

Right you are! (If you think so) – Act II

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In Italiano – [Così è \(se vi pare\)](#)

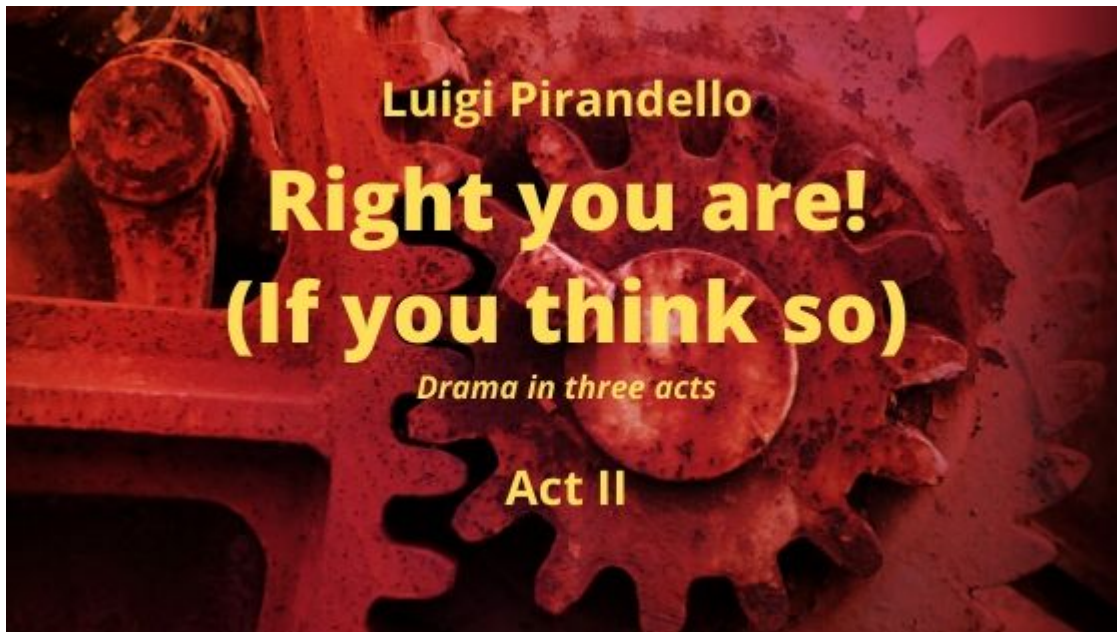
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Right you are! (If you think so)

Act II

English version by Arthur Livingston – (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1922)

Councillor Agazzi's study in the same house. Antique furnishings with old paintings on the walls. A portière over the rear entrance and over the door to the left which opens into the drawing room shown in the first act. To the right a substantial fireplace with a big mirror above the mantel. A

flat top desk with a telephone. A sofa, armchairs, straight back chairs, etc.

As the curtain rises Agazzi is shown standing beside his desk with the telephone receiver pressed to his ear. Laudisi and Sirelli sit looking at him expectantly.

Agazzi: Yes, I want Centuri. Hello... hello . . Centuri? Yes, Agazzi speaking. That you, Centuri? It's me, Agazzi. Well?

(He listens for some time): What's that? Really?

(Again he listens at length): I understand, but you might go at the matter with a little more speed...

(Another long pause): Well, I give up! How can that possibly be?

(A pause): Oh, I see, I see...

(Another pause): Well, never mind, I'll look into it myself. Goodbye, Centuri, goodbye!

He lays down the receiver and steps forward on the stage.

Sirelli *(eagerly):* Well?

Agazzi: Nothing! Absolutely nothing!

Sirelli: Nothing at all?

Agazzi: You see the whole blamed village was wiped out. Not a house left standing! In the collapse of the town hall, followed by a fire, all the records of the place seem to have been lost – births, deaths, marriages, everything.

Sirelli: But not everybody was killed. They ought to be able to find somebody who knows them.

Agazzi: Yes, but you see they didn't rebuild the place. Everybody moved away, and no record was ever kept of the

people, of course. So far they have found nobody who knows the Ponzas. To be sure, if the police really went at it, they might find somebody; but it would be a tough job.

Sirelli: So we can't get anywhere along that line! We have got to take what they say and let it go at that.

Agazzi: That, unfortunately, is the situation.

Laudisi (*rising*): Well, you fellows take a piece of advice from me: believe them both!

Agazzi: What do you mean – “believe them both”?...

Sirelli: But if she says one thing, and he says another...

Laudisi: Well, in that case, you needn't believe either of them!

Sirelli: Oh, you're just joking. We may not be able to verify the stories; but that doesn't prove that either one or the other may not be telling the truth. Some document or other...

Laudisi: Oh, documents! Documents! Suppose you had them? What good would they do you?

Agazzi: Oh, I say! Perhaps we can't get them now, but there were such documents once. If the old lady is mad, there was, as there still may be somewhere, the death certificate of the daughter. Or look at it from the other angle: if we found all the records, and the death certificate were not there for the simple reason that it never existed, why then, it's Ponza, the son-in-law. He would be mad.

Sirelli: You mean to say you wouldn't give in if we stuck that certificate under your nose tomorrow or the next day? Would you still deny...

Laudisi: Deny? Why... why... I'm not denying anything! In fact, I'm very careful not to be denying anything. You're the people

who are looking up the records to be able to affirm or deny something. Personally, I don't give a rap for the documents for the truth in my eyes is not in them but in the mind. And into their minds I can they say to me of themselves.

Sirelli: Very well – She says he's mad and he says she's mad. Now one of them must be mad.

You can't get away from that. Well which is it, she or he?

Agazzi: There, that's the way to put it!

Laudisi: But just observe; in the first place, it isn't true that they are accusing each other of madness. Ponza, to be sure, says his mother-in-law is mad. She denies this. not only of herself, but also of him. At the most, she says that he was a little off once, when they took her daughter from him; but that now he is quite all right.

Sirelli: I see! So you're rather inclined, as I am, to trust what the old lady says.

Agazzi: The fact is, indeed, that if you accept his story, all the facts in the case are explained.

Laudisi: But all the facts in the case are explained if you take her story, aren't they?

Sirelli: Oh, nonsense! In that case neither of them would be mad! Why, one of them must be, damn it all!

Laudisi: Well, which one? You can't tell, can you? Neither can anybody else! And it is not because those documents you are looking for have been destroyed in an accident – a fire, an earthquake – what you will; but because those people have concealed those documents in themselves, in their own souls. Can't you understand that? She has created for him, or he for her, a world of fancy which has all the earmarks of reality itself. And in this fictitious reality they get along perfectly well, and in full accord with each other; and this

world of fancy, this reality of theirs, no document can possibly destroy because the air they breathe is of that world. For them it is something they can see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and touch with their fingers. Oh, I grant you – if you could get a death certificate or a marriage certificate or something of the kind, you might be able to satisfy that stupid curiosity of yours. Unfortunately, you can't get it. And the result is that you are in the extraordinary fix of having before you, on the one hand, a world of fancy, and on the other, a world of reality, and you, for the life of you, are not able to distinguish one from the other.

Agazzi: Philosophy, my dear boy, philosophy! And I have no use for philosophy. Give me facts, if you please! Facts! So, I say, keep at it; and I'll bet you we get to the bottom of it sooner or later.

Sirelli: First we got her story and then we got his; and then we got a new one from her. Let's bring the two of them together – and you think that then we won't be able to tell the false from the true?

Laudisi: Well, bring them together if you want to! All I ask is permission to laugh when you're through.

Agazzi: Well, we'll let you laugh all you want. In the meantime let's see...

(He steps to the door at the left and calls): Amalia, Signora Sirelli, won't you come in here a moment?

The Ladies enter with Dina.

Signora Sirelli *(catching sight of Laudisi and shaking a finger at him):* But how is it a man like you, in the presence of such an extraordinary situation, can escape the curiosity we all feel to get at the bottom of this mystery? Why, I lie awake nights thinking of it!

Agazzi: As your husband says, that man's impossible! Don't bother about him, Signora Sirelli.

Laudisi: No, don't bother with me; you just listen to Agazzi! He'll keep you from lying awake tonight.

Agazzi: Look here, ladies. This is what I want – I have an idea: won't you just step across the hall to Signora Frola's?

Amalia: But will she come to the door?

Agazzi: Oh, I imagine she will! Dina. We're just returning the call, you see...

Amalia: But didn't he ask us not to call on his mother-in-law? Hasn't he forbidden her to receive visits?

Sirelli: No, not exactly! That's how he explained what had happened; but at that time nothing was known. Now that the old lady, through force of circumstance, has spoken, giving her version at least of her strange conduct, I should think that...

Signora Sirelli: I have a feeling that she'll be awfully glad to see us, if for nothing else, for the chance of talking about her daughter.

Dina: And she really is a jolly old lady. There is no doubt in my mind, not the slightest: Ponza is mad!

Agazzi: Now, let's not go too fast. You just listen to me (*He looks at his wife:* – don't stay too long – five or ten minutes at the outside!

Sirelli (*to his wife*): And for heaven's sake, keep your mouth shut!

Signora Sirelli: And why such considerate advice to me?

Sirelli: Once you get going...

Dina (*with the idea of preventing a scene*): Oh, we are not

going to stay very long, ten minutes – fifteen, at the outside. I'll see that no breaks are made. Agazzi. And I'll just drop around to the office, and be back at eleven o'clock – ten or twenty minutes at the most.

Sirelli: And what can I do?

Agazzi: Wait!

(Turning to the Ladies): Now, here's the plan! You people invent some excuse or other so as to get Signora Frola in here.

Amalia: What? How can we possibly do that? Agazzi. Oh, find some excuse! You'll think of something in the course of your talk; and if you don't, there's Dina and Signora Sirelli. But when you come back, you understand, go into the drawing room.

(He steps to the door on the left, makes sure that it is wide open, and draws aside the portière): This door must stay open, wide open, so that we can hear you talking from in here. Now, here are some papers that I ought to take with me to the office. However, I forget them here. It is a brief that requires Ponza's immediate personal attention. So then, I forget it. And when I get to the office I have to bring him back here to find them – See?

Sirelli: But just a moment. Where do I come in? When am I expected to appear?

Agazzi: Oh, yes!... A moment or two after eleven, – when the ladies are again in the drawing room, and I am back here, you just drop in – to take your wife home, see? You ring the bell and ask for me, and I'll have you brought in here. Then I'll invite the whole crowd in! That's natural enough, isn't it? – into my office?...

Laudisi *(interrupting):* And we'll have the Truth, the whole Truth with a capital TI

Dina: But look, uncle, of course we'll have the truth – once we get them together face to face – capital T and all!

Agazzi: Don't get into an argument with that man. Besides, it's time you ladies were going. None of us has any too much leeway.

Signora Sirelli: Come, Amalia, come Dina! And as ,for you, sir
(*Turning to Laudisi*):, I won't even shake hands with you.

Laudisi: Permit me to do it for you, madam. (*He shakes one hand with the other*): Good luck to you, my dear ladies.

Exit Dina, Amalia, Signora Sirelli.

Agazzi (*to Sirelli*): And now we'd better go, too. Suppose we hurry!

Sirelli: Yes, right away. Goodbye, Lamberto!

Laudisi: Goodbye, good luck, good luck!

Agazzi and Sirelli leave. Laudisi, left alone, walks up and down the study a number of times, nodding his head and occasionally smiling. Finally he draws up in front of the big mirror that is hanging over the mantelpiece. He sees himself in the glass, stops, and addresses his image.

Laudisi: So there you are!

(*He bows to himself and salutes, touching his forehead with his fingers*): I say, old man, who is mad, you or I?

(*He levels a finger menacingly at his image in the glass; and, of course, the image in turn levels a finger at him. As he smiles, his image smiles*): Of course, I understand! I say it's you, and you say it's me. You – you are mad! No? It's me? Very well! It's me! Have it your way. Between you and me, we get along very well, don't we! But the trouble is, others don't think of you just as I do; and that being the case, old man,

what a fix you're in! As for me, I say that here, right in front of you, I can see myself with my eyes and touch myself with my fingers. But what are you for other people? What are you in their eyes? An image, my dear sir, just an image in the glass! They're all carrying just such a phantom around inside themselves, and here they are racking their brains about the phantoms in other people; and they think all that is quite another thing!

The butler has entered the room in time to catch Laudisi gesticulating at himself in the glass. He wonders if the man is crazy. Finally he speaks up.

butler: Ahem!... Signor Laudisi, if you please...

Laudisi (*coming to himself*): Uff!

butler: Two ladies calling, sir! Signora Cini and another lady!

Laudisi: Calling to see me?

butler: Really, they asked for the signora; but I said that she was out – on a call next door; and then...

Laudisi: Well, what then?

butler: They looked at each other and said, "Really! Really!" and finally they asked me if anybody else was at home.

Laudisi: And of course you said that everyone was out!

butler: I said that you were in!

Laudisi: Why, not at all! I'm miles and miles away! Perhaps that fellow they call Laudisi is here!

butler: I don't understand, sir.

Laudisi: Why? You think the Laudisi they know is the Laudisi I am?

butler: I don't understand, sir.

Laudisi: Who are you talking to?

butler: Who am I talking to? I thought I was talking to you.

Laudisi: Are you really sure the Laudisi you are talking to is the Laudisi the ladies want to see?

butler: Why, I think so, sir. They said they were looking for the brother of Signora Agazzi.

Laudisi: Ah, in that case you are right!

(Turning to the image in the glass): You are not the brother of Signora Agazzi? No, it's me!

(To the butler): Right you are! Tell them I am in. And show them in here, won't you?

The butler retires.

Signora Cini: May I come in?

Laudisi: Please, please, this way, madam!

Signora Cini: I was told Signora Agazzi was not at home, and I brought Signora Nenni along. Signora Nenni is a friend of mine, and she was most anxious to make the acquaintance of... Laudisi,... of Signora Frola?

Signora Cini: Of Signora Agazzi, your sister!

Laudisi: Oh, she will be back very soon, and Signora Frola will be here, too.

Signora Cini: Yes, we thought as much.

Signora Nenni is an oldish woman of the type of Signora Cini, but with the mannerisms of the latter somewhat more pronounced. She, too, is a bundle of concentrated curiosity, but of the sly, cautious type, ready to find something

frightful under everything.

Laudisi: Well, it's all planned in advance! It will be a most interesting scene! The curtain rises at eleven, precisely!

Signora Cini: Planned in advance? What is planned in advance?

Laudisi (*mysteriously, first with a gesture of his finger and then aloud*): Why, bringing the two of them together!

(*A gesture of admiration*): Great idea, I tell you!

Signora Cini: The two of them – together – who?

Laudisi: Why, the two of them. He – in here! (*Pointing to the room about him*):

Signora Cini: Ponza, you mean?

Laudisi: And she – in there! (*He points toward the drawing room*):

Signora Cini: Signora Frola?

Laudisi: Exactly!

(*With an expressive gesture of his hands and even more mysteriously*): But afterwards, all of them – in here! Oh, a great idea, a great idea!

Signora Cini: In order to get...

Laudisi: The truth! But it's already known: all that remains is the unmasking.

Signora Cini (*with the greatest surprise*): Oh, really? So they know the truth! And which is it – He or she?

Laudisi: Well, I'll tell you... you just guess! Who do you think it is?

Signora Cini (*ahemming*): Well... I say... really... you see...

Laudisi: Is it she or is it he? You don't mean to say you don't know! Come now, give a guess!

Signora Cini: Why, for my part I should say... well, I'd say... it's he.

Laudisi (*looks at her admiringly*): Right you are! It is he!

Signora Cini: Really? I always thought so! Of course, it was perfectly plain all along. It had to be he!

Signora Nenni: All of us women in town said it was he. We always said so!

Signora Cini: But how did you get at it? I suppose Signor Agazzi ran down the documents, didn't he – the birth certificate, or something?

Signora Nenni: Through the prefect, of course! There was no getting away from those people. Once the police start investigating...

Laudisi (*motions to them to come closer to him; then in a low voice and in the same mysterious manner, and stressing each syllable*): The certificate! – Of the second marriage!

Signora Cini (*starting back with astonishment*): What?

Signora Nenni (*likewise taken aback*): What did you say? The second marriage?

Signora Cini: Well, in that case he was right .

Laudisi: Oh, documents, ladies, documents! This certificate of the second marriage, so it seems, talks as plain as day.

Signora Nenni: Well, then, she is mad.

Laudisi: Right! She must be, mustn't she?

Signora Cini: But I thought you said...

Laudisi: Yes, I did say... but this certificate of the second marriage may very well be, as Signora Frola said, a fictitious document, gotten up through the influence of Ponza's doctors and friends to pamper him in the notion that his wife was not his first wife, but another woman.

Signora Cini: But it's a public document. You mean to say a public document can be a fraud?

Laudisi: I mean to say – well, it has just the value that each of you chooses to give it. For instance, one could find somewhere, possibly, those_letters that Signora Frola said she gets from her daughter, who lets them down in the basket in the courtyard. There are such letters, aren't there?

Signora Cini: Yes, of course!

Laudisi: They are documents, aren't they? Aren't letters documents? But it all depends on how you read them. Here comes Ponza, and he says they are just made up to pamper his mother-in-law in her obsession...

Signora Cini: Oh, dear, dear, so then we're never sure about anything?

Laudisi: Never sure about anything? Why not at all, not at all! Let's be exact. We are sure of many things, aren't we? How many days are there in the week? Seven – Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday... How many months in the year are there? Twelve: January, February, March...

Signora Cini: Oh, I see, you're just joking! You're just joking! (*Dina appears, breathless, in the doorway, at the rear*):

Dina: Oh, uncle, won't you please... (*She stops at the sight of Signora Cini*): Oh, Signora Cini, you here?

Signora Cini: Why, I just came to make a call!... Laudisi,... with Signora Cenni.

Signora Nenni: No, my name is Nenni.

Laudisi: Oh yes, pardon me! She was anxious to make Signora Frola's acquaintance...

Signora Nenni: Why, not at all!

Signora Cini: He has just been making fun of us! You ought to see what fools he made of us!

Dina: Oh, he's perfectly insufferable, even with mamma and me. Will you excuse me for just a moment? No, everything is all right. I'll just run back and tell mamma that you people are here and I think that will be enough. Oh, uncle, if you had only heard her talk! Why, she is a perfect dear, and what a good, kind soul!... She showed us all those letters her daughter wrote...

Signora Cini: Yes, but as Signora Laudisi was just saying...

Dina: He hasn't even seen them!

Signora Nenni: You mean they are not really fictitious?

Dina: Fictitious nothing! They talk as plain as day. And such things! You can't fool a mother when her own daughter talks to her. And you know – the letter she got yesterday!...

(She stops at the sound of voices coming into the study from the drawing room): Oh, here they are, here they are, already!

She goes to the door and peeps into the room.

Signora Cini *(following her to the door):* Is she there, too?

Dina: Yes, but you had better come into the other room. All of us women must be in the drawing room. And it is just eleven o'clock, uncle!

Amalia *(entering with decision from the door on the left):* I think this whole business is quite unnecessary! We have

absolutely no further need of proofs...

Dina: Quite so! I thought of that myself. Why bring Ponza here?

Amalia (*taken somewhat aback by Signora Cini's presence*): Oh, my dear Signora Cini!...

Signora Cini (*introducing Signora Nenni*): A friend of mine, Signora Nenni! I ventured to bring her with me...

Amalia (*bowing, but somewhat coolly, to the visitor*): A great pleasure, Signora!

(*After a pause*): There is not the slightest doubt in the world:... it's he!

Signora Cini: It's he? Are you sure it's he?

Dina: And such a trick on the poor old lady!

Amalia: Trick is not the name for it! It's downright dishonest!

Laudisi: Oh, I agree with you: it's outrageous! Quite! So much so, I'm quite convinced it must be she!

Amalia: She? What do you mean? How can you say that?

Laudisi: I say, it is she, it is she, it's she!

Amalia: Oh, I say! If you had heard her talk...

Dina: It is absolutely clear to us now.

Signora Cini and Signora Nenni (*swallowing*): Really? You are sure?

Laudisi: Exactly! Now that you are sure it's he, why, obviously – it must be she.

Dina: Oh dear me, why talk to that man? He is just impossible!

Amalia: Well, we must go into the other room... This way, if you please!

Signora Cini, Signora Nenni and Amalia withdraw through the door on the left. Dina starts to follow, when Laudisi calls her back.

Laudisi: Dina!

Dina: I refuse to listen to you! I refuse!

Laudisi: I was going to suggest that, since the whole matter is closed, you might close the door also.

Dina: But papa... he told us to leave it open. Ponza will be here soon; and if papa finds it closed – well, you know how papa is!

Laudisi: But you can convince him!... You especially. You can show him that there really was no need of going any further. You are convinced yourself, aren't you?

Dina: I am as sure of it, as I am that I'm alive!

Laudisi (*putting her to the test with a smile*): Well, close the door then!

Dina: I see, you're trying to make me say that I'm not really sure. Well, I won't close the door, but it's just on account of papa.

Laudisi: Shall I close it for you?

Dina: If you take the responsibility yourself!...

Laudisi: But you see, I am sure! I know that Ponza is mad!

Dina: The thing for you to do is to come into the other room and just hear her talk a while. Then you'll be sure, absolutely sure. Coming?

Laudisi: Yes, I'm coming, and I'll close the door behind me – on my own responsibility, of course.

Dina: Ah, I see. So you're convinced even before you hear her talk.

Laudisi: No, dear, it's because I'm sure that your papa, who has been with Ponza, is just as certain as you are that any further investigation is unnecessary.

Dina: How can you say that?

Laudisi: Why, of course, if you talk with Ponza, you're sure the old lady is mad.

(He walks resolutely to the door): I am going to shut this door.

Dina*(restraining him nervously, then hesitating a moment):* Well, why not... if you're really sure? What do you say – let's leave it open!

Laudisi *(bursts out laughing).*

Dina: But just because papa told us to!

Laudisi: And papa will tell you something else by and by. Say... let's leave it open!

A piano starts playing in the adjoining room – an ancient tune, sweet, graceful, full of pain, from "Nina Mad Through Love" by Paisiello.

Dina: Oh, there she is. She's playing! Do you hear? Actually playing the piano!

Laudisi: The old lady?

Dina: Yes! And you know? She told us that her daughter used to play this tune, always the same tune. How well she plays! Come! Come!

They hurry through the door. The stage, after the exit of Laudisi and Dina, remains empty for a space of time while the music continues from the other room. Ponza, appearing at the door with Agazzi, catches the concluding notes and his face changes to an expression of deep emotion-an emotion that will develop into a virtual frenzy as the scene proceeds.

Agazzi *(in the doorway):* After you, after you, please!

He takes Ponza's elbow and motions him into the room.

He goes over to his desk, looks about for the papers which he pretends he had forgotten, finds them eventually and says:

Agazzi: Why, here they are! I was sure I had left them here. Won't you take a chair, Ponza?

Ponza seems not to hear. He stands looking excitedly at the door into the drawing room, through which the sound of the piano is still coming.

Agazzi: Yes, they are the ones!

(He takes the papers and steps to Ponza's side, opening the folder): It is an old case, you see. Been running now for years and years! To tell you the truth I haven't made head or tail of the stuff myself. I imagine you'll find it one big mess.

(He, too, becomes aware of the music and seems somewhat irritated by it. His eyes also rest on the door to the drawing room): That noise, just at this moment!

(He walks with a show of anger to the door): Who is that at the piano anyway?

(In the doorway he stops and looks, and an expression of astonishment comes into his face): Ah!

Ponza *(going to the door also. On looking into the next room*

he can hardly restrain his emotion): In the name of God, is she playing?

Agazzi: Yes – Signora Frola! And how well she does play!

Ponza: How is this? You people have brought her in here, again! And you're letting her play!

Agazzi: Why not? What's the harm?

Ponza: Oh, please, please, no, not that song! It is the one her daughter used to play.

Agazzi: Ah, I see! And it hurts you?

Ponza: Oh, no, not me – but her – it hurts her – and you don't know how much! I thought I had made you and those women understand just how that poor old lady was!

Agazzi: Yes, you did... quite true! But you see... but see here, Ponza! (*Trying to pacify the man's growing emotion*):

Ponza (*continuing*): But you must leave her alone! You must not go to her house! She must not come in here! I am the only person who can deal with her. You are killing her... killing her!

Agazzi: No, I don't think so. It is not so bad as that. My wife and daughter are surely tactful enough...

Suddenly the music ceases. There is a burst of applause.

Agazzi: There, you see. Listen! Listen! (*From the next room the following conversation is distinctly heard*):

Dina: Why, Signora Frola, you are perfectly marvellous at the piano!

Signora Frola: But you should hear how my Lena plays!

Ponza digs his nails into his hands.

Agazzi: Her daughter, of course!

Ponza: Didn't you hear? "How my Lena plays! How my Lena plays!"

Again from inside.

Signora Frola: Oh, no, not now!... She hasn't played for a long time – since that happened. And you know, it is what she takes hardest, poor girl!

Agazzi: Why, that seems quite natural to me! Of course, she thinks the girl is still alive!

Ponza: But she shouldn't be allowed to say such things. She must not – she must not say such things! Didn't you hear? "She hasn't played since that happened"! She said "she hasn't played since that happened"! Talking of the piano, you understand! Oh, you don't understand, no, of course! My first wife had a piano and played that tune. Oh, oh, oh! You people are determined to ruin me!

Sirelli appears at the back door at this moment, and hearing the concluding words of Ponza and noticing his extreme exasperation, stops short, uncertain as to what to do. Agazzi is himself very much affected and motions to Sirelli to come in.

Agazzi: Why, no, my dear fellow, I don't see any reason...

(To Sirelli): Won't you just tell the ladies to come in here?

Sirelli, keeping at a safe distance from Ponza, goes to the door at the left and calls.

Ponza: The ladies in here? In here with me? Oh, no, no, please, rather...

At a signal from Sirelli, who stands in the doorway to the left, his face taut with intense emotion, the Ladies enter.

They all show various kinds and degrees of excitement and emotion. Signora Frola appears, and catching sight of Ponza trembling from head to foot, worked up into a state of positively animal passion, stops, quite overwhelmed. As he assails her during the lines that follow, she exchanges glances of understanding from time to time with the Ladies about her.

The action here is rapid, nervous, tense with excitement, and extremely violent.

Ponza: You? Here? How is this? You! Here! Again! What are you doing here?

Signora Erola: Why, I just came... don't be cross! Ponza. You come here to tell these ladies... What did you tell these ladies?

Signora Frola: Nothing! I swear to God, nothing!

Ponza: Nothing? What do you mean, nothing. I heard you with my own ears, and this gentleman here heard you also. You said "she plays." Who plays? Lena plays! And you know very well that Lena has been dead for four years. Dead, do you hear! Your daughter has been dead – for four years!

Signora Frola: Yes, yes, I know... Don't get excited, my dear... Oh, yes, oh yes. I know...

Ponza: And you said "she hasn't been able to play since that happened." Of course she hasn't been able to play since that happened. How could she, if she's dead?

Signora Frola: Why, of course, certainly. Isn't that what I said? Ask these ladies. I said that she hasn't been able to play since that happened. Of course. How could she, if she's dead?

Ponza: And why were you worrying about that piano, then?

Signora Frola: No, no! I'm not worrying about any piano...

Ponza: I broke that piano up and destroyed it. You know that, the moment your daughter died, so that my second wife couldn't touch it. She can't play in any case. You know she doesn't play.

Signora Frola: Why, of course, dear! Of course! She doesn't know how to play!

Ponza: And one thing more: Your daughter was Lena, wasn't she? Her name was Lena. Now, see here! You just tell these people what my second wife's name is. Speak up! You know very well what her name is! What is it? What is it?

Signora Frola: Her name is Julia! Yes, yes, of course, my dear friends, her name is Julia!

Winks at someone in the company.

Ponza: Exactly! Her name is Julia, and not Lena! Who are you winking at? Don't you go trying to suggest by those winks of yours that she's not Julia!

Signora Frola: Why, what do you mean? I wasn't winking! Of course I wasn't!

Ponza: I saw you! I saw you very distinctly! You are trying to ruin me! You are trying to make these people think that I am keeping your daughter all to myself, just as though she were not dead. *(He breaks into convulsive sobbing):*... just as though she were not dead!

Signora Frola *(hurrying forward and speaking with infinite kindness and sympathy):* Oh no! Come, come, my poor boy. Come! Don't take it so hard. I never said any such thing, did I, madam!

Amalia, Signora Sirelli, Dina: Of course she never said such a thing! She always said the girl was dead! Yes! Of course! No!

Signora Frola: I did, didn't I? I said she's dead, didn't I? Arid that you are so very good to me. Didn't I, didn't I? I, trying to ruin you? I, trying to get you into trouble?

Ponza: And you, going into other people's houses where there are pianos, playing your daughter's tunes on them! Saying that Lena plays them that way, or even better!

Signora Frola: No, it was... why... you see... it was... well... just to see whether... Ponza. But you can't... you mustn't! How could you ever dream of trying to play a tune that your dead daughter played!

Signora Frola: You are quite right!... Oh, yes! Poor boy! Poor boy!

(She also begins to weep): I'll never do it again: Never, never, never again!

Ponza *(advancing upon her threateningly):* What are you doing here? Get out of here! Go home at once! Home! Home! Go home!

Signora Frola: Yes, yes! Home! I am going home! Oh dear, oh dear!

She backs out the rear door, looking beseechingly at the company, as though urging everyone to have pity on her son-in-law. She retires, sobbing.

The others stand there looking at Ponza with pity and terror; but the moment Signora Frola has left the room, he regains his normal composure.

Ponza: I beg pardon for the sad spectacle I've had to present before all you ladies and gentlemen to remedy the evil which, without wanting, without knowing, you are doing to this unhappy woman – with your compassion.

Agazzi *(astonished like all the others):* What? You were only pretending?

Ponza: I had to, my good people! It's the only way to keep up the illusion for her, don't you see? I have to roar out the truth that way – as if it were madness, my madness! Forgive me, I must be going, I must go to her.

He hurries out through the rear door.

Once more they stand astonished and silent looking at each other.

Laudisi (*coming forward*): And so, ladies and gentlemen, we learn the truth!

He bursts out laughing.

Curtain

1917 – Right you are! (If you think so)

Drama in three acts

Introduction, Analysis, Summary

Characters, Act I

Act II

Act III

In Italiano – Così è (se vi pare)

En Español – Así es... si así te parece

««« Pirandello in English

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