

FEDERICO: Rocco's friend

Federico is also Giulianella Boyfriend who opposes her emancipated views because of his jealousy.

Rocco. Buona sera. (He goes over to his mother at the stove and kisses her.)

FEDERICO Nice to see you, Signora Rosa.

RosA. Buona sera, Federico.

FEDERICO. (He crosses Right to above table.) Buona sera, Cavaliere. (VIRGINIA takes chopping board from to sink.)

PEPPINO. Buona sera to you.

Rocco. Mmmmm! Smell that! Tomorrow's ragu is on its way! (He crosses below table to FEDERICO.) Make sure that it's a good one-I've invited Federico for dinner tomorrow. Last week I ate at his place and his mother's ragu was superb!

FEDERICO. Grazie!

RosA. (She puts garlic in pot, stacks empty garlic bowl and empty lard dripping bowl and leaves them between Downstage and Center burner.) Then he has my sympathy, tomorrow he'll have to be content with mine.

FEDERICO. I'm sure it's perfect, Signora Rosa. But I can't accept the invitation- I've already promised someone I'll be somewhere else.

Rocco. (He crosses Left above FEDERICO, pushes him into chair above table.) Federico, tomorrow you'll eat here! (To RosA.) He's had another fight with Giulianella.

ROSA. Why do Sundays always start to go wrong on Saturday night?

Rocco. Giulianella's a stupid child and Federico's completely in the right.

ROSA. (She crosses to snk.) Rocco, don't interfere in things which don't concern you. (She takes cup from area Left of sink, fills it with water.)

Rocco. (He moves upstage). I wouldn't interfere in anything. Federico's upset and all I want is for the two of them to have the chance to straighten things out.

FEDERICO. Straighten things out.

ROSA. (She breaks down to FEDERICO'S right)

Federico's always welcome, but not to straighten things out with Giulianella in front of all the family.

(She crosses Downstage of Rocco to stove with cup of water.

Rocco follows RosA. Rosa pours water into pot, puts empty cup on stack of bowls.)

Rocco. Why not? Reasonably and fairly in front of impartial witnesses.

RosA. Impartial. You've just called your sister stupid-does that make you impartial?

Rocco. Everybody knows what's Wrong with Giulianella-she's stupid.

FEDERICO. Rocco, she's not

Rocco. It's not entirely her fault. It's those stupid idiots she calls her friends. Telling her that she is beautiful, putting ideas into her head, making her believe that she is something that she's not.

(.....)

FEDERICO. Giulianella, you're going to listen to me ...

(GIULIANELLA picks up magazine, holds it high so she can't see FEDERICO.) and not that aunt of yours! This morning you walked off and left me standing in the street, just because I happened to say that I didn't like the idea of you going on TV. (PEPPINO crosses to above table.) Your brother is on my side; he agrees with me. Ask your parents-ask them if I'm right or wrong, ask them if you ought to listen to me. Giulianella, after we're married, we will discuss everything together before we decide anything. (Rosa tries to lower the magazine GIULIANELLA is holding.) But the final decision must rest with me, as the man. Otherwise, what kind of a husband would I be? (To the others.) I'm right, aren't I?

PEPPINO. Do you mind? You're spitting in my soup. (FEDERICO backs Right, PEPPINO Sits, FEDERICO Crosses Left above table.)

FEDERICO. As it happens, the television business has solved itself. I've got a friend who works in the TV studios. I got him to look up the results of your test. You failed. (Taking out a scrap of paper.) Here's a copy. "Giulianella Priore. Unphotogenic. No perceptible talent." Read it yourself. (He puts note on table, then backs Left.

GIULIANELLA is shaken by the news but controls herself and replies with apparent calmness. GIULIANELLA Puts her magazine on top of note.)

DOCTOR CERFECOLA ,a family friend.

He is one of the guests at the Sunday lunch and will help Rosa after she is bedridden.

CEFERCOLA. (Offstage.) Don't worry, Donna Rosa-and I say it's quite safe. I take full responsibility.

MEME. (Offstage.) You see? If the doctor says there's no need to worry, why should you?

CEFERCOLA. (Offstage.) You'll need to take things easy for a day or so, but there's no need to stay in your room. (RoSA enters, supported by the DOCTOR and MEME, and closely attended by RAFFAELE and ATTILIO. Rosa's hair has been neatly combed, she is wearing a housecoat and slippers and looks every inch the complete invalid-which is what she wishes to be. VIRGINIA is last one on with tray of water and glass, puts tray Right end of table.)

ROSA. But I haven't got any strength in my legs, doctor. And there are so many things to do in the house. Madonna mia! Who's going to take care of everything? I can't leave it to the girl.

MEME. You just tell me what wants doing, and I'll see that it gets done.

CEFERCOLA. (Opens his bag.) All you have to do is to sit down and give the orders.

ROSA. What about my voice? What if my voice goes again? You don't understand what I'm going through.

CEFERCOLA. What are you going through?

RoSA. I can't describe it. Like a bad dream, when you can see your arms and legs moving and they don't belong to you. (VIRGINIA gathers meat, plates, and bread together.)

CEFERCOLA. A couple of days and you'll be as good as you ever were.

ROSA. Doctor, I don't want to contradict you. You know more about these things than me. But I know what I'm suffering. Something has

gone very wrong in my life. Donna Rosa Priore will never again be the Woman she was.

MEME. If the Doctor says so-it is so.

RAFFAELE. Donna Rosa, you have as many lives as a cat

ATTILIO. Mama says that there is nothing wrong with you. (MEME and RAFFAELE hit ATTILIO.)

ROSA. Your mother only says that because she loves me-She can't bear to think of me being ill. But I know I am. (She lifts her right arm with her left hand. When she lets go, her arm falls to her lap.) Aunt Meme, Donna Rosa is not going to be with you much longer. (VIRGINIA exits with bread and meat.)

MEME. Rosa! Will you please stop talking like that!

ROSA. No, I tell you, it's finished, I've not long for this world.

CEFERCOLA. (Indicating the easy chair by the balcony.) In the meantime, sit in the armchair over there, you'll be more comfortable. Rest yourself.

ROSA. Thank you, Doctor. (She allows herself to be helped into the chair.) Gently...Gently...God bless you. You are very kind. (ATTILIO Puts blanket over ROSA's legs.)

CEFERCOLA. Now, all you have to do is call your maid in. . .

(VIRGINIA enters Up Right goes to table for coffee tray.) There she is! And give her your orders. She'll do what there is to be done. (ATTILIO on knees Right at ROSA.)

ROSA. Doctor, I don't think I have the strength.

(VIRGINIA picks up tray.) Ah, you'll have to help me. (VIRGINIA drops silverware as she exits Up Right. MEME picks up after her and exits Up Right.)

RAFFAELE. I must be getting ready. It is almost time I was leaving for the bank.

CEFERCOLA. I thought the bank didn't open till ten. (MEME re-enters.)

RAFFAELE. I walk all the way, there and back, twenty-five minutes each way. I have to keep fit.

ROBERTO, Peppino and Rosa first son.

Roberto is the eldest childless charismatic than his siblings but by far the more level headed

ROBERTO. (He enters, dressed, followed by MARIA.) We have to go, papa. Ciao, Rocco.

Rocco. Ciao.

ROBERTO. We'll see you all next Sunday, at our house.

PEPPINO. No, you come here again next Sunday.

ROBERTO. After yesterday ? Papa, next Sunday you come to us? Please? (VIRGINIA enters Up Right and goes off Up Left.)

PEPPINO. How can Maria Carolina cook for the whole family?

MARIA. Really Papa, you are terrible, I cannot forgive you. All week we look forward to Sunday, then you ruin everything. (ROBERTO pulls MARIA Left.)

VIRGINIA. (Entering Up Left.) Signor Ianniello is here. (Everyone freezes, then all look at PEPPINO.)

PEPPINO. Ask him to come in.

VIRGINIA. (She exits Up Left. Off.) Come in, Signor. (LUIGI and VIRGINIA enter Up Left, rather hesitantly. He is taken back to find so many of the PriorE family confronting him.)

LUIGI. Buon giorno. ..

ALL. Buon giorno

LUIGI. (He crosses Right a few steps.) You wanted to see me, Cavaliere?

PEPPINO. If I might have a moment of your time.

(Rocco puts on suit coat. GIULIANELLA enters Up Left, now dressed. She goes to Rocco and the two of them attempt to exit.)

Giulianella! This concerns you.

CEFERCOLA. Oh, Peppino

PEPPINO. I would like you all to listen to what I

have to say. (A deep breath, summoning his courage, then.) Signor Ianniello is a gentleman and a good friend, and I am a prize fool.

(Ad lib.) And anyone who disagrees with that is as big as fool as me.

LUIGI. Cavaliere ..

PEPPINO. Wait. It isn't easy. I am speaking from my heart. No interruptions, please. (Pause.) I have insulted my wife, I have insulted you, I have insulted your wife, I have insulted the family name, Priore, therefore I have insulted myself-no, I have not insulted myself for I am not worth insulting. Luigi Ianniello-Old Friend, if you would like to hit me now, hard, in front of my children, you have my permission to do so. (Ad lib.)

MEME. Peppi', is all this necessary? You have made a fool of yourself and I think we are all agreed. So why make an issue of it?

LUIGI. Let's speak no more about it. My wife and I have been discussing it and she-we've come to the opinion that I am slightly to blame. Without intending it, my behaviour has been out of place. Cavaliere, let's forget the whole affair. (GIULIANELLA embraces PEPPINO, MARIA embraces LUIGI.)

ROBERTO. Spoken like a true friend.

PEPPINO. Am I not worth reproaching? Am I to be treated like an irresponsible child?

ROBERTO. You mustn't speak like that, Papa. The accountant has just told you that your outburst yesterday was very understandable from the human point of view.

PEPPINO. And nobody wants to laugh in my face? And tell me how stupid I am?

ROBERTO. Papa, enough! Do you want to shake his hand or not?

PEPPINO. Yes, I give you my hand with all my heart. (They shake hands.)

EVERYBODY. Bravo! Good, very good...

ROCCO, Peppino and Rosa second son

Rocco is clever, energetic, funny and has business acumen.

MEME. Sit down and don't behave like a baby!

GIULIANELLA. No! I shall decide who I choose to sit with! And if I can't have Sunday dinner with my family without having to sit with total strangers who have bad manners-I don't want Sunday dinner .. (FEDERICO retrieves and presents flowers to her. She hits him on the head with them and exits Up Left.)

FEDERICO. (To Rocco.) Did you hear that?

ROCCO. She likes you really. Give her a couple of days to think it over.

ROSA. She doesn't know what she does want. That's always been her trouble.

FEDERICO. (Rises.) Donna Rosa, will you excuse me?

RosA. All right, Federico. (FEDERICO goes to Down Left arm chair and sits. There is an embarrassed silence. DoN ANTONIO, who has been stolidly chomping his way through his macaroni, unaware of the drama

in the dining room, rings a bell that has been on the Small table.

Rocco rises, goes to balcony. VIRGINIA enters Up Right.)

VIRGINIA. What is it, Don Anto'?

ANTONIO. Please may I have a glass of water?

VIRGINIA. Coming! (She goes out Up Right. Rocco Returns to his chair.)

MARIA. Aunt Meme, is it true that you've started Writing a novel?

MEME. Who told you that?

MARIA. (To Rocco.) Am I allowed to say?

ROCCO. "Am I allowed to say ?" Why not? It's true!

MEME. And who told you?

ROCCO. I saw you myself. Early in the morning, up on the roof.

ELENA. What were you doing on the roof, early in the morning?

ROCCO. I often take my breakfast up there on the terrace where it's quiet and cool. You can see Vesuvius, the bay, the boats and the bathrooms across the court yards.

(Men laugh-ladies shocked. VIRGINIA enters Up Right with glass of water.)

ELENA. What?

ROCCO. I inspect them one by one. All the ladies taking their baths. In Professor Scarochini's bathroom, one of his daughters, you should see the volcanoes she has.

ROSA. You rush your breakfast and strain your eyes gazing at girls in bathrooms!

ROCCO. I take my binoculars. (VIRGINIA exits Up Right with empty decanters.)

LUIGI. (Puzzled.) Is Donna Meme writing a novel in the professor's bathroom?

ROCCO. (He goes to Luigi.) No! Up on the roof. I've seen her up there, often, scribbling away in a notebook. I asked Giulianella what she was writing and she told me-Aunt Meme is writing a novel.

LUIGI. Is it true ?

MEME. Yes, it's true. It's the only place in this house where I can find any peace. The doctor's been helping me.

CEFERCOLA. Only in an advisory capacity. And I can say I'm enjoying every moment.

MEME. It's almost autobiographical. I've written into it the story of my own marriage. Some happy memories and some disappointments, some sacrifices. Isn't it the same for everybody?

VIRGINIA, the Priore's maid

Virginia does her best to help at home but is easily distracted by her personal and family problems, with which she confides to Rosa

ROSA. (She crosses to sink, gets plate of parsley.) Haven't you finished yet?

VIRGINIA. Nearly. Only two more.

ROSA. (She brings plate to table.) Hurry up-I'm waiting.

VIRGINIA. Signora, I think I've done enough already.

ROSA. Are you telling me how to make ragu? The more onions there are, the thicker the sauce. I'll tell you how to make ragu, it's all in the cooking. Slowly, over a low flame. Then the onions curl up round the meat in a black crust. When you add the white wine, the crust loosens. That makes a rich golden stock and then you mix it with the tomato sauce and that gives it that lovely dark colour. Ragu shouldn't only taste right, it should look right. Don't you try tell me how to make ragu! (She gets scissors and string from left drawer of table.)

VIRGINIA. At home we just fry the onions, put in the tomatoes and meat and boil it all up together.

ROSA. I am sure you do . . . And what does it taste like? Boiled meat with tomatoes and onions! My mother would have told you how to make ragu. "To make a ragu," she used to say, "takes patience." And she had some patience, my mama! Every Saturday night she was in the kitchen- (She picks up ladle.)the ladle in her hand. At this very table. And nothing would make her move

away from her casserole dish- if a murderer climbed in through the window she would not move. When it was half-cooked in the casserole dish, she would tip it out and finish it off in the big pot. (She gets pot from wall above sink and returns to table.) There was no aluminium in those days. When the sauce was ready-just at the right moment-the meat was taken out of the casserole dish and placed in the big pot- (She lifts meat from Left chopping board, puts it on oval platter.) carefully, like a newborn babe in its cradle. My mother knew how to make ragu all right! (She goes to sink, picks up pot lid from work area Left of sink.)

VIRGINIA. (Politely.) Of course, if you have a passion for cooking.

ROSA. And my father, you know what Don Antonio is like-if his Sunday ragu wasn't fit to be confessed and blessed, oh! The house wasn't worth living in. (She takes lid to stove and puts it on Stage side of stove, between Downstage burners.)

VIRGINIA. Your poor mama!

ROSA. She worshipped him. And you know why? Because he worshipped her ragu. (She fans fire, Center door.) Friends would stop her in the street. "Signora," they'd say, "What's the recipe for the ragu that your husband never stops talking about?" It was always,

"My wife's ragu this" and "My wife's ragu that."

Mama would ask him to bring his friends and their wives round to Sunday dinner. (She fans fire, Upstage door.) Afterwards they would say: "He's right, your husband. The ragu's wonderful!" And, as they went out, they would cross themselves.

VIRGINIA. It's a pity your husband hasn't much of an appetite.

ROSA. (Stirs soup.) Don Peppino does not show enthusiasm for food-he's above that sort of thing. If it was just for my husband's sake I'd give him yesterday's macaroni, even on Easter Sunday-he wouldn't notice. (She notices that VIRGINIA's face is marked by tears and that the girl is sobbing heavily. Rosa crosses Right to table.) Is that the onion or are you really crying?

VIRGINIA. I'm really crying, Signora.

(She sits down and bursts into a fresh stream of tears.)

ROSAA. What for? What's happened to you?

VIRGINIA. It's my brother, Michele.

RoSA. What's he done?

VIRGINIA This morning he went to get his hair cut! And they'll arrest him again and put him away in prison!

RosA. Because a man has his hair cut he is arrested and sent to prison?

VIRGINIA. An ordinary man, no, signora! My brother, yes! (PEPPINO wearing top coat and carrying briefcase enters Up Left as RosA stares at VIRGINIA, perplexed. PEPPINO, Rosa's husband, is a man in late middle-age, sturdy and in good health. Unaware of the drama that is taking place, he remains near the door

examining a door key closely.) I have to bear my brother like a cross. (She rises and goes Up Right.)

PEPPINO. My son has a very strange sense of humour. His great joke is to leave his front door key on the hall table and take mine instead. So I go off with his key in my pocket. (He crosses above ROSA to table.) When I come home in the evening I spend half an hour fiddling in the keyhole. Very funny! He does it on purpose because his key doesn't fit properly and mine does.

ROSA. (She crosses Right above PEPPINO to VIRGINIA. In irritation.) Excuse me, I'm trying to listen to Virginia.

PEPPINO. What's the matter?

ROSA. (Without deigning to look at him.) She's crying, can't you see?

wave length, are we, you and I? I can see that she's crying. I'm asking-why?

ROSA. I'm trying to find that out. (She leads VIRGINIA to Right of table. Rosa sits above table.) Now then, your brother has his hair cut-and then? (She puts chopper in VIRGINIA'S hands, then ROSA cuts garlic and VIRGINIA chops onions.)

VIRGINIA. Signora, it was & long time ago. He was in an accident. He was in the hospital, in and out, in and out, and when they finally sent him home he was not the same man.

ROSA. Well, what does the doctor say?

VIRGINIA. The doctor has said that there is nothing to be done. "He has this animal strength so like any other animal, he must find an outlet for that strength."

(PEPPINO sits in chair Left of table.)

ROSA. What sort of an outlet?

VIRGINIA. He used to push a piano up and down the road. Now it's this business of getting a hair cut. And when he gets his haircut, he's like the hammer of God.

ROSA. Virgi, I still don't understand. Stop crying and tell us.

VIRGINIA. He has the barber shave off all his hair, completely. And he pulls a cap down over his head.

PEPPINO. What good does that do him?

VIRGINIA. (She crosses Left above ROSA.) Then he goes out in the streets. When he sees a man as big as himself he stands in front of him, takes off his cap and stares him in the face. (PEPPINO and ROSA laugh.) Who wouldn't laugh? And Michele grabs him by both lapels with his two big hands and says, "You, what are you laughing at?" There is a fight. (She returns Right above ROSA.) Michele always wins. My brother can fill a hospital in less than a day.

ROSA. My God. .. and this morning he saw a barber? (She rises puts lard into big pot. Takes pot and ladle to stove.)

PEPPINO. God help everyone out in the streets!

VIRGINIA. Donna Rosa ...?

ROSA. What do you want?

VIRGINIA. If I could have tomorrow off. .. (She crosses Left.) he never so much as lifts a finger when he's with me.

ROSA. Virgi, tomorrow is Sunday. We have people coming to dinner.

PEPPINO. What people?

(VIRGINIA goes back to table and puts chopped onions from board onto onion plate.)

ROSA. "What people!" Relatives. Your daughter-in-law.

PEPPINO. My daughter-in-law.

ROSA. I apologise. I must remember to mind my grammar. Our daughter-in-law. Roberto and Maria Carolina.

PEPPINO. All right, all right!

ROSA. She telephoned this morning. "Mama, tomorrow is Sunday. Could we come to dinner with you?" That girl has never learned to cook.

PEPPINO. We go often enough to eat with them.

ROSA. (She crosses to table.) To eat, yes. To eat Sunday dinner, no. I know what I'm saying. Roberto Would rather eat Sunday ragu here. (She puts parsley on top of plate of onions that VIRGINIA is holding.)

PEPPINO. You think Roberto thinks about tomorrow's ragu. He's wrapped up in his contracts and his projects. Besides, Maria Carolina is a very good cook.

ROSA. (Pause. Not wishing to argue further.) It isn't important-we won't talk about it any more. (Goes to stove with plate of onions and parsley. Puts plate on Downstage end of stove.)

MARIA CAROLINA ,Roberto's wife

Maria Carolina is Beautiful, good cook, and level headed as her husband.

(Rocco hurries out Up Left. Rosa enters, wearing her turquoise cardigan and covered in trinkets and baubles.)

ROSA. Virginia-we are ready.

(VIRGINIA goes out. All men rise. They all, with the exception of PEPPINO, greet DoNNA Rosa with "Ooohs" and "Aahs" of admiration. Rosa sits beside LuiGI.)

ROBERTO. Mama, you look wonderful!

MARIA. But so elegant! (ROBERTO crosses Up Center, pulls chair out for Rosa.)

ROSA. (With false modesty.) Why not? Because I've been in the kitchen, it does not mean that I have to come to the dining room in a dirty apron.

LUIGI. Donna Rosa, even in the kitchen, in a dirty apron, you are always the perfect lady!

ROSA. T'hank you. I only wanted to show off the cardigan to its best advantage. It was a present from Signor Ianniello-I mean, Signora Ianniello.

LUIGI. But specially selected by Signor Ianniello!

ELENA. Who wants to take all the credit.

MARIA. But what good taste for a man. Mama, it makes you look years younger.

ROSA. (Good humouredly .) And what does that mean? That usually I look like an old woman?

MARIA. No! (She brings PEPPINO to table.) I only meant that sometimes the right garment can make even a young person sometimes look younger. (VIRGINIA and MICHELE enter, staggering under a dish large enough to contain two kilos of macaroni.)

VIRGINIA. Dinner is served, everybody!