

SUMMER ME, WINTER ME

On the eve of a new Millenia, a famous composer asks his opera-singer wife for the unimaginable.

Characters

CLAYTON SCOTT, Male, age 59, any race.

CARLA LEONI, his wife, age 59, any race.

RADIO ANNOUNCER, (voice only), any gender, any race, any age.

Time and Place

New Year's Eve, 1999

The couple's Malibu home

Scene opens to a dark living room
of a beach house with an ocean
view.

CARLA

(enters the stage)

Clayton? Why are you sitting in the dark?

CLAYTON

(sits by a table covered
with pharmacy pill vials as
the lights come up)

Just resting my eyes, and waiting for you to come home.

CARLA

(pulls a wine bottle from
her bag)

I stole a bottle of champagne from the GALA committee. What
can I get you? Do you need another pillow?

CLAYTON

How was your evening?

CARLA

I asked Andre for something to do so he let me play the
triangle solo at the end of the second movement, you know,
between the French horns and the violas?

CLAYTON

Sweetheart, you're the most accomplished Rossini singer of
the 20th century, playing a tin can with the LA Philharmonic
is hardly a suitable /

CARLA

And how was your evening? Did anyone of interest call?

CLAYTON

If you mean the president, yes, he called.

CARLA

And?

CLAYTON

And, he said

(imitating a Bill Clinton
accent)

(MORE)

2. Summer Me, Winter Me

CLAYTON (CONT'D)

"Clayton, I trust you are sitting down, 'cause I have news ... news that may involve you."

(in his normal voice)

So, I said, Mr. President how nice of you to call /

CARLA

CLAYTON!

CLAYTON

What?

CARLA

I swear to God, if you don't just spit it out /

CLAYTON

It's as you suspected, I've been awarded the Medal of Freedom.

CARLA

I KNEW IT.

CLAYTON

He asked about you, by the way.

CARLA

Of course he did, I'm the nice one. When's the ceremony?

CLAYTON

The usual, mid-May, which he offered to move up on account of my pending plan to kick the bucket.

CARLA

Clayton, stop it. What did you say?

CLAYTON

I told him no, that my illness prevents me from traveling, and that you'll accept on my behalf.

CARLA

I'll tell him to move it to LA, the Dorothy Chandler.

CLAYTON

Carla, you'll do no such thing.

3. Summer Me, Winter Me

CARLA

The Kodak? Or, the Hollywood Bowl? Oh, wouldn't that be /

CLAYTON

It's a famous White House tradition, think of the other recipients.

CARLA

Why? What did they ever do for me? I'll call POTUS tomorrow, you're forgetting he owes me a favor. Now, are you sure I can't make you more comfortable?

CLAYTON

I'M AS COMFORTABLE AS I'M GOING TO BE. Now can we please /

CARLA

Come on Clayton, it's the year 2000, and we just got some good news for a change. Can't we just, look I'm sorry.

CLAYTON

No sweetheart, I'm the one who's sorry. God, I hate who I've become, how we've become.

CARLA

Honey, we haven't *become* anything. Have some champagne.

CLAYTON

I don't need any champagne! What I need is to continue our conversation.

CARLA

Which was over before it began! Unless you want to discuss another bone marrow transplant?

CLAYTON

The doctor's said there's no second chance with this procedure. It's pass-fail and I failed. Miserably.

CARLA

There's got to be something else we can try.

CLAYTON

There is. And when I asked you said, of course my love, anything.

4. Summer Me, Winter Me

CARLA

(grows angry)

You manipulated me!

CLAYTON

And you *betrayed me*.

(on CARLA'S hurt look)

Babe, I didn't mean that. Please /

CARLA

You know I would trade places with you in an instant. But Clayton, you need to listen to me. Pain has been a creative source for centuries, for artists not half as good as you.

CLAYTON

Not this time. I couldn't write a nursery rhyme let alone a symphony.

CARLA

But you re-invent old symphonic forms better than anyone. You even do it in your sleep.

CLAYTON

Those are hallucinations from the drugs.

CARLA

Which is where I come in. You know how good I am at extending your musical vision, like I did with *American Requiem*.

CLAYTON

And you did it brilliantly, but that's all in the past. If I check out now, history records me as one of the century's most important composers, not some hack who couldn't live up to his last work.

CARLA

Let's talk about something else.

CLAYTON

Fine, what's this about rescheduling your New York trip?

CARLA

I can't leave you alone right now, so I'm canceling it.

CLAYTON

You will do no such thing! I forbid it!

CARLA

Too late. I called Levine this morning.

CLAYTON

Carla, I know that what you're doing, you're doing out of love, I do. But sweetheart, you've got to think about your career /

CARLA

Without you, I may as well sing to an empty hall. I swear to God, I won't utter another note. You don't think I'm serious, but I'm not kidding around. You cannot tell me what I can, and cannot do.

CLAYTON

You'll lose momentum that you may never recover.

CARLA

Screw momentum. Another year with you is worth any career. Remember the terrible reviews I got for *The Crucible*? When you took over, everything changed. FIVE standing ovations.

CLAYTON

You know very well the orchestra was covering you, and the percussion was all wrong. Once I fixed it ... it was all you. That, and my threat to burn the Seattle Symphony to the ground. Works every time!

CARLA

(both laugh)

Even your laugh is music. I've missed it.

(pleading)

Now, why won't you let go of this insane idea?

CLAYTON

Because I love you. And, because you love me.

CARLA

Quoting your wedding vows. That's not fair.

CLAYTON

Why not?

6. Summer Me, Winter Me

CARLA

I don't know, it just isn't.

CLAYTON

You plagiarized your vows, that wasn't fair either.

CARLA

Hey, no one said they had to be original.

CLAYTON

(quoting his wedding vows in
a soft, loving voice)

Summer me, winter me.

CARLA

And with your kisses morning me, evening me.

CLAYTON

And as the world slips far away, star away,

CARLA

Forever me with love.

CLAYTON

I thought it was from Camelot. Seemed like something
Guinevere would have said to Lancelot.

CARLA

Forgive me, my prince?

CLAYTON

Of course. Even if you, my darling, came off as the Poet
Laureate, while I came off as a /

CARLA

Man in love. When you recited your simple, boyish vows I
remember thinking "I've never felt so loved."

CLAYTON

And I remember thinking, did she just quote Rogers and
fucking Hammerstein? Or was it Lerner and fucking Lowe?

CARLA

(both laugh)

Doesn't matter. If I drown you in memories, it will distract
you from the pain, help you remember all the reasons /

CLAYTON

You'll eventually run out of stories.

CARLA

I'll re-invent them so you won't get bored!

CLAYTON

You could never bore me. And I've always trusted you.

CARLA

Then stop cornering me! Dismissing me! Clayton, consider the enormity of what you're asking me to help you do.

CLAYTON

If you really love me ...

CARLA

I will NOT entertain the rest of that sentence. These traps you set, they're cruel and underhanded.

CLAYTON

That's not what I Carla, you know I've never been one for hidden agendas.

CARLA

(pauses, then starts to cry)

And you've always been there for me. So why can't I be here now, for you?

CLAYTON

But, you can.

CARLA

(exasperated)

Oh my God, you're doing it again.

CLAYTON

Sweetheart, this is for both of us. If you'll just reconsider

CARLA

RECONSIDER? So after I help you take your own life, I'm supposed to just walk onto the stage of the New York City opera and sing as if I'm the luckiest woman alive?

CLAYTON

What are you talking about?

CARLA

My New York trip? Levine is doing *Fidelio*. He wants *me* to sing *Leonore* for chrissakes. I think it's a pity offer. Or maybe his perverted idea of publicity. Well, screw him. I won't do it, I can't do it.

CLAYTON

You can and you will.

CARLA

(with quiet rage)

I see, you think this is *Game Over* and I shouldn't be such a sore loser, is that what you need to hear?

CLAYTON

You and I have never been competitors.

CARLA

Which is why I fell in love with you. But now, you've turned us into negotiators.

CLAYTON

No, Carla. That's not /

CARLA

Except it's your way or the highway.

CLAYTON

And what's your way? Watching me become an invalid? I won't have it. Please, just let me ...

CARLA

Please don't say it.

CLAYTON

Die with dignity

CARLA

All right, if you insist, two can play this game.

CLAYTON

What are you saying?

CARLA

Clayton, if you really think you're doing this for me, for us, there's only one way I will ever agree to it. And I swear to God -- it's absolutely non-negotiable.

CLAYTON

You have your whole life in front of you, now who's insane?
Carla, you can't /

CARLA

Oh, yes I can. Clayton, I know why you wanted to buy this house on the beach. I'm not stupid. And I'm not going to come home someday, or hear on the radio that you're missing or that your body has washed up /

CLAYTON

So you're coming with me?

Lights fade as the volume on
Frank Sinatra's recording of
Summer Me, Winter Me comes up.
Volume does down as RADIO
NEWSCASTER begins.

RADIO NEWSCASTER

Our first story of the year 2000 is a sad one. The bodies of American Composer Clayton Scott, and his opera-singer wife, Carla Leoni, washed ashore early today in what police are calling a double suicide. We're still gathering the details, but for now, Clayton Scott and his wife Carla -- found dead in front of their Malibu beach house. They were 59.