

MEN FROM LAZARUS

PITCH

Boston, present day. Victor works for Lazarus: an agency of actors who impersonate deceased loved ones for those in mourning. When Victor, upright and detached, meets Dom, enthusiastic and rebellious, he realizes he has buried his emotions behind the masks of the dead he played. Returned to life thanks to his new friend, Victor discovers that Lazarus is using him for shady motives and that his mission was never to help those who suffer. Is there hope of returning to live with authentic emotions? A drama about our times, about the rampant emotional illiteracy that is numbing the hearts and minds of all of us.

SUBJECT

It's past midnight and Cynthia refuses to sleep. Her husband, Albert, in bed beside her, tries to make her sleep but she doesn't want to; he knows that to convince her, he must tell her a memory from their past, one of the many from their wonderful life together. He caresses her silver hair as he takes her back in time, to the day they met: she was just a little girl when, having entered his shop to ask for information, she found Albert, bare-chested, waiting for his mother to finish sewing a button on his shirt. Cynthia smiles as she abandons herself to that sweet memory until she falls asleep. Albert loves her so much, but it's getting late; he gets dressed in silence, kisses his wife's forehead, and carefully closes the door behind him.

Albert is the only passenger on the bus. Waiting to get off at his stop, he contemplates the beauty of Boston, so elegant and discreet, the guardian of so many secrets, including his own.

Once back, he takes off his scarf and coat when the entrance light comes on: the house is not the same and waiting for him in the hallway, with a scarf on her head that covers her thinning grey hair, is Ada (65) who is staring at him; the woman, so poised and elegant in her blue silk dressing gown, is not at all happy with the fact that Cynthia always keeps him beyond the work schedule. Her husband agrees with her, as always, but Ada knows well that her words are useless; she has no choice but to withdraw, but not before finding out what story he told to the other woman: their first meeting is also Ada's favorite. Albert finishes undressing, takes hold of his aquiline nose and tears it off, revealing a smooth, small nose beneath it. He puts two fingers in his eyes, pulling out blue lenses, revealing hazel-colored irises, then grabs his wavy gray hair and removes it with a sharp jerk. Albert, Cynthia's husband, is dead. Now there is only Victor (70), the Lazarus.

Victor hates going to the agency. Everyone there treats him with reverence, calling him Maestro or a legend, but he doesn't seek praise, attention, or applause, not since he left the theater.

Having shown him into the office, Cassandra (45), his boss, updates him on the latest news at the agency, such as the work in the east wing for... but Victor cuts her short, impatient to find out why she called him. Unlike his characters, so kind and loving, Victor is stiff and cold as a corpse.

Cassandra, always so calm and charming, gets straight to the point: she has a new client for him. His name is Adam Bossi, a retired orchestra conductor who needs a Lazarus to impersonate his late brother and opera singer, Robert. Victor glances at the red leather folder containing all the information, but sees no reason why he couldn't receive it in the mail, as usual. It is then that Cassandra reveals to him that it wasn't Adam who requested his services, but his son, Tate, as the elderly man suffers from dementia. Victor doesn't need to hear anything else; he can't operate if the client isn't lucid; it's the Lazarus code and Victor is loyal to it. Convinced he's finished, he's about to leave the room when Cassandra abandons her polite manner and warns him: if he refuses to take the case, the privilege she granted him for his years of service will be revoked. Victor's blood runs cold; he knows exactly what she's referring to and having no other choice, he's forced to accept.

While carefully reading the folder at his favorite rooftop bar, where he's a regular, Victor witnesses an unexpected event: a scream captures the attention of everyone present, who turns their gaze to a man about to jump from the ledge. Everyone gets agitated but remains seated at their tables; they're frightened but don't call for help; their only interest is filming the event on their cell phones. Seeing that no one is willing to intervene, Victor is about to get up when he notices that a young man in a waiter's uniform has preceded him. The waiter lets the would-be suicide know that his name is Dom (35) and that he wants to help him, but the man shouts that no one can: his ex-wife has left him and took their children with her, preventing him from seeing them. Dom leaves everyone, including Victor, breathless as he climbs onto the ledge to offer him his hand. He too has a daughter he never sees because of his ex-wife, and he's thought many times about ending his life until he realized that committing suicide would only bring pain into his little girl's life. Dom proves so convincing that the man takes his hand and together they climb down from the ledge. Amidst general applause, the waiter appears annoyed by the attention he's receiving from the crowd; he wants to go back to waiting tables and pretend nothing's happening, but he quickly realizes that's impossible. He approaches his manager, who is also astonished by his prowess, asking for a break before disappearing through the service door, unaware that Victor is watching him with fervent curiosity.

He approaches him in the back of the bar with the excuse of wanting to congratulate him in person, but Dom, who wanted nothing more than a bit of peace, makes no effort to hide his irritation; he throws his freshly lit cigarette on the floor and is about to go back inside when Victor asks him point-blank how much of what he

said to that man was true. Dom, surprised, bursts out laughing, admitting he made it all up, but he has no regrets: he acted when no one else did anything to save that poor man. Victor can't help but agree and for this reason, he offers him a job, his job. He reveals that he's part of the Lazarus, an agency that provides professional actors willing to impersonate deceased loved ones. The client selects the Lazarus who most closely resembles the deceased, provides the necessary information for the optimal staging, and finally chooses the service they prefer, from overcoming grief to keep lull in it.

Convinced he's impressed him, Victor doesn't expect to be told to fuck off. Dom knows who the Lazarus are and has no intention of exploiting people's pain to make money like they do. Resentful Victor insists, assuring him that what he does has nothing to do with profit; he assists people in difficult times in their lives, helping them cope with their emotions. The waiter listens but doesn't understand why he's so keen for him to accept the offer, to which Victor tells him he's seen something in him that no one else possesses: a rare empathy that shouldn't be wasted. Dom, despite being touched by Victor's words, remains skeptical; however, he decides to accept his business card, at least to get him out of the way.

Days pass, but the courageous waiter doesn't call. This disappoints Victor who, nevertheless, has other things to think about: after carefully studying the character of Robert Bossi, he's finally ready to play him.

The sun hasn't risen yet, and Victor, sitting in his room, waits for the doorbell to ring. Ada opens the door and ushers in the agency's costume designers, makeup artists, and hair stylists. Like dancers, they move around Victor, applying his makeup, his prosthetics, fixing his wig, and dressing him in his finest. Ada, the only spectator, silently admires her husband's metamorphosis, sitting on the bed, with her wrist pierced by the needle connecting her to the IV. The sun has risen, and Victor is dead: now there's only Robert Bossi.

When Tate (40) opens the door, he almost faints; Victor's resemblance to his uncle is striking. He invites Lazarus in by calling him by his name, but Victor promptly corrects him: his name is Robert and he doesn't know who this Victor is; he's there for visiting his brother. Tate plays along and escorts him down the corridor, making sure his newfound uncle learns a few simple house rules: doors and windows are not to be opened, no communication devices are allowed, and most importantly, Adam must never leave the room... for his safety.

An opera music echoes in the dark room. Victor's eyes search for his client. There he is, Adam (80), hidden behind the armchair next to the record player that's blasting the music. Victor makes his way through the scores and vinyl records that cover the parquet floor like a minefield, and as soon as Adam sees him, he jumps up and hugs him, filled with joy. Without Victor being able to say a word, Adam begins to reminisce about their past, the games they played as children and when they both were admitted to the conservatory, not to mention the time they hooked up with the same violinist after the premiere of Rigoletto. The former conductor

laughs raucously, and Victor laughs with him until Adam's expression suddenly changes. How can he remember all this? It never happened. Adam knows that the man before him is not Robert but an impostor who just fell into his trap. The spell is broken, and Victor doesn't know how to react. Suddenly, the frail Adam rushes at him like a fury; he raves, hurls insults at him and, all of a sudden, begs him to help him get out. Only Tate's intervention allows Victor to escape. He knew it was a gamble, he knew it couldn't work and he almost lost his life. Victor reports the incident to Cassandra, confident she'll come to the same conclusion but she downplays it, calling it an accident and trusting in his mastery of finding a solution. Even at home, Ada wastes no time complaining about Cassandra, urging her husband to tell her to go to hell, but he knows well he can't do that; he can't stop being a Lazarus.

That same night, in a suburban neighborhood, Dom, in his modest apartment, finally decided to call Victor, fresh from a bad night: dating has changed dramatically these days. Where once there was an interest in getting to know someone better before going to bed, now there's no longer any need. Thanks to social media, everything has changed: you simply exchange a few photos, arrange to meet and once it's over, everyone goes their separate ways. There's no longer any room for intimacy... for falling in love. Desolate by so much lack of affection, Dom thinks back to Victor's words, fishes the crumpled business card out of his jeans pocket and dials the number; he couldn't have imagined that that haughty gentleman would meet him the next day for a job interview, not such an absurd one...

Along with hundreds of candidates of all ages, shapes and ethnicities, gathered in a large room with green porphyry marble walls, Dom has to try crying in front of an unmarked tombstone. Just as mourners wept over the tombs of unknown people in ancient times, even today this is one of the agency's most requested services, and if you can't cry on command, you can't be a Lazarus.

Victor has always hated witnessing this test, seeing the extent to which a bunch of desperate people are willing to embarrass themselves just to fake crying, biting their tongues and digging their nails into their flesh; a red-haired girl was even caught cheating with fake drops. It should be something natural, instinctive but instead it seems like a school play. This time, however, Victor has a good reason to attend: Dom is among the first to shed tears, and he can only be pleased.

Reduced to a handful of people, the candidates are briefed by Cassandra on the strict code that every Lazarus must follow: "It is forbidden to approach a client outside of a session; romantic relationships between Lazarus and client are not permitted; it is forbidden to impersonate anyone who is still alive; a Lazarus is not permitted to use another Lazarus; the client's wishes must be respected; except in cases of danger, one must always remain in character; information shared during a session remains strictly confidential; and, finally, a client must accept the treatment of his or her own free will."

After passing through the east wing undergoing renovation, the candidates are led into a long corridor full of closed doors where they will take the final test: each of them will be assigned a client for whom they will impersonate a deceased family member, allowing them to bid a final farewell, without hindrance. The young waiter is confident he will pass this test as easily as he did the first; He struts around so much that irritates Victor who decides to assign him the most unpleasant client.

Dom struts into the room but what finds inside left him shocked: waiting for him in that little set, designed as a bedroom, is a child waiting to say goodbye to his father. Dom can't believe it's real, nevertheless tries to listen and indulge the little boy, who, sobbing, emotionally reads the farewell letter written to his father. Dom passes the test, but as soon as he leaves the room, he exclaims in horror that he has no intention of taking part in another farce like that and runs away.

Victor, chasing after him, doesn't hesitate to scold him until he realizes how distraught the young man is: the pain is too much to bear and he doesn't believe he has the strength to go on. Faced with such doubt, Victor puts aside his stern nature: he knows well that being a Lazarus means taking on someone else's grief, a burden not everyone can bear, but he is convinced that Dom can. He asks Dom to trust him and his teachings and in order to convince him, he shows him the Crying Booth: an old telephone booth in the center of a large room set up as an artificial forest where a Lazarus can call anyone they wish, living or dead.

Victor lets him try, suggesting he call the same person he thought of while standing before that nameless tombstone. Leaving the booth, Dom dives into Victor's arms who, despite his initial stiffness, lets him. Dom confesses that that person was Martha and that she was the love of his life, a girl full of joy, always smiling, until she became addicted to fentanyl, a drug that allows its users to live in a constant state of hazy serenity. Discovering his scars, Victor gives him his word that if he becomes a Lazarus, he can dedicate his life to helping those like Martha, who have forgotten how to deal with their emotions, especially pain. A handshake seals the deal and Dom accepts the job.

Thus begins an unexpected bond between the old master and his new protégé, a bond Victor never believed could happen. Victor, who detests his colleagues, who can't stand physical contact, who never makes time for anyone except his clients and his beloved wife, now spends precious, formative moments with his new friend, as irreverent as he is charismatic.

Along with the other new employees, Dom learns from Victor the art of imitation necessary to impersonate someone: in addition to learning to control his emotional memory, he studies how to modulate his voice until it completely changes, and he watches archive footage to simulate gait, nervous tics, and the most subtle movements, from raising an eyebrow to crossing a leg. He is entrusted with his first services, such as crying at

funerals, approaching grieving relatives in hospital, and answering clients' letters to their deceased loved ones. The more time passes, the more Dom begins to believe firmly in the mission of Lazarus.

Confident he can trust him, Victor does something he's never done before and tells him about the troubled Adam who, after their first meeting, hasn't spoken to him since. Tate doesn't seem interested, but for Victor, so accustomed to helping others, it's a terrible penance. Perhaps, Dom argues, the poor old man doesn't need a dead man by his side, just a friend. Victor thanks him for the attempt but scoffs at such heresy: even if it were true, appearing before Adam without playing Robert would violate the code to which Victor is so devoted.

Yet, just before the session begins, the dutiful and exasperated Lazarus suddenly changes his mind, sheds his persona, and enters the lion's cage as himself.

Music resounds in the room, the same as their first and subsequent meetings. Victor introduces himself to Adam for the first time, unleashing his anger once again. Intent on dodging everything the old man throws at him, Victor loses his patience and grabs him by the wrists, yelling that no matter how much he continues to act like a brat, he won't leave until he's helped him feel better. That unexpected lecturing leaves Adam confused and mortified; he begins to ramble again and cry for help. Only the music seems able to calm him, so Victor tries to ask him more about the song he listens to so obsessively. Adam regains some of his clarity, only to turn sternly to Victor and inform him that it isn't a song at all, but an aria entitled "In fondo al tempio sacro," one of Bizet's most popular operas, which tells of the strong bond between two friends, Zurga and Nadir, jeopardized by the veiled girl, Léila, with whom they both fall in love. It was Adam's first opera as a conductor and Roberto's first as a singer.

Convinced that music is the key to communicating with him, Victor returns home and listens intently to Bizet's opera for the first time. As the music fills every corner of every room, Victor feels something awaken inside him, an emotion rising to his core, warming his heart. Ada, drawn by the poignant melody, reaches out and embraces her husband. Victor is moved, remembering for the first time in a long time what it means to be alive.

It's a big day for Dom: his first client awaits him. The new Lazarus has studied the character thoroughly, watched and rewatched archive footage, listened to interviews, and rehearsed entire nights to embody the dead man's movements and character. Victor reassures him that everything will be fine; he just needs to trust his instincts, put his teachings into practice and, most importantly, respect the code.

The two enter the agency, ignoring the red-haired girl caught cheating in the first rehearsal. Since the day she was rejected, she's been showing up outside the building, trying to cry. Everyone sees her, but no one says anything, preferring to ignore her.

While wealthy clients are provided with in-home expert Lazarus, those who can't afford that kind of service have the new comers working in the agency's west wing, where every room is a furnished and illuminated set, equipped with blackout windows that allow observers to observe and, if necessary, intervene.

Dom takes a deep breath and enters the set: he's dead, now only Marc is there. Seated at the end of the bed is Sara (28), a girl with a pretty, if emaciated, face who immediately jumps to her feet upon seeing him. They greet each other shyly, remaining distant, studying each other like caged animals. The girl is a bundle of nerves, trying to break the ice by asking him about his day and if he might like something to drink. She quickly runs to the kitchen to get a glass of water, unaware that there's nothing inside the cabinets. Dom, seeing her anxious, tells her he's missed her while tucking a lock of hair behind her ear, as her husband used to do. Overcome with emotion, Sara embraces him without hesitation.

Victor and Cassandra watch the rest of the session unfold beautifully through the darkened glass. Sara hasn't paid to escape her grief, but to lull herself into it, so Dom follows precise instructions, repeating everything the deceased did on his last day of life. However, when he is about to leave, unaware that he will soon meet his death, Sara grabs his wrist, begging him to stay and Dom, as ordered, accepts to stay. The two spend the rest of the session lying on the bed with Sara resting peacefully on his lover's chest when a deafening siren announces the end of the session. Dom carefully slips out, letting her sleep but before leaving, he pauses for a moment to gaze at her: she is truly an extraordinary beauty with an heart pounding in her chest.

Victor wants to take his favorite student to celebrate but Adam is waiting for him. Locked in his room, the former orchestra conductor plays him all the vinyl records he owns while showing off his photo albums, focusing in particular on the photo taken after Bizet's premiere. Victor carefully examines the photo, which depicts a young Adam embracing a handsome Robert and the woman who would later become his wife, who played Léila.

Adam's confused mind prevents Victor from following every step of the story, but the sweet old man is keen to tell him how he fell in love the moment the photograph was taken.

In a confidential mood, Victor confesses that he too met and fell in love with Ada on stage... a love that in the past he had taken for granted, prioritizing the love he received from his audience. In fact, after their marriage, Ada put acting aside to attend to her husband's needs on tour. Only later, with the discovery of her illness, Victor realized his mistake and withdrew from theatre so he could take care for her. For the first time, Adam

lowers his defenses and takes Victor's hand, squeezing it tightly in solidarity: he too has neglected his love for music, a mistake he will regret for the rest of his life.

Moved by this gesture, Victor wishes he could reciprocate in some way; he asks Tate if he can take his father out for a walk, but Tate firmly refuses. Victor tries to insist, assuring him that he will always be by his side, but Tate refuses and asks him to go away, leaving him perplexed by his stubbornness.

Same place, same time. Sara returns to the agency for the umpteenth time to see her husband. Dom does his part but just can't understand: how could someone so full of love waste it reliving such a painful memory? Sometimes, pain is the most comfortable place to be, Victor always tells him, but Dom can't accept this explanation, and when the moment comes as she begs him to stay, Dom goes off script telling her not to waste her time and money; he knows she's suffering, but punishing herself for not saving her husband will only end up consuming her. Sara, stunned, doesn't have time to react because Victor bursts onto the set and furious, grabs his protégé, brutally pulling him away from her. He drags him outside, ordering him to go home, without allowing him to explain.

Dom, mortified, obeys but that same evening he shows up at Victor's house, knocking on the door like a madman. He knows he hasn't respected Sara's wishes but he felt it was the right thing to do and he wanted his teacher to know it. Victor, taken aback by seeing him in his home, appears extremely uncomfortable. He tries to send him away before he wakes his wife but it's too late. Ada appears frightened in the living room, demanding an explanation at which Victor flies into a rage and admonishes Dom: no Lazarus can assume the right to choose when and how a person should stop mourning; it's not their job but Dom disagrees: they should help people feel better. Having exhausted his patience, Victor makes him promise not to bother the poor girl again at which point Dom apologizes for the intrusion and promises he'll stop.

Alone, Victor begs Ada's forgiveness who, fed up with being neglected, doesn't hesitate to make him feel mortified. The sweet and kind wife turns into a cold and vindictive woman who delights in watching Victor beg for forgiveness on his knees. He promises her he won't make the same mistake again, that he'll spend more time at home taking care of her instead of wasting his energy on Dom. Ada, satisfied, withdraws leaving Victor on the ground, humiliated.

Dom's promise is short-lived. The former waiter tracks down Sara and begs for a minute of her time; he apologizes for his behavior, explaining that the reason he acted the way he did is because he saw in her a genuine love that deeply moved him. Dom waits for her reaction, probably a slap or worse, but instead the girl lingers on his face for a long time, asks his real name, and then leans in and kisses him tenderly on the lips.

The snow falls softly on the rooftops of Boston. Dom has breakfast in bed with his beloved Sara, while Victor gazes in horror at a billboard placed in front of the bus stop: "Just jump... into Funeral Services." He tries not to think about it as he clutches an old vinyl record with Adam's name on the cover; he found it by chance at a shop and thought it would be the perfect gift for his new friend.

Adam is indeed moved; that vinyl contains the last concert he recorded with his Robert. To make that moment even more special, Victor has an idea: he places the vinyl on the turntable and starts the music, hands Adam his old conductor's baton, and invites him to climb onto the velvet footstool. Victor positions himself in front of his newfound conductor and, moving his lips, pretends to sing with Robert's voice in the background. A smile blooms on Victor's face which he hasn't been this happy since he performed on stage. Seeing Adam so engaged and filled with joy is the greatest reward he could ever receive. Adam conducts him with his baton, which he waves with dexterity and feeling; like a magician casting a spell, the maestro seems to have come back to life; he watches his Robert perform just for him and, aided by his clouded mind, he climbs down from the footstool, leans forward, and...

Adam's lips touch Victor's who, caught off guard, struggles to maintain his usual composure but Victor, being a professional prepared for any twist, lets Adam hold him close and kiss him repeatedly until he's exhausted. Once the session is over, Victor bids him farewell as usual and then quickly leaves the house.

He walks briskly down the street, avoiding the waves of passersby coming toward him. Troubled and confused, he quickens his pace until a ghost appears before him: the real, not-at-all-dead Robert who, after following him for a long time, now needs to talk to him.

Seated opposite each other in a bar, Robert starts from the beginning revealing that he is not Adam's brother, but rather his dearest and oldest friend. The two had met while working on Bizet's opera and from the moment they shook hands they both knew... but what existed between them couldn't work. Those were different times, a different upbringing, a different sensibility, and Adam feared it would ruin his career, so he decided to distance himself from Robert and start dating his co-star. They remained good friends, both married and started families, but everything changed after his wife's death the year before. Adam had shown up at his house, tired of living someone else's life and declaring he regretted giving him up. He decided to tell his son everything but Tate didn't take it well and taking advantage of his father's dementia diagnosis, locked him up at home, isolating him from the rest of the world and from Robert.

Victor thinks back to all the times Adam asked him for help escaping, to Tate's absurd rules to keep him "safe" at home, but there's still one detail he doesn't understand: why would Tate ask for a Lazarus to impersonate him if he hates him so much? Robert confides that after they were separated, Adam attempted suicide; they miraculously saved him, but from that moment on, Tate never lost sight of him and with his mental confusion

worsening, he decided to use a Lazarus as a palliative to appease his father. The only explanation for passing him off as his brother, Victor thinks, must have something to do with the rule that prohibits a Lazarus from impersonating the living. Tate must have falsified the information in the red folder before handing it over to Cassandra. Victor can't believe he was part of such a charade. Mortified, he asks Robert for forgiveness, but he doesn't need an apology, but rather his help: he's the only one who can enter that house, he's the only one who can bring him back to Adam.

Conflicted, Victor seeks Ada's advice, confident that she will give him the courage to do what he deeply feels is right. Instead his wife pulls her hands away from her husband's, beginning to rub them together in worry. Ada doesn't want to hear anything else; she doesn't want to be complicit in the kidnapping of an elderly man incapable of understanding. She regains her composure and, tersely, tells her husband that whatever choice he makes, she will keep the secret but doesn't intend to get involved. Victor struggles to believe it; he doesn't recognize the woman before him. Desperate, Victor runs to the only person crazy enough to help him. He knocks frantically on the door, but is bitterly surprised to find Sara instead of his protégé.

Dom runs down the stairs, trying to stop his mentor, eager to explain everything. He loves Sara and she loves him, but Victor mocks him, warning him: that woman is using him because she reminds him of her dead husband; in her eyes, she's nothing more than a mannequin. The warning doesn't scare Dom who challenge Victor to tell everything to Cassandra but Victor can't do that... he needs him, so he proposes a deal: he'll keep his mouth shut if he promises to leave Sara and help him with Adam.

Vittorio's plan is simple: Domenico, posing as an antenna technician, will take Tancredi to the roof and keep him busy as much as possible by inventing an antenna problem. Meanwhile, Vittorio, in a meeting with Angelo, will take advantage of the situation to get him out and reunite him with Roberto, who will be waiting for them outside.

The plan works perfectly: Dom, disguised as a technician, convinces Tate to leave the house. Victor quickly puts a heavy jacket on Adam who, confused, lets him lead the way, promising to see his beloved Robert soon. Making sure not to make too much noise, the two quickly descend the stairs, reach the entrance hall, and open the door, but...

Tate and Cassandra are waiting for them, determined to block their way. Dom, to Victor's bitter surprise, is also there. In the end, it has happened; his protégé has finally learned the most important lesson of all: always respect the Lazarus code. Victor knows exactly why he did it, or rather, who he did it for. Master and student need not say anything to each other; Victor's betrayed gaze strikes Dom's guilty one, who quickly turns away.

Engaged in discussion, the four fail to notice that Adam has recognized his Robert from across the street and, eager to embrace him, escapes their control, running toward his beloved without noticing the car hurtling toward him. No one can do anything; the impact is inevitable. Adam lies on the ground in a pool of blood that stains the snow-covered street. Victor, petrified by that tragic outcome, remains standing paralyzed while Robert and Tate lift Adam, attempting to revive him. It's all in vain; with his last strength, Adam holds the hand of his son and his newfound love, then seeks Victor's face a moment before the life fades from his eyes.

Having fled the scene of the accident, Dom takes refuge in Sara's arms, who caresses his head, resting it in her lap. She consoles him, repeating that he did the right thing by informing Cassandra; now they can stay together without him giving up his Lazarus job. Sara continues to cuddle him, unaware that she repeatedly calls him by her late husband's name. Dom notices this but remains in a fetal position, allowing her to caress him, thus accepting his surrogate love.

Victor is mortified by Adam's death but doesn't regret what he's done. These words only fuel Cassandra's anger: he was the best she had at the agency, the only one she could trust blindly, but Victor replies that they're all lies. She was the one who forced him under threat to take on the Bossi case, and now not only will Tate sue him, but she'll sue the entire agency as well. Victor tries to explain to her about the cruelties his son subjected Adam to, but Cassandra doesn't need to be told anything; she already knew everything and even accepted Tate's money so she could falsify the information in the red folder herself.

In an instant, everything Victor thought he knew about Lazarus falls apart. Cassandra fires him and, taunting him, advises him to visit the restored east wing so he can see with his own eyes what he helped build thanks to Tate's money and his work.

Victor runs toward the east wing. The plastic sheets, the stacked tiles, the dust-covered scaffolding are gone; there's only a long black marble corridor with a red door marked "White Ward." The deepest dismay is evident on Victor's face: newborns of a month or so rented to parents who lost their babies. The now former Lazarus is horrified to see the infants held in the arms of tearful strangers willing to pay just to cling to a terrible illusion.

Victor flees from that ward, from that building. He runs down the stone stairs where he sees the red-haired girl once again, trying to cry. In a rage he yells at her, asking why she's still there, why she insists so much on trying to cry. It's then that the frightened girl answers him half-heartedly, leaving him stunned: "Because... I can't."

Although forbidden to approach the funeral, Victor couldn't miss it. Standing at the back of the church, he watches the guests listen to the priest: no tears, no emotion, no genuine regret, just a crowd of relatives and

acquaintances present, uninterested in commemorating his friend. The coffin is carried out and placed on the hearse while Tate receives condolences. Victor heads toward the exit when...

"On this day that unites us. And faithful to my promise. Like a brother, I want to love you! It is she, the goddess. Who comes on this day to unite us..."

Victor recognizes that voice, recognizes that aria. Robert is there, in front of his Adam, who sings a cappella the aria that kept them close even when they were far away. Robert sings without taking his gaze from his love, without caring about Tate or those gathered to witness the impromptu concert.

A miracle happens before Victor, something he no longer believed possible: everyone present, without exception, cries moved by that pure and touching gesture. No one takes a video, no one bothers to hide their pain. They shed rivers of tears without shame or fear, embracing each other, in silence, in adoration of Zurga and Nadir's final, marvelous performance.

Sitting on the couch with the IV attached to her arm, Ada awaits Victor's return. She notices his red eyes as soon as he crosses the threshold, but she doesn't have time to open her mouth before Victor speaks up: he apologizes to her, he apologizes for being a terrible husband, for not loving her as she deserved, for not being there for her during her illness and before her death. He thought he could make amends, to atone for his guilt with the Lazarus, but now he's realized there's no point in dwelling on grief; he must accept the pain and move on.

Ada silently looks at her husband, then asks if he's sure of his decision. Victor thanks her for not saying anything to Cassandra, for respecting the code, but now that he's been fired and stripped of his privilege, she's free to go. Ada shrugs her shoulders, pulls the fake needle from her wrist and removes the scarf that was covering her thinning wig, beneath which was a thick, raven mane. She greets Victor who greets her back, calling her by her real name: Stefany.

Thus exits the only Lazarus placed at the disposal of another Lazarus, the lie of Victor that has managed to deceive everyone, including himself.

There is a deep silence in the house. Left alone, Victor sits on the sofa, where he peacefully leans forward, staring into void; he smiles serenely, finally free from his ghosts, free from guilt but above all, free to move on.