

Passion (1994) • Synopsis of Scenes*

1. Milan, Italy, 1863: Giorgio Bachetti, a captain in the Italian army, is in bed with his mistress Clara. They express their ecstasy (**SONG: "Happiness"**) During a pause in their lovemaking, Giorgio informs Clara that he has been transferred to an outpost far away.
2. Colonel Ricci, commander of the post, introduces Giorgio to the other officers and to Doctor Tambourri. They hear piano playing upstairs. Ricci explains that it is his cousin Fosca, who is in poor health. Upon hearing that Fosca loves to read, Giorgio offers to lend her his books. There is a scream from upstairs. Ricci apologizes for not warning the captain that his cousin has outbursts. Giorgio and Clara sing from **letters** they have received. Time passes. Fosca comes downstairs to thank Giorgio for the books. (**SONG: "I Read"**) Fosca agrees to show Giorgio the gardens and the ruined castle.
3. **SONG: "Garden Sequence"**—Clara, back in Milan, reads a **letter** from Giorgio as Giorgio and Fosca stroll through the castle garden. Clara's reading of the letter overlaps with the dialogue between Giorgio and Fosca. Giorgio and Clara sing an impassioned duet (that echoes "Happiness"). Giorgio and Fosca talk about love; she accuses him of being cruel for talking about happiness, beauty and "superior" love. She confesses she has been watching him; she thinks that he is different, not like the other soldiers.
4. Another exchange of **letters** between Clara and Giorgio: he has told her about befriending Fosca; she warns him to be careful. Fosca reads a **letter** she has written to Giorgio, accusing him of avoiding her. She places it by his plate in the dining hall. During the meal, she grabs his hand and won't let go. Giorgio requests a five-day leave from the Colonel to attend to urgent business in Milan.
5. The next morning, Fosca confronts Giorgio before he leaves. She suddenly kisses him. He pushes her away. She proclaims that she adores him. She makes him promise to write her from Milan. Giorgio visits Clara (brief reprise of "Happiness"), while Fosca reads the **letter** from Giorgio, in which he tells her that his heart "belongs to someone else." (**SONG: "Trio"**)
6. Back at the outpost Giorgio visits Fosca. She confronts him about "her rival" and asks, since he loves her and she is beautiful, "Why don't you marry her?" Giorgio replies, "She is already married." [This is the first we hear about Clara's marital state.] Fosca: "And is your angel also a mother?" Giorgio replies, "I find your sarcasm most distasteful." Fosca dismisses him. In his next **letter** to Clara, Giorgio reveals that Fosca "has all but disappeared from my life." Later, the Doctor sends for Giorgio and tells him that Fosca is mortally ill. "It's because of you," he tells Giorgio, "The woman is letting herself die because of you." He asks Giorgio to visit her—"What is the cost of a few words when a life hangs in the balance?"
7. Giorgio visits Fosca in her room. She invites him to sit on the bed. They sleep. Back in Milan, Clara reads a **letter** she has written to Giorgio. The next morning, when Giorgio prepares to leave Fosca's room, she asks him to write a **letter** that she will dictate to him. He agrees. Though this letter is from Giorgio's point of view, and written in his handwriting [plot point!], the words are Fosca's, and she sings them. (**SONG: "I Wish I Could Forget You"**)
8. (**SONG: "Flashback"**) Colonel Ricci thanks Giorgio for being kind to Fosca. Meanwhile, in another part of the stage, Fosca is writing a **letter** to Giorgio. The Colonel and Fosca tell Giorgio of Fosca's tragic past. She was a sad and lonely child. Though her parents tell her she is beautiful, others think her plain. Her cousin introduces her to a handsome young man, Count Ludovic of Austria, who proposes to her. However, after the marriage, when he has received her "sizable dowry," he makes himself scarce. Fosca is accosted in the street by one of his mistresses, who tells her he is not even a count. When Fosca confronts him with the information, he justifies his actions: "We made a bargain, and we got what we bargained for. You gave me your money, I gave you my looks." This experience causes Fosca's health to fail.

* Scene numbers follow the published script of *Passion* (Theatre Communications Group, 1994).