

Don Loco  
By Jim Shankman  
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## Cast

Don Loco	An old man who wanders around Little Italy in his pajamas. 60's
DJ	His attendant. 30's – 40's
Old Lady	Old lady on a park bench in the neighborhood. 80's
Theresa	Don's wife. Late 50's – early 60's
Joe the Bartender	Proprietor of a downtown bar. 40's – 50's
Tina	Don's former girlfriend. Once a knockout, her wild life deepened her into a striking ravaged beauty. 40's.
Benny	A dead man, formerly a lady-killer. 40's

Time: the present

Setting: Various locations in Little Italy

At rise: A door opens onto a street. Sounds of traffic, voices, the city. An disheveled, vacant man steps through the door dressed in pajamas, slippers and a bathrobe. He stands, takes a couple of uneasy steps. Another man, much younger, steps through the door and stands beside him.

DJ

Your hat.

(He puts an elegant fedora on the old man's gray head.)

DON

Bene. Hey what day is this today?

DJ

Sunday. It's Sunday.

DON

I knew it was Sunday. That's good. I like Sunday. Why do I like Sunday?

DJ

Everybody likes Sunday.

DON

Yeah. What do I do on Sunday? Don't tell me.

DJ

You go to....

DON

I go to church. I walk to St. Anthony. Yeah?

DJ

That's right.

DON

Now?

DJ

Certainly.

DON

This way?

DJ

This way.

DON

Yeah that's right. How come I don't remember that?

DJ

It's not important.

DON

It is. It is important. A man should know which way to church on Sunday.

DJ

Sometimes we forget things. We have things on our mind.

DON

What? What do I got on my mind? Nothing.

DJ

It's ok. Come on. We'll go to church.

DON

And ask forgiveness I don't remember which way.

DJ

Ok.

DON

(Don sees an old woman sitting on a bench.)

Who is that? Do I know her?

DJ

No I don't think so.

DON

Sure I do. I know her face. I wanna say her name.

DJ

I don't think we know her.

DON

We?

DJ

You. I don't think you do.

DON

Maybe I'll just go say hi. A friendly hello on a Sunday morning.

DJ

You might frighten her. I mean a stranger.

DON

How could I be a stranger? I live here. All my life I live here. I know her face. I wanna say her name. Olivia.

(Don speaks to the old woman on the bench.)

Olivia? Is that you? Olivia?

OLD LADY ON THE BENCH

Whozzat?

DON

Olivia? I see your face I wanna say Olivia. Is that you?

OLD LADY

You ask me that?

DON

I just thought to say hello

OLD LADY

You say hello to me?

DON

Hey why not? Right? A beautiful Sunday morning. I take a walk to church. I see a familiar face. I stop and say hello.

OLD LADY

You say hello to me?

DON

Hey why not? I see your face. You remind me of Olivia. You look like her I think. I got it wrong I beg your pardon.

OLD LADY

You what?

DON

I beg your pardon. What? I think I must of got it wrong.

OLD LADY

You bet your ugly ass you got it wrong. You stop and say hello to me? I spit on you. What do I care?

DON

Hey hey hey.

DJ

I told you this.

DON

Come on let's go.

OLD LADY

I piss on your grave before you're cold in the ground.

DON

Hey lady hey. What kind of talk?

OLD LADY

You show your face to me? I only wish I had a gun.

DON

A gun? The hell you say to me? I stop to say hello, ya old bat. To pass the time of day.

OLD LADY

You stop and say hello to Benny.

DON

I know that name. Olivia she got a boy his name is Benny. Big strapping kid. Of course I say hello. Why not? Where is he? Point him out.

OLD LADY

He's in the ground.

DON

I'm sorry. Please forgive.

OLD LADY

Forgive?

DON

I didn't know.

OLD LADY

You put him there. You kill him three times.

DJ

Lady please.

DON

I what?

OLD LADY

Three times. You got a shotgun, you go boom boom boom. You leave me nothing for the funeral. I make them nail the casket shut so God don't take offense.

DON

What is she talking about? I never fired a gun in anger in my entire life.

OLD LADY

Nah not you. You never pull the trigger. You don't get your hands dirty. Not you.

DON

She must have got me mixed up.

OLD LADY

Mixed up? I mix you up, you stupid old man.

DON

You call me old? You look like death warmed over.

OLD LADY

Because I am. So what? My little Benny, you make a mess of him. For why?

DON

I don't know nothing about this. I never touched a hair.

OLD LADY

You don't got to touch a hair. You just raise a finger.

DON

Raise a finger? What is she saying?

OLD LADY

Was maybe him? (To DJ.) Was you? Why not? You're all alike. You all gonna burn in hell

DJ

Hey Grandma, don't you have respect for an old man in the neighborhood? You shut your mouth you know what's good for you.

(He raises a hand to her.)

DON

(To DJ.) Hey hey! What is the matter with you? You strike a poor old crazy lady? Are you out of your mind. On Sunday in the sight of God and St. Anthony?

OLD LADY

(To DJ.) Go on you dirty bastard. You got a gun? Go on. Why don't you put a bullet in my face? Tough guy. Killer. Rot in hell.

DJ

I will send a man, Grandma, he will set your house on fire. You want to go up in smoke?

OLD LADY

No please no please.

DON

Who are you, do a thing like that?

DJ

You know exactly who I am.

OLD LADY

(She falls to her knees and mutters in Italian under her breath.)

No please no please.

DON

I do? I don't. I don't know no such thing.

DJ

Come on. Let's go. I told you this. Before I regret something.

DON

(To DJ.) You stay away from me. Tell her get up off her knees.

DJ

Come on. Let's go. Before she has a heart attack, somebody calls the cops, courageous citizen with a cellphone.

DON

(To DJ.) You stay away.



DJ

Come on, old man. I ain't got time for this.

DON

Olivia? Is she ok? Tell her she should get off her knees. It hurts me looking at her.

DJ

She keeps a civil tongue in her head she'll be just fine.

DON

I'll call the cops.

DJ

Don't make me laugh.

DON

Olivia!

(The old lady continues to mutter in Italian.)

DJ

(To Don.) Shut up. Stop saying that. Don't you got the brains you was born with?

DON

(Suddenly he is very confused.)

What is going on? I don't know you what you want. I wanna go home.

DJ

You said you want to go to church. Come on I ain't got time for this. Come on.

DON

Ok. Ok.

DJ

Come on.

DON

Ok.

DJ

We go to church.

DON

Which way?

DJ

Come on. Stop staring. What is wrong with you?

(They walk away from the old lady. She gets up and sits on the bench.)

DON

I want her dead.

DJ

You what?

DON

She talks to much. I want her dead. You understand?

DJ

You want her dead? Don't make me laugh. You make me laugh.

DON

I don't want to see her face. I don't want to hear her name. Capice?

DJ

You crazy old man. You make me laugh. You think you own this street? This is your street? You call the shots? Who lives and dies? Did you take your meds today?

DON

And you, you little jerk. You ever talk like that in public again like that I will tear your face right off your skull, you hear me, kid. I will hold it in my fist and shove it up your ass.

DJ

You crazy old man. The hell do you think you're talking to?

DON

I'm talking to you, kid. And I hope I'm coming through loud and clear. I don't got time for you temper. I can't afford your stupid mistakes.

DJ

Ok. Ok. Whatever you say, boss. You're the boss, Boss. Now settle down, ok, or I will march you right up First Avenue and leave you on the doorstep at Bellevue. Is that what you want? Cause I will do it if you make me mad. I got my orders too you know.

DON

No no, please don't do that.

DJ

Don't push me, old man. I got my orders too.

DON

No no, I swear, I can't go back in there. I swear. I go back in, I don't come out. St. Anthony protect me.

DJ

All right all right. Settle down. Just settle down. You really make me earn my pay, you know that.

DON

Yeah?

DJ

Yeah. Oh yeah.

(They walk for a moment.)

DON

That was good, yeah? I sound like a crazy old man?

DJ

You are a crazy old man.

DON

Bene. Just in case anybody was listening.

DJ

Who's gonna listen to you?

DON

Yeah right. And while I'm thinking. I want to make that deal on Mott Street. I don't want any crap. Just do it.

DJ

What deal on Mott Street? There is no deal on Mott Street

DON

No bullshit. No nonsense.

DJ

I don't know what you're talking about.

DON

Yeah right cause I am just a crazy old man. Look at me. Hoo-wee.

DJ

You got that right.

DON

Listen to me you little putz. Look at my face. Listen to the tone of my voice. I'm only gonna say it once.

DJ

Don't waste my time. They couldn't pay me enough.

DON

I'm talking serious now you hear me?

DJ

I don't hear nothing but garbage out of you, old man. Garbage in and garbage out. Story of my stupid life.

DON

Stop that talk. I don't listen to that. You got a job to do you do it. You don't piss moan and complain like an old woman.

DJ

Why I gotta listen to this?

DON

I will sell your nuts on Sullivan Street. I will nail 'em to a telephone pole. I will bury you alive head first at Fresh Kill and watch how long your feet kick.

DJ

HEY OLD MAN! I hear they just reopened your case.

DON

They what?

DJ

They re-convened the grand jury.

DON

Says who?

DJ

They're asking all kinds of questions I hear.

DON

Like what?

DJ  
Like where were you on the night of ---

DON  
No no no.

DJ  
Oh yeah. And can you account for your whereabouts between the hours of ---

DON  
No they can't do that.

DJ  
They seem to know a lot this time.

DON  
You're just trying to scare me 'cause I raised my voice. Ok ok, I'm sorry what I said.

DJ  
Bene. Capice?

DON  
Capice.

DJ  
(After a moment.) You want her dead?

DON  
Can I do that?

DJ  
Hey you can do it all. You are Don Loco, are you not?

DON  
She talks too much. I want her dead.

(Blackout. Lights rise on Don sitting on the park bench. Benny is sitting beside him.)

DON  
You don't look so good.

BENNY  
I'm fine I'm fine.

DON

Where you been?

BENNY

I know I'm late.

DON

You're not just late, you're always late. You got a thing all of a sudden, a neurosis like about being on time? You're some kind of perfectionist, you got too many details to attend to in your life, there aren't enough hours in the day for you to dot the i's and cross the t's?

BENNY

No.

DON

Or maybe you don't like what you see in the mirror, you gotta have a clothes snit until you get your outfit just right?

BENNY

No I'm just late.

DON

It shows a certain disregard. Like you don't care no more.

BENNY

I had a thing.

DON

Oh well in that case. Forgive me.

BENNY

What are you so sensitive?

DON

I don't know.

BENNY

Jeez.

DON

Hey, look at me. I'm getting old. Too sensitive. Maybe time to pack it in, hang up the spikes.

BENNY

Yeah?

Yeah I been thinking.

DON

What?

BENNY

Oh you know. One last deal I gotta make. One last score I gotta settle.

DON

Yeah?

BENNY

One last itch I gotta scratch and then I kick back a little, retire, maybe go back to Sicily.

DON

San Pantaleo?

BENNY

Yeah maybe. Why not?

DON

Sounds nice.

BENNY

Don't it? Are you sure you're ok? You look like hell.

DON

I got a pain.

BENNY

What?

DON

In my chest.

BENNY

Which side? Let me look at you. You don't look so good.

DON

I don't feel so good.

BENNY

Hey what is that? That's blood. You're bleeding.

DON

What? BENNY

Take off your jacket.  
(He does.)  
Jesus Benny you been shot. DON

Oh yeah. That's right. BENNY

What? DON

I keep forgetting. Ain't that funny? I been shot. BENNY

Don't look at me like that. DON

Like what? BENNY

Like I done something wrong. DON

Oh no? BENNY

This is not my fault. You did this to yourself.  
(Benny falls to the ground.)  
You did this to yourself. Don't look at me like that. DON

(Blackout. Lights rise on Don, Teresa and DJ at the dinner table.)

Hey look at him, Tess, don't he look good? DON

He looks fine. THERESA

Yeah he looks fine. Looks like a million bucks. Looks like Donnie, don't you think? DON



THERESA

It is, Donnie. He came over for dinner.

DON

Oh yeah. Donnie. He looks just like him.

DJ

Dad, it's me, it's Donnie.

DON

I know that. He looks just like him.

THERESA

You want some more meatloaf?

DJ

Yeah mom, would you mind?

THERESA

Not at all. Back in a jiffy.

(Theresa goes out.)

DON

Theresa? Where'd she go? Theresa!

THERESA (Off.)

Hang on. I'll be right there.

DON

Where'd she go to?

DJ

Dad she'll be right back. Come on. That's enough.

DON

That's enough?

DJ

Yeah.

DON

Enough what?

DJ

You know perfectly well what.

DON

No I don't. I'm an old man. I don't know nothing.

DJ

Come on, Dad.

DON

I'm not your Dad. Don't call me Dad. I ain't anybody's Dad.

DJ.

Yes you are.

DON

Not anymore I ain't.

DJ

Well you were.

DON

I was hunh.

DJ

Yeah.

DON

Whose?

DJ

Mine.

DON

Don't give me that horse manure. I was never your Dad.

DJ

Hey, cut the crap, would you. It's just you and me.

DON

So what?

DJ

So talk to me straight.

DON

I don't even know you. You come in here, come into my house, sit down at my table, eat my meatloaf. Who the hell are you? Theresa? Theresa?

THERESA (Off.)

Give me a second.

DON

Theresa, who is this sitting here? He says it's just him and me? Theresa?  
(Theresa re-enters with meatloaf.)

THERESA

Here, Donnie. Here you go.

DON

He told me to cut the crap.

THERESA

Donnie.

DJ

Mom, for chrissake.  
(Don gets up.)

DON

I gotta pee. Am I excused?

THERESA

You coming back?

DON

I gotta pee.

THERESA

You're excused. You want coffee?

DON

Yeah I gotta pee.

(Don crosses to park bench where Benny is sitting with a briefcase in his lap.)

DON

How you doing? You ok? I only got a second here.

BEN

I feel a little faint.

DON

Oh no, not again.

Yeah

BEN

Everytime I see you it's trouble. You got it?

DON

Yeah

(Ben gives Don the briefcase.)

Oooh boy.

BEN

Put your head between your legs.

DON

Yeah?

BEN

Yeah, get's the blood rushing to your head again.

(Ben bends over.)

DON

Oooh, I don't feel so good.

(He sits up again. His face is bloody..)

BEN

Ah jesus, Ben. What is it with you?

DON

Can't breathe.

BEN

Here lemme.

(He opens Ben's shirt. Blood everywhere.)

Oh jesus Ben. You're shot to shit.

DON

I think I been whacked.

BEN

You're doing it again.

DON

What?

BEN

(In great pain, Ben falls to the ground.)

DON

You trying to make me feel bad? Is that what this is?

BEN

It's not about you, Don. It's about me. I'm dying here.

DON

You're saying it's my fault.

BEN

I don't blame you. I blame myself.

DON

Are you for real or am I making this up like in my unconscious mind

BEN

How the hell should I know?

DON

Well someone's gotta know. I can't take much more of this.

BEN

Yeah me neither.

DON

It's not a joke!

(Lights out on Bench. Lights up on Theresa and DJ.)

THERESA

Come on, Donnie.

DJ

Mom, what the hell?

THERESA

He's bad, Donnie. He's real bad. Getting worse all the time. Going right downhill. Doctors in and out. Nobody tells me nothing. He comes downstairs in the middle of the night, makes these phone calls.

DJ

What kind of phone calls?

THERESA

Crazy calls, incoherent.

DJ  
To who?

THERESA  
The hell should I know.

DJ  
Mom, for real?

THERESA  
What kind of question? Yes for real. Real as I'm sitting here. Wake up, Donnie. He's an old man. Enjoy him while you can.  
(Don returns with a briefcase.)

DON  
Where am I?

THERESA  
Did you go?

DON  
Go where?

THERESA  
(To DJ.) See? (To Don.) Go pee.

DON  
Oh yeah go pee. No no, I hadda see a guy.  
(Theresa and DJ exchange a glance.)

THERESA  
You want some coffee?

DON  
Yeah

DJ  
Yeah me too.

THERESA  
Good.  
(She exits.)

DJ

Now will you cut the crap. It's very tiresome.

DON

Listen to me. I got fifty grand here. I want you to take it and I want you to do the following. I want you to go down to Mott Street and I want you to talk to him real nice and I want you to make him the following offer. I want you to offer to buy him out, all his interests and I will assume all his debts and he will sign over to me all the items of interest that we have been discussing. And this (He indicates the briefcase.) is his, a token of my earnestness. Tell him this is my last and final offer. After this offer I no longer do business with him, I do something else entirely. Do you understand me?

DJ

What the hell are you talking about. Fifty grand? You don't have fifty grand. You don't know know any bartender on Mott Street.

DON

You tell him for me, my considerable patience is at an end. My tolerance for being jerked around by a twobit tavernkeeper has reached its limit. You take this cash and you buy him out.

(Don opens the briefcase.)

DJ

What the hell is this? Where did you get this? Where did you get this money?

DON

Stop asking me so many questions. Just do what I tell you.

DJ

Fifty thou --- (He lowers his voice.) Fifty thousand dollars. Where did you get this money? Did you go to the Dime? They gave you this? Give me that money.

DON

Just do it, Donnie. Don't give me any crap.

DJ

I am gonna take this right back to the Dime and put it back. The hell is the matter with you?

DON

The only thing the matter with me is I got a son like you don't listen to a goddamn thing I say.

DJ

Oh so you recognize me now. You know who I am.

DON

Don't play with me. I only got so much patience then I don't got any more. You understand me?

DJ

I am not gonna have this argument. Mom! I am not playing anymore games with you. Give me the money. Give it to me.

DON

Take it. Take it and go down to Mott Street –

DJ

I am going to the Dime and put it back in the bank where it belongs.  
(Theresa re-enters with the coffee.)

DON

The hell you are.

DJ

Look at this. Do you see this? Fifty thousand dollars he's got here. I thought you were keeping an eye on him?

THERESA

What did he do?

DJ

He went to the Dime. How many times I gotta tell you to keep an eye on him?

THERESA

Oh pappa.

DON

Don't oh pappa me. I am not anybody's pappa. I give the orders. I say what goes. Don't tell me what to do with my money.

THERESA

Give me the cash. Give it to me.

DON

Hey hey. Hands off.

DJ

Mom, let me handle this. Go get his meds.

DON

No, no meds.



THERESA

(As she goes.)

Ok.

DON

No, no meds. You stay away from me with that stuff.

DJ

All right, Dad. All right.

DON

Stop calling me that.

DJ

Don, I'm sorry. Don. It's ok. I will take the cash. I will set it up on Mott Street. I will make him a final offer.

DON

Ok.

DJ

Ok.

DON

Tonight?

DJ

Tonight.

DON

Good boy.

DJ

Ok.

DON

All right. I don't understand why I gotta raise my voice. You make me crazy.

DJ

Sorry sorry. I didn't understand.

DON

You're supposed to be a smart boy.

DJ

Sorry. I got mixed up.

DON

Well don't.

DJ

Sorry.

(Theresa returns with meds.)

DON

Oh no. Oh no no no. Go away from me with that suff.

THERESA

Come on, doctors orders.

DJ

Come on, Dad

DON

I'm not your goddamn Dad

DJ

Don. Sir. Come on. Please. Don't make me get tough.

THERESA

Please. Just take it. I'm sick and tired.

DON

I'm sick and tired of all of you. And I'm sick and tired of this crap. Makes me feel like shit.

THERESA

It's good for you. You want to get better?

DON

I'd rather be sick than take that crap.

DJ

Sit down and shut up or I will ram it down your throat.

DON

Don't talk to me like that. You got no right to talk like that.

THERESA

Donnie, please.

DJ

Mom go away. Let me do this.

THERESA

Donnie, no.

DJ

Mother leave us alone. You want me to do this or not?

THERESA

I am so sick and tired of this I can't stand it anymore.  
(Theresa leaves.)

DON

Give it to me.

DJ

No funny business.

DON

Just give me the little green one.

DJ

That's not the right one.

DON

I want the green one.

DJ

It says "as needed."

DON

I need it now.

DJ

Fine fine.

(DJ gives Don the medication. Don takes it. A moment.)

Give me the cash.

(Don gives him the briefcase.)

DON

Sorry. Sorry about that.

DJ

I am so sick of this shit.

DON

Yeah well. Consider the alternative.

DJ

Right. Right.

(A moment.)

DON

You look just like him.

DJ

Who?

DON

Ben. I still gotta pee. Whatsa matter with me?

(Don crosses to the Bench where Ben is sitting.)

DON

You feeling better?

BENNY

Yeah it comes and goes. How about you?

DON

Benny. Ben. I'm scared I might be losing it.

BENNY

I thought you were pretending.

DON

Pretending? Who's pretending. I ain't pretending. This is like acting. You have to believe in what you're doing. You have to commit yourself to the part. Don't you know anything about the movie stars, how they pull off those big roles and win their academy awards? Jesus. This is an art. This ain't no hobby, Ben. This a serious business. You gotta get your head into it and keep it there. And I gotta say: sometimes I am good and sometimes I ain't so good, but sometimes I hit that sweet spot I could take a lie detector test am I crazy as a bedbug and I would pass with flying colors.

BENNY

Maybe you should go to Hollywood and live the life and be a movie star.

DON

Little secret, Benny. I already am a movie star.

BENNY

You are?

DON

Look at me. I'm on camera 24 hours a day. They got me miked up the wazoo.

BENNY

Who?

DON

The Feds. I know it. They know I know it. I know they know I know it. Only difference is I don't get any nominations when the awards season rolls around like that little putz Di Caprio.

BEN

What you need is a publicist.

DON

Yeah maybe. Listen. The kid says they convened a grand jury.

BEN

Again?

DON

They're re-opening the case. This makes me nuts.

BEN

One of these days they're gonna get you.

DON

You think?

BEN

They're gonna nail your ass.

DON

Come on, I'm in the shade.

BEN

How come?

DON

I talk to dead people.

BEN

Do you?

(Crossfade to the kitchen. Theresa re-enters.)

DJ

What?

THERESA

You know damn well what.

DJ

Mom, he went to the bank, he took out a briefcase full of cash.

THERESA

How did he do that? He don't even know if he's gotta pee anymore.

DJ

Yes he does. Sometimes he does. Sometimes he knows exactly what he is doing.

THERESA

And what is that, Donnie? What exactly is he doing with a briefcase full of cash? What kind of nonsense is this? The man is sick. The man is retired.

DJ

Yes Mom I know that. I am trying to humor him. I am just trying to play along. We play this game. It passes the time. It makes him happy. It's perfectly harmless.

THERESA

A suitcase with fifty thousand dollars is harmless? You could do a lot of damage with a suitcase like that. You could get your ass into some very hot water with a suitcase like that. Couldn't you? Couldn't you?

DJ

No Mom you couldn't, because it's just a game we play.

THERESA

Some game, Donnie. Some game. One of these days he's gonna be playing for real, he won't even know it. He's gonna get in way way over his head.

(Crossfade to the bench where Don and Ben are still talking.)

DON

Plus I got all these meds I gotta take.

(Don shows Ben a fistful of prescription bottles.)

BEN

Holy christ, Don.

DON

The lawyer says it's part of the thing, you know, keeping up appearances. So I take these pills. They mostly make me feel like someone took a crap in my head except for this little green one, wow, this little green one is amazing. It just turns my day right around. Or my night. At night? Can't sleep? I pop this little pill and I don't care. Hey I can't sleep, so what, who cares. I used to hate the night. You close your eyes, the silence in the bed, Theresa breathing that exhausted runner breathing like she barely made it to the bed and then collapsed. And I am lying there and every time I close my eyes I see....But now I'm like Up All Night! Wahoo! The dark, the quiet, I just drink it up like a chocolate malt, can't nobody touch me in the night. God bless that goddamn pill.

BENNY

Are you high now?

DON

Who knows. Who cares.

BEN

You are.

DON

So what? So what? It's all good Benny boy. All good.

BEN

Like hell.

(Don leaves Ben and crosses to bed where Theresa is lying awake. Ben exits.)

THERESA

What's the matter?

DON

I can't sleep.

THERESA

Yeah no kidding.

DON

Yeah no kidding. You?

THERESA

What does it look like?