

## **Rocco and his Brothers, Parte I**

### *English translation*

*Please note: This not a native-language level literary translation of the photo-essay. This basic translation is a tool to assist intermediate-level Italian learners to understand the story.*

*In writing our photo-essays, we aim for a fluid Italian and then we write an English translation to match it. Our English translations retain some Italian syntax to help students get the feel for the Italian. This more literal translation also makes the text more accessible to lower-level students.*

*For our Italian films, the lines of dialogue are verbatim from the film as spoken by the actors – or dubbers, as in the case of this film. (The only exceptions are that, in order to make the photo-essay effective as a language-learning tool: 1) we have translated dialect into standard conversational Italian, 2) we have corrected non-standard grammar, and 3) we've clarified or simplified some phrases.) Although we have not printed every line of dialogue, we actually have included most of it, so students can use this document to assist them in following the Italian dialogue while watching the film.*

*We hope that this language-learning tool will be engaging and enlightening. We're just telling the story here, though, not analyzing it. It's no substitute for material written at a native-language level that explores the film in depth!*

*The images are an important part of the photo-essay. Each paragraph refers to specific images. Even if you don't understand Italian, please read this translation alongside the Italian version on the blog, so that you can have context for the words. These visuals also help us to know the movie better: they not only enrich the story, but they also show camera movements, editing, the symbols chosen by the director and thematic ideas. You will also have access to the links to other references in the blog itself.*

*Thank you, and enjoy!*

## **Rocco and his Brothers, Parte I**

Luchino Visconti, Director (1960)

Cinematography: Giuseppe Rotunno

Screenplay: Suso Cecchi D'Amico e Luchino Visconti

Set Design: Mario Garbuglia

Soundtrack: Nino Rota

### **What are we talking about?**

Rosaria Parondi, a widow, moves from the South of Italy to the North in search of a better life. Dressed in black, in mourning and with her old-fashioned ways, she brings her four sons to Milan, where the fifth son is already living. An encounter with a woman there will lead to make choices that will change the brothers' lives and will tear the family apart.

### **Getting to know them better**

The opening title sequence is displayed over an image of the inside of a railroad station. We seem to almost be looking through prison bars. Somber music – mournful, really – lets us know: this is not going to be an easy journey.

When the music ends, the station comes to life. A train pulls in with a blast of steam. People hurry off and hustle along the platform.

Inside a car, a young man, Simone ([Renato Salvatori](#)), munching on an apple, wakes his mother, a woman dressed all in black, who leans back against the window, cradling a younger boy in her arms. She's a widow – a recent widow – travelling with her four sons.

“Wake up! We're in Milan!” Simone says excitedly. “Get up, Luca! We're here!”

His mother, Rosaria ([Katina Paxinou](#)), awakens and looks at him lovingly.

“Finally!” says [Ciro](#), another of the brothers, as he steps out of the train.

The fourth brother appears: [Rocco](#) ([Alain Delon](#)).

From outside the train, we see [Ciro](#) help his mother step off. He supervises the unloading of sons and of luggage, all in a big pile.

“Isn’t Vincenzo here? Why isn’t he here yet?” Rosaria asks. Vincenzo, her fifth son, has already moved to Milan.

“Maybe he’s waiting for us outside.”

Ciro puts his arm around his mother, whose head is covered with a black shawl. With a worried expression, she asks, “Simone, why isn’t Vincenzo here yet?”

Simone offers to go look for him. “Yes, but don’t go far!” she instructs him. This is the big city.

As Simone walks down the platform, the steam from the train mingles with the steam from his breath; it’s cold! At last, he turns around, shrugs with arms outstretched, and heads back to his family.

By now, all the other passengers have left, greeted by family and friends. The station is practically deserted. A few cleaners wash off the sides of the train. We watch the family in a long shot as they pick up their things and leave.

CAPTION: The Parondis, carrying all their worldly possessions, walk down the broad tiled staircase and then out of the station.

The family is on a tram, going through the city. The boys look out in awe at the shop windows.

“How beautiful!” exclaims Rosaria.

“Rocco, look!” exclaims Simone. “Look at those shop windows. What light! It seems like daytime.”

“Excuse me,” Rosaria says, to get the ticket collector’s attention. She shows him a piece of paper, asking, “Where should I get off to get to there?”

“At the end of the line.”

“The end of the line?!”

“The end of the line. Get off at Lambrate.”

She shows him two worn photos of Vincenzo in his military uniform. “My son. The oldest,” she says proudly. “We’re going to see him.”

## VINCENZO, Installment 1

We move to the home of Ginetta, Vincenzo's fiancée. Vincenzo (Spiros Focás) and Ginetta (Claudia Cardinale) sit side by side, smiling at each other and holding hands. Vincenzo has a flower in his hair. Noisy chatter fills the room; it's a festive occasion.

Men raise their glasses to the couple and say "Best wishes! Congratulations again!" As the camera pans across the living room, we see bald men in suits and ties seated at a table laden with food. A Chianti bottle holds a bunch of flowers. Paper decorations dangle from the ceiling. Across the room, young people are chatting.

Ginetta's mother brings a tray out to a second table, which seems already to be spilling over with plates and bottles.

"They wanted to do everything their way! And the parents? But who wants to hear from them anymore!"

Ginetta sits shyly, her fiancé's hand covering hers, as he replies, "We had to do it eventually. I had no desire to go back down there." He's talking about Lucania, in the South, the region where he was born. "I want to raise my family here."

One of the guests tells Ginetta's brother, Alberto, that he should get married, but he says he won't.

At that point, Ginetta stands up. Speaking of Alberto, she says dismissively, "He thinks that they'll have to support us, but we've decided that we're going to make it on our own." She turns to her fiancé. "Isn't that right, Vincè?"

Ginetta walks around the room with a tray, serving drinks.

When she comes to Alberto, she says sternly, "We will never ask you for anything. Got it?"

She's interrupted by the doorbell. Another of her brothers says, "That must be Aldo. I'm going to the movies, Mama."

The guests bid him a noisy farewell, with cries of "Bye!" and "Enjoy yourself!" He responds repeatedly as a slow tracking shot follows him to the door.

"It's craziness!" a guest comments. "He lives on bread and movies."

"Yes, it's become an obsession," another agrees. "Sunday, I went along too. But I fell asleep immediately," she laughs.

When he finally opens the door, the brother sees a stranger, who asks, "Good evening. Do the Giannellis live here? I'm Mrs. Parondi."

He turns and calls out, "Vincenzo, come and see who's here!"

As the family enters, Vincenzo arrives from the other room. He runs towards his mother with his arms open wide.

They fall into each other's arms as the family looks on.

"Son! My son!" she cries. In a melodramatic flourish, she starts to cross herself, then takes out a handkerchief and sobs into it.

He bends down and picks up his little brother: "Luca!"

Soon, Ginetta's mother appears and embraces Rosaria. "Ah, Rosaria! Dear Rosaria! Is that your family?" she asks Vincenzo, "Oh, god bless you! Come in!"

While Mrs. Gianelli guides Rosaria into the other room, Ginetta asks, "These are all your brothers?" She greets them one by one as they courteously remove their hats. "Leave everything here and come in! Make yourselves comfortable!"

The new arrivals stir up a flurry of conversation among the guests.

Ginetta's father says, "Amelia! Offer her a glass of wine! Come on, boys! Come in! Amelia, offer a glass of wine to the boys! Don't you see that they're cold? Ginetta, offer him the cookies! They are really good-looking!"

The Parondis are getting a very warm welcome here.

Everyone is excited. But not Rosaria, who sits glumly with her glass of wine. When Vincenzo touches her cheek, she complains, sighing, "What bad luck we've had, dear son!" Then, after a pause: "Tell me something. But have you already stopped wearing mourning clothes for your father?"

In fact, he does have a black mourning band on his arm, but he replies, "Yes, you're right, but this evening ..." He takes the flower out from behind his ear and continues, with a gesture, "This is Ginetta. I wrote you that we were engaged. And you've arrived just in time to give us your blessing."

"Are you already so rich you can marry right now while you have the responsibility for the whole family on your shoulders?" He is the oldest son, after all.

Ginetta has been listening to this conversation and she doesn't look happy.

Vincenzo replies, "Why didn't you write me that you were all coming!"

Rosaria looks at her future daughter-in-law, shrugs, and rolls her eyes. "We did write!"

"Yes, when we lost Papa. I answered that first I had to look for jobs for them. It's not easy to find work here in Milan."

In the meantime, Rocco and Simone are in the corner, talking to two women. Simone crudely stuffs food into his mouth. Rocco distributes oranges that they've brought from the South, much to the delight of one of the guests, who exclaims, "Oranges! From our region! Thank you! What a fragrance!"

Ginetta's mother confronts Rosaria, who sits at the table hunched over and aggrieved. "Listen, Rosaria, I thought that you all came for the engagement party. It's fine that Vincenzo didn't say anything, but my god, I thought it would be a nice surprise."

Rosaria shrugs, raises her eyebrows, and pulls aside her shawl to reveal a big button pinned to her coat with a picture of her late husband. "I have too much grief to think about parties."

"You came right straight from the station?" asks the father.

"Yes."

"Where will you sleep tonight? We have no room."

The woman clasps Vincenzo's hand and looks at him, imploringly. "I don't think that my son will make me sleep in the middle of the street. He has to think of us now."

Ginetta's mother jumps into the fray. "Listen here, Rosaria, it's best to say now how things are. You need to think about these boys of yours. You're correct. But I have to think about this daughter of mine, got it?"

Then she rushes out of the room, complaining, "She arrives just like that and ruins everything!" Ginetta runs after her and takes her by the shoulders. "Mama, what are you saying?"

Rosaria has had enough. She stands up and calls her boys: "Rocco! Simone! Let's go." Gesturing at Ginetta's mother, she says, "I'm not crazy. I understood everything!" Then, still staring at the mother, but addressing Vincenzo, she continues sternly, "They want to keep you from helping your mother! They have no respect for your dead father. Heathens!" "Heathen?! Me?!" replies Ginetta's mother, shocked.

Rosaria rushes out of the room. "Let's go! Hurry up!" She grabs her bag. Ginetta runs to stop her and takes her by the arm. But Rosaria pushes her away, accusing, "You shut up! You're all the same family!" Then she gestures to her boys. "Let's go, sons, hurry up!" Ginetta is upset and repeats softly, "No! No!"

But her future mother-in-law is on a rampage. Shaking her finger at them, she yells, "God will punish you, because God is just! And he judges everyone." Behind her, we see a devotional Catholic image hung on a door.

Ginetta tries again, "No, bear with me. No one meant to offend you."

But her brother, Alberto, grabs her and pushes her into the other room as she protests, "Let me go, let me go!"

Vincenzo tries to intervene, but Alberto stops him. Meanwhile, the other Parondis leave the house with their baggage.

And finally Ginetta's mother points at Vincenzo, yelling, "You too! Get out of here!"

It almost seems like Rosaria had a plan to get her son back and this plan has worked perfectly. "Did you hear?" she asks her son. "What are you waiting for? Come on!"

Vincenzo grabs his coat and leaves with his family. Throughout this hubbub, we see several religious images pinned to the wall and door, as if welcoming people to this tranquil place.

When the last Parondi has left, Ginetta's mother shouts, "Get out!" and slams the door.

It's night. Vincenzo is walking beside tall wooden fences. He peeks in between some slats and calls out, "Armando!" A dog barks. A voice calls from inside, "Who is it?"

"It's me, Vincenzo. Open up!"

The door opens and we see the silhouette of a small man who steps out into the doorway. Vincenzo towers over him. "What's wrong? What are you doing here so late?"

"I'll explain later."

Armando invites Vincenzo to come in. "Hurry up, it's cold!"

A tracking shot shows us a yard behind the fence. In the background, lit windows shine in the dark. From behind the fence, we hear Armando saying, "Now you'll tell me why you're here at this hour."

"To sleep, if it's possible."

"It's almost day already!"

Vincenzo stoops down to pet the dog, which barks without letup as the men enter a little wooden house.

"Sit down! Explain!"

Vincenzo sits, takes off his gloves and tells his story, "My mother and my brothers arrived like an earthquake. And then there was a big argument with my future in-laws. I had to give up my room, my fiancée, and I have all these things I'm worrying about. Everything is a big mess."

Armando laughs. "For you, a room and a fiancée are the same thing."



"I don't want to joke. What do I do with my whole family on my shoulders? Where do I get the money to pay for a house? Tonight is okay, I set them up. But tomorrow, what will I do?"

"What's the problem? There are so many houses in Milan. Apartment buildings are popping up like mushrooms."

"Sure! But they have to be paid for, I know."

"Do what all the southerners\* do. Get an apartment in public housing! Pay for a few months and then don't pay anything more. About a month, later they evict you and you go where the evicted people don't have to pay anything. You'll have heating, light, etc. etc. The City of Milan does not leave anyone in the middle of the street!"

"But can't they take us right away?"

"No! You have to be evicted. That's the secret. Get it?"

\* *Derogatory slang for people who come from the south.*

Through the wire grid of a fence, we see the Parondis pulling a wagon loaded with their belongings. Rosaria is in the lead, with the littlest son, Luca, beside her.

They walk up to the fence. Rosaria calls out, "Porter!" The boys wait. Simone rubs his hands together briskly to warm them. "Porter!"

"Eh?" comes a voice off-screen and in the distance.

"I'm Mrs. Parondi. Open up!"

"I'm coming!"

A lady comes to the fence with a shawl over her head and shoulders. She opens up the gate for the family.

"Madonna, what a rush!" she exclaims, annoyed, with a Milanese accent.

Rosaria introduces herself.

The lady responds, "Parondi, Parondi, yes, there, it's over there." She gestures and repeats herself, evidently thinking that this way, this lady from the South who speaks a different dialect will understand her better. "There, there, down, down, the basement."

The family walks on. It's raining now and Rosaria opens her umbrella. The ground is slick with water. A woman stares at them as they pass.

The woman says to the porter, referring to the Parondis, "Did you see that?"

"*Mamma mia!* Africa!"

"Where are they from?"

"Lucania."

"Odd name. Where's that?"

"Down south."

"I see, the land of the idlers!"

Sharing an umbrella, the women have a good laugh at the expense of our poor family, the Parondis.

It's early morning and still dark. The Parondi family is asleep. As the camera pans around the kitchen, we see dishes out on the table and the top of a piece of furniture crammed with other utensils, under the family portrait.

The camera stops at the window, and we see that it is snowing. Vincenzo sits up in bed and looks out of the window. He's wearing a scarf around his neck; it's cold in that house. It's snowing like crazy.

Getting out of bed, he walks to another window, which he opens. With his hands on the sill, he gazes out. We hear yelling from the street.

At last, he turns on the bare light bulb in the room. "Wake up!" He goes to each bed in turn, waking his brothers. "Ciro! Wake up! Rocco! There's work for everybody!"

Ciro sits up and looks around, then he stands and looks out the window.

The commotion wakens Rosaria. The wall behind her is bare, except for a rosary hanging on a nail.

"What's wrong?" she asks.

"Nothing. Look out the window. We'll all work today!"

Rosaria is in awe. She puts her hand up to her face and exclaims, “Snow! Look at those flakes!” She wakens Luca, who is sleeping in bed beside her. “Luca, look at the snow!”

Luca bounces up and down. The family is so excited. It’s not something they’re used to in Lucania.

Vincenzo returns to the other brothers, wrapping his scarf back around his neck. “Hurry up or we’ll miss our chance.” He explains, “The Milanese don’t like snow in their streets.”

He and Rocco go to Simone’s bed, “Hey, sleepyhead! Wake up! Look at the snow!”

“Eh?” Simone yawns sleepily, sitting up and stretching. Suddenly he looks back, sees the snow and is momentarily impressed.

Simone is still stretching while a chorus of voices tells him, “Look at the snow! Look!”

His mother, hugging him, says, “Simone, darling, get up. Look, it’s snowing. It’s wonderful! There should be work for everybody. Get going!” But Simone lies down and his brother has to go in and smack him on the behind to get him moving.

Rosaria goes to Rocco. “You’ve been sick. Wear one of my sweaters.”

“But it’s a woman’s!” Everyone laughs.

“Let them tease you. Listen to your mother. Put it on. It can’t be seen underneath.” He nods and she goes to prepare breakfast.

In the kitchen, under the gaze of the family portrait, Rosaria sets out bowls on the table. “The coffee’s almost ready. There are fresh eggs, fresh from today.”

Ciro sits down and cuts off a hunk of bread to dunk as his mother pours coffee in the bowls. She keeps up a steady patter, “The Lord is merciful. He sent us snow.” She crosses herself and checks that Rocco is wearing the sweater.

To the accompaniment of cheerful organ-grinder music, she calls again, “Simone, hurry up!” He comes stumbling into the kitchen, still yawning, with his eyes closed. She pats his arm. “Poor Simone, his first day of work.”

Simone winces. “It’s freezing.” He walks over to the window and slams it shut.

Rosaria leaves the room and the camera pans over the boys having breakfast, stopping at Rocco. We watch him drinking his steaming coffee, pausing between sips to blow on it and occasionally giving a sweet smile.

Rosaria comes back loaded down with coats. “Rocco, bundle up. You’ve been sick.”

“Come here, lazybones,” she says to Simone, helping him with his coat. “God bless this city. Are you happy now?” She laughs.

Vincenzo urges his brothers to hurry. “It’s stopped snowing. There’s enough snow for a full day’s work.”

All the brothers are putting on scarves and hats for this cold climate, so different from the South.

Rosaria stands in the hallway to say goodbye. “Hurry up! I’m almost dying of the cold!”

One by one, she says goodbye, telling one, “Give me a kiss” and another, “God bless you.”

The boys turn and wave. Their mother sends them off with a warning: “See that you come back with your pockets full of money, or you’re no longer sons of Rosaria Parondi!”

Outside, the ground is covered with snow. Luca stops to make a snowball.

The brothers join a small group passing by and they all set off in search of work.

Ginetta is walking on a downtown street. There are piles of snow everywhere. Visconti is giving us a sense of the new Milan – the people in business attire walking past department store windows – and of the old city – with the vegetables set out in front of a grocery.

Vincenzo spots Ginetta and runs to her, leaping over a puddle of melted snow.

“Have you seen who’s there?” she asks. We assume she’s referring to her brother, Alberto, who follows her to make sure she’s not meeting with Vincenzo.

“Yes, he’s gone now. Let’s go down where we can talk.”

He leads her to an out-of-the-way spot between buildings, where they stand beside stacked crates of wine. He lays out their predicament: “I can’t come to your house anymore. In the street you’re always chaperoned, you work when I work.”

“At my house, they want nothing to do with you,” Ginetta tells him. “With what courage do we start a new life?”

“I’m optimistic.”

“You’re a born optimist.”

Some of Ginetta’s friends pass by and greet her. She smiles at them.

Vincenzo continues, “Maybe we’ll manage it all. We’ve got a house and, as Mama says, ‘If a real man really wants a woman, he takes her without asking.’”

Her smile fades. “What?” she asks, slapping his face.

“Oh!” he exclaims, putting his hand up to his cheek, startled. “What’s come over you?” he asks, then foolishly answers her question: “He takes her! Like you take a woman! Without asking her or anyone for permission.”

She tells him firmly, “Vincè, with me you have to ask permission every time!”

He thinks this is cute. “Okay,” he says, reaching out to pinch her chin, but she slaps his hand away, still furious.

“Bye,” she says, with a slight smile, and turns to go. Leaning on the crates, he watches her walk away.