

FOREVER

by

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Based on

ON GOLDEN WINGS

by

Giovanni Affinito

FADE IN.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - STREET - NIGHT

A limousine cruises.

INT. LIMOUSINE

LAWRENCE TOLLIVER (40s) rides in the back. He stares out the window as his index finger massages his temple. His brow is hard-set in thought. He absently shakes his head. Sighs.

EXT. STREET

Evening PEDESTRIANS stroll along the walk. PEOPLE gather outside the bars to smoke and mingle. The limo drives on.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE

The limousine heads north across the great landmark.

EXT. MANSION

The limo turns into the circle drive and rolls slowly to the front entrance.

Lawrence exits in haste. He appears apprehensive as he walks up the porch steps to the large front doors.

PORCH

Lawrence knocks. DAVID, the butler, a the door.

DAVID  
Good evening, sir.

LAWRENCE  
Good evening to you. I am here to see Joseph.

DAVID  
I apologize, sir, but he is not seeing visitors today.

LAWRENCE  
I am an old friend. My name is Lawrence Tolliver. I assure you he will see me.

DAVID  
I shall inquire then. Please excuse me.

He closes the door.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM

A dying flames flicker in the fireplace.

JOSEPH (36) sits in a deep reading chair with his head in one hand and a wine bottle in the other. He stares into the fire.

Several empty bottles stand forgotten on the reading table adjacent the chair—others on the floor.

David enters.

DAVID

A Mr. Lawrence Tolliver to see you, sir.

JOSEPH

Send him away, David.

DAVID

As you wish, sir.

He shuffles out.

Joseph takes a long drink from the bottle. His eyes never leave the fire.

EXT. PORCH

David opens the door a crack.

DAVID

I am sorry, sir, but he is indisposed at this time.

LAWRENCE

Indisposed? You told him who calls?

DAVID

Yes. I did, sir.

LAWRENCE

You're certain? Lawrence Tolliver, you told him that?

DAVID

I did, sir.

LAWRENCE

What exactly did he say?

DAVID

That—he was indisposed.

LAWRENCE

Tell him I insist that he sees me.

DAVID

As you wish.

The door shuts.

INT. LIVING ROOM

David returns.

DAVID

I apologize, sir, but he insists he must see you.

JOSEPH

I don't care.

DAVID

What shall I tell him?

JOSEPH

No, perhaps?

David looks uncertain. He hesitates then exits.

Joseph tips the bottle, indulges again.

EXT. PORCH

David opens the door only a crack.

DAVID

The answer is no. Good evening to you, sir.

Lawrence thrusts a hand out and blocks the door.

LAWRENCE

No, it is not a good evening, nor will it be if I am forced to stand here throughout the whole of the night. Do you understand me?

DAVID

Yes.

LAWRENCE

See to it that he does.

David frowns as he retreats into the mansion.

INT. LIVING ROOM

David enters looking sheepish.

DAVID  
He won't go, sir. What shall I do?

JOSEPH  
I don't know. Show him in, I suppose.

DAVID  
Thank you, sir.

David exits.

Joseph lifts the bottle and swallows deeply.

He places the wine on the reading table knocking several bottles off as he does so.

He glances absently down at them then gazes again at the flames.

David escorts Lawrence into the room.

DAVID  
Mr. Tolliver, sir.

He picks up the bottles from the floor then leaves.

JOSEPH  
Not very assertive is he, my new butler?  
He utterly loathes confrontation.

LAWRENCE  
Hello, Joseph.

Joseph looks up.

JOSEPH  
Hello, Lawrence. My apologies, but I do not wish for company.

LAWRENCE  
You made that quite clear, but we need to talk.

JOSEPH  
About.

LAWRENCE  
Mr. Sebastian's opera.

JOSEPH

Oh yes, that.

LAWRENCE

You were commissioned six months ago.  
Have you finished it?

JOSEPH

No.

LAWRENCE

Have you begun?

JOSEPH

No.

LAWRENCE

You are serious?

JOSEPH

Yes.

LAWRENCE

Joseph, why?

JOSEPH

Is this the reason my old friend has come  
to visit—to simply tend to his master's  
investments?

LAWRENCE

Mr. Sebastian asked that I inquire, yes,  
but that is not the only reason I came.

He sits across from Joswph.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

I heard what happened, and I was deeply  
saddened and concerned for you. Things  
were insane back east and I couldn't get  
away. But I wanted to see you ... see if  
there was anything I could do ... if you  
needed anything.

JOSEPH

But to business first, eh, my friend.

LAWRENCE

I'm sorry. That was—I was angry that  
you wouldn't see me, so yes, I got right  
to the point. Again, I am sorry.

JOSEPH

Forget it.

The pair sit in an uncomfortable silence for a time.

LAWRENCE

What has happened to you, Joseph? I know you have suffered a loss ... a terrible loss, but this, this isn't you.

Joseph takes the bottle to hand. Drinks deeply.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

Have you been composing or playing at all?

JOSEPH

No.

LAWRENCE

I couldn't imagine you pain, Joseph, but life still goes on. Grieve, yes, but do not despair, for the world will not despair with you. The world will continue to turn and it will not wait while you linger.

JOSEPH

I am not asking it to.

LAWRENCE

Yes you are. By giving up, by abandoning your responsibilities, you are.

JOSEPH

How cleverly you have returned to the point of my commission.

LAWRENCE

It was not my intention, but it indeed is a case in point.

Joseph raises the bottle in salute. Drinks.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

So how long, Joseph, do you intend to linger here?

JOSEPH

When will I write this opera? Is that what you wish to know?

LAWRENCE

That is not all, but, yes, I do want to know.

JOSEPH

So long as I mourn, I shall not compose.

LAWRENCE

And how long will that be? My heart cries for you, truly, but soon I must return to New York and I must do so with an answer from you.

JOSEPH

It must be wonderful to walk away from a place like this. Just walk away from ugliness. I am not permitted such freedom.

He looks around as if at cell walls.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I sat with Michelle in a room where pain lived day and night. She had hardly brushed the dirt from her funeral dress before it was soiled again. She was so strong ... and tall—everyone noticed that right away about her. It's strange ... all the little things that stick in your head.

He smiles at some memory. It quickly fades.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

She seemed to grow smaller, though—I mean visibly smaller—as she followed those two tiny coffins out of that room.

He looks Lawrence in the eyes.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Thomas was the first. The doctors never knew what it was. They just shrugged shoulders and shook their heads ... and I could do nothing! Nothing but watch him whither away in his mother's arms while they clung to each other like two frightened children. And when he died, I thought there could be no greater sorrow. But I was wrong.

Tears come freely now.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Cindy was a few days later. My daughter ... my sweet little girl of such big smiles.



JOSEPH (CONT'D)

The same nameless sickness that ends in death! Oh, Lawrence, it was too much ... too much.

His face hardens.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

But still not enough. The following month Michelle became ill. My wife! Then another coffin was carried out of that room. But this time I had to follow it alone ... I was truly alone. Suddenly, everyone I loved in the world was gone ... forever! Do you know how long forever is!

Lawrence has no answer.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Leave me.

LAWRENCE

Joseph...

JOSEPH

Please, just leave me.

Lawrence hesitates, then walks to the door. He looks at Joseph once more, then exits.

Joseph sobs quietly as the fire dies away.

FADE OUT

THE END