

## Rome, Open City, Part X

Director: Roberto Rossellini (1945)

The soldiers are going door to door in search of the frail old man, not entirely convinced that he exists. They move closer and closer to Pina's apartment. But Don Pietro and Marcello make it inside just in time.

They find the grandfather sleeping peacefully in his corner bed. Don Pietro tucks the rifle and Romoletto's bomb under the blanket.

Out of breath, Don Pietro sits by the bed just as the man wakes up, outraged to find a priest there. "But what are you doing here? I'm perfectly fine!" he exclaims.

Don Pietro tells him to lie down and pretend he's sick, but the man is not ready for his last rites. "I want to live one hundred years!" he insists.

The priest explains, "They're coming!"

"Who?"

"The Germans!"

"I don't give a damn\* about the Germans and the Fascists!"

Don Pietro puts his hand over the man's mouth. To Marcello, he says, "Give me –"

*\*Though the grandfather is not using the phrase in this way, "me ne frego" (I don't give a damn) was an iconic fascist phrase.*

Rifles drawn, the soldiers arrive at Pina's place. Suspenseful music plays. They walk in through the open door.

Hearing a voice, they follow it and find Don Pietro giving last rites to the grandfather, who lies in bed, eyes closed, out cold.

The priest looks over at the men, nods and then continues his prayer. The soldiers leave.

As soon as the door closes, Don Pietro leans over and tries to revive the old man. Marcello picks up a frying pan. "Wow, Don Pietro, you really let him have it!" he exclaims, with a delighted smile.

Outside, Pina and the other women are still comforting Giorgio's mother. Pina glares at a helmeted SS man as he walks back and forth in front of her.

"You have such pretty eyes," he tells her in German, stroking her arm. She slaps his hand away.

Just then, soldiers drag Francesco out of the building. Seeing him, Pina calls out, "Francesco!" She tries to run to him, but the SS man blocks her path. "Pina!" Francesco yells. "Pina!"

The soldiers drag Francesco away. Pina breaks free and fends off the woman who has been interpreting. In silhouette, we see her run through the dark passageway toward the street.

As Pina emerges from the passageway, soldiers and even Don Pietro try to stop her. Francesco has been loaded in the back of a truck, which pulls away. He tries desperately to escape, as Pina struggles to reach him.

Pina breaks free from Don Pietro's grasp and rushes into the street, arm outstretched toward Francesco. In an iconic shot, she runs down the center of the street, one arm raised, plaid scarf clutched tight in the other, with a great mass of dark figures at the upper left, a lone car parked behind her and a soldier and motorcycle at the back. She chases the truck, calling Francesco's name over and over.

In the crowd, Don Pietro watches her, his arms around Marcello. Francesco, yelling, hair across his face, has one leg out of the truck.

Suddenly gunshots ring out and Pina falls sprawling in the street. She lies flat on her back, arms outstretched, motionless. We see her in a long shot from Francesco's point of view.

Still dressed in his white altar boy cassock, Marcello runs to her, screaming, "Mama!" He leans over her. Her skirt is high on her thighs, exposing her stocking tops and garters.

Don Pietro pulls the hysterical boy away. The police sergeant tries to restrain him as he calls inconsolably for his mother. Soldiers hold back the crowd.

Don Pietro holds Pina in his arms, her head back, eyes closed, her hair loose. His white vestments contrast starkly with her dark dress. The pose looks like a pietà.

Near the railway yards, a man emerges from the scrubland not far from the road, just as the convoy carrying Francesco and the other imprisoned Italians comes along. The man turns and gives a shrill whistle.

Waiting with a few others, Manfredi says, "There they are, get ready!" As one man whistles a reply, they pick up their rifles. "Watch for when they round the bend. Aim for the drivers." They take up their positions.

Led by a motorcycle, the trucks carrying the prisoners go under an overpass. When they reappear, the partisans, crouched on a rocky overlook, begin to fire.

The trucks come to a halt, and the captives jump off.

Some run away; others, Francesco among them, grab the rifles of injured soldiers and begin firing on the Germans.

Some of the Italian prisoners make it over the hill to safety, taking the Germans' guns. But the bodies of their dead comrades lie by the roadside.

Manfredi and Francesco are spending the night at Marina's apartment. She had insisted on hosting them. We notice the new furniture and the radio.

"There's always an American station playing jazz at this hour," Marina says cheerfully. The men sit somberly as she turns on some fast dance music.

“Shall we have a little drink, boys?” Animated as a hostess at a party, Marina sits down next to Francesco and smiles. “This kummel\* was a gift.” From a German, obviously. “It will warm us up.”

*\*Kummel is a German liqueur.*

Finally she notices that Francesco looks downcast. “Don’t you feel well?” She puts her hand on his forehead. “You have a fever!” She turns to Manfredi. “Feel, Giorgio, he’s burning up.”

Manfredi and Marina make up the sofa for Francesco, as the frenetic music continues to play and Marina chatters obliviously.

The doorbell rings, and Laretta is at the door. “Hello, sweetie,” she says, seeming quite drunk. “You see, I did come!”

Greeting the two men, she comments that Pina must have thrown Francesco out on their wedding night. She seems not to know that her sister is dead.

A little later, as Marina is changing in the bedroom, Manfredi goes in to get an aspirin for Francesco. “That idiot is just what we needed!” she says, referring to Laretta. “Now, where will you sleep?” “Don’t worry. I’ll be fine in the other room, in an armchair.”

The phone rings, and Marina sprawls over the bed to answer. “Oh, it’s you. Good evening.” We see that it’s Ingrid, with her heavy make-up. The Major stands behind her, holding a beer. He listens intently. “How are you, sweetheart? I’ve been waiting for your call.” There’s a pause. “How come you’re not alone?” Another pause.

“Have you seen him? Is he there?” Again a pause, and then, in a disappointed tone, “Oh, little Laretta.”

“She came to stay with me for a few days.”

While Marina is talking, Manfredi, a cigarette in his lips, takes a lighter from her purse. Replacing it, he notices a medicine bottle with a label marked cocaine. He examines the bottle, then puts it in his pocket.

At the end of the phone call, he asks her, “Why do you have this stuff in your purse?”

Manfredi doesn’t believe her story about a toothache, and they argue. Finally, he tells her she is free to do what she wants. “I don’t have any rights over you. Who am I? I’m just someone who has passed through your life for a moment.”

“You were about to say one of the many!”

“I didn’t say that.”

“But you thought it!”

“Yes! I’ve had lovers. What was I supposed to do? How do you think I bought all this furniture, my clothes, everything? With my pay? My pay is barely enough for stockings and cigarettes! I’ve gotten by like every other woman. That’s life.”

“Life’s the way we want it to be.”

“Words! Life is ugly, filthy. I know what poverty is, and it scares me. Maybe I could have married a streetcar driver and I would be starving to death now with him and our children.”

“Poor Marina. You think happiness consists of having a fancy apartment, nice clothes, a maid, and rich lovers?”

“If you’d really loved me, you’d have changed me. But you’re just like all the others – even worse. At least they don’t give me sermons.”

“You’re right. Forgive me.”

He leaves the room.

“Giorgio!” she murmurs. But he is gone.

In the other room, the two men talk quietly in the darkness. Marina opens the door, just as Manfredi is saying, “We’ll see Don Pietro tomorrow. He offered to hide me in a monastery for a while. We’ll go together.” She silently closes the door.

Francesco replies, “Not me. I couldn’t. Now I have to work harder than before. She’s dead.”

“Yes, I understand. But you’re upset right now. You might act rashly. Your activity might do more harm than good. Don’t be afraid that time will run out. It’ll be a long fight.”

Marina enters with blankets for Manfredi. “I brought your aspirin,” she says to Francesco. As they say goodnight, Manfredi barely looks at her.

Marina sits on the edge of her bed, where Lairetta lies in a drunken stupor. She picks up the phone and dials.

Just then Lairetta wakes up and calls her name.

“What do you want?”

“You know, maybe Manfredi’s right. We’re idiots.”

“Shut up! Go to sleep,” Marina answers, lowering the phone to her lap as the screen goes dark.