

Small Change

An opera in two acts

Music, story and libretto by
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CAST

St. John - artist -- somewhat neurotic, confused much of the time - his work is narrative, full of threads etc. -- He has amazing technique and knowledge of past masters' techniques. Unwitting forger for Mr. Houston. (tenor)

Mr. Houston- entrepreneur -- user, handles St. John through Psychiatrist Dr. Ruth Mingle. Connected into shadier areas of the art world (undocumented paintings discovered in Nazi vaults in Switzerland and South America, international crime and synthetic drugs. (baritone)

Dr. Ruth Mingle -- Psychiatrist whose only patient is St. John. She is in employ of Houston. Her job is to keep St. John functional and administer synthetics as needed to induce delusional regression...through suggestion, he "becomes" an old master of Houston's choice and paints the forgeries in an adjacent office to hers...so she can keep an eye on him. (mezzo)

Dillon Marshall -- Mr. "Cool" -- Miami social scene -- one of the beautiful people -- Houston's front man. Does Houston's dirty work accompanied everywhere by a silent guy named Eddy. (tenor)

Eddy -- non speaking/singing role -- obviously a hit man -- dirty-dirty work guy. (any)

Emmi Swedenborg -- Swiss - Head of the NeueEuro-Cartel. Synthetic Drugs very expensive - very exclusive clientele. He is a collector of anything that makes a good investment and serves as a fence for the drug money. Buys forgeries from Houston unaware that they are forgeries. Sells synthetics to Houston. (baritone)

Carmen - Marshall's wife -- another "beautiful person" had a past with Emmi Swedenborg that no one in her circle knows about. (coloratura)

Violetta -- Emmi Swedenborg's love interest. Suave, sophisticated, Her own person. (coloratura)

Coffee Shop Waitress #1 (soprano)

Coffee Shop Waitress #2 (soprano)

Coffee Shop Waitress #3 (soprano)

Cell phone speaker 1(any)

Cell phone speaker 2 (any)

Cell phone speaker 3 (any)

Curator #1(mezzo)

Woman #1 (wife) at Pumba Gallery (soprano)

Woman #2 at Pumba Gallery (soprano)

Woman #3 at Pumba Gallery (soprano)

Man #1 (husband) at Pumba Gallery (tenor of sorts)

Mr. Smith (another artist) at Pumba Gallery (baritone)

Mrs. Launder C ache (soprano)

Curator #2 (baritone)

Act I

Scene 1: Dream Sequence -

(Funereal procession - stylized/raked phalanx with Mr. Houston as priest)

Priest(Houston): I pronounce you Dead in Life. You never really lived at all. Planning for a future that never came. Moments slipping by, fireflies on and off and out of sight -- you were right...you hated movies when you realized that they were just a scene or two -- you wanted it all - a whole world -- no vignettes-- nothing fake -- but life was like that A few simple sets some starting scenes... you wanted a plot -- you were always wanting the whole world - obsessively - take a moment! Take two or three and you'll see that life is rich and full in the blink of an eye -- a firefly on and off - here its gone again! Grab it while you can and you refused. Not living in the moment you said... waiting for the

scene to change, the plot to develop, banking on a future that never came... Why couldn't you just take the moment! Your destiny was driven by desire for the unattainable.
(quote from Aceldama - Upanishad) placing coins over the eyes....

St. John: No!!

(Up from coffin, gasping for breath -- kneeling on the floor -- pulling coins from eyes - kisses them and puts in pocket...)
stands up and walks to therapists couch --

SEGUE Scene 2: Therapist's office

St. John: and that was my dream.

Dr. Mingle: and what are you feeling now?

St. John: I am not...

Dr. Mingle: Yes -- you are numb to it all.
Life,... aren't you.
It can't provide you with a suitable plot.
In other words, the worlds you create on canvas...

St. John: recreate

Dr. Mingle: recreate on canvas

St. John: they exist -- pre-exist my work -- beauty is -- I simply try to recreate as best I can...

Dr. Mingle -- yes?

St. John -- that's all

Dr. Mingle --the worlds you re-create on canvas are vistas, moments in time that you ..allow your art to reveal ..but you know the depth and richness of each world. Time before and after the moment -- don't you??

St. John -- yes, I do -- I was there -- always --

Dr. Mingle -- and now you are here in this life -- and so very fortunate that Mr. Houston takes care of you -- he understands your particular genius and, in fact, gives you unlimited access to your worlds without the annoying distractions and diluted mundanities of daily life.

St. John -- yes....yes , of course...it's just that...well, sometimes I can't remember where I have been for days on end ... and then,and then everything is clear again for a while.

-- you know, I tried to kill my self -- tried to fall in front of a car this morning but I missed somehow... You know some people tell their troubles to a penny and leave it in a public place for another to pick up and take on...

Dr. Mingle: I understand what you're saying about the lost time and the confusion you feel sometimes. There are things buried in your past which you seem unable to face at the moment. I think we need to regress you again –

(handing him a capsule from a special container)

here take this

(he takes and gradually relaxes and transforms – she looks at watch – timing the word “Titian” to coincide with a certain moment when the drug kicks in – Sfz “A” passages are moments when the drug is hitting him hard – hurting or making him sick then recovering)

Tell me about Titian.

St. John - Titian was the greatest painter of light and detail. We all learned from him.

Dr. Mingle: What sort of paint did he use?

St. John (A bit more groggy) - well you know -- he was..

Dr. Mingle -- you

St. John - I?

Dr. Mingle: You were telling me about Titian's use of materials -- your ideas of light.

St. John -- yes, I seem to remember, he used egg in tempera, but the crucial element was lavender, that's why his studio always ...

Dr. Mingle: Your studio.

St. John, yes, well, yes, that's why my studio always smelled of lavender

Dr. Mingle: Master?

St. John, Master?

Dr. Mingle: Your studio, Master. It is prepared and waiting for you. (gesturing to another room)

St. John, Yes?,... oh yes - Thank you...

Dr. Mingle: Valentinus ,,your servant, Master.

St. John, yes, Valentinus -- Thank you. (he gets up and goes to the studio to paint.)

(“Aura Lee” as Renaissance recording – Dr. Mingle places on record player after or CD to mask outside sounds for him... he looks surprised)

“the court musicians Master – are you pleased....

St. John : Oh, oh, of course, yes – thank you... (she shuts door to studio – enter Houston)

SEGUE Scene 3

[Houston enters office as Dr. Mingle shuts door to St. John/Titian’s studio.]

Houston: Well, how is he?

Dr. Mingle: He tried to kill himself today.

Houston: I told you he was losing it. We have to keep him operational - at least through these next two paintings.

Dr. Mingle: He is empty and confused. He has little or no real connection to the world and his subconscious is beginning to interfere. That was a cry for help.

Houston: Could the “cry for help” come out in his work for me?

Dr. Mingle: Possibly -- . His own art work is being influenced. You’ll have to keep a close eye on these next paintings to avoid discovery and there are no guarantees for the future. We really don’t know the side effects of these synthetic drugs you’ve had designed for him. He takes on whatever delusion I suggest and thanks to his thorough knowledge of period techniques and extraordinary artistic genius and you get these forgeries - so close to perfection. No one has figured it out yet, but we just don’t know how long it can go on, or when he might begin to show side effects.

Mr. Houston, we are in dangerously unexplored territory here and I

Houston: He needs a woman.

Dr. Mingle: I ...beg your pardon?

Houston: He needs a woman. Someone to keep him interested in living. Passion -- you know Dr. Mingle. Diversion. -- Someone who can appreciate him but won’t get in the way...I’ll call in Marshall.

Dr. Mingle: But Mr. Houston....

Houston: It’s done Dr. Mingle. You’re doing your job well. Keep up the good work. Now it’s time for some of the real world. I’ll call in Marshall.

Dr. Mingle: I... Yes sir.

Scene 4

(Dillon Marshall at home on a tread mill with Eddy the trainer adjacent)

I'm up at 5 before the break of day
To exercise to make me look this way
I used to think it was a no-brainer
But now I'm smart and use my own trainer
It isn't simply just the vanity
It's doin' business here in Miami

And it's My oh My Miami
Where everybody looks so fine
And it's My oh My Miami
Don't play the game you're left behind
And it's My oh My Miami

And it's My oh My Miami?

Carmen: enters [modeling something] : Dillon?
What do you think?

Marshall [not looking over] -- great!

Carmen: and the hat? (she's not wearing one)

Marshall: Terrific!

Carmen: You Jerk -- You didn't even look.

Marshall: Want to do South Beach for Lunch?

Carmen: Two years ago you would have jumped me right here and now. You used to want me all the time.

Marshall: Want you? I want you baby. Want to do lunch or not?

Carmen: You Pig -- See? You know an old college friend is coming for lunch so now you can safely ask me out. You didn't ask before you knew that.

Marshall: So I forgot -- Bring her along too.

Carmen: Forgot? Forget it. We have catching up to do anyway-- besides what romance is there in having lunch with your husband and an old friend? (spits towards him) Eat lunch by yourself. [She turns to leave in a huff]

Marshall: [smiling w/ raised eyebrows to Eddy] --
By myself? Probably not my little flower.

(hops off tread mill into suit)

I make my money from another's work
For that some people say I am a jerk.
But I'm the one with all the curb appeal
'Cuz I can turn a sham into a deal.
It isn't simply just the vanity
It's doin' business here in Miami

Healthy Breakfast
Get my carbs early in the day
Dress so sexy
Just business gotta be that way

And it's My oh My Miami (enter chorus with street scene - literally!)
Where everybody looks so fine
And it's My oh My Miami
Don't play the game you're left behind
And it's My oh My Miami
Looking fine, South Beach to Perrine
And it's My oh My Miami
California, South America redefined

[on cell phone with Houston through chorus]
And it's My oh My Miami
I Got it - a cute Broad with lots of smarts
And it's My oh My Miami
Not to mention other parts
And it's My oh My Miami
The opening is Friday Night
And it's My oh My Miami
I 'll make sure that she treats him right.

(spies St.John's discarded penny from his dream still on stage)

I see a penny and I pick it up
And all day long I'm gonna have good luck

(starts to step off of curb -- hears screeching tires and a crashing sound as he pulls back -- 1000 watt smile at audience)

See?

(Pockets the penny)

(Refrain—“My oh My Miami”)

Scene 5

[Back at Marshall’s Home]

Carmen: After all, it’s just a friend. He’s not my lover - anymore. What’s wrong with that? Nothing. Why should it matter if it’s a woman or a man. After all, he’s just a friend. But Marshall gets so jealous...I would have told him but he gets so jealous --after all. If that’s a sin it’s only a sin of omission. I didn’t lie -- I don’t need his permission. And after all, if I didn’t do this, I would resent him. After all, he’s just a friend.

[Doorbell rings - she lets Swedenborg enter - they eye each other, full of uncertainty -- after an awkward hug and protracted silence -- they kiss on the cheek and then the lips lingering almost too long -- a quick breaking apart and ...]

Carmen: You look terrific!

Swedenborg: And you remain divine.

Carmen: You really ook terrific!

Swedenborg: And you look, just fine.

Carmen: You must be quite happy.

Swedenborg: Does it show? [pause - her embarrassed and disappointed]
It’s only the reflection you know -- seeing you face again after all these years.

Carmen: I’m quite happy too - after all -----of those years. [he moves towards her again]
Would you like some coffee? [motioning him to the couch and scurrying to the kitchen]

Scene 5a (concurrent)

[lights up another part of the stage -- coffee house Marshall is entering]

Coffee House Girls (and Carmen from kitchen): No place has coffee like Miami!!
Rich and dark and full of last night. No place has coffee like Miami -- and if they did they couldn’t make it right.

Cell Phone chorus:

(Latin accents sung and whispered continues through as either a chorus when between or rhythmic interest as sub-layer) :

excuse me, what?, excuse me, how? Excuse me, when and where? Oh now?

I really can't, you shouldn't rant, it's costing more than that my dear I just don't know, it goes to show, but I've got roaming charges here.

you're breaking up - I'm losing you -- I cannot hear you in this zone, you're breaking up - I'll call you back- just leave a voicemail on the phone

Marshall to Counter girl but winking at Eddy(tongue in cheek): A cup of coffee please.

Girl: (long pause) what kind?

Marshall: a cup of coffee, -- please.

Girl - We got 36 flavors. Help me out Dear. What kind?

Marshall: Kind? Dear? Waitress UnKind! (comic aside to her) Shakespeare. -- I'll take a double Machiado like a sweetened cortadito with a drop of amaretto and a twist of Quierida?!

Counter girl: Do you want it wet or dry? Azucar or Chicorrita?

Marshall: Jesus Christ I'm gonna cry, hold me back before I beat her! (leans across the counter and they exchange a smiling kiss.)

Coffee House Girls (and Carmen from kitchen): No place has coffee like Miami!! Rich and dark and full of last night. No place has coffee like Miami -- and if they did they couldn't make it right.

Carmen (to herself preparing coffee): After all there's nothing wrong with a little innocent flirtation. As long as we are strong of heart. In fact an innocent flirtation could not keep true lovers apart. [bringing out the coffee]

Marshall to Eddy: There's nothing like a little innocent flirtation. To get your day off to a start. There's nothing like a little innocent flirtation. To make you feel good in your heart.

[they sit down to enjoy the coffee]

Swedenborg: Come sit here beside me - I'm not really a vampire you know. After all, we haven't been together since Madrid. [He takes her hand]

Carmen: No... not since Madrid. [Aside: It's only my hand after all - I might be holding a girlfriend's hand for all of that]

Swedenborg: It looks like he treats you well. [I feel her pulse begin to throb begin to swell]

Carmen: He treats me, well, Dillon treats me yes well.

Swedenborg: Dillon -- I'm sure he's a bright and handsome man.

Carmen: Yes, Dillon - he's all of that... And you - you're... with someone?

Swedenborg: someone? Some two? Not really, no one really since you.
Forgive me Carmencitta -- the answer, of course is "no".

Swedenborg: Carmencitta, may I hold you again just once for old time's sake?

Carmen: (Oh my god!) Yes, of course, After all we're still the best of friends. (after all we're not really kissing)

Swedenborg: We've made amends, after all those years (After all she's not really resisting)

Carmen: After all, we're not really missing anything in our lives.

Swedenborg: We're both content.

Carmen: That's what I meant.

Carmen and Swedenborg: Yes, of course, After all we're still the best of friends. (after all she's not resisting... After all he keeps persisting... There's nothing like a little innocent flirtation. To make you feel good in your heart. There's nothing wrong with a little innocent flirtation. As long as we are strong of heart. (they continue off and on and end up kissing and petting as they sing)

Cell Phone chorus

(Latin sung and whispered continues through as either a chorus when between or rhythmic interest as sublayer) :

excuse me, what?, excuse me, how? Excuse me, when and where? Oh now?

I really can't, you shouldn't rant, it's costing more than that my dear
I just don't know, it goes to show, but I've got roaming charges here.

you're breaking up - I'm losing you -- I cannot hear you in this zone,
you're breaking up - I'll call you back- just leave a voicemail on the phone

Marshall (on cell phone): Violetta? Hi it's Dillon Marshall. We met last Thursday at ...yeah that's right -- the Trent opening. I'm flattered you remember (grimaces at his own faux

pas)...oh yeah...your phone number, of course I remember asking for it -- I must say , you absolutely are the most intelligent, interesting and beautiful woman I have ever gotten the nerve up to ask for a phone number...yeah. What? [pause] no, I'm ... really, I just wondered if you might be able to meet me for the St. John opening this Friday on the Beach. You don't know his work? Amazing stuff. You'll love it!! I don't understand it except on a visceral level, but then I can introduce you two and you can find out all you want from him. Great! Pumba Gallery, Friday at 7. See you there!

Marshall (smiling victoriously to Eddy): Next?

There's nothing like a little innocent flirtation to get your business underway. After all, an innocent flirtation is how the whole world likes to play.

[Swedenborg and Violetta retire to the bedroom]

excuse me, what?, excuse me, how? Excuse me, what's that all about?
you're breaking up - I'm losing you -- I cannot hear you in this zone,
you're breaking up - you're breaking up - somebody toss the dog a bone.

END ACT I

ACT II: Scene 1

Friday night at St. John's opening. Narrative work (but clearly 21st century) on display.

String quartet playing in background, wine and cheese crowd mingling

Curator: (clapping for attention) Welcome, welcome everyone. Pumba Gallery is honored to present this show – "*Time before and After...*" recent work of St. John" and as you know, this is his first public appearance in over 15 years. Despite his lack of...self-promotion... his work remains *highly* collectable. Please feel free to engage him in conversation but please be sensitive to his...shyness and avoid crowding him. Thank you so much- enjoy the show!

Gallery Patrons:

It's so refreshing!
It is refreshing to see something recognizable.
It's so refreshing to see something narrative.
What do you mean by narrative.
You know -- it tells a story of some sort.

You call this modern art?
It's from the last century.
Clearly derivative.
Where are the Jackson Pollacks of today?
All technique.

I really like it.
I do not like this work at all...
I'd really like to buy it
I would not have it on my wall!

Curator: Ladies and Gentlemen – Mr. St. John.

(-applause- etc.)

immediately crowds begin to move in – he backs away and curator herds the crowd...

Woman 1: (knowingly) You a deeply religious man Mr. St. John are you not?

St. John: Well, what exactly do you mean by that?

Woman 1: Your devotion to God is apparent in the work don't you think Mr. St John?

St. John: Well... what exactly do you mean by that? (looking around for help)

Mr. Smith: Obviously she's speaking about herself not you. Art is a reflection of the viewer. Don't you agree? I'm an artist too you know – Smith – Jonathan Smith – no "h" in Jonathan.

St. John: Well... excuse me Mr. Johnson, I need to check on my ... I need a ... to get a drink...

Curator: Mr. St. John – this is Mrs. Launder Cäche. She is interested in acquiring your triptych for her collection. (ushering him over to the large wall mural for privacy)

St. John: Pleased...

Mrs. Cäche: Of course, you are. Tell me about this work – exactly how big is it and what will you take?

Marshall (pointing out Violetta to Dr. Mingle): There she is – I’ll try to get her past that lump of a curator.

Dr. Mingle (to herself) : Oh my goodness. That’s precisely what he doesn’t need. Houston – you’re an oaf and a fool. We’ll be lucky if this one leaves anything for us after she’s done. She’ll either “comfort” him into complete non-productivity or destroy him emotionally. Dead man either way.

Marshall (to Violetta): Just what this space needs – some true beauty!

Violetta: (ice queen staring intently at the Tyiptych across the room) Do I know you?

Marshall (self-assured smile): Dillon, Babe. Dillon Marshall from the Trent opening – I invited you here.

Violetta: (scribbling out a check) I received a formal invitation – I think you’ve mistaken me for someone else - my name is not “Babe” - Mr. Deputy.

Marshall: Marshall, babe – Dillon Marshall. Violetta – Right?!

Violetta: Left. (pointing to the exit sign to her left as she dismisses him – she drops the check in Curator’s hand and proceeds directly to the Tryptich)

Mrs. C ache: I understand you are a religious man Mr. St. John. What is your real name?

St. John: Religious? Where...but...St. John, -- that’s my, my real name – my father, you know...

Mrs. C ache: What can I tell my friends about this (reading the placard)“tripe-tick” *if* it were to enter my collection?

St. John: Well... what exactly do you mean? It’s a triptych – you know – three panels – not some form of “stomach parasite” ...“Tell your friends” – what do you mean by that?

Violetta – Excuse me, You could tell them that this work combines historic images in unusual ways - striking images - clean, clear, direct... that the content reflects history and tradition while maintaining a contemporary edge...self-contained worlds full of the intensity of a moment yet celebrating a rich spiritual insight that projects us into time and space before and after... St. John has achieved a zen-like state of grace with this work. You could tell them that each time you enter it, it's like visiting an oracle - fresh insights provided by the myriad juxtapositions. You could tell them that it is, in fact, a primary mystical experience. However, you are too shallow and boorish to own this work AND it has already been sold.

(Curator tows indignant Mrs. C ache away.)

St. John: Thank you... I think.

Violetta: I'm sorry you had to endure that. Thank you, Mr. St. John for this work.
Violetta Falcone.

St. John: My pleasure, truly. Elvis.

Violetta: Elvis?

St. John: Elvis, St. John. That's my name. He was a singer wasn't he?

Violetta: Elvis? Yes, Mr. St. John. Are you teasing me?

St. John: Sorry, no, I just...I'm just not familiar with his work you know.

Violetta: You are a curious man Mr. St. John. Elvis

St. John: It's OK – I'm used to St. John. I wish we could get out of here.

Violetta: Truly?

St. John. Truly.

Violetta: Are you adventurous St. John?

St. John: I don't know. I just want to get away from here – from all of this.

Violetta: Ever been to Mexico?

St. John: No.

Violetta: No one knows me there either. Shall we go?

St. John: (slight pause) sure.

(They exit.)

Marshall seeing this high-5's Eddy but gets a nod of concern from Dr. Mingle. (Houston is not present)

ACT II: (a bar in Mexico , guitar playing in background)

St. John: This is amazing country!!

Violetta: Yes rich and alive.

St. John: The folk art is so real. The emotion is pure and immediate. I mean, they manage to bypass any separation of emotion and intellect...a mystical innocence

Violetta: Well said.

(music at Bar switches to Elvis – Aura Lee) –

St. John (agitated): What? That's so familiar – what, what is that music.

Violetta: (pointing to an Elvis on velvet over the bar) The King - your namesake: Elvis. That's him doing an old folk song.

St. John: But it sounds so ancient – mediaeval or renaissance...

Violetta: It's just an old American folk song

St. John: Do you think I ...was him, Elvis, in a former life?

Violetta: only if it were parallel – he only died in the 70's.

St. John: It's just that I'm ...streaming you know? ...I'm seeing myself as an ancient painter and hearing his music as I work – that's crazy isn't it...but I can see it all, I can .. smell the lavender for the paint...I hear that music ...

Violetta: Probably not what a Titian would have been listening to...

St. John: Titian?? Why, why did you say him?

Violetta: No reason really, my last “significant friend” was a collector. He just acquired a Titian on the black market – quite a find – amazing actually. It had been in some Nazi vault in South America since the 40's. It was one of those portraits thought to have been lost.

St. John: This is too much! Everything seems driven by fate.... I... I'm..like I'm supposed to be here with you – here and now... Violetta – I ...

Violetta: Yes, what is it?

St. John: Oh, I'm so sorry, I'm not..it's just, Violetta, I... Violetta, I...

Violetta: It's OK, I think I know what you're trying to say to me... I want to hear it.

St. John: Yes, of course, Violetta, I really need to paint.

Violetta: Right now?

St. John: I knew you'd understand me! Thank you!
(He reaches over and awkwardly kisses her then rushes out dragging her along)

ACT II: Scene 3 (- a week later - Dr. Mingle's office.)

Houston: Well, how is he?

Dr. Mingle: Mr. Houston. He didn't come to his appointment yesterday.

Houston: What's wrong?

Dr. Mingle:

Houston: you haven't spoken with him? Who saw him last?

Dr. Mingle: I saw him last week at his opening - Pumba Gallery.

Houston: Call Marshall - get him and Eddy on it. We need to stay on schedule. Those synthetics I get for him cost \$15,000 a pop and have a shelf life of only 72 hours. A small price to pay for what they do, however, we can't afford to lose track of him...even for a day. Get him back --

Dr. Mingle: I called Marshall yesterday.

Houston: AND?!

Dr. Mingle: I haven't heard anything back...(Houston is speed dialing before she can finish)

Houston: Marshall? St. John...

Marshall -- Houston, we've got a problem -- She took him to Mexico best as I can tell - I've got Eddy on it. They went down on her sugar daddy's jet --

Houston: She? Who do you mean? Who is he with?

Marshall: I didn't know, you told me to fix him up -- Violetta -- I met her at the Trent opening...

Houston: Trent opening??....

Marshall: -- you remember? Real head turner...

Houston: Violetta...Falcone?!

Marshall: Yeah I think that's right - Violetta Falcone...you know her?

Houston: Not as well at Emi Swedenborg.

Marshall: no way!!!! Emanuel Swedenborg

Houston: Oh, my god...

Marshall: - I know , I know -- Mr. NeueEurope Cartel. Christ almighty!! We're dead ..I mean St. John's - well I'll get down there myself. NAFTA here I come.

Houston: Marshall – listen carefully - if there's trouble, retire him – both of them - but only as a last resort. We can't afford to have him talk – if she puts us together...get down there now...

Marshall: Done.

Dr. Mingle -- But Mr. Houston , these synthetics cause memory loss -- his own complaint -- you have nothing to fear --

Houston: I fear nothing – I'm a business man -- find him Marshall . (HANGS UP)

(To Dr. Mingle): Don't you find it curious Dr. Mingle – as a Professional? A curious circle beginning and ending with Swedenborg. Emi is my biggest buyer – AND he has a division in his cartel that manufactures synthetics for us that we use to “inspire” St. John to create forgeries, which we in turn, sell to Swedenborg...well really they're new works aren't they? It's just that no one can tell they're not authentic. Our religious relics department ages them in the Caribbean. When the art is ready, I recover it from some mysterious Nazi Vault in Sweden or South America to sell to addicted collectors like Swedenborg. I think he stays in the drug business to support his “forbidden art” habit Doctor.

We have to stop that affair and get St. John back safely -- or else cut our losses. We have enough interest in religious relics to make it thorough this. We've been dodging bullets for a while on this one. Maybe it was time anyway...

ACT II: Scene 3: months later at a bar in Mexico

Violetta: This opening is going to be great! I'm so proud of you!

St. John: All ten are sold already. We did ok.

Violetta: Ten paintings at one point 5 million each– that's pretty OK.

St. John: To the King. (toasting an Elvis on black velvet above the bar)

Violetta: You must be the only person in our generation who hadn't heard Elvis Presley!

St.John: I was a late bloomer.

Violetta: Lucky me!

St.John: I feel so free now. No more nightmares, no more confusion. You were right. The city was killing me – Houston was killing me – thank you Violetta. To us.

Violetta: To us. To you, Elvis. It's breathtaking how you've assimilated world culture into your art. Everyone will learn from you. You are the modern Titian.

St.John: To the King.

(They down their drinks and step over into the gallery side of the stage. Paintings under sheets ready for unveiling.)

(Gallery Side of Stage: Paintings covered with sheets for dramatic unveiling)

Houston: Well, where is he?

Dr. Mingel: you going to "retire" him still?

Houston: Not on your life --He's a big international success now underwritten by Swedenborg -- I can't touch him...couldn't if I wanted to, and as you say -- he has no memory.

Dr. Mingel: and Marshall?

Houston: He screwed up and he knows too much. Don't worry, Marshall will get a severance nice package.

Curator #2: Ladies and Gentlemen. St. John and his work require no introduction. This portrait, like the other 9, has already been purchased by private collector in a blind auction...

(Crowd murmurs approval)

Houston (to Mingle): the only art I've seen in Mexico has been paintings of Elvis, Bleeding Jesus and Busty women painted on velvet no less...

Curator #2: This is the first public viewing and it will remain on exhibit for only 7 days. I present to you, St. John's Portrait No 3.

(Painting unveiled as Elvis de la Cruz – a big crucified Elvis on black velvet – Applause, gasps etc...)

Houston: two out of three ... not bad --

Swedenborg and Carmen: isn't it funny how things work out after all. We thought our lives so very different yet we were striving for the same things, love and comfort and peace. Things which were here, all along, had we seen. We so busy striving when all we needed to do was to stop and live – to enjoy the moments like fireflies on and off and on again. Things money can not buy: love and comfort and peace.

Mingle (referring to Swedenborg and Carmen) : Idealistic new couple...Easy to say when you're loaded! The rich are always saying things like "Money can't buy happiness!"

Houston to Mingle: That's true – money can't buy happiness – BUT something which is quite similar don't you agree?

(Cell Phone rings: All eyes turn accusingly to Dr. Mingle – she sheepishly takes the call
Cut to a crouching Marshall in Miami – gunshots with a silencer directed at him...)

Marshall: (shouting off in the distance) Stop it Eddy!! (to cell phone) Dr.Mingle – you gotta help me –

Dr. Mingle: What's wrong - Marshall? (saying his name loud enough for Houston to show interest)

Marshall: I lost a winning lottery ticket, Carmen just left me for an old college flame and Houston has a contract out on me... with Eddy no less... (more gunshots) Stop it you idiot!! Dr. Mingle, you know, I used to be a lucky guy -- you know last month I saw a penny and picked it up and it saved my life – a car would have run right over me... a lucky guy – good stuff just happened to me... but then and there all of this bad stuff started happening -- (more gunshots)

(Mingle looks at St. John and recalls "you know some people say their troubles to a penny and leave them for another to pick-up" -- looks back at phone with a grin.)

Dr. Mingle: ...Marshall -- now trust me on this -- do You still have that "lucky Penny" –

Marshall: (fumbling in his pocket) -- yeah -- last one to my name –

Dr. Mingle: OK -- tell all of your troubles to it, take it to wherever you found it and drop it there. Trust me on this -- and Marshall -- never call me again -- Houston has a trace on my phone.

Marshall: (hanging up abruptly) -- My god
(looks around, holds penny up to lips and begins mumbling – checks to make sure it is safe to move and getting up -) Guess he's done for the night...

I'm up at 5 before the break of day
And this is how my loyalty's repaid
There wasn't anything I couldn't do

Believe me when I say this could be you
It isn't simply just the lottery
It's doin' business here in Miami

And it's My oh My Miami
Where everybody looks so fine
And it's My oh My Miami (tosses penny)
My troubles now are left behind
And it's My oh My Miami
I'm feelin' better as we speak
And it's My oh My Miami (whips out cell phone)
I got another winnin' streak

I see a penny and I pick it up... (starts to pick it up – hesitates)
Nah...

(crosses off stage (on cell phone)
screeching of tires and thunk -- closing music --)

- THE END -