

(From the life of Joseph Guarnerius (del Jesu) -- 1687-1744 --
one of the ^{two} greatest makers of the violin the world has ever known)

PROLOGUE

A summer evening in the small medieval town of Cremona, North Italy, the year 1738.

The opening dissolve shows an ancient square known as the Piazza Domenica, a gay, bustling little market-place, nestling devoutly in the protecting shadows of the towering Cathedral Domenica, from which it receives its name. Joined to the great Cathedral by a high wall is the Convent of the same name, with its ever constant stream of black garbed nuns passing to and fro through the great gates into the little square beyond, and contrasting sharply with the colorful throng in the market-place, and more than ever today, as it is market day, and both noble and peasant have come from far and near to barter and trade . . . gossip, and carry on many an innocent flirtation. As we watch the gay throng, we are suddenly conscious of a voice floating high and sweet above the air of the thronged piazza -- haunting, and with a devil-may-care-gaiety. We see a group of peasants in the foreground, one of whom impulsively swings his lute into position, as he listens to the song, and softly accompanies the singer, to the nodding approval of his friends, nearby. As we turn to search for the invisible singer, we overhear one good burthen remark to another:
"The Master sings! Another great instrument born today! For

ever have we known him to sing like that upon the completion of a new masterpiece. Devil or Saint, that he is, what matters it when a man gives birth to the voice of angels instead of a woman!" We follow their eyes, and the camera takes us through the crowd to the far side of the square, where we find ourselves standing before a cluster of ancient low buildings, and in the centre of these, before a large open window, with its diamond studded panes opening outward, sits our singer, smiling gaily as he hums and keeps time to his song. Our attention is at once rivetted on that black curly head, as it bends over some unseen object in his lap. (Here the camera brings us closer, and we see that it is a violin, complete save for the top which the master holds in his hand, ready to join with the other half.)

The song suddenly ceases, as he turns to shout triumphantly over his shoulder -- "Mario! Vittore! Come quick and see what a master you have, to create so sweet an instrument! Verily, it shall be a very Fountain of Song down throughout the ages, and who knows, may even sing that great sinner Guarnerius through the golden gates of Heaven itself!" (Here, the smile fades quickly from the dark face, as he glances quickly toward the Cathedral and surreptitiously crosses himself, and while doing so -- with closed eyelids -- fails to see a great butterfly, dazzling in its golden beauty, float gently through the open window and hang, like a great jewel in the warm sunlight, poised for a quivering instant in all its gleaming splendor above the open half of the violin in Guarnerius's hands -- then gently, down, down . . . until it comes to rest in the heart of the violin, its great golden wings seeming to utter a sighing sound, as though at last they had found a worthy resting place.

As we watch, the man Guarnerius raises his eyelids, carefully

joins the two pieces of wood together, still wholly unconscious of the great creature within, and we are suddenly given to understand that with the death of the butterfly, its soul has passed into this great violin, bequeathing to it an added glory that shall live eternally, and sing its glorious message through this world, and beyond . . .

Here the dissolve shows us Guarnerius reverently holding the great instrument aloft, high in both hands, before the open windows, an unearthly gleam of joy and triumph in his eyes, while his apprentices, no less affected, gather close, in trembling adoration.

END OF PROLOGUE

NOTE: Voice of Guarnerius must be baritone, and his solo, a gay, popular air of the day. Good effect if groups of laughing peasants, little by little join in on the chorus, more and more instruments (lutes, guitars, violins carried on the backs of strolling players) are swung into position, until the volume of sound swells out into one mighty chorus. The whole square rocking and swaying to the melody. Guarnerius leading the song, and the peasants taking up the chorus. Otherwise, music incidental throughout prologue -- a motif, perhaps, for the butterfly, as it floats into the window . . . something of great purity and tenderness . . . and gradually adding a deep note of tragedy, as the butterfly is walled up forever in the great instrument. Music carried through to the end of the scene, as Guarnerius holds the completed violin aloft before the open window, as though seeking benediction from the great Cathedral directly opposite -- his apprentices at his feet. Music here increasing in volume, until it swells to a mighty climax, expressing an almost unearthly joy, triumph, and religious adoration.

Workshop of Guarnerius, some days later --

Opening dissolve shows us Guarnerius quietly seated at his work-bench, moody, silent, and obviously in the throes of some great mental torment, while his apprentices work feverishly in the background, well knowing their master's mood, and greatly fearing what the storm may bring this time. We see them stirring the bubbling varnish in the great iron kettles, studying rolls of parchment, and running their hands over age-old blocks of wood -- maple, sycamore, and pine -- which the master has cut and brought in, himself, from his secret forest. An ominous silence reigns in the little shop, the daylight fades, and we see the apprentice silently enter from a back room with lighted candles, which he places on tables and work-benches. As he turns to glance anxiously at the forbidding back of his master, a sound comes to his ears; a horse at full gallop clattering on the ancient cobblestones in the square, until, with an oath, the rider has pulled up at the very door and is pounding for admittance. The door is flung wide, and a shrill voice belonging to the old neighbor of Guarnerius is crying: "Master! Master! A courier from His Majesty the King of Spain!" Great commotion from all but Guarnerius, who, with a great effort, rouses himself, and rises to his feet and turns to greet the travel-stained but richly dressed emissary from the Spanish sovereign, who after a courteous though haughty presentation of his credentials, hands Guarnerius a roll of parchment which Guarnerius unrolls and reads by candle-light. It is an order from the King of Spain for a quartet of the master's finest instruments, to be delivered in person at the Spanish court, in time for Her Majesty's birthday, but five months hence -- the fee far beyond anything the Master has ever before received for his instruments, and best of all offering a chance to see this great Spain about

which he has heard so much. Beautiful women and untold wealth and grandeur beyond his wildest dreams.

This dissolve shows us Guarnerius in a state of almost savage excitement, seeing his apprentices scampering for wine, rich food, and friends with whom to celebrate his great good fortune.

Later -- same evening -- midnight. The camera shows us the moon-flooded Piazza Domenica, deserted now, and with a deathly stillness pervading all but the small house of Guarnerius, where the lights twinkle merrily. Bursts of merriment come to our ears, and bits of song, from time to time. As the camera brings us closer, we see the interior of the Master's small livingroom, ten or twelve companions of both sexes grouped about an ancient table piled high with viands, and everywhere great flagons of wine. Great revelry prevails as they drunkenly toast the Master, who sits strangely quiet and preoccupied at the head of the table. He has drunk much, but his brain remains clear. Two violins for the Spanish King's quartet he already has, locked safely within his great chests, but the other two . . . ? And but five months' time, and the wood to be procured from a carefully selected tree in his secret forest, several leagues away, plus the three weeks overland journey to the Spanish capitol. Guarnerius silently slips from their midst, calls to his apprentice for a horse and a lantern, and rides rapidly away into the night.

Following is a brief outline of the next few months in the Master's career:

~~On the night he slipped away from his companions to visit the secret wood, arriving around midnight, he makes his way cautiously by flickering lantern-light to the heart of the wood where he carefully selects a few choice logs from a hidden cache. While thus occupied, he turns suddenly, and his hand comes in contact~~

The following dissolve shows us the Master ~~arriving~~ arriving in his secret forest. It is midnight, and as he makes his way by flickering lantern light to the heart of the wood, he notes that a band of gypsies have camped nearby; the glow of their fires can be seen through the trees, and bursts of song and merriment come to his ears on the ^warm night air. Cautiously, he kneels, selects a few choice logs from a hidden cache, and while thus occupied, turns suddenly, starts, as his hand comes in contact with that of another, and quick as light, he pulls the unknown into the sputtering circle of the lantern light. Thinking that he has been spied upon by one of the many rival violin makers, who may have followed him, he is surprised to find that his prisoner is a young woman, obviously a gypsy, and of great beauty. She tells him that she belongs to the gypsy caravan, seen in the distance, en route to Spain, and that straying idly from camp, she saw his lantern, and consumed by curiosity, brazenly followed him, wondering who could be abroad at such an hour and at such a place.

Catching a glimpse of his face, she recognized the great Cremonese master, as he had several times been pointed out to her on her visits to Cremona. She assures him earnestly that his secret is ^Safe with her, and that she desires only to serve him. He learns that this wild and lovely girl, Maryanka by name, lives only to play the violin, herself, and when he shrugs, smilingly remarking that all gypsies play the violin, and all in the wild gypsy fashion which is not true art, she angrily points to the glowing fires in the distance and bids him follow her.

She will show him that though but a gypsy, she has the soul of an artist, and may some day be a great one. Laughing gaily, he shoulders his wood and follows her, reminding himself that, after all, this is a night of nights -- that this girl is beautiful,

whether she can play or no, and besides, what better way to celebrate than in a gypsy camp. They are next shown emerging into the firelit circle. Guarnerius is greeted by the gypsies in high good humor, while Maryanka proudly calls for her violin.

The following scene shows us Maryanka playing, a song of love and longing, with a throbbing passion and beauty of tone such as Guarnerius has never heard before. Where does she come from, and who can she be, to play like that? Then, as he listens in sharp amazement, his eyes never leaving her face, and his blood on fire, the song breaks into a wild lament, intensified and swelled by the accompanying guitars and gypsy voices, soaring higher and higher, with an incredible purity and sweetness that rides the cool night wind like a celestial chorus. A sudden break . . . a throbbing long high note . . . and the song is ended. The gypsies are instantly wrapped in silence.

Seemingly unaware, Maryanka makes her way to Guarnerius and kneels before him. The Master, deeply shaken, can only ask in wondering amazement, where she learned to play like that, and nods understandingly, when she replies, "Didn't you know? You and I have had the same Master!"

That evening at the gypsy camp proves to be the first of many meetings, as Guarnerius, touched by the crude instrument on which she played, allows her to play, day after day, on his last great violin, his perfect "Fountain", and whether it is the soul of the dead butterfly within, or the magic of her playing, the tone of this violin is like no other, and he sorrowfully dreads the hour of parting with it to the Spanish King.

The days pass, joyously for Maryanka and Guarnerius, happily unconscious of the jealous envy of a rival maker of lesser fame, one Guiseppe Maligano, who, living near by, watches with ever

growing rage the bustling activity of his great rival across the square. Why should this Guarnerius, spawn of the devil himself, in spite of his professed piety, acquire this last great good fortune? A whole quartet at once for the great Philip of Spain, riches, fame, and the power to enslave women -- the lovely Maryanka, gypsy or no, ever at his side, while he, Maligano, sits idly in his shop, disposing of his violins at half their actual value, and is years older, at that! His rage mounts daily, and is brought to a peak by the sly suggestion of his friend and neighbor, one Pietro Amali, also a violin-maker, and no friend to Guarnerius.

He suggests that if but a way could be found, in which to prevent the fine Guarnerius from completing the King's order in the allotted time, say a sudden café brawl, with an accompanying jail-sentence . . . then their score would be settled. Disgrace, ruin for Guarnerius, and loss forever of any Sovereign's favor. We leave them here, plotting and drinking, far into the night.

The following dissolve shows us Maryanka and Guarnerius, celebrating the completion of the third instrument, some time later. Seated together, in a small café on the piazza, Guarnerius in high spirits, drinking deeply from a great decanter of wine before him pays little attention to the sudden appearance of his two rivals, Maligano and Amali, until with cool insolence, the two conspirators seat themselves at his table, on either side of Maryanka, and begin making love to her.

Furiously, Guarnerius orders them to leave, and when they refuse to do so, in spite of Maryanka's pleading, as she instinctively senses the true nature of their actions, the Master hurls himself upon Maligano and a fight ensues, while his friend, Amali, slips quickly outside, and loudly calls to gendarmes.

The next scene is the following morning. Guarnerius has been thrown

into jail, with a two-months sentence, and is here seen frantically pacing his cell, beseeching the jailor to release him so that he may finish the last violin of the King's quartet on time, promising to serve his sentence later on his return from Spain, and assuring him of a flattering personal reward, as well. The jailor curtly refuses, reminding him that too much wine and a hot temper have landed him here before, and that violins or no violins, he must serve his sentence.

The gypsy girl visits him, later in the day, in great distress, and confirms his suspicions that the whole thing is a plot to bring disgrace and ruin upon him, and that if he cannot go to his workshop, his workshop must come to him. The time is short, and the last violin must be completed on time.

Little by little she unfolds her plan, which is soon put into effect. By bribing the now sympathetic jailor, she smuggles the tools for violin making into Guarnerius's cell. The Master once more buries himself in work, lightened only by the faithful visits of Maryanka, bringing him more tools, food, and gay conversation. She has come to love him with a blind, consuming passion, anticipating his every wish, and Guarnerius, during the long sleepless nights of his prison life, warns himself that this must be but a passing fancy, that he must not admit the deep contentment of her presence, nor the wild, answering leap of his blood, when she touches his hand. He has work to do, in which a wife can play no part -- violins, adventure, and all Spain before him. He must put this girl out of his heart . . . and yet . . .

Weeks pass, the happiest he has ever known; Guarnerius has been released from prison, the last violin completed, and Guarnerius is about to set forth on his long journey to Spain. His preparations completed, he seeks Maryanka at their meetingplace to bid her

farewell, and finds a pitiful note instead, pleading that she could not endure a final parting, that their caravan leaves shortly for Spain, and beseeches him to be true to their love, unavowed though it has been, and that one day they will meet again.

Guarnerius, with his two apprentices and four Spanish soldiers to protect him from highwaymen, are next seen rambling over the rough highway on their way to the Spanish capitol, his massive coach piled high with luggage and precious violins. They are within a few days, now, of their destination, and Guarnerius is thinking that Maryanka, too, must have passed this way, and that surely they will find one another before many days have passed and will again know happiness together.

Two days later, the lumbering coach is shown rumbling up before a picturesque Spanish Inn. It is dusk, and the late October nights are cold. The travellers, weary and stiff, note the austere beauty of the Spanish countryside, contrasting so sharply with the warm twinkling lights and shouts of gay laughter coming from the friendly Inn.

The inn-keeper, large, round-faced and jolly, bids them welcome, in his booming voice, and we next see the little company gratefully warming themselves before the open fire, so large that a calf may be seen, revolving slowly on an iron spit, sizzling appetizingly and sending out enticing odors to the hungry travellers. The gossippy inn-keeper, convinced by the haughty mien of Guarnerius, and the number of his attendants, that this last guest must be of noble birth, confides that a great good fortune has come to his humble inn, and that if Guarnerius accepts, he shall be invited to sup this night with one of the greatest ladies in all Spain, as well as the one most famed for her beauty, none other than the Marquesa del Redondo, who is escorted by her serving woman, and a

handsome Spanish captain of the guards with four soldiers.

Guarnerius, however, is thinking sadly of Maryanka, and makes a quick toilette, unimpressed by fellow travellers of such high rank,

Rudely refusing the invitation of the great lady to sup with her company, he dines early and goes for a long walk, instead, returning only when he supposes they must all have retired for the night.

As he pauses before a window, on his return, he stops abruptly and stares in sharp amazement at the figure reclining in a great chair before the open fire, a glorious blonde woman with the face of a madonna and of unbelievable loveliness and grace, smiling lazily into the eyes of a haughty young nobleman at her feet.

Guarnerius enters, his eyes on her face. She turns -- their eyes meet -- he bows. She, sensing that this must be the traveller who dared refuse her invitation to supper, returns his bow coldly, but Guarnerius is handsome, with a strange attraction she has never met before, and Carlos, with his everlasting protestations of love is beginning to bore her. For weeks he has proved a most amusing lover, but now -- After all, she will soon be back with her old husband, tiresome and stupid, although he is the King's Minister and one of the greatest grandees in Spain. All this passes through her mind as she watches the interesting stranger through her long lashes. It is not long before it is Guarnerius, instead of Carlos, who is sitting at her feet, her fascination proving so great that the emotional Italian is swept completely away, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Maryanka, his violins, Cremona, and even his religion, being temporarily forgotten in his sudden passion for this golden woman before him.

So engrossed are they that neither notices a ^{shadow} ~~spot~~ at the window near them. It is Maryanka, en route to the Spanish capitol with

the gypsy caravan, camped but a short distance from the Inn. She has been watching the highway daily for the coach of Guarnerius, Haunting the Inn, to the fury of the gypsy band, word comes to her at last that he has arrived, and reaching the Inn late that evening, she is in time to witness the above scene. Joy turns to shocked despair, as she senses the state of affairs at a glance; she watches, with death in her heart, while Guarnerius brings his precious instruments from his room adjoining the one in which they are sitting, notes the veiled indifference in the eyes of the Marchesa, and shortly afterward, hears the lady invite Guarnerius to travel the remaining distance in her splendid coach, hinting at many happy hours together in Madrid.

They are abruptly interrupted by the furiously jealous Carlos, and Guarnerius, pretending fatigue, begs permission to retire -- but not to his room, as they suppose, but to a curtained recess under the stairs where he watches the tableau before him, undetected. Carlos upbraids the silent woman before him, and as she shrugs indifferently to his pleadings, begs her to remember the happy hours they have had together, the song he has composed for her. Then, seeing her eyes grow softer, he begins to sing, in his beautiful tenor voice, their song . . . This Love I Bear . . . while Maryanka, watching from her post outside, ponders a way to bring Guarnerius back to her, and apprise him of the fact that she is there.

Silently, she steals into the Inn, slips into the Master's room, unobserved, and out again, with the beautiful Fountain and bow under her arm. Once more she takes up her post beneath the window and softly begins to play, ~~thru~~ her first song of love and longing, the song commemorating their first hours together, and their last.

(Here, the tenor solo of Carlos must be so orchestrated that it

merges into a duet with Maryanka's song, though two totally different pieces of music, giving the audience to understand that these two are seeking to bring their beloveds back to them, through song.)

As the last note dies away, and Guarnerius makes no sign that he has heard, the gypsy girl silently replaces the violin, slips back, out into the shadows once more, and is swallowed up in the night.

The following scene is one showing Guarnerius, the Marquesa and Carlos, in the lady's coach, nearing Madrid. The Master and his lady are gay and obviously wrapped up in one another, while Carlos fumes in his corner . . .

The next dissolve shows the arrival of Guarnerius at the palace of the King. Much pomp and ceremony as the Cremonese Master is ushered into the courtroom, followed by his quaking apprentices, carrying the magnificent violins.

apprentices carrying the magnificent violins. He receives a gracious welcome and gains courage at the sight of his Spanish lady smiling proudly down at him from her seat near the royal couple. To Guarnerius's amazement, the King suggests his accepting an amount lower than the sum agreed upon; the King argues that his court violinist is ill, and cannot try the violins to the court's satisfaction, and that he will be unable to tell the true worth of the instruments. The matter is argued before the entire court -- aptly, by Guarnerius, as the injustice of it dawns upon him. To the great amusement of the courtiers, who whisper among themselves in delighted amazement that this Italian maker shows not only courage but a ready wit, and that, dressed properly, would have a most fascinating appearance, Guarnerius notes the smiling faces around him and the amused eye of the King, and brings the argument to an abrupt close by asking one more audience, stating that he, Guarnerius has a far more worthy artist to play his great violins, than the court musician, and that by tomorrow night he will have her at the palace, so that all may hear and judge for themselves.

The following scenes are of Guarnerius frantically searching for Maryanka in the gypsy camps on the outskirts of the city. He finds her at last, and finally induces her to accompany him, so that she may be made presentable to play before their Majesties.

Just before being summoned to play, standing in a small room off the court, in a magnificent costume of gypsy design, Maryanka is startled by the appearance of the beautiful Spanish woman, who warns her of her peril if she does not leave the palace at once and cut herself off from Guarnerius forever. Aware of Guarnerius's deep feeling for the gypsy girl, she has become intensely jealous, and warns Maryanka that she will suffer death if she does not leave at once. Maryanka proudly defies her, and warns her that she knows

all about her affair with Carlos, and of other affairs which might prove most interesting to the old Marquis her husband. As the blonde woman furiously withdraws Maryanka is summoned and begins to play before the King and assembled court. She plays as never before, and as she plays, notes that Guarnerius has eyes for her alone.

In the midst of her triumph, she meets the sinister, threatening eye of her golden rival, who surreptitiously makes a threatening gesture toward herself and Guarnerius. At the end of her first number, Maryanka coolly takes up the beautiful Fountain, once more, and this time plays Carlos's love-song, turning straight to the hoblewoman, who stands pale and visibly moved beside her elderly husband. The love-song is the one that Carlos had sung that night, at the Inn, and Maryanka plays it as a direct threst, her eyes never leaving the beautiful pallid face in front of her. Then the wild gypéy Chardash, and then the concert is ended, and she curtseys in gypsy fashion before Their Majesties and the court.

The King is completely charmed and overwhelmed by the beauty^{and playing} of this girl, and announces that he, Guarnerius, shall be paid twice the ammount than the original sum agreed. In the midst of the tumult and confusuion, Guarnerius and Maryanka seek to steal away alone together, but are waylaid and confronted at a side entrance by the infuriated Carlos, who seeks to kill them both, vowing that, between them, they have brought dëshonor to himself and the woman he loves.

In the duel which follows, Carlos is killed, and Guarnerius must fly for his life. Maryanaks, heartbrokenly provides the horse and provisions for his flight, from the gypsy camp, and after a tragic scene, tales the magnificent Fountain, and plays her farewell to him. He must go alone, and the last dissolve shows

her high on a hill, in the bright moonlight, lighting his way
with their song, a promise that they shall meet again, either
in this world or beyond.