

DICKINSON

SEASON 2

Episode 206, "Split the lark"

Written by

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Revisions by

Alena Smith - WHITE PRODUCTION DRAFT - 7/8/19

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Directed by

Silas Howard

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WORD.IDEA.IMAGINATION.PRODUCTION.



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MUSIC CUE: Opera music. Something from *La Traviata*.

CLOSE-UP:

Emily's hands, gathering GLOVES, OPERA GLASSES, and a pair of TICKETS that say "La Traviata. Boston Opera House."

1 OMITTED 1

2 INT. OPERA HOUSE - MAIN ENTRANCE - NIGHT 2

The main doors to the opera house open into the crowded lobby full of utterly ELEGANT PEOPLE, and in walk... the DICKINSONS. Emily, Mrs. Dickinson, Edward, Lavinia, and Ship. Dressed to the nines.

MRS. DICKINSON
(to the crowd, operatic)
We're heeeerrree!

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES - DICKINSON

3 INT. OPERA HOUSE - MAIN ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS 3

The Dickinsons all do a bit of gawking and rubbernecking at the SWANKY CROWD. Ship adjusts his obviously brand-new TOP HAT. Mrs. Dickinson pats her perfectly coiffed hair. And Emily searches the crowd, looking for a certain person's face...

EDWARD
Okay, folks. Let's see what this opera craze is all about.

MRS. DICKINSON
Everyone looks so elegant... I should have worn my cape!

SHIP
I'm starving... do you think they have popcorn?

LAVINIA
(condescending)
They don't have *popcorn* at the
opera, Ship.

Ship looks at her. A little stung. Lavinia barrels on:

LAVINIA (CONT'D)
I can't believe we're finally here.
I've read *all* the reviews of the
Italian production! I am
overwrought!

SHIP
Why do you always use such big
words.

EDWARD
This better be entertaining.
Tickets cost me an arm and a leg.

MRS. DICKINSON
I hope we have good seats...

EMILY
Look! There's Austin and Sue!

Emily waves at Austin and Sue, who emerge from the crowd,
surely the most dazzling couple in the opera house. Sue's
cape is extraordinary.

MRS. DICKINSON
Oh, of course *she* wore her cape.

EMILY
Sue! You look incredible.

SUE
(air-kissing)
So do all of you! I'm so happy you
could join us tonight.

AUSTIN
Yeah, how was Aunt Lavinia's?

EMILY
She has mice.

LAVINIA
How was your *hotel*?

SUE
(casual)
Oh, it was fine.
(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)

Good enough for a night or two, but
I wouldn't stay there for longer.

EDWARD

(disapproving)

I don't think you could *afford* to
stay there for longer.

SUE

(brushing this off)

So, is everyone *excited*? Here we
are, at opening night!

(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)

And all of Boston is buzzing about
the lead soprano.

LAVINIA

(know-it-all)

Oh, yes! The magnificent Adelaide
May. Fresh off the boat from Italy,
where she trained with Verdi
himself. You know she's originally
from Philadelphia? Most Americans
can't sing opera, of course, but
Adelaide, she dazzled all of Europe
with her voice!

SUE

They say she once shattered a
reviewer's monocle with a high C.

LAVINIA

That's a myth. That *has* to be a
myth.

As they talk, we move CLOSER on Emily, whose attention is
caught somewhere else...

EMILY

(almost to herself)

He came.

Everyone's heads turn to see Sam Bowles, who pops out of the
crowd to greet them.

SAM

Dickinsons. Welcome to the opera.

EMILY

(gushing)

We're so happy to be here--

Before anyone else can respond, Austin suddenly excuses
himself.

AUSTIN

Sorry, I think I saw someone I know
at the bar. If you'll excuse me--

Austin walks off. Sam looks a little insulted.

SAM

That was abrupt.

SUE

(smoothing it over)

Oh, Sam, thank you *so much* for your
help with the tickets. We're
thrilled to be up in that box.

MRS. DICKINSON

Wait a minute. Where are we
sitting?

EDWARD

(looking at his tickets)

Orchestra. Back row.

MRS. DICKINSON
Why didn't we get a box?

EDWARD
First you leave me in a hole, now
you want to stick me in a box!

SAM
The orchestra's very good, too.

MRS. DICKINSON
Oh, sure it is. Well, Edward, let's
go find the "back row."

EDWARD
Yes, come on, everyone. Emily - are
you coming?

EMILY
I just - need to talk to Sue.

Edward and Mrs. Dickinson, Lavinia and Ship head off to find
their seats. Sue, Sam, and Emily are left alone.

SAM
All right, well, I'll see you
later...

EMILY
No, Sam, wait! Don't go.

SAM
I thought you needed to talk?

EMILY
Oh, no, not really. I just wanted
to talk to you.

Sam glances at Sue, uncomfortable. Emily is definitely
flirting with him. Sue, meanwhile, seems totally at ease.

SUE
Of course, the poet needs a word
with her editor!

SAM
Right...

SUE
Sam, you're not here alone, are
you? Where is Mary?

Beat. Emily looks around.

SAM
She - couldn't come.

SUE
Oh, what a shame! I'm dying to see her...

SAM
Yes, well - she wasn't feeling well. Again.

EMILY
(forced)
Too bad! I'd love to meet her. I mean - I feel like I know her already.

Uncomfortable beat. Then, Sue smiles.

SUE
Well, I suppose it's a lucky break for Emily.

EMILY
(startled)
For me?

SUE
Yes! Because now you can sit with Sam in his box!

Sue practically SHOVES Emily closer to Sam. Sam looks uneasy.

SAM
I - uh...

SUE
Oh, Sam, she *has* to. It's her first time at the opera! And Adelaide May is performing... this is the opportunity of a lifetime. Especially for such a sensitive artist as Emily...

Sam freezes, looking at Emily.

EMILY
(bold)
If it's all right -- I'd love to sit with you.

SUE
You absolutely *must*. Sam, be a gentleman. Let her sit with you.
(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)

If she's down here, all the way in the back, she won't even be able to see! Remember - she has eye troubles.

EMILY

(with a little shrug)
Iritis.

Sam, it appears, has no choice. He offers Emily his arm.

SAM

Well, I guess there's no point having an empty seat.

Emily takes his arm, feeling a thrill run down her spine.

4

INT. OPERA HOUSE - SAM'S BOX - NIGHT

4

Emily and Sam are getting situated in Sam's front-and-center box seats. The stage is covered with a heavy RED CURTAIN, and the entire theater is abuzz with excitement.

Sam waves to people he knows, here, there, everywhere. He's always networking. Emily clocks a WHISPERING COUPLE who are definitely gossiping about them. She feels like everyone in the place must be wondering who she is, and why she's with Sam Bowles, in his box.

Sam takes his coat off and flops down in his seat, totally comfortable in the public eye.

SAM

Can't wait to hear this Adelaide May sing tonight. Everyone says she's really got the chops. Sings like a lark, they tell me.

EMILY

Oh, I can't wait. An international singing sensation! That's what it says on the poster.

SAM

And I hear she's a doll in person.

EMILY

Really?

SAM

Yeah, well, I guess I'll find out. I'm supposed to interview her, right after the show.

Sam flashes a BACKSTAGE PRESS PASS at Emily, whose eyes widen.

EMILY

Wow... you get to go backstage?!

SAM

Of course. This is a new opera house. They need the press.

Emily looks at Sam, impressed and slightly intimidated. She gestures at the stage, at the red curtains, at all of it...

EMILY

This is so incredible...

Emily looks out at the opera house, across the theater, in the direction of...

5 INT. OPERA HOUSE - AUSTIN AND SUE'S BOX - CONTINUOUS 5

Sue is settling down into their plush box, across the theater from Emily and Sam. She's alone, removing her gloves, getting comfortable... until Austin comes in.

SUE

What took you so long?

AUSTIN

You'll never believe who I just ran into, at the bar.

SUE

(excited)

Ooh, who?

AUSTIN

Frazar Stearns.

Sue looks blank.

SUE

Who's that?

AUSTIN

Frazar. My old buddy, from school. Great guy - son of the college president. You must remember him.

SUE

(vaguely)

Oh, yes... kind of.

AUSTIN

Come on. *Frazar Stearns*. Sweetest guy in the world.

(MORE)

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

I haven't seen him since we graduated. He's at West Point now. He was wearing his uniform... he looks like a real soldier. God, I miss the old gang... maybe I should organize a reunion.

Sue stifles a yawn, arranging her skirts.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)

(lost in nostalgia)

Those were the days, man. We used to have such good times...

Sue looks at him, sharply.

SUE

You still have good times. Don't you?

Off Austin, saying nothing - but looking deeply melancholy.

We travel down to...

6 INT. OPERA HOUSE - ORCHESTRA SECTION - CONTINUOUS 6

Where we find Lavinia and Ship in their (shitty) seats, along with Mr. and Mrs. Dickinson.

Lavinia is looking at the stage through her OPERA GLASSES, then notices Ship, trying to make sense of a program.

LAVINIA

(whispers)

"La Traviata." It means, "the fallen one."

Ship looks irritated.

SHIP

I knew that.

LAVINIA

You did?

SHIP

I took Italian in college, okay?

LAVINIA

Yeah, but - you dropped out.

SHIP

(angry)

Okay, whatever!

LAVINIA

(smug, also, future-quoting
Richard Gere in *Pretty
Woman*)

You know, people's reaction to
opera the first time they see it is
very dramatic. They either love it
or hate it. If they love it, they
will always love it. If they don't,
they may learn to appreciate it,
but it will never become part of
their soul.

Ship now seems even more uncomfortable.

SHIP

Cool. I gotta take a piss.

LAVINIA

You just went.

Ship jitters his legs, frustrated.

Over to Mr. and Mrs. D., who sit uncomfortably in their bad seats, behind a man whose TOP HAT is blocking their view.

MRS. DICKINSON
(to Edward)
Is he going to wear that hat the whole time?

EDWARD
(irritated)
What a ripoff. We can't even see.

MRS. DICKINSON
All these people are so pretentious.

EDWARD
The whole thing is in Italian? God help us.

MRS. DICKINSON
I wish we were seeing some vaudeville.

Edward nods in agreement, and annoyance.

BACK TO:

7 INT. OPERA HOUSE - SAM'S BOX - NIGHT

7

Emily grins with excitement at everything. Finally, she dares to glance over at Sam, who looks particularly dashing as he observes her.

SAM
You've really never been to the opera?

EMILY
No... I've only dreamed about it.

SAM
Well, I guess your dream is coming true.

EMILY

So many of my dreams have come true
- since I met you.

Beat. Sam's expression is hard to read, but he holds her intense stare. For a moment, it's like it's just the two of them alone in this place.

SAM

Emily--

EMILY

(unable to contain herself)
Sam. I just have to thank you.

SAM

Don't mention it. I didn't even pay
for this box--

EMILY

No, not for that! I mean, not *just*
for that. For all of it. For what
you've given me.

SAM

Oh, please, it's nothing--

EMILY

It's everything! You changed my
life. Before I met you - I was
nobody. And now - my poem will be
published!

Emily's face looks like it might burst with emotion. Sam is transfixed by it. Until suddenly he looks around, and sees a FEW PEOPLE, staring at them, witnessing this display. His face quickly hardens.

SAM

Emily. We have a problem.

EMILY

(caught off guard)
We do?

SAM

You - well. You wrote a letter to
Mary.

Beat. Emily is thrown.

EMILY

Oh. I mean - yes, I did.

SAM

Yeah. That was not a good move.

EMILY

But - what do you mean?

SAM

You wrote a letter to Mary, and it made her extremely - uncomfortable.

Emily blinks. Shocked.

SAM (CONT'D)

Both of us, I should say. It made
both of us uncomfortable. Or - more
than uncomfortable.

Sam glances around, then leans in closer and lowers his
voice, trying to be discreet.

SAM (CONT'D)

In fact, your letter upset Mary so
much, that's the reason why she's
not here tonight. She refused to
come. Because of your letter.
Because it made her feel so - (*He
lowers his voice:*) violated.

EMILY

I - don't understand--

SAM

(losing some of his cool)
You wrote the craziest shit in that
letter! You said I was like the
sun, like you're cold whenever I'm
not there, like every time I leave
Amherst, winter sets in! Why would
you write something like that/--

EMILY

/Because it's how I feel!

SAM

(over her)
--/about a *married man* - to his
wife?!!

Beat. Emily feels like her face must be as red as the
curtains.

EMILY

(quiet, struggling)
I didn't mean to upset her. I was
only trying to express my
gratitude. My *admiration* for you--

SAM

Well, you went a little too far!

EMILY

I'm sorry! Sometimes when I write -
I... lose control.

Sam looks at her, softening slightly.

SAM

I know. I understand that. It's part of what makes you a great writer. But - you have to be aware. There are all these rumors...

EMILY

What rumors?

SAM

Oh, you've heard them. Every time I choose to support another female voice. All the gossips on the East Coast think I've got - ulterior motives. And Mary hears these whispers - and they upset her. Naturally. They hurt her - even though she knows, in her soul, that I am *always* faithful to her.

Emily stares at him, feeling guilty and ashamed.

SAM (CONT'D)

I've tried to be absolutely clear with you. This *interest* I've taken in you - it's purely professional. You do understand that, right?

Emily nods, mortified.

EMILY

Of course.

SAM

Mary is the only woman on earth for me. I would never betray her.

Emily gathers her last strands of confidence.

EMILY

Sam - please forgive me. I didn't mean to do anything wrong. I have the utmost respect for your marriage. The fact that you are so faithful to your wife is one of the things that makes you such a great man!

Beat. Sam nods.

SAM

Look. I know it's - romantic. To
have your poem get published.
Especially when you've had to wait
so long. But you gotta remember,
Emily - the romance? It's between
you, and yourself.

Emily stares at him for a moment, then turns back to face the
stage. It is now incredibly awkward in this box.

Across the theater, a glimpse of Sue, WATCHING THEM, through
her opera glasses...

DOWN ON THE STAGE--

The curtains raise and the music of the opera BEGINS...

8 INT. OPERA HOUSE - STAGE - NIGHT

8

The curtain raises on the opening scene of La Traviata. A
GLAMOROUS PARTY in the home of the fun-loving, free-spirited
courtesan Violetta. And it's uncanny because...

THE WHOLE SCENE LOOKS LIKE ONE OF SUE AND AUSTIN'S SALONS.
The red draperies, the gold-framed paintings, the beautiful
furniture, the posh guests... it's all eerily reminiscent of
the Evergreens.

And then the lead soprano, ADELAIDE MAY, comes out on stage,
to perform the role of Violetta the courtesan, and -- SHE
LOOKS ALMOST EXACTLY LIKE SUE. Like a doppelganger. She's
even wearing a GOLD GOWN like Sue's.

As the opera begins, with Violetta greeting her guests, we
jump around the audience, from POV to POV, as follows:

-- To **SAM'S BOX**, where Emily stares at Adelaide, taking in
the whole scene, registering all of this weird mirror-
imaging... She glances over at Sam, who is maintaining a
STONY SILENCE...

-- To **SUE AND AUSTIN'S BOX**, where Sue watches the show, eyes
on the stage, admiring but not necessarily seeing herself
reflected there... And Austin, who, instead of watching,
CLOSES HIS EYES, lost in some reverie...

-- To **LAVINIA AND SHIP** in the orchestra, where Lavinia looks
rapt. Ship looks lost. Seeing this, she leans over.

LAVINIA

(loud whisper)

She has tuberculosis.

Ship gives her sardonic thumbs up. She goes back to watching. He broods a little, but then gets an idea. Slowly he SNEAKS HIS HAND UNDER LAVINIA'S DRESS, but SHE SLAPS IT AWAY:

SHIP

Ship! Not at the opera!

...Ship sinks back into his seat, hurt.

-- Over to **MR. AND MRS. DICKINSON**, who are trying to follow the action, but are bored and confused. Mrs. Dickinson RANDOMLY LAUGHS IN THE WRONG PLACE, and some OPERA SNOB rudely shushes her. Mrs. Dickinson leans over to Edward:

MRS. DICKINSON

This is so boring.

EDWARD

(heartily agreeing)

I don't know how much more I can take.

...Edward turns and looks towards the EXIT, then RAISES HIS EYEBROWS at Mrs. D. She grins...

9 INT. STAIRWELL - OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

9

Mr. and Mrs. Dickinson, arm in arm, are escaping down the stairs. They look around to see if anyone has seen them, before CRACKING UP.

MRS. DICKINSON

Oh, we're free! We're free!

Edward imitates the sound of EARSPLITTING SOPRANO VOCALS. Mrs. Dickinson applauds him.

MRS. DICKINSON (CONT'D)

Bravo!

Edward doubles over laughing.

EDWARD

My god, that was awful!

This might be the most fun we've ever seen them have together... Mrs. Dickinson continues to SING NONSENSE IN A HIGH SOPRANO as we return to...

10 INT. OPERA HOUSE - SAM'S BOX - LATER

10

Deeper into the opera now. On stage, a LOVE SCENE plays between Violetta (Adelaide) and her lover, ALFREDO.

ALFREDO
(on stage)
Perché nessuno al mondo v'ama.

VIOLETTA/ADELAIDE
(on stage)
Nessun?

ALFREDO
Tranne sol io.

Emily, in Sam's box, watches, rapt, moved, almost breathless. A gifted, sensitive artist responding to the call of truly great performance.

She leans over to Sam, and whispers, about Adelaide:

EMILY
She's riveting, isn't she?

Sam nods.

EMILY (CONT'D)
My heart feels like it could -
split right open.

Emily and Sam look at each other. For a moment, it almost seems like they are ABOUT TO KISS. But then - Sam says:

SAM
(abrupt)
I have to go.

He stands up, gathers his things. Emily is bewildered.

EMILY
What - right now?

SAM
I shouldn't have come tonight. I
have to go home. Mary needs me.

One or two people nearby SHUSH them. Emily feels desperate.

EMILY
Wait - Sam. I wrote you something--

She pulls out a FOLDED, DELICATE PIECE OF PAPER, tries to hand it to him. His eyes narrow, like a snake.

SAM

Keep it.

He turns and leaves. Emily is alone in the box. Shattered.
Heartbroken.

The opera continues on stage, as Emily looks down at the POEM
she wrote for him, in her hands.

VIOLETTA/ADELAIDE (O.S.)

*È strano! È strano! In core
scolpiti ho quegli accenti!
Saria per me sventura un serio
amore?
Che risolvi, o turbata anima mia?
Null'uomo ancora t'accendeva - O
gioia
ch'io non conobbi, esser amata
amando!
E sdegnarla poss'io
per l'aride follie del viver mio?*

Then, she looks back up at the STAGE, where the queenly
Adelaide now STANDS ALONE, preparing to deliver an ARIA...

11 INT. OPERA HOUSE - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

11

Adelaide begins to sing La Traviata's famous "Sempre libera"
aria. Only... it's different. It's not Sempre libera. The
tune is different, and the words... the words are the lines
of Emily Dickinson's poem, "Split the lark." As she sings, we
see them written, in the GHOSTLY FONT...:

ADELAIDE

(singing)

*"Split the Lark - and you'll find
the Music - /
Bulb after Bulb, in Silver rolled -
/
Scantily dealt to the Summer
Morning /
Saved for your Ear when Lutes be
old. /
Loose the Flood - you shall find it
patent - /
Gush after Gush, reserved for you -
/
Scarlet Experiment! Sceptic Thomas!
/
Now, do you doubt that your Bird
was true?"*

12 INT. OPERA HOUSE - SAM'S BOX - CONTINUOUS 12

In Sam's box, Emily is watching this - having a psychedelic experience of profound artistic inspiration and connection. Adelaide is literally *singing the words of her own heart*. Emily feels cosmically bound to the beautiful woman on stage.

And then suddenly, it's not Adelaide, but Sue on stage. Singing. In her golden dress.

Emily gasps. She can't believe it - especially because a moment later, it's Adelaide again... Emily is spellbound.

13 INT. OPERA HOUSE - AUSTIN AND SUE'S BOX - CONTINUOUS 13

As the magical aria concludes, the audience, including Austin and Sue, JUMP TO THEIR FEET, in a STANDING OVATION.

Austin, we notice, has TEARS RUNNING DOWN HIS CHEEKS. Sue glances at him - and we can't quite read her expression.

14 INT. OPERA HOUSE - SAM'S BOX - CONTINUOUS 14

The standing ovation continues, but Emily sits still in her seat, not clapping - stunned, almost PARALYZED by the emotional experience she just had. She's in a daze.

15 INT. OPERA HOUSE - AUSTIN AND SUE'S BOX - MOMENTS LATER 15

We jump back to Austin and Sue. Austin is putting on his coat. The audience still claps. Sue looks at him, confused.

SUE

Are you going to fetch the carriage?

AUSTIN

No. I'm going to find Frazar. He asked me to meet him after the show - for a drink.

SUE

(aghast)

So what - you're *leaving* me here?

AUSTIN

You can take the carriage back to the hotel.

SUE

Alone?!

AUSTIN
(cold)
Or with whoever you want.

With these inscrutable words, Austin exits the box - leaving Sue there, by herself.

16 INT. OPERA HOUSE - SAM'S BOX - MOMENTS LATER 16

Emily sits there, still in a daze, as the standing ovation continues to roar.

Then, she looks down at Sam's empty seat and sees... the BACKSTAGE PRESS PASS. He left it there. Emily has an idea... and the sound of CLAPPING suddenly stops as we...

CUT TO:

17 INT. BACKSTAGE - HALLWAY - LATER 17

Emily is backstage at the opera house. **Note: We have entered a space now where logic splits. Emily is here, backstage, while her family has clearly left without her. No one is looking for her. No one is thinking about her. She is free to explore the space of this fantasy herself. As if it is real.**

Backstage, the atmosphere is sweaty, loose. Singers from the CHORUS rush past with their makeup and wigs half-removed. A couple MUSICIANS scurry by with their instruments. Someone wheels a CART FULL OF PROPS.

People kiss each other on the cheeks and say "Bravo, bravo. Great show, darling." No one pays any attention to Emily, until...

CHORUS MEMBER
(to Emily)
Are you looking for someone?

EMILY
(startled)
Oh - yes. I'm looking for Adelaide May.

CHORUS MEMBER
(laughing)
Of course you are. She's in her dressing room. And I wouldn't bother her if I were you.

Another chorus member laughs, in agreement.

CHORUS MEMBER 2
Who are you? A friend of hers?

EMILY
I'm - a writer.

The chorus members look at each other.

CHORUS MEMBER
What kind of writer?

EMILY
Oh, I'm - a newspaper reporter.
See? I'm with the press.

Emily holds up Sam's PRESS PASS. They inspect it.

CHORUS MEMBER
A girl reporter? Never heard of
that.

EMILY
I'm with the *Springfield*
Republican.

CHORUS MEMBER 2
I guess they're really keeping up
with the times here in
Massachusetts.

The other chorus member cackles.

CHORUS MEMBER
I need a drink.

CHORUS MEMBER 2
Who doesn't?!

CHORUS MEMBER
You want to come have a drink with
us, girl reporter?

CHORUS MEMBER 2
Yeah, you could write about us!
We're *fascinating*.

EMILY
(bravely)
I'm supposed to interview Adelaide
May.

CHORUS MEMBER
(skeptical)
Adelaide doesn't give interviews.

CHORUS MEMBER 2
(slightly bitter)
She doesn't have to. Everyone
already knows who she is.

CHORUS MEMBER
Ha! That's right. See, press is for
people who are desperate. Like us.
The real stars... they can just
hide.

The chorus members sail off down the hallway, in search of
booze, leaving Emily alone.

She creeps further backstage...

18 INT. BACKSTAGE - DRESSING ROOM DOOR - MOMENTS LATER 18

Emily finds herself outside of a dressing room. The door is
shut. There is a RACK OF COSTUMES with a tag that reads,
"Violetta." This must be Adelaide's room. Emily takes a deep
breath...

...And KNOCKS. From inside, a sad, beautiful voice:

ADELAIDE (O.S.)
Who is it.

Emily gathers up all her courage, and TURNS THE KNOB, opening
the door.

EMILY
(timid)
It's - me.

Inside, she sees Adelaide, sitting at the mirror, wiping off
some makeup. Adelaide barely glances at her.

ADELAIDE
(flat, weary)
Well, come in, come in if you're
coming in, shut the door behind
you, fast.

Emily obeys, coming in and shutting the door behind her.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)
(barely acknowledging her)
I'm not in the mood to be bombarded
tonight. My throat hurts. I don't
want to sign autographs. I know
it's terrible, but I don't have the
energy.

(MORE)

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

The fans are so overwhelming. They love me so much, it's like they want to kill me. It's all just too exhausting - I can't do it tonight.

Emily hovers by the door, apologetic.

EMILY

I'm sorry to intrude--

ADELAIDE

You're only doing your job. You're the wardrobe girl, aren't you? I'm ready to undress--

*
*

EMILY

I'm actually - I'm just--

Adelaide looks at her, more sharply.

EMILY (CONT'D)

--I'm just here to tell you how amazing you are.

ADELAIDE

(curt)

Oh. You're one of them.

EMILY

I was in the audience tonight. And your singing - I've never heard anything like it. It was so beautiful - it broke my heart.

ADELAIDE

(dry)

Yes, that's what they all say.

Adelaide now REMOVES HER WIG. The hair that looked so much like Sue's was fake, apparently.

*

EMILY

(grasping)

But I mean it. Listening to you, it made me feel things I've never felt before!

Adelaide looks at her, half-amused.

ADELAIDE

Really. What's that like?

EMILY

What?

ADELAIDE

Feeling things.

Adelaide turns back to the mirror. Emily comes a step closer.

EMILY

You must know what it's like. You brought it all to life so perfectly! You made me feel what Violetta was feeling...

ADELAIDE

Oh, that's just a performance. I've done Violetta so many times, I don't even need to be awake when I'm on stage. You just saw "the most moving story"! But I felt nothing. Here, if you're staying, have a seat. I can't stand people hovering around me.

Emily sits down in an empty chair, staring at her.

EMILY

It's impossible... you were crying. Those were real tears...

ADELAIDE

Were they? I don't know what's real anymore. I don't even know what city I'm in. Is this Paris? Rome? It doesn't matter. Every night is the same. Just a blur. A dream. Another person falling in love with me, another drink, another round of applause. So many people have fallen in love with me, I've lost track. I lose track of reality. What is reality? Who am I?

EMILY

(adamant)

You're Adelaide May! The world's greatest soprano!

Adelaide looks at her, half-smiling.

ADELAIDE

Oh, but that's not my real name. That's just a stage name.

Emily stares at her.

EMILY

Well - whatever your name is. You
changed my life tonight. Your voice
will haunt me forever.

Adelaide holds Emily's gaze.

ADELAIDE

There is no such thing as
"forever." Don't you know that,
darling? The voice fades. And then
memory fades. Things go in and out
of fashion, time goes on, and all
of us, eventually, are forgotten.

Emily shakes her head.

EMILY

I'm not going to forget you.

Adelaide smiles at her, and, suddenly, takes her hand.

ADELAIDE

Would you like to see the stage?

EMILY

(surprised, thrilled)
Really?

ADELAIDE

Come with me.

Adelaide stands and pulls Emily out of the dressing room.

19 INT. BACKSTAGE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

19

Adelaide moves swiftly down the hallway, towards the stage,
with Emily rushing behind her, trying to keep up.

ADELAIDE

(lightly)
We're not supposed to go onstage in
the dark... but I don't care! It's
a lark...

Emily is mesmerized, following her, trying to catch up, as
they emerge out onto:

20

INT. OPERA HOUSE - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

20

The BARE STAGE of the opera house. Silent and empty, facing the rows and rows of EMPTY SEATS.

Adelaide pulls Emily all the way out onto center stage. Emily stares out at the darkened theater.

EMILY

It's beautiful...

ADELAIDE

Yes. I like it better when no one is here.

Emily looks out at the audience again. Suddenly, for one moment, she sees **the entire theater filled with people. Every seat packed. She imagines that all of them are applauding for her. A wild standing ovation. Screaming. Huge.**

Emily looks up to SAM'S BOX, and sees, in midst of the cheering crowd -- Sam. Sitting silently. Not standing. Not clapping. Just staring down at her, with disapproval.

And then--

Silence. Everybody disappears. The noise cuts off. Empty seats.

Emily turns back to Adelaide.

EMILY

I want to be famous.

*

Adelaide smiles.

ADELAIDE

You do?

EMILY

Doesn't everyone?

ADELAIDE

Why do you want to be famous?

EMILY

Because - I am a writer. And I write, and I write, and I write, and then - I stick it in a drawer. And it just sits there. In the dark. Where the light never shines. And that's not enough. Is it? Doesn't it need to be seen? Don't I need to be seen?

ADELAIDE

I don't know. If you're seen -
you're exposed. And everything
that's exposed, well. It goes
stale.

EMILY

Not everything...

ADELAIDE

Yes, everything. The critics,
they'll put you on top for a
minute, but then they'll drag you
down. They'll get sick of you, and
they'll destroy you. They hate you,
see - because you made them love
you. You were a courtesan, and they
fell for your trick.

EMILY

(frustrated)

Well, then, who cares what they
say! Who cares what people think?!

ADELAIDE

Exactly. You might as well just
stay in a room by yourself. With no
one watching.

Emily looks out at the (empty) audience again. Takes a beat.

EMILY

How do you do it? How do you have
the courage to sing - in front of
all these people?

Adelaide smiles again.

ADELAIDE

I just pretend they're not there.

EMILY

(looking at her)

But I was here tonight. I was here.

ADELAIDE

(returning her gaze)

Then I suppose I was singing for
you.

Adelaide steps closer to Emily, and touches her.

Emily turns to face her, and, mysteriously, in Adelaide's place, there is... SUE. Emily stares at Sue's face - the face she loves more than any other in the world...

SUE
(staring into Emily's eyes)
What is it you really want? What is
the deeper yearning that you have?

EMILY
Sue... What do you mean?

SUE
Beneath all this nonsense about
fame - what is it that you crave?

Emily shakes her head, not knowing the answer.

SUE (CONT'D)
You crave meaning. You crave
beauty. You crave - love.

Emily, suddenly, takes Sue's beautiful face in her hands, and
KISSES HER.

The two women passionately embrace, on the empty, enormous
stage. Emily presses herself into Sue, as if they could merge
into one.

An OPERATIC CHORUS rises around them, as they kiss, though
nobody else is visible on the stage. The chorus repeats the
song we heard earlier, with the lines of Emily's poem:

CHORUS (V.O.)
*"Split the lark - and you'll find
the Music - / Bulb after Bulb, in
Silver rolled..."*

Emily pulls Sue even closer, aching for her, wishing this
were real...

...And then suddenly, Sue is gone. There is no more singing.
Emily stands alone on the stage, in the darkened theater.
It's totally empty and quiet.

From the back, a MAN'S VOICE - an USHER.

USHER
Hey. What are you doing there?

Emily looks out at the empty space, and says nothing.

USHER (CONT'D)
Clear the stage. Clear the stage
this minute, or I shall have to
report you!

Close on Emily, closer, closer...

EMILY

(quiet)

You don't even know who I am.

End of episode.