



12th NIGHTed

By Patrick Thomas McCarthy

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Characters 6 men 3 women 1 Musician/Clown

Orson Argento: middle aged businessman, Cesario is his personal assistant, Antonio Alberto Argento is his twin brother, one actor could play both Argentos

Antonio "Tony" Alberto Argento: middle aged businessman, Vito is his muse, Orson Argento is his twin brother, wears glasses, one actor could play both Argentos

Viola/Cesario Vitale: Viola/Cesario is Orson's personal assistant disguised as a man, has a brother twin, Vito Vittorio Vitale

Vito Vitale: Viola's twin brother, wears identical wig as Viola/Cesario, wears identical costume as Viola/Cesario, same height as Viola/Cesario, wears glasses, Antonio's muse

Olivia Ruttate Earnrighto: middle aged entrepreneur, head of the family, widow grieving for her dead husband Earnesto Earnrighto

Francesco "Frankie" Assisi: personal assistant to Olivia Ruttate Earnrighto

Toby Ruttate: the black sheep of the family, brother to Olivia

Maria Theresa D'Assolvere: the Italian maid

Mel Volio: the butler, middle aged, handler of personal correspondence

Festay/Festina: a la Harpo Marx, third veiled serving man/woman, musician, handles all sound effects, underscores some scenes onstage, uses horns, whistles, chimes, bells, percussion, stringed instruments to punctuate onstage action [Festay/Festina can be cut if all sound effects & music are recorded]

SETTINGS: 1960's Little Italy, New York City, Orson's office, Olivia's Palazzo, Antonio's Studio Apt/Office, the streets of Little Italy

RUNNING TIME: 126 minutes + 10 minute intermission

Synopsis: On the 12th day of Christmas, your true love brings to me, many kinds of pasta, one butler braying, and one golden ring. Updated to 1960's Little Italy, NYC, USA, this 12th NIGHTed is shot out of a Shakespearean confetti cannon of sexual confusion, double sets of twins, and families trying to stick or get back together. A farce of epic proportions mirroring the Bard's Twelfth Night.

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PROLOGUE: A jazzy version of the Dies Irae played by the musician leading the morning mourning procession. It includes Olivia Earnrighto, all in black, heavily veiled; Mel Volio, all in black with a black parasol shading Olivia from early morning's light; & Frankie Assisi, in black Nehru jacket and sunglasses. The procession makes its way across the stage to early morning mass at St. Sebastian's. Toby stumbles out of the shadows on his way home from an all night drunk and bumps up against Frankie from behind. Frankie pushes Toby between himself & Mel Volio, Mel Volio notices the addition with disgust. Viola/Cesario makes his/her way from the early morning shadows & addresses the audience. It is winter approaching the 12th day of Christmas. The procession freezes as Viola/Cesario starts to speak.

CESARIO: I come to see this every day. Like clockwork, every morning, the widow Olivia Earnrighto makes her way through the streets of Little Italy with her entourage in mourning for her late husband. I come every day to try to figure out a way to meet her. She is independently wealthy. She's an entrepreneur & a widow. She holds the key to all our fortunes and futures. My boss's, mine, maybe even my twin brother Vito's future, if he's still alive. I'm his twin sister, Viola, making my way as Cesario, the former orphan now budding entrepreneur. Don't believe everything you see. I had to dress like a man to make my way in the world. I had to find a way as we all can. Now, my boss man beckons & my daily report gets a lot more interesting with a little sleight of hand.

[She places an envelope into Frankie's pocket & tweaks his ass as the procession starts to move again. Frankie notices & is pleased. Viola/Cesario gives the call me signal, then takes the imaginary receiver away from her head & docks it firmly on Frankie's nether parts, pinches him, then slaps his ass as she backs away from the procession and back into the shadows to exit. Mel Volio notices Frankie lagging & pokes him with the parasol to get him to keep up. Toby stumbles along while the procession moves offstage, Frankie remains on stage alone]

FRANKIE: *[Takes letter from his pocket, lifts sunglasses to read the letter]* It's the letter he promised. He put it there. And then he, *[mimes the "call me" phone call & placement of receiver to crotch]* well you saw what he did. When we met, I knew he was the one. Love at first sight, but he wants things from me, & I will do anything for him. He is so dreamy, like an Adonis on the half shell. He is the man for me. Every day, he follows me, well follows us to mass at St. Sebastian's. We've met in secret. He told me he would write this special letter. So hot. *[fans himself with letter, then speaks directly to the audience]* What does it say? *[opens letter, sings line, then reads]* On the 12th day of Christmas, he wants to bring to me ... No ... he wants to come to the Palazzo... that's today He wants to come to the Palazzo Earnrighto today to tell everyone about us No ... He wants a meeting with my boss Olivia Earnrighto ... so he can tell them about us ... No ... so he can present a business proposal to her ... and then

he can tell them about us ... No ... for his boss, he wants to present a business proposal for his boss Orson Argento of Carb On Pasta and the collateral will be one golden ring ... he's bringing a ring! ... I hope it's the right size... I don't care about size... and I know he'll tell Mrs. Earnright about us eventually ... if not today, at least they'll meet and set the groundwork for our announcement, I don't think I can live without him... What else? ... *[scanning letter]* set up meetings, call him with a schedule, for today, for this morning? Pay phone, get to a pay phone. For one thin dime, I will promise him anything and make all my dreams come true.

Scene One: Carb On's Office: We Need a Little Christmas

[Orson Argento enters speaking on an old black rotary dial phone he carries, then sits at his desk busying himself with his business papers & accounting]

ORSON: Hello. It's 12th night here at Carb On Pasta. The end of season for our special Christmas & holiday pastas. It's my business, pasta. I got all shapes & sizes. But that's it. Pasta, all I got. Maybe I'll do the gravy someday, but right now I got your spaghettini, ravioli, rigatoni, macaroni, farfarelli, maybe some gnocchi, but pasta is what I got. Ya want stollen, don't come here. As I always say, if pasta be the food of love, carb on. Pretty catchy, huh. If pasta be the food of love, carb on. Yeah. Thought of it myself. Shakespeare? I'm no Shakespeare, but I do like a good pasta. Carb on. *[He is hung up upon]* Hello...

CESARIO: *[Enters hearing last line]* Carb on boss man.

ORSON: *[Flustered]* Cesario, where ya' been? Pasta doesn't pack itself.

CESARIO: Same place I am every morning, trying to get you your entre to the Palazzo.

ORSON: Did ya?

CESARIO: I think I came close today boss man.

ORSON: How close?

CESARIO: I would say you are in their pocket. Mr. Orson Argento, that being you, the boss man, is as close to being in the pocket of the Palazzo as he has ever been.

ORSON: I've never been close at all.

CESARIO: *[Sits on Orson's desk facing him]* You are as close as we are right now.

ORSON: You're sitting on my spreadsheets.

CESARIO: Exactly, I'm trying to get your attention and tell you about possibility.

ORSON: You're wrinkling my spreadsheets. *[Trying to extricate them]*

CESARIO: I'm adding new wrinkles to your business possibilities.

ORSON: I'm going to have wrinkles?

CESARIO: Why did you hire me?

ORSON: Cuz you needed a job.

CESARIO: And?

ORSON: And I liked you.

CESARIO: Where did we meet?

ORSON: It was a business meeting.

CESARIO: It was at the Stonewall Inn.

ORSON: I was there on business.

CESARIO: Business? What kind of business?

ORSON: I was trying to raise capital for my pasta business.

CESARIO: At the Stonewall Inn? Do you know who hangs out at the Stonewall Inn?

ORSON: You were, hanging out there.

CESARIO: Looking for work. Trying to meet someone like you. And what does that make me?

ORSON: *[Disconcerted]* I had a meeting set up with an investor.

CESARIO: And who set up that meeting?

ORSON: I did, on the phone.

CESARIO: You'd never met the investor, only talked to him on the phone?

ORSON: Yes.

CESARIO: The investor never showed up & you ended up talking to me and hiring me that night.

ORSON: Yes.

CESARIO: Just think of all the wrinkles in that scenario.

ORSON: I can't read a wrinkled spreadsheet.

CESARIO: I'll stop wrinkling your spreadsheets if you listen to me.

ORSON: You're still wrinkling.

CESARIO: Listen to the someone who promised when we met, to get you the investment capital you needed.

ORSON: *[Giving up]* All right.

CESARIO: *[Pulls the spreadsheets from under butt, gives them to Orson, continues seated on the desk facing Orson]* All right. Sometime today, you will be receiving a call on that phone from one Frankie Assisi.

ORSON: And is he?

CESARIO: Makes no difference. Met him at the Stonewall Inn. Mr. Francesco Assisi, he's also the personal assistant & accountant to the Palazzo Earnrighto's Olivia Earnrighto, the heir to the Earnrighto fortune, an investment entrepreneur, and the answer to all our needs.

ORSON: Oh. So, I'll be receiving a call?

CESARIO: From Assisi. Mr. Francesco, Assisi, will call you to set up a meeting for me to meet Olivia Earnrighto & present her with your business plan.

ORSON: For you to meet? Why am I not presenting the business plan?

CESARIO: I'm the liaison. That's French. It's how you do things at the Stonewall. I made the contact & have to handle the delicate first steps in this negotiation.

ORSON: *[Stands]* I'm the boss. That's Italian. How I do things here at Carb On Pasta where pasta is the food of love.

CESARIO: *[Stands]* Your pasta can only be the food of love if you have investment capital.

ORSON: And since I'm the boss, I should present the investment plan.

CESARIO: Do you want anyone to know we met at the Stonewall Inn?

ORSON: What?

CESARIO: Sit down.

ORSON: What? I'm not... *[sits]*

CESARIO: No, you're not, but others might think that with your connections there... So, with my help, you never have to be seen there again. You've never gone back have you?

ORSON: Only time I've ever been there.

CESARIO: That's good. Let me help you. Let me take the first meeting with the Palazzo. We both know how awkward you are in...

ORSON: I'm not awkward.

CESARIO: I can set up everything for you and prep you for your follow-up meeting. *[Phone rings, musician makes sound offstage or on]* I bet that's Assisi now.

ORSON: Assisi? That's his name?

CESARIO: Frankie Assisi. Answer it.

ORSON: *[Answers phone]* Hello, Carb On Pasta, this is Orson Argento speaking. How can we serve your pasta needs on 12th night? Assisi?

CESARIO: A-sees-i...

ORSON: A-sees-i... he told me you'd be calling He seemed certain but he's always sorta psychic that way.....You're psychic too? You do palm reading? And you're an accountant? ... It seems you've got all bases covered ...Play the stock market? You should.... Talk to Cesario? ... but don't you think I should do the first presentation? Oh ... then I'll let you speak to Mr. Cesario Vitale ... Here's Assisi.

CESARIO: *[Takes phone receiver]* Mr. Assisi? I knew it would be you. I told my boss you'd call. So, let's do the two meetings today...

ORSON: Two?

CESARIO: *[Puts his fingers to Orson's lips to quiet him]* Mine this morning, and Mr. Argento and myself this evening.

ORSON: Today?

CESARIO: Perfect times. I'm confirmed with Mrs. Earnrighto for this morning? Yes, and I'll bring the collateral?

ORSON: Collateral?

CESARIO: *[Shushes Orson again]* Of course, one golden ring. Shows serious intent. Not five. That would be silly. Overkill. Mr. Argento is very excited to meet with Mrs. Earnrighto this evening. Thank you, Francesco, for setting Call you Frankie? Of course, Frankie. And you should call me Mr. Vitale for now. You'll probably be calling me something else when you really get to know me. Good.... I'll see you in a couple hours with collateral in hand, or, on my hand. Thanks Frankie. See you soon at the Palazzo. *[Hangs up the phone]*

ORSON: Collateral on hand?

CESARIO: One golden ring.

ORSON: It was my mother's wedding ring. *[Looks at it on his hand]* She had big fingers.

CESARIO: *[Statement of fact]* That's all you've got.

ORSON: I was saving it for my wedding day.

CESARIO: Maybe today's your wedding day.

ORSON: I was saving it.

CESARIO: You'll get it back. We will be successful. It's needed now to hold the promise of what is to come.

ORSON: Will we be successful?

CESARIO: We will be. Just put it on my finger.

ORSON: That would be weird.

CESARIO: I don't want to lose it on my way there.

ORSON: It would still be weird.

CESARIO: It's not like you're marrying me. Two men can't get married. We know that.

ORSON: I know that.

CESARIO: So, put it on my finger, and we'll pledge to the success of this venture. Do you trust me?

ORSON: I do... *[He puts the ring on Cesario's finger].*

CESARIO: You said it.

ORSON: What did I say?

CESARIO: All I needed to hear. *[Prepares to leave]* I am going to prove worthy. You took me off the streets. You gave me a job and a place to stay. I am going to get you everything you want & need today or my name's not Cesario Vitale. *[Starts to exit singing "on 12th day of Christmas, my man boss gave to me, one golden ring", slugs Orson in the shoulder]*

ORSON: Ouch. You always hit me. Why do you always slug me? I'm your boss. You shouldn't slug your boss.

CESARIO: Love taps boss man. I should kiss you for what you've done for me, but we both know two guys can't do that.

ORSON: No, two guys can't do that.

CESARIO: Certainly not, but if you & I were somehow different, maybe...

ORSON: Maybe what?

CESARIO: *[Sings]* On the 12th day of Christmas, someone will bring to me...*[punches Orson again & exits]*

ORSON: Ouch. *[Phone rings]* On the 12th day of Christmas, the phone just rings & rings .. *[Orson answers]* What? Oh. Sorry. Carb On Pasta. *[Sings]* On the 12th day of Christmas what do you want from me? If pasta be the food of love, carb on. Yeah, it is catchy, but it's not Shakespeare, I thought of it. *[Exits]*

Scene Two: The Palazzo Earnrighto – At Sixes & Sevens

[Phone rings in the palazzo, Maria in maid's costume with feather duster rushes from offstage to answer it. There are many blue vigil lights in the otherwise austere palazzo. There is also a fainting couch or bench, a folding screen, & a telephone. There can possibly be a white Christmas tree with white or blue Italian miniature lights to denote the season]

MARIA: Oh! The mistress not home yet and the palazzo at sixes and sevens. *[She answers the phone with a sultry growl]* Palazzo de Earnrighto... NO! The palazzo does not have a madam. Madam Earnrighto is not a madam. She's an entrepreneur'ò, *[louder]* Like a preneur'ò with an entre. This morning, Madam Entrepreneur'ò is at church mourning the death of her late husband Earnesto Earnrighto, also an entrepreneur'ò. My mistress? She has never been my mistress or anyone else's. She's a good Catholic widow and does not go mistressing about. She's in mourning, every day, for five years. She's been an entrepreneur'ò even longer than that, and she's never been a madam, or a mistress, mister. Never! Return? The madam, who's not a madam, returns at the same time every day after morning mass at St. Sebastian's. Never call the Palazzo de' Earnrighto again, if you know what's good for you or I'll have to make you an offer you can't refuse. Have a buono day'o... *[She hangs up]* The mistress not home yet and the palazzo at sixes and sevens. Where to begin? *[The doorbell rings, it is the DIES IRAE in chimes]* Just like clockwork.

[She goes to answer the door. The musician, still playing Dies Irae, Olivia, Mel Volio, Toby, & Frankie process into the palazzo, Mel Volio takes Olivia's coat, folds the parasol & starts to leave with them]

MEL: Madam, will you...

OLIVIA: I'm not a madam.

TOBY: Oh, she most certainly is not. Oh...

FRANKIE: She's not the concierge either. *[Mel stares]* Oh...

MEL: The lady of the house will have her cappuccino before correspondence?

FRANKIE: Cappucino?

MARIA: And antipasto.

TOBY: With mucho gustohhhhhh ...oh... [*as Mel gives the stare of death*]

OLIVIA: Please, bring me cappuccino, Mel ...

TOBY: Volino?

MEL: Your wish is my command, madam.

OLIVIA: I'm not a madam.

MEL: Yes, cousin. [*exits with the musician*]

MARIA: Distant cousin. Very distant cousin.

TOBY: The very distantest of cousins.

MARIA: And I am chopped calamari?

FRANKIE: We're all related in one way or another.

OLIVIA: We are all family here, and must get along, if you are to stay here in the Palazzo Earnrighto with me. We are in mourning still.

TOBY: For five years? I'm not anymore. I'm in celebration for my life.

OLIVIA: I am in mourning for my life.

FRANKIE: Here it comes.

MARIA: To Moscow, to Moscow, to Moscow....

FRANKIE: That's Russian, that's Russian, that's Russian...

OLIVIA: To Roma. To Roma. To Roma, then.

TOBY: Now that's Italian. [*He tries to dance with Olivia*] Come, sorella mine & dance your mourning away.

OLIVIA: If you weren't my only brother, I'd have thrown you out years ago.

TOBY: But I am, sis baby. And you never will.

OLIVIA: Your drunken behavior might make me.

TOBY: But what of it?

MARIA: He can only speak of butt.

TOBY: Yours? Yours, Maria, I will always speak of. *[He grabs Maria to dance]* Come dance with us. Frankie, you too. We will dance our morning away. *[Grabs Frankie to join, now all 4 are in a tight group, Toby is groping Maria's and Frankie's butts]* Who would have wanted it this way? Earnesto!

OLIVIA: Earnesto! My Earnesto. *[She starts to faint, she is taken to the fainting couch]*

MARIA: Oh, oh....

FRANKIE: Toby strikes again. Oh....

TOBY: *[Continues dancing]* I strike no one. I'm a lover, not a striker.

OLIVIA: You all have your jobs. Go do them.

MARIA: Toby doesn't have a job.

TOBY: My job is to love, love.

MARIA: Your job is to sleep it off.

TOBY: With you gladly...

MARIA: With me never... again.

OLIVIA: Don't be mean to Toby. He's my only brother. Take Toby to the terrace & ...

FRANKIE: Tart him up before he takes a tailspin on the terrazzo.

TOBY: *[A little dizzy from dancing]* Et tu Frankie? Is that terrazzo I see so distantly down there? I will go. But only if I am kissed. A kiss from sis?

OLIVIA: *[She kisses him]* What will we do with you?

TOBY: Make others kiss me. And I will go.

OLIVIA: You promise to go sleep it off if they kiss you?

TOBY: I promise.

OLIVIA: Maria, Frankie, kiss Toby.

FRANKIE: Must I?

OLIVIA: If you want to remain part of the family.

FRANKIE: *[He reluctantly kisses him on the forehead]* Ohhhccch....

OLIVIA: And Maria?

MARIA: Must I?

OLIVIA: You must. *[Maria approaches & kisses Toby gently on the lips]*

MARIA: In memory.

TOBY: A distant memory.

MARIA: I'd almost forgotten.

OLIVIA: I have my family back.

TOBY: Take me to the terrace and tart me up before I tumble to the terrazzo.

OLIVIA: Maria, you tart him on the terrace, I need my Frankie here.

TOBY: I am temporarily terrorized by the tarting on the terrace's terrazzo. Take me to the terrace. I tell you, take me to the terrace, oh take me to the terrace, *[She has led him off as he continues from offstage]* terrorize me into tumbling on the terrazzo.

OLIVIA: *[To Frankie]* Come sit with me.

FRANKIE: Melvin will bring your cappuccino soon.

OLIVIA: Talk with me until then.

FRANKIE: *[Coming to her & sitting]* Do your reading?

OLIVIA: Read my palm. You're best at that.

FRANKIE: Is that why you keep me here?

OLIVIA: Maybe. I am in mourning.

FRANKIE: It's about time, you started living again.

OLIVIA: I am still in mourning.

FRANKIE: This morning, yes, but this evening, it says right here *[has letter from his pocket that Cesario placed there in his hand but pointing to her hand]* you will meet a handsome, young stranger....

OLIVIA: How can I be sure he's not just after my money?

FRANKIE: The love line says it right here. It says it will be love. And it says sometime today. This morning most likely around 11am and then again tonight about 7pm.

OLIVIA: It says all that?