

Won't Pay! We Won't Pay! By Dario Fo

#### PRODUCTION HISTORY

This translation was prepared in consultation with Dario Fo and Franca Rame in 1999 for its premiere at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Andrei Belgrader was the director. Set design was by Anita Stewart, costume design was by Evin Sanna Olsen and sound design was by Christopher Walker. The cast was as follows:

ANTONIA

GIOVANNI

MARGHERITA

LUIGI

STATE TROOPER, POLICE SERGEANT,

GRAVEDIGGER, GRANDFATHER

Marisa Tomei

Thomas Derrah

Caroline Hall

Ken Cheeseman

Will Lebow

#### FIVE CHARACTERS

ANTONIA

GIOVANNI

MARGHERITA

LUIGI

STATE TROOPER

POLICE SERGEANT

GRAVEDIGGER

GRANDFATHER

SEVERAL TROOPERS AND POLICEMEN

NOTE: The role of the State Trooper, the Police Sergeant, the Gravedigger and the Grandfather are played by the same actor.

#### ACT ONE

Antonia's apartment: a modest working-class home. On the right side of the stage is a dresser and a bed. On the left side is a hat rack and a wardrobe. Center stage is a table. Upstage is a set of glass-doored shelves for dishes. There is a refrigerator, a gas stove and two gas tanks hooked together for welding.

The lights go up on the entrance to the apartment. Antonia and her younger friend, Margherita, enter. They are loaded down

ith numerous plastic bags overflowing with merchandise. They let the bags down on the table.

ANTONIA: It's a good thing I ran into you, or I don't know how I ever could have carried all this stuff.

MARGHERITA: Can I ask where you found the money to pay for it all.

ANTONIA: I won it . . . in a lottery . . . the church was raffling off scratch tickets . . . mine had a portrait of the pope, in silhouette, in the pope mobile.

MARGHERITA: The pope mobile . . . come on!

ANTONIA: Why, you don't believe it?

MARGHERITA: No!

ANTONIA: Okay, then I'll tell you the truth.

MARGHERITA (Sitting): Go on. Tell me.

ANTONIA- This morning I had to go grocery shopping, but I didn't know how I could buy anything, because I didn't have any money. So I walked into the supermarket, and I see a crowd of women. They're all raising hell because the prices are higher than they were just the day before. (She looks into the sacks and goes back and forth putting things into the kitchen shelves) The manager's trying to calm them down. "Well, there's nothing I can do about it," he said. "The distributors set the prices, and they've decided to raise them." "They decided? With whose permission?" "With nobody's permission. It's the free market. Free competition." "Free competition against who? Against us? And we're supposed to give in? . . . While they fire our husbands . . . and keep raising prices . . ." So I yelled, "You're the thieves!" . . . And then I hid, because I was really scared.

MARGHERITA: Good for you!

ANTONIA: Then one of the women said, "We've had enough! This time, we're setting the prices. We'll pay what we paid last month. And if you don't like it, we won't pay nothing. Understand?" You should have seen the manager. He turned white as a sheet. "You're out of your minds. I'm calling the police." He runs for the telephone behind the cash register, but the phone doesn't work. Somebody cut the line. "Excuse me. I've got to get to my office. Excuse me . . ." But he can't get through . . . not with all the women around him . . . so he pushes them . . . they push him . . . and while we were pushing, a woman pretended he'd punched her in the belly, and fell down on the

ground as if she'd fainted.

MARGHERITA: Ah . . . nice move!

ANTONIA: You should have seen what an artist she was! Just like the real thing . . . And there was a fat old woman there, she was huge, waving her finger like it was a machine gun . . . she pointed it at the manager and said, "Coward! Picking a fight with a defenseless woman, and she's pregnant. And now if she loses her baby, what's going to happen to you! They'll throw you in jail- Murderer." And then we all started chanting together: "BABY KILLER! BABY KILLER! BABY KILLER!"

(Bursts out laughing) It was great.

MARGHERITA: And then . . . what happened?

ANTONIA: Well, that prick of a manager was so scared he caved in completely . . . we paid whatever we wanted to pay.

MARGHERITA (Laughing): Ah! Ah! -S

ANTONIA: "The cops are coming," someone shouts. We all start < running. We're dropping our bags on the ground. We're o crying with fear. It's a false alarm. Some truckers came to - help when they heard us shouting: "Hey. Calm down. What's -• there to be afraid of. Don't get your panties in a wad worry- < ing about the police. You're within your rights to pay a fair g price. Let 'em have it!" So this is the payback for all the m money they've stolen from us in all years we've been shop- 0 ping there. And then a woman yelled, "We won't pay any- z thing! We won't pay. We won't pay. We won't pay. We won't pay!" We went back and started shopping all over again. We > shopped and we shopped and we shopped. You don't know how good it feels to shop without spending money.

MARGHERITA: Ah, how beautiful! What a shame I wasn't there!

ANTONIA: But in the meantime, the police actually did show up, for r e a l . . . in riot gear . . . I can't tell you how scared I was! I was shaking, we were all shaking, our bags were shaking . . . the noise from the plastic was deafening! But this time, none of the women ran away. We walked calmly out of the supermarket with decisive faces . . . so firm, so honest . . . we looked like Hillary Clinton defending her man . . . and we said to the cops, "Oh, thank God you're here. Finally! Go in there and arrest those thieves!"

MARGHERITA: How beautiful!

ANTONIA: It was thrilling! It was a shopping spree to end all shopping sprees! Not because we didn't pay for the stuff, but because suddenly we were all there together with the

courage to stand up for ourselves. And we caught the bastards off balance. Now they're the ones who are afraid.

Soon supermarkets will have to put those plastic theft protection devices on every onion.

GHERITA: But what are you going to tell your husband? You're not going to try to sell him the story about the Pope mobile.

ANTONIA: Why, you don't think he'll buy it?

MARGHARITA: Not a chance.

• Yeah . . . maybe it's a bit much. The problem is, he's an. You know how men are. They can't see the big picture. He's a law-and-order freak. Who knows what kind of tantrum he'll throw! "How could you do such a thing?" he'll say. "My father built a good life for his children by following the rules. I follow the rules. We're poor, but we're honest!" He doesn't know that I've spent everything, that there's nothing left to pay the gas, the electric or the rent . . . I don't even know how many months behind we are . . .

MARGHERITA: I haven't paid the rent for five months! And I didn't manage to get in on the shopping spree like you did . . .

ANTONIA: There's enough stuff here to feed a day-care center. Take some home.

MARGHERITA: No, no, please. Thanks, but I don't have any money to pay for it.

ANTONIA (Serious): Well, if you can't pay for it . . . (Changes tone) Are you crazy! I donated this stuff to myself . . . Go on, take it home. Take it!

MARGHERITA: Sure, and then what am I going to tell my husband? He'd murder me!

ANTONIA (Taking cans out of the bag): Mine would just lock himself in the closet.

MARGHERITA (Astonished): In the closet?

ANTONIA (Points at wardrobe): Yeah! For ten years . . . every time we have an argument . . . he locks himself in that wardrobe. He's very organized about it! He has his little flashlight, his little chair. And he reads Dante's Inferno. He's trying to memorize it. (Looks at can in her hand)

What's this? (Reads) "Meat compost for cats and dogs"?

MARGHERITA (Reads): "Homogenized for the beefy flavor your pet can't resist"! But why did you take this?

ANTONIA: In the confusion . . . I just grabbed what was there . . . •

(Takes another can) Look at this one!!

MARGHERITA (Reads): "Bird seed for canaries"!!

ANTONIA: Well, it's a good thing I didn't pay for this stuff, or I'd be eating . . . (Reads) "Frozen rabbit heads"!

MARGHERITA: Frozen heads?

ANTONIA: That's what it says: "To enrich the meals of your chickens . . . five rabbit heads for twenty cents." At least it's cheap. (Disappointed) But I can't return this stuff . . . they'll just arrest me.

MARGHERITA (Laughing): And you wanted me to bring this junk home to my Luigi?

ANTONIA: Oh, no! I'm much too attached to my rabbit heads . . . You take home the bad stuff: the oil, the pasta . . . go on, get moving. Your husband's on the night shift, so you'll have time to hide it all.

MARGHERITA: Yeah . . . and what if the police start searching house to house?

ANTONIA: Don't be silly! The whole neighborhood was at the supermarket . . . you think the police are going to come and search every house . . . (Opens a window) Oh dammit, my husband! He's coming up. Quick, get this stuff out of here . . .

MARGHERITA (Frightened): Where should I put it?

ANTONIA: Under your coat! (Margherita stuffs some of the bags under her coat) Help me get it under the bed . . . (Takes all the bags on the table and stuffs them under the bed. She puts the animal food on the counter behind her) If Giovanni finds out, he'll call the police. "Officer, arrest my wife. She's an enemy of the people!" Come on, run . . . and keep it quiet! Tell him some fairy tale.

(Margherita goes to the door and bumps into Antonia's husband, Giovanni, entering the house.)

MARGHERITA (In a hurry, very embarrassed): Good morning, Giovanni.

GIOVANNI: Oh, good morning, Margherita . . . how are you?

MARGHERITA: Fine, thank you . . . 'Bye, Antonia, see you later . . . (She leaves)

(Giovanni remains perplexed and looks at Margherita's belly as she leaves.)

ANTONIA: So, Giovanni, why are you standing there? It's about time you came home. Where have you been?

(Antonia prepares the table for dinner, plastic plates, napkins, etc.)

GIOVANNI: What's up with Margherita?

ANTONIA: Why, what should be up?

GIOVANNI: Well. . . she's all fat up front: there's a belly!

ANTONIA: So? Is that the first time you ever saw a married woman with a belly?

GIOVANNI: You mean she's pregnant?

ANTONIA: Well, it's one of those things that can happen when you make love.

GIOVANNI: But, how many months is it? I just saw her last Sunday and it didn't seem like . . .

ANTONIA: What do you know about these things? It's already been a week since last Sunday . . . and in a week, who knows what could happen!

GIOVANNI: Listen, I'm not that stupid . . . Luigi works next to me on the assembly line. He tells me everything . . . and he never said anything about having a baby . . .

ANTONIA: Well. . . there are some things . . . people don't bother to talk about.

GIOVANNI: What are you talking about? Is it too embarrassing? "Oh, God, I made my wife pregnant!"

ANTONIA (Searching): Maybe . . . he hasn't said anything . . . because he doesn't know yet. (Giovanni looks at her dumbfounded. She continues unperturbed) And if he doesn't know, how could he tell you?

GIOVANNI: What do you mean he doesn't know?

ANTONIA: Eh, yes. It's obvious. She doesn't want to tell him.

GIOVANNI: What do you mean she doesn't want to tell him?

ANTONIA: Eh, yes, because she . . . that girl . . . is very shy. And he, Luigi . . . is always saying it's too soon, it's not the right time, they have to get organized first . . . and if she gets pregnant the company where she works will fire her. He's so worried about it that he makes her take the pill.

GIOVANNI: And if he makes her take the pill, how come she's pregnant?

ANTONIA: Well, obviously, it had no effect. It happens, you know!

GIOVANNI: And if it happens, then why does she have to hide it from her husband. It's not her fault, is it?

ANTONIA: Well, maybe the pill had no effect, because of the fact. . . that she didn't take it . . . if you don't take the pill (Doesn't know what to say) . . . it can happen that the pill. . . has no effect.

GIOVANNI: But what are you saying?!

ANTONIA: Eh . . . yes . . . she's very Catholic. And since the pope

has declared the pill to be a mortal sin . . .

GIOVANNI: You're crazy! The pope! Her with a nine-month belly and her husband hasn't noticed?

ANTONIA (Getting in deeper difficulty): Maybe Luigi hasn't noticed . . . because Margherita . . . binds herself up!

GIOVANNI: Binds herself up!?

ANTONIA: Yes, yes. She ties it all in tight. .. very t i g h t . . . so no one can see! It got to the point where today I just had to say, "You're crazy. Do you want to lose the baby? Unbind yourself immediately, and who cares if they fire you! The baby's more important!" Was I right?

GIOVANNI: Of course you were right. You were right, yes!

ANTONIA: Did I do the right thing?

GIOVANNI: Yes, yes . . . the right thing.

ANTONIA: And so she . . . Margherita . . . decided to unbind herself and: ploff!!! A big belly!! You should have seen it, Giovanni!

GIOVANNI: I saw it!

ANTONIA: And I also said, "If your husband gives you any trouble, tell him to come to my house, and my Giovanni will teach him a thing or two." Was I right?

GIOVANNI: Of course you were right?

ANTONIA: Did I do the right thing?

GIOVANNI: Yes, yes . . .

ANTONIA: Listen to you: "Yes, yes . . ." Is that any way to answer? Are you holding something against me? Tell me, what have I done now? (Takes a broom and starts sweeping the house)

GIOVANNI: No, I'm not holding anything against you. If I'm upset it's because of what happened at work today.

ANTONIA: Why, what happened?

GIOVANNI: There's all this tension in the air . . . All this talk about downsizing . . . yesterday the company fired four ead m e n . . . Yes, four dead men! Died two months ago . . . °ur welders . . . and they fired them . . . for absenteeism.

There's so much mistrust floating around that you can never relax. And then today in the cafeteria some guys . . . five of them, started raising hell about the food: "It's disgusting. Pig slop. Right out of the dumpster!"

ANTONIA: When it was really fine cuisine cooked with farm fresh ingredients?

GIOVANNI: No, no . . . it was absolutely disgusting . . . but that's no reason to whip everyone up into a mass frenzy.

ANTONIA: A mass frenzy? You said there were only five of them.

GIOVANNI: At first! But then everyone got into it . . . they all ate and left without paying!

ANTONIA: Them, too?

GIOVANNI: What do you mean, "Them, too?"

ANTONIA: I mean, not only those five, but all the others, too . . .

GIOVANNI : Yes, everybody got into the act.

ANTONIA (Feigning indignation): How shocking!

GIOVANNI: But that's not all: I passed by a bunch of women at the supermarket, the one near work . . . and they were all shouting . . . maybe three hundred of them . . . loaded down with bags of stuff. So I asked what was going on . . . and they told me that they had only paid what they decided they wanted to pay!

ANTONIA (Still more indignant): Oh, what a thing to do!

GIOVANNI : And what's worse, they stormed the checkout counter, and most of them left without paying anything at all.

ANTONIA: Them, too?!

GIOVANNI: What do you mean, "Them, too?!"

ANTONIA: Eh, I mean . . . like those bums from your factory who didn't pay for their lunches.

GIOVANNI: Eh, yes, them, too!

ANTONIA: Oh, what a thing to do! Look at me, I'm standing here in shock.

GIOVANNI: I don't know what kind of husbands those women have, but if my wife ever did anything like that I'd make her eat every tin can she stole . . . and the can opener too! And I hope you don't get it into your head to pull a stunt like that, because if I find out you've been ripping off supermarkets, or even paying one penny less than what is marked on those little stickers, I'll . . . I'll . . .

ANTONIA: I know . . . you'll make me eat every tin can I stole and the can opener too.

GIOVANNI: NO, worse! . . . I'd pack my bags and you'd never see me again. And what's more, I'd murder you first, and divorce you later!

ANTONIA (Furious): Listen, with that attitude you can leave now . . . without a divorce. How dare you even insinuate that I . . . ? Look, before I'd bring home anything that was not bought at a legal price, I'd . . . I'd . . . I'd let you starve to death!

GIOVANNI: That's more like it. And speaking of starving, what's for dinner? (Sits at the table)



ANTONIA: This! (Angrily, she throws on the table a can of meat for cats and dogs)

GIOVANNI: What's this?

ANTONIA: Can't you read? It's meat compost for cats and dogs.

GIOVANNI: Meat compost for cats and dogs?

ANTONIA: It's delicious!

GIOVANNI: Delicious for dogs maybe!

ANTONIA: That's all I could afford. Besides, it's cheap, and nutritious . . . and full of protein . . . estrogen-free . . . so it won't make you fat! It's exquisite! Look, it says so right here!

GIOVANNI: Are you kidding?

ANTONIA: Who's kidding? You don't know what it's like to go grocery shopping without any money.

GIOVANNI: Come on, I'm not a dog. You eat it!

ANTONIA: Oh, yes. I'll eat it, yes! (Starts barking)

GIOVANNI: Isn't there anything else?

ANTONIA: Yes, I can make you a little soup.

GIOVANNI: What kind?

ANTONIA (Pulling out the package from the shelf): Bird seed for canaries.

GIOVANNI: Bird seed!

ANTONIA: Yes, it's delicious . . . and you know it helps fight diabetes!

GIOVANNI: But I don't have diabetes!

ANTONIA: Well, it's not my fault you don't have it yet . . . and besides, it's half the price of rice.

GIOVANNI: Listen, you've got to make up your mind. Am I a dog or a canary?

ANTONIA: Oh, don't be silly . . . Angela next door makes it every morning for her husband . . . and he loves it . . .

GIOVANNI: Yeah, I noticed he's been growing a few feathers lately! And this morning when we were waiting for the bus his foot started going like this. (Makes chicken movement)

Then his neck went like this. (Mimes chicken walk)

And when the bus came he . . . (Imitates rooster) "Cockadoodledo"

(Mimes a rooster flapping wings) "I think I'll

be getting to work on my own today."

ANTONIA: Stop joking around. This bird seed is a blessing! The secret is in the broth . . . see, I also got some frozen rabbit heads. (Puts the package with the rabbit heads under his nose)

GIOVANNI: Rabbit heads?

ANTONIA: Sure! Bird seed soup is always made with rabbit!

Only the heads, though . . . frozen.

GIOVANNI (Puts on his jacket and goes toward the door): Okay, okay . . . I get it . . . see you later!

ANTONIA: Where are you going?

GIOVANNI: Where do you want me to go? I'm going out for dinner.

ANTONIA: And what are you going to do for money?

GIOVANNI: Right, give me some money.

ANTONIA: From where?

GIOVANNI: What do you mean, from where? Don't tell me there's none left. . .

ANTONIA: No, but maybe you forgot that tomorrow we have to pay the gas, electricity and rent. Or do you want them to evict us, and cut off the gas and lights.

GIOVANNI: Dammit! We'll starve to death, but at least we'll be illuminated.

(Antonia puts on her coat)

Where are you going?

ANTONIA: To Margherita's. She did a lot of shopping today, and I'm going to borrow a few things. I'll be right back.

GIOVANNI: Don't come back with any rabbit heads.

ANTONIA: NO, I'll just bring the feet. (She leaves)

GIOVANNI: Yeah, very funny . . . while I'm here hungry as a . . .

I could even eat a . . . (Takes a can in his hand, turning it as he reads the label) "A gourmet treat for your dogs and cats! Homogenized, tasty . . ." Well, maybe I'll just see what it smells like. How do you open it? Look at that.

Typical. They forget to give you the key. Oh, look, it's selfopening.

For dogs and cats who are self-starters. (Opens

the can and sniffs it) Ah, doesn't smell too bad . . . kind of like ground kidney with pickled marmalade and a dash of cod-liver oil. (Puts the can next to his ear and laughs) You

can hear the ocean! (Laughs in disgust; changes tone)

Who knows, maybe I'll try just a taste! (From outside there are the sounds of police sirens, shouting crowds and military orders)

What's going on out there? (Goes to an imaginary window in the middle of the proscenium and makes

signs to a neighbor across the street) Aldo! Hey, Aldo!

What's happening? Yes, I can see it's the police . . . but

what do they want? Oh, stolen merchandise! From

where? What, the supermarket? Which supermarket? Oh,

here too? The one in the neighborhood? But when did it

happen? Today? Who did it? What do you mean, everyone?

Stop exaggerating! A thousand women! No, my wife wasn't there, I'm sure. She's so set against that kind of stuff that she'd rather eat frozen rabbit heads! No, just the heads . . . you throw the rest away. They're delicious. You crack them in half with a few drops of lemon and . . . (Mimes eating one). . . like an oyster! No, no. No way . . . My wife didn't even leave the house today. She had to unbind her best friend's belly. No, no, it doesn't hurt . . . she just took off the wrapping that she tied herself up with so her husband, Luigi, wouldn't know she was pregnant . . . because he was making her take the pill. . . but she had orders from the pope, so the pill had no effect, and it only took a week for her belly to blow up like a beach ball . . . what!! What do you mean, you don't understand? (Looks down on the street, hears the shouts and orders) What's that? A house to house search? Well if they try to come in here, I'll teach them a thing or two! Because that's an out and out provocation! (There's a knock at the door.)

VOICE FROM OUTSIDE: Can I come in?

GIOVANNI: Who is it?

VOICE FROM OUTSIDE: Open up. Police!

GIOVANNI (Opening the door): Police? What do you want? (A Police Sergeant enters. A local cop on the beat.)

SERGEANT: This is a search. Here's the warrant. We're searching the whole building.

GIOVANNI: For what?

SERGEANT: There was an assault on the supermarket today. A thousand women, and men too, removed a large quantity of merchandise at reduced prices . . . and some of them didn't pay anything at all. We're looking for the stolen goods or, if you prefer, the merchandise acquired at deep discount.

GIOVANNI: So you come looking for it at my house. That's like calling me a thief, a looter, a hooligan!

SERGEANT: Listen. This is not my choice. I get my orders and I have to carry them out.

GIOVANNI: Just following orders, eh . . . but I'm warning you . . . this is a provocation . . . You come here insulting people dying of hunger . . . Look at what we're reduced to eating: homogenized meat compost for cats and dogs! (Thrusts the can toward the officer)

SERGEANT: What?!

GIOVANNI: Yeah! We can't afford decent food . . . We've got to be creative. Use our heads . . . rabbit heads! (Puts the bag of frozen rabbit heads under the officer's nose)

SERGEANT: You really eat this stuff?

GIOVANNI: It's not bad, you know! Do you want to try some? No kidding . . . a few drops of lemon and it goes down like cat shit! Taste it. It's good for the nerves.

SERGEANT: No thanks . . . I never vomit before dinner.

GIOVANNI: I understand . . . Maybe you'd prefer me to fix you a nice soup made from bird seed for canaries?

SERGEANT: Bird seed?

GIOVANNI: Yeah! Look it's right here: costs only ten cents a pound . . . eat a little b i t . . . and before you know i t . . . a few feathers . . . and then . . . then your wings start to flutter . . . • (Imitates a rooster) and you become a chicken. Or maybe you'd prefer another barnyard animal. A pig perhaps. (He snorts) After all you are a cop. (Snorts again)

SERGEANT: I can see you've been reduced to hard times here. And to tell you the truth, on a policeman's salary, my family's not doing much better. My wife has to perform miracles in the kitchen too! Listen, I understand what you're going through . . . and, I shouldn't say this, but I understand why the neighborhood women had to do what they did today. Personally I sympathize with them completely: the only defense against thieves is confiscation.

GIOVANNI (Astonished, looks at the officer incredulously): You mean, you mean . . . you think they were right.

SERGEANT: Sure they w e r e . . . they couldn't put up with all this for much longer. You might not believe me, but sometimes it disgusts me to be a policeman . . . to have to rob people of their dignity. And for who . . . for the politicians and slumlords who steal them blind and leave them homeless and hungry . . . Those bastards are the real thieves. (Takes off his hat)

GIOVANNI: Are you really a cop?

SERGEANT: Yes, I'm a cop.

GIOVANNI : You've got some pretty strange ideas for a policeman.

SERGEANT: I'm just a guy who thinks things out, and gets pissed off about them! You've got to stop looking at us policemen as a bunch of idiots who salivate when we hear a whistle and follow orders—jump, bark, bite—like a bunch of guard dogs! As if we didn't have minds of our own.

IOVANNI: If that's how you feel, may I ask why you chose to join the police force?

SERGEANT: Did you choose to eat that dog food or those rabbit heads?

GIOVANNI: No! It was my nutritionist's idea. (Becomes serious)  
No, of course not.

SERGEANT: See. I didn't make this choice on my own either. It was sign up or die hungry. And inter nos, I've got a college degree, dear sir.

GIOVANNI: Oh, college? Is that where you learned to say "inter nos"?

MALE VOICE (From outside): Sergeant . . . we've finished out here . . . what should we do . . . keep looking?

SERGEANT (Toward the door, to the man outside): Don't stand around busting my balls . . . Search the other goddamn floors you scumbag. (Continues his discussion with Giovanni) Anyway, I was saying that I've got a degree. My father tightened his belt for years so I could go to college . . . and in the end what did it get me? Nothing: I had no choice . . . dear sir! "Join the police force and see the world." I've

seen the world. It's a world of bastards, thieves and con men!  
GIOVANNI: But not all policemen think like you. Some of them like being police.

SERGEANT: Sure, some guys buy into it. They get off on giving orders. They need to oppress somebody else to feel good about themselves.

GIOVANNI: This is amazing! Excuse me, but are you really a cop? Because now I feel it's my turn to defend the police. We need police, don't we? Without them, we'd have chaos . . . someone has to lay down the law!

SERGEANT: And what if the law is wrong? What if it's just a cover-up for robbery?

GIOVANNI: Well, uh, then there's the political parties . . . the democratic system . . . laws can be reformed.

SERGEANT: But who's going to do the reforming? Where are the reforms? What is reform! Lies, that's what reforms are!

They've been promising us reforms for umpteen years, but has that gotten us better health care, or less homeless people on the streets. Believe me, the only real reform will come when people start thinking for themselves and reforming things on their own. Because until the day that people have faith in each other, with trust, patience, a sense of responsibility, and self-discipline . . . and move on . . . nothing is going to change! And now, if you'll excuse me, I have to do my job. (Puts his hat on and goes toward the door)

GIOVANNI (Snickering): I was waiting for that. The utopian subversive puts his hat back on and turns into a pohc man again.

SeERGEANT: You're right. I'm all words . . . I vent and I'm gone. S

GIOVANNI: Without even conducting a little search? Come on! ^

You're insulting me! Do a little snooping just to humor

me . . • anywhere, under the bed, in the cupboard . . . H

SERGEANT: Thanks, but I'll pass. Good-bye and good eating!

(He leaves) <

GIOVANNI : That guy was an undercover agent. He was trying to trick me into talking, and if I had agreed with him he'd

be: "Stop right there! You're under arrest."

(Antonia comes in out of breath.)

ANTONIA: Have they been here too?

GIOVANNI: Who?

ANTONIA: They're searching the neighborhood, house to house.

GIOVANNI: Yes, I know.

ANTONIA: They've already arrested the Mambettis and the

Fossanis . . . they've found groceries in lots of houses, and

confiscated everything!

GIOVANNI: It serves them right. That's what they get for breaking the law.

ANTONIA: But they've also taken away things people paid for legitimately.

GIOVANNI: Of course, it always happens that way. When looters

go wild, people who have nothing to do with it always end

up suffering. For example when they came here—

ANTONIA: They came here?

GIOVANNI: Of course.

ANTONIA: And what did they find?

GIOVANNI (Surprised): Why, what should they find?

ANTONIA (Trying to divert him, changes tone): Nothing. No,

was Just saying . . . you never know . . . sometimes you're

convinced that you don't have anything in the house, and

then out of nowhere . . .

GIOVANNI : And t h e n out of n o w h e r e ?

ANTONIA: And then out of nowhere the police plant stuff in your house and trap you! It wouldn't be the first time

GIOVANNI: You mean you think they'd actually put bags of pasta and sugar under the bed? I'd better take a look.

ANTONIA (Grabs him from behind, stopping him with a violent jerk): No!

GIOVANNI: What are you doing? Are you crazy? You displaced a vertebra!

ANTONIA: I forbid you to touch my bedcover! I just washed it . . . I'll give a look myself . . . meanwhile, you go and let in Margherita.

GIOVANNI: Margherita? Where is she?

ANTONIA: She's there, behind the door. (Pretends to look under the bed) No, there's nothing's there.

GIOVANNI (Goes to the door): Are you losing your mind, letting a poor pregnant woman stand out in the hall?

Oh, my God, Margherita, what are you doing there.

Come inside, come in. (Margherita enters trying to stop herself from laughing) What's wrong. Why are you crying?

ANTONIA (Goes to Margherita and sits her down on the bed):

Come here, Margherita . . . (To her husband) Oh, the poor girl was home all alone . . . and with all those police sniffing around, she was terrified! Can you believe that one of the officers wanted to squeeze her belly?

GIOVANNI: What for?

ANTONIA: Because he got it in his head that instead of a baby, she had bags of pasta and fine herbs in there.

GIOVANNI: The son of a bitch!

ANTONIA: Yeah, you said it . . . And so I told her to come over here to our house. Did I do the right thing?

GIOVANNI: Of course you did the right thing! (Approaches Margherita and tries to help her take off her coat) Stay here and relax, Margherita . . . take off your coat. . .

MARGHERITA (Frightened): No!

GIOVANNI: Make yourself comfortable . . .

MARGHERITA: No!

(Antonia intercepts Giovanni and grabs him by the shoulder.)

GIOVANNI (Lets out a scream, then turns toward Antonia, furiously):

If you keep smacking around my vertebra every five minutes, I'm going to go into the wardrobe and never come out again.

ANTONIA: She told you she'd rather keep her coat on! She's cold!

GIOVANNI: But it's hot in here!

ANTONIA: It's hot for you, but pregnant women are always cold! Maybe she's got a fever!

GIOVANNI: A fever! Is she sick!

ANTONIA: She's in labor!

GIOVANNI: Already?

ANTONIA: What do you mean, "Already?" What do you know about it? A half hour ago you didn't even know she was pregnant and now you're amazed that she's in labor!

GIOVANNI: Well, it seems to me, you might say . . . maybe it's a little premature!

ANTONIA: YOU think you know better than her?

GIOVANNI: But if she's in labor, maybe we should call the doctor, or an ambulance.

(Antonia goes to the cupboard and takes out two pillows. She places them on the bed so that Margherita can lie down comfortably.)

ANTONIA: Oh sure, an ambulance. There's not a chance in hell we'd find a vacant bed! You have no idea what it's like in those hospitals. You have to make reservations a month in advance!

GIOVANNI: SO why didn't she reserve a place?

ANTONIA: That's right, we run the errands, we make the babies, and you want us to make the reservations too! And why didn't her husband do it?

GIOVANNI: But her husband didn't know about it. How could he think of it?

ANTONIA: Very convenient! Just give us the paychecks and then its, "Pay the bills!" You make us pregnant and then, "Take care of it yourself! Take the pill." And who cares if the poor wife, who's a strict Catholic, dreams all night of the pope saying, "It's a sin, you must procreate!"

GIOVANNI: Apart from the pope . . . how long has Margherita been pregnant?

ANTONIA: What do you care?

GIOVANNI: No, I was just saying . . . because she hasn't even been married five months yet. . .

ANTONIA: So what? Isn't it possible that they might have made love before they got married . . . or are you turning moralistic on us . . . you're worse than the pope!

GIOVANNI: Luigi told me that they only made love after they were married.

MARGHERITA: My Luigi talks to you about those things?!!

GIOVANNI (Embarrassed): We were playing pool. . .

ANTONIA: Jesus, Mary and Joseph!!! What a bum! Margherita, that's grounds for divorce!

GIOVANNI: Let's not get carried away . . .

ANTONIA: What do you mean? Going around talking about private, personal moments . . . to just anyone out on the



street.

GIOVANNI (Insulted): I'm not "just anyone out on the street." I'm his friend! His best friend! He tells me everything. He asks my advice . . . because I'm older, and I've got more experience!

ANTONIA (Shoots him a look full of irony): Oh, oh, he's got more experience! (Giovanni is about to respond, but there is a knock at the door) Who's there?

VOICE FROM OUTSIDE: Police. Open up!

GIOVANNI: Again?

MARGHERITA: Oh, God!

(Giovanni opens the door. The same actor who played the Police Sergeant is now wearing the uniform of a State Trooper and has a mustache. Two other troopers enter behind him.)

GIOVANNI: Well, hello . . . you again?

TROOPER: What do you mean, "you again?"

GIOVANNI: Sorry, I thought you were the one from before.

TROOPER: Which one from before?

GIOVANNI: The police sergeant.

TROOPER: But I'm a state trooper.

GIOVANNI: I see. And you've got a mustache too. So you must be someone else. What can I do for you?

TROOPER: We have to conduct a search.

GIOVANNI: Your colleague from the police force just did that a little while ago.

TROOPER: That doesn't matter. We'll do it again ourselves.

GIOVANNI: SO you don't trust them . . . You've come to make sure they haven't botched things up! Then I guess the National Guard will come to check up on you. Next it'll be the CIA . . . and then frogmen from the Marines will show up in our bathtub . . . (Mimes a grotesque frogman)

TROOPER (Angry): Listen, cut the comedy. Just show us around and let us do our job.

ANTONIA (Bursts out): Sure, your job is to make sure we comply with orders. (Troopers open the wardrobe and cupboards) Why don't you ever check to make sure that management is honoring our contracts, that the air in our workplaces is breathable, that they're not downsizing our jobs so that they can exploit child workers in third world countries, that they're not evicting us from our homes, and starving us to death! (Giovanni tries to calm his wife)

GIOVANNI: No, no. You shouldn't talk like that, because they're

disgusted by all those things themselves. Isn't that true, officer, that you're fed up with robbing people in the name of authority. Tell my wife how you police officers are sick and tired of salivating when the whistle blows: "Follow orders! Jump. Bark! Bite like a bunch of guard dogs . . ." (Howls like a guard dog on a chain)

TROOPER: Could you say that again, please? (Giovanni barks)  
No, the part about the guard dogs?

GIOVANNI: Yes, I was just saying that you're just bought and sold by the politicians to help them get reelected!

TROOPER: Is that right?

GIOVANNI: Yes, I was j u s t . . .

TROOPER (Turns to the two Troopers): Cuff him!

(The two Troopers move to put handcuffs on Giovanni.)

GIOVANNI: Handcuffs? Excuse me, but why?

TROOPER: For insulting a public official.

GIOVANNI: What insult? I'm just saying what your colleague, the police sergeant, told me a few minutes ago . . . he's the one who told me that you feel like servants of the politicians, slaves of the system.

TROOPER: Who's "you"? . . . us state troopers?

GIOVANNI: No, he was talking about them . . . the city cops on the street.

TROOPER: Oh, the city cops. (Laughs derisively at the insult to city cops) Okay, take off the handcuffs. But watch what you say about us state troopers.

GIOVANNI: Okay, okay, I'm watching, I'm watching.

(The Troopers continue their search. One of them begins searching near the bed.)

ANTONIA (To Margherita): Moan, go on, cry!

MARGHERITA: Aihooooo!

ANTONIA: Louder.

MARGHERITA (Agonizing cries): Ahiouua! Ahiaoooo!

TROOPER: What is it? What's wrong with her?

ANTONIA: Pain, a lot of pain . . . she's in labor.

GIOVANNI: She's five months premature!

ANTONIA: She was traumatized a little while ago . . . the police tried to squeeze her belly . . .

TROOPER: Squeeze her belly?

GIOVANNI: Yeah, to see if, maybe, instead of a baby, she had rice or pasta in there. Go on, why don't you help yourselves while you're here: squeeze her to make sure! Go ahead, squeeze away!

(Margherita continues screaming hysterically.)

TROOPER: Have you called an ambulance?

ANTONIA: An ambulance? Why?

TROOPER: DO you want her to die right here? Besides, if she's premature like you say, she might lose the baby.

GIOVANNI: He's right! I told you we should have called an ambulance.

ANTONIA: And I told you already that without a reservation, the hospital won't admit her. They'll send her driving around to every hospital in town. She'll die in the car!

(From outside there is the sound of a siren.)

TROOPER (Looking out the window) Look, it's the ambulance that we called for the sick woman downstairs. (Turns to the two Troopers) Come on, give me a hand. We can take her too.

ANTONIA (Stopping them): No, for God's sake . . . don't disturb her.

MARGHERITA (Crying in fear): No, I don't want to go to the hospital.

ANTONIA: See, she doesn't want to go.

MARGHERITA: I want my husband, my husband . . . Ahio! Ahiuaaoo!

ANTONIA: Hear that? She wants her husband . . . and he's not around because he works the night shift. I'm sorry, but without her husband's consent, we can't take this responsibility.

GIOVANNI: Eh, no, we can't take it.

TROOPER: Oh, you can't take it, can you. You'd rather take responsibility for having her die right here?

ANTONIA: What difference does it make?

TROOPER: In the hospital they might be able to save her, and maybe the baby too!

GIOVANNI: But it's premature. I already told you!

ANTONIA: Yes, it's premature! And with all those potholes in the road, the baby will pop out right in the car. How could a five-month baby survive that?

TROOPER: Obviously, you have no idea of the progress that modern medicine has made in our times. Haven't you ever heard about test-tube babies?

ANTONIA: Yes, I've heard about them, but what's this got to do with test tubes? The baby's five months old. You can't stuff it in a test tube . . . you can't even put it in an oxygen tent.

GIOVANNI: Of course not, such a little baby under a tent . . .  
what's he going to do, go camping?

TROOPER: YOU people are completely ignorant! Haven't you  
ever seen the hospital equipment they're using these days  
... at the gynecological centers? I worked a shift there  
five months ago, and I actually saw the doctors perform a  
transplant.

GIOVANNI AND ANTONIA: What kind of transplant?

TROOPER: A premature baby transplant. They took a four-and-a-  
half-month-old fetus from a woman who couldn't hold  
it any longer and put it in the belly of another woman.

GIOVANNI: In her belly?!

TROOPER: Yes, a cesarean. They put it in there with the placenta  
and everything . . . and four months later . . . just last  
month, it was born again, healthy as a fish!

GIOVANNI (Incredulous): A fish? ..

TROOPER: Yes!

GIOVANNI : I think it was some kind of a trick.

TROOPER: What do you mean trick? I saw it myself. Sure it's  
hard to believe: a baby that's born twice . . . a baby with  
two mothers!

M ARGHERITA : I don't want to do it. I don't want to do it. I won't  
give my consent.

ANTONIA: See . . . she won't give her consent . . . so we can't  
make her go.

TROOPER: I'll give the consent. I'll take responsibility.

ANTONIA: That is complete and utter arrogance! You come into  
our home, you search everywhere, put us in handcuffs . . .  
and now you want to drag us into an ambulance! We  
know you won't leave us alone to live our lives, but at  
least you can let us die in peace wherever we want to.

TROOPER: NO, you can't die in peace wherever you want to.

GIOVANNI: Of course not, we have to die according to the law!  
(Goes toward the wardrobe)

TROOPER: And you, enough with the jokes. I already told you  
once . . . Where's he going?

GIOVANNI (Opens the wardrobe door, enters, and sticks his head  
out): I'll be in my office . . .

ANTONIA: Come out. Stop it! Now's not the time. Come on, let's  
bring her downstairs.

TROOPER: Should we get a stretcher?

ANTONIA: NO, she'll go down on her own . . . You can walk,  
can't you?

MARGHERITA: Yes, yes . . . (She gets up. She suddenly puts her hands on her belly to arrange the stolen goods) Oh, no, no, it's slipping out! . . .

ANTONIA: Dammit! Could you please step outside a m o m e n t . . .

TROOPER: Why?

ANTONIA: It's a woman's thing! (The men leave. To Margherita, angrily) Idiot! (Imitates her) "It's slipping out! . . ." (Changes tone) This trooper's going to hang us!

MARGHERITA: If it's slipping out, it's slipping out!

ANTONIA: Oh, shut up! And another thing, is that any way to walk? Haven't you ever seen the way pregnant women walk? Do they walk like this? (Grotesquely imitates Margherita) Who are you kidding! When a pregnant woman walks . . . think of the Virgin Mary! (Advances majestically)

MARGHERITA: I knew it would end up like this! What's going to happen at the hospital when they realize I'm pregnant with rice and tin cans?

ANTONIA: Nothing's going to happen, because we're never going to get to the hospital.

MARGHERITA: Sure, because they're going to arrest us first.

ANTONIA: Stop whining! As soon as we get into the ambulance, we'll tell the driver where things stand . . . I'm sure he'll help us.

MARGHERITA: What if he turns us in instead?

ANTONIA: Stop it, he's not going to turn us in! And pull up your belly! (She helps her)

MARGHERITA: Another bag's slipping out. I'm falling apart!

ANTONIA: Hold onto it! Oh what a mess!

MARGHERITA: NO, don't press there . . . Oh, my God, you ripped the packet of olives in pickle juice. Ahhhhhh!!!!

(Giovanni and the Troopers return, alarmed by her shouting.)

GIOVANNI: Now what happened?

MARGHERITA: It's coming out! It's all coming out!

GIOVANNI: The baby's coming out! The baby's coming out!

Quick, officers, help me grab her arms!

(They follow his lead.)

TROOPER (Supporting Margherita's back with his arm): She's all wet! What is it?

ANTONIA: She's breaking her water!

GIOVANNI: Ohhh! Look at that water! . . . (Mimes being in a swamp) Quick, or she'll have the baby right here!

MARGHERITA: It's coming out! It's coming out!

(Margherita is carried offstage. Giovanni returns immediately.)

GIOVANNI: Wait for me. I'll get my jacket and be right there.

ANTONIA: Where are you going?

GIOVANNI: To see the premature baby get born . . .

ANTONIA: NO, you stay home! This is a woman's thing. I'll go!

(Puts on her coat) Get a rag and clean all that water off the floor. (She leaves)

GIOVANNI: I see, okay . . . I'll get a rag and start cleaning . . .

because that's a man's thing! (Grabs a rag and leans against the window) What a mess! Who knows how Luigi will take it when he comes home tomorrow and all of a sudden finds out he's a father . . . he'll have a stroke! And then what if he finds his kid transplanted into the belly of another woman . . . he'll have a double stroke . . . and drop dead on the spot! I've got to talk to him first. Prepare him for it, little by little . . . give him the big picture . . .

yeah, that's i t . . . I'll start with the pope . . . (Down on his hands and knees wiping up the floor) Ohhh!! All that water! But what a funny odor . . . it smells like vinegar . . . (Sniffs the rag) It's pickle juice. (Taken aback) Pickle juice?

I never knew! Before we're born, we spend nine months floating in pickle juice? (Continues to wash the pavement)

Oh, look at that . . . what's that? An olive? We float in pickle juice with olives? Oh, that's how it . . . No! No!

Olives have nothing to do with it. (Hears another siren and gets up to go to the window) Well, they're on their way. I hope it all turns out okay. But where did this olive come from? Oh, look, another one! Two olives? If I wasn't so unsure about where they came from I'd eat 'em . . . I'm starving! (Puts the two olives on a plate on the table)

Maybe I'll try cooking up a little of that bird seed soup. At least it's organic. The water's already boiling. I'll put in a bouillon cube, some onion . . . (Opens the refrigerator)

Look at that. I knew i t . . . there's no bouillon . . . not even an onion . . . All I've got to put in is this rabbit head!

Goddammit! (Without thinking he leans against the welding canister) How many times do I have to tell that dopey Antonia that this is a welding gun, not a lighter for the gas stove. It's dangerous! One day it'll blow up the house!

(Luigi, Margherita's husband, opens the door.)

LUIGI: Can I come in? Anybody home?

GIOVANNI: Oh, Luigi! But what are you doing here at this hour? You don't get off work until tomorrow morning.

LUIGI: Something happened. I'll explain later . . . but what I want to know is, where's my wife? I went home and the doors were open, but nobody was there.

GIOVANNI: Oh yeah, your wife was just here a few minutes ago. She went out with Antonia.

LUIGI: Where'd she go? What for?

GIOVANNI: Well, you know, it's a woman's thing.

LUIGI: And what would that be, that woman's thing.

GIOVANNI: It would be a thing that we wouldn't be interested in. We should only be interested in men's things.

LUIGI: What do you mean I shouldn't be interested? I'm very interested!

GIOVANNI: Ah, now you're interested, are you? And how come you weren't interested last month when you were supposed to reserve a bed like everyone else does?

LUIGI: Abed? For what?

GIOVANNI: Oh sure, that's woman's work, huh? It's the same old story! We give them our paychecks, and then we say, "Pay the bills." We make love to 'em and say, "Take the pill." We make them pregnant and it's, "You take care of it."

They're the ones who nurse the babies.

LUIGI: What are you saying?

GIOVANNI: I'm saying that they're right. We're just a bunch of good-for-nothing loafers.

LUIGI: But what does all this have to do with the fact that my Margherita went off with the doors open and didn't even leave me a note, just disappeared like . . .

GIOVANNI: And why should she leave you a note? Weren't you supposed to be working the night shift? Which reminds me ' h o w come you're home so early?

LUIGI: Work stoppage.

GIOVANNI: What do you mean?

LUIGI: We were protesting because they wanted to raise the price of our commuter passes thirty percent!

GIOVANNI: Christ! With all the tension there already, why would you want to screw things up even more?

LUIGI: Sure, sure, I agree it was a screwed-up thing to do. I even told the other guys, "Guys! It's useless trying to get them to bring down the price of our commuter passes."

GIOVANNI: Good for you!

LUIGI: "We should get our commuter passes for free!"

GIOVANNI: Are you out of your mind? We shouldn't pay anything?

LUIGI: Sure, the company should pay for our commute. And

they should also pay us for the time we're on the train.  
Because we lose those hours, and believe you me, it ain't  
no vacation . . .

GIOVANNI: Who put this stuff in your head? Have you been  
talking to that police sergeant without the mustache who  
looks like the state trooper with the mustache?

LUIGI (Tastes the contents of the open can): Hey, this pate is  
great. .. what kind is it?

GIOVANNI: Did you eat the stuff in that can?

LUIGI: Yeah, it's not bad. Sorry, I was hungry.

GIOVANNI: Without any lemon?

LUIGI: Why? Are you supposed to eat it with lemon?

GIOVANNI: Uh . . . I don't know . . . but are you sure it tastes all  
right?

LUIGI: Yeah, it's delicious.

GIOVANNI: Let me taste. Oh, that's not bad! Go open that other  
can on the sink.

(They feast on the pet food at the table, making appreciative  
sounds of satisfaction.)

LUIGI: Hey, what is this stuff?

GIOVANNI: It's a kind of pate . . . for rich cats and dogs.

LUIGI: Pate for cats and dogs? Come on, are you crazy?

GIOVANNI: NO, I'm a gourmet! And while you're at it, taste this-  
(Pours him some of the soup) Taste it. Taste it!

LUIGI: Hey, this isn't bad! What's in it?

GIOVANNI: It's one of my specialties: bird seed soup . . . with  
broth from frozen rabbit heads!

(Shocked, Luigi spits soup in Giovanni's face.)

LUIGI: Bird seed soup with rabbit heads?

GIOVANNI: Yeah, it's a Chinese delicacy. Over there they call it  
"consomme du Won Ton Dim Sum Hang Yan Lo." When  
Nixon went to China, he was nuts about it. "I'll never go  
back to America. I'm gonna stay here and eat this soup  
forever." It's in the tapes.

LUIGI: But the bird seed's a little crunchy . . .

GIOVANNI: That's because it's bird seed pilaf . . . you've got to  
serve it al dente. The bird seed is always al dente and the  
rabbit heads are medium rare . . . (Alarmed) Did you eat  
those olives?

LUIGI: Yeah. Why. Shouldn't I have?

GIOVANNI (Almost hysterical): Eh, no, no, you shouldn't have!  
They were your wife's olives, you boob! You'd even stoop  
to eating fetus!



LUIGI: My wife's olives . . . fetus? . . .

GIOVANNI: Yeah. Don't you know that when a baby's born . . . the woman loses her pickle juice? First there's the slipping part . . . well, we'll leave that out for now . . . then there's the problem of the pill that has no effect . . . and that's because the pope never stays put . . . he's always running all over the place . . . he doesn't even know what day it is anymore . . . n i g h t . . . d a y . . . now he's in Africa . . . then he's in Brazil . . . next stop India . . . kisses the ground . . . then a little dip in the papal pool, filled with holy water! Some skiing! Always the steep slopes . . . SCVUM! SCVUM! And that's without the ski poles . . . so his arms are free to bless people on the way down.

(Mimes ski-borne benedictions) Dominus Pacem. Dominus Pacem. Dominus Pacem. (Mimes high-speed blessings)

LUIGI: Giovanni, what kind of talk is that? The pope . . . olives . . . fetus?

GIOVANNI: Yeah, you're the voice of reason, aren't you? The company should pay our train fare and give us wages for commuting time. Next you'll want them to pay a bonus to our wives when they make love with us . . . because sex regenerates us, and makes us more productive!

LUIGI: That's right. You said it! We need some relief from this life of shit we're forced to live.

GIOVANNI: Well, let's not get carried away. It's not exactly a life of shit, is it . . . we're better off than we used to be. We've got a house, maybe a little run-down, but it has what we need . . . of course some of us have to work overtime

. . .

LUIGI: So what if I've got a stove and a refrigerator, if I'm disgusted by my life . . . goddammit. . . with a job that could be done by a trained monkey (Mimes the assembly line) Weld! Hammer! Drill! Weld! Hammer! One piece finished, here comes the next. Weld! (Mechanically, Giovanni joins the movement without thinking) Hammer! Faster! Weld . . .

GIOVANNI: Hammer, drill, weld . . . weld (Stops himself suddenly) For God's sake, what have you got me doing. You're making me crazy, too!

LUIGI: NO, I'm not the one making you crazy. It's the way we live. Everything's going down the drain . . . look at all the factories closing, toxic dumping, ethnic cleansing all over the world. Earthquakes. Hurricanes. The pope.

GIOVANNI: Yeah, scaring all the women in the world to make sure they get pregnant!

LUIGI: What were you saying about the pope getting pregnant?  
(Laughs)

GIOVANNI: No, he's not pregnant. I was talking about your wife.

LUIGI: What's my wife got to do with the pope?

GIOVANNI : Ah, you're pretending you don't know about it?

LUIGI: NO. It's just that I don't know! What's this story about the pope?

GIOVANNI: Look, if you spent less time stirring up trouble at work and paid more attention to your wife, you'd know what she was dreaming about at night when the pope comes to her and says, "Don't take the pill for Christ's sake!

LUIGI: Actually . . . Margherita doesn't take the pill.

GIOVANNI: Oh, so you know. Who told you?

LUIGI: Who do you think told me? She doesn't have to take the pill because she can't have babies. She's got a malformation down there in the whattayacallit. . .

GIOVANNI: You're the one with the malformation! In your head! Your wife is very healthy, and has no problem with having babies . . . in fact she's having one.

LUIGI: Having a baby? When?

GIOVANNI: Now. In fact she could be giving birth this minute: five months premature!

LUIGI: Don't be silly. Five months. She doesn't even have a belly.

GIOVANNI: She doesn't have one because she tied it up . . . and then Antonia untied it and . . . PLAFF . . . a belly big enough to be nine months . . . maybe even eleven!

LUIGI: Come on, are you kidding me?

GIOVANNI: My wife, if you must know, took her in an ambulance to the hospital. . . because she just about gave birth to the kid here on the floor.

LUIGI: Here on the floor?

GIOVANNI: She broke her water here . . . I cleaned it up myself!

LUIGI: YOU cleaned up her water?

GIOVANNI: Well, it wasn't exactly water . . . pickle juice . . . with a few olives. The ones you just ate.

LUIGI: Listen, stop joking around. Where's my wife?

GIOVANNI: I told you. At the hospital.

LUIGI: Which hospital?

GIOVANNI : Who knows. If you'd have reserved a room a month ago like you're supposed to, we'd know. But no . . . now

the baby's going to be born in the car . . . poor kid, in the middle of all those olives!

LUIGI: Come on, stop this nonsense! Tell me what hospital she's in or I'll punch you out.

GIOVANNI: Hey, calm down. I already told you that I don't know . . . No, wait, maybe they went to that Gyne . . .

Gyneco . . . that Gynecological Place.

LUIGI: The Gynecological Place?

ANNI: Yeah, the place where they do the premature baby transplants.

LUIGI: The premature baby transplants?

GIOVANNI: Where have you been living? At the Gynecological Place there's a machine with a tent full of oxygen . . . they take the woman with the baby that's premature by four-and-a-half, or even five months . . . then they take another woman to be the second mother . . . they do a cesarean . . . put the baby in the new belly, stuff in the placenta and everything . . . and then four months later . . . (Pause) . . . a fish!

LUIGI: Cut it out. I don't give a damn about your transplant machines, and cesareans . . . I want to know where the hell is this Gynecological Place. Get the telephone book and we can look it up.

GIOVANNI: I don't have a phone. What would I do with a phone book: read up on who lives in the neighborhood?

LUIGI: Come on, we can go to the bar downstairs. They've got a phone?

GIOVANNI: I just remembered. It's next to the new mall.

LUIGI: The new mall? Why would they go so far away?

GIOVANNI: I told you! It's the only place where they do the transplants! They'd find another woman. A healthy woman who happens to be near by. (Stops; he has an idea) Another woman? (He screams) Antonia! (Luigi screams) She's going to be right there . . . She'll be the first one they ask . . . and she's crazy enough to do it! She's going to have a transplant, and come home pregnant. Quick! Let's go!

(They exit, running.)

ACT TWO

Antonia and Margherita return. Margherita still has a big belly; he is sniffing.

ANTONIA (Calling): Giovanni. Giovanni! He's not here. He went to work. What time is it? (Looks at the alarm clock on the

shelves) Five-thirty. Can you believe it? We've been out playing this charade for more than four hours. (Peeks into the other room)

MARGHERITA: I should never have listened to you! Look at the mess we're in now!

ANTONIA: You're such a complainer. It all worked out, didn't it? All we had to say to the ambulance team was, "Careful, this girl's not pregnant... but she's got a gut full of stolen goods," and they couldn't wait to give us a hand. They wanted to throw a party for us! And you were so worried  
•.. for nothing . . . you have to have faith in people! Me, I have faith in people! (Looks into the refrigerator) Where's the butter. Who stole my butter? Ah, no, there it is. Now I'll make you some soup. Ah, the rice. Give me a packet of rice. (Margherita pulls a packet of rice out from the bag hidden under her coat. Antonia goes to the stove. She sees the pot) But what's this stuff? The bird seed? Don't tell me that dopey Giovanni really cooked up a bird seed soup with rabbit heads! All you have to do is feed him a story and he swallows the whole thing. Let's see what I can whip up for you.

MARGHERITA: If you're making the soup just for me, don't other. I'm not hungry. My stomach's all blocked up. 3 9

ANTONIA (Margherita unpacks her "belly"): What are you doing?

MARGHERITA: Did you think I was going to carry this stuff around the rest of my life?

ANTONIA: I don't want any stolen goods in my house! Is that clear? And while you're at it, could you help me get rid of the stuff under the bed. I'll make myself a little belly, too. (Takes some pillowcases from a drawer)

MARGHERITA: And where will we put it all?

ANTONIA: We'll carry it out to my father-in-law's little shed behind the railroad tracks. He grows vegetables there. It will be a great hiding place.

MARGHERITA: That's enough, I can't take this anymore . . . I've had it to here with your harebrained schemes. I'm going home.

ANTONIA: You're a loser.

MARGHERITA: Well, if you're so smart, tell me what I say to my husband when he sees me without a belly . . . or a baby?

ANTONIA: Oh, I thought of that already. We'll tell him that you had a hysterical pregnancy.

MARGHERITA: Hysterical?

ANTONIA: Yes, it happens all the time . . . a woman thinks she's

pregnant, her belly blows up, and then, when she's ready to give birth, all that comes out is air. Just air!

MARGHERITA: And how would I have gotten this hysterical pregnancy?

ANTONIA: From the pope. He kept coming to you in your dreams and saying, "Make a baby! Make a baby!" So you obeyed him: you made a baby . . . of air. Just the soul of a baby!

MARGHERITA: NOW we drag the pope into the story.

ANTONIA: Look at all the times he's dragged us into his stories. (Margherita has removed her bundles, while Antonia has re-stuffed her coat) I'll be back in ten minutes . . .

MARGHERITA: But why don't you just get a cart and carry it all over there at once, instead of playing this pregnant mother game?

ANTONIA: Because we'd be caught right away. See those police wagons down there. They're waiting to catch you in the act! (Brings the welding tanks to the stove)

MARGHERITA: What are you doing? Won't you ruin it?

ANTONIA: NO. It's Giovanni's welding canister. It's made of iron . . . it's special stuff called animonio . . . it can heat up to two thousand degrees without even turning red . . . (Lights the gas stove with it)

MARGHERITA (Standing by the window, peeking out): Look, it's Maria from the third floor. She's pregnant, too.

ANTONIA: Stealing all my ideas. Before you know it there'll be pregnant dogs walking by . . . pregnant men . . .

MARGHERITA: Listen, I thought it over. I'm coming with you. (Starts reinserting the bags in her "belly" under her coat)

ANTONIA: Brava! I knew you'd change your mind. Let's go. Today is the day of the mammas!

(Scene change. A half-curtain runs the length of the proscenium. Giovanni and Luigi enter as if walking on the street.

Luigi pulls out a beret and puts it on his head. Giovanni does the same.)

LUIGI: Listen. I want to tell you something.

GIOVANNI: What.

LUIGI (Can't bring himself to say it): Look, it's raining. Like the saying goes, "When it rains, the government is stealing something."

GIOVANNI: Well, that's just to remind you that when it's sunny, the government is murdering somebody.

LUIGI: Goddammit, do you still have the energy to make jokes

and keep laughing?

IOVANNI: Me, no! But my feet, yes. They're dying for a good laugh! You and your bright idea of checking every hospital in town on foot. I've had enough. I'm going back to the station and get a train to work. I'll already be docked an hour's pay as it is.

(Two stagehands walk by as the sound effect of a truck plays on the loudspeaker. The stagehands/truck drop several sacks in front of Luigi and Giovanni as they pass by, then exit.)

Look! Those sacks must have fallen off that . . . truck.

They're filled with coffee.

LUIGI: Yeah. Ethiopian. Kenyan. French vanilla. Let's take some home.

GIOVANNI: Are you crazy? Do you want to lower yourself to the level of thieves and looters? I don't take stuff that's not mine. I work for what I have.

LUIGI: Listen. What I was trying to tell you before is . . . starting tomorrow we're all being downsized.

GIOVANNI: Downsized?

LUIGI : Yeah. I heard it on the train. Six thousand out of twenty-six thousand employees are being downsized now. And the rest of the plant closes in the next few months.

GIOVANNI: They're closing the plant?

LUIGI: Not only that. We won't get paid for our last two weeks.

GIOVANNI: Come on. Help me load up this stuff. Let's take it all.

(As they leave the State Trooper enters.)

TROOPER: Drop those sacks or I'll shoot.

LUIGI: Look. He's got a gun.

TROOPER: Stop or I'll shoot.

GIOVANNI: Go ahead and shoot.

TROOPER (Chases them offstage): Those bastards.

(Change of scene. The curtain stays down; only the lights change to indicate another street. It's dark. From stage left, Giovanni and Luigi reenter with their sacks.)

GIOVANNI: You can do it. We're almost there. Wait. There's a police van . . . in front of my house . . .

LUIGI: Look at those two women crossing the street. Aren't they our wives?

GIOVANNI: No, it can't be them.

LUIGI: Sure, they're standing there in front of the building you live in. And one of them's pregnant.

GIOVANNI: No, take a better look . . . they're both pregnant.

LUIGI: Oh, I guess it's not them.

GIOVANNI (Grabbing his shoulder): Goddammit, we're trapped.  
Look across the street. It's the state trooper who was  
chasing us!

LUIGI: Why not? He knows where you live . . . he'll head  
straight to your house to find us!

OVANNI: SO we'll go to your house!

LUIGI: Right. Keep moving. Let's go this way and shake him  
off. (They exit through the curtain)

(The Trooper crosses the entire stage and exits to the left. He  
returns again, still looking for Luigi and Giovanni.)

TROOPER: You can't get away . . . I know where you live! I know  
the streets! . . . I know how to read too!

(In the dark the curtain rises and we find ourselves again in  
the house of Giovanni and Antonia. The two women are  
entering with big bellies. They are overwhelmed and  
exhausted.)

ANTONIA: I want to die . . . I want to die . . .

MARGHERITA: Load, unload, I feel like I'm turning into a truck!

ANTONIA (Goes to sit on the bed): I want to die . . . Oh, God, the  
exhaustion of pregnancy.

MARGHERITA (Loosens her coat and removes some lettuce leaves  
and a few cabbages): Look, look at all the vegetables we  
have here from your father's farm. There's enough to  
make salads for a year!

ANTONIA: At this rate we'll never get the stuff out of here . . .

With the cops down there we can't go out with big bellies,  
and come home with no bellies . . . and go out again with  
big bellies . . . no bellies . . . big bellies . . . no bellies. The  
soup! (Runs to the oven) I forgot about the soup . . . it'll be  
all burned up! My God, the hunger's gone to my brain . . .

(Lifts pot cover) That's a relief. It didn't even boil . . . but  
why? It's been on four hours? The gas! Those bastards cut  
off the gas! Disgusting creeps, murderers, thieves . . . just  
because I didn't pay the gas bill. And they cut off the electricity  
too . . .

MARGHERITA: They cut off the gas?

ANTONIA: Yes. The man was here yesterday to check up on i t . . .

(There's a knock at the door) Who is it?

VOICE (From outside): Friends.

ANTONIA: What friends?

Cfi: Im a friend of your husband's from work. He asked me  
come and tell you something.

ANTONIA: Oh, my God! What could it be? (Goes to open the door)

MARGHERITA: Wait a second. Let me hide the lettuce. (Puts it under her coat)

ANTONIA: Just a moment please . . . I'm not dressed. (Opens the door and sees the State Trooper) You again? What kind of joke is this?

TROOPER: Stop right there, where you are! This time I've got you! Look at that. Now you're both pregnant! My how those bellies grow! I knew all along it was a trick!

ANTONIA : What kind of trick are you talking about?

MARGHERITA (Letting herself flop on the bed in exhaustion): Now we're in for it. I knew it. I knew it.

TROOPER (TO Margherita): Glad to see you haven't lost your little bundle of joy. And you, madam . . . congratulations! In five hours you've made love, become a mommy, and arrived at your ninth month!

ANTONIA: Look, officer, you're making a mistake . . .

TROOPER: NO, I made a mistake last time . . . when I fell for your little act with the labor pains and premature birth! But I'm not going to fall for it again. Out with the stolen goods!

ANTONIA: But what stolen goods are you talking about?

TROOPER: Let's stop playing games. Your seam's an open book: the husbands go out to commit the robberies, pass the bags to the wives, and all day long I see nothing but pregnant women! Now why is it that all the women in this neighborhood got buns in their ovens at the same time! Mature women, teenagers, little girls . . . Today I even saw an eighty-year-old woman who was pregnant . . . with twins!

ANTONIA: That's because . . . because of the Festival . . . the Festival of the Patron Saint. . . Santa Eulalia.

TROOPER: The Patron Saint?

ANTONIA: You don't know about her? What a saint! The holiest of saints! A good woman . . . who . . . who wanted to have children . . . she was obsessed . . . she wanted to get pregnant . . . but she couldn't do it . . . she just couldn't do it!

Poor saint. Hard as she tried, she never succeeded . . . up to the point where the Heavenly Father Above took pity on her and: psium! She was pregnant! . . . at sixty years old! A miracle!

TROOPER: Sixty years old?

ANTONIA: Yes, you can imagine, and her husband was over eighty!



TROOPER: But. . .

ANTONIA: The power of faith! They say, though, that the husband died immediately. Anyway, in memory of this miracle all the women in the neighborhood go around for three days with false bellies.

TROOPER: Oh, what a wonderful tradition. And is that why they empty out the supermarkets, to put stuff in their bellies? Come on! Enough with the fairy tales! Let me see what you have under there, or I'll lose my patience!

ANTONIA: And do what? Rip off our clothes? I warn you, that if you lay even a finger on us . . . a . . . a . . . a curse . . . will befall you!

TROOPER: Don't make me laugh. What curse?

ANTONIA: The same thing that happened to the incredulous husband of Santa Eulalia! The old man was a skeptic and he didn't believe her: "Santa Eulalia, come here right away. Open your blouse and let me see what you have in your belly, and I warn you, if you really are pregnant, I'll strangle you, because that baby's not mine." And then she, Santa Eulalia, opened her blouse, and a second miracle: out of her stomach . . . out of her stomach . . . came roses . . . roses . . . a cascade of roses.

TROOPER: Roses?

ANTONIA : Yes, but that's not a l l . . . all of a sudden the old man's eyes went black: "I can't see anymore. I can't see anymore," he shouted. "I'm blind! God has punished me!"

"Oh, skeptic, now you believe," said Santa Eulalia. "Yes, I believe!" And then, third miracle: out of the roses sprang a ten-month-old baby boy who could already speak, and he said, "Papa, Papa, the Lord forgives you. Now you can die in peace." The baby put his little hand on the old man's head, and he dropped dead just like that.

TROOPER: Okay, story time's over. Now show me the roses . . . I mean . . . the goods. Hurry up!

ANTONIA: So you don't believe in the miracle?

TROOPER: Not at all.

ANTONIA: You're not afraid of the curse?

TROOPER: NO, I said so already!

ANTONIA: Okay. Have it your way! Don't say I didn't warn you. (To Margherita) Come on. Get up and we'll show him together:

Santa Eulalia of the big belly

On whomever does not believe in the miracle

Let fall the curse  
To whomever does not believe the oracle  
Let come the evil black bastard  
To darken his sight  
Santa Eulalia, Santa Pia,  
Unleash your curse  
And so be it!!!!

(The two women open their coats.)

TROOPER: What's all that stuff in there?

ANTONIA: What stuff? (The two women make sounds of amazement)

Oh, look at that! It's a salad!

TROOPER: Salad?

ANTONIA: Yes, an apparition of a salad: chicory, endive, fennel  
and even a cabbage!

MARGHERITA: Me too, me too—I have a cabbage!

TROOPER: What's going on here? Why are you hiding all these  
vegetables in your stomach?

ANTONIA: But we didn't hide anything. Can't you see? It's a  
miracle!?

TROOPER: Yeah, the miracle of Our Lady of the Cabbage!

ANTONIA: Well, these days you make a miracle with whatever  
vegetable you can get your hands on. But whether you  
believe or not, there's nothing wrong with it, is there? Is  
there some law that says a citizen is not allowed to carry  
chicory, endive, fennel and cabbage in her belly? Is li  
prohibited?

TROOPER: No.

ANTONIA: Is there a law against it?

TROOPER: No.

ANTONIA: Then good-bye! (Begins to usher him out)

TROOPER: What do you mean, "good-bye!" (Grabs the cabbage  
and presses the nozzle of his gun against it, as if holding it  
hostage) All right! That's it! Tell me why you put all this  
stuff under your clothes . . . or else!

ANTONIA: I told you already. To make a belly in honor of the  
miracle of Santa Eulalia! And anyone who doesn't believe  
in it is cursed!

(The lights dim slowly.)

ANTONIA AND MARGHERITA:

Santa Eulalia of the big belly

On whomever does not believe in the miracle

Let fall the curse . . .

(The women repeat the "prayer to Santa Eulalia." They

notice with anxiety the dimming of the lights.)

TROOPER: What's happening now? The lights are going out.

ANTONIA (Very calmly): What are you talking about, officer?

TROOPER: Can't you see . . . (Worried) It's getting dark . . .

ANTONIA: NO, you must be mistaken . . . I can see just fine. (To Margherita) Can you see?

MARGHERITA (Antonia kicks her): Yes, yes . . . I can see . . .

ANTONIA: We can see. Maybe your eyesight is fading.

MARGHERITA (Moves close to Antonia and whispers): They cut off the electricity.

ANTONIA: Quiet!

TROOPER: Come on, stop kidding around. The light switch. Where's the light switch?

ANTONIA (Moving comfortably, in spite of the darkness): It's right here. Can't you see it? Wait, I'll try it . . . (Clicks the switch audibly) There, you see. Now it's off. Now it's on.

There's an awful lot of light in my house! Don't you see it?

TROOPER; No, I can't see.

ANTONIA: Oh, my God. He's gone blind! It's the curse!

ER: Cut it out! Open the window . . . I want to see outside!

ANTONIA: But the window is open!

MARGHERITA: Yes, the window's open. Can't you see?

ANTONIA: Come on, come and look. (Leads him to a chair)

Look, over here. Watch out for the chair!

TROOPER (Bumps into the chair): Ahhhaa . . . Owwww. That hurt!

ANTONIA: Pay attention when you walk!

TROOPER: HOW can I, if I can't see?

ANTONIA: Oh, I forgot, you're blind.

TROOPER (Scared and angry): Blind!!!!!!!!!!!!

ANTONIA: Come on . . . there's the window. (Takes him to the shelves and opens the two glass cabinet doors on top)

Careful now . . . look, we're opening the window . . . feel the glass? (The Trooper touches the glass tentatively) Look out there . . . what a panorama! Sometimes I forget myself how beautiful it is. Let's hope the landlord doesn't realize what a great view this is, or he'll raise the rent!

TROOPER (Desperate): No I don't see it. I can't see anything. Dammit, what happened to me? A match . . . Light a match!

ANTONIA (Worried): A match? . . . I have something better than a match (Goes and gets the welding tank) Stay there. Don't move. You don't know the house, and you might hurt yourself... I'll bring it over . . . it's a welding torch . . . (She

lights it) Look, look . . . what a beautiful red flame!

TROOPER: I don't see any flame . . . let me touch it.

ANTONIA: NO, no, can't you see it's red h o t . . .

TROOPER (Arrogant): I said let me touch it. That's an order!

(Antonia obeys) Ah, ahiiiaaohoooo! My hand! I burned my hand! Oh God, that hurts! What a burn!

ANTONIA: I tried to warn you.

TROOPER (Cries desperately): I'm blind!

ANTONIA: Don't cry . . . it's going to be all right. . . come on . . . at the end of the day what happened . . . it's nothing . . . so you've gone a little blind . . .

TROOPER: I want to get out of here . . . I've got to get out.

(Becoming more desperate) I want to get out of this house . . . to my superiors . . .

ANTONIA: Wait, wait, I'll help you to the door . . . Here it is . . . there's the door . . . (Opens door to wardrobe)

(The State Trooper rushes into it like a madman, smashes his head on the interior, falls back staggering, and collapses on the floor.)

MARGHERITA: He hit his head!

TROOPER: Ahhii! Who punched me?

ANTONIA (Searching): The baby . . . It's Santa Eulalia's baby. He's touched your forehead with his little hand!

TROOPER: That's some little hand! (Collapses on the floor)

ANTONIA: Officer . . . Officer! Dammit, he fainted. (She gets down on her knees by the Trooper)

MARGHERITA: Maybe he's dead!

ANTONIA: Always the optimist! What do you mean, dead . . . get a pillow . . . (Margherita obeys) No, he's not dead. He's just having some faintness . . . a slight case of faintness . . . he's fine . . . he's breathing . . .

MARGHERITA: He's dead, he's dead . . . he's not breathing anymore!

ANTONIA: He's breathing . . . he's breathing . . . no . . . he's not breathing! And his heart's not beating either!

MARGHERITA: Oh God! We killed a cop!

ANTONIA: Oh, yeah! Maybe I got a little carried away. What do we do now?

MARGHERITA: Ah, you're asking me? What do I have to do with it? It was all your idea . . . I'm sorry but I'm going home . . . The keys! Where did I put the keys to my house?

ANTONIA: Some friend you are. Walking out on me just like that.

MARGHERITA (Finds keys on the shelf): Ah, here they are! But I have another pair in my pocket. Two sets of keys! These

are my husband's! So he was here . . . he came looking for me . . . and he forgot them!

ANTONIA: What do I care about that! I'm here with a dead cop and you're talking to me about keys!

MARGHERITA: That means that Luigi met Giovanni and he must have told him that I was pregnant, and now what am I supposed to say? You've got to think up something to get me out of this mess . . .

ANTONIA I m desperate. (Crying, she speaks to the unconscious Trooper) Officer . . . don't be that way . . . let's make up . . .

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It was just a little bump on the head . . . officer . . . wake up (Lifts the officer's arm and lets it go. The arm falls heavily without life) He's dead! He's really dead!

MARGHERITA: See what happens when you make fun of miracles?

ANTONIA: No, he was the one making fun of them . . . I even warned him: watch out for the curse, because Santa Eulalia is an awesome saint! (She grabs him by the shoulders, lifts him up and drops him)

MARGHERITA: And now what are you doing?

ANTONIA: Artificial respiration.

MARGHERITA: No. You have to use mouth-to-mouth resuscitation like they do when people drown.

ANTONIA: Now you want me to kiss a cop! With my political background! No . . . you kiss him . . .

MARGHERITA: No. I can't do it! Maybe we should get him an oxygen tank.

ANTONIA (Thinks a moment): I've got one. It's with Giovanni's welding equipment. One valve's for hydrogen, and the other's for oxygen. Come here and help me . . . close the hydrogen valve . . . like t h a t . . . and open the one for oxygen. Stay calm . . . you'll see. As soon as he gets the oxygen, he'll come around! He'll even feel better than before!

Like he spent a month in the mountains!

MARGHERITA: Are you sure it's going to work?

ANTONIA: NO problem. You'll see . . . (Puts the welding canister tube into the officer's mouth) The oxygen's going to his stomach . . . you see, his chest is rising . . . and then it falls . . . look . . . he's waking up . . . he's breathing . . . see how

nically that chest rises . . . and how it falls.

MARGHERITA: It looks to me like it's only rising . . . and his stomach too . . . stop . . . you're going to blow him up.

(The two women frantically try to turn off the infernal machine.)

ANTONIA (Lifts the tube up to the officer's mouth): Oh, no. I gave him hydrogen instead of oxygen . . . Oh God, what a belly . . . what a belly! I made a policeman pregnant!

(Blackout. Curtain falls.)

Giovanni and Luigi enter. The area in front of the curtain is understood to be the street outside Luigi's apartment.

Giovanni and Luigi stand outside.)

G i o V A N N I : Well, we can't keep on sitting outside your place like a couple of bums. I'm going to see if I can break down the door with my shoulder.

LUIGI: NO, you saw what happened when I tried. I couldn't get past the two locks.

GIOVANNI: Why do you have all that hardware?

LUIGI: My wife made me install it. She's terrified of thieves.

GIOVANNI: We're screwed.

LUIGI : Son of a bitch! Now I remember where I left the keys. At your house . . . yeah . . . on the table.

GIOVANNI: Are you sure?

LUIGI: Absolutely. Come on. Give me the keys to your house and I'll go get them.

GIOVANNI: Yeah, with that state trooper waiting outside my place! TRAC . . . You're under arrest!

LUIGI: NO, after all this time, he must be gone.

GIOVANNI: Don't kid yourself. That guy's a bloodhound. We can't even think of going back there.

(They hear noises.)

Dammit, someone's coming . . .

LUIGI: Calm down, it's probably just a neighbor.

GIOVANNI: What do you mean, neighbor. It's that cop . . . (Tries to hide the bags)

VOICE (Offstage): Excuse me, I need some information.

GIOVANNI: Dammit, we're screwed.

(Gravedigger enters. It is the same actor who plays the Trooper.)

LUIGI: No, it's not him. It looks like him, but it's not him.

GIOVANNI: You're right. It's not him.

GRAVEDIGGER: What were you saying? Who do I look like?

VANNI: Damn, he looks just like him. Ah, I'm sorry for

laughing, but you are the spitting image of the sergeant without the mustache who looks like the state trooper with the mustache. I feel like I'm in a play that I saw when I was a kid . . . you know, one of those theatre companies where they can't afford to pay more than a few actors, so one of them has to play the parts of all the cops.

GRAVEDIGGER: But, really, I'm not a policeman.

GIOVANNI: Ah no, and what do you do?

GRAVEDIGGER: I'm an undertaker.

GIOVANNIANDLUIGI: Oh, Mother of God! (With rapid gestures, the two of them touch their testicles)

GIOVANNI (Explains to the audience): This is an Italian gesture expressing the fear of death. (Demonstrates the gesture again and then turns to the Gravedigger) Sorry, it was just an instinct.

GRAVEDIGGER: Oh, don't worry . . . I understand . . . everyone does that when they meet me . . . I do it myself whenever I look in the mirror.

GIOVANNI: How nice.

GRAVEDIGGER: Can you tell me if a certain Sergio Prampolini lives around here.

LUIGI: Sure, he's upstairs on the third floor. But I'm sure he's not home. He's in the hospital. The poor guy is always sick! . . .

GRAVEDIGGER: He's dead. But do you know if anyone in his family is coming home today? I've got to get someone to sign for the casket I've got out there.

GIOVANNI: Oh well, just leave it in the hallway . . . with a little note on it . . . and when the son comes home: "Oh, it's Dad!"

(Mimes the action of carrying the casket on his shoulder)

GRAVEDIGGER: A casket in the hallway? Abandoned? . . . With all the people passing by . . . little kids jumping in to play Indians paddling their canoe? No, I can't do that. I have to have the papers signed by someone who's responsible.

You live here, don't you?

LUIGI: Yes, I live right there.

GRAVEDIGGER: Good, then it's all set. I'll leave the casket with you, you keep it in your house . . . and this evening when the son of the deceased . . .

GIOVANNI (Shocked): A dead man's coffin in my house?

GRAVEDIGGER: It doesn't take up much space, you know . . . and if you overlook its macabre function, it's actually

quite decorative.

GloVANNi: s u r e , put a little doily on top, and it's a portable bar!

GRAVEDIGGER: Be serious.

GIOVANNI: I'm dead serious.

OIGI: The fact is, you see . . . we locked ourselves out.

GRAVEDIGGER: Oh, what a shame! Then, I'll have to return it to the warehouse.

GIOVANNI: No . . . maybe we can take it to my house. I live just down the street. . . I'll take care of everything. But you'd have to let us load these sacks into the casket . . . so our stuff won't get wet in the rain. The casket has a lid I hope?

GRAVEDIGGER: Yes, yes, it's a regulation casket. It's cheap, but even so we never make them without the lid.

GIOVANNI: What a great country we live in! Every coffin has a lid!

GRAVEDIGGER: OK. I'll leave the casket with you. (He leaves)  
(Giovanni and Luigi gather the bags.)

GIOVANNI: I'd like to see a cop who's got the guts to stick his nose into a dead man's casket. I'll be the corpse, and you can be the undertaker making a delivery to the house.

Come on. Let's get the sacks and go. (They leave)

(Blackout. The curtain rises on the women in the house.

The Trooper is still stretched out on the floor. Antonia is filling up a bag with the food from under the bed. Margherita is furious.)

ARGHERITA: You're crazy. We're here with a dead man in the house and you're still worried about smuggling out rice and pasta.

A N T O N I A : Well, it's the last trip. And besides, if he's dead, he's dead. Just come over here and help me lift the guy up . . . so we can get rid of him.

ERITA: Where are we going to put him?

ANTONIA: In the wardrobe.

MARGERITA: In the wardrobe?

ANTONIA: Where else? Haven't you ever seen a detective movie? They always put the body in the wardrobe.

(They lift the officer to his feet. Antonia lifts him over her shoulders.)

MARGHERITA (Struggling): He's heavy.

ANTONIA: What do you expect? He's a cop! (Manipulates him as if he were a puppet and stows him away in the wardrobe)

There, he's in. Now let's put a coat hanger under his jacket so we can suspend him from this hook . . . (They do it)



Perfect! Dammit, the door won't close. Let's push . . . come on. (They push hard) There! Look how nicely he fits in now! Just like Baby Jesus in the manger! (Closes wardrobe door)

MARGHERITA: Well, that's that. (Mimes opening the window) The rain's coming down by the bucketful.

ANTONIA: I'll be right b a c k . . . I'm going in there for a minute . . . load up your belly . . . just one more trip and we're done . . . so exhausting! (Goes out to the bathroom)

(The door opens. Luigi is there. He's wearing the cap of the Gravedigger.)

LUIGI (Barely peeking in, whispers): Hey, is anybody home?

MARGHERITA: Who's there? . . . (Frightened) Luigi, is that you? What are you doing dressed up like that?

LUIGI: Margherita, my sweetie pie, finally . . . How are you? .. • Let me look at you! But don't you have a belly? The baby? Where's the baby? Did you lose it?

MARGHERITA: NO, no . . . don't worry . . . everything's fine . . . •

LUIGI: Really, everything's fine? And you're okay? Tell m e . . .

MARGHERITA: Later, later . . . it's better if Antonia tells you . . . •

LUIGI: Why Antonia?

GRAVEDIGGER (From outside the door): Hey this casket's heavy, are we coming in or not?

LUIGI: Yes, yes, come on in . . .

(At that moment the door of the wardrobe opens so that tn Trooper can be seen hanging inside. Margherita closes quickly and runs into the other room.)

54 Come on, Giovanni, get out of the casket. . .

GOVANNI (From outside the door): Too bad, I was just getting comfortable in here . . .

(The wardrobe door opens again. Without seeing what's inside, Giovanni closes the door. They put the coffin on the table.)

MARGHERITA (From the other room): Antonia, Antonia, come here . . . hurry.

ANTONIA: (From offstage): What is it . . . can't I even pee in peace?

GIOVANNI: They're both back?

LUIGI: Yes, yes, and everything's fine . . . they're all doing fine.

GIOVANNI: That's good . . . Close it, close the lid . . . (To the Gravedigger) Thank you. Thanks for everything.

GRAVEDIGGER: Don't mention it. (He leaves)

LUIGI: Listen, I have an idea. Let's close the door and lock ourselves in here until we unload everything. Then we can

hide the stuff under the bed, and stand up the casket in the closet.

GIOVANNI: All right, go lock the door. (Luigi does. They take the bags out of the casket and put them under the bed)

MARGHERITA (From the other room): Hurry up, Antonia. I have to tell you something.

ANTONIA: I'm coming. I'm fixing my clothes. Everything's falling out.

GIOVANNI: There, it's done . . . the bags are all out of sight. Push, push them further under.

LUIGI: Look at that! We push the bags in on one side and they come out on the other . . . (Bends over to look under the bed) It didn't seem like that much in the casket! It looks like twice as much!

GIOVANNI: Of course it does, if you look at it with your head upside down . . . everything seems exaggerated that way . . . they call it the yoga effect . . . Come on, help me lift up the casket . . . No, wait, first let's take off the lid so "won't be too thick.

(Giovanni and Luigi lift the casket and insert it into the wardrobe, after resting the lid up against the wall.)

° L u i G i: You're right. . . But what was that yoga effect you were talking about?

a. GIOVANNI: Oh, that was discovered in India . . . people there are so poor that when their hunger gets too much to bear . . . they stand on their heads . . . and while they're upside down they imagine whatever they want . . . all kinds of things to eat and drink . . .

LUIGI: And that makes the hunger go away?

GIOVANNI: No, but it keeps people off the streets. Come on, we've almost got it in—push.

(They manage to squeeze in the coffin so that the Trooper fits within it. They close the door without seeing the Trooper.)

LUIGI: Ah, so the illusion is enough to satisfy them . . . is that it?

GIOVANNI: Yeah, that's it . . . (Tries to close the door of the wardrobe)

LUIGI: You know I had an illusion, too.

GIOVANNI: Yeah, you told me.

LUIGI: No, no, another one . . . I thought I saw the state trooper in the closet.

GIOVANNI: State trooper? (Opens the wardrobe door) Good

thing it was an illusion . . . Don't let me catch you standing on your head again, okay . . . Dammit, it won't close.

(Pushes, but door stays open)

MARGHERITA (From the other room): Listen, Antonia, I'm getting tired of this . . . I'll just wait in there . . .

GIOVANNI: Go open the door. I can't move . . .

(Luigi runs to open the door. Margherita enters and sees Giovanni leaning against the wardrobe door.)

MARGHERITA: Oh, thanks, that's better . . . (Sees Giovanni) Oh, Giovanni, hello.

GIOVANNI: Hello. Your husband told me that everything went well . . . So did you have the baby or not?

ANTONIA (Enters suddenly; to Margherita): So what did you have to tell me that was so urgent?

(Antonia tries to hide her belly as much as possible, and slowly, bent over double, she goes toward the front door.)

GIOVANNI (Blocks her with a shout): Antonia! Your belly! You had the transplant?!

LUIGI: The transplant?!

ANTONIA: Well . . .

GIOVANNI (Starts to walk into the wardrobe, but turns suddenly to block her): Did you get the cesarean?

ANTONIA: A little.

GIOVANNI: What do you mean, a little?

ANTONIA: Well, in the end . . . it was the right thing.

LUIGI (TO Margherita): Did you have a cesarean, too?

MARGHERITA: Uh, yes, well, I don't know . . . Antonia, did I have one?

LUIGI: Why are you asking her . . . don't you know?

ANTONIA: Uh, no, poor thing. They put her to sleep. And since she was asleep, how could she know?

GIOVANNI: You mean they operated on you while you were awake?

ANTONIA: What's with this interrogation? Why the third degree. I take the fifth. (Almost out of sympathy, the cupboard's glass shelf doors and the front door of the house start opening, setting off an absurd merry-go-round of activity) You could have asked how our health is, if we're living or dying. What do you care that we dragged ourselves out of bed like idiots against the doctors orders so that you wouldn't worry about us. And what do you think I should have done . . . she was going to lose her baby . . . I was in a position to save it . . . how could I say no . . .

Aren't you always telling me that we have to help one another. . .

>IOVANNI: Yes, yes, you're r i g h t . . . I'm sorry . . . maybe you did the right thing . . . yes, of course you did.

IGI: Thank you, Antonia. Thank you, Antonia, for all you did. You are truly a remarkable woman.

OVANNI: Yes, truly a remarkable woman.

"IGI (2b Margherita): You tell her, too. Come on.

HERITA: Yes, Antonia. You are a remarkable woman.

GIOVANNI: Come . . . come here . . . you shouldn't be standing up . . . (Sits her on the bed) not with that cesarean, you know . . . maybe it would have been better for you to stay there at the hospital.

ANTONIA: Don't be silly . . . I'm fine . . . didn't even notice it!

GIOVANNI: Yes, you look absolutely great . . . And look at that great big belly! (Caresses her stomach) It's moving already!

LUIGI: It's moving? Excuse me, Antonia, can I touch it, too?

MARGHERITA: NO, you're not touching a damn thing!

LUIGI: Eh, but it's my son, too, you know?

GIOVANNI: Yeah . . . we're all related now.

MARGHERITA: What about me. All this cheering for Antonia . . .

ANTONIA: Yeah. Do some cheering for Margherita. Go lift her up on your shoulders. I have to go. (Gets up and rushes toward the door)

GIOVANNI (Blocking her way): Go? Are you crazy? You're not going anywhere . . . except to bed . . . to stay warm . . . in fact we'll move the bed next to the heater. (Begins to move the bed)

LUIGI: Stop, what are you doing!?

(All look at him.)

GIOVANNI: You're right . . . it's too dangerous to move it, too dangerous . . . the gas tanks are there . . . (Tries to put Antonia back on the bed)

(Antonia stops him; she's seen the cover of the coffin inside the wardrobe.)

ANTONIA: Giovanni. . . what's that?

GIOVANNI (Distracting her while he tries to come up with a plausible response): The gas tanks . . . are there . . . But you could at least have warned me . . . instead of letting me worry . . . all it would have taken was a phone call. . .

ANTONIA: Giovanni, what's that?

GIOVANNI: All it takes is a dime . . . a quarter . . . you could have

asked a nurse . . . you could have said: "Look, call my house . . . no, call the bar downstairs from my house . . . and say . . . listen, tell my husband?"

T O N J A (Interrupting him): Excuse me, Giovanni, what is that thing. ••

GIOVANNI (Desperate, doesn't know what to say): "Hello, could you tell my husband that everything's fine . . ."

ANTONIA: Giovanni, what is that brown wooden object?!

GIOVANNI: Don't change the subject! How come, instead of calling me . . . about the baby . . . you keep talking to me about that disgusting piece of wood . . . I'll burn it . . . I don't know why I ever bought the thing . . . it's . . . it's . . .

ANTONIA (Exasperated): Giovanni, what is it?

GIOVANNI: You still don't get it do you? Don't you ever watch TV? A child . . . would understand right away, even a child . . . watching TV . . . the commercials . . . especially when you see the foam . . . the waves . . .

ANTONIA: But what is it, Giovanni?

GIOVANNI: It's a surfboard! They sell them at the factory . . . in front of the gate . . .

LUIGI: The gate.

GIOVANNI: Yeah. We're going to be laid off until January . . . so what are we going to do in December? Surf the Atlantic. I know, I know . . . you don't believe it . . . in fact it's something else entirely . . .

ANTONIA: What is it? . . .

GIOVANNI: YOU have such a limited imagination! It's a cradle! When I said to Luigi, "Look, Luigi, your wife's expecting a baby," right away he said, "A cradle, a cradle!"

LUIGI: A cradle.

GIOVANNI: SO I went into the first cradle store I could find. And got the most modern cradle on the market. From Japan. Its a Toyota. (Luigi and Giovanni grab the cover and rock it) You see, it's got four holes here, two on each side . . . so you can suspend it from the ceiling with two steel cables . . . you put the baby in . . . you barely have to touch it and look how the cradle swings for hours . . . then, when the baby cries, just give it a slap and—ZAC! The spin of death! And the baby (Mimes baby's terror) frozen stiff. Doesn't make a peep for a week!

ANTONIA (Noticing the size of the lid): It looks a little big to me . . .

GIOVANNI: But babies are always growing!

(Antonia stretches out on the bed, unconvinced. An Old Man comes to the door. It's the same actor who played the Sergeant, etc., with a white wig, his face covered in a cobweb of wrinkles.)

OLD MAN: Excuse me. Am I disturbing you?

GIOVANNI: Oh, Papa, what a pleasure. Come in. Come in.

ANTONIA: Hi, Papa!

GIOVANNI: Do you know my friends? This is my father.

OLD MAN: My pleasure.

LUIGI: Giovanni, have you noticed that your father . . . looks a lot like the state trooper and the police sergeant?

GIOVANNI: Don't tell him, because he's already getting a little senile . . .

OLD MAN: I am not senile . . . (Turns to Margherita) How is my Antonia . . . oh, how beautiful you look . . . you're getting so much younger all the time.

GIOVANNI: NO, Papa, she's not Antonia. That's Antonia.

OLD MAN: Is that so?

ANTONIA: Yes, Papa, it's me.

OLD MAN: What are you doing in bed? Are you sick?

GIOVANNI: No, she's expecting a baby.

OLD MAN: Oh, is that so? And where has he gone? Don't worry . . . you'll see, he'll come back. (Looks at Luigi and confuses him for his grandson) Oh, look, he's come back already.

And he's all grown-up . . . You shouldn't keep your mamma waiting like t h a t . . .

GIOVANNI: Dad, this is a friend.

OLD MAN: That's good! You should always be friends with your children. But I came here to tell you that they're throwing you out of your house.

GIOVANNI: Who?

OLD MAN: Your landlord. He sent the eviction letter to my house by mistake. Look here. It says that you haven't paid the rent for four months.

GIOVANNI: Don't be silly. It must be a mistake. Let me see that.

GIOVANNI

Antonia always pays the rent on time, isn't that true Antonia?

ANTONIA: Yes, of course.

MAN: In any case, they're going to clear out the whole building, because for months hardly anybody has been paying—

GIOVANNI: Who told you that?

OLD MAN: The sheriff . . . who's clearing people out apartment  
by a p a r t m e n t . . . a nice man!

(Almost imperceptibly, voices shouting orders are heard  
outside.)

LUIGI (Goes to the window): Take a look out there on the street.  
There's a whole squadron of police cars . . .

GIOVANNI: Yeah . . . look at that formation. It's like a war out  
there. And look at all those trucks.

OLD MAN: Sure, to carry away the furniture and everything  
else. All for free.

(The noise outside increases: voices of women and children  
mixed with the shouting of orders.)

VOICE OF A POLICEMAN (From outside): Come on . . . keep it  
moving . . . carry that stuff out . . . don't leave anything  
behind!

GIOVANNI: SO I guess this eviction letter really is for us.  
Antonia, for God's sake! How did this happen?

ANTONIA: Don't shout. You'll scare the baby!

GIOVANNI: Okay, 111 speak softly. Antonia, is this true? Answer me.

ANTONIA: Okay: yes, it's true. I haven't paid the rent for four  
months, and I haven't paid the gas or electricity either . . .  
that's why they cut our service.

GIOVANNI: They cut off our gas and electric? Because you  
didn't pay the bill?

ANTONIA: Because with everything we earn between the two of  
us, there's barely enough to eat.

MARGHERITA: Luigi, I have something to tell you: I haven't  
paid the rent either.

LUIGI:No!

ANTONIA: See, see, we all have the same problem . . . everyone  
else who lives in our building, and the people across the  
street, too . . . and over there . . . everybody.

GIOVANNI: For God's sake, why didn't you tell me that you were  
short of money?

ANTONIA: But what could you have done . . . go out and commit  
a robbery?

GIOVANNI: Ah, no, of course n o t . . . but in the end . . .

ANTONIA: In the end, you would have had a fit and cursed the  
day you married me. (Sniffles)

LUIGI (To Margherita): And you, did you at least pay the gas and  
electricity?

MARGHERITA: Yes, yes, the gas and the electric, yes!

LUIGI: That's a relief.

GIOVANNI: Come on, don't cry. It's not good for the baby.

OLD MAN: That's right, that's right, everything will be all right.

Oh, I just remembered. I came by to bring you something.

Wait, I left it outside in the hall. (Gets a bag and puts it on the table) Sometimes I'm just not all here. There, look at this. I found this in my shed. It must be yours.

LUIGI (Goes to the bag and looks inside): What's this? Butter, flour, tomatoes?

ANTONIA: I've got nothing to do with it.

GIOVANNI: No, Papa, this isn't our stuff.

OLD MAN: Sure it is. I saw Antonia come out of my shed this morning?

ANTONIA: All right, yes, its the stuff I bought yesterday at reduced prices.

GIOVANNI: At the supermarket?

ANTONIA: Yes, but I only paid for half of it, the rest I stole . . .

GIOVANNI: Stole? You've become a robber?

ANTONIA: Yes!

LUIGI (To Margherita): You, too?

MARGHERITA: Yes, me, too . . .

ANTONIA: No, it's not true . . . she had nothing to do with it! She was just helping me out.

(The two policemen from earlier enter.)

POLICEMAN: Excuse me? The Bardi family . . . is that you?

GIOVANNI: Yes. . .

POLICEMAN: I've got an eviction notice here. You've got a halfhour to get ready. We'll be back in a few minutes to give you a hand . . . (They leave)

GIOVANNI: This is really unbelievable . . . I'm losing my mind!

LUIGI: Calm down, Giovanni . . . when it comes to talking about stealing, we should keep our mouths shut.

GIOVANNI: What do you mean "keep our mouths shut"! What's that got to do with it? We were in the middle of the street, don't you understand the difference . . . she's a disgrace, a dishonest criminal.

ANTONIA: Sure, you're right . . . I'm nothing but a criminal who throws mud on your poor but honorable name . . . and who also toys with your delicate sentiments of fatherhood . . . because you should know . . . (Removes packages from belly) all I've got in my belly is sugar, rice and pasta.

LUIGI: The baby, the transplant. . . (To his wife) Margherita?

GIOVANNI: I'm going to murder her . . . I'll murder her! (Goes



toward Antonia; Luigi blocks him)

OLD MAN: Well, now that I've done what I came for . . . I'll bid you children good-bye. Have a nice day. (He leaves)

(The noises outside get louder: women and men yelling, people shouting orders, sirens.)

GIOVANNI: You dirty liar. How dare you joke about the story of our son! (To Luigi) Let me go.

ANTONIA : Let him kill me! Go ahead. I'm sick of this lousy life! And I'm fed up with your sermonizing . . . about law and order, and how you follow the rules, rules, rules . . . with such pride. Bullshit! You swallow your pride every day. And then when other people try to find a little dignity by breaking free of the rules you call them looters, bums, terrorists. Terrorism . . . Terrorism is being held hostage by a minimum-wage job. But you don't want to know how things really are.

GIOVANNI: I know how things are. And I can see. I'm mad as hell and I'm frustrated and I'm not the only one. Nobody can make ends meet. There's Aldo across the street whose wife left him when he lost his job. And how about our neighbors next door. They sleep four to a bed. People are hungry. And when they ask for help nobody listens. And the rage I feel isn't at you . . . it's at myself, and at the impotence I feel . . . when I'm being screwed over every day . . . because I don't see a way out. And it seems there's nobody out there who gives a shit about the people who end up on the street with no place to live. And you know what. I'm starting to take it personally. Because in just a few minutes the homeless are us.

ANTONIA: What happened, Giovanni, is that really you talking? Is your head screwed on straight?

GIOVANNI: I've felt like this for a long time . . . I just never had the courage to say it before. And there's something else you should know about me. I'm a thief too. Look under here. Luigi and I stole these: bags of coffee!

ANTONIA (Truly astonished): You stole!

LUIGI (Going to the rescue): Yes, but he only did it after he got mad about us getting laid off our jobs.

GIOVANNI: No, that was just the last straw . . . because for a long time I'd already been mad enough to scream . . . (To Antonia) And one more thing, Antonia . . . This is not a cradle. It's the lid to a dead man's coffin! (Antonia reaches for her crotch, making the sign that expresses the fear of

death) Look in here. (Goes to the wardrobe, Antonia and Margherita try to stop him)

ANTONIA: No, stop, what are you doing?

GIOVANNI: I'm doing what I have to do . . . you should know everything . . .

(Luigi helps Giovanni pull out the casket. The State Trooper is revealed.)

STATE TROOPER: I can see! (Comes out of wardrobe) I can see!

Santa Eulalia forgave me . . . she blessed me! (Notices his belly) I'm pregnant! God bless Santa Eulalia! . . . I'm a mother . . . I'm a mother! (Exits running) I'm a mother.

GIOVANNI: What day is it today? (Hears shots and shouts from outside and runs to the window) Look, the women are pulling their stuff off of the trucks. The police are shooting! (The others go to the window.)

LUIGI: Yeah, and look at those kids on the rooftops . . . they're throwing things . . . tiles . . . bricks!

GIOVANNI: The police are shooting to kill. One kid's already down.

MARGHERITA: They're firing for keeps!

(The four of them shout insults out the window.)

ALL: Murderers . . . bastards . . . cowards . . .

LUIGI: They're running away . . . the police are running away!

ANTONIA: And over there, look! That woman has a hunting rifle. There in that window. She's shooting.

LUIGI: It's happening.

GIOVANNI: Of course it's happening. People have been putting up with things out of fear. But fear can turn into rage when you can't see any way out, and you watch your bills piling up and up and up, and you've got nothing in the bank. And you keep getting downsized and downsized and downsized until no one can even see you anymore.

MARGHERITA: There's a limit to what people can take.

ANTONIA: People are hungry. They're not just hungry for food. They're hungry for dignity. They're hungry for justice, for a chance.

GIOVANNI (To the audience): Desperation's funny, isn't it? Especially when it's somebody else's. Then it's really funny. It's a scream. It's a riot. Remember the Los Angeles riots. Nobody expected them. You're smiling, aren't you? Sure, we all know that the poor people just burned down their own neighborhoods, and left themselves flat on their asses with nothing to show for all their rage. But

just wait, because it might turn out that, little by little, they're going to get up off their asses onto their knees. And then they just might drag themselves up off the ground and onto their feet. And that's when we better start paying attention, because when people stand up for themselves, they can always find a way to make things happen.

(During this last speech, the lights dim until darkness is completeBlackout.)

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GIOVANNI: Of course it's happening. People have been putting up with things out of fear. But fear can turn into rage when you can't see any way out, and you watch your bills piling up and up p, and you've got nothing in the bank. And you keep getting downsized and downsized and downsized until no one can even see you anymore.

MARGHERITA: There's a limit to what people can take.

ANTONIA: People are hungry. They're not just hungry for food. They're hungry for dignity. They're hungry for justice, for a chance.

iOVANNI (To the audience): Desperation's funny, isn't it? Especially when it's somebody else's. Then it's really funny. It's a scream. It's a riot. Remember the Los Angeles riots. Nobody expected them. You're smiling, aren't you? Sure, we all know that the poor people just burned down their own neighborhoods, and left themselves flat on their asses with nothing to show for all their rage. But

just wait, because it might turn out that, little by little, they're going to get up off their asses onto their knees. And then they just might drag themselves up off the ground and onto their feet. And that's when we better start paying attention, because when people stand up for themselves, they can always find a way to make things happen.

(During this last speech, the lights dim until darkness is completeBlackout.)

THE END

d shouts from outside and runs to the window) Look, the women are pulling their stuff off of the trucks. The police are shooting! (The others go to the window.)

LUIGI: Yeah, and look at those kids on the rooftops . . . they're throwing things . . . tiles . . . bricks!

oVANNi: The police are shooting to kill. One kid's already down.

MARGHERITA: They're firing for keeps!

(The four of them shout insults out the window.)

ALL: Murderers . . . bastards . . . cowards . . .

LUIGI: They're running away . . . the police are running away!

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