HUMMING MOZART

Written by

Jason R. Couch

Dedicated to my beloved mother-in-law,
Barbara H. Rosentreter; a true lady to the end.
FADE IN:

INT. JORI’S APARTMENT – DAY

JORI (72) joyously sways in the sunshine bursting through her window. Her revealing silk dress, expensive jewelry and modern smart-watch denote her as the living embodiment of the finely curated art that adorns her lavish apartment. Blazing Mozart empowers every stroke of her colored pencil as she hums along and skillfully dances a detailed and muscular male nude from her mind onto her canvas.

JORI
(humming to the tune)
Bum pa bum pa bum.. pa bum pah....
BUM!

A B&W photograph of a young Jori and a strikingly handsome man in a vintage Jaguar convertible graces the stereo cabinet and a row of finely framed editions of her exquisitely wrought pencil work extends to the end of the wall on her left.

A deep, coarse male voice explodes from beyond this wall.

BOB (O.C.)
Jesus, would ya put on a bra? Your droopy tits don’t need to be hanging out for world to see.

Jori winces and sits on her art stool, free hand shooting to her temple, eyes tightly closed.

JORI
(softly)
God, I wish this would stop.

The pencil hangs loose in her hand until an equally powerful woman’s voice counters with:

MARGE (O.C.)
You used to like them; they were good enough to nurse our children and they are going to the river in comfort.

Jori rubs her temples, breathes deeply and turns the expensive-looking stereo up a notch.
BOB (O.C.)
Ya know, maybe if you dressed or, god forbid, acted normal our kids would come around once in a damn while.

MARGE (O.C.)
Oh, don’t you lay that on me again. It was you that drove them away; always going on about money this and money that.

BOB (O.C.)
Well, there is more than one kind of weaning and you were no damn good at either. Always with the Carmella needs this and Bob Jr. wants that, I want, I want, I want...

Jori turns the music nearly off and with one hand to her temple places the other on the wall and briskly pats one hand on her head and the other on the wall then rubs both temples.

JORI
Can we have some peace and quiet please? This is happening way too often and I am trying to create.

Long silence

JORI (CONT’D)
Do you understand me? Please keep it down.

Long silence

BOB (O.C.)
Who the hell are you? Mind your own damn business.

Jori stops rubbing her temples, takes a deep breath, turns the music completely off and places both hands on the wall.

JORI
You know exactly who I am and I would like to enjoy a quiet morning with my artwork; I have a gallery showing coming up.

BOB (O.C.)
Go back to your fancy music.
MARGE (O.C.)
Bob, you are so rude; you know artists need their peace.

BOB (O.C.)
Shut the hell up Marge, meddling snob needs to mind her own...

MARGE (O.C.)
No, you mind your business Bob. You are the one that should shut up, shut up for good.

BOB (O.C.)
That’ll be the day.

Jori palms the wall briskly again.

JORI
(sighs)
Hey, hey... I am willing to help talk this out later but what I must have now is some peace and quiet, got it?

Jori puts her head against the wall and closes her eyes.

BOB (O.C.)
How the hell can you help? More noise, that is all you have to contribute.

MARGE (O.C.)
Give us a chance Bob. Anything is better than listening to you bellow day and night.

Jori sits up straight and musters herself with a shudder and a shake of her head.

JORI
I am good at talking things out. I have always been the one who wanted to smooth things out, but, for now, quiet, please.

Jori turns to a dog-eared page of her drawing pad, sets it back onto her easel and begins to sway in place and draw again on this oft worked and hidden drawing with renewed vigor, hands flying without revealing the subject matter.

JORI (CONT'D)
besides... my Love and I were just like you once.
Long Silence

Jori perks an ear toward the wall listening then, when satisfied all is quiet, begins to hum Mozart again as she leans into and away from the piece she is creating.

JORI (CONT’D)
Rum pum pum pum pum pummmmm

Jori works on her drawing for a few delicious moments in peace until another burst comes.

BOB (O.C.)
(snarling)
Well? What the hell do you have to say? Enlighten me. I thought you had something to say? Now would be good.

Jori shudders for a moment and places her hands still holding her pencil and massages her temples.

JORI
(staccato)
Can you narrow it down? What is your actual complaint?

BOB (O.C.)
Why do you think our kids never visit?

MARGE (O.C.)
You maybe, but I can talk with them all the time.

BOB (O.C.)
Oh, bullshit Marge, more bullshit!

JORI
Do we have to do this now?

BOB (O.C.)
Yes, we have to do this now. Why the hell do you think our kids never visit any more, Miss Know-It-All?

JORI
Well, why do you think?
MARGE (O.S.)
Oh come on Bob, you know why. Every
time they came and asked for a
little help or a little love you
made them feel like trash. So, why
would they come see you now except
to laugh at what you have become?

BOB (O.C.)
Trash? I worked my tail off to
provide for their every need.

Jori draws furiously with occasional stops to put pressure on
her temples with both hands.

MARGE (O.C.)
Need, need, life is about more than
need Bob, admit it, you are just
cheap, dirt-damn-cheap.

BOB (O.C.)
There was no way I could give them
money every time they asked,
especially with the expensive
tastes you gave them. A home in
East River, foreign cars, clothes,
trips...

MARGE (O.C.)
(screeching)
Screw you Bob, screw you; you cheap
bastard.

BOB (O.C.)
I was trying to keep us out of the
poor house.

Jori takes the sketch-pad in hand, rises and her dance shifts
to a stiff back and forth pace in front of each of the framed
prints and keeping her current creation close to her breast.

MARGE (O.C.)
Well, you sure didn’t mind dumping
my mother at one Robert Dietrich.

Jori winces then smiles when hearing Marge continue:

MARGE (O.C.) (CONT’D)
Dirt-cheap Dietrich rides again

BOB (O.C.)
Oh, not fair, not fair at all. She
had stage 3 dementia. No way could
we care for her.
MARGE (O.C.)
You wouldn’t even let me try...not even try.

BOB (O.C.)
Love, honor and cherish Marge!
Nothin’ in there about mothers-in-law with dementia. Nothin’ in there about dementia at all.

Jori stops dead, wild eyed, and pounds the wall with the flats of her hands.

JORI
Stop it, just stop it. You cannot go on forever arguing about what is done. The love must still be there or...

Jori’s smart-watch makes 3 soft tones then announces in a distinctive voice:

WATCH
(melodiously)
Bah, bum, bum, 15 minutes, 15 minutes

Jori looks at her wrist and smiles teary-eyed.

CLOSE SHOT - JORI’S SMART-WATCH - IT READS 11:45

Jori tears the secret page from the pad neatly and her look of concern changes to a smile as she surveys the still unrevealed sketch.

JORI (CONT’D)
As a peace offering, I would like to gift you with a sketch I have been working on these last few days during our talks. Signed it is quite valuable. Then we can rejoin the discussion after lunch when we are all calmer, yes?

BOB (O.C.)
Sure, why the hell not. Maybe you can find something new to say.
MARGE (O.C.) (IN TEARS)
Of course.

JORI
I will see you after lunch.

Jori turns the music back up and hums along as she busies herself putting away her drawing tools, straightening up the designer-kissed apartment, brushing her hair and finally, pulling on a silk brocade jacket and steps in to the hallway glancing again at her watch which shows 12:00.

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT - JORI’S WRIST AND SMART-WATCH - IT READS 12:00 (WARM AFTERNOON LIGHT)

DISOLVE TO:

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT - JORI’S WRIST, now heavily age-spotted. Instead of a watch, we see a PATIENT ID BRACELET which reads “MARJORIE DIETRICH” (Cold blue light)

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT: PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM SPEAKER

PUBLIC ADDRESS
(melodiously)
Bah, bum, bum, lunch is now being served in the main dining room for all residents.
(uncaring)
Lunch is now being served.

CUT TO:

INT. INSTITUTION - CORRIDOR - DAY

Jori walks out of her door and now stands in an over-lit institutional setting looking much older and very bent, hair amiss.

ANGLE - The door behind her stands agape and reveals a vista into the dark room;

We see:

-cheap metal furnishings,
-a little radio sitting on a dresser,
a framed B&W photograph of a younger Jori and the same, yet somehow less striking, man in a beat up Dodge station-wagon.

The left wall is covered in hand-drawn artwork that seems to plummet in skill level as it runs toward the door.

The door closes shut.

Jori is braless beneath her dingy T-shirt, wears sweatpants and plastic slippers and carries a very crude crayon sketch of the photograph with the Jaguar.

PUBLIC ADDRESS
Bah, bum, bum, The West Side Care Facility welcomes our special guests the Talent High School Choir who will be performing selections from Mozart’s Requiem (mispronounced) in the Shasta Room.

Jori smiles broadly, hums and sways in place until a woman attendant in scrubs comes and firmly leads her to a remote table where sits a much older version of the man in the photograph.

As Jori gets seated she accidentally overturns a coffee cup marked “ROBERT” and spills heavily creamed coffee onto the raw crayon sketch whose colors now run and blend with the orange paper of the “Residents Art Show THIS FRIDAY” flyer already on the table.

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The Choir begins the concert out of view but within earshot. Jori, closes her eyes and smiles in response.

Jori (CONT'D)
Oh, it is such a lovely day. We simply must get outdoors later.

A server slides a tray with an unappetising tuna sandwich and a chicken salad in front of Jori and cleans up the mess with one big wipe of a dirty towel while Jori begins to feed Robert a small bite at a time from the tuna sandwich while also humming and directing along with the choir’s music with the other hand.

Some, but not many, of the other neglected-looking seniors in the cafeteria have younger uncomfortable-looking family joining them for lunch and listening to the unseen choir whose voices now fill the room with the 3rd movement of Mozart’s Requiem.

Jori (CONT'D)
Robert love, perhaps when the concert is over we should take the Jaguar out for a spin to the river with the top down. I need to feel the sun on my skin and the wind in my hair.

Jori feeds Robert another bite and gently cleans his stubbly chin with a napkin.

Jori (CONT’D)
But let’s wait a little while to see if Carmella and Robert Junior stop by. They both said they would come by again soon.

Robert sits blank-eyed with tuna on his very oversized T-shirt which reads “My kids went to Hawaii and all I got was this stupid T-shirt” while Jori savors a fork-full of plain chicken salad still humming along and directing the concert between a bite for him then one for her, humming Mozart throughout.

Jori (CONT’D)
Today is the day, I can feel it. Maybe they will bring some good chocolate or a nice bottle of wine.

She places her hand on Robert’s hand, closes her eyes and hums along with the music.
JORI (HUMMING TO THE TUNE) (CONT'D)
Bum pa bum pa bum.. pa bum pah....
BUM!

FADE OUT.