



SHINE

by Johnny Cohen

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Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL - AFTERNOON

REPORTAGE STYLE: WIDE - AS RAYS OF SUNLIGHT STREAM INTO THE AUSTERE SYMMETRY OF A SMALL STONE CHAPEL, A FIGURE IN A BLACK DRESS STANDS DEAD CENTER OF FRAME, IN REAR ANGLE, BETWEEN THE HIGHLY-POLISHED PEWS, IN FRONT OF AN OPEN CASKET. ALL THE WHILE, PLAINITIVE PIANO NOTES AWASH WITH REVERB BUILD GRADUALLY...DELIBERATELY TOWARDS "UPLIFTING".

FEMALE VOICE

(tentative, but sweet)

My name is Sylvia Georgette Bloom
from Pocatello Idaho... I've been
a mortuary cosmetologist for
going on 19 years now.

With a compact in one hand and a brush in the other, Sylvia adds touches of blush to the face of the casket's occupant - a man with a pronounced underbite - using two deft strokes, before tenderly smoothing his silver cowlick into place. Then, with the unaffected mannerism of an artist, she cocks her head slightly, half-closing one eye behind her thin, silver frames, to survey her handiwork. Strangely, despite the wire-rimmed spectacles, tight hair bun, origami-like collar and stilted narration, there is a peculiar intensity to her gaze: the unmistakable promise of something or someone entirely other, beneath the porcelain facade.

MONTAGE: OPENING "EMO PIANO" PLAYS THROUGHOUT

INT. MUSEUM OF CLEAN

SYLVIA (V.O.)

But when business is slow, I work
as a guide at Pocatello's very
own Museum of Clean.

Sylvia demonstrates one of the museum's prized artifacts - a Harvey antique vacuum cleaner - to a tidy throng of silhouetted visitors, with a grandiose wave of its hose.

INT. HERBERGER'S DEPARTMENT STORE

Sylvia browsing the cosmetic section - where she applies a dab of lipstick to the back of her hand with immense precision, comparing it to the shades drawn beneath it.

SYLVIA (V.O.)

Even though cosmetology gives me
the chance to express my
creativity, my one true passion..
is opera.

EXT. AUNT LORETTA'S FRONT PORCH - AFTERNOON

An attractive woman in her early seventies is seated on a porch swing, talking to camera with complete candor.

AUNT LORETTA

When my brother and his wife died in that Tilt-A-Whirl accident at the '76 State Fair, Sylvia went to live with her grandparents. Our father, of course, was the great baritone Alfonso Bellomo, or Alfonso Bloom as he came to be known in the United States...

SLOW ZOOM INTO A FADED PHOTOGRAPH OF A BEARDED HUNCHBACK ON STAGE, GESTURING EXPANSIVELY, WITH A SWORD ON HIS HIP.

AUNT LORETTA (CONT'D)

And so she grew up in a home where opera hung in the air as heavy as the smell of fettuccine puttanesca. But when you have your heart broken so often...when no one your age understands...
(choking up)
you kinda put your dreams on hold until one day...it's too late.

INT. SYLVIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Sylvia crouches with feline poise so she can show camera the aquarium in her modest living room, at eye level.

SYLVIA

The yellow one is Pappagena...the blue guy is Figaro... and this is Pagliacci, the clown fish.
(hoping the cameraman will "get" the joke)
Pagliacci...the **clown** fish?

EXT. LAKE SHORE

Sylvia looks out contemplatively over a glorious sunset, with a tiny white flower in her fingertips.

SYLVIA (V.O.)

When I sing, it's truly like nothing on earth. It's the only time I feel free. Really free.

WIDE. OPENING HER ARMS WIDE, IN A POSE REMINISCENT OF HER GRANDFATHER, A FLOCK OF BIRDS ON THE SHORE TAKES FLIGHT.

INT. FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL

Sylvia, bathed in a ray of light from one of the chapel's high windows, looks earnestly at camera with a shy smile.

SYLVIA

My name is Sylvia Georgette Bloom
and this is my time to shine.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO SET - "SHINE" AUDITIONS

Against a gleaming backdrop with the logo SHINE emblazoned across it, Sylvia steps hesitantly into frame. Although her attempt to bring some glamor to the occasion, by wearing an evening dress, has lent her an air of sophistication, the heels she is struggling to walk in are clearly beyond her life experience. And one look at the people across from her only seems to compound her awkwardness and unease.

Seated behind a long, white counter on the other side of the room are the reality show's three celebrity judges: a fifty-something rocker sporting dark glasses and a head scarf - JIMMY WELLS, a blinged-out, blue-haired Latina - TRIXXX and a surly, middle-aged British gent in a tight-fitting black T-shirt - TREVOR SLOANE.

JIMMY

Hey there...

TREVOR

(English accent)
You must be Sylvia.

SYLVIA

Yes.

TRIXXX

Love the heels, butterfly.

SYLVIA

Oh. Thank you.

TREVOR

So Sylvia...what are you going to
sing for us?

SYLVIA

I'll be performing the Habanera
from the opera Carmen.

Trevor shoots his fellow judges a highly sceptical look.

JIMMY

I thought the habanera was some
kind of chilli...

TRIXXX

That's a habanero, Jimmy. Such an idiot. Don't pay any attention to him, sugar. Show us your stuff.

Sylvia composes herself and breathes deeply as the familiar cello strokes of the Habanera begin. Two bars later, she closes her eyes with a tranquil grace and starts to sing...

SYLVIA

L'amour est un oiseau rebelle
Que nul ne peut apprivoiser,
Et c'est bien in vain qu'on
l'appelle
S'il lui convient de refuser....

Although Sylvia's timing is impeccable, her pitch is horrific. Awful beyond description. And yet, with all of her heart, every ounce of her passion, Sylvia plunges deeper and deeper into the aria with her eyes closed, as looks of growing mortification appear on the judges faces.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Rien n'y fait, menace ou prière.
L'un parle bien, l'autre se tait.
Et c'est l'autre que je préfère.
Il n'a rien dit mais il me plait.

When she gets to the chorus, Trevor can't take it any more.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

L'amour! L'am...

TREVOR

Sylvia! Stop! Please stop! I'm begging you.

Totally aghast, Sylvia stops suddenly and opens her eyes with a look of bewildered incredulity.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Is that what you call singing?

SYLVIA

(completely surprised)
Yes. Of course. Is there...a problem?

TREVOR

(about to explode)
Is there a PROBLEM?!

TRIXXX

(interjecting, in an attempt to spare her)
Girlfriend...you know I love you, but that was a little disappointing.

TREVOR
 DISAPPOINTING?! Trixxx! Is that
 honestly how you'd describe what
 we just heard? Jimmy!?

Jimmy just shrugs, at a total loss for words.

JIMMY
 I don't know what to say...

TREVOR
 I do. That, Sylvia...was without
 doubt the worst performance I
 have ever heard in nine seasons
 of this show. Congratulations!

She looks devastated. Deeply, mortally wounded.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
 I mean do you sing while you're
 at work? Because I can guarantee
 you that if you did, you might
 actually stand a chance of waking
 the dead!

Her eyes start to well with tears.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
 And you're the granddaughter of
 Alfonso Bloom for goodness sake!
 Clearly you got the shallow end
 of the gene pool. I wouldn't be
 surprised if old Alfonso just
 turned 180 degrees in his grave
 and put his fingers in his ears.

Then Sylvia snaps. With a lightning-fast bend of her knee,
 she lifts her right foot at an angle, whips off her shoe
 and hurls it full force at Trevor, so it connects **hard** with
 his forehead. And in a split second, his tirade becomes a
 howl of agony as he clutches his head with both hands.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
 Aaaaaaah!!!

CUT TO:

FULL FRAME BLACK, FOR THREE SECONDS, AS TREVOR'S SAMPLED
 SCREAM IS REPEATED IN SYNCOPATED STABS, LIKE A SONG INTRO,
 BEFORE THE SCREEN EXPLODES INTO LIFE: REVEALING SYLVIA
 DRAMATICALLY RESTYLED AS A DIVA WITH SERIOUS ATTITUDE, IN A
 GLOSSY MUSIC VIDEO. TRANSFORMED ALMOST BEYOND RECOGNITION,
 SHE PROWLs THE FRAME WITH A HITHERTO UNSEEN CONFIDENCE
 WHILE BELTING OUT A MARK RONSON-ESQUE MIX OF RETRO SOUL AND
 MODERN POP, THICK WITH AUTO-TUNE AND INTERSPERSED WITH
 JUDICIOUS, TIMELY BURSTS OF TREVOR SLOANE'S PAIN.

SYLVIA
 Don'tcha diss me or dismiss me
 SHOE-WAP! SHOE-WAP!

With a follow-me dance routine in the vein of Gangnam Style, Sylvia angles her leg on cue, whips off an invisible shoe and hurls it dramatically at camera where it "hits" the lens as a Roy Lichtenstein style graphic, with the title SHOE-WAP! While Trevor's scream kicks in on the beat.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
 Don't despise me, patronize me
 SHOE-WAP! SHOE-WAP!
 Thought you could make me hide in
 shame...but I promise you boy,
 you'll remember my name.

FREEZE FRAME. THEN ZOOM OUT TO REVEAL THE CLIP AS THE SIGNATURE IMAGE ON THE BACK WALL OF A TALK SHOW.

INT. STUDIO SET - "LIVEWIRE"

Across from the glamorous host of the show - ZOE BANKS - three people are seated in comfortable chairs: Sylvia, Trevor and a super cool African American dude - MC SQUARED.

ZOE
 So how does it feel to know that
 SHOE-WAP is the biggest song on
 the planet right now?

SYLVIA
 To be honest, I'm completely
 overwhelmed. I could never have
 dreamed, when I auditioned for
 Shine, that this would happen.
 It's just surreal. But I wouldn't
 be here if it wasn't for MC
 Squared and the incredible job he
 did producing the song.

MC SQUARED
 I was watching the show with my
 boys when Sylvia went postal. And
that sound...of her shoe making
 contact with Trevor's skull...
 those kinda samples don't come
 along every day. You know what
 I'm sayin'? It was like this
 perfect hybrid of a kick drum and
 a rim shot rolled into one. With
 Trevor's yell and the hook Sylvia
 wrote...I knew people wouldn't be
 able to get it outta their head.
 (to Trevor)
 No offense, man.

Trevor gives his best attempt at a good-natured smile, but the square indentation in his forehead is unmistakable.

TREVOR

None taken.

ZOE

Well I, for one, was glad to hear you dropped the law suit.

TREVOR

I suppose it turned out best for everyone at the end of the day. Sylvia became an overnight sensation, MC Squared produced another number one hit, and my record company got the benefit of both. My plastic surgeon also seems to have done rather well...

(feeling his forehead)

Apparently one more procedure and it should be "almost invisible".

He rolls his eyes with a what-can-you-do-about-it grin.

ZOE

(chuckling)

Well let's hope so. Thank you all for being here tonight. I can only imagine what a whirlwind this has been for you Sylvia...

INT. SYLVIA'S DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Sylvia takes a hurried step in, closes the door quickly behind her and exhales deeply. On her face, a mix of fatigue and excitement. This is actually happening. She's in her own dressing room, surrounded by bouquet upon bouquet of fresh flowers, cards and fan mail. Walking over to the bathroom, she unpins her hair and as the shower starts up, she steps casually into the dressing room again - lifting a bouquet of red roses so she can read the attached note. Lost in thought, she starts singing the Habanera to herself absentmindedly, acapella.

SYLVIA

L'amour est un oiseau rebelle
Que nul ne peut apprivoiser,
Et c'est bien in vain qu'on
l'appelle
S'il lui convient de refuser...

Remarkably, the voice that leaves her lips this time is breathtakingly beautiful: masterfully controlled, perfectly pitched, angelic. And having read the card, she gives a mischievous smile, strides back into the bathroom and swings the door shut, still singing the aria to perfection.