

# THE BARBER

An Original Screenplay by

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(15 Page Excerpt)

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EXT. VITO'S BARBER SHOP (THE BRONX, NYC) - DAY

An old fashioned, striped barber pole revolves outside a tiny shop on a side street off of Arthur Avenue.

A sign in the window reads: 'Three Chairs, No Waiting.'

TONY (V.O.)

There was a barber in the Bronx.

INT. VITO'S BARBER SHOP - DAY

An ancient, Italian barber, VITO ANGELONE (87), shuffles to his post. He opens a straight edge razor with unsteady hands.

TONY (V.O.)

Vito Angelone. Legend has it that Giuseppe Verdi wouldn't go out in public until Vito's great-great granddad gave his whiskers a trim.

Vito grabs the leather strop and runs the razor across it.

The lathered up GUY in the chair, warily watches.

TONY (V.O.)

Those tonsorial skills were passed down from generation to generation, which is how Vito became the best barber in the tri-state area.

The razor drops to the floor. Followed by Vito. THUD!

TONY (V.O.)

This story isn't about him.

INT. THE CHURCH OF ST. PHILIP NERI - NIGHT

A casket full of Vito rolls through the packed church. The organ plays him off with, of course, Verdi.

TONY (V.O.)

Vito's passing left a hole in the soul of the Bronx. Not just with the locals, but with a customer who makes the pilgrimage from Jersey to see Vito twice a week.

In the last row of the church sits CARLO MANNETTI (85). He's frail and glassy-eyed but still very much in charge.

TONY (V.O.)

That's Don Carlo Mannetti, the head  
of the Mannetti crime family.

He's flanked by his twin grandsons, NINO and DINO MANNETTI  
(30). Two huge sides of beef, dressed in black.

The casket passes Don Carlo. He shakes with emotion.

TONY (V.O.)

This story isn't about him either.

The man speaking, TONY PALMIERI (30), sits in a pew. He  
shifts his attention to two men arguing near him.

BENICIO 'BENNY' CASTELLI (75) pleads with a well-dressed old  
gent next to him. It's his brother-in-law, JIMMY VESTI (80).

TONY (V.O.)

The story's about this guy. Giacomo  
Vesti. AKA 'Jimmy the Gent.' He's  
not the second best barber in the  
hood. More like fourth or fifth.  
But Jimmy has a lot of grit. And  
tremendous style.

Jimmy straightens his tie as the Monsignor passes and blesses  
him. Once he's gone, Benny returns to begging.

BENNY

You gotta do this for me.

JIMMY

No. There's-a no way.

BENNY

I gotta go pick up your sister, in  
Yonkers. So I can't stop no place.  
The drawing's tonight. 250 million.

JIMMY

I can't. You know I make-a promise.

BENNY

I know. But it wouldn't be like you  
was playing. You'll be using my  
numbers. And if I win I'll give you  
ten percent. Okay?

Jimmy mulls it over, breaking into an excited sweat.

JIMMY

250 million?

BENNY

Yeah.

JIMMY

Twenty-five percent.

BENNY

Sure, sure. You got it.

Benny hands him his list of 'numbers.' Jimmy stashes it in his pocket and mops his sweaty brow with a hankie.

EXT. THE CHURCH OF ST. PHILIP NERI - NIGHT

Nino and Dino lead Don Carlo toward the waiting town car. Following close behind, Tony loudly calls out.

TONY

Hey! Don Carlo!

The twin bodyguards look back at him. Don Carlo stares straight ahead, unresponsive.

TONY (CONT'D)

I know what you did. And you're not gonna get away with it.

Nino approaches Tony. He grabs him by the shirt.

NINO

If I catch you within ten feet of Don Carlo again I'll rip your balls off and stuff them in your ears.

TONY

(smirking)

Is that a threat or a proposal?

NINO

Keep it up and I'll put you in a hole right next to your Dad.

Tony's smirk fades. Nino stares him down as he moves to the town car. Tony angrily watches them drive off.

INT. LOCAL BODEGA - NIGHT

The counter guy, FRANKIE (25), punches in the lengthy list of Benny's numbers. Jimmy anxiously watches.

The Lotto machine shoots out ticket after ticket.

FRANKIE  
Forty-five bucks, Jimmy.

JIMMY  
Shhh. Please. No names.

Jimmy hands him the cash and stuffs the tickets in his coat. He tips his hat and goes. Frankie smiles. He's so old world.

EXT. ARTHUR AVENUE - NIGHT

Jimmy bustles toward home. As he sees people, he stops, tips his hat and semi-bows. A young couple laugh and bow back.

INT. VESTI LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Planted on the couch, woofing down Doritos, BRUNO VESTI (30) yells at the Knick game on TV.

BRUNO  
Ah! You bums! You stink!

Jimmy enters and cringes at the insanely loud volume.

JIMMY  
Hey! Turn that down!

Bruno ignores him. Jimmy thinks about yelling again but gives up. He knows it's useless. He heads back toward his bedroom.

INT. VESTI BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sprawled in bed is her highness, MADELENA VESTI (75). She eats Fritos and screams at a wrestling match on her TV.

MADELENA  
(to the TV)  
Suplex! Do the suplex! Stupido!

She sees Jimmy quietly slide in.

MADELENA (CONT'D)  
How was the service?

JIMMY  
Oh. It was-a nice. Crowded. They had to move it from-a the chapel into the big cathedral. 50 pews. No waiting. Heh heh.

Madelena ignores him and yells at the TV.

MADELENA

Go! Get him! Kill him!

JIMMY

Anyway, there was lots-a people.

MADELENA

(one eye on the match)

Sure. He was very well liked. And respected.

The word 'respected' lands heavily on Jimmy. As he takes off his jacket, the lotto tickets fall out of his pocket.

Madelena sees them and loses her shit.

MADELENA (CONT'D)

What is that!?

JIMMY

(playing innocent)

What is what, ma bella mia?

She furiously points at the tickets on the floor.

MADELENA

You're gambling again!

JIMMY

No, Mama. No!

Jimmy hurriedly gathers the fallen tickets.

MADELENA

You swore on your mother's grave you'd stop! And now, look!

JIMMY

Cara mia, I didn't--

MADELENA

Here we go! First comes the lying! Then the gambling and the drinking. You keep this up and we gonna lose what little we got left. Merda!

JIMMY

If-a you let me explain--

MADELENA

My mother warned me. She said, "Don't go off with that 'Dapper Dan.' He'll break your heart!"

Jimmy's heard this song for fifty years. Embracing his fate, he sighs and moves to the closet for a pillow and blanket.

MADELENA (CONT'D)

I never should have married you. I had so many other offers. Like Vinnie Isola. He's a big success now, selling in-ground pools.

As she continues, Jimmy exits with the pillow and blanket.

INT. VESTI LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Madelena rants away as Jimmy sadly walks in with the bedding. Bruno's still planted on the couch.

JIMMY

Hey. Turn that off. I gotta get some sleep.

BRUNO

No way. They just went into overtime.

JIMMY

Don't talk back. Go to bed.

BRUNO

Hey. It's not my fault you pissed off Nana. That's on you, old man.

Bruno cracks a fresh beer and shoots Jimmy a look.

BRUNO (CONT'D)

I sure as shit wouldn't let my wife talk to me that way.

JIMMY

Ha! Your wife threw you out.

BRUNO

I left! Understand? She mouthed off to me and I left.

Bruno drinks a slug of beer. Jimmy licks his lips with envy. He puts the pillow and blanket down and heads to the kitchen.

INT. VESTI KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jimmy tip-toes to the pantry. He takes items off of a shelf, one by one, silently putting them on the counter.

He reaches far back inside the shelf and reacts with disgust. He pulls his hand out. It's stuck in a roach glue trap.

Jimmy yanks the trap off and tosses it. He reaches back in and pulls out what he's looking for. A half pint of whiskey.

Jimmy opens it and takes a sip. It soothes him. He caps the bottle and tries to put it down, but it's stuck to his hand.

Panicking, he rushes to the sink and turns on the hot water. The water helps him un-stick the bottle and he puts it down.

During this, he hears the ANNOUNCER on the living room TV.

ANNOUNCER

And we go into DOUBLE overtime!

Sighing, he takes another slug from the bottle.

EXT. VESTI BUILDING - DAY

It's a glorious, sunny day in the Bronx.

INT. VESTI BATHROOM - DAY

Jimmy preps himself for the day. His tie, perfectly knotted. He studies himself in the mirror. Something's off.

He picks up a pair of scissors and trims a runaway nose hair.

During this, Madelena appears in the doorway and sneers.

MADELENA

You lost, right? You must've lost otherwise you'd be gone.

Jimmy doesn't answer. He continues snipping.

MADELENA (CONT'D)

You can't fool me. I know what goes on in that fiendish brain of yours. You'd leave me in a minute if you won that money. Right? Admit it.

JIMMY

(calmly)

We out of milk. I pick some up.

He exits the bathroom and heads for the door.

MADELENA

Go after work so it stays cold. And  
come straight home, you hear?

EXT. ARTHUR AVENUE - DAY

Jimmy strolls along the block, tipping his hat 'Good Morning'  
to locals as he passes. He's indeed a very 'Dapper Dan.'

INT. CASTELLI'S MARKET - DAY

Jimmy enters the shop full of meat, cheese and pastries.

He walks toward the counter and passes FORTUNA BELLEZZA; a  
beautiful, 25 year old Italian native.

Jimmy tips his hat to her and smiles.

JIMMY

Bongiorno, bella Fortuna.

She smiles back while arranging pastry on display.

Benny and his wife ANGIE (70) finish with a customer. Jimmy  
pulls the lottery tickets out of his pocket.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

So sorry, Benny. We lose.

BENNY

I know. Turns out Angie played my  
numbers for me up by her Aunt.

(smiling at her)

I may have lost the lotto but I won  
the grand prize with her. Eh?

Angie blushes. Benny kisses her. Jimmy isn't moved.

JIMMY

You owe me forty five bucks.

BENNY

I just told you. Angie played the  
numbers for me. In Yonkers.

JIMMY

I play them too. So you owe me.

BENNY

But we lost. So forget about it.

JIMMY

I no want to 'forget about it.' I want-a my forty five bucks.

ANGIE

Benny, give him the money.

JIMMY

(annoyed)

Don't be taking your brother's side.

ANGIE

You owe it to him! So pay him!

BENNY

What are you? My accountant? I'll pay him back when I feel like it.

Jimmy puts the tickets on the counter and walks out.

Fortuna sadly watches him go. She picks up a plate of sfogliatelle (sea shell cookies) and follows him.

EXT. ARTHUR AVENUE - DAY

Annoyed, Jimmy moves toward his shop down the street. Fortuna chases after him, holding the cookies.

FORTUNA

Sigñore Vesti.

Jimmy stops and faces her. Not knowing what to say (or much English) she thrusts the cookies at him.

FORTUNA (CONT'D)

Here. Per favore.

Jimmy takes the plate and, amused, answers in Italian.

JIMMY

(subtitled)

I can not take this.

FORTUNA

(subtitled)

They shouldn't treat you like that.

JIMMY

(subtitled)

What can I do? They're my family.

(looking at the cookies)

Please. Take this back.

FORTUNA

(subtitled)

No. Is for you. I bake them myself.  
Is sfogliatelle. Sea Shells. Your  
sister says they're your favorite.

JIMMY

(subtitled)

Yes, they are. Thank you.

They swap tender smiles. After an awkward moment, Jimmy walks off toward his shop. Fortuna moves back toward Castelli's.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Jimmy unlocks the door. He puts down the cookies and raises the shade covering the window. Sunlight pours into the shop.

It's ancient and lovely. Black and white tile with two red leather chairs waiting for customers.

Jimmy removes his blazer and dons his crisp white coat. It makes him look more like a doctor than a barber.

He plugs in his electric razor and readies his tools. He looks up and sees a big black town car pull up outside.

EXT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Out of the car steps Don Carlo's sizable twin grandsons, Dino and Nino. They look identical but act very different.

Nino spots Tony Palmieri on a stoop across from the shop. The big lug angrily stares him down as he goes inside.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

The two behemoths enter. Nino pulls a list from his pocket.

NINO

Are you--?  
(reading from a list)  
Jimmy Vesti?

Jimmy's frightened. He knows they're mob.

JIMMY

Yeah. I mean, yes. That's-a me.

NINO  
Seeing as Vito is gone and all,  
we're looking for another person--

DINO  
A barber.

NINO  
Right. A barber to tend to our  
granddad. You know who that is?

JIMMY  
(trembling)  
Don Carlo?

NINO  
That's right. You might-a heard he  
had a stroke--

DINO  
A really bad stroke.

NINO  
So he can't talk or do a lot of  
what he used to do for himself.

DINO  
He can't talk. At all.

NINO  
I just said that.

DINO  
I thought it was worth repeating.  
(to Jimmy)  
He was born three minutes before me  
so he thinks he's smarter.

Nino shoots him a 'knock-it-off' look and continues.

NINO  
Anyway, Don Carlo likes to get a  
shave. Twice a week. And a trim  
when he needs it. But he wants  
someone who can be, uh, quiet. Uh--

DINO  
Discreet.

NINO  
(growing angry)  
Will you stop?

DINO  
You was struggling. Searching.

NINO  
Just stop.  
(to Jimmy)  
Anyway, it's good you have a shade.  
Don Carlo likes his privacy.

JIMMY  
Not to worry. My father teach me  
"What people say inna the chair,  
stays inna the chair."

NINO  
That's good. But, Don Carlo doesn't  
say nothing. He can't speak.

DINO  
At all!

Nino shoots Dino a silencing look. Then turns to Jimmy.

NINO  
We're checking out some local  
barbers and we was wonderin' if you  
want to be considered for the job.

Jimmy's overwhelmed. And a bit terrified.

JIMMY  
I don't know I--

NINO  
We pay well. \$200 a visit.

JIMMY  
I just-- I don't know. I got a lot  
of regulars. So I can't--

Dino bites into one of the sea shell cookie and yells!

DINO  
Jesus!

Reacting, Nino pulls out his gun and looks around.

NINO  
What?

DINO  
This cookie! It's amazing!

JIMMY

A girl I know make them. For me.

NINO

You got cookies here all the time?

The sight of Nino's gun frightens Jimmy into saying--

JIMMY

Yeah. Sure. Whatever you want.

Nino puts away his gun and makes a note on his list.

NINO

Don Carlo will like that. How's tomorrow, 10 AM? That work for you?

JIMMY

Yes. That's-a fine.

NINO

We'll bring our granddad by. If he likes you, the job is yours.

Dino holds out a sea shell masterpiece to Nino.

NINO (CONT'D)

You know I'm watching my weight.

DINO

But they're so freakin' good.

Nino takes it and they go. Jimmy's in shock. And pretty darned thrilled.

EXT. VESTI BUILDING - DAY

Jimmy bustles toward his apartment building.

INT. VESTI LIVING ROOM - DAY

He excitedly bursts in.

JIMMY

Mama! I got-a terrific news!

Madelena's on the couch, clipping Bruno's toenails.

BRUNO

Ow! Nana, that's my skin!

MADELENA

Hush up. I'm done having these talons tear up my sheets.

Seeing this deflates Jimmy. He moves toward the bedroom.

MADELENA (CONT'D)

Where you goin'? You're next.

Jimmy smells the air. He smiles and calls out.

JIMMY

You makin' sausage and peppers?

MADELENA

You stay away from that. That's for me and Bruno. I made you farina.

The old fella's smile fades. While Madelena works over Bruno's nails Jimmy sneaks into the kitchen.

INT. VESTI KITCHEN - DAY

Jimmy moves to the stove, angrily muttering to himself.

JIMMY

I don't wanna no fucking farina.

He raises the lid on the pan full of sausage and peppers. The delicious aroma fills the air. Jimmy deeply inhales.

From the other room, Bruno YELPS in pain.

MADELENA (O.S.)

Sit still. I'm almost done. Maybe if you cut your nails once in a while your wife will take you back.

BRUNO (O.S.)

I don't want that bitch back. Ow!

During this, Jimmy spears a sausage with a fork and takes a bite. He's in heaven. Madelena yells in to him.

MADELENA (O.S.)

You better not be eating those sausages. Doctor Lofaso told you to stay away from them.

Jimmy defiantly takes another bite. Chewing ferociously, he twirls the last bit with peppers and lustily gobbles it up.

MADELENA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 And those peppers give you gas. You  
 start tootin' up a storm and you'll  
 be out sleeping on the couch again.

Jimmy wipes his mouth and scoops a big dollop of farina into  
 a bowl. He tops it with butter and goes back inside.

INT. VESTI LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jimmy holds up a forkful of farina so Madelena can see.

MADELENA  
 That's good for you. And it'll keep  
 that poop-shute of yours quiet.

Jimmy sits at the small dining table and quietly eats. His  
 wife moves Bruno's feet from her lap.

MADELENA (CONT'D)  
 Go wash your feet so we can sit  
 down to supper.

BRUNO  
 I'll wash them after.

MADELENA  
 You'll wash now or you get nothing!

Moaning, Bruno heads toward the bathroom. Madelena puts away  
 her clippers. Jimmy clears his throat.

JIMMY  
 Mama, I have something important to  
 tell you. Two men came in today--

MADELENA  
 (ignoring him)  
 You got to help Bruno get a job.  
 Something good. Something steady.

JIMMY  
 No.

MADELENA  
 Why not? He's your grandson.

JIMMY  
 He's also a lazy, no good bum. Let  
 him find his own damn job.