

# Giacomo's Muse

Douglas Macari / Philip Henderson  
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## ACT I

Nightingale (Dancer), foraging for food among the reeds, is alarmed by the sound of human activity. Startled, she flies up into range of the guns. Tragically, she is struck and falls to earth, mortally wounded. A young woman (Doria) appears, sees the stricken bird, is horrified and begins to run towards it to comfort it.

**Giac:** *What troubles the mind first and foremost is what taxes the heart in the last resort. Can each hold fast the strength within to kiss the cheek of Tragedy when offered forth, with calm and measured taut humanity? Such thin veneer of human construct is, the fear, no match against that stranger's coarse sardonic leer; insistent lips that hiss, 'Just walk with me to chaos, know with me oblivion and there all life undone'. In that encounter who could fail to see in fading shadows cloud put out the sun, as Winter's bristled chin brushed fleetingly the startled throat of Spring's fresh destiny?*

*where are you, Signor Giacomo?  
G'... 'i'... 'a'...ahhhhh, there you are Giacomo, Maestro mio.*

*Tell me; what facts unfound remain, what lies unfounded in your name, what secret truth lies buried still behind those hooded eyes. What meant, tell me, that silence rent with notes unsounded as you came to leave your final testament ungrounded but for sighs?*

*(He initiates a Google Translate search...)*

*Dimmi, voglio sapere, Giacomo, ho bisogno sapere queste cose. La tua vita era l'opera, e l'opera era la vita che scegliești.  
Parlami, Giacomo. Parlami.*

**Giacomo:** Oh-peh-ra... op-peh-ra... in Italiano!!

**Giac:** Perché?

**Giacomo:** Why?! l'Opera è Italiana. It simply must be Italian!

**Giac:** It is I who will decide! I too, am Italian...well,...mezzo.

**Giacomo:** - Half? Ma, Signore, noi siamo tutti solo mezzo Italiani . There is yet far to go, but I do not have the English language.

**Giac:** And, yet, we converse in English, my mother tongue.

**Giacomo:** Si, la madrelingua, that much is true, Signore. And mother tongue sets straight man's path on terra firma but at his mother's breast imparerà d'amore. And there too at mother's knee prime verities are learned, soul-implanted footprints set to chronicle his story. Mother, wife, lover; this triad sets a man spinning.

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Theirs the tools to soften rock, to turn the wildest breed. Sons to fathers pass their lives, fools to dream of winning cuori di madre, that futile quest paid greatest heed.  
For this heart forgiveness no limit knows for sinning.  
Allora, Inghilterra è casa vostra. E, la vostra Patria, e il vostro cuore? Where is your heart?  
Dimmi, dov'è Signore?

**Giac:** 'My heart is my own affair. You are my character!

**Giacomo:** Indeed I am. And what would you have us ...be...this character of ours?

**Giac:** Don't be smart.

**Giacomo:** Smart? But I am, as you see, am I not, Signore, smart?  
You, on the other hand... Or is this, our character, to be a dull and uninteresting fellow with no redeeming features? Surely.....Maestro, that would not do, it would not do at all. No, not at all would it do.

**Giac:** That is for me to decide.

**Giacomo:** Indeed, indeed, ...er,...on your character, signore, ...or mine? Are you to decide on your own character? Can you do that? Does one's god-like power of invention extend to self-creation or only to fictional... quasi-historical mortals, just such as I?

**Giac:** In time, we shall see. For now, there is much work to do.

**Giacomo:** Lavoro.

**Giac:** What?

**Giacomo:** Lavoro... Work...there is Op-eh-ra!

**Giac:** Opera, yes, there is opera. For you, for me, there is opera.'

**Giacomo:** Where there is work, so too is life - the gods are with me. I was...horizontal and now  
And here...now... certainly there is life. A lavoro! To work!

**Giac:** So it begins, this work of creation.  
Here, a clean sheet is horizontal set. Vertical marks on pristine horizons.  
One man standing as a man of some note. One notable man. Man and note are one; on key, in perfect accord with his world. The chord is cut!  
There he stands alone, alone in his world; vertex against parallel horizons,  
foot set firmly in the world. What delight!

**Giacomo:** No blank sheet accounts for men such as I  
I am upright, gifted, in search of role.  
Subtlety, nuance take grit in the shell.  
I breathe, have life, have I choice that is clear? Feelings, intention, some stories to tell  
Who would deny me now this, my idea?  
I am vertical. In house of senses though window is eye.  
It is fire in the belly that would melt ice in the soul.

**Giac/Giacomo:** Music, in visual manifestation, mirrors man

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populates by syntheses; rising, falling, clusters,  
pausing, darts and weaves in time forms keys, families, tribes, nations, peoples- moves in  
common purpose to change the world...in sound. Music, Maestro! Music!

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**Elvira:** Giacomo...(sleepily). ...Giacomo!

**Giac:** Yes?

**Giacomo:** Si

**Elvira:** Cosa stai facendo?

**Giacomo:** My loving wife. She misses me.

**Giac:** Yes. Go to her. We will speak again later. Giacomo?

**Giacomo:** Giacomo?

**Giac:** Not beloved?

**Giacomo:** Mi Scusi?

**Giac:** Your wife...you described her as, loving. "My loving wife"

**Giacomo:** Do not presume...

**Giac:** Truth....there must be truth in life.

**Giacomo:** ...to put words into my mouth, young Giacomo.

**Giac:** Tricky! You live, Giacomo, thus you choose. To live IS to choose.

**Elvira:** Where have you been? Cultivating one of your little 'gardens', no doubt!

**Giacomo:** Tesoro? I am a mighty hunter of wild fowl, operatic libretti and attractive women.

**Elvira:** And I... I am Santa Maria... Eloisa... Francesca da Rimini; keeper of broken dreams  
propagated promises and lost boys! A woman knows of such things.

**Giacomo:** You confuse dreams with promises, Tesoro. Dreams, the unconscious, fantasy -  
these are, for the artist, his terroir, the tools of his trade. Constantly, he must dig, break new  
ground, sift, seed, nurture and - so long as the muses approve - harvest the fruits of his  
creation. But, promise...promise is not real. Promise is not now - merely one possible future.  
What matters is the ever-moving, ever-changing, NOW!

**Elvira:** So, I must wait for that which was mine, give up that which never was and remember that which may never be. There is your land of promise!

*Beneath the earth - patient, still - muted beauty locked within suspended animation lies. Restrained, reserved, awaits its fill; the Lily root arrests with time its mighty, potent spring. Uncoiled, banner proud, the world in studied admiration sighs; yet crushed, still yields a soothing balm against the serpent's sting. Where lesser blooms may idly spray ephemeral fragrance on the breeze in brazen speculation, Madonna Lily bides her day, waits to see which way a fickle wind may set his bearing. She nurtures in her fibrous soul defence to tribulation, yet keeps alive the sweetest air was ever there for sharing. "Mea culpa....peccávi nimis cogitátione, verbo, ópere...et omissióne:..... mea culpa, mea culpa,.... mea máxima culpa."*

**Giacomo:** Tesoro. Cosa c'è? Perchè adesso? Perchè piangi?

**Elvira:** Will you always protect me? You were my hero, my liberator, my rock. I was trapped - you released me. Now, your heart only is the rock, it is gone from me. I am locked out and alone, ungrounded in this world.

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**Giacomo:** This is your doing!

**Giac:** Really? You think that?

**Giacomo:** Vero. Certainly.

**Giac:** But, mine is a work of imagination. I am a turn, no more, in a path you may never travel. Surely these things, ...affairs, result from your own choices.

**Giacomo:** Yes, action, intention - these, it is true...these you may set at my door. But, this cruel, dark mess which besets me, paralyses my work, sullies my reputation, renders me mute; this is not of my doing. Perhaps this is your work. Where has it, your opera, taken me?

**Giac:** Why do you speak so?

**Giacomo:** I am your 'character', you say; a mere creature of your creation - over which I have no control - played for the benefit of who knows whom? Perhaps it is you that is my character; that part of each of us wrought, poco a poco, from the crucible of our lives. Which of us is wont truly to know his better part before time renders such acquaintance futile?

**Giac:** It is true, you are my character, but you "breathe", you "have life" - you said it yourself. Perhaps I am that better part of you; your true character, formed from your own thoughts, trials and errors. Am I to be held responsible for paths already taken? No! These words, this 'now', these only are mine. However, though I cannot change what is, and what has been, perhaps I can have bearing on what follows. The stage is mine. This is my work, my 'opera'.

**Giacomo:** But opera is mine. My life IS opera! Without opera, ... I... I am nothing.

**Giac:** You would choose... nothing?

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**Giacomo:** Choose!? Where is choice in this world? My course here was set from the very first, my destiny etched in this Mother Earth by searing Tuscan sun.

*From this Tuscan sun, nature's solitary gift, was sprung humanity. Reaching forth to grasp that spark from Titan's rays, Dante, with divine intent, took words and forged the mother tongue whilst Giotto in his first circle scribed the world in perfect phase. B'neath this gold-illuminated dome of cradled creativity, mighty Buonarotti worked his genius to unveil incarcerated effigies - hero, slave and muse - who, surviving deep the sleep of aeons in Carrara's stony gaol, awoke in time to offer-up their existential dues to he who set perfection free from petrified captivity.*

*This Tuscan sun, sublime creator, watchful sire, father to a thousand sons, has chosen now to set his beam upon this faithless Tuscan son in his desire to mine once more that richly laid and glorious seam of lustrous, time-honed harmony and bitter sweet notation, for that unique light to gleam once more, refracted through the prism of three-hundred years of carefully wrought selection; dramas grand and humbly staged and lovingly enacted, mimesis carved from life in theatrical projection, all encompassed here within this Tuscan, solar nation.*

*Adesso! Proprio adesso... quando io sono abbandonato. Now that sacred mantle, Opera, has deserted me. I am nothing now. Destiny has rendered this songbird mute. No more free to choose than the creature in that cage... automaton. If that bird could but speak.*

**Giac:** Then let it speak...

**Giacomo:** The creature was an unexpected visitor in early Spring that year. It would sing each night in a tree close to the girl's own window.

**Giac:** Doria?

**Giacomo:** She would relate it all next day with such delight. I suppose she thought I'd think her more... cultured.

**Giac:** And did you?

**Giacomo:** I was amused... One day, she came to me quite distraught - the bird was dead! She had found it thrashing around - it's wing shattered. A hapless victim of the guns, no doubt - the guns. She nursed it, of course, loved it, one might even say. I felt for the girl. She was beside herself. She was distraught. And I thought...Yes, I thought...well, it might...It has the finest French movement. And then... She became so devoted. I was amused.

**Giac:** You mocked her?

**Giacomo:** No...I...No, I was touched. She insisted on naming it. She called the creature, Musetta. Musetta. It was, of course, absurd. The thing was merely an automaton! How could one become so... attached... to a stuffed bird, devoid of sense...of feeling?

**Giac:** How, indeed?

**Giacomo:** Who are you? What do you seek?

**Giac:** What I seek, Giacomo, is your truth.

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**Giacomo:** My truth?.. truth! I am my truth!

**Giac:** To me you are the truth that was. Help me, Giacomo, to help you live again that truth.

**Giacomo:** Help me? 'Live again'?! What does it mean? To what end?

**Giac:** To the end of that which torments you. Must we not all face our demons in the end, trace again those steps which made possible transient escape? Take me to the heart of it, take me to Doria.

**Giacomo:** Ahh...si, quella sventurata ragazza; così brutalmente rovinata! She is gone...gone...gone! Would that I could undo that hideous crime. A sweet butterfly, crushed to dust.

**Giac:** And yet her memory lives. As does yours - and as, in time, so too will my my own. In time, all futures are realised past futures!

*Into the labyrinth, time marches hard on the heel of memory; Clio's army in full retreat. Custom's children, we run toward sound of drum and peel of bell that heralds every battle won; defeat once more for legions of dull forgetfulness. Such Pyrrhic gains expose those unprotected flanks, revealing truth behind the lines of history's shield. The poet's task, to prise apart those serried ranks, extract the cowering hostage and essence yield. Parted atoms seek always new togetherness.*

Together, let us warm-over these still, cold bones of history. Take me now to Doria.

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Nightingale's dance: Dancer performs her Automaton Dance; at first mechanistic, giving way to a flourishing and fluid flight of fancy before returning to the mechanistic and repetitive figures.

**Doria:** My little friend, you have such tales to tell. I could come back later if...

**Giacomo:** No...No...please...

**Doria:** *My step is light, my path weaves here and there. My heart this day on wings of coloured dust is borne aloft like breath, without a care for any 'may not', 'shall not', 'will' or 'must', nor even grinding pain of acid scold. This mutilating stain of broken trust would poison every bloom and life withhold if granted licence here to hawk its wares. My heart this day resolves to fly away. My step is light, my path weaves here and there.*

**Giacomo:** Doria, life appears to suit you well today. This light demeanour lifts me and inspires.

**Doria:** Well, if it pleases you so, then so be it.

**Giacomo:** Indeed so it pleases me. Such symmetry of language too is foundation for music

**Doria:** Foundation? Symmetry? I know nought of these. Neatness, cleanliness, obedience to good form, these are basic watchwords keeping order here

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**Giacomo:** Yes indeed...and you prove the point perfectly. Words - form and substance - are masters to music; music, servant to emotion. Dio! Was there ever more noble a serf than this?

**Doria:** Music? Servants? Such society I keep! As for masters - one more is two too many! Which this way or that is a young maid to turn?

**Giacomo:** Whichever she would choose, her step serves us well. From rhythm in her limbs fresh harmony flows. A foundling melody, with softest murmur stirs. Its cry too, for nurture, cannot go unheeded.

**Doria:** Make of it what you will, sir, make it what you will.

**Giacomo:** My will sits ill with destiny, Doria. Duty, there's the thing; you know it well I should imagine.

**Doria:** Faith! I know it no better than does this poor bird. In truth, who but Nature wields the whip with such zeal.

**Giacomo:** Brava! Well said, Doria. Well spoken indeed. What tales from this bird, one muses, could it speak?

**Doria:** Oh, it speaks alright, though no ear hears so well as the heart, sacred vessel of life's story.

**Giacomo:** Ha! Such words - to the saltiest soul, true balm! But this story's surely done, the vessel broken?

**Doria:** Some might say there's nought to count when life's all done: slate wiped clean by sweep of some indifferent palm.

**Giacomo:** I've heard this said, Doria, so often spoken. Yet for you, I sense, there's more to this dull sum?

**Doria:** 'Tis true. What mockery of life's suffering were each to draw, vice and virtue, same respect. Could hope survive such callous calculation?

**Giacomo:** Tell me then, to which spare creed of reckoning this old sceptic might, slate in hand, genuflect and with vain, slender prospect gain salvation?

**Doria:** I know only of the Virgin's one true creed taught me at the knee of our own good padre...

**Giacomo:** Beings both quite as odd as flying fish to me!

**Doria:** (continuing)...in which soul takes flight as propagating seed in an other-worldly garden, lush they say, as could we any Eden ever wish to be.

**Giacomo:** Fortune-favoured seeds no doubt of sound renown?

**Doria:** If Fortune be the name of good mother plant.

**Giacomo:** But journey less auspicious awaits that breed I fear who, with freedom's baggage weighted down, trust such elevated creeds to offer scant solace. But enough of creeds and seedy deeds! As curator of this creature's story, tell what wisdom that avian sage would impart? Speak for the unfortunate bird, if you will. To be moved by spirit which flows heart to heart is the essence sought in that blend to distil: the very grail of those who practise the art.

**Giac:** *(As Narrator) What truth in vibrant detail here is told of muse and maestro joined in playful discourse; rank disarmed as time-encrypted years unfold, inner worlds collide with gentle force. Each stiffened sinew prised reveals in gifts a priceless trove awaiting undisturbed that moment Fortune's chosen hunter sifts the final grain, sourcing vital essence. Here the work of gods, or so portrayed, let loose in fields of infertility, their breath to barren soils once overlaid, yields sparkling shards of creativity.*

*Time now to unearth riches, strike the spade, turn humble clods in such sublime presence.*

**Giacomo:** Speak now, Doria. Set free that captive wisdom

**Doria:** "Make of me what you will. Make me what you will. Though time is short there is yet far to go. Nature placed me, primed me for my mission to serve need beyond my understanding. Stillness in a turning world is treasure, so fashion me thus, make beauty my goal. I will serve with the whole of my heart."

**Elvira:** Troia! Troia!

**Doria:** Signora. Signora!

**Elvira:** Troia! Porca troia! Maremma maiala!

**Doria:** No, no, Signora! I am a clean girl. I have done nothing. My heart, my hands are clean. I am clean.

**Elvira:** Grime, iniquitous grime, surrounds us, devours us! Infidelity clouds the air, rains treachery; a descending damp shroud. I can sense it, smell it, feel it. My flesh creeps, the air is rife with stench of betrayal and nowhere more than in this room!

**Giacomo:** Elvira! What are you thinking?

**Elvira:** Thinking? He asks now what I think!

**Giacomo:** What world is this? How to convince? It's not her fault.

**Elvira:** Thought flew this coop a long time since, driven forth by scheming, sordid flesh, ...its foul source rooted here,

**Doria:** Signora, no! I am clean , I am clean, I swear. I am clean! Clean, I swear it!

**Giacomo:** What world is this? How to convince? It's not her fault.

**Elvira:** ...foul flesh and ... sin, manifest within this foul skin!

**Doria:** No! No!

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**Giacomo:** This girl is blameless - blameless,

Elvira: Faithless hand, such sweet, soft innocence you feign, while secrets lodge yet hard within that fisted twin? To what fleshly talents flaunted in your presence has foul and lustful knowledge given rein? Feckless Youth, whose wand this tragic spell has cast, saw fit to mock these years of loyal forbearance: these diked, solid tears breached with squalid tide of sin. Faithless hand heed well this grasp, you cross your last. For sin its own reward draws, prayer no skin shall save.

**Giacomo:** Basta! Basta! Elvira! Have you gone quite mad?

Blackout.

END OF ACT I

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ACT II

**Matteucci:** Signore... SIGNORA!? Signora... I...

**Elvira:** Shocked?

**Matteucci:** Shocked? Frankly Signora, I could not be more shocked had Our Dear Lord Himself..well... I would be as the blessed Thomas...

**Elvira:** Just... just...save your saintly incredulity, father.

**Matteucci:** Sig-nora.

**Elvira:** The deepest wounds which disfigure this miracula corpus do not avail to pious prods and cloying probes of ecclesiastic scepticism. So, kindly keep those hands where I can see them and where they are best employed - together in prayer! That is what you do best, Father, is it not so?

**Matteucci:** Si...gnora, I... it is of course your own aff...business, but...why...?

**Elvira:** Why do I manifest as husband? Is it not obvious?

**Matteucci:** Si.. No!...Of course...there were rumours...the girl...but... I thought...

**Elvira:** You thought! Ma! (Dismissively.) Does the dull cloth hone now the scissors?

**Matteucci:** The girl...your husband...I thought - but now this!

**Elvira:** Mannaggia! Dio! This cloth is truly dense! Asino! That bird is flown. Gone! Dismissed! And yet, the Lord help me, hunter is drawn still to prey, hunter is drawn still to prey.

**Matteucci:** I will pray for your soul...Lord hear my prayer for this ...our sister... that she may find release from this torment.

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**Elvira:** So demeaned. Thus decoy is played by the diva. Lord, hear me, what life is this? This cursed lake, I say, deceives them all! Liquid soft composure...belies a shallow undertow. Liquid soft repose... Priest! Priest! To work! Deliver this stray fish!

*Why has this priest not set to his calling? Is not lake his parish - this whore his catch? I shall myself baptise her, dip the bitch, consign this harpy to the church of the deep. Such liquid promise of soft repose and deep tranquility shall yet know foul deeds. Here I stand, dignity gone, una mondina nella melma del Pò, deep to my arse in mud and drowning! Basta! Basta!*

Vade retro Satana! Ohime!

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**Doria:** Mi aiuti... aiutatemi, Padre.

**Matteucci:** Come here, my child. Our Lady awaits you.

**Doria:** But my prayers to Our Lady go unheard. I am cast aside, sent out from this world.

**Matteucci:** You are in sin, Doria. You must repent. Our Lady hears all but may not listen.

**Doria:** All that I am has been taken from me.

**Matteucci:** You must repent of your sins, Doria.

**Doria:** I am nothing. Give me the flesh, the blood of our Lord, so that I may live once more.

**Matteucci:** First confess your sins. You must confess them; your sins.

**Doria:** Confess? My sins? You say that I have sinned? And you see this sin that is within me?

**Matteucci:** You know that it is so, you are in sin?

**Doria:** I know that it is so? Then it must be so.

**Matteucci:** *In nomine Patris... et Fillii... et Spiritus Sancti.*

**Doria:** Bless me Father ...for I have sinned. It has been... one month since my last confession. These... are my sins...

**Matteucci:** Confess your sins, speak them, child. Why do you hesitate? Confess your sins.

**Doria:** My sins? What is this load I now must haul? With mind adrift, cast off to destiny, have time-idled musings hastened my fall? My childish dreams crushed by calls to duty, passion stifled, stamped by obligation. Scoldings are to gentle souls injurious, so too shame, pressed without foundation. Surely these construe that monstrous trespass, sin, do they not? Yet whom to these confess?

**Matteucci:** You must break your silence. Do not hold back. Make your confession now, and be absolved. Confess and receive absolution.

**Doria:** My silence? Am I now no longer heard? Can it be that I am dead to this world? No!... No!...No! My voice, gone! Nobody hears. No body, no blood. Now it is over. I am done! Basta! Basta! Finita!

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**Doria:** Within without this skin begins a journey from wherein has grievous sin sunken deep its wells of sorrow, seeping acid tears which vanquish soundly doubt from years of days unborn to be dissolved from this tomorrow. Within without this skin breath shall never stir that fan which in a man can fire inflame to reckless passion, nor steal in tryst a kiss of sweetest rapture to this heart at rise of sun nor even simple bliss. No ring-indented skin shall years betray nor child these hips with weighted flesh impress without. Within this skin begins a journey flight from that which each breath and step besets. Kindled blaze, so said, will quench the killer flame, so too this bane a toxic draught shall purge cruelest calumny.

“Make of me what you will. Make me what you will. Though time is short there is yet far to go. Nature placed me, primed me for my mission to serve need beyond my understanding. Stillness in a turning world is treasure, so fashion me thus, make beauty my goal. I will serve with the whole of my heart.”

END ACT II

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EPILOGUE

**Giac:** "...mmm... poet's task to prise apart those serried ranks, Poet's task to prise apart those mustered ranks, extract the cowering hostage and essence yield. Parted atoms seek always new togetherness. Together, let us warm the bones...let us warm these still, cold bones...these still, cold bones of history.”

**Young Woman:** Giac.... Giac... Giacomo! Giacomo? Am I too early? I can come back later if...

**Giac:** No, no...please.

**Young Woman:** So Sad. "What tales from this bird, one muses, could it speak?"

**Giac:** "No ear hears so well as the heart...."Then let it speak." Please?

*"This thin veneer of human construct weighs light upon that greater sphere, nature's scheme. But just as parted atoms seek always togetherness anew, so too does dream play its part. By spanning years time is brought to heel."*

*"In dreams, instances near as real reveal the tears\* and fissures pain has wrought in that fabric of our beings yet to heal. Each shadow lost to dying of its light remains in perpetuity unfound until with careful steps a path is made. What sets our spinning inner world aright? From whence comes power to cauterise the wound, if not new light cast over fallen shade?"*

I've got it! Right here, under my nose! The finale!

See what you think.

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**Young Woman:** *In waves of sound we were bathed he and I, bound both from birth to give voice to song. My life small not yet free as a bird, his lost in greatness yet to be found. Our parts each were played in this wondrous game, art as echo to nature's call. Constrained by wilderness too rarely heard my song remained wild, worlds apart.*

*Grounded by small town musical chairs his call was to fame before very long. Would Fortune endow her glistening prize or was Pride giving rise to a fall?*

*Drawn here from two worlds, I am Giacomo's Muse; a captive free spirit between music and words. One cruel misadventure shattered my wings, opened my heart gave flight to my dreams. Freed from my nature now able to choose, my name is my calling, Giacomo's Muse.*

*I was a nightingale, or so they say, with a tale of a terrible fall; shattered by shock-waves, plucked from the skies, broken vulnerable small but not frail.*

*His course had been true, this hunter of mine; hearts stirred to flutter at a butterfly's plight, pathos consumed as divas demised. A well-tended field had reaped what was due. But a turn in his path was about to unfold, grief-bearing roots sprung caused him to stumble. The artist seeks sureness, his footings were lost; such is a gift that a muse may bestow.*

*Drawn here from two worlds, I am Giacomo's muse; a captive free spirit between music and words.*

*A captive free spirit between music and words. I am Giacomo's muse.*