

Blood Type: RAGU

**BY
FRANK
INGRASCIOTTA**

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

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BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

*for Gaspare, Maria,
Phil, Jennie,*

and

Teresa

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

On casting:

Blood Type: RAGU was originally written as a solo play for one actor portraying multiple male and female roles. Alternatively, the play can be creatively reimagined as a multi-actor play and restaged by the director. Frank can be portrayed by a young and adult actor. The narrator's role shifts from the present action to Frank's inner dialogue. The internal narrator should be played by Frank. The present narrator can be portrayed by other actors and/or Frank. Due to the rapid scene transitions, the cast can be seated off the sides of the stage allowing them to make quick entrances and exits while using voice, body, and costume accessories to identify their character.

On set design:

The original off-Broadway production used a small table set downstage left, covered in a tablecloth displaying sunflowers. Video images (*Optional.*) set each scene. Lighting established mood and transition scenes. With the exception of a chair, the use of set pieces were imagined and mimed by the actor. One lightweight vintage cushioned metal kitchen chair was used and moved throughout each scene by Frank. Symbolically, the chair represents the weight of his mother Maria's influence on him, releasing and setting it free after a confrontation with her.

On music and sound effects:

Sound effects were used to create mood and allow the audience to experience the story viscerally. The songs used in the original production can be altered and reimagined due to copyrights. Some songs played for a few bars to introduce a scene did not require copyright clearance.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

On the text:

An effort should be made to authentically pronounce the Italian and Sicilian dialect words, phrases, and accents for Frank's parents and other Italian characters. If the character is not translating a phrase in their dialogue, the translation is provided in brackets after the phrase. A glossary of translations is also provided.

On presenting *Blood Type: RAGU*:

Blood Type: RAGU is a humorous and heart-rending coming-of-age story, a rollercoaster ride of push-pull emotions and should be portrayed with honesty, avoiding stereotypes. There should be an awareness of how time progresses from the 1960s to the 1990s and how the culture and environment evolves with the times.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU was produced by Andrew Levine at the Actors Playhouse, in New York City, opening on March 5, 2009. It was directed by Ted Sod; associate producer Mark Monchek; press representative David Gersten and Associates; scenic design was by John McDermott; lighting design was by Josh Bradford; projection design was by Joshua Higgason; sound design was by Brandon Wolcott; and the production stage manager was Katherine Wallace. The cast was as follows:

All characters. Frank Ingrasciotta

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU received a world premiere production at the Belmont Playhouse, in New York City, opening on January 8, 2000. It was directed by Dante Albertie; scenic and lighting design was by Beowulf Boritt; sound designer and production stage manager was Hector Olivieri. The cast was as follows:

All characters. Frank Ingrasciotta

Over 1,200 performances of BLOOD TYPE: RAGU toured theatres and festivals nationally and internationally.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

CHARACTERS

FRANK, (spans from ages 7-35)
NARRATOR, (present and internal)
MARIA, his mom (spans from ages 30-60)
GASPARE, his dad (spans from ages 30-60)
PHIL, his brother (spans from ages 15-40)
JENNIE, his sister (spans from ages 10-25)
THE RAGING SPINSTER, a neighbor
MRS. CAMARATA WITH HER LEGS SPREAD OPEN, a neighbor
MILK VENDOR
FRUIT VENDOR
EGG VENDOR
ZIA BETTINA, his aunt (spans from ages 30-60)
ZIO GAETANO, his uncle (spans from ages 30-60)
NONNA CATERINA, his maternal grandmother (60s)
NONNO FILIPPO, his paternal grandfather (60s)
NONNA GIOVANNA, his paternal grandmother (60s)
MARIA, his cousin (12)
TOWNSPEOPLE
SIGNORA PAULINA, a soothsayer (70s)
HERBY, Frank's friend
SEDUCTIVE WOMAN at the Disco
SEDUCTIVE MAN at the Disco
MADAM, at the Brothel
MINDY JO, brothel whore
SARA JO, brothel whore
DODY JO, brothel whore
MARY, brothel whore
COUNTY SHERIFF
CABBIE
NANCY, Gaspare's girlfriend (late 50s)
TERESA, Frank's wife

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

SETTING

Time: 1966 to 1995.

Place: Brooklyn, New York / Sicily / Brooklyn / Las Vegas, Nevada /
Brooklyn, and Sicily.

SCENE 1: Family living room, Ridgewood, Brooklyn, 1966.

SCENE 2: Front porch – family house.

SCENE 3: Backyard – family house.

SCENE 4: Family living room.

SCENE 5: Airport, Palermo, Sicily, 1966.

SCENE 6: Nonna Caterina's house – (Frank's maternal grandmother.)

SCENE 7: Nonno Filippo's house – (Frank's paternal grandfather.)

SCENE 8: Cow stall.

SCENE 9: Nonna Caterina's house.

SCENE 10: A street in Mazara del Vallo, Sicily.

SCENE 11: Nonno Filippo's house (Frank's paternal grandfather.)

SCENE 12: Outdoor dirt road to cemetery.

SCENE 13: Inside a Catholic church.

SCENE 14: Cemetery grave site.

SCENE 15: Outdoors – large sunflower field.

SCENE 16: Signora Paulina's house.

SCENE 17: Palermo Airport runway.

SCENE 18: Family kitchen, Ridgewood, Brooklyn, 1979.

SCENE 19: A disco, Brooklyn, 1980.

SCENE 20: Family living room.

SCENE 21: A desert road to Pahrump, Nevada, 1981.

SCENE 22: The Chicken Ranch.

SCENE 23: Mary's bedroom

SCENE 24: Family Home, Ridgewood, Brooklyn, 1982.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

- SCENE 25: U-Haul Truck, Ridgewood, Brooklyn.
SCENE 26: Family living room, Ridgewood, Brooklyn.
SCENE 27: Inside a car in front of the family home.
SCENE 28: Nancy's apartment, Ridgewood, Brooklyn.
SCENE 29: Restaurant, Ridgewood, Brooklyn.
SCENE 30: Nancy apartment interior, Ridgewood, Brooklyn.
SCENE 31: Funeral home interior.
SCENE 32: Family living room, Ridgewood, Brooklyn.
SCENE 33: Social Security office, 1993.
SCENE 34: New York City Park.
SCENE 35: Mom's apartment, Ridgewood, Brooklyn.
SCENE 36: City street, Mazara del Vallo, Sicily, 1995.
SCENE 37: Zia Bettina's house.
SCENE 38: Outdoors – large sunflower field.

Blood Type: RAGU

SCENE 1

THE FAMILY HOME, BROOKLYN, 1966

SFX: Song - Al Di La. Music swirls as lights rise on MARIA sitting at her imaginary sewing machine. She places a pair of imaginary eyeglasses on her face happily sewing and singing along to the radio. She realizes her son FRANK is not home from school. MARIA turns off the radio. SFX: Radio Knob Click. Music out. She rises opening an imaginary window in front of her.

MOM. *(She has a thick Italian accent.)* Frenghie! Frenghinè! Frenghinello! *[Pronounced Fren - with a hard g - ee]* Ah Frenghinello, bello dello mi cuore, campa tu e cu muore, muore!

NARRATOR. *(To the audience.)* Translated – Oh little Frenghinello, beautiful in my heart, you live on, and whoever dies, dies! That was my mother's term of endearment everyday as I came home from school. *(Showing a large framed vintage family photo. Can also be projected on stage for audience to view.)* Here she is standing strong, proud, protective of her brood, her arms holding the shoulders of my brother Phil and sister Jennie, and their arms holding my shoulders, and me, not having anything to hold on to, I'm holding on to my penis, looking up to my mom. Well, I had to hold on to something because I was in for the ride of my life. My story begins at the age of 7 in this house right here in Ridgewood, Brooklyn, 1406 Willoughby Avenue. I'd come home every day from school and greet my mom with a kiss, as she'd be preparing our last supper of the day. *(Photo fades.)* Food preparation was the umbilical cord to my cultural past: First, you must take a

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

bunch of ancestral roots from Mazara del Vallo, Sicily, and let them flower. Let the families arrange to marry the seed of 1 Gaspare Ingrasciotta to the egg of 1 Maria Ballatore. Cut the roots from their stems to escape the World War II depression and marinate in trans-Atlantic waters for 15 days. Place them in a 1949 New York melting pot and add 1 box of American Cultural Mix. Beat the 2 cultures together, adding sacrifice and hard work over the peasant stock. *(Sniff aroma.)* Reduce the mixture into a 1 family home. Then as a preservative, wrap the entire living room in 1 big plastic slipcover, and rope off to use for special occasions only. Then ladle the rest of the family in a dungeon, known as the basement. Spice with zest of baroque, and season to taste. This recipe serves 2 parents, 1 brother, 1 sister and me.

MARIA. *(She returns to sewing at her machine.)* Ah, Frenghinè, when you were born, you ripped me in half. It took 3 doctors to sew me shut, the stitches got infected. Ah, a mother suffers for her chulli. *[Children – Broken English]*. But it's nothing, because you my son, my life... *(Proudly.)* my husband.

FRANK. *(Happy to be important to his mom.)* Ooo, a husband! *(Trying to understand meaning.)* Ma, what's a husband?

MARIA. *(Quickly changes the subject.)* Ah, Frenghinè, no just stand there like a long piece of coguzza *[Squash.]* Get me la scula pasta. *[Colander.]*

NARRATOR. *(Rises in awe, acting out the world of his mother's kitchen.)* Throughout her culinary kingdom, all her implements were mummified in hand knitted dust protectors. I smell garlic roasting in olive oil, hear sounds of water straining pasta, see her hands stuffing and breading. Her wooden *cucchiaio di legno [Wooden spoon.]* that stirred her pasta had never worn. Her "steeless stain" pots and pans, as she called them, were bought in the 1950's by collecting coupons off Progresso cans, they had never suffered a scratch or stain in 40 years.

MARIA. *(Miming putting on her apron then demonstrating how she washes her dishes.)* Ah, Frenghinè, you mommi knows to keepa the pots looki new, I wipe the grease while the catsarola *[Pot.]* still hot. I soak in Palmalivo soap,

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

the best! Like my hands? (*Displays them with pride.*) Good ah? Young? What you think I'm some kind of porca femina Americanizzata? [*An Americanized pig woman.*] (*Proud.*) I'm a femina Siciliana. [*A Sicilian woman.*] These hands take care of 2 parents, 5 brothers, 1 husband and 3 chulli.

FRANK. Ma, can we go out to eat tonight?

MARIA. Mangiare fuori! Eat out! Atsa matta, [*What's the matter? – Broken English*] my food no good enough for you? Not even if I were left dead in the middle of the street for dog's lunch, would I throw money away like that! When I cook, I know what I eat!

NARRATOR. She took pride in every plate and fork used for every meal, everyday.

MARIA. (*Proudly displaying her imaginary food.*) Ah, Frenghinè, for dinner tonight we got pasta fazool [*Pasta with beans.*] or milingiana fritta. [*Fried Eggplant.*]

FRANK. Ooo, I'll have some milingiana!

MARIA. OK, you wanna eat from the red plates you father got when he work in ristorante, or the gold ones I got on sale 10 years ago on Orcine Street? [*Orchard Street – Broken English.*]

FRANK. I don't care ma, the red ones are fine...

MARIA. OK, you wanna the forks you won at the church bazaar or the steeless staine ones I got allu cheap storu? [*the cheap store – Broken English.*]

FRANK. (*Puzzled as to why he's being asked so many questions.*) I, I guess the ones I won at the church bazaar.

MARIA. OK, you wanna the glass with Fred Flintstone or the one with Barney Rubbile?

FRANK. (*Frustrated.*) I just want to eat! Can I just eat?

MARIA. (*Gives a stern look.*) Ah, ah, ah, the day I die, figghliu bedru, [*My beautiful son.*] then you realize all I do for you, you gonna cry for this Mamma.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

NARRATOR. *(To the audience.)* Every night, in front of the TV, her old-world superstitions clashed with these new world ideas, creating mutant perceptions that became the teachings of my life.

MARIA. *(Sits down to teach FRANK a lesson according to her old-world beliefs.)* Frenghinè, watch where you go, what you eat, what you drink. Last night I watch *Bewitched* on TV. Someone put a drogga [*Drug.*] in a man's drink to make him dance funny. No trust nobody... especially you friends. *(She stirs bowl of ricotta.)* Ah, Frenghinè, I know these things. *(She spoon feeds FRANK.)* One day, one day mommi, you are going to make a girl very happy. Not like you disgraziato [*Disgraceful.*] father! *(Beat, taking FRANK in.)* Who do you like better you father or me? *(Flashes a smile.)*

FRANK. *(Confused, not knowing how to answer.)* You ma?

MARIA. I LOVI YOU! Here have more ricotta. *(Spoon feeds FRANK.)* Mm, gooda, ah? *(Licks the spoon she fed him with.)* Eh, my fatha say to me, "marry him, he's a good man, he'll give you a plate of pasta on the table every night"... and that's all I got, a plate of pasta on the table every night! But you, my little Frenghinè, no do like me, take time to get to know her, but no marry an American women. *(Making the sign of the cross.)* You be eating spaghetti out of a can for the rest of you life! God forbid! *(SFX: Door Opening.)* *(MARIA looks towards the front door then back to FRANK.)* Shh, e' l'uomo cane con la cuda di ferro!

NARRATOR. *(To the audience.)* It's the dog man with a tail of iron. Also known as – my father coming home from work. My mother called him that because he was born with a slightly extended tailbone that was removed at birth. She tolerates his kiss. After his daily shower, I respond to the call of the wild.

GASPARE. *(He removes his shoes, grabs a chair, turns it backward, and sits tired.)* *(He has a thick Italian accent.)* Frenghie, viene ca! [*Come here.*] Rub my back, Frenghie, I work like a sweated mule 9 days a week, 60 hours a day to carry 100-pound bags of cement on my back in this America.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

NARRATOR. It was respect under duress. (*FRANK rubs GASPARE's back.*) Touching him was like rubbing cold marble. He was a mosaic terrazzo construction worker who laid those mosaic chips you walk over in building lobbies and subway stations. (*Displays fingers.*) His fingers each held the thickness of sausages you buy at the Italian feast. When they branded my ass, they sizzled like a grill. Shh, be very quiet, the dog man takes a nap before dinner. (*GASPARE turns chair forward, sits, and begins snoring. SFX: Bug's Bunny Looney Tunes Theme. He wakes up hearing the TV.*)

GASPARE. Pezzu di laniusu, you piece of lazy thing, shut off that Bugs Bunny before I shut off you eyesight! (*FRANK quickly motions to turn off the TV. SFX: Radio Knob Click. GASPARE puts his shoes on.*)

NARRATOR. Our meals revolved around my father's hunger, and like an intravenous bottle, my mother was the direct link to his nourishment. And the mass begins: (*SFX: Dinner Bell.*) (*Each character mentioned is acted out as part of the sign of the cross.*) I am seated at the right hand of the father with the Madonna directly across from me, the Apostles, my brother Phil, and sister Jennie, on each side. The perfectly set table becomes a symbol of holy communion, covered by a hand embroidered cloth made by the Holy Mother. Her conveyer belt arms transport our nourishment from the kitchen directly to our plates. (*Places hands in prayer position.*) They were the gold ones bought 10 years ago on Orcine Street. My father breaks the Eucharist.

GASPARE. (*Noticing his bread on the table.*) WHORE FROM HELL! I told you all cinquantamila (*50 thousand.*) times, you no put Italian bread upside down on the table.

NARRATOR. It was sacrilegious for him to see his symbol of life desecrated.

GASPARE. (*Mimes tasting bread.*) Poo, this pane [*Bread.*] taste like the culo of a porcupine! (*Looks to FRANK.*) She's no from Knickerbocker Bakery.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

FRANK. *(Thinking to himself.)* Danger Frenghinè! Danger Frenghinè!
Danger Frenghinè!

NARRATOR. If my father's bread wasn't fresh no one could start eating. It was my daily chore to bike a mile everyday to buy it at his favorite bread shop on Knickerbocker Avenue. This day I got caught up playing football.

FRANK. *(Thinking to himself.)* Oh Lord, help me to say the words so I shall be healed. *(To GASPARE.)* Da, I, I... got a flat tire on my bicycle, and... I, I didn't want to be late for dinner. So, I bought your bread at the corner store, because I really wanted you to have your bread. *(GASPARE slaps FRANK up against his forehead.)* Ow!

GASPARE. Sheku! *[Jackass.]* Just in case you lie. When I was young, I walk with no shoes everyday to buy my padre fresh pane. The heat from the ovens made my blood sweat while I waited on long lines. You have it too good in this America!

FRANK. *(To the audience. Arms out as if crucified.)* This is my body, which will be given up for you.

NARRATOR. And then the “liturgy” would begin with pasta – on Sundays it showed its best, on Saturdays it was its day of rest. *(Motions giving the communion host out to the audience from a chalice for each food mentioned.)* Manicotti, cannelloni, fettuccine, linguini, macaroni, rigatoni, fusilli, tortellini. *(Motions showering a holy water blessing using an imaginary aspergillum for each food mentioned.)* Con ragu, alla marinara, semplice, al dente, con alglio, con olio, con pesce e piselli. But wait, more is coming from the assembly line: *(Motions swinging an imaginary thurible on chains as if to spread incense for each food mentioned.)* Meatballs, sausage, eggplant, prosciutt, vegetables, salad, Italian bread, fruit. And that’s just the appetizer! *[Motions making a cross sign with his index and middle finger.]* A dinner conversation from the Gospel, according to my father Gaspare.

FRANK. *(Tentative.)* Da, can I have a new bicycle for Christmas?

GASPARE. A new bicycle, ah? Va prendella alla casa della Madonna.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

NARRATOR. Translated, it waits for you at the House of the Virgin Mary. Well, anything that wasn't food or clothing was considered frivolous. So, in my young Catholic mind, (*Looks up as if he's having a lightbulb moment.*) I conjured these fantasies of one day finding this "House of the Virgin Mary" to collect the toys she'd been holding for me.

FRANK. (*Waves to the Virgin Mary up in heaven.*) (*An image of the Virgin Mary can also be projected.*) Hey Virgin Mary, how ya doin'?

GASPARE. Phili, come to eat! The pasta is getting cold.

NARRATOR. Now, my older teenage brother Phil was always conjuring up these get rich quick schemes to make a million dollars before he was 21. This time he got this idea to sell through mail order, a pocket mace spray as a mugger deterrent for women. The anxiously awaited product arrives and he's checking it out. He finally comes to the table.

GASPARE. Phili, no make me wait for my dinner! When I call you to this table, you come! (*GASPARE slurps his pasta.*) Jinni, passa the insalta [*Salad.*] (*He releases a muted cough.*) please...

FRANK. Ma, can I have some more (*FRANK releases a muted cough.*) beans?

MARIA. Here, figghiu bedru, [*My beautiful son.*] (*MARIA releases a muted cough.*) they good for you... but what's with us tonight? Something must be in the air... Oh my ga! (*Everyone at the table begins coughing uncontrollably.*)

NARRATOR. Suddenly the table becomes a riot scene of hacking, eye tearing and the clutching of throats. (*GASPARE scans a look first to JENNIE, then to FRANK.*) My father's "someone-has-wronged-me inner Sicilian radar" scans the room. (*A pointed look lands on PHIL.*) Without needing to know why, it locks on Phil.

PHIL. I didn't do it dad, I just sprayed a little in the basement to see if the nozzle worked!

GASPARE. Ta mazzu! Testa di cazzu! [*I'll kill you! Dickhead!*] (*PHIL runs out the front door.*)

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

FRANK. *(Thinking to himself.)* Dead brother walking! Dead brother walking!

NARRATOR. Phil makes a run as my father slides to catch him, his sausage fingers cup his ass, but it's a swing and a miss. He's walked. A Phil shaped hole is all that remains of the door. My mother shouts:

MARIA. Run out to the porch! *(Everyone runs out of the house.)*

SCENE 2 FRONT PORCH OF FAMILY HOME

NARRATOR. We're gasping for oxygen as neighbors flock from their homes for free tickets to the show. *(FRANK bows, SFX: Cymbal Crash.)* Now, I never knew any of my neighbor's real names because my mother had nicknamed everyone by their most outstanding feature or characteristic. *(Acting out each character. If not a solo performance, multiple actors can portray each neighbor.)* So out comes “La Judah” – The Jew, a very attached old Jewish couple. Whether together or alone, my mother labeled them just – the Jew. Also making a rare appearance was a milky-skinned vampira you'd see once a month through the crack of her door to shake out her dust rag. She was marked “La Morte Passione” – The Passionate Dead Woman. Followed by her husband, a Quasi Modo-like man with a protruding under bite and a fur coat growing from his back. He was tagged “Il Gobo di Lana” – The Woolly Hunchback. Already on her porch, was my friend Joey's mom in house coat, pink curlers, stockings rolled down to her knees, *(Sits with his legs spread open as if he were in a rocking chair.)* sitting in her favorite spread leg position, facing her lawn statue of the Virgin Mary. My mother, under her breath would say:

MARIA. “Vergogna! Shame on you, that the Madonna has to view, that!”

NARRATOR. She was branded “La Camarata Con Le Goche Aparte” – Mrs. Camarata With Her Legs Spread Open. And finally, there was my mother's

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

nemesis, “La Sketa Raggiata” – The Raging Spinster, who, every night through her window, you’d hear:

THE RAGING SPINSTER. *(With Italian accent.)* Ta dato tutta la mia vita. I gave you my whole life Ma, when are ya gonna die and leave me in peace!

NARRATOR. And one night her wish finally came true.

THE RAGING SPINSTER. Un morire, Ma, please don’t die!”

NARRATOR. To which my mother replies...

MARIA. ...but is she ever happy.

NARRATOR. So here we are on our porch, my father is chasing my brother down the street, as my sister is heaving, and my mother turns to her cast of characters.

MARIA. Whoever put this curse on us, God will think of them 3 times a day!

NARRATOR. Now the neighbor who relished our choking spectacle the most was The Raging Spinster. My mother was convinced she had the hots for my father by the way she greeted him when he was gardening.

SCENE 3 BACKYARD OF FAMILY HOME

THE RAGING SPINSTER. *(Flirting.)* Ciao, Gaspare come stai? *(She puffs a cigarette seductively blowing out smoke. She pushes her breasts forwards as she gently places her hand under the left one to push it up, she then licks her lips.)*

NARRATOR. My mother takes it in.

MARIA. You ugly, like hunger!

NARRATOR. Now La Sketa’s backyard was attached to ours, and between our yards, was a patch of property. For years there was a feud as to who’s property it was. My mother had planted some coguzza [*Squash.*] there. One day my mother sees La Sketa toiling in the patch.

MARIA. Oh my ga! Get the hell off my properti!

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

THE RAGING SPINSTER. You property? She's my property.

MARIA. Hee, look, look what you do, you kill my coguzza!

THE RAGING SPINSTER. What coguzza Maria? This is where I put my clothesline pole.

MARIA. Oh yeah, and what do you hang there, your culo grande [*Big ass.*] you show my husband everyday? Get the hell off my properti!

THE RAGING SPINSTER. How dare you, brutta femmina! [*Ugly woman.*] I hear you husband yell all day, maybe because you no make him happy. Ah?

MARIA. Go back to you house and be La Sketa Raggiata that you are!

NARRATOR. In a deliberate but demure pose, La Sketa starts romping and stomping on the coguzza.

THE RAGING SPINSTER. (*Stomping.*) There, there, that's what I think of you coguzza!

MARIA. Hee! My coguzza! Pezza di zocolla senza marito! You piece of whore without a husband!

NARRATOR. My mother grabs her garden hose.

MARIA. Get the hella off my properti, you polio-stricken Sketa!

NARRATOR. Like a 60's riot clip from the eleven 'o clock news, she starts hosing her down.

THE RAGING SPINSTER. Iyy! Fa freddo! Figlia di puttana! [*It's cold, you daughter of a whore.*] Iyy!

NARRATOR. Her auburn beehive hairdo deflates to its black roots. (*Yanks the coguzza from the dirt.*) In retaliation, La Sketa pulls up a long coguzza and throws it at my mother like a quarterback.

THE RAGING SPINSTER. (*Throws coguzza at MARIA.*) Die, you woman who doesn't know how to treat a husband, die!

NARRATOR. Hearing all the commotion, La Camarata with her legs spread open appears. (*Sitting spread legged rocking herself while using her hands as a fan to cool off the heat between her legs.*)

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

MRS. CAMARATA. *(With a Brooklyn accent.)* Aw, Signora, [*Lady.*] what you do? You adults, no children. Behave yourselves.

NARRATOR. To which my mother says:

MARIA. Oh, go spread your legs in front of the Madonna!

NARRATOR: To which La Sketa echoes:

THE RAGING SPINSTER. Yeah Maria, for once, and only once, I think you right, *(Turns to MRS. CAMARATA.)* you think the Madonna likes to view you breadbasket all day. Ah?

MRS. CAMARATA. How dare you both insult me! Me?

NARRATOR. In a feminine Sicilian fury her beehive starts spinning as the queen bee plans her attack.

MRS. CAMARATA. Tapanare, [*Whores.*] the both of you!

NARRATOR. With her bare hands she yanks a whole rose bush from La Sketa's garden.

MRS. CAMARATA. *(Yanks an imaginary rose bush from the dirt and throws it at them both.)* Here! Take that!

NARRATOR. All hell is breaks out. My mother is now hosing them both down. La Sketa Raggiata is hauling coguzza at La Camarata, and La Camarata, bending in her spread leg fashion, *(Squats down to a standing spread leg pose and starts yanking.)* is yanking every flower from La Sketa's garden.

MRS. CAMARATA. *(Throwing.)* This is for you, and this is for you!

NARRATOR. *(Sitting down observing.)* I watch the three graces through the kitchen window.

FRANK. *(While sitting FRANK dodges roses thrown in his direction.)* Oh! Oh! *(Observes the action with his hands over his face and two fingers open for one eye to view.)* What do I do? Should I call the police? I didn't want to get anybody in trouble, especially since my mom had hosed them down first.

NARRATOR. Well, when there was nothing left to pull, yank, or throw, my mother retreats indoors like a defeated Anna Magnani.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

SCENE 4
FAMILY LIVING ROOM

MARIA. (*Sitting.*) Ma Gaspare, there's no one here to help me. No one has respect in this America! I sew clothes, cook meals, do cleaning, stretch dollars. I keep the house looki perfect so family no talk behind our backs. I no can live here no more!

GASPARE. Eh, that's you job, like mine is to work like a sweated mule to put food on the table. What do you want from me and this America Schifozsa? [*Disgusting.*] C'mon Frenghie, let's go out to the park.

MARIA. No Frenghinè, you want to walk alongside a malignant shadow?

GASPARE. You say things like that to my son about me?

MARIA. Yeah, why? Are they no true?

GASPARE. Disgraziata! [*Wretched.*] (*GASPARE slaps her face.*)

FRANK. (*FRANK holds on to the back of GASPARE's belt to stop him. Barely able to speak.*) Dad, you leave her alone!

GASPARE. (*GASPARE pushes FRANK away.*) I no hear you little schippiune, [*Spider.*] go dance with you matha. You two deserve each other. OK, Maria, four and four make eight, later we add it up, now I go to the park to play bocce.

MARIA. Oh yeah, and I go have a nervous breakdown.

NARRATOR. (*Looking to GASPARE.*) I never wanted to be like him, but I didn't know what to be. (*Looking to MARIA.*) So I fine tuned myself into my mother's every thought and feeling. One day I came home from school to find that she tried to hang herself.

FRANK. Ma, what happened, please don't cry, did I do something wrong? I love you!

MARIA. I wasn't like this yesterday. I try to hang myself, but the rope broke, so God no want me yet. I go to no head doctor, for what, to make people laugh. Never miné, they talk to you while they suck the money outta you

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

pockets. God forbid! So, I go to Sicilia. The native air will be good for me. We no can afford to take Phil or Jinni, and you fatha, ah, he has to work, but you, you come with mommi my little Frenghinè, and whoever dies, dies!

(SFX: Plane Departing fading to SFX: Sicilian Mandolin entrance music.)

SCENE 5 **AIRPORT, PALERMO, SICILY, 1966**

NARRATOR. So in June of 1966, at the age of seven, we arrive to my parent's hometown of Mazara del Vallo, Sicily. We step off the plane. *(Steps back. Amazed.)* Suddenly, all these aunts and uncles I had never met before, come charging at us, as if we were the Madonna and child on a comeback concert tour after a 2,000-year absence. From the crowd of Aunts, my father's sister Zia Bettina appears. *(All characters in Sicily, except for FRANK, speak in Italian accents.)*

ZIA BETTINA. *(Pinching FRANK's cheek.)* Biii! Che fatto grande lu carruzu! Look how big he got! Come to our house for breakfast! We haven't seen you in twenty years so now we want to sew you into our skin and wear you as a blouse!

NARRATOR. From the maze of uncles, my father's brother Zio Gaetano presents himself.

ZIO GAETANO. Ayyy, Madonna mia, e` so padre scorciatu! Someone scraped off his father's face and pasted it on his! Come to our house for lunch. An ocean separated us, so now we want to drain you of your blood and drink you alive for wine!

ZIA BETTINA. *(Tugs FRANK's left arm in one direction.)* Come to our house to eat!

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

ZIO GAETANO. (*Tugs FRANK's right arm in the other direction.*) No, to our house to eat!

FRANK. I am in a land of no television, no Etch-a-Sketch, no BOUNDARIES? (*FRANK breaks away.*) Leave me alone!

NARRATOR. We board at my maternal Nonna [*Grandmother.*] Caterina's house.

SCENE 6

NONNA CATERINA'S HOUSE

- (*FRANK's Maternal Grandmother.*)

NARRATOR: At 5:30 AM:

MILK VENDOR: [*VENDORS can be played by actors or a pre-recorded voice over that FRANK reacts to.*] (*Singing the word.*) Latte! [*Milk.*]

FRANK. (*FRANK yawns while opening an imaginary window to see what the commotion is about.*) Cries a peddler with kettles clanging off his bicycle.

NONNA CATERINA. (*Scurries out with a limp.*) Bedra Madre, lu latte! [*Good Mother! The milk!*]

FRANK. My Nonna bolts through the unpaved streets beating a line of other ladies, all holding bottles to be filled with the raw milk of farm cows. At 6:00 AM:

FRUIT VENDOR. (*Singing the words.*) Frutta Fresca! [*Fresh Fruit!*]

NONNA CATERINA. (*Scurries with a limp to the other side of the stage.*) Maria Santissima, la frutta! [*Oh sainted mother! The fruit!*]

FRANK. Nonna grabs her wicker basket, and darts out to buy fresh fruit. At 6:30 AM:

EGG VENDOR. (*Singing the words.*) L'uove Fresche! [*Fresh eggs.*]

NONNA CATERINA. (*Scurries with a limp to the other side of the stage.*) Oh Dio mio, ora l'uove. [*Oh my God, now it's the eggs.*]

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

NARRATOR. Nonna makes a mad dash for fresh eggs.

NONNA CATERINA. (*NONNA CATERINA performs a slow-motion run to be first in line to buy her eggs as she extends the word 'No.'*) Noooo! (*She arrives to the line declaring.*) I was here first!

NARRATOR. At 7:00 AM I realize... there must be no Kroger Supermarket here!

NONNA CATERINA. I only have this grandson here for four months, he gets the best.

NARRATOR. (*Acting out every action.*) I rise to see my mom and nonna preparing a bounty of fresh foods that will be eaten that day. There's no refrigeration and only one water pump in the barnstall. I use pails of water to flush the toilet, wash my face in a pitcher and bowl and bathe myself in a tub in the middle of the kitchen. As I drink the freshest milk I've ever tasted, I see my mom and nonna sharing stories and laughing. I had never seen her so – happy.

MARIA. Frenghinè, hurry up and finish your breakfast, we have to visit your sick Nonno Filippo.

SCENE 7

NONNO FILIPPO'S HOUSE

- (*FRANK's Paternal Grandfather.*)

NARRATOR. I'm taken to this room where I see my father's father lying, with rosary in hand and strings of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits.

NONNO FILIPPO. (*NONNO FILIPPO is sitting in a chair slack-jawed straining to recognize who is staring at him. He realizes who it is after all these years. With a muttering voice he attempts to speak.*) OO AA OO lu nipote, mi fa piacere verderti dopo tutto questo tempo... [*My grandson, it*

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

brings me great pleasure to see you after all this time.] (Every time NONNO FILIPPO attempts to speak, he goes into a coughing fit buttoned by a gag, spitting in FRANK's eye.)

FRANK. *(Wiping his eye.)* Uhh, his mouth smells like rotten eggs.
(Whispering.) Ma, what's he saying?

MOM. He's saying he's pleased to meet you but wishes your father were here.

FRANK. You got all that, from that.

NARRATOR. My father was the oldest of 2 brothers and 2 sisters. Zio Gaetano, never married and still lived at home. Though he was an adult and owned his own villa, a Sicilian would never think to live alone unmarried if his parents were still alive. He was a simple man who farmed cows and took pride in sharing his produce with everyone.

ZIO GAETANO. Domani mattina andiamo a prendere la ricotta. Tomorrow morning we go to make my fresh ricotta!

NARRATOR. Wow, I loved ricotta, my mother would serve it to me sprinkled with powdered sugar between two slices of bread.

SCENE 8

ZIO GAETANO's COW STALL

NARRATOR. So he takes us through this open field of... *(SFX: Cow Mooing.) (As we hear a cow mooing FRANK steps in it then pulls up his foot to look.)* Yuck! Fly-coated cow dung. We enter a dark stall. My throat starts closing from a smoky fire shooting sparks under a huge cauldron. I see Zio, stirring these white solids from liquids with flies dancing around it. With a proud smile, he pours me a hot bowl over day old bread.

ZIO GAETANO. *(Speaks with a gravel voice. Proudly smiling as he happily displays his concoction.)* Mangia la ricotta, lu nipote, è speciale! *[Eat the*

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

ricotta my nephew, it's special.] (FRANK is hesitant but decides to taste to not insult his Zio.)

FRANK. OK. *(As he swallows, his face crinkles trying not to gag.)*

NARRATOR. Uhh, it tastes like sour milk! This was not the supermarket Polly-O I knew! *(FRANK observes MARIA licking her fingers after trying it.)* My mother is eating it like candy. Zio is smiling motioning to take more.

ZIO GAETANO: Ayy! Buono ah? Squisito ah? Ancora! *[Its good, right? Tasty, right? More?]*

FRANK: No! Zio, I had enough!

ZIO GAETANO: Ancora! *[Take more.]*

FRANK: No! Zio, please!

NARRATOR. *(FRANK tries to hold back his gagging. He then throws it up.)* I hurl the ricotta all over him, now twice curdled.

ZIO GAETANO. *(Observing FRANK's vomit on his shirt. He mutters.)* Chi fasciste? Mi mazzaste? *[Look what you did? You killed me!]*

NARRATOR. Mortified, I run out of the stall avoiding him for the rest of the trip.

SCENE 9

NONNA CATERINA'S HOUSE

NARRATOR. That evening, just when I was about to take a bite from all the delicious foods my Nonna had prepared for me that day... *(SFX: Hard Door Knock.)*

COUSIN MARIA. Zia Maria, viene subito! Nonno e' morto! *[AUNT MARIA, come quickly, NONNO has died.]* Acting as town crier, my 8 year-old cousin Maria, announces my Nonno Filippo has suddenly died.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

SCENE 10

A STREET IN MAZARA DEL VALLO, SICILY

NARRATOR. (*Acts out the scene.*) My mother spins herself into her Samantha Stephens black regalia, scooping me up, and as we fly through the dark streets of town. Smells of ragu cooking on wood burning stoves drift out of every window. We arrive to an open door and walk through a red beaded curtain shimmering the inside light. The hammering of each bead is deafening as we enter an apprehensive stillness.

SCENE 11

NONNO FILIPPO'S HOME

- (*FRANK's paternal grandfather.*)

NARRATOR. I see the family in the living room sitting around a laid out dead body. Heads turn as eyes focus on us for a moment and then:

ZIA BETTINA. (*Throwing herself over an imaginary body in the coffin.*)
Papa, como mi lasciaste mezzo la strada!

NARRATOR. (*Translating.*) Dad, how could you leave me in the middle of the street?

ZIO GAETANO. (*Hanging over the dead body in the coffin.*) Como ti consumasti!

NARRATOR. (*Translating.*) How did you get consumed?

ZIA BETTINA. (*Hands clasped to the heavens.*) Mi squagiaste!

NARRATOR. (*Translating.*) You just melted away! Zio Gaetano in a black armband, Zia Bettina shrouded in a black shawl are taking turns catapulting themselves against my grandfather's body. On cue, my Mother clasps her hands and falls to her knees. I don't know what's going on, but I start crying because she starts crying. The emotional tide guides my other Nonna,

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

Giovanna, my father's mother, to sing a lament around her dead husband to comfort her grief. *(SFX: Sicilian Lament music.)*

NONNA GIOVANNA. *(NONNA GIOVANNA places her shawl over her head, beating her chest. She wails 'ay ay e moru' 3 times as she walks slowly around her husband's body. She sits on the third one.)* Ay, ay e moru, ay ay e moru, ay ay e moru. *[I'm in pain and I die.] (SFX: Sicilian Lament music fades as NONNA GIOVANNA sits on her chair.)*

NARRATOR. The numbing vigil takes me into the next morning waking up to the high pitch voices of a Sicilian pain competition between my mother and Zia Bettina.

MARIA. *(Overly dramatic. Hand over forehead.)* Ah, Ayo un dolore di testa di morire! Como mi pisa!

NARRATOR: *(Translated.)* I have a pain in my head to die from, how it weighs me!

ZIA BETTINA. *(Overly dramatic. Hand over back.)* Bii! Ti pare che tu hai guai la cognata! Mi tira la nervatura di ca fina ca e mi pighia la schena!

NARRATOR: *(Translated.)* You think you have problems sister-in-law? I have a pain that weighs me from here to here and it lands in my back!

MARIA. *(Overly dramatic. Using her hands to act out her gastric reflux.)* Questa e' una malatia? Ayo una bruciura allu stomaco, mi fria como un goccio di fuoco, mi fa guari, gure, guari, gure!

NARRATOR. *(Translated.)* You call that an illness? I have a burning in my stomach that fries me like a drop of fire. It goes up and down, up and down! Then, I notice someone has tied a handkerchief around Nonno's head.

FRANK. He looks like Bugs Bunny! *(FRANK walks over to NONNO's body looking into the coffin. He acts like Bugs Bunny eating his carrot.)* Eh, what's up doc? *(MARIA pulls FRANK's ear to tug him away.)*

MARIA. Shh! Stai zito! Sheku, *[Be quiet jackass.]* that's around his head to keep his mouth closed.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

SCENE 12

OUTDOOR DIRT ROAD TO CEMETERY

NARRATOR: Then from a distance I hear horse hooves. (*SFX: Horse Hooves Clipping.*) The family processions behind a black horse and buggy carrying the open coffin through the town streets. The weeping and wailing calls swarms of neighbors from their homes. (*SFX: Horse Hooves fade.*) They run up to my dead Nonno's body to slip pieces of paper into his jacket pocket.

NEIGHBOR: (*NEIGHBOR runs up to the coffin slipping a folded piece of paper in NONNO's suit pocket.*) Filippu, say hello to my husband Nunzio in heaven, I wrote it down so no forget. OK?

NARRATOR. The buggy finally arrives to la chiesa della Madonna, the Church of the Virgin Mary. (*SFX: Church Bells ringing.*)

SCENE 13

CATHOLIC CHURCH INTERIOR

FRANK realizes where he is and recalls his father's words about his bicycle.

FRANK. Oh, this must be the House of the Virgin Mary! YES!

NARRATOR. I walk up to the priest conducting the funeral.

FRANK. (*Looking up, tugging on priest's vesper.*) Voglio la bicicletta! (*Tugs.*) Voglio la bicicletta! My father told me there's a bicycle that waits for me at the House of the Virgin Mary! This is the Virgin Mary's house isn't it? I want my bicycle now! (*MARIA pulls FRANK's ear to tug him away.*) Ow!

MARIA. (*Gives FRANK the Italian gesture of biting the side of her index finger between her teeth - meaning you are in for it!*) Un fare lu stupito, [*Don't act stupid!*] respect the dead!

NARRATOR. We arrive to the burial site.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

SCENE 14 CEMETERY GRAVE SITE

NONNA GIOVANNA. Che la morte mi pighiasi in subito! Death, take me now! Put me with my husband! (*Illustrated by suspending body while balancing abdomen over the back of the chair, one arm holds seat, legs and other arm outstretched.*)

NARRATOR. Nonna takes a flying leap into the grave. Grave jumping: A well-known Olympic sport in Sicily. No one flinches as they boomerang her back.

NONNA. (*To the crowd.*) I no want to be with you! I want to be with him!

SCENE 15 OUTDOORS IN A LARGE SUNFLOWER FIELD

NARRATOR. As the family parades back from the cemetery, we pass this huge sunflower field where I see a group of crop pickers working in the hot sun. (*SFX: Song - Respiri Di Pizzica Tarantella.*) (*FRANK is mesmerized by what he is observing. Music begins in low volume and rises as FRANK moves closer to the dancing.*) A hypnotic pull draws me toward their frantic dancing around one of the field workers. I break away from my Mom. Their chanting entrances me as the field worker is now convulsing on the ground. (*FRANK tries to mimic the moves of the Tarantella he is observing.*) I don't know why, but I'm riveted to dance the dance with them. (*FRANK loses himself in dancing with the field workers.*) (*SFX: Respiri Di Pizzica Tarantella music stops abruptly as MARIA tugs on FRANK's ear to pull him away.*)

MARIA. NOO! Scimunito! [*Idiot.*] Do you want to catch what she has? The field worker was bitten by a tarantula! They dance the tarantella around her to sweat out the poison of evil spirits until a doctor arrives. Don't I have enough

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

evil spirits in my life? (*MARIA makes the Italian horns sign and spits between her fingers 3 times to ward off the evil spirits. SFX: Soft Mandolin music is heard as FRANK looks out to the audience puzzled, trying to understand what this means.*)

NARRATOR. To get help for *her* evil spirits, my mother sought counsel from a Sicilian psychiatrist.

SCENE 16 SIGNORA PAULINA'S HOUSE

SFX: Eerie Quiver. SIGNORA PAULINA sits across from MARIA placing her hand over her forehead and muttering to channel her spirit.

SIGNORA PAULINA. Grazie, thank you spirit! Qualc' uno ta fatto na fattura! [*Curse.*] Someone's put the mal'occhio [*Evil eye.*] on you, and you son.

MARIA. Who? Who put this evil eye on us?

NARRATOR. Says mom to Signora Paulina, a 90 year-old rimina ventura, town fortune teller, with breasts sagging down to her thighs and olive oil smeared over her eyes lids.

SIGNORA PAULINA. (*SFX: Eerie Quiver.*) (*Places her hand over her forehead to channel her spirit.*) Grazie, thank you spirit! I cannot tell you, but someone did it to you, and they did it to you good, they did it so you cannot look at you husband, and you husband cannot look at you.

NARRATOR. Oh no, not the famous fattura! That was my mother's out for never having to take responsibility for anything in her own life. Growing up like a mantra I'd hear...

MARIA. They did it to us.

FRANK. Ma, who's they?

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

MARIA. Don't ask me who's they? They know who they are! *(Realizing.)* Ci colpa la disgraziata di lu Bronkisi! *(To FRANK.)* It's the fault of your father's sister ZIA NINA, from lu Bronkisi, *[The Bronx.]* she cursed me because she thinks I threw mule urine at her on her wedding day. *(To SIGNORA PAULINA.)* It was good luck holy water! That's why nothing go right for me in America! Am I right Signora Paulina?

SIGNORA PAULINA. *(SIGNORA PAULINA likes the answer MARIA gives her.)* Yes, that's good... *(She adjusts her tone as if she created the idea.)* I mean that's right. *(SFX: Eerie Quiver.)* *(Placing her hand over forehead to channel spirit.)* Grazie, thank you spirit. We must remove this fattura now to exorcize the evil spirits. We must expel it first from you son. *(Gives FRANK a pointed look.)*

FRANK. Me? But... wait... there's no fattura on me... I'm OK, really I am!

NARRATOR. She rubs my stomach with her special fattura remover made of ragu, garlic and olive oil.

SIGNORA PAULINA. *(Chanting an incantation as she rubs FRANK's stomach.)* Alla mattina aivorna Pasqua, con le nerve terra casca! *[In the rising of Easter, when the nerves of the Earth fall.]* *(SIGNORA PAULINA grabs a knife and scraps the mixture off FRANK's stomach.)*

NARRATOR. With the dull side of a knife, she scrapes the mixture off me.

SIGNORA PAULINA. Va via spiritu malignu! *[Away from us malignant spirit!]* *(Motions flinging a knife across room.)* *(SFX: Visual cue - Cartoonish sound of knife flying through air.)*

NARRATOR. Her shamanic energy moves her road map face towards mine.

FRANK. *(To audience.)* It's a good thing I speak fluent Bugs Bunny language. *(To SIGNORA PAULINA.)* I know who you are Signora Paulina, you're that orange monster Gossimer, with white sneakers and no arms from my favorite Bugs Bunny Cartoon. *(SFX: Looney Tunes Theme over spoken dialogue.)* *(Bugs Bunny voice.)* You monsters are the most interesting people, the places you must go and things you must see, my stars!

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

SCENE 17

PALERMO AIRPORT RUNWAY

NARRATOR. Upon our departure, the entire family accompanied us to the airport.

ZIA BETTINA. Bii, you're leave without tasting my homemade ricotta cheesecake? Here take it with you!

ZIO GAETANO. You're leaving without trying my homemade wine? Here take it with you!

ZIA BETTINA. Take my handmade lace!

ZIO GAETANO. Take my fresh pressed olive oil!

ZIA BETTINA. Take my heart!

NARRATOR. My mother, in her grief, runs up the tarmac onto the plane, forgetting I was with her.

FRANK. Ma, no! Don't leave me here!

MOM. Oh bedra madre Frenghinè! We have to go back to that America!

NARRATOR. My shirt is stained with the tears of everyone's sadness. I see my mother's face pressed against the plane window for one last look. I cry, not for them, but for her grief, as she holds the ticket to my happiness. As the plane taxis, I see these balloons of waving handkerchiefs dancing in mid-air.

ZIO GAETANO. *(Waving a handkerchief.)* Arrivederci! *[Goodbye!]*

ZIA BETTINA. Non mi scurdare! *[Don't forget me!]*

ZIA GAETANO. *(Waving a handkerchief. Crying.)* Mi la salutare a to padre! *[Say hello to your father!]*

ZIA BETTINA. *(Waving a handkerchief. Crying.)* Don't forget us! Say hello to your fathaaaaa! *(Lights Fade.) (SFX: Airplane Jet departing runway - fading into SFX: Song - Volare.)*

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

SCENE 18

FAMILY KITCHEN, RIDGEWOOD, BROOKLYN, 1979

*Lights up as we hear GASPARE offstage singing along to the song 'Volare'.
SFX: Phone Ring as Volare songs fades.*

GASPARE. Somebody, answer the telephone. The phone in this house she ring day and night. If I don't answer the telephone, no one answer the telephone. (*GASPARE enters to answer the phone as he's buttoning his shirt. He mutters Italian curses under his breath.*) HALLO!

HERBY. (*Scared.*) Hello is Frank there?

GASPARE. (*Irritated.*) Frenghie no home?

HERBY. Could you please take a message, could you tell him... (*GASPARE abruptly hangs up.*)

FRANK. (*Entering.*) Dad, did anybody call while I was out?

GASPARE. Yeah, somebody call...

FRANK. Who?

GASPARE. I no know, I think it was you friend, Angie Doro.

FRANK. Angie Doro? I don't know an Angie Doro...

GASPARE. (*Impatient.*) That's what he say! Angie Doro!

NARRATOR. It took me three weeks to figure out that Angie Doro was my friend Herby Dowdle! Help Wanted: First Generation Adolescent Child Needed to Fill Position of Translator, Buffer, and Go-Between for Sicilian Household. No Benefits or Hope for Advancement.

GASPARE. (*FRANK scurries between GASPARE and MARIA.*) Frenghie, tella the bank teller, I want 20s, tell her... (*FRANK nods OK with frantic approval, scurries over to MARIA.*)

MARIA. Ah, Frenghinè, tella the telephone man to fix the telephone, tell him... (*FRANK nods OK, scurries over the GASPARE.*)

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

GASPARE. Frenghie, the grocery man, he charge me ten cents too much for la ham. No one fuck with me, tell him! (*FRANK is about to relay the message to the grocery man and pauses, realizing what he's been told to say.*)

NARRATOR. I sought refuge in the basement, into my disco world, where my mother subliminally absorbed my music.

MARIA. (*Sings made up lyrics to the song 'Grease' as she motions cleaning her pans.*) Grease the word, on the pots and the pans, she's an ugly feeling, Grease, the worda, the worda, the worda... Ah, Frenghinè, I like when you play Gloria. Play Gloria, she's the story of my life. Last night I watch *Maude* on TV. I like her clothes, *she* knows how to control *her* husband.

NARRATOR. She was learning there was more to her world than cooking and cleaning.

GASPARE. (*Sitting waiting impatiently for MARIA to come home.*)

Grandissima sbindurata, [*Huge disgrace.*] where you go?

MARIA. I volunteer to help the priests at church Gaspare.

GASPARE. If you rather be with priests than at home, then why you no go to bed with them?

MARIA. Oh geloso! [*Jealous!*] OK! You go to you club whenever, to refresh you coglione? [*Balls.*] And me, I'm just a servant, ah?

GASPARE. Maria, you place is here.

MARIA. So you want to take the church away from me too. OK, Gaspare, OK, I make you dinner, uno minuto! [*One minute.*] (*She makes a face behind his back.*)

NARRATOR. She makes a quick pizza. This time the Holy Mother's conveyor belt arms bypass the dog man's place setting serving me first, the youngest.

FRANK. (*Thinking to himself as he witnesses their exchange.*) Danger Frenghinè! Danger Frenghinè! Danger Frenghinè!

GASPARE. Maria, what do you think you do?

MARIA. Cinquanta / Cinquanta. 50 / 50. From now on, Gaspare.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

GASPARE. I work, I pay the bills, I rule this house. I'm the King!

MARIA. *(Lets out a hearty laugh.)* The King of what? Maybe cement mixing? You know why? Because there ain't no crown big enough to fit that testa di minghia [*Dickhead.*] you have!

FRANK. *(Thinking to himself.)* Look! Dad is turning into the dog man!

NARRATOR. He yanks the hot pizza from my mother's hands sending it into a Flying Wallenda Act, as it sticks to the ceiling.

GASPARE. *(Spitting.)* Poo! Che ti scatassi lu cuore.

FRANK. *(Observing and translating to audience.)* Your heart should blow up out of your body.

MARIA. *(Spitting.)* Ptu! Tava seccare la lingua.

FRANK. Your tongue should wither and fall out.

GASPARE. *(Spitting.)* Poo! Ritorna alla vendra di to madre.

FRANK. Go back to the womb of your mother.

MARIA. *(Spitting.)* Ptu! Ci nasciste cu la cuda e ci muore.

FRANK. You were born with a tail and you'll die with a tail.

GASPARE. *(Spitting.)* Poo, you ruined 3 chulli!

MARIA. *(Spitting.)* Ptu, no, you ruined 3 chulli!

NARRATOR. The ruined chulli grab for the only piece of pizza that gets served.

FRANK. If I keep eating, maybe it will go away.

NARRATOR. *(SFX: Ploop sound of food falling to the floor.)* One, *(SFX: Ploop)* by one, *(SFX: Ploop)*, *(FRANK looks to the ceiling.)* pizza slices are showering from the ceiling. *(FRANK swirls his fingers as if his eyes can see the mozzarella.)* Angel hair strings of mozzarella dance in mid-air forming a protective veil between us and them.

FRANK. Oh God, take me through the TV. Make me a Brady, a Petrie, a Partridge. I'd even settle to be raised by *Mr. Ed* and *My Mother the Car*.

NARRATOR. Now, like a batting machine, he's pitching whole tomatoes at her. *(SFX: Whoosh is heard as FRANK sees the tomatoes flying past him).* But

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

wait, she's not ducking anymore.

MARIA. Animale! You are never going to touch me again!

NARRATOR. With a Herculean strength, she wallops a tray of pizza over his head. *(SFX: Smashing Plates. FRANK turns around and covers his ears. When the plates stop smashing he turns back.)*

FRANK. Am I an orphan yet?

NARRATOR. Like a stunned cartoon character that suffered an explosion, he rises. He draws the mozzarella curtain. A tomato skin hangs over his ear as paddings of oregano lie in the crevice of his shoulder blade.

FRANK. He looks at us, then at her. Is he going to kill her? *(Beat.) (FRANK watches GASPARE retreating.)* No, he retreats like a wounded animal!

MARIA. Liberta, Gaspare, liberta. I want justice, vendetta and peace in my life! Ah, Frenghinè, mette la Gloria, play Gloria, she's the story of my life!

SFX: Song - I Will Survive. As the piano intro begins, MARIA strikes a pose. She places her right hand over her heart and extends her left hand straight up in the air. She counters a response after each line of the song's lyric.

SONG LYRIC SFX: At first I was afraid I was petrified...

MARIA. Una volta. *[At one time!]*

SONG LYRIC SFX: Thought I could never live without you by my side...

MARIA. Con un l'uomo cane con la cuda di ferro... *[With a dog man with a tail of iron.]*

SONG LYRIC SFX: But then I spent so many nights just thinking how you did me wrong...

MARIA. Per da vero e ptu! *(Spit.) [For the truth!]*

SONG LYRIC SFX: And I grew strong and I learned how to get along...

A disco ball drops as a light show begins. In her imagination MARIA sings her own lyrics as she shimmies and shakes to celebrate her independence.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

MARIA. Giustizia, vendetta e pace, nella mia vita! Giustizia, vendetta e pace, nella mia vita! Giustizia, vendetta e pace, nella mia vita... [*I want justice, vendetta, and peace in my life!*]

Music goes into slow motion. Like a wind up doll, MARIA slows down with the music as she bends forward. Her arms suspend loosely towards the floor. (SFX: I Will Survive and disco lights end on cue of MARIA's freeze.)

NARRATOR. A malfunction exiled the Holy Mother's conveyor belt arms from the dinner table to the kitchen, where she now eats alone as a declaration of her independence. She unroped her plastic slip covered temple, banishing the dog man forever onto the Castro Convertible. A cold war living pattern set up a shame blockade, aborting all celebrations, and cutting off communication with family from the outside world. (*SFX: May Day Siren.*)

FRANK. Mayday! Mayday! Abandon ship! We all run to the nearest lifeboat. My brother Phil finds escape in a new car. I join a high school theater group where rehearsals keep me out late. But my sister Jennie, she wasn't running to a lifeboat, but daring to build a ship of her own, separate from the tribe.

GASPARE. (*Subdued.*) Jinni, come to eat.

NARRATOR. Now down to four at the dinner table, my sister serves the traditional Friday fish dinner.

JENNIE. (*Muttering under her breath.*) I'm moving out.

GASPARE. (*Pauses a moment if he heard right.*) Ah, you want trout, take. Frenghi pass the trout to Jinni.

JENNIE. (*Tentatively tries again.*) I'm moving out.

FRANK. (*Realizing what she's trying to say.*) Shh, you want sprouts! Right sis, sprouts?

GASPARE. We have no... (*Realizing what she's saying.*) You movin' out?

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

NARRATOR. This had never been done by an unmarried Sicilian daughter. My mother makes a rare appearance from her independence nook.

MOM. You get married? Right? That's why you move out, right gioia mia? *[My joy!]* I have you wedding linens all ready in you hope chest. I now start to iron them.

JENNIE. No, Ma... I'm not getting married.

MARIA. *(Realizing what she's hearing.)* Bedra madre! God is ripping my only daughter from my womb!

GASPARE. Atsa matta? It's no good enough for you here?

JENNIE. No... I just want to see...

GASPARE. ...if you could be a puttana, *[Whore.]* ah?

MARIA. *(Looking up to the heavens.)* Death? Take me now from this fattura! *(To JENNIE.)* All the sacrifices I make with you disgraziatu *[Disgraceful.]* father to wait until you marry...

GASPARE. ...and don't I throw my blood out in a bag everyday to give you shelter, and this is how you honor me?

JENNIE. It's not about you mom and dad, I just want to see... if I can make it on my own.

DAD. *(Motions to strike JENNIE, stops himself, and sharply turns to FRANK.)* Frenghe, what do you think of this?

FRANK. *(Caught by surprise. Seeing this as an opportunity to finally express himself, he maturely stands up to him.)* Well, she's 21, and women are living alone these days, I think she should be on her own.

GASPARE. *(The palm of his hand slaps FRANK against his forehead.)* Scitrulu! Shatappe! *[You cucumber. Shut up! – Broken English.]* You know nothin'! OK Jinni, we are going to cut the meat with the bone! You move out, and you gonna be one puttana, with 2 broken legs!

NARRATOR. The next day my sister plans her escape while my father's at work.

BLOOD TYPE: RAGU

MARIA. *(Looking out an imaginary window.)* Hurry, before that malignant shadow comes home! *(Turns to JENNIE, hugs her tightly.)* You go mommi, no, you go, go with my blessing, *(MARIA can't break the hug, JENNIE struggles to release herself.)* You're cutting every vein leading to my heart! *(MARIA finally lets go.)* Now go! *(SFX: Transitional soft Mandolin music.)*

NARRATOR. A few months later my brother Phil also flew the coop. *(Looking around.)* Well, left amongst Sicilian ruins, I grabbed my white polyester suit, ruffled bell sleeved shirt, matching hanky and platform shoes and I found that:

SCENE 19

A DISCO, BROOKLYN, 1980

SFX: Cymbal Crash fades into SFX: Song - Disco Round. A disco ball light show begins as FRANK wildly dances his John Travolta Saturday Night Fever disco moves around the stage. FRANK is now 20 years old.

NARRATOR. The disco round takes me into my early 20s and the jive talkin' comin' at me gave me a night fever.

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