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Mom Sings an Aria

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Mom Sings an Aria

Characters:

Mom (Mrs. Lowenstein) ................ Mezzo-soprano
Lennie, her son ........................ Baritone
Shirley, his wife ....................... Soprano
Cohen, a regular standee at the MET ..... Bass
D’Angelo, a regular standee at the MET . . Tenor

Non-singing, non-speaking roles:

Two old ladies, friends of Cohen and D’Angelo
And Cohen’s nephew

Synopsis:

Lennie, a homicide detective, and his wife Shirley come for regular Friday night dinner at his Jewish mom’s house. Mom had musical ambitions for herself and her son, but these didn’t work out.

Lennie’s latest case, in which a murder took place in the standing room section of the Met opera is discussed (and acted out in flashbacks) during the meal. Mom’s colorful stories, her opera singing, and the standee’s fights about the comparative virtues and defects of Renata Tebaldi and Maria Callas divert us while Mom solves the case for her son. At the last moment she also helps Lennie with his marriage.
Lennie [entering with Shirley]:

Mom, We're here.
She never wants any help.

Mom [entering from kitchen]:

Oh, Lennie.
right on time.

Let me give you

a
great big hug!
Shirley:

Lennie never keeps anyone waiting.

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Punctuality is a virtue. But a little less punctuality
and a little more imagination would help a homicide de-

Shirley:

Mom:

Oh, be serious! You think I’m not serious?
Sit down.

You never give up wishing

I would be a creative type with lots of imagination
No, I gave up wishing.

- tion, a musician, for instance.

[Mom exits.]

Let me get the appetizers.
I took two years of violin before Mom had to admit I wasn't Heifitz.
I remember your saying.

I played "Rustling Leaves" the first year. I played "Rustling Leaves" the second year. I would have
[Mom re-enters with appetizers.]

played "Rust-ling Leaves" forever because I couldn't get it right.

Mom:

Such a disappointment.

Oh well,
I got over it.

What is playing this Saturday on the
"La Traviata"

Met broadcast?

Such a sad, beautiful opera!
Mom, you were going to be an opera singer before you gave it up to raise a homicide detective. Maybe you could understand how someone could love music so much.
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that he'd commit murder for it.

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That isn't hard to understand. Why else would I

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- 19 -
stop your violin lessons. Once while you were playing "Rustling Leaves," I happened to look at your teacher, Mrs. Steinberg.
And on her face was murder, if I ever saw it.

Shirley:
You don't mean that literally? Would a woman kill a boy?
just because he couldn't play the violin?

People can have plenty feelings that were never in your psychology
books, believe me. My

Aunt Godie thought the pigeon outside her window actually was her husband
The pigeon appeared on the day Jake died.
It had a walk like Jake's. It liked the same food that Jake liked.

The pigeon hated the
rabbi and went away, just like Jake, whenever the rabbi came to visit.
Gol-die talked to the pigeon like she talked to Jake until the day she died. Of course, there might have been
more than one pigeon. Goldie had really bad eyesight.

Shirley: Slower

Mom: What a colorful story! Yes,
[To Lennie:]

colorful. I'm colorful. We're all colorful!

So you are investigating someone who committed murder for...
Slower

Looks like it. There are certain people

who show up in the Met's standing room line
night after night after night. They come earlier than anyone else

and wait longer, know one another's names, gossip a-
The last place on earth

bout the opera singers.

Even an opera lover has a

you'd expect to find a murderer.
private life. He loves music, but he also could have plenty of real trouble.

That's just it, Mom, if one of these standing room regulars had gone
home and killed his mother-in-law, this would be a routine case.

But in this case, one of the regulars killed another standing room regular.
Shirley:

Don't bother your mother with this.

Mom:

It's no bother. I'm interested!

Tell it. Being a widow, life can get dull.
The two reg-u-lars were Sam Co-hen, a re-tired phar-ma-cist, whose neph-ew
took over his busi-ness and Gu-isep-pi An-gel-o,
someone who used to own an exterminating business in Queens.

Opéra was the biggest thing in both their lives. D'Angelo was
The most operatic city in Italy. If a born in Parma.

tenor hits a bad note, they run him out of town. How horrible! How
Mom:

positively uncivilized!

A little less civilization here in New York

then maybe we wouldn't have so many bad notes.
[Lights up on the men.]

So for maybe fifteen years

They have argued constantly.