

Rome, Open City, Part IX

Director: Roberto Rossellini (1945)

The telephone rings and the housekeeper answers. It's Marina, looking for Manfredi.

"No one has seen him."

"Nannina, tell me the truth. Do you know where he is?"

"I don't know, Signorina," the housekeeper insists. "I swear. If I did, I'd tell you."

Hanging up, she comments, "She is really an idiot! She calls and asks for information over the phone. That stuff will end us all up in via Tasso!"*

**The SS tortured members of the Resistance in the building at via Tasso 145 which now houses the Museum of the Liberation of Rome.*

In his office, Bergmann is leafing through various Italian newspapers when a soldier appears, announcing the chief of police.

The two men share a Nazi salute.

"My dear friend," Bergman says, shaking his hand. "You came at just the right time. Something very interesting has come up. Our Signor Manfredi was spotted this morning around the Prenestino district. And just a while ago, a bomb blew up a car of gasoline in the rail yard in the same area."

"Excuse me, my dear major," responds the chief, as the two men sit. "My news is even more sensational. I, too, discovered something very interesting."

From his briefcase, he takes out a document, which the major reviews. "Fantastic!" he exclaims, then reads aloud: "Ferraris, Luigi. Arrested in Bologna on February 4, 1928. Sentenced to twelve years for conspiring against the state. Escaped during transport." The document shows Manfredi, front and side views.

Through a side door, Bergmann goes into another room, where someone is playing piano. Officers lounge on couches and chairs, drinking.

"Ingrid!" calls the major, summoning a woman who has been leaning on the piano. We already saw her when she went to visit Marina in her dressing room. He whispers something to her and she nods.

In Bergmann's office, Ingrid greets the police chief, who kisses her hand. She thanks him for a gift of flowers and coffee.

Bergmann hands her the Manfredi document.

"Fantastic!" she says, in German.

"The time for talk is over, Ingrid. We must act immediately."

"Leave it to me," she replies.

Francesco and Manfredi are getting ready for the wedding. Francesco whistles as he shines his shoes. Manfredi, about to shave, has spread foam on his face.

There's a knock on the door and Francisco calls out, "Who is it?"

"Police!"

"Good morning, Sergeant! Wait a moment! I'm dressing."

“Then with your permission, we’ll pay our respects to your future wife.” Outside the door, the sergeant holds a bouquet of flowers, no doubt a wedding gift. At his side is in the man who, in beginning of the film, tried to sell black market eggs.

They walk over to Pina’s apartment, just as she rushes out, pushing them aside.

She calls, “Francesco!” and uses her key to enter the apartment. “The Germans! The Fascists! They’re surrounding the building!”

From the window, they see people yelling and running, some entering the building and others leaving. Trucks and motorcycles pull up.

As dramatic music plays, troops gather in formation. The order comes in German: “Get everyone out of the building. Now!”

At the window – with panes taped as reinforcement against exploding bombs – Pina says, “Look, they’re surrounding the building.” She pushes Francesco behind her, warning, “Get inside.” The Germans could be there for a raid – or to round up men to send to a labor camp.

Looking down, she sees soldiers marching to the building.

They enter the courtyard, and an SS officer orders his soldiers in German, “Bring everyone down from every floor.”

Then he says to a blonde in civilian clothes: “Tell them to go upstairs and bring everyone down immediately!” She translates the message to the Italian soldiers, who leave.

When the police sergeant emerges from the building, the SS man orders him in German, “Come here!”

“Me?” He lifts his arm in a sort of Nazi salute and approaches.

The German officer turns to the woman. “What’s he looking for?”

She translates and the sergeant responds, “I’m here on duty, but I have to go now.”

“Nonsense!” says the German, shaking his finger. “He stays here.”

She translates again: “You have to stay here.” He gulps, gives a faint a Nazi salute and steps aside.

At the church, as the altar boys are setting up for mass, the little girl who’s Marcello’s roommate bursts in. She’s carrying the baby and holding her little sister’s hand. “Marcello! Marcello!” she cries frantically.

She puts the baby down and runs up to the altar. “The Germans and Fascists!”

“Where?”

“Our building!”

Marcello calls out, “Let’s go, boys!”

Don Pietro intervenes. “Stop. Wait a minute!”

“Didn’t you understand that the Germans are there?” argues Marcello.

“Don’t move. I’ll go to see what’s going on.”

“But we have to go!”

“I said to stay here! Understand?”

Marcello explains, “But, Don Pie’, there are bombs in Romoletto’s attic!” So the secret is out.

The women and children are assembled outside the building. Inside, the men are slipping away and heading for the railway station. And just in time: a soldier looks one way, as the men run the other.

Outside, Pina stands in the crowd, hands crossed. A woman points: “Look at these cowards! They are even dragging the sick downstairs!”

Pina’s landlady tells the sergeant, “Grandfather didn’t want to be brought down. What will they do to him?”

He tells her not to worry.

Two soldiers drag out a man, followed by a running woman: “My son! My son! Giorgio!” A soldier grabs her and shoves her into the crowd, where a neighbor embraces her. Pina holds her plaid scarf over the sobbing woman's shoulders, with a look of growing rage.

“No men in this building?” says a German. “Nonsense!”

The translator tells the Italian in charge, who in turn barks at the policeman, “Did you understand? Where are all the men?”

“How should I know? I’m not the doorman!”

From the rear, Don Pietro approaches, accompanied by Marcello, dressed as an altar boy.

The Italian soldier approaches the priest. “Where are you going?”

“There is a sick man in need of comfort.”

“It’s no use; don’t bother. There’s no one else there. We brought them all down for a little fresh air.”

Don Pietro shakes his head and says calmly, “It’s not possible. A man that sick... I have to go up.”

The sergeant pipes up in mock frustration, “You get here at this hour, Father? The poor man was begging for you. He’s probably dead by now. Go on and hurry!”

“Just a minute!” counters the Italian soldier. “How can that be? They brought everyone down.”

“No, not this one!” insists the sergeant. “This one is a paralyzed old man.” He gestures to the priest.

“Go ahead, Father. Hurry!”

The priest and Marcello head upstairs and the sergeant throws up his arms. “Some service! They used to be as prompt as firemen.”

As suspenseful music plays, Don Pietro and Marcello hurry up the stairs. At the top, Marcello gives the secret whistle.

Then he runs to the door. “Romoletto, open up! It’s me! Don Pietro is here too!” But the boy refuses.

“Open up, Romoletto!” yells the priest.

“No, go away or get blown up with me!”

Don Pietro forces the door open and runs in.

Rushing across the roof, they see Romoletto at the edge, leaning on his crutches. He holds explosives in one hand. “What are you doing?!” asks the priest.

“I’ll kill them all! Get out of here!”

“Do you want to kill us all, you lunatic? Give me that stuff!” Struggling with the boy, Don Pietro finally wrests a rifle and some other things from him, with Marcello’s help.

Downstairs, the Italian soldier asks the sergeant, “What floor is this dying man on?”

“I don’t know... third or fourth...”

“I’ll go have a look. I’m a bit of a doctor myself.”

He gestures to two others to accompany him.

“I’ll go with you,” offers the policeman.

“No, I’ll go alone. I don’t like your face.”

Don Pietro and Marcello race downstairs to get to Pina’s apartment – where the grandfather lies in bed – to hide the weapons.

From above, in a dizzying shot made up of diagonals and parallel lines, we see the Italian soldiers hurrying upward – and they have the same destination.