

quick. Get it open . . . You haven't got the dog? How many more times do you need telling to bring the dog? (*The siren stops and there is dead silence as they wait for the planes*)

AMALIA Sergeant, there's a very good shelter just across the way. We don't have to stay here out of bravado, you know.

CIAPPA (*calmly lighting a cigarette*) Don't you worry about me, my dear. You go off to the shelter. I'll keep watch over the dead man for you. Well, it would be a sin to leave him here alone, wouldn't it?

(*At this the two nuns leap to their feet and make for the door, talking in high-pitched female voices*)

FRANCO This is no place for us. There's work to be done outside.

PASCALINO Yes, sister. Wait for me. I'm coming, too. (*As they exit CIAPPA catches sight of their backs*)

CIAPPA Well, well, well. Nuns in trousers. Now that's a sight I never thought I'd live to see. (*Chuckles*) Nuns in trousers, eh? (*The anti-aircraft guns open up*) All right, corpse. Come on. Stop messing about and let's get down to the shelter. (*No movement from GENNARO*)

PLAIN CLOTHES POLICEMAN Sergeant, for Christ's sake!

CIAPPA Shut your whingeing. There's no need to stay here. If you're wetting your pants, clear off.

(*In the distance the first bombs begin to fall. AMALIA, while with terror, stands with her back against the wall clasping her two children to her. ERRICO and ADELAIDE are pressed against the other wall*)

PLAIN CLOTHES POLICEMAN Sergeant, sergeant! Oh, sod this for a game of soldiers, I'm off. (*He runs out followed by his colleague.*)

CIAPPA (*cool, calm and collected*) They're getting nearer. Yes, they're getting nearer all right. Hello, there go the machine guns. Struth, they're gunning us now.

(*A bomb explodes very near and they all, except CIAPPA and GENNARO, cower instinctively from it*)

Dear oh dear, that was a bit too close for comfort, eh? You know, I don't know whether these houses will stand up to it. A direct hit and - whoosh - we'll all be blown to smithereens. Wayhay, there goes another. Getting really close now, eh?

(*The bombing is at its most violent. The explosions are more and more frequent, rattling the shutters with their blast. CIAPPA is unmoved as he watches GENNARO lying stock still in bed. The noise of the raid gradually subsides. There's the odd distant explosion. Then silence*)

So. A real live corpse as ever was. Bombs dropping all around you, and you didn't bat an eyelid. My congratulations, sir. Dedication like that in a corpse is not a thing you see every day of the week. Oh no. Such devotion to duty. I take my hat off to you. (*He crosses to the bed and stands at the foot*) Right, you. Out of it. Do you hear me? I said I want you out of that bed now. This instant. (*No response. For a second he loses his cool and shakes the bed violently*) Are you deaf, you bastard. I said Up.

(*GENNARO lies there more 'dead' than ever. CIAPPA walks round the bed and lifts a corner of the mattress cover with his swagger stick to reveal every imaginable item of black market food*) Jesus Christ, what have we got here? This isn't a wake. It's a bleeding harvest festival.

(*The all clear sounds and after a moment the voices start up again outside*)

VOICES Thank God, it's over . . . Anyone seen father?  
 . . . Get you: self washed. You're covered in dust . . .  
 What's happened to my slippers? . . . My God, they got  
 the big house on the corner . . .

(*Noise of fire engines. CIAPPA is now looking at GENNARO  
 with open admiration*)

CIAPPA Well, I take my hat off to you. I really do. That  
 must have taken a whole lot of guts. Bravo, sir. Bravo.  
 It's all right, I know you're not dead. And I also know  
 there's enough black market food here to feed a regiment  
 of stormtroopers for a whole year – for the whole dur-  
 ation. My dear sir, I am not going to arrest you. I don't  
 know about its being sacrilege to touch the dead, but it  
 sure would be sacrilege to touch a man who's got as  
 much bottle as you have. Don't worry. I'm not going to  
 arrest you. (*Pause*) Just give me the satisfaction of seeing  
 you move. That's all I want – just a little flicker of  
 movement from you. I won't even search the place. I've  
 seen nothing. Right? (*Still no response from GENNARO*)  
 Come on, matey, let me see you move. I won't arrest you.  
 I give you my word. (*No response*) I haven't seen anything.  
 And I'm not going to look. I give you my word of honour.  
 GENNARO (*sitting bolt upright*) Well, if you arrest me after  
 that, you're a two-faced shit.

CIAPPA No, no, I've given you my word. But there's just  
 one thing. I'd like you all to bear in mind that I am not a  
 complete, screaming bloody idiot.

GENNARO Me neither, sergeant. Me neither, old cock.

(*CIAPPA smiles, goes to pat GENNARO on the back. Then he  
 stops and turns to the door*)

CIAPPA Well then, everyone, I bid you good day.

(*They all breathe freely again and they are all over him, jabbering  
 and pawing at him. Good naturedly he smiles at them*)

AMALIA Sergeant, may I offer you a cup of coffee?  
 CIAPPA A cup of coffee? Well, thanks all the same, but I  
 had one on my way here. Half a lira cheaper than yours,  
 but nowhere near as nice, I'm sure. (*They all go to see him  
 off*)

CURTAIN