Thank you.

BEATRICE

(to Mario)

And the pinball king?

NERUDA

Do you want red wine too?

MARIO

Red wine, yes.

NERUDA

Two glasses of red wine and a pen to
write with.

Beatrice exits

DONNA ROSA turns to MALE PATRON #3 and MALE PATRON #4 seated at
the bar.

MALE PATRON #3

He's here for your niece.

Beatrice steps behind the bar as Donna Rosa joins her. Beatrice
starts to pour two glasses of wine from a pitcher.

NERUDA

Give me the notebook.

MARIO

Notebook? Why?

Mario takes the notebook out of his bag and gives it to Neruda.
A male patron watches, intrigued.

Beatrice enters with two glasses of wine on a tray and sets it
down on the table. Beatrice picks up a pen from the tray and
gives it to Neruda.

NERUDA

Just a moment.

Beatrice serves the glasses of wine and starts to pick up the
tray. Neruda touches Beatrice's hand. Neruda writes in the
notebook as Beatrice looks on.

Neruda's hand writes on a page in the notebook, reading:

TO MARIO,
MY INTIMATE FRIEND
AND COMRADE —
PABLO NERUDA.

Neruda closes the notebook.

NERUDA (cont'd)

There you are. You already have your
poetry. If you want to write it down--

Neruda gives Mario the notebook as Beatrice watches amazed.

NERUDA (cont'd)

--here's your note-book.

Neruda holds out the pen to Beatrice.

NERUDA (cont'd)
(to Beatrice)
Thank you.

Beatrice leaves them, impressed.

EXT. SHORE - DAY

Beatrice walks on the beach, carrying a hand basket. Mario enters, steps onto a rock, and watches her.

MARIO
Beatrice.

BEATRICE
What is it?

EXT. CAFE - DAY

TWO OLD MEN play cards at a table in front of the cafe as Beatrice enters, walks to the table and picks up an empty bottle of wine.

Donna Rosa emerges from the cafe and approaches the two men as Beatrice walks up the staircase.

DONNA ROSA
Go home--it's closing time! I won't make you pay for the bottle, but go home, we're closing.

The two men get up.

MAN#1
Let's go.

INT. BEATRICE'S ROOM - DAY

Beatrice seated on her bed, looks out a window. Donna Rosa enters.

DONNA ROSA
What are you doing?

BEATRICE
I'm thinking.

DONNA ROSA
With the window open?

BEATRICE
Yes, with the window open.

DONNA ROSA
Be honest with me--what did he tell you?

BEATRICE
Metaphors.

DONNA ROSA
Metaphors? Never heard such big words
from you before. What metaphors did he
do to you?

BEATRICE
Did? He said them! He said my smile
spreads across my face like a butterfly.

DONNA ROSA
And then?

EXT. SHORE - DAY - BEATRICE'S FLASHBACK

Beatrice smiles.

BEATRICE (V.O.)
I laughed when he said that..

MARIO
Your laugh is a rose, a spear
unearthed, crashing water. Your laugh
is a sudden silvery wave....

INT. BEATRICE'S - DAY

Donna Rosa does not seem pleased.

DONNA ROSA
Then what did you do?

BEATRICE
I kept quiet.

DONNA ROSA
And he?

BEATRICE
What else did he say?

DONNA ROSA
No, what did he do? Your postman, as
well as a mouth, has two hands!

BEATRICE
He never touched me. He said he was
happy to be next to a pure young woman.

EXT. SHORE - DAY - BEATRICE'S FLASHBACK

BEATRICE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Like being on the shores of the white
ocean.

MARIO
I like it when you're silent because
it's as though you're absent.

DONNA ROSA (V.O.)
And you?

INT. BEATRICE'S ROOM - DAY

DONNA ROSA (cont'd)
And he?

BEATRICE
He looked at me too, then he stopped
looking at my eyes and began to look at
my hair...

EXT. SHORE - DAY - BEATRICE'S FLASHBACK

Beatrice touches her hair.

BEATRICE (V.O.) (cont'd)
...without a word, as though he were
thinking.

DONNA ROSA (V.O.)
Enough, my child!

INT. BEATRICE'S ROOM - DAY

DONNA ROSA
When a man starts to touch you with
words, he's not far off with his
hands.

Beatrice lays down on the bed.

BEATRICE
There's nothing wrong with words.

DONNA ROSA
Words are the worst things ever. I'd
prefer a drunkard at the bar touching
your bum, to someone who says "your
smile flies like a butterfly"!

BEATRICE
It "spreads" like a butterfly!

DONNA ROSA
Flies, spreads, it's the same thing!
Just look at you! One stroke of his
finger and you're on your back.

Beatrice starts to sit up.

BEATRICE
You're wrong--he's a decent person.

DONNA ROSA
When it comes to bed, there's no
difference between a poet, a priest or
even a communist!

Donna Rosa exits as Beatrice looks off into space.

MARIO (V.O.)
"Naked, you are as simple as one of
your hands, smooth, earthy, small,
transparent, round:"

EXT. CAFE -- DAY

Mario reads the Poetry Book.

MARIO (cont'd)
(reading)
"...you have moon-lines, apple-
pathways: naked, you are slender as a
naked grain of wheat. Naked, you are
blue as a night in Cuba..."

Beatrice watches from inside the cafe, picking up a case of
drinks

MARIO (cont'd)
"...you have vines and stars in your
hair. Naked you are spacious and
yellow as summer in a gilded church."

Beatrice sets the case down, revealing a note folded in her
brassiere.

Donna Rosa enters and takes the note out of Beatrice's
brassiere.

Beatrice gasps.

INT. CATHEDRAL -- DAY

Donna Rosa walks past some pews to an altar and crosses
herself. She knocks on the door to a priest's chamber. The
PRIEST, a young man holding some flowers, opens the door.

DONNA ROSA
Good morning, Father.

Donna Rosa steps through the doorway and shows him the note.

DONNA ROSA (cont'd)
I found this in her brassiere.

Donna Rosa takes the flowers from the Priest and gives him the note.

DONNA ROSA (cont'd)
I want you to read it to me. I'm not
letting her out of the house for now.

The Priest reads the note.

DONNA ROSA (cont'd)
Well?

PRIEST
It's a poem.

DONNA ROSA
Read it to me!

The Priest looks at Donna Rosa.

PRIEST
"Naked..."

DONNA ROSA
(horrified)
Madonna!

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

Neruda is seated, writing, as Matilde opens a package in the background. Neruda gives Matilde a page of manuscript. Mario sits quietly.

NERUDA
(reading)
(in Spanish)

Neruda takes off his glasses.

NERUDA (cont'd)
What are the nets like? Mario, I need
an adjective.

Matilde looks at the page, puts it down on the table and removes some record albums from the package.

MARIO
Nets...Which nets? Fishing nets?

NERUDA
Yes.

MARIO
Sad.

NERUDA

Sad.

MARIO

All right?

Neruda gives Matilde a page of manuscript.

NERUDA

Mm-hm.

Matilde takes a record out of a sleeve, goes to a phonograph and plays the record. Neruda smiles as he listens to the music. Matilde approaches him and they begin dancing.

EXT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/PATIO - DAY

Neruda and Matilde dance through the doorway onto the patio. Neruda dips Matilde. Mario follows them outside.

Donna Rosa enters walking up to the front gate. Matilde and Neruda continue to dance until they notice her.

MATILDE
(in Spanish)

Neruda turns and Matilde goes into the house.

NERUDA

Good morning, signora.

DONNA ROSA

Good morning.

NERUDA

Would you like....

DONNA ROSA

Yes.

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Neruda and Donna Rosa walk through the doorway into the living room. Neruda removes the record.

NERUDA

Please, sit down.

Donna Rosa shakes her head.

DONNA ROSA

No. What I want to say is too serious to say sitting down.

NERUDA

What is it about?

DONNA ROSA
For over a month...Mario Ruoppolo has
been hanging around my inn, and he has
seduced my niece.

NERUDA
What did he say?

DONNA ROSA
Metaphors.

NERUDA
Well?

DONNA ROSA
He's heated her up like an oven with his
metaphors. A man whose only capital is
the fungus between his toes! And if his
feet are full of germs, his mouth is
full of spells.

She sits down on the couch, and Neruda sits beside her.

NERUDA
(feigning shock)
No!

DONNA ROSA
It started off innocently enough: her
smile was like a butterfly. But now
he's saying her breast is like a fire
with two flames.

NERUDA
But do you think that these images are
only his imagination or that--

DONNA ROSA
(interrupting)
Yes, I think he's had his hands on her.

Donna Rosa gives Neruda the note.

DONNA ROSA (cont'd)
Read this, it was in her brassiere.

Neruda opens the note and reads it.

NERUDA
Ah.
(reading)
"Naked...as beautiful as...naked
you're as delicate as nights on an
island...and stars in your hair...."
It's beautiful!

DONNA ROSA
So he's seen my niece naked!

NERUDA
No, signora Rosa! Nothing in this poem
leads us to think that.

DONNA ROSA
The poem's telling the truth--my niece
naked is just as the poem describes
her. So do me a favour and tell Mario
Ruoppolo, who's learnt a lot from you,
that he must never see my niece again
for the rest of his life.

NERUDA
Hm.

Donna Rosa gets up, followed by Neruda.

DONNA ROSA
And tell him that if he does, I'll
shoot him. Is that clear?

NERUDA
Yes.

Donna Rosa Exits.

DONNA ROSA
Good day.

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/DINING ROOM - DAY

Mario is seated in a chair as Neruda enters. He stops and looks
at Mario. Mario gets up and walks to the doorway.

NERUDA
You're as white as a sack of flour.

MARIO
I might be white outside, but inside
I'm red.

NERUDA
You won't save yourself from the
widow's fury with adjectives.

MARIO
If she harms me, she'll go to jail.

NERUDA
She'll be out in a couple of hours.
She'll say she acted out of self-
defence. She'll say you threatened the
virginity of her damsel: with a

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NERUDA (cont'd)

metaphor hissing like a dagger, as sharp as a canine, as lacerating as a hymen. The poetry will have left the mark of its seditious saliva on the virgin's nipples. The poet François Villon was hung from a tree for much less and his blood gushed from his neck like roses.

MARIO

I don't care. She can do what she wants. I'm ready.

Neruda sits on the ledge of the patio.

NERUDA

Good lad! It's a real shame we haven't got a trio of guitarists to go...

He makes GUITAR NOISES.

MARIO

My dear poet and comrade, you got me into this mess. You've got to get me out of it. You gave me books to read, you taught me to use my tongue for more than licking stamps. It's your fault if I'm in love.

NERUDA

No, this is nothing to do with me.

MARIO

Yeah, right.

NERUDA

I gave you my books but I didn't authorize you to steal my poems. If I think you gave Beatrice the poem I wrote for Matilde....

MARIO

Poetry doesn't belong to those who write it, but those who need it.

NERUDA

I appreciate that highly democratic sentiment.

(chuckles)

He stands and SIGHS.

NERUDA (cont'd)

Now go home and get some sleep. You've got bags under your eyes as large and deep as soup bowls.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Mario is seated at a table.

Di Cosimo shuts the door of his car. A FISHERMAN works in the background. Di Cosimo's BODYGUARD is handing out leaflets.

BODYGUARD

This is for you. Vote for Di Cosimo.

FISHERMAN #1

They promised us running water on the island two years ago, too.

DI COSIMO

Two years ago it wasn't Di Cosimo who promised you. What's written on that paper is a pledge, not a promise. An oath, and God is my witness.

He walks up to Mario's table.

DI COSIMO (cont'd)

Hey, Mario! Aren't you interested in what I am saying?

MARIO

I'm voting communist.

DI COSIMO

What?

MARIO

I'm voting communist.

DI COSIMO

I hear you've gone crazy about poetry. I hear you're competing with Pablo Neruda. But remember, poets can do a lot of damage to people.

BODYGUARD

(to fisherman)

How much do these clams cost?

FISHERMAN #1

300 lire, to you.

Di Cosimo's bodyguard drops a handful of clams into the basket as Fisherman #1 and Fisherman #2 look on.

BODYGUARD

Three hundred lire?

FISHERMAN #1

Yeah.

BODYGUARD
For that price you'll have to guarantee me a
pearl in each one.

FISHERMAN #1
Yeah.

BODYGUARD
Give me a good price.

Fisherman #1 shakes the Bodyguard's hand.

FISHERMAN #1
I'll give you a discount, all right?

BODYGUARD
That's good.

FISHERMAN #1
Give me that.

BODYGUARD
Thanks.

Mario, who has been watching the transaction, seems upset.

MARIO
Fishermen are exploited enough as it is. He
said 300 lire--why should he give you a
discount?

BODYGUARD
I don't mean to exploit anyone. Good-bye.

The Bodyguard exits.

FISHERMAN #1
Why don't you mind your own business?

MARIO
I was trying to help....

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Giorgio and Mario are seated at a table. A stack of mail is on the
table.

GIORGIO
Mario, as your superior I must order you to
deliver the undelivered mail.

MARIO
Yes, yes...

GIORGIO
But you're still moping after that girl.

CONTINUED

GIORGIO (cont'd)
Beatrice is pretty now, but in 50
years she'll be as ugly as the rest.

Di Cosimo enters through the front door.

MARIO
Beatrice will never be ugly.

Di Cosimo walks to the table as Giorgio gets up and walks up to
him.

GIORGIO
Yeah.

Di Cosimo gives Giorgio a receipt.

DI COSIMO
Here.

Giorgio exits.

DI COSIMO (cont'd)
(reciting)
"I held the splendour of your eyes
secretly within me, blissful
Beatrice."

MARIO
What's Beatrice got to do with it?

DI COSIMO
It's a poem.

MARIO
Dante Alighieri...

DI COSIMO
No, Gabriele d'Annunzio, my poet.

MARIO
Your poet wrote something for
Beatrice? I don't like it.

Giorgio enters and gives Di Cosimo a package.

GIORGIO
There you are.

DI COSIMO
(to Mario)
Strange, I thought you'd appreciate a
hymn to Beatrice.

Di Cosimo exits.

DI COSIMO (cont'd)
Thank you. Goodbye.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

A WOMAN walks up the stairs to the upstairs apartments as Mario enters and watches the cafe.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Beatrice at the bar. Donna Rosa enters with a tray of glasses and sets them down.

DONNA ROSA
Sleeping Beauty...

A MILITARY OFFICER enters and sits down at the bar.

MARSHAL
Good evening.

DONNA ROSA
Good evening.
(to Beatrice)
Give the Marshal his usual, and pour
one for me, too.

Beatrice takes a bottle of whiskey from a shelf.

MARSHAL
Thank you.

Beatrice pours the whiskey into a glass, and sets it on the bar, then pours another glass of whiskey for Donna Rosa.

MARSHAL (cont'd)
Your niece gets more and more
beautiful.

DONNA ROSA
If only you knew how difficult it is to
keep a hold on her....

MARSHAL
Young people today aren't what they
used to be. They have everything and
want the moon. I remember my poor
departed mother--I'd tremble whenever
she spoke.

Beatrice reacts.

DONNA ROSA
It's true.

Beatrice walks past Donna Rosa, exiting.

BEATRICE
Good night, Aunt. Good night, Marshal.

DONNA ROSA
This raisin wine is good.

MARSHAL
Yes. It's just like sugar.

INT. POST OFFICE - NIGHT

Mario enters and sits down at a desk. He picks up the little white ball on the desk and tosses it from hand to hand.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

Beatrice emerges from the residence and walks down the stairway. Various townspeople are milling about. Beatrice runs away.

INT. POST OFFICE - NIGHT

Mario with his head on the desk. He jolts awake as the door opens.

Beatrice enters. Mario stands, staring at her as she approaches.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

Donna Rosa closes the front doors.

DONNA ROSA
Good night, Marshal.

Donna Rosa turns a light switch off. She exits up the stairs.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

Donna Rosa emerges from the residence, holding a shotgun.

DONNA ROSA
Beatrice!

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Beatrice's hands roll the white ball up from her bosom to her face as camera tilts up to include Mario looking on. Beatrice puts the white ball in her mouth. Mario removes it and kisses her.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CATHEDRAL/HALLWAY - DAY

Beatrice and Mario are seated on a bench in a lobby. The Priest enters, holding two large candlesticks.

PRIEST

Find yourselves a decent person who isn't a communist. If Neruda doesn't believe in God, why should God believe in Neruda? What sort of witness would he be?

MARIO

God never said a communist can't be a witness at a wedding.

(pause)

I'm not getting married then.

BEATRICE

You're more interested in Neruda as a witness than me as your wife.

MARIO

My darling...

Mario touches Beatrice's face.

MARIO (cont'd)

Neruda's a Catholic. I know he's a Catholic.

PRIEST

In Russia communists eat babies, how can he be Catholic?

BEATRICE

He doesn't look the type.

PRIEST

Neruda has a pretty wife, he's getting on and he has no children. How do you explain that?

MARIO

So according to you Don Pablo ate his kids?

PRIEST

Who knows?

MARIO

Give me a break.

PRIEST

Anyway, my answer's no, for your sake, too.

(to Beatrice)

He inspired your bridegroom to write that filthy naked stuff.

CONTINUED

MARIO

That was only a poem.

PRIEST

Not to mention the rest.... He's not
worthy of being witness to your
happiness.

The Priest looks through the doorway into the cathedral as
Neruda kneels at a pew and crosses himself.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY

It is a beautiful spring day. Yellow flowers bloom all along
the mountainside.

INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Beatrice and Mario, wearing wedding attire. Neruda is holding a
pen. The priest watches as he signs a marriage certificate,
reading:

Mario Ruoppolo
WITNESSES:
Pablo Neruda

INT. CAFE - DAY

Mario and Beatrice's reception. Several children run from the
cafe doorway. Di Cosimo's bodyguard and an older man enter.

Giorgio, Matilde and numerous other WEDDING RECEPTION GUESTS
are seated around a long table, drinking and eating. An
ACCORDION PLAYER plays in the background.

Beatrice is seated at the table, and Mario's father, standing,
delivers a speech as Neruda and Mario look on.

MARIO'S FATHER

She'd say: "I ask Jesus to let me live
to see my son with a job, a wife and
children in his arms." Unfortunately
she didn't make it because when the
Lord called her to Him he didn't even
have a job. Today from heaven my poor
wife will see that he's made her
happy, because at least he's got a
wife and a little job. Even if it's not
the job she'd have wanted for him.

MARIO

All the best! Well done, Dad!

Giorgio is sitting at a table, and notices a little boy
drinking wine. He slaps him in the back of the head.

GIORGIO
What are you doing, drinking wine?

Giorgio walks over to Neruda and Matilde and hands Neruda a letter.

GIORGIO (cont'd)
I'm sorry, Comrade, I forgot—this came for
you.

Neruda reads the letter.

MATILDE
(in Spanish)
¿Podemos volver?

NERUDA
(in Spanish)
Se necesita una semana...para obtener
lo que tuviste.

Neruda and Matilde embrace as Giorgio looks on.

MATILDE
(in Spanish)
Soy demasiado feliz. No lo puedo creer.

NERUDA
(in Spanish)
Thank you.

GIORGIO
Good news?

OLD MAN #1 stands up and raises his wine glass.

OLD MAN #1
To the newlyweds!

Di Cosimo raises his wine glass.

DI COSIMO
To the newlyweds!

The guests APPLAUD. Neruda stands up.

NERUDA
With a chaste heart, with pure eyes I celebrate
your beauty...holding the leash of blood so
that it might leap out and trace your outline
where you lie down in my ode as in a land of
forests, or in surf: in aromatic loam or in
sea-music.

The guests APPLAUD. Neruda picks up a glass.

NERUDA (cont'd)
Now I'd like to toast my friend Mario,
and say what a pleasure it was for me
to participate, in a small way, in his
happiness.

Neruda raises his glass and drinks. The guests *applaud*.

Neruda grasps Beatrice's hand.

NERUDA (cont'd)
And lastly I'd like to say that on this
very special day I have received some
wonderful news. The warrant for our
arrest has been revoked, and therefore
Matilde and I can now return to the
country we love so much: Chile.

Beatrice and Mario APPLAUD.

Mario gestures for the accordion player to play. Beatrice and
Neruda get up to dance. The guests APPLAUD loudly, and Mario
beams.

EXT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/PATIO - DAY

Mario at the gate, holding his bag. Mario walks through the
gate to the front door of the house.

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mario walks into the living room and stops. He takes a letter
out of his bag, walks to a cabinet, and sets his bag down.

Neruda, holding a suitcase, walks through the doorway. He sets
the suitcase on the couch and opens it. He takes the letter
from Mario. Matilde is in the background preparing for their
journey.

Neruda takes out his wallet as Mario shakes his head.

MARIO
No, Don Pablo.

NERUDA
But you'll be unemployed tomorrow.

MARIO
No, no, really no.

Neruda puts his wallet in his coat pocket.

MARIO (cont'd)
No...I don't want anything.

NERUDA
I'll miss you.

MARIO
I'll miss you...but you will write to
me?

Neruda walks across the room to his desk.

NERUDA
Of course. Things change all the time in
my country. Today they'll let me go back--

Neruda picks up two notebooks and places the notebooks in the
suitcase.

NERUDA (cont'd)
--tomorrow something else will happen
and I'll have to flee again. I'll
leave some things here anyway. If you
could keep an eye on it for me...I'll
let you know where to send them.

MARIO
Perhaps I'll bring them to Chile
myself.

NERUDA
That'd be wonderful.

MARIO
Do you need this?

Mario walks to the phonograph and picks up two albums.

NERUDA
Yes. Thank you.

MARIO
I've discovered another poet who wrote about
Beatrice, called D'Annunzio. Do you know it?

NERUDA
Yes, I know it.

MARIO
So you could have written one, too.

Neruda reacts. Mario chuckles to himself. Mario smiles as
Neruda embraces him.

NERUDA
Good-bye.

MARIO
Good-bye.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

The sea, as the camera tilts up to the horizon.

INT. MARIO'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mario's hands holding the leather bound notebook. Mario sits down at the table and opens the notebook. He turns to the page with the circle drawn on it, then to a clean page. Mario starts to write on the page, then looks around.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Political sign on a fence reads:

BECAUSE THIS SHALL NOT BE YOUR FLAG
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

Mario is walking to the post office entrance. He opens the door. Giorgio is seated at a desk, looking at some newspaper clippings in a notebook.

MARIO

What is it?

GIORGIO

Look at this.

Giorgio picks up a clipping and places it on the table.

GIORGIO (cont'd)

He's in Russia, giving an award.

Mario sits down at the desk and looks at the clipping.

MARIO

In Russia? If he's over here he might pay a visit.

GIORGIO

He's a very busy man, Mario! He must meet the people he didn't see when he was in exile. And he's also well-loved in Chile. He won't have time to come here.

MARIO

It's a good picture....

Mario holds up the clipping which shows a photograph of Neruda with a Russian man.

GIORGIO

Mm.

MARIO
(reading)
The young poet, Milovan...

GIORGIO
Perkovic.

MARIO
(reading)
Awarded a poetry prize by the maestro.
Can I keep it?

Giorgio takes the clipping from Mario and places it in the notebook.

GIORGIO
No, you can't. I'll put it in here with
all the rest. You can look at it
whenever you like.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Mario rides his bicycle on a street as Di Cosimo's car drives by, carrying a LOUDSPEAKER on the roof.

CAMPAIGN LEADER
(over loudspeaker)
Vote for Di Cosimo! The candidate
promises to lead us on a new path. Vote
for Di Cosimo! For a new way of life.
For the sake of our island!

INT. CAFE -- DAY

Donna Rosa and Beatrice sit at the counter.

Mario enters.

MARIO
Did that bloke come here?

DONNA ROSA
Who?

MARIO
Di Cosimo.

BEATRICE
Yes.

MARIO
Why are you smiling?

DONNA ROSA
Di Cosimo has served us a fortune on a
silver platter.

MARIO

Really?

Donna Rosa walks to a table and picks up a plate and glass.

DONNA ROSA

20 families will be coming here to work on the new water mains. Di Cosimo asked us if we can provide them with two meals a day.

Donna Rosa walks to the counter and sets the plate and the glass down.

MARIO

And we can't.

BEATRICE

We told them we could. they'll be here for two years.

MARIO

Without asking me?

DONNA ROSA

Just add it all up.

MARIO

Money...all you can think about is money. Where will we put 20 families?

BEATRICE

We'll do two or three servings if necessary!

Mario walks to the table and sits down as Donna Rosa follows him and Beatrice looks on.

MARIO

Please yourselves.

DONNA ROSA

No, we'll do as we please. Would you be prepared to work in the kitchen, "signor" husband?

MARIO

In the kitchen?

DONNA ROSA

Yes.

INT. CAFE - DAY

TWO MALE WORKERS seated at the table eating. Other male workers are in the background.

Beatrice, holding a pitcher of water, walks about serving customers. A table of workers look on. WORKER #1 stands up, and holds up a glass of wine.

WORKER #1
A toast to Beatrice, the prettiest
girl in town!

WORKER #2 at the table stands up and holds a glass. The workers CHEER.

Mario is in the kitchen cooking next to a huge pile of tomatoes.

INT. CAFE -- DAY

Di Cosimo and his bodyguard smoke cigarettes and watch Beatrice and several workers playing the table soccer game.

EXT. CAFE -- DAY

Mario in a chair, sleeping. He wakes up suddenly. Giorgio runs toward him waving a newspaper in his hand.

GIORGIO
Mario!

Giorgio points to the newspaper.

MARIO
Yeah?

GIORGIO
Look!

MARIO
What does it say?

Giorgio's hand points to a newspaper headline, which reads:

PABLO NERUDA IN PARIS
WITH EXILED INTELLECTUALS

GIORGIO
He's in Paris.

INT. CAFE -- DAY

Giorgio is seated at a table as Mario and Donna Rosa look on. Beatrice enters and walks up to the group.

GIORGIO
(reading)
"Whereas I really loved Italy...where
I led a happy life in complete
solitude and among the most simple

CONTINUED

GIORGIO (cont'd)
people in the world." "What things are you most nostalgic about?" "Nostalgia is an emotion I can feel only for my own country, but I will never forget my strolls along the beach, and among the rocks where tiny plants and flowers grow exactly the same way as in a large garden composition."

Giorgio stops reading. They wait for more.

MARIO

Go on.

GIORGIO

That's it.

MARIO

Oh. That's it.

DONNA ROSA

He doesn't mention us.

MARIO

Why should he mention us in an interview? He's a poet. Poets talk about nature...not about the people they meet.

DONNA ROSA

The bird that has eaten flies away! I bet he doesn't even remember what we look like.

MARIO

But---what are you saying?

INT. POST OFFICE - NIGHT

Mario and Giorgio seated at a desk, listen to a RADIO on a shelf.

REPORTER (V.O.)

The Christian Democrats have been victorious in every region. The party chairman has expressed his satisfaction.

Giorgio gets up and turns off the radio.

GIORGIO

Satisfaction! They haven't managed it.

Giorgio sits down.

MARIO

What? They've taken every region in Italy.

GIORGIO

They can't do anything with a handful of votes. They've won a battle, but not the war.

MARIO

So, we'll win the war?

GIORGIO

Who else? But we have to fight and we will fight! It's the only way to break our chains and set ourselves free!

MARIO

Yes, but here, when we've broken our chains, what do we do then?

GIORGIO

If Don Pablo could hear you, he wouldn't approve.

MARIO

Don Pablo...Don Pablo can't hear me. Who knows where he is? What he's doing....

INT. CAFE - DAY

Beatrice pours some water into a cup from a pitcher. Di Cosimo and Donna Rosa sit at the counter.

DI COSIMO

What's with these long faces?

DONNA ROSA

Mr. Di Cosimo, this is a tragedy for us. We were counting on those two years of work. We'd made plans, run up debts even....

DI COSIMO

I know, it's a shame to leave the work half-completed, but we hope to start again soon.

DONNA ROSA

Soon when?

DI COSIMO

I don't know. It depends.

Di Cosimo walks up to his bodyguard at a table as Mario, Beatrice and a group of customers look on.

DI COSIMO (cont'd)
But I assure you it won't be long.
Anyway, I can't wait to try out your cooking.

Di Cosimo and the bodyguard sit down at the table.

MARIO
What does it depend on?

DI COSIMO
Company problems are very complicated.

MARIO
I don't know much about company problems, but I'm not daft. We all knew that as soon as you got elected the work would come to a halt.

Mario exits. The CUSTOMERS begin to GRUMBLE amongst themselves.

CAFE PATRONS
That's true.

DI COSIMO
The husband's hot-blooded.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

Mario with his bicycle as he looks at the sea.

MARIO (V.O.)
If Don Pablo had been here maybe the elections would have gone better.

INT. MARIO & BEATRICE'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Beatrice sits on a bed.

BEATRICE
Mario, I've something to tell you, I'm pregnant.

MARIO
Really?

BEATRICE
Yes.

MARIO
You're really pregnant?

BEATRICE

Yes.

MARIO

We have to leave here. No one understands us here. They're all too ignorant. We'll go to Chile, so Pablito will grow up there, breathe poetry...

BEATRICE

Pablito?

MARIO

Don't you like it? After Neruda. It'll be a good omen for our son.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A statue of the Madonna is carried through the streets by the townspeople, who PRAY softly. The priest, wearing vestments and holding a staff, walks in front followed by various townspeople in costumes carrying the statue.

Giorgio, wearing an angel costume, runs through the streets, looking for someone. Padre, Beatrice and Donna Rosa walk with the procession.

A MAN wearing a white sheet over his head with holes for his eyes and mouth, walks along carrying the base of the statue. Giorgio approaches the man.

GIORGIO

Mario?

MAN WITH STATUE

No, he's in front.

Giorgio approaches Mario, who is wearing a similar costume as the man with the statue.

GIORGIO

Mario, is that you?

MARIO

Yes.

Giorgio shows Mario a letter.

GIORGIO

There's a letter from Chile.

MARIO

Put it in my pocket. please.

Giorgio puts the letter in Mario's pocket.

EXT. HARBOR -- NIGHT

Two BOYS, wearing angel costumes, sing as others look on. The Madonna statue is put on a skiff and several men push the skiff into the water.

INT. CAFE -- NIGHT

Giorgio, Mario and Beatrice seated at a table. Mario holds the letter.

BEATRICE

Open it!

MARIO

Wait.

(reading)

Mario Ruopollo...

(chuckles)

It's the first letter I've ever received.

Mario opens the letter.

MARIO (cont'd)

(reading)

"Santiago, 15th October, 1953. Dear Sir, I ask you to send me some objects belonging to signor Pablo Neruda which are to be found in the house where he lived during his stay in Italy. Address enclosed and a list of the above-mentioned objects. The secretary ...the secretary of Pablo Neruda."

Mario puts the letter into the envelope.

BEATRICE

And for you? Not a word, not a greeting—and he left over a year ago.

DONNA ROSA

I told you: the bird that has eaten flies away! People are kind only when you're useful to them.

MARIO

Not again with that "bird that has eaten..." And useful for what? What did I do for this person? In fact, it was always me who would ask: Don Pablo, will you check this metaphor ...Don Pablo, will you read me a poem...I'm the one who bothered him. And you say I was useful...what did I do? And yet he knew I was no good as a

CONTINUED

MARIO (cont'd)
poet. He knew, you know? But instead he
treated me like a friend. Like a brother.

BEATRICE
It's not true that you're no good. And
I'm not calling him Pablito.

MARIO
What has the baby got to do with it?
Why, do you think I'm a poet? Am I a
poet? Have I ever written anything,
any poems?

GIORGIO
No, Mario, but--

MARIO
Then, "No Mario..." nothing.
(sniffs)
Admit it...Why should he remember me?
As a poet, I'm not much good...
(sniffs)
As a postman...he would hardly
remember...a postman who took him his
mail when he lived in Italy. As a
Communist? Not even that, I wasn't
very...It think it's...quite normal,
that he...All right.
(sniffs)
Tomorrow we'll go there and send his things off.

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

The Madonna statue in the skiff.

INT. NERUDA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mario enters through the front door.

Mario walks up to the phonograph on the bureau and picks up a
record, looks at it and places it on the phonograph. Mario
turns on the phonograph and it PLAYS THE RECORD.

MARIO'S FLASHBACK

Neruda and Matilde dancing in the dining room.

MARIO'S FLASHBACK ENDS

Mario steps into the doorway and looks onto the patio.

Mario steps from the doorway to the phonograph and removes the
record. Mario puts the record in a sleeve, places it on the
couch and looks at the recorder machine on the desk. Mario
steps to the desk and touches an ink well, then the recorder

CONTINUED

microphone and the recorder. Mario turns on the recorder as a white light illuminates on the front panel. Mario pushes in a cartridge.

NERUDA
(over recorder)
(in Spanish)
Queridos compañeros...

An open notebook on the desk. Mario closes the notebook. He sits down.

NERUDA
(over recorder)
(in Spanish)
...escuché recién vuestra grabación...que me ha alegrado tanto. Me da mucho gusto publicar el libro en Chile. Me da una gran alegría. Ahora quisiera que escucharan a uno que aquí ha llegado a ser un gran amigo mío. Mario Ruoppolo.
(in Italian)
I told them I'm here with a friend who wishes to say hello and tell them something nice about this beautiful country.

MARIO
(over recorder)
No.

NERUDA
(over recorder)
Yes.

MARIO
(over recorder)
Good morning.

NERUDA
(over recorder)
No, there.

MARIO
(over recorder)
Good morning. Something nice about the island?

NERUDA
(over recorder)
Yes, one of the wonders of your island.

Mario smiles.

MARIO
(over recorder)
Beatrice Russo.

NERUDA
(over recorder)
(laughing) Yes. Very good.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Giorgio splices some electrical wires which are connected to a battery. Mario looks at a pile of wires protruding from Neruda's recorder.

MARIO
Are you sure it works outdoors, too?

GIORGIO
If it works inside, it'll will work
outside.

Giorgio touches two wires together, making an electrical connection.

GIORGIO
Eh!

MARIO
It works here.

Giorgio CHUCKLES.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Giorgio and Mario on a beach, with a baby carriage containing the battery and recorder. Mario speaks into the microphone as Giorgio operates the recorder.

MARIO
One, two, three....Is the red light
on?

GIORGIO
Yes, it's lit.

Mario squats down and holds the microphone out over the surf.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Mario speaks into the microphone.

MARIO
(into microphone)
One. Number one. Waves at Cala di
Sotto. Small ones.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Giorgio with a pram on the beach as large waves crash on the rocks.

GIORGIO

Go on!

Mario holds the microphone over the waves.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Mario speaks into the microphone.

MARIO

(into microphone)

Number two. Waves. Big ones.

EXT. SEA - DAY

Giorgio in a boat, operating the recorder.

GIORGIO

Go on!

Mario holding the microphone. A large cliff is in the background.

MARIO (V.O.)

Number three.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Mario speaks into the microphone.

MARIO (cont'd)

(into microphone)

Wind on the cliffs. Number four. Wind through the bushes.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

Giorgio operates the recorder as Mario aims a microphone at a large bush.

EXT. SEA - DAY

Mario holds the microphone in a boat while his father works with a net.

MARIO (V.O.)

Number five.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Mario speaks into the microphone.

CONTINUED

MARIO (cont'd)
(into microphone)
Sad nets belonging to my father.

EXT. CATHEDRAL/ROOF - DAY

Mario holds the microphone next to RINGING CATHEDRAL BELLS, as Giorgio operates the recorder.

MARIO (V.O.)
Number six.

The priest emerges from a stairwell and looks up at them.

PRIEST
Is that enough?

MARIO (V.O.)
Church bell--

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Mario speaks into the microphone.

MARIO (cont'd)
(into microphone)
--of Our Lady of Sorrows, with priest.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Mario holds the microphone to the stars in the sky.

MARIO
(into microphone)
It's beautiful. I never realized it
was so beautiful. Number seven.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Mario speaks into the microphone.

MARIO
(into microphone)
Starry sky over the island. Number
eight. Pablito's heartbeat.

INT. MARIO & BEATRICE'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - DAY

Mario holds the microphone against Beatrice's burgeoning stomach as Giorgio operates the recorder.

GIORGIO
You can hear everything!

BEATRICE
Really?

Mario holds his head against Beatrice's stomach.

MARIO

You can hear it! You can hear Pablito's heart!

Mario places the microphone against Beatrice's stomach.

BEATRICE

I'm not calling him Pablito.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Townspeople mill about the sidewalk as Neruda and Matilde walk toward the cafe.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Matilde and Neruda enter through the front doorway. Neruda looks at a wedding photograph on the wall of him, Mario, Beatrice and Donna Rosa. Matilde looks on.

MATILDE

(in Spanish)

Ah, pero yo no estoy allí.

A white ball bounces across the room. Mario and Beatrice's son PABLITO enters and retrieves it. He looks at Neruda & Matilde.

MATILDE

(in Spanish)

¿Y tu? ¿Quien eres?

BEATRICE (off camera)

Come here, Pablito!

Neruda looks up.

Beatrice walks through a doorway, drawing back a curtain.

BEATRICE (cont'd)

Pablito, come to Mom.

She stops short and stares at Neruda & Matilde.

BEATRICE (V.O.)

There was a communist demonstration.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Beatrice next to a coffee machine, holding a recorder cartridge. Neruda and Matilde are seated at a table, on which is the recorder.

Beatrice walks across the room.

BEATRICE

Pablito never saw him. He was born a few days after Mario died. I didn't want him to go, But he wouldn't listen. "Don Pablo would be proud," he'd say. A riot began, and the police moved in on the crowd. He was trapped. This is something Mario made for you.

Beatrice puts the cartridge into the recorder.

BEATRICE

I should have sent it to you, but I kept it instead.

MARIO

(over recorder)

Dearest Don Pablo, this is Mario. I hope you haven't forgotten me. Anyway ... Do you remember that you once asked me to say something nice about my island and I couldn't think of anything? Now I know. So I want to send you this tape, which, if you want to, you can play to your friends. If not...you can listen to it.

INT. POST OFFICE - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

Mario is seated, back to camera, speaking into the microphone on the table.

MARIO

(into microphone)

Then you'll remember me and Italy. When you left here I thought you'd taken all the beautiful things away with you, but now...now I realize that you left something behind for me.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Neruda walks on a beach. The cliffs are in the background.

MARIO (V.O.)

I also want to tell you that I've written a poem, but you can't hear it because I am embarrassed. It's called: "Song for Pablo Neruda." Even if it's about the sea, it's dedicated to you.

EXT. SEA - DAY - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

Mario and Giorgio in a boat with the baby carriage and recorder, looking at the cliffs.

MARIO (V.O.)

If you hadn't come into my life, I never would have written it. I've been invited to read it in public. And even though I know my voice will shake, I'll be happy. and you will hear the people applaud when they hear your name.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Neruda walks on the beach and stops.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - DAY - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE BLACK & WHITE

A large crowd of communists is gathered in a square, waving flags and banners.

SPEAKER

(over loudspeaker)

Comrades! Comrades! We now invite onto the platform three working men: Luigi Tronco, Mario Ruoppolo, and Antonio De Marco.

Mario, in the crowd, looks at Giorgio.

SPEAKER (cont'd)

(over loudspeaker)

They are here not to speak, but to recite their poetry.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Neruda, looking sad.

SPEAKER (V.O.)

We invite Mario Ruoppolo onto the platform, who has dedicated his poem to the great poet who is known to us all, Pablo Neruda!

EXT. CITY SQUARE - DAY - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - B&W

A man is on a stage speaking to the crowd of communists.

SPEAKER

(over loudspeaker)

Please, clear a path for Mario Ruoppolo!

GIORGIO

Hear that? Hurrah!

Mario tries to walk up to the stage.

MARIO
(mouthing)
Mario Ruoppolo.

Giorgio holds the microphone as Mario steps through the crowd.

GIORGIO
He's Mario Ruoppolo, let him through.
Excuse me! We have to reach the
platform.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Neruda.

SPEAKER (V.O.)
Comrades!

GIORGIO (V.O.)
Mario, where are you? Mario Ruoppolo!

SPEAKER (V.O.)
Comrades, keep calm! Keep back!
Comrades!

EXIT. CITY SQUARE - DAY FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - BLACK & WHITE
MONTAGE

--Mario steps back with some communists toward several
police officers wielding batons.

--A police officer strikes several communists with
his baton.

--An injured communist is helped up and led away by two
other men.

--Several communists run in all directions.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Neruda reacts.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - DAY - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - BLACK & WHITE -
SLOW MOTION

Several communists run about as camera TILTS DOWN to a sheet of
paper on the ground.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Neruda on the beach, looks out at the sea, grieving.

FADE TO BLACK.