

Episode 4 – La Donna è Omicida

By Lou Sutcliffe

Content warnings:

Clowns (technically present)
Violence
Misogyny
Death/dying
Murder

References to: Sexual assault, ghosts

SFX: Opera singing, outdoor sounds, screaming,

My ladies, gentles, in you come
(And those who're neither, all or some)
Come hither all such tales to hear
Of misrule, magic, flight and fear
Of things that unleash pandemonium
And heroes to defend us from them
And for those who thusly need informing
In the show notes you'll find content warnings
So cautioned, audience, come with me
To the Pantaloon Society...

[THEME MUSIC PLAYS]

Episode 4 - La Donna è Omicida

[A PHONE RINGS]

NIGEL: Hello, is that...er..the...um..

DR HARRINGTON: [on the phone] Yes, this is the Pantaloon Society. I assume that's what you're trying to ask.

NIGEL: Oh right. Right, good. Thanks. I got your number from a friend who got it from a feller he used to work with. I heard you're the people to contact about...weird stuff.

DR HARRINGTON: Yes, that's us. Is there something you need help with?

NIGEL: Yeah...Right, so, I work at a theatre off Covent Garden.

DR HARRINGTON: Hmm. That's convenient...

NIGEL: Sorry what?

DR HARRINGTON: Never mind, carry on.

NIGEL: Well, there's been a murder. One of the cast. The police have been but they've no idea who did it. He was stabbed but they've never found the weapon. And now...everyone's refusing to go on with the show, saying there's a curse on it. So we're not getting paid.

DR HARRINGTON: I see....and do you think there is a curse on the show?

NIGEL: I'm not sure... there has been weird stuff. Scenery falling, people being weird.... It's probably nothing, but...

DR HARRINGTON: But it might not be. Yes, I think I understand, Mr...

NIGEL: Braithwaite, Nigel Braithwaite.

DR HARRINGTON: Mr Braithwaite. I'll send some of our operatives over to investigate as soon as possible. Can I take the address of the theatre in question?

[STINGER]

[GRAMOPHONE RECORDING OF LA DONNA È MOBILE BEGINS, THEN BECOMES QUIETER]

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Ah, the opera! That wondrous marriage of song, libretto and dance, that pinnacle of western artistry. Since the late sixteenth century, these delightful works of high drama, comedy and tragedy have delighted audiences across the world. The particular opera which had until recently been enjoying a successful run at the theatre which Mr Nigel Braithwaite, stagehand, was for the moment employed, was Giuseppe Verdi's 1850 tragedy, *Rigoletto*. For those not familiar with the work, it is an opera in three acts, telling the tale of the cuckolding Duke of Mantua, his hunchbacked court Jester the titular *Rigoletto*, and *Rigoletto*'s innocent daughter *Gilda*. The opera itself was beset by setbacks and obstacles which almost prevented its staging. At the time of its writing, the former Republic of Venice had been annexed to the Austrian Empire and all Venetian artworks were subject to censorship by the exceedingly strict Austrians. The opera was rejected by the censors, calling it "repugnant" and "obscene triviality". The Victor Hugo play upon which it was based had already been banned in France previously. In order to get it approved, the setting and the plot had to be altered, to Verdi's protestation, and several of the racier scenes deleted. Plagiarism was common at the time, necessitating Verdi keep the scores secret until the last minute – the score for the Duke's famous aria "La donna è mobile" was not provided until a short time before the first performance. Needless to say, when the opera finally premiered, it was to a sold-out theatre, and the aria in question was being sung in the streets the next morning.

[FINAL PHRASE OF LA DONNA È MOBILE, WHICH THEN FADES OUT]

[SOUNDS OF A BUSY STREET]

But let us leave the premieres of yesteryear and turn to another premiere – that of our heroes. Yes, “heroes” plural, for in addition to small Jen, in today’s performance we are joined by big Joe, who you may remember, dear audience, from Episode 2. It is their first outing together as performers of the Pantaloon Society. We find the two of them just outside a theatre, whose signage still proudly and currently inaccurately proclaimed their sumptuous re-imagining of “Rigoletto” would be performed from the 3rd Jun – 25th July. For some reason, Joe had brought several large cases with him and was checking the contents.

JEN: What’s that?

JOE: Ghost hunting stuff. EMF meter. Thermometer. Ghost box.

JEN: You’re going tae tell them we’re ghost hunters?

JOE: Yep. Done it before. Everyone thinks you’re just some weirdo. Some of ‘em even help you find stuff.

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Jen was, although they had not expressed it, not altogether pleased to be on this case with Joe. The two of them had not exactly hit it off on their previous meeting at the Society which you may also remember from Episode 2. However, as Dr Harrington had explained, there were no other operatives...performers.... available to train her. Dr Harrington herself was too advanced in years to be running around London investigating ghost and curses and these days was mainly involved in the information gathering and organisational part of the operation. Unfortunately, it was Joe or nothing – she would have to do her best to get along with him – perhaps she could even try to have a bit of fun? Jen followed Joe through the revolving glass door into the theatre, considering the situation.

[SOUNDS OF STREET FADE AWAY]

JEN: I’ve got an idea, hang on a sec.

JOE: Your phone?

JEN: Yeah, I’m gonnae film ye. Wait...OK...now. Welcome to the London Ghost Hunter’s Society with me Jen, your host and my fellow spook inspector, Joe. Joe, can you talk us through your equipment....

JOE: Hah. Yeah, right...er.. so, this is a ghost box. It scans the AM and FM frequencies searching for unusual signals.

THE RACONTEUREUSE: As they had undoubtedly intended, Joe and Jen’s shenanigans rapidly attracted the attention of an official-looking man in a slightly ill-

fitting suit – or perhaps he was a man who might look like his suit was ill-fitting regardless of how it was tailored. He hurried over to intercept them, looking irritated.

MR FRIEDMAN: Excuse me, the theatre is closed, you shouldn't be in here. Who are you?

JEN: We're from the London Ghost Hunter's Society and we're here to investigate the...Rigoletto Curse...

MR FRIEDMAN: Paranormal investigators? Oh....no, you can't. You must leave at once. Are you filming?

JEN: I'm streaming!

JOE: You're not...

JEN: I might be. You don't know.

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Mr Friedman, the theatre manager, for it was he who had intercepted our heroes, attempted to shoo Joe and Jen out of the theatre. He was not very successful in this, as Jen was dancing around holding up their phone and Joe was rather too large a gentleman to be easily moved from wherever he chose to be at that time. Luckily, at that point a gentleman in workmen's trousers and a black polo-shirt with the name of the theatre emblazoned on it appeared from a side door.

NIGEL: Here...are you from...the Society?

JEN: The London Ghost Hunter's Society, why yes, yes we are. Here to investigate the Rigoletto Curse.

NIGEL: It's all right, Chris, they're with me. I asked them to come, thought if I got someone in to do an investigation then folk would stop talking about curses and hauntings and whatnot.

MR FRIEDMAN: Oh...oh, actually, that's quite a good idea, well done Nigel. Sorry, I'll... I'll leave you to it. Yes. Yes, good idea.

[MR FRIEDMAN WALKS AWAY QUICKLY]

NIGEL: You can drop the act, he's gone.

JEN: Act? Whatever do you mean...[laughing] all right, I'll cut that bit out.

JOE: You'll be Mr Braithwaite then?

NIGEL: Nigel, aye. You best come with me.

[STINGER]

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Before the manager had a chance to have a second

thought about their presence in his theatre, Nigel spirited our heroes away through a series of progressively quieter and dustier corridor into the backstage areas of the theatre, until they found themselves in a back office where there was a handy and ancient-looking kettle. Once everyone had been provided with a cup of tea, they set to discussing the situation.

JEN: What's been going on then? I hear...there's been a murder.

NIGEL: Aye, that were Humphrey Walbottle. BA RCM, OBE, one of the finest tenors the Royal College ever produced, until someone stuck a knife in his back last Thursday in his dressing room.

JOE: Any suspects?

NIGEL: Not a one. Everyone loved him, top bloke, apart from...

JEN: Apart from?

NIGEL: Apparently, he'd been known to get a bit ...handsy...

JEN: Ew...

NIGEL: We don't know where that came from mind you. And before the..the murder, there was other stuff. Signor Balatro, him who's playing the lead, he was nearly killed by a bit of scenery falling. After the murder the police came, but they couldn't find the murder weapon, and nobody saw anything so...the investigation is ongoing. Now everyone's saying there's a curse or a ghost or something. Some of the cast have just left, saying they don't want to be next. The two playing the Count and Countess of Ceprano will only talk through their Equity deps. Show's not going on, nobody's getting paid. Eventually they'll have to shut it down if it goes on like this. That's why I called you lot – if it's just a murder maybe you can solve it, if it's a curse maybe you can..lift it? I dunno.

JOE: We'll give it our best. Can't promise anything, like you say it might just be a normal murder. Probably better start by interviewing anyone who's still here, then maybe have a look at the dressing room where the murder was done.

NIGEL: The police have already talked to everyone, but aye, sure.

JEN: Ah..well... Maybe there's stuff they won't say to the police, but they will say to...the London Ghost Hunter's Society.....!

[STINGER]

THE RACONTEUREUSE: With the ever-helpful Nigel as their escort, Jen and Joe launched their own investigation. Nigel suggested they start with some of the chorus members, who he maintained could be relied upon to have whatever was the latest gossip. And thus, we find Jen in the dressing room, having their ear talked off about every possible suspect for the murder, their purported motives and anything else vaguely or not remotely relevant.

JEN: So, er. Preston, is it?

PRESTON: Yeah.

JEN: You're in the chorus

PRESTON: Nono, I'm the sign language interpreter.

JEN: OK thanks. Do you remember anything about the day of the murder?

PRESTON: Oh I wasn't there that day, I was doing my NVQ classes. But everyone knew what Walbottle was like. Handsy Humphrey, they called him. Most people liked him obviously, except Lawrence.

JEN: Lawrence?

PRESTON: Lawrence Percy-Blenkinsopp. He's a bass, plays Sparafucile, you know, the assassin? Lawrence tried to get chummy with him, but Walbottle absolutely cut him dead every time. Very politely. Viciously beautiful.

JEN: That's interesting.

THE RACONTEUREUSE: More interesting than the earlier piece of information about the chief sound technician's divorce, anyway, Jen thought silently to themselves.

Meanwhile, in the aforementioned Lawrence Percy-Blenkinsopp's dressing room, Joe had found that the bass was much more keen to cut to the chase.

LAWRENCE: Well, yes obviously we're all very cut up about it. Dear old Humphrey, beloved by all, the old hack.

JOE: Yeah, that's what people keep saying. Everyone liked him. Well, half the population liked him anyway.

LAWRENCE: Well, you expect a certain amount of that with the old boys, don't you? Things were different in their time. A lot's changed since then, not always for the better. You look like a man of the world, John, was it?

JOE: Joe.

LAWRENCE: So, you know what I mean, Joe...

JOE: A lot's changed, that's right. So, have you got any ideas?

LAWRENCE: If I did, I'd have told the police, I assure you...but if I had to speculate...well, I don't know why he would do it, someone who could, Balatro.

JOE: The one who was nearly hit by falling scenery?

LAWRENCE: Oh, they told you about that? Yes, scenery that wasn't properly secured because, so they say, Humphrey was...mm...pressing his attentions on the stagehand. And Balatro, fine baritone, comes from a long line of theatrical types, but in his youth, he was in the Italian equivalent of the paras. Could probably do you in before you could blink.

JOE: Was he now?

[PAUSE]

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Of course, Joe and Jen were not always so lucky in the loquacity of their interviewees. Sadly, some of the cast were...less helpful.

JEN: Now we're at the dressing room of Miss Sofia Zello, the leading lady. Miss Zello, I'm from the Ghost Hunters Society, can I talk to you about...

SOFIA: PORCA MISERIA! Get OUT! GET THAT CAMERA OUT OF MY FACE. I CANNOT WORK UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, DIO SANTO, WHERE IS THE MANAGER. This was supposed to be my DEBUT.....

JEN: Sorry, sorry, never mind.

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Although others were at least more polite about it.

JOE: Excuse me, Signor Balatro, can I...er

PIETRO: Forgive me, Mr...

JOE: Er.....Wilton.

PIETRO: Mr Wilton. I have already spoken to the police. I am very tired of all..this...There is nothing further I can add that I did not already tell them. I would prefer to be left in peace to rehearse my lines, in the hope that all this horrible business will be over soon, and we may continue with our show. Dedicated of course to the memory of poor Mr Walbottle.

[STINGER]

JEN: Here we are at the place where the murder actually happened....just a normal dressing room as you can see...but on this very chair, this now extremely clean chair, the dreadful deed was done.

JOE: Turn that off will you. There's nobody around to care.

JEN: Just staying in character – you're still waving the ghostbuster stuff around.

JOE: It's hardly worth it. There's nothing here, the police have already swept it and it's obviously been cleaned up since. There isn't even a bloodstain. I've no bloody idea who's done this murder and I haven't seen anything weird.

JEN: Apart from the cast.

JOE: All right but that's normal weird, stage folk weird, not...

JEN: Supernatural weird.

JOE: Yeah...

JEN: Who's your money on then?

JOE: Signor Whatsisname maybe? One of the cast said he was in the Italian paras. But he didn't have any motive. That I know of.

JEN: Preston, the BSL interpreter, says the lad playing the assassin didn't like the victim much.

JOE: Yeah, it was him I spoke to. Might be trying to pin it on the Italian.

JEN: Couldnae get anything out of the leading lady...too...

JOE: Highly strung?

JEN: High volume more like.

[A pause]

JEN: Joe...

JOE: Yeah??

JEN: I think we might have got off on the wrong foot.

JOE: Yeah, sorry about that.

JEN: S'all right, wouldnae be the first time.

JOE: I'm old and stupid sometimes.

[PAUSE]

JEN: So...How long have you been working for the Society?

JOE: Oh, long time. Years. I've had breaks where I went off and did something else for a while. You need breaks sometimes.

JEN: Aye, I bet you do.

[PAUSE]

[Simultaneously]

JOE: About your...

JEN: Can I ask...

JEN: You go first.

JOE: Veronica didn't tell me about your present. You don't have to tell me, but it'll help if we're working together if I know what you can do.

JEN: I can bring stuff to life...make it move around...toys are easiest, but anything with a face.

JOE: Creepy, but useful. Mine's...

[MUFFLED SOUNDS OF SHOUTING]

JEN: What's that?...

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Jen and Joe's brief heart to heart was interrupted by the sounds of an altercation from the corridor. When they hurried out to see what was going on, they found the elegant Signor Balatro and Lawrence Percy-Blenkinsopp in the midst of an altercation. Several other members of the cast and crew were watching, from a safe distance, obviously. Who knew what such a reputedly dangerous baritone could do to anyone foolish enough to tangle with him?

JEN: [Under their breath] Preston, isn't it? What's going on?

PRESTON: [Also quietly] Oh hello, it's you again. This is wild. Lawrence thinks Balatro did it. He only went and accused him...in public.

LAWRENCE: [From across the hallway] Everyone knows you're the only one good with a knife here, Balatro, own up and turn yourself in so we can get back to our jobs.

BALATRO: I strongly advise you to leave me alone, Lawrence.

LAWRENCE: I notice you're not denying it.

BALATRO: This is your final warning.

THE RACONTEUREUSE: It was unclear exactly what happened next. The fighting we see on stage and screen may go on for several minutes of back and forth, thrown punches or flashing blades. In reality, such scuffles are over quickly, particularly when one of the combatants is significantly more skilled than the other. Balatro may have attempted to pass by Lawrence, rather forcefully, Lawrence may have resisted, or perhaps it was the other way round. Either way, it ended rapidly and quite impressively with Lawrence pinned to the floor, his arm behind his back, protesting loudly. Once his defeat was obvious and he had stopped struggling, Balatro released him.

LAWRENCE: He's a madman! I'm off.

[HE RUNS AWAY]

BALATRO: [sigh] I am sorry you had to witness that.

JEN: Don't be, it was great. First you got his arm and then he was on the floor...Honestly, I thought you were just gunnae lamp the dafty.

BALATRO: Hah...well...perhaps next time I will teach him a lesson. Perhaps not. Excuse me, I think I will return to my dressing room, to consider how much more of this I can endure.

[He leaves]

PRESTON: Ooh. He's such a gentleman, isn't he? Be still my beating heart..

JEN: Aye, bit of a silver fox.

PRESTON: Mhm.

JEN: Preston, when you said that stuff about "Handsy Humphrey".

PRESTON: Yes?

JEN: Who says that? Why?

PRESTON: Oh...well...you know.

JEN: Aye?

PRESTON: Old boys...

JOE: Did anything happen recently?

PRESTON: Oh...oh, yes. Sofia Zello, the soprano. He said something to her and she had an absolute fit. Wouldn't come out of her dressing room for hours afterwards. Called him all sorts of things...well, they were in Italian, but you know when you can like... tell it's rude whatever language it's in?

[Simultaneously]

JEN: Aye.

JOE: Yeah.

PRESTON: Like that. Mr Friedman was in there for ages trying to talk her down, she was throwing things, ooh, it was awful. I heard from Agnes in accounts that she's getting paid a lot more now. Like, a lot more. So, that got sorted out, but whenever she was around old Humphrey, she looked like she'd eaten a lemon. Ooh, do you think she did it?

[AN UNEARTHLY SCREAM]

PRESTON: What was that?

JEN: That didn't sound good.

JOE: No it did not.

[JOE AND JEN HURRY OFF TOWARD THE SOUND OF THE SCREAM]

PRESTON: They're very brave, these ghost hunters...oh...you forgot your ghost detecting stuff....don't they need that.

[MUFFLED GRAMOPHONE RECORDING OF LA DONNA È MOBILE BEGINS]

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Our heroes, minus ghost box, hurried towards the sound of the scream, a scream that even from the other side of the theatre had inserted itself violently into their ears like the shriek of an owl paralysing its tiny scurrying prey in the night. It was easy enough to follow the direction it had come from – the stage. Joe, being none too young found himself falling a little behind the nimble young Jen. Thus it was that Jen was the first to find themselves running in from stage right, with Joe shortly behind, puffing and wheezing.

In the centre of the stage stood the soprano, Sofia Zello, looking like some sort of crazed heroine from a Regency novel recently escaped from confinement in some forgotten attic. Her dark hair was loose and her eyes were wild and flashing with rage. The knife in her hand she was brandishing at the manager, Mr Friedman, was absolutely not in any way a prop. His hands were out defensively, and he was clearly trying to talk her down.

MR FRIEDMAN: Look...please...I'm sure this can all be sorted out, please just be reasonable Miss Zello.

SOFIA: YOU, YOU OFFER ME MONEY....MONEY WHEN THAT OLD GOAT...

JOE: I think I know who might have stabbed Humphrey.

JEN: Do ye aye?

THE RACONTEUREUSE: But who is this, appearing from stage left? Why, it is the dashing Signor Balatro walking quietly but calmly. He was unarmed, but there was something about his general bearing that indicated he was prepared to deal with whatever was going on.

PIETRO: [quietly] La Maledizione... [louder] Sofia... Sofia please, please put the knife down.

SOFIA: Vatenne!

PIETRO: Please, listen to your father.

SOFIA: Go away, I don't want anything to do with you! Figlio di puttana! I can't believe you took the role here, it was supposed to be my DEBUT and you and that old goat RUINED it for me. [unearthly scream on "ruined"]

THE RACONTEUREUSE: The sound of Sofia's scream echoed around the stage unusually – its harmonics went in through the ears and straight to the guts in an unnaturally jarring and unpleasant way. Joe and Jen looked at each other, both with their hands reflexively clapped over their ears, clearly having the same thought. Joe held up his finger. Jen nodded.

JOE: Hmm...Miss Zello, can I ask you a question?

SOFIA: Ugh, not another one! What do you want?

[LA DONNA È MOBILE FADES AND IS REPLACED BY THE PANTALOON THEME, SIMILARLY MUFFLED]

THE RACONTEUREUSE: A prickling began on the back of Jen's neck. It was not the piercing horribleness of the scream, but instead a sense of something building, something warm and familiar. When Joe spoke, the feeling intensified.

JOE: How do you know when a theatre is upset?

SOFIA: What?

JOE: How do you know when a theatre is upset?

SOFIA: I...don't know..

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Jen was clearly not the only one affected. The tension was starting to go out of Sofia's shoulders and the knife sagged a little in her grip.

JOE: It's in tiers. Tiers.... All right that one's better written down. I wrote a script about the dictionary once.

JEN: Did ye?

JOE: Yep. It was a play on words.

SOFIA: I...haha...[sniff] huh...

THE RACONTEUREUSE: For some unaccountable reason (although Jen thought they had a good idea why) everyone began to laugh. Everyone except Joe who visibly relaxed when the knife fell to the floor. [SOUND OF KNIFE HITTING FLOOR] Signor Balatro appeared to recover soonest, and swiftly strode across the stage to envelop Sofia in his arms, although notably also to place himself between her and the knife. When they were stood next to each other, the family resemblance became much more obvious. He began speaking swiftly to her in Italian – and before long, conveyed her away into the wings, leaving Jen, Joe and very a pale theatre manager.

JEN: [whispering to Joe] That was really cool.

JOE: What?

JEN: You know what.

[STINGER]

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Their job at the theatre done, Joe would have much preferred to disappear as quickly as possible, but Nigel insisted on seeing them out, and thanking them gruffly for solving the mystery of the murdered tenor – although as Joe pointed out, the mystery had sort of solved itself when the murderess lost her nerve and tried to do in somebody else. Still, Nigel insisted on shaking their hands anyway.

NIGEL: Have you got all your ghost hunting stuff?

JOE: Yep. Works every time.

THE RACONTEUREUSE: He glanced at Jen as he said that: who grinned back.

NIGEL: Not sure what you did, but it's all sorted one way or another. We're going to need a new Duke. Preferably a new Sparafucile as well, I reckon Lawrence isn't coming back. And a new Gilda, obviously.

JOE: Because she's going to prison.

NIGEL: Because she's going to prison, yeah. There was always something a bit funny about her. Her voice made the hairs go up on the back of my neck, and not in the good way.

THE RACONTEUREUSE: When Nigel said that; Jen and Joe exchanged another quiet look between the two of them.

NIGEL: Hopefully now everyone knows there wasn't a curse, it was just some mad soprano, they'll all come back. Maybe. Thanks, anyway.

JEN: Nae bother. All in a day's work for the..

JOE: [Interrupting] Ghost...Hunter's Society.

JEN: Aye. The London Ghost Hunter's Society. See you!

[STINGER]

THE RACONTEUREUSE: Dear audience, before we leave the performance today, the waving hands and retreating backs of Joe, Jen and Nigel, let us go to the local police station, wherein Sofia Zello is sitting in a cell awaiting further decisions on her fate.

[OMINOUS STRINGS]

Outside, an indistinct figure glances at the station, then glances at something in their hand. They waver for a moment, as if considering whether to go in. Then, they close their hand into a fist and tear themselves angrily away, storming off down the road.

[OMINOUS STRINGS FADE OUT]

[THEME MUSIC PLAYS]

The Pantaloon Society is a Cytochrome Hear production by Lou Sutcliffe (ey/em pronouns) distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence. This episode used sounds from freesound.org. For full accreditation, content warnings and transcripts, please see the show notes. To be kept up to date on the show, please do follow on Twitter @pantaloon soc. Farewell, dear audience, and thank you for listening.

Episode Summary: Nigel Braithwaite, a stagehand, calls the Pantaloon Society asking for help investigating a murder at the opera, which is rumoured to be because of a curse. The Raconteureuse tells the listener about the history of the opera in question, Rigoletto. Joe and Jen go to investigate, under the cover of being ghost hunters. The theatre manager tries to eject them but Nigel appears and vouches for them and explains about the victim, Humphrey Walbottle, who was well respected but a known sexist, and various strange occurrences preceding and surrounding his death. Jen and Joe interview the cast and crew of the opera including Preston, the sign language interpreter, Laurence the bass who plays the assassin Sparafucile. The leading lady Sofia Zello and Pietro Balatro, the baritone playing Rigoletto himself do not want to speak to them. Joe and Jen learn little, and even less by investigating the crime scene which has already been cleaned up. Joe apologises for being prejudiced at their first meeting and they talk about Jen's present. Before Joe can talk about his, they are interrupted by fight between the bass, Laurence and Balatro the baritone, which Laurence loses. A conversation with Preston reveals the murdered man had said something inappropriate to Sofia Zello. Another interruption, a scream, and they rush to the stage to find Miss Zello threatening the manager with a knife. The manager and Balatro both attempt to get her to calm down but she will not listen. Joe then uses his present: he tells jokes which make her laugh, apparently against her will, and drop the knife. The action over, Jen and Joe bid Nigel farewell. Sofia Zello waits in a police cell to face her fate: outside, a dark figure watches the police station, but storms off without doing anything.

Sound effects and music used in this episode (in addition to those previously listed):

Creative Commons Attribution Licence:

<https://freesound.org/people/AdamWeeden/sounds/163637/>

<https://freesound.org/people/dersuperanton/sounds/435853/>

Creative Commons 0 Licence:

<https://freesound.org/people/Jarebear1223/sounds/618536/>

<https://freesound.org/people/NachtmahrTV/sounds/618112/>

https://freesound.org/people/13FPansk%C3%A1_Tolar_David/sounds/378670/

In the public domain:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:La_Donna_E_Mobile_Rigoletto.ogg