

Eurovision

A Play
by Tim Luscombe

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Scene 3.

The Green Room in a modern conference centre, in Rome, where the Eurovision Song Contest is being held.

There are several chairs and tables. At the centre table, Gary and Kevin are having coffee. They have their Eurovision Song Contest handouts with them (a programme, guides, schedules etc), and each is wearing his accreditation badge. Gary is writing in his notebook. Kevin is reading from the glossy programme.

Kevin: *(reading)* “Pogere il benvenuto del Concorso Eurovisione della Canzone”.

Gary: *(not really looking up)* Welcome to the Eurovision Song Contest.

Kevin: This programme’s all in Italian.

Gary: I thought you spoke Italian.

Kevin: I can say bread roll and sick bag. Strangely enough, at the Ryanair School for young airhostesses they didn’t teach us how to say “Welcome to the Eurovision Song Contest”. Oh, no, it’s alright, it’s in English as well.

Gary: Concorso Eurovisione della Canzone. Sounds beautiful, doesn’t it?

Kevin: (*reading*) "The Euro festival will surely be viewed by an immense television audience".

Gary: Between 200 and 500 million. Depends who you talk to.

Kevin: "And represents one of the traditional borderless happenings". None of this makes sense.

Gary: Hang on a sec. I've got to an important bit. (*writing*) "I give you my life, happily, lovingly" (*thinking*) Um.

Kevin: "Previous winners for Italy are "No ho l'eta" by Gigli...Gigli...

Gary: Gigliola Cinquetti.

Kevin: Yes, her. In –

Gary: 1964. (*singing*) "No ho l'eta, no ho l'eta, per amati, no ho l'eta –

Kevin: And Tuto Cutugno's song "Insieme".

Gary: (*singing*) "Insieme, unite, unite, Europe"! (*spoken*) A song about European unification. You see, they're not all mindless rubbish.

Kevin: Slovakia's song seems to be about a scheme to build a hydroelectric power station.

Gary: Yes. Fascinating. Don't think it'll win, though.

Kevin: Listen to this. This is Portugal. "Tomorrow there'll be time to think about life, to have children, to invest all my savings. Hurrah!" I'm going mad. Will you stop writing in that bloody notebook and talk to me.

Gary: I just wanted to get rid of Antinous.

Kevin: From one fantasy to another.

Gary: He walked into the river Nile and drowned himself; trying to extend Hadrian's life.

Kevin: Sounds logical.

Gary: At least that's what I think. Lots of people think he was assassinated by the anti-Greeks. There are conflicting theories.

Kevin: Really?

Gary: Yes, you see, the anti-Greek lobby was very strong, and Antinous represented a threat, as they saw it, to Rome. But I think their love for each other was so strong, selfless, epic, pure. It was the logical thing for Antinous to have done for his dying lover: sacrifice himself.

Kevin: Really.

Gary: Yes, there was a belief in those days, you see, that if you literally sacrificed yourself for someone, then the person who you sacrificed your life for would live longer by the number of years you'd already lived on earth. So Antinous was giving Hadrian, who was gravely ill, dicky heart, another 19 years to live. Amazing huh?

Kevin: I'm speechless. Why are we waiting here?

Gary: Because this is the Green Room for all the contestants. It's where it's all at.

(They look around)

Well, it's early. They'll be here.

Kevin: Who?

Gary: The singers and the press and everybody.

Kevin: Then what'll we do?

Gary: Oh, you know.

Kevin: No. What?

(Gary wrinkles with excitement)

Kevin: Maybe we'll see Terry Wogan.

Gary: Oh god, I hope not. He is the enemy. Xenophobic, hateful, ignorant man. He talks through the music! What does he think this is? Radio 2?

(Katia Europa enters)

Oh look! Katia Europa!

Kevin: Who's she singing for?

Gary: No-one. She's the TV presenter!

Kevin: Oh.

Gary: Ah, scusi, Signora Europa?

Katia: Si.

Gary: Um. Would you be kind enough to sign our programme. (*He snatches it from Kevin*)

Katia: Oh, yes. Of course. Who are you?

Gary: Gary. And that's Kevin. It's a great honour to meet you.

Katia: Thank you, thank you.

Gary: Good luck with the rehearsals.

Katia: I am very how-you-say out at lunch. So much rehearsal. Heavens! Technical, make up... You are sick of the songs.

Gary: Are you?

Katia: They are rubbish, no?

Gary: Well...

Katia: Ah. You are fan club people?

Gary: Well...

Katia: You are English! Yes, very nice. Your song not so bad.

Gary: Oh, do you think so?

Katia: (*insincerely but smoothly*) Yes. Goodbye.

Gary: Goodbye.

(*Katia goes*)

She's marvellous, isn't she?

Kevin: (*snatching the programme back*) Um.

Gary: I think we stand a chance. The song's no good at all but that often isn't important. They perform it very well. We'll probably come second. Or last. That's us these days. Second or last. My money's on Spain, though. Or possibly Malta.

Kevin: Malta? Haven't they run out of singers yet?

Gary: They recycle. Unlike Luxembourg, who always use to hire in.

Kevin: Used to?

Gary: They don't bother to come any more. Not since 1993. Tragically. Vicky Leandros, famously. She's Greek but she sang for Luxembourg. Après Toi. 1972. (*quickly sings a brief refrain*) Greece itself has never won of course.

Kevin: Why "of course"?

Gary: Well, they always get it a bit wrong. They either go too ethnic and wear shepherd costumes or something, or they try and be sort of poppy and it just comes over as tacky and imitative. Or they do comedy songs. Never a good idea. Sincerity's the key to success. Look at Nicole. Sung for Germany, 1982. Nicole was 17, and she sat there and just sung and played this huge guitar, all virginal and sweet. A song about peace. A Little Peace. Ein Bisschen Frieden. Romped to victory. You see, by 1982 the voting panels wanted to show that they were finally ready to start forgiving Germany for the Second World War. They were absolutely ruthless, the voting panels. Of course now it's all televoting, apart from sometime the Ukraine or Russia or Turkey can't cope with the technology involved, so they still have a voting panel. I mean, who makes up the panel, I can hardly imagine. I have an image of a dozen or so 60-year-old peasant women, all dressed in black, sitting in a dingy studio in Istanbul with headphones on. It's one of the great unsolved mysteries of our time. How each country picks its voting panel. Do you know it used to be just 2 people from each country. But the problem was the range of possible scores wasn't big enough. In 1969 in Madrid, for example, four countries came first equal. France, Spain, Holland and Britain. I mean, it was ludicrous! Can you imagine how embarrassing it must have been?! (*resuming his central point*) And looks, of course, play an important part. And running order. For instance, it's an enormous help going last. Like when Yugoslavia won in 1989. Terrible song, sung last, came first. And a key change before the third chorus. Countries like Greece seldom win. Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, Morocco, Malta. None of them have ever won. There's a kind of bias towards the North of Europe, you see. Ireland, Estonia, UK, Sweden, Netherlands. Always do well. And look at Latvia! People are funny about languages they're not familiar with, too. Before the 2001 rule change, countries like Iceland and Finland didn't stand a chance because the language sounded unpleasant to most people. As in the famous case of Norway, after having had "nil points" two years running, they put the hundred nicest-sounding Norwegian

words into a computer and asked it to compose lyrics using just those words. That year Norway came second.

Kevin: You're mad.

Gary: No, it's true. Do you think it's because I'm gay that I like the Eurovision Song Contest?

Kevin: No, you're just mad. Anyway, I'm gay and I can't stand the Eurovision Song Contest.

Gary: You will. You'll get into it.

Kevin: I think I just got into it.

(Andrea Alexiou has come in. He gets himself a cup of coffee and sits DSL reading his fan mail)

Gary: What? Oh, that's Andreas Alexiou. The Greek entry. Yes. He's gorgeous, isn't he?

Kevin: I think I'm in love.

Gary: And look! Oh my god! There's Sergio Flores!

(Sergio has come in and sits DSR)

You're looking at the odds-on favourite to win this year's Eurovision Song Contest. Oh no, you're not. Get your eyes off the Greek boy. Look. There! Sergio Flores. *Probemos Una Sola Vez*. Marvellous song. He's terribly famous.

Kevin: I've never heard of him.

Gary: Well, he's not famous in Britain, of course. Xenophobic, un-European Britain. But on the continent he's a major star. Very big with a major part of the group of people who'll stay in on a Saturday night to watch it, I should think...oh!

(Kevin has slipped away and gone over to Andreas)

Kevin: Hello.

Andreas: Yia sou.

Kevin: May I sit down?

Andreas: You are gionalista?

Kevin: I am...?

Andreas: Gionalista. Your lapel.

Kevin: Well, no – Yes! I am. Journalist. From Cyprus.

Andreas: Iste Kibrios? Ma then miazete katholoy Kibrios!

Kevin: Sorry.

Andreas: You are not from Cyprus. You play joke with me. Hahaha.

Kevin: *(laughing along)* Oh, I see.

Andreas: Why you say you from Cyprus? Cyprus is Greek.

Kevin: Is it?

Andreas: Their song is no good. It is Turkish.

Kevin: I'm very confused.

Andreas: My song is very beautiful. I will win, no?

Kevin: Yes. Kevin. Kevin Curtis.

Andreas: Andreas Alexiou. I will be first Greek to win. *(pointing to Sergio)*
I will be famous like him one day.

Kevin: You see, although it says gionalista –

Andreas: Eniosa kati mestin karthia stin karthia mou, in ena mistiko trayoutho! Ine yia mas tous alithino to kathe lebto.

Kevin: My goodness.

Andreas: It is my song.

Kevin: Ah.

Andreas: You do not know it?

Kevin: Yes, of course.

Andreas: It is written by Fortini Christou and Leonidas Soteropoulos. Very famous artists in my country. You don't write this down?

Kevin: Ah.

(Kevin starts to write on whatever is to hand)

Andreas: I wined 158 points in the Greek national final with my song.

Kevin: (*correcting him*) You won 158 points.

Andreas: I know. I give very good performance.

Kevin: I'm sure.

Andreas: Last year I came twice in the festival of Tessaloniki.

Kevin: I beg your pardon.

Andreas: Twice... Tooth? Second!

Kevin: Second! And how old are you Andreas?

Andreas: I am born in [whatever year makes him 19 now].

Kevin: Good Lord.

Andreas: Ask me more questions.

Kevin: Are you enjoying Rome?

Andreas: Rome is nice. I am from Boli. It is in Turkey but I am Greek.

Kevin: Uh-huh. Have you found any clubs in Rome that you like?

Andreas: My manager, he no like me go to clubs. I am very bad boy.

Kevin: Are you?

Andreas: Yes. I go out. I get drunk. Woops. My voice, it is very how-you-say...dear?

Kevin: Precious.

Andreas: Precious. Very good. Yes. So I no go to clubs. Where are clubs?

Kevin: Well, are you busy tonight?

Andreas: Tonight is big dress rehearsal. I sing!

Kevin: Of course you do! Well, maybe some other time.

Andreas: You want naughty tale!

Kevin: Well, good luck in the contest.

Andreas: Thank you for interview.

(Kevin comes back to Gary)

Kevin: He thinks I'm a journalist. What should I do? Oh, come on. Don't look like that. You could just as easily have gone over there and –

Gary: Alright.

Kevin: I think he was flirting with me.

Gary: How do you know he was gay?

Kevin: I didn't. He might not be.

Gary: Kevin?

Kevin: Um?

Gary: Thathela kalamaraki tiyanito, ke mia mikri mboukala kراسي kokkino.

Kevin: What does that mean?

Gary: I would like the deep fried squid and half a bottle of the house red.

Kevin: Don't understand.

Gary: It's just very easy to sound sexy in Greek, that's all.

Kevin: Don't be stupid. Don't be jealous of me.

Gary: I'm not jealous of you. I mean I just wish someone would come up to me, and pretend to be a journalist and get into my trousers.

Kevin: They might.

Gary: Who? Sergio? I think not!

Kevin: Is he gay?

Gary: No, he's as straight as a whatsit. I presume. He's kind of famous for it. His affairs with different women are always in the papers. Why do you assume that everybody's gay? Anyway, what did Andreas tell you?

Kevin: Everything. It was relentless. He's a great singer, he was born in xxxx, he came second in some other contest, he comes from Boli and he doesn't go out much.

Gary: But he's Greek.

Kevin: So?

Gary: Boli's in Turkey.

Kevin: Is it?

Gary: Are you sure he said he was from Boli?

Kevin: Yes. Hang on, I wrote it down. Yes. Boli. "It's in Turkey but I am Greek".

Gary: But that's incredible. It's where Antinous was born.

Kevin: Oh, no. Is there no escape?

Gary: It's in what used to be Greece in Antinous' day, but has been Turkish for about a thousand years. It was called Claudiopolis in the second century. Then it became shortened to just Polis, which was corrupted to Boli by the Turks. It's incredible.

Kevin: Well, not really. He has to come from somewhere. So, you want another coffee?

Gary: Not really. I've already had five.

Kevin: What about some wine?

Kevin: Do you?

Gary: I'm asking you.

Kevin: Yes, alright.

(Kevin goes off. Gary looks timidly over to Sergio, trying to pluck up courage to speak to him. Instead, he grabs Kevin's programme and reads)

Gary: *(flicking through programme)* Sergio, Sergio. *(reading)* Sergio Flores was born in [whatever makes him about 45] in Santiponce! *(closing the programme quickly)* Oh my God!

(He goes over to Sergio)

Permiso, Señor Flores. Gary Roberts de la BBC. ¿Me permite una pregunta?

Sergio: Por supuesto, Gary.

Gary: El programa dice que tu nascite en Santiponce.

Sergio: Si, es cierto.

Gary: ¿Es el lugar natal del Emperador Adriano, no es cierto?

Sergio: Si, creo haberlo dido antes.

Gary: Vale. Gracias.

(Kevin returns with wine)

Sergio: Bien.

Gary: Exito en la competicion.

Sergio: Muchas Gracias.

(Gary returns to Kevin)

Kevin: I didn't know you spoke Spanish.

Gary: Kev, something strange is happening.

Kevin: That's really impressive.

Gary: Kevin, are you listening to me?

Kevin: When did you learn?

Gary: Kevin!

Kevin: What?

Gary: This is unbelievable. Andres Alexiou comes from the same town that Antinous was born in, and Sergio Flores comes from the same town where Hadrian was born.

Kevin: Really.

Gary: Yes, and look at them. Andreas is really young and pretty just like Antinous was and Sergio is the same age as Hadrian when Hadrian died.

Kevin: So, it's coincidence.

Gary: It can't be.

Kevin: It can't be anything else. Calm down.

Gary: I'm calm, I'm calm.

Kevin: I really can't cope with this, Gary.

Gary: But it's amazing.

Kevin: Gary, I didn't come all the way to Rome with you so you could endlessly indulge in your fantasies about Roman Emperors and all this crap.

Gary: It's not crap!

Kevin: And when I get interested in something, I'm made to feel like an unfaithful husband. I need some fresh air.

(Kevin leaves, taking time to wink at Andreas who smiles back)

Gary: Damn.

(Gary sits, dejected. He looks at Sergio and then at Andreas. The lights subtly change to something more romantic as, at first imperceptibly, we hear romantic slushy euro pop slowly becoming more audible. (suggest: Gli Amori by Eros Ramazzotti.) Sergio and Andreas catch each other's eyes and lock with extraordinary passion. The music builds. Something strange is going on! Gary, between them, watches, enthralled.

Sergio's and Andrea's choreographed rises and initial moves towards each other are soon interrupted by the brisk, mood-changing entrance of Rocco (Sergio's manager), Dolores (Sergio's wife), and the paparazzi. The music ends as abruptly, and the lights re-establish.

One journalist is from RAI. The others are Spanish. Sergio's party arrives at Sergio's table)

Rocco: Hola, Sergio.

Sergio: Hola Rocco.

Rocco: A qui esta la esposa. Los chicos quieren unas tomas y unas palabras.

Sergio: Hola, chicos.

Paprz: Hola, Sergio, ciao, etc.

(Dolores puts her arm through Sergio's, immediately establishing a happy husband/wife look and feel - a bit cheesy)

Rai: Stà godendo la nostra ospitalità Romana, Sergio?

Sergio: Ah! In Italiano, si. Si, è bello essere qua.

Dolores: Si.

Sergio: Amiano Roma.

Dolores: Si.

Sergio: Per mia moglie ed io è meraviglioso.

Pap2: ¿Que posibilidades crees tener de ganar mañana?

Sergio: La cancion es genial.

Dolores: Como mi marido!

Sergio: Creo que es la cancion española mas fuerte en años. Tan Fuerte como Vivo Cantando de Salome!

Dolores: Pero, vosotros sois muy jovenes para recordar, no?

Pap3: ¿Tu esposa viaja contigo esta vez. Para acompañarte.

Sergio: Es una ocasion muy especial. Les quiero contra que celebremos mañana nuestras bodas se plata.

Paprz: Hahaha.

Pap2: Felicitaciones!

Rai: Fantastico!

Dolores: Allora, facciamo le seconde nozze di miele qui a Roma questa weekend.

Paprz: Hahaha.

Rai: Va bene. Molto grazie, Sergio.

Pap2: Gracias. Suerte mañana.

Rocco: Gracias, chicos.

Pap3: Vale.

Rai: Bisogna spicciarsi. I Danesi stanno tenedo una conferenza stampa nella sala dei VIP adesso.

Rocco: D'accordo. Via andate.

Pap2: Gracias, Señor Flores.

Sergio: Nada. Adios.

Pap3: Adios.

(The Paparazzi go, leaving Sergio and Dolores who professionally disentangle)

Sergio: Gracias, Rocco. Estuvo formidable.

Rocco: Vale, Dolores. Estuvo formidable. Te veo en el hotel.

Dolores: Bien. Hasta luego, Rocco.

(She moves away)

Rocco: Bien, Sergio. Te quieren con maquillaje. Estamos a media hora del ensayo.

Sergio: Vale. Estoy contigo.

(Sergio hangs back and Rocco strides off, picking up the dawdling Dolores and manhandling her arse. Sergio throws a look over his shoulder to Andreas, who rises to his feet as if to say something, but Sergio has gone. Andreas looks momentarily forlorn)

Gary: Sergio Flores is a closet queen!

To read the entire play, please contact Tim directly on tim@timluscombe.com +44 (0) 777 978 9198

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