

# REFLECTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

MARY GENEVA CARUSO

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## THE CHARACTERS

Mary

Vincenza (Mary's Mother)

Severio (Mary's Father)

Enrico (Severio's Uncle)

Father (Enrico's Father)

Son (Mary's Son)

Friend (Friend of Mary's Son)

Auctioneer

Notary Public

Voices from the background

Taxi Driver (Played by the Auctioneer)

*The Voice* (Played by the Auctioneer)

Messenger (Played by the Notary Public)

Paramedic (Played by the Friend)

Nine Actresses/Actors

*Note:* The Voice narrates several changes in Scenes from the background (from behind the stage)

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\* Voices from the background (from behind the stage)

## ACT 1

## Scene 1 Description

The curtain opens to a dark stage except for a white light from above that shines on a small area of the floor. Only voices from the background (from behind the stage) can be heard. Two not-yet identified voices (Mary and Taxi Driver) are discussing a journey to Sonora, California. After this discussion the stage lights, then, are lit showing a large room where two young men (Mary's son and Friend of Mary's son) in their early 40's are sitting at a small table presently in discussion at the Sonora Inn, 1984.

## ACT 1

## Scene 1

- Mary: I am ready whenever you are to go visit my old school site.
- Taxi Driver: The taxi rate will cost you a lot. It is a long journey from the Bay Area to Sonora, California. Are you ready to pay?
- Mary: It is even a longer journey from Sonora to the Bay Area. Yes, I can pay.
- Taxi Driver: The dispatcher said to secure a \$250.00 deposit.
- Mary: Here it is \$250.00, as agreed.
- Taxi Driver: I have been to Sonora, but not to Standard. The dispatcher said you wanted to go there, too. And, that you knew how to get there. But, I brought my maps just in case we can't find it. So, little lady, you don't have to worry about getting lost.
- Mary: I will find it. This taxi looks new.
- Taxi Driver: The dispatcher gave me a new taxi just for this trip. This journey must be real important for you to pay so much money.
- Mary: Yes, it is very important.
- Taxi Driver: Then let's go.
- The Voice:* The Taxi Driver and Mary leave for the Sonora Union High School, Sonora, California.
- Note:* On stage: The lights are on now and the discussion with Mary's son and Friend of Mary's son comes into play.
- Son: I would like to think that my mother will not be too disappointed in what she will find when she arrives at her old school site. Everything has changed so much that she may become quite upset. So, the question is will she be strong enough to accept the change?

- Friend: I think she is okay. She looks healthy to me. Does she know that the two original buildings were demolished and replaced by five new ones, plus a swimming pool? Does she know about Standard?
- Son: No! She doesn't know. But, she will find out soon enough.
- Friend: What is she doing up here anyway. Doesn't she live in the Bay Area?
- Son: Yes, she lives in a five-room house full of junk.
- Friend: What do you mean, junk?
- Son: Well! She was poor when she was growing up so she learned to save and utilize what most people throw away. Anyway, my mother saves pieces of fabric. She tells me she is going to sew some quilts, but she can't seem to get around to it. She has a "Log Cabin" quilt started and a beautiful "Butterfly" quilt not-yet finished, which are now packed away in cardboard boxes. She just doesn't seem to find enough time to complete all her projects.
- Friend: She sure has a good attitude for a little old lady.
- Son: She is always busy doing something! She does sewing for people. If not doing that she is helping someone do something.
- Friend: No wonder she can't get to the other stuff.
- Son: If you think my mother has a good attitude you should have seen my grandmother. She was the real admirable person of the family. She used to say: "We came to America so that our children could have a better way of life." She worked all day and did sewing at night way into the early hours of the morning. She did it all by hand. She didn't even have a sewing machine, but that boundary didn't stop her.
- Friend: Did you know your grandmother, or are you just making this up?

Son: My grandmother, Vincenza Caruso, died after I was born. Mary has a tiny pair of my baby shoes which my grandmother had bronzed and sent to her, for me, when I became four months old. A short time after that she passed away of a massive coronary at the age of 57.

Friend: How come you call your mother Mary? What is it with you anyway calling her by her first name?

Son: We have a good relationship. I am with the idea that, you see, when you are little you are with your “first family.” Later in life you go beyond your first family to your “chosen family.” And, I choose to be with her. This tickles her as she likes to say we grew up together. Anyway, I remember the day she told me “mother is the first other.”

Friend: So, how did you get to know your grandmother? What was she like?

Son: My mother told me she was small boned and of a very delicate nature, but she worked like a plow horse. It was through my grandfather Severio Caruso, who even in his 80’s spoke of how precious the spirit of VJ (Vincenza) was to be with. And, my mother spoke of her patience, understanding, and love, especially with my grandfather, who spent most of his time resting in a hammock. You see, Vincenza let him be in charge! But, VJ was always “alongside, behind and ahead of” him.

Friend: Let’s go ride our bikes and get some fresh air. This room is beginning to close in on me.

Son: Okay, let’s go. We are on our way fresh air!



## ACT 1

## Scene 2 Description

The stage is set for Vincenza (Mary's mother) in her late 20's and Severio (Mary's father) in his early 40's. It is the late 1800's in Italy. Severio is resting in a hammock tied between two large apple trees, just outside the front room. The stage displays the front room and kitchen which are adjacent to one another. In the front room there is a huge open fireplace which is used for heating the room. The hammock outside is in view. Vincenza is sitting at a table in the kitchen with a pan in her lap. She is preparing some string beans for cooking of a vegetable stew. The mood is a happy one. Severio is in his usual stern mode of presentation. Vincenza is speaking to Severio who is "highly visible" through the old-time large shutter window. Severio is in his most favorite place "center stage," in front, in his hammock.

## ACT 1

## Scene 2

- Vincenza: Do you want some potatoes in the vegetable stew, or do you want just the fresh beans, tomatoes and peppers?
- Severio: Of course, I want potatoes. (Spoken in his usual stern mode of presentation) What a question! “Do you want potatoes?” You know that string beans don’t have any flavor for me unless they are prepared with tomatoes, peppers and herbs, as well as the potatoes.
- Vincenza: (Laughing) Well! I was asking because you keep saying you have “heartburn” all of the time. And, I just wondered perhaps the potatoes could be too much for you!
- Severio: The next thing you will say is that the little glass of wine I drink during my meals is the problem.
- Vincenza: I didn’t say that to get your dander up. I understand about your precious little glass of wine. To you it’s food!
- Severio: Someday you will understand how I feel because you don’t seem to give me much sympathy these days.
- Vincenza: What I don’t understand is how you can stay in that hammock for so long. Don’t you ever get tired of being tired?
- Severio: (Laughing) That is what they used to say to Enrico. “Don’t you ever get tired of practicing the scale?” (Then Severio sits up just a little and sings) . . . *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la. ti, do.* (Severio seems to rather like that so he sings it again) . . . *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la. ti, do.* (Then Severio sort of looks at Vincenza questioningly and after a short pause he says) I could have been a singer!
- Vincenza: The Voice, The Voice!
- Severio: (Severio pretends not to hear that and continues on) Enrico practiced the scale over and over again until the entire neighborhood was singing the scale. He developed his God given natural breathing to a new height and depth and breadth. And, he resided within the cross of

this vertical and horizontal dimension. His rhythm was and inspiration/aspiration dialectic. Enrico, stuck with it and what happened, he became a great tenor. What a voice! We were all so proud of him.

## ACT 1

## Scene 3 Description

The stage is set for Enrico (Severio's uncle) and his father (Enrico's father). It is the late 1800's in Italy. Father and son are seated at a small table in the center of a large room. It is evening time. The house is built of stone and has a huge open fireplace which is used for heating the room. There is a huge stone kettle hanging over the fireplace flame which is used for cooking. This room serves as kitchen, dining room and sitting room.

## ACT 1

## Scene 3

- Enrico: (Gazing into the flame) The flame burns intense.
- Father: Well! Enrico, how did it go today with your music?
- Enrico: Quite well, thank you father, but Professor Dominique thinks I am ready for advanced training. He thinks he has taught me all he can and it is time to move on as he puts it.
- Father: Move on indeed! Did you tell him that here is no money for such a move?
- Enrico: I did my best, but when he gets wound up he is like a string on a violin ready to snap at the least aggravation.
- Father: Tomorrow you will go to work at the feed store. They need a young man to move some 100-pound sacks of grain to another department of the store. I am told today that they also need a driver to haul grain back and forth from the store. The Voice you embody can wait a little while until we can obtain enough money for an advanced teacher. Meanwhile you will work the same as I do and help your parents, to pay for food and lodging.
- Enrico: To hell with food and lodging. I want to sing! Mama said that "The Voice" I embody was a gift from God. I must go ahead and do God's Will with it. It is spiritual, singing brings my natural inclination and chosen vocation into play. I may even sing Operas at La Scala (The Opera House). I am going to leave this place and go to Rome.
- Father: You go to Rome and I will send the *Carabinieri* (Police) after you, and then you will see what a gift from God will do for you!
- Enrico: All right then, I will work, but only until I have saved enough money to go to Rome to study with an advanced teacher.
- Father: You will do well! It will only be a few weeks my son, and we will see you to Rome.

## ACT 1

## Scene 4 Description

The stage is set for Vincenza (Mary's mother) and Severio (Mary's father). The stage is similar to Scene 2 except that Severio is sitting in the center of the front room in a large chair. Vincenza is in the kitchen.

## ACT 1

## Scene 4

- Severio: I heard from my friend Giuseppe that my uncle Enrico is going to sing at the church tonight and I think we should honor him with our presence.
- Vincenza: I am afraid that I will be unable to go. I have some important work to do. I promised to bake some loaves of bread for the Market tomorrow. My friend said that the bread is needed at the Market place. They are eating a new kind of fritter and a slice of corn bread would taste good with a glass of wine and the fritters.
- Severio: Ha, ha, ha, what a wife you turned out to be! We have a famous tenor in our family and you want to stay home to bake bread for the Market place.
- Vincenza: After all these years of selling olive oil at the Market place, you mean to miss a day of work in preparation for going out this evening. You have not missed a day of work, rain, shine, or sickness! We need money for . . .
- Severio: To hell with money. I want to hear my uncle sing! Enrico is The Voice. He is the First Voice of Opera!
- Vincenza: Yes, I am proud of Enrico, but we must eat. You go to the church social to hear uncle Enrico sing. Tell him your little wife sends her best regards and wishes him a continuing and successful singing career. *Santa Maria, Madre de Dio.* Yes, Severio, I am reciting the Lord's Prayer as I work because I don't have to appear in church to say prayers. God hears me no matter where I am. I pray while I am working. I feel good about this because I know that God hears me and will answer my prayers. If I receive no answer immediately I say to myself: "It is not time for an answer, perhaps tomorrow the answer will come."
- Severio: I know VJ and if you don't get an answer then you have reached the infinite!
- Vincenza: You speak so abstract.

Severio: The dreamer is so abstract, no! It happens within what I apprehend, *Capisco!* (Understand!).

Vincenza: I know.

Severio: All right, I am off. How do I look? Do I look presentable?

Vincenza: Of course you do. You look very neat and clean. You are on stage, my husband. Go and God be with you.

Severio: Good night, then. I will be home immediately after the service.

Vincenza: (Turning towards the oven and speaking to the bread) "You are ready now for baking. Come little loaves and get to bed to rise again. You will be able to go to Market in the morning." (Vincenza turns towards the open door and speaks softly. These words are barely audible as she smiles. Then these ending words are heard, but not by Severio) "Someday my dreamer . . . when the mental content and the object are the same . . . he will be immediately knowing what to do."



## ACT 1

## Scene 5 Description

The following day at the Market place. There are a lot of voices from the background (from behind the stage) exemplifying the activity of the Market place. There is a table with seven baskets of bread on it. Vincenza (Mary's mother) is behind the table and the auctioneer is in front of it. The auctioneer is watching the crowd and making announcements while attending to Vincenza. (Some unidentified robed figures, enacted by a few other characters in the play, move across the stage from time to time purchasing the bread)

## ACT 1

## Scene 5

Vincenza: These six baskets are full of corn bread and ready to be sold. The seventh basket is full of small pieces to be given out as samples for people to taste.

Auctioneer: *COME ONE, COME ALL to sample the corn bread baked by our dear Signora Vincenza Caruso! COME ONE, COME ALL it will be delicious with a glass of wine! COME ONE, COME ALL to enjoy corn bread, wine and taste!* (Pausing) Vincenza when did you bake all of this bread? It is really delicious. When I speak of your bread I speak of truth!

Vincenza: I started late last night and worked until early morning. I came up with the idea to shape tiny loaves. I bake regular size loaves for my family, but I thought the tiny leaves would be different yet strike a fundamental chord.

Auctioneer: A fundamental chord?

Vincenza: Fritters, corn bread and wine in harmony!

Auctioneer: You are starting a new fashion with the small loaves, and pretty soon everyone will be baking tiny loaves of bread. (Standing in front of the baskets of bread) *COME ONE, COME ALL, taste the harmony of fritters, corn bread and wine!*

Vincenza: (Vincenza first holds her arm out shoulder height with the palm of her hand down, then raises her hand upward to the sky while speaking) That is how, you say: “New fashions” are started. It is by inspiration, a small idea to be worked out, and then allowing that idea to rise.

Auctioneer: I tasted another piece it is consistently delicious. You must tell me your secret so that I can pass it along to my wife.

Vincenza: (Laughing) But, then it would no longer be a secret. Yes, I will share the secret with you. The only difference is that I ran out of sugar and I substituted honey in its place. The bread seems tastier with the honey in it.

- Auctioneer: How very ingenious of you. You are not only a beautiful woman, but you know how to use your brains, too. Mark my word you will be rich and famous one day. (Standing in front of the baskets of bread) *COME ONE, COME ALL, taste the harmony of fritters, corn bread and wine!*
- Vincenza: Rich and famous you say! My friend that is not my aspiration in life. I just want a family so that Severio and I can enjoy bringing up our children together. You see my mother died when I was born, so I want to become a mother first of all. My father was a teacher, and perhaps one our children will follow in his footsteps and become a teacher. In that way it will be an inspired succession.
- Auctioneer: I know that you will get your wish my dear friend. Someone as determined as you are will go a long way in this world.
- Vincenza: There is only one tiny loaf of bread left and I want you to have it, Mr. Auctioneer. I have sold all of the bread except this one loaf which is my gift to you.

## ACT 1

## Scene 6 Description

The stage is set for Vincenza (Mary's mother) and Severio (Mary's father). The stage is similar to Scene 4. Severio is sitting in the center of the front room in a large chair. Vincenza enters from the kitchen. She has just returned from the Market.

## ACT 1

## Scene 6

- Vincenza: (Arriving home after selling all of the corn bread) *Savé, Savé*, (Severio, Severio), where are you? (Vincenza speaks pleasantly while waiting patiently) Come here! I have great news.
- Severio: (Entering the room walking slowly rubbing his eyes with one hand and holding his shoes in his other hand) What do you want, VJ? Yelling like that! I was just about to doze off.
- Vincenza: All of the corn bread has been sold, and I have a concession for next week and every week until winter sets in.
- Severio: Good for you little one. Then you won't miss me because I am leaving for America tomorrow.
- Vincenza: (With a faint smile) What did you say? You are leaving tomorrow . . . for America?
- Severio: Yes, I have made up my mind at last! If you will recall we have discussed this possibility for a long time, but I just was not ready. We decided when we were first married that we would work in preparation to go to America someday. That day has arrived, tomorrow! It is the only way. I am not going to wail until I am too old to make the journey. I have to go by boat and it is a long voyage.
- Vincenza: (Spoken softly) Degrees of readiness.
- Severio: (Spoken in his usual stern mode of presentation) What?
- Vincenza: I see you really have made up your mind. No matter what I say you are leaving tomorrow, anyway.
- Severio: Yes, VJ, yes! It is the only way. Remember we talked about this very thing many times. Now, *you* must face reality.

Vincenza: (Spoken softly) God help me to survive his going to America. I must be strong and follow later when I have enough money.

*The Voice:* And, so Severio left for America, and Vincenza worked long hours for that one day when she, too, would journey to America to join her husband.

## ACT 2

### Scene 1 Description

Five years have elapsed. Vincenza (Mary's mother) is youthful and beautiful as ever. Her long straight hair that almost reaches her waist has, now, turned pure white. Vincenza is seated in a small office speaking with a Notary Public.

## ACT 2

## Scene 1

- Vincenza: I have come for help, please.
- Notary Public: What kind of help? I have no openings.
- Vincenza: I would like to ask if you could check the mail service for me and do it confidentially. I just know someone is confiscating my letters from Severio.
- Notary Public: Maybe he found a new wife in America!
- Vincenza: You may say what you wish, but I know the man I married. He is a family man and very dedicated. I will pay for your services. I have the money for researching the matter.
- Notary Public: Okay, two liras now and ten when I get the required information.
- Vincenza: Agreed, two liras now. Here is the money. Start immediately, please.
- Notary Public: I will start right away.
- The Voice:* The lights go out on the stage. It is approximately one week later. From the background (from behind the stage) the voices of Vincenza and a Messenger can be heard.
- Messenger: “Vincenza Caruso, you are hereby notified that the Notary Public wishes to see you in secret at his place of business tomorrow the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. Please bring ten liras with you, as agreed.”
- Vincenza: Yes, yes, tell him I will be there with the money.
- Note:* The stage is, then, lit. The Notary Public is seated at his desk. Vincenza enters. Discussion ensues regarding the transaction agreed upon.
- Vincenza: Do you have good news?
- Notary Public: Yes, maybe, no!



- Vincenza: I have been five years without my husband, and no word, please speak, so that I may know.
- Notary Public: Vincenza, your letters are being sent monthly by Severio and your brother-in-law has been receiving them. I have proof here from the postal authorities. What do you want to do, prosecute?
- Vincenza: No! I do not want to prosecute. I only want enough of the money that my husband sent so I may leave for America as soon as possible. It is time to be with my husband.
- Notary Public: I spoke with your brother-in-law and he said he would be able to give you some of the money, but most of it is gone. So, what will you do?
- Vincenza: I will take what little money is left and go to American even if I have to book third class passage.
- Notary Public: The money is not enough even for that.
- Vincenza: It is not what you earn. It is what you save that counts. I will go to America as soon as I can make the necessary arrangements. I have been selling corn bread for a long time now at the Market place, and I have saved some of that money for a rainy day. This is that rainy day!

## ACT 2

## Scene 2 Description

Vincenza booked passage for America and arrived in Standard, California in 1916. Vincenza (Mary's mother) and Severio (Mary's father) are seated in a large room in the house that Severio built, on the property he bought, since his arrival in Standard. The house is similar to Enrico Caruso's (Severio's uncle) in Italy, except that it has a wood-burning heating stove in the front room. Severio is sitting in a large chair in the center of the room. Vincenza is standing nearby.

## ACT 2

## Scene 2

- Vincenza: (Smiling) I have arrived at last in this beautiful America. (Holding her arms out to each side) Now, we will work and stay together my dear husband. (Bringing her hands together)
- Severio: It took you five long years!
- Vincenza: Yes, five long years. It is a long and sad story, but I have the rest of my life to tell you about it.
- Severio: It had better be good because I almost married again!
- Vincenza: I know you better so stop telling me a lot of nonsense. I know how difficult it must have been for you, my husband.
- Severio: We want to do all we can to bring up children in the “American way” so that they will have an easier life.
- Vincenza: The first thing I am going to do is bake some corn bread for you. I remember how much you enjoyed it with a little glass of wine.
- Severio: There is talk about prohibition on alcohol. We will only be able to make so much wine and when it is gone, it is gone. This means we have to regulate the amount we consume so that it will stretch until we can make some more. But, for now I will let you have some of it.
- Vincenza: You are very kind to say that, but wine was never to my liking which you well know! Without your wine what will you do, my husband, because to you it’s food!
- Severio: Remember you said that when I put the bottle of wine on the table this evening. (Severio assumes the stance of Enrico and sings) *Wine, Vincenza and song!* (Severio, then, pauses and muses the idea that he too could have been a great singer. He then sings) *Wine, Vincenza and The Voice!* (Then he says to Vincenza) So, you will have no wine?

- Vincenza: Well! A woman can change her mind, can't she?
- Severio: You are in America a short time and already you act American! My little VJ can adapt to anything. How happy I am to be with you in America. Here the word is Freedom! With you I am free! You free me for my ownmost possibilities!
- Vincenza: Yes, to be together again. I knew God would see to it that we would be reunited.
- Severio: You live on faith.
- Vincenza: Severio, you have fresh corn, beans and tomatoes! Where did these fresh vegetables come from?
- Severio: (Spoken in his usual stern mode of presentation) From the garden! Where else? They came from the garden. After work I come home and I work in the garden. I am even designing a little lake at the far end of the property.
- Vincenza: Will not the owners mind?
- Severio: (Laughing) Well!
- Vincenza: You mean?
- Severio: Yes, my little VJ, yes!
- Vincenza: We have arrived, my husband, now we can be open to the future and create together our living garden.
- Severio: We will create, *in concreto*, the new. But, it will be within the old with a slightly bent of direction, a lake.
- Vincenza: You mean there is a natural spring here the same as we had in the old country?
- Severio: (Impatiently) Yes, VJ, yes! Instead of digging it deep, I am building a rock fence to hold the water.
- Vincenza: Is the rock fence going to hold it?
- Severio: There is a place called Hales and Symons in Sonora and they sell cement by the sack. I am going to buy ten sacks

and I think we can build a firm wall with it. It is an art to place rocks, but I will show you how it is done.

Vincenza: Remember in Italy we went swimming. We can do it here.

Severio: That was the most enjoyable part of our lives, when we went swimming together. That is why I am building the wall directly in front of the natural spring.

Vincenza: I will help you build it.

Severio: You will see that this place is a lot like where we were born. Even the weather is similar. So, out of the old we will create the new, it is the only way, that is why we will succeed.

Vincenza: Do you have enough money to pay for the cement?

Severio: Yes, I have a few dollars saved up for you to start with. You had better learn the money system so you can handle it. Dollars in America, not Italian Liras!

Vincenza: I have been used to stretching the liras so I can also stretch the dollars.

Severio: Very well then, you are in charge of the money from now on. I have a cardboard box here of the different coins. Try handling them first, then read the amount on the coin so that you will learn quickly.

Vincenza: Yes, I know about the small coins. The 10¢ piece is smaller than the 5¢ piece, but is worth twice as much. This is a little confusing, but I know it will not be a problem. I will bear in mind, less is more!

Severio: (Severio is still sitting in a large chair in the center of the room. He slides a nearby stool closer and now props up his feet) You can rearrange the furniture as you like. We only have these three chairs, and this large table which I put together. And, that wood-burning heating stove has to stay there. And, my chair and stool should stay where they are.

Vincenza: That is where we had our fireplace in Italy.

- Severio: That is the traditional location for all of the Caruso family. It is like a stage play the personalities change within the situatedness.
- Vincenza: (Smiling and looking directly at Severio) Personality changes without ceasing. It is ongoing.
- Severio: The wooden floor is bare so that it can be easily scrubbed, weekly, to keep it clean. It is ongoing, too. The kitchen has a huge wood-burning stove, with a large oven for baking apple pies.
- Vincenza: Where do you get the wood for the stove?
- Severio: This property consists of five acres. One acre is all rocks, three acres are planted in trees and grapevines, and one acre is used for the house, a small shed and a garden.
- Vincenza: I am quite sure that the person you bought this land from thought you were a “bit crazy” as who would buy land with rocks, but you.
- Severio: You see so much my little one. Not very many people have the understanding that you have.
- Vincenza: I would like to buy a couple of cows so that we can have milk as we did in the old country.
- Severio: I was going to do just that very thing. I already started to build a corral and shed on the west side of the house with some of the rocks.
- Vincenza: There is a lot to do.
- Severio: I think I will check out my hammock outside.
- Vincenza: I also want a few chickens so we can have fresh eggs for breakfast as well as for baking.
- Severio: I am tired. You can have anything you little heart desires. The only thing you will have to do (Saying the words slower and slower) is to learn how to use a hammer and a saw and how to pound a few nails. And, after that is finished you can learn the art of placing rocks. (Seemingly very tired now Severio says) And, we can work together to build our swimming pool.

## ACT 2

## Scene 3 Description

The following day, a very tired Vincenza (Mary's mother) is found sitting in Severio's large chair. Severio (Mary's father) enters with his lunch box under his arm, and is dragging his feet. Severio impatiently waits for Vincenza to move another chair.

## ACT 2

## Scene 3

- Vincenza: How did your day go, my husband?
- Severio: It went slowly. I was always thinking of home and what needs to be accomplished.
- Vincenza: You are always thinking something, conscious of something, or experiencing something.
- Severio: Whether I am working in a gold mine, Pickering Lumber Company or the Railroad, I think of my little VJ.
- Vincenza: I did a lot of rearranging in the house today. Tomorrow, I will begin outside. I would like to convert that little shed into an outside kitchen because it is close to the Dutch oven you built.
- Severio: The Dutch oven was a real chore, but I knew that was the only way you would be able to bake Italian bread for me. It is even shaped like the one in the old country.
- Vincenza: You haven't forgotten about the bread?
- Severio: No! I haven't. Some of the neighbors bake it, but it is not like yours. You are a genius when it comes to homemade bread.
- Vincenza: You are happy that I am here so that I can bake for you. So, where do you buy the yeast?
- Severio: The Standard store carries what is known as "Fleischman's yeast." It comes in a little cake, is fresh, and sells two cakes for 5¢.
- Vincenza: I will buy some tomorrow.
- Severio: (Spoken in his usual stern mode of presentation) Look in the kitchen! We have flour, yeast, salt and canned milk. All of the ingredients needed for bread making.
- Vincenza: There is so much to see that I am overwhelmed. I guess I missed the kitchen cupboards. And, I guess I do need a



couple of days rest after my long journey. We are united at last!

Severio: (Laughing) Well! That is why they call it the United States.

## ACT 3

## Scene 1 Description

Much time has elapsed and it is now 22 years later. Vincenza (Mary's mother) looks youthful as ever, but Severio (Mary's father) looks very old, and limps from a leg injury which did not heal correctly. Mary, their American born child, of 15 August 1917, in Standard, California, is now 21 years of age. The setting is much the same, three chairs, a large table, and a wood-burning heating stove in the front room. Some throw rugs have been added. Vincenza is seated at the table knitting a sweater. Severio limps into the room and sits in the center of the room in his large chair with his feet propped on a small stool.

## ACT 3

## Scene 1

- Severio: My leg hurts.
- Vincenza: It was not set properly after you broke it when you fell off the lumber train.
- Severio: Yes, VJ, yes! (Now sitting in his large chair with his feet propped on a small stool) You don't seem to give me much sympathy these days.
- Vincenza: Our American daughter of 21 years took me into her confidence and told me she is going to marry a 23 year old who lives in Sonora. He has a college education in mathematics.
- Severio: Did you find out his name?
- Vincenza: No! I didn't. (Smiling) What's a name?
- Severio: (Speaking rather loudly) What do you mean! "What's a name?" It is everything. And, another thing if he is not Italian tell her I forbid the marriage.
- Vincenza: Remember you are in America and your daughter Mary, whom you wanted to be brought up in the "American way" is now familiar with the American ways. She went to American schools. She is an intense spirit.
- Severio: Yes, I understand she is different, indeed, and very set in her ways. Our marriage was arranged and it has turned out pretty good. We are happy in spite of the many obstacles we have faced together.
- Vincenza: You mean, freedom in spite of determinism?
- Severio: Yes, VJ, yes!
- Vincenza: Mary is not as, you say: "Set in her ways." She is just of a rhythm all her own. She is adventurous . . .
- Severio: Adventurous she inherited from me.

- Vincenza: Mary breaks-through-boundaries. She is continually blazing a path rather than walking down a well-beaten trail.
- Severio: I want to talk to her about this young man she intends to marry.
- Vincenza: When she told me about him, she also said she loves him, and that is enough for me. He is young, and they love each other that is all that matters. Their spirits are good together. I know.
- Severio: Faith, faith, faith! Well! If you have already taken care of the matter, she doesn't need her father's suggestions then. But, I want to look him over.
- Vincenza: I invited him to Sunday dinner.
- Severio: (Spoken in his usual stern mode of presentation) Good I can, then, size him up on Sunday.
- Vincenza: He is six-feet-two, so there you have it!
- Severio: Yes, VJ, yes! I may have to give her some suggestions, but not advice, that way she is free to make her own decisions and will not have to go against me.
- Vincenza: I suggest, when you size this young man up you stand on a box, my dear husband! He even has tall ideas for you to reach.
- Severio: (Spoken in his usual stern mode of presentation) Yes, VJ, yes!
- Vincenza: Now, I don't want you to embarrass Mary by asking the young man a lot of crazy questions, because I can tell you right now he is not Italian, but he want to marry our daughter.
- Severio: (Speaking rather loudly) What do you man he is not Italian? VJ, we have to check this young man out before we say "no" to such an arrangement.
- Vincenza: I know you think our daughter has been blinded by love, but it is her life. And, my husband, love is *not* blind! It

is her choice. It is the American custom to fall in love, get married and work together.

Severio: She only thinks she loves him.

Vincenza: Thought and passion mingle with delight.

Severio: Well, all right, if you say so! But, she may live to regret this so called love as she puts it. Angelo would have been a perfect husband. He has money, good family and would give her a good life. And, she would live close to us so we could maybe see a grandson.

Vincenza: You never give up, you say: "Would have been" and then "Would give!" She told you she didn't love Angelo so she couldn't marry him. So, that is that.

Severio: Do you know how bad he felt because she refused him. Well! He was devastated. He practically tore the shirt off his back for her. Now, he is unable to eat for a week, and his mother is unhappy because of our daughter.

Vincenza: It is her life and we cannot live it for her. We have tried to teach her what we know from our experience. Now, we have to let her go and find her own experience. That is all we can do. And, my husband we cannot experience her experience.

## ACT 3

## Scene 2 Description

The stage is set for Vincenza (Mary's mother) and Severio (Mary's father). Severio is in his second most occupied space which is the center of the room in his usual chair, with his feet propped on a small stool. Vincenza walks in from the kitchen carrying a tray with some corn bread and a small glass of wine for Severio.

## ACT 3

## Scene 2

- Vincenza: Well, Severio! What do you say now?
- Severio: I think I could put my hammock in this room.
- Vincenza: No, what do you have to say now, about the marriage. Can you see the way those two are together.
- Severio: I can tell everyone felt good at the wedding by all of the wine they drank.
- Vincenza: Severio!
- Severio: Mary is not going to live close to us.
- Vincenza: They are going to live in the Bay Area.
- Severio: And, in a few years I will have a grandson which I will never see!
- Vincenza: If you carry on like this Mary will have a daughter in spite of what you say.
- Severio: Yes, VJ, yes!
- Vincenza: Maybe one day you will walk beside your grandson, my husband.
- Severio: I would like that very much.
- Vincenza: The Bay Area has a lot of good schools.
- Severio: San Francisco, that is where the ground shakes. Enrico was there, VJ.
- Vincenza: Sometimes when *you* speak it is a wonder the ground doesn't shake.
- Severio: (Pretending not to hear that) Can they afford to live there?
- Vincenza: Mary will see to it.

- Severio: Why does he wear red suspenders, anyway? You know at one time everyone went to Sonora to see the bootblack with the college education.
- Vincenza: Mary said that she would get a job.
- Severio: She could have had everything with Angelo, but no, she didn't love him. This great love she has had better last her the rest of her life.
- Vincenza: Okay, Severio, that's enough she is married now. She was 21 on August 15<sup>th</sup>. She is, her own. I don't want to hear any more talk from you about this, understand.
- Severio: So be it my wife! (After a long pause) He is English!
- Vincenza: Severio!
- Severio: What will become of the Italian name "Caruso?"
- Vincenza: Granddaughter or grandson, Mary's offspring will probably surprise you and carry the "Caruso" name forward.
- Severio: Do you think so VJ?
- Vincenza: I know.
- The Voice:* After a long journey of life Mary became a success beyond her wild expectations!



## ACT 4

### Scene 1 Description

Mary and her son enter the stage. The stage is similar to Scene 1 in Act 1. Mary's hair is pure white, her face is wrinkled, but her spirit is just as colorful as ever. She is bent with the age of a long journey.

## ACT 4

## Scene 1

- Mary: A strange thing happened today, son!
- Son: What? What's wrong mother! You look bewildered and frightened.
- Mary: The Taxi Driver handed me a white envelope when I got out of the taxi, and just looked at me with a piercing smile.
- Son: Then what happened?
- Mary: I opened the envelope and there was my \$250.00. I looked up and the driver and taxi had vanished.
- Son: Vanished?
- Mary: I looked to one side and then to the other of the street. Neither the driver nor the taxi were to be found. I didn't even hear the taxi drive away!
- Son: (Laughing) You are losing it!
- Mary: Inside the envelope with the money was this small hand written note in this old style writing.
- Son: Let me see that! (Reading the note out loud) **"There is a spirit in you that giveth understanding."**
- Mary: I telephoned the taxi dispatcher and asked the young man's name. The dispatcher said they didn't send a taxi. The dispatcher went on to say that: "We can send a taxi immediately." But, I said: "I am already here."
- Son: (Laughing) Look mother, you just crossed over to the twilight zone. So, where did he take you anyway?
- Mary: Well! I saw my school, but it was gone and replaced with five buildings, plus a swimming pool. Everything here that I have touched has been demolished and replaced.
- Son: Really!

- Mary: It was the same way when I took that trip to Europe in 1978. I was so happy to be able to visit my parents' homeland that I cried with joy. No one seemed to understand why I was crying. It seems that I was touching my roots and it was beyond my control to stop crying. There seemed to be someone guiding my very footsteps and saying: "Your parents worshipped in this Church, isn't it beautiful. Isn't the ceiling lovely in the Sistine Chapel? Take a good look because you will never again see this place during your lifetime."
- Son: Not very many people have the understanding that you have, mother.
- Mary: I went into one of the shops to make a purchase. The shop owner inquired where I was from. I immediately replied that I was of Italian lineage, that I was Italian. He asked me where I was born, and I replied that I was born in America, but the both of my parents were from Italy. He immediately informed me that I was not Italian, that I was American. I was crushed beyond belief. I was unable to comprehend what this man was telling me. I had felt Italian, I speak Italian fluently and my parents were Italian and I had always taken great pride in my heritage.
- Son: Not Italian? That's absurd!
- Mary: It was quite sometime later that I realized what the man was saying to me: My parents left their homeland. Well! My parents told me that they came to America so that their children could possibly obtain the opportunity for a better way of life. Yes, I am American but the past is the ground out of which the future springs.
- Son: That's a sound connection.
- Mary: My parents were both very perceptive in making their decisions. They constantly talked things over and worked things out.
- Son: I used to like going for walks with my grandfather.
- Mary: You know, son, when I was in Rome, suddenly, I wished that my parents were still alive so that I could tell them how I felt. But, they are both buried at the Mt. View Cemetery in Sonora, California. My view will someday be from there.

- Son: What about now, mother.
- Mary: Well, it is always “now.” The only thing left to do is to recite the short prayer that “The Old Monk,” the one you wrote about, told you to say: “Jesus, Mary and Joseph.” I did this, at the time, and have continued to do so many times since then, especially when I am sewing at night. I pray while I am working. And, many times I pray for your sister Judith Ann. That her soul may rest in peace.
- Son: You see, mother, it is like this: Everything changes. When you saw your old school, which was replaced you were immediately thrown into reflection. It is like on the way up here to Sonora, Sunnie and I passed my old school that was just demolished, with the bricks scattered around the street, but the oak tree, that old tree in the courtyard outlived the buildings. It stands tall, yet bent with age.
- Mary: I remember touching the tree at my old school. I used to sit and read there where the tree remains standing.
- Son: Trees are important.
- Mary: It is in the breathing, that is the exchange. We are in living dialogue with trees.
- Son: I think you could refractionate a reflection, mother.
- Mary: Reflection? What is that? Is it reflection that you are teaching a group of teachers here where I was born? (Tuolumne County) I have attained the greatest joy of my life by sitting in this philosophy class when you are lecturing on the old thinkers and scholars my parents talked about. And, that you are The Writing Caruso makes someone smile.
- Son: You should have given a lecture, one girl in the class said the mother is a philosopher, the son a poet and that the wife is a quiet presence.
- Mary: Sunnie knew what she was doing when she stopped in the middle of the street to pick up a brick from your old school, son.
- Son: Look mother, when you walk down the street in Sonora and reach the next intersection, you look around and see where you are. You look at the buildings that are there and some that are

not. It is irreversible. Yet, the meaning is there. And, when you look at something the second time, you look at it in a different way.

Mary: William James in 1899 put it this way: “Our mind may enjoy but little comfort, may be restless and feel confused; but it may be extremely efficient all the same.”

Son: How can you hold so much thought?

Mary: There is no consciousness without memory.

Son: Of the past to the present feeling.

*Note:* Mary cries out in pain and falls to the floor.

Son: (Kneeling to pick her up but realizing that he had better call an ambulance immediately) Mother, what’s wrong?

Mary: (With a faint smile) I can’t get my breath.

*Note:* The lights go out on the stage.

Siren, ambulance, commotion, then voices from the dark stage.

Paramedic: Where is the patient?

Son: Over there. That’s my mother Mary. She just fell and cried out in pain.

Paramedic: All right, Mary. We are taking you to the Sonora Hospital. We have qualified doctors there.

Mary: (Difficulty in speaking) . . . sure, I know, I was born there.

*The Voice:* On the second day, Mary returned home. That night she passed away in her sleep of a massive coronary.

*Note:* The stage is dark except for a white light from above that shines on Mary. She is sitting on the floor and wearing a white robe which matches the whiteness of her hair. **And, Mary finds herself with The Voice.**

Mary: (Bewildered and looking around slowly, after a long pause, then speaking) “Where am I?”

*The Voice*: You passed away Mary and went straight to heaven. You are pure spirit! . . . (A long pause, then *The Voice* says) Standard no longer exists!

Curtain