

Please note: With a script by renowned playwright, Arthur Miller, we've retained the colorful – but not so perfect – grammar of some of the protagonists in the English translation, copied verbatim from the film dialogue. However, as always: the cineracconto is written in standard conversational Italian.

This translation document is not a literary translation of the photo-story, which is written at an intermediate language level. This basic English translation is a tool to help Italian language learners understand the text. In writing our photo-stories, we aim for a fluid, standard Italian and then write an English translation to match it. Sometimes you'll find our English syntax a little stilted, in order to convey the feel of the Italian; at other times, the English will read slightly differently from the Italian in order to convey the same meaning. It's always a judgement call, and our team spends a lot of time analyzing way to write the most accurate and accessible translation, while maintaining a sense of time, place and character in our photo-stories.

The images are an important part of the photo-story. Each paragraph refers to specific images. Even if you don't understand Italian, please read this translation alongside the Italian version, with its images, 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 on the blog post.

Please see the blog for more information about our translation philosophy.

The Misfits, Part I

John Huston, Director (1961)

Screenplay: Arthur Miller

Cinematography: Russell Metty

Summary from Welcome page:

Roslyn Taber, innocent and fragile, has gone to Nevada for a quickie divorce. With Isabelle, her Reno landlady, she encounters three men – a pilot, a rodeo rider and a cowboy – who get by, day to day, in the bleak and beautiful desert landscape, stubbornly trying to make their way without submitting to a wage, a boss, or city life. They're all looking for something. The men think they've found it in Roslyn – but she's as lost as them.

On a quiet street in Reno, Nevada, a truck from Jack's Reno Garage pulls into a driveway and stops behind a Cadillac parked next to a beat-up house. The driver, Guido (Eli Wallach), gets out and walks around the car, examining its many dents and scrapes. There's a loving close-up of the Cadillac's classic fins.

A woman's voice from off-screen asks, "Young man, do you have the time?"

It's Isabelle (Thelma Ritter). She's dressed in a robe and has one arm in a sling. In her good hand she holds a small circular clock. Stepping down off the porch, she shakes the clock next to her ear and complains, "I got six clocks in the house and none of them work."

Her house has seen better days. Isabelle takes in short-term roomers: women who have come to Reno for a quickie divorce.

Guido answers, "Twenty after nine."

She exclaims, "After?!" and turns her head, yelling up towards a window in the house, "It's twenty after, dear!" Getting no response, she tries again, "Darlin'!"

The camera gazes up toward the window in a beautifully composed shot, all angles and straight lines.

A woman almost hidden by a curtain answers, "Five minutes. What about you?"

"I'm all set. I just ironed my sling. The lawyer said nine-thirty sharp, darlin'."

"Okay."

Guido gets into the car and slams the door shut.

At the car window, looking him straight in the eye, Isabelle says, "I hope you're not the miserly kind. The car brand-new, you know. She ought to get a very good price for it."

He leans out and asks in amazement, "Is that the right mileage? Twenty-three miles?" Even his hat looks startled.

"Yeah, we only took two rides in it. It's the darn men in this town. They keep running into her just to start a conversation." So we understand that the figure at the window must be some good-looking woman.

The camera looks up again to the window, where the woman, still hidden, asks in a quiet voice, "Will you come up, Iz?"

"Sure, dear." Then, shaking her clock for emphasis, Isabelle instructs Guido, "Don't go by appearances. It's brand-new. It was a divorce present from her husband."

"They givin' presents for divorces now?" he asks in disbelief.

"Why not?" she answers dreamily. "On the anniversary of our divorce, my husband always sends me one potted yellow rose, and it'll be 19 years in July. Course, he never did pay me the alimony. But I wouldn't wanna put a man out, you know? If his heart's not in it."

With his pinkie, Guido indicates her arm in the sling. "You break your arm in the car?"

"No. My last roomer, the one before Mrs. Taber, we celebrated her divorce and... I misbehaved. I'm so sick and tired of myself." She sighs, then turns and goes into the house.

Upstairs, Roslyn (Marilyn Monroe) sits at the vanity in her slip, staring at her reflection in the mirror. She has a mane of platinum blonde hair. As she applies her makeup, she whispers to herself, rehearsing the lines she'll soon recite before the judge. In order to get her divorce, she'll have to accuse her husband of... something.

Isabelle appears in the mirror and Roslyn asks, "Will you go over my answers with me again?"

"Sure, dear. But don't worry about it, you're gonna do wonderfully."

Isabelle patiently coaches Roslyn, who is reluctant to accuse her husband unjustly of cruelty. But that's the only way she'll get her quickie divorce.

Isabelle prompts, "In what way did this cruelty manifest itself?"

Roslyn turns away from the mirror and begins, "He persistently... how does that go again?" She gets up from the vanity.

Isabelle reads, "He persistently and cruelly ignored my personal wishes and my rights... and resorted on several occasions to physical violence against me."

Roslyn is fishing around in her closet for her dress. She tries again, "He persistently –"

She turns to face her landlady. Clothes hang in disorderly array on the door behind her. "Oh, do I have to say that? Why can't I just say... he wasn't there?" She starts to put on her dress. "He... You could touch him, but he wasn't there."

"Darling girl, if that was grounds for divorce, there'd only be about eleven marriages left in the United States. Now, just repeat after me."

They continue to rehearse as Roslyn pulls her dress over her head. It's black and sleeveless and cut low in front, perfect for a party or a nightclub. She's wearing vivid lipstick and has emphasized her eyebrows and lashes. Actually, she looks stunning.

The light toot of a car horn sends Roslyn to the window, where she peeks out between the curtains. Guido, leaning on the car, looks up at her, in another perfectly composed shot: the shadows, the shimmer of sunlight on the car, the configuration of straight lines leading directly to Guido in the center of the frame.

"They'll call in their estimate from the office, ma'am," he hollers.

"Those dents aren't my fault, you know." She's so beautiful that he actually looks confused.

He opens his arms in a gesture of helplessness. "I'll recommend the best price I can, ma'am. You can drive her now. I've put in a new battery."

"I'll never drive that car again," she tells him, and turns into the room to say, "Let's take a taxi."

He stammers, "I... I'll give you a lift if you're leaving right away."

"Swell. Two minutes!"

Back in the room, Roslyn says, "Iz, get dressed! You gotta be my witness!"

"This'll be my seventy-seventh time I've witnessed for a divorce! Two sevens – that's lucky, darlin'!"

"Oh, Iz! I hope!"

A dissolve carries us from Roslyn in her room to Guido's truck in downtown Reno, where she will appear in court.

Guido pulls his truck into a parking spot, gets out and runs around to the passenger side to help the ladies out.

"Easy does it, now," he says as he takes Isabelle's hand.

"Oh, you're a dear," she says with a smile.

Then he helps Roslyn out. We see that she's pinned back her hair for court, and a jacket covers her arms.

"Here we are!" he says. Only he doesn't let go of her arm.

Roslyn tries to break free, saying, "Thanks a lot. We've gotta go now."

But Guido persists, "If you're not goin' back East right away, I'd be glad to show you the country."

Roslyn seems to consider it. "Beautiful country around here, you know!" he assures her.

Roslyn is positioned in the exact center of the frame, between Guido and Isabelle. Clearly, she's the centerpiece of the film. "Well, I don't know where I'll be, but okay," she says, a little more warmly.

"Thanks again." She leaves.

Just to be cute, the landlady tells Guido, “My name is Isabelle Steers.”
“Isabelle. Well, okay, you come along too.”
“That's a sweet afterthought! You Reno men!”

Isabelle walks briskly to catch up with Roslyn, who hands her the notes. “I can't memorize this.” she says. “It's not the way it was.”

Isabelle looks at her with alarm. “Just say it. It doesn't have to be true. This isn't a quiz show; it's only a court.”

Then Roslyn stops short. She sees something. Or someone.

It's Roslyn's husband, Ray (Kevin McCarthy). He's standing at the top of the courthouse steps in a suit and tie, wearing a summer fedora. Roslyn takes a deep breath and walks up to him.

He says, “I just got off the plane. I'm not too late, am I?”

Roslyn goes up the steps toward him. She looks down, not meeting his gaze. “I don't wanna hear anything –”

He cuts her off. “Just give me five minutes. After two years, five minutes...”

She pleads with him to stop. “You can't have me now, so you want me, that's all. Please, I'm not blaming you. It's... I just don't believe in the whole thing anymore.”

“Kid, I understand. I understand...”

“You don't understand. You're not there, Raymond. If I'm gonna be alone, I wanna be by myself. Go back. You're not gonna make me feel sorry for you anymore.” She grabs Isabelle's hand and pulls her up the courthouse steps and inside.

At the train station, Guido scans the crowd from inside his truck. A train is pulling in, and some passengers are waiting to board. We notice a couple embracing, with a long-legged dog close by. The man is wearing a cowboy hat.

Guido yells over to the man, “Gay!”

Gaylord (Clark Gable), known to his friends as Gay, looks over and hollers back, “Wait up! I was just goin' over to see ya!”

The woman beside him, Susan (Marietta Peabody Tree), is wearing a pearl necklace and white gloves in the middle of the day.

Gay turns back to her and says matter of factly, “Well, good luck now, Susan.” He sounds as if he is saying goodbye to a business associate. He adds, a little more warmly, “I won't forget you, you can be sure of that.”

She looks up at him wistfully and puts her hands on his shoulders, pulling him to her.

“I don't even know where to write you,” she says.

He pulls back. “General delivery. I'll get it,” he assures her.

“Well, will you think about it?” she asks him. “It's the second-largest laundry in St Louis.”

“I wouldn't wanna kid you, Susan. I ain't cut out for business.”

“Well, will you think of me?” she entreats him. “Oh, Gay...”

He pats her arm reassuringly and turns her towards the train. "Oh, you know I will, honey. Goodbye." He puts her onto the train with a wave.

As the train pulls away, she blows him kisses from the window and he waves back to her, smiling.

Gay walks over to Guido's truck. "How're you doin', boy? Ready to cut out of this town? 'Cause I am." "Well, I've been thinkin' about it," Guido replies. Then he leans forward with a devilish grin and asks, "Which one was that?" "Susan. Swell sport, that woman," he says. Although he goes with a lot of women and he may have been relieved to see her off, he speaks decently of her to his friend.

"I just met me a girl sweet enough to eat, Gay. Fine-lookin' woman. The only trouble is, when I think of all the useless talkin' you gotta do, I get discouraged." "I tell you, I'm dyin' for some fresh air. And no people, male or female." Gay leans into the open window, making a proposition. "Look, why don't we take out to the mountains? Maybe we could even do a little mustangin' up there." "Well, I wanted to pile up about five hundred this time. I gotta get me a new engine." Gay disagrees. "That engine'll fly you anywhere. Say, you've been more than two months on this job, fella. You're gonna get the habit."

Guido, grimacing, wants to drop the subject of whether he's settling into a regular job. "I'll see you over at Harrah's later. Let's talk about it," he says. Gay agrees, and Guido takes off.

Gay calls to his dog: "Tom Dooley!" The dog goes to him, then bounds ahead, with a bark. He knows just where they are going. They walk across the broad street together, heedless, like they own it.

Done with their business in court, Isabelle and Roslyn are in Harrah's for a drink. They place their orders with a uniformed waitress.

Seeing Roslyn's sad expression, Isabelle says, "Well, cheer up!" "I will. I just hate to fight with anybody. When you win, you lose. You know, in your heart." "Well, you're free. Maybe the trouble is you're not used to it yet." "No, the trouble is I always end up back where I started. Never had anybody much. And here I am."

"Well, you had your mother, didn't you?" Isabelle asks. "How do you have somebody who disappears all the time? They both weren't there. She'd go off with a patient for three months and... You know how long three months is to a kid." As their drinks are being served, Isabelle has an idea. "Listen, don't leave. Settle here. They got a school. You could teach dancing. One thing about this town, it's always full of interesting strangers."

Abruptly, Roslyn puts her head down on her hand. "Oh, I'm sorry," Isabelle exclaims. "What did I say? I..."

Looking grief-stricken, Roslyn replies, "I suddenly miss my mother. Oh, isn't that the stupidest thing?"

Recovering, Roslyn leans towards Isabelle, holds up her glass and smiles. "Iz, you're a fine woman. You're practically the only woman that's ever been my friend." Isabelle smiles back. "Well, drink up then."

Suddenly Roslyn notices Gay's dog, Dooley, sitting on the floor in front of a white ceramic plate. Gay and Guido sit at the bar behind him, their backs to the women. "Oh, isn't that the dearest dog? Look how sweet he sits there."

"Yeah. Dogs are nice."

"Here, puppy," Roslyn says, and tries to attract him making kissing sounds and holding out something for him to eat. Dooley cocks his head.

With little hesitation, he trots over and eats right out of Roslyn's hand. They have definitely taken to each other. He looks soulfully into her eyes.

The dog gives a couple quiet barks of happiness, which catches Gay's attention.

"Hey, Dooley," he scolds.

Turning around, Guido notices that the ladies he had met earlier are sitting right there in Harrah's. He gets up off his stool and walks towards them, taking off his baseball cap.

He rests his hands on a chair back and leans towards Roslyn, smiling. "Hello. How'd you make out?"

"Okay," Roslyn responds, hesitantly.

"I'd like you to meet a friend of mine. Gay... Gay Langland, Mrs Taber." Walking over from the bar, Gay seems in awe of Roslyn's beauty. He takes off his cowboy hat. "How do you do?"

Pointing to Isabelle, Guido says, "And this is Mrs, uh...?"

She helps him out. "Steers. Isabelle Steers. One thing about Reno men, they do remember the name."

But it doesn't matter, because Gay cannot take his eyes off Roslyn, who is still feeding Dooley.

"Why don't you boys sit down?" Isabelle invites.

They sit and Gay orders drinks.

"Uh... you sure made a big impression on my friend here. And I can see why," says Gay. It's not quite clear if he's referring to Guido or to Dooley.

Ignoring that, she asks, "Are you a mechanic too?"

"Him?" scoffs Isabelle. "He's a cowboy."

"How'd you know?" asks Gay.

"I can smell, can't I?"

"Hey, you can't smell cows on me."

"I can smell the look on your face, cowboy." She smiles at him wryly. "But I love every miserable one of ya. Course, you're all good for nothin', as you know."

"That may be," he banters back, eyebrows raised. "But it's better than wages."

"I suppose you'll be headin' back East soon, Mrs Taber?" asks Guido.

"I can't make up my mind. I don't know yet what to do." Isabelle gives her a protective look.

Gay asks in surprise, "You don't have a business to run, or a school to teach, or...?"

"Me? I never finished high school."

"Well! That's real good news."

"You don't like educated women?"

“They're all right. Always wantin' to know what you're thinkin', that's all.”

“Maybe they want to get to know you.”

“Did you ever get to know a man better by askin' him questions?”

“You mean he'd lie?”

“Well, he might not. And then again, he just might.” Guido looks at her on with something close to admiration.

Then Gay turns to Guido. “How about it, Pilot? We takin' off today?”

Guido asks Roslyn, “You ever been outside Reno, Mrs Taber?”

“I walked to the edge of town. Doesn't look like much is out there.”

Gay disagrees. “*Everything's* there.”

“Like what?”

“The country.”

“Well, what do you do with yourself?”

“Just live.”

“How do you just live?”

“Well, you start by goin' to sleep. You get up when you feel like it. You scratch yourself. You fry yourself some eggs. You see what kind of a day it is. You throw stones at a can and whistle.”

She gets it. “I know what you mean.”

Guido offers, “I have an empty house in the country just beyond Hawleyville. It's all yours if you want some peace and quiet before you go back.”

Roslyn considers the idea. She tells Isabelle, “Well, I wouldn't stay there. But let's rent a car. We could look at the country.”

“Gay has a truck. You can have my car.” Another offer from Guido.

“Then you'll have to drive me back.”

“I don't mind.”

“Thanks, but I like to feel I'm on my own. I'll rent a car. Where can I?”

“Right now?”

“Why not?”

“Okay. You sure don't waste time, do you?”

Guido tells Gay, “I just gotta stop by the garage and quit.”

“Hey, now, that's the boy!” Gay is an old cowboy and not one to support working for wages.

Guido goes to pay the bill and the others go outside. The country awaits them.