

CINEMA PARADISO
by
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Shooting Script

The October sun slashes through the gray clouds, cuts across the shadow towards the sea, along the coast where the new suburbs of the city of Giancaldo have been built up.

Bright light streams through the windows, glancing off the white walls in an almost blinding reflection. MARIA, a woman a little over sixty, is trying to find somebody on the phone.

MARIA

...Salvatore, that's right,
Salvatore. Di Vita Salvatore
...But, miss, what do you mean you
don't know him?!...I...Yes...

She gives a nervous sigh. She has dialed her way through endless numbers but still hasn't managed to speak to Mr. Di Vita. She finally heaves a sigh of relief.

MARIA (CONT'D)

...That's right, good for you!
Oh!...yes...And I'm his mother. I'm
calling from Sicily. Been trying
all day...Ah, he's not there...But
would you be so kind as to give
me...?...Yes...

She nods at another woman around forty sitting nearby: it is LIA, her daughter, who jots down the numbers her mother dictates:

MARIA (CONT'D)

...Six, five, six, two, two, oh,
six...Thanks ever so
much...Goodbye. Goodbye.

She hangs up, takes the number LIA has jotted down, determined to have still another try. LIA speaks to her as if she were a baby, to be more convincing.

LIA

Look, Ma...It's useless calling
him. He'll be terribly busy, God
knows where he is. Besides he might
not even remember. Do as I say,
forget it...He hasn't been here for
thirty years. You know how he is.

MARIA pauses to think it over. The decision she has to make is important. Then, stubbornly.

MARIA

He'll remember! He'll remember!
(She puts on her glasses
and starts dialing the
number.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

MARIA (CONT'D)

...I'm positive. I know him better than you do. If he were to find out we hadn't told him, he'd be angry. I know.

(She takes off her glasses.)

...Hello? Good morning. Could I please speak to Mr. Salvatore Di Vita. I'm his mother...

2 ROME. STREETS. EXT/INT. NIGHT

2

It's late, but there is still traffic on the streets heading downtown. Inside a high-powered car, a man around fifty is driving. It is SALVATORE DI VITA. Elegant, just growing gray, a handsome face creased by deep wrinkles. His weary expression hides the determined, self-assured manner of the successful self-made man. He must be a heavy smoker judging by the way he draws the last puffs on his cigarette.

He stops at a red light. He stubs out the cigarette and rolls down the window, as a little Fiat Uno pulls up alongside. A rock tune plays full blast on the radio. SALVATORE turns instinctively to have a look at the man at the wheel a BOY with a brush cut standing straight in the latest fashion. He studies the Boy's expression with almost exaggerated attention, but devoid of curiosity, coldly. The GIRL sitting beside him, lots of curly hair, overripe red lips, returns SALVATORE'S look, provocatively. The BOY notices, turns to SALVATORE in a surly voice:

BOY

Hey! What the fuck you looking at!?

Green light. The Fiat Uno shoots off, leaving a trail of music in its wake.

3 ROME. SALVATORE S APARTMENT. INT. NIGHT

3

The apartment is luxurious, tastefully furnished. There is no one waiting for SALVATORE. Through the picture window on the terrace, the city can be seen slumbering in the night. SALVATORE gets undressed on his way to the bedroom. He moves quietly, as if to make no noise. He doesn't even turn on the light, finishes getting undressed in the pale blue glow coming from the picture window. A rustling sound, a movement on the bed, the voice of a woman waking up.

CLARA

Salvatore...But what time is it?

She turns on the bedside light. It is CLARA, a young woman around thirty. SALVATORE climbs in beside her under the covers, kisses her sweetly, then in a whisper.

(CONTINUED)

SALVATORE

It's late, Clara. Sorry, but I wasn't able to let you know I wouldn't be coming...

(He fondles her, but he is tired, feels like sleeping.)

Go to sleep now. Sleep.

He turns over on the other side. CLARA shuts her eyes, is about to drop off, but whispers.

CLARA

Your mother phoned. She took me for somebody else...

SALVATORE

(Surprised)

And what'd you tell her?

CLARA

I played dumb, so as not to disappoint her. We had a nice little talk. She says you never go see her, and when she wants to see you she has to come to Rome...Is it true?

SALVATORE doesn't answer. God only knows how often he's heard that question before.

SALVATORE

She phoned just to say that?

She reaches out to switch of the light, buries her head into the pillow.

CLARA

She said a certain Alfredo had died. And the funeral's taking place tomorrow afternoon...

A strange look suddenly comes into SALVATORE'S eyes. The idea of going to sleep has clearly left him. It's a piece of news he didn't expect. That's taken him off-guard. CLARA would like to carry on the conversation, but sleepiness makes it almost impossible. An she can manage is one last question in a faint little voice:

Who is it? A relative of yours?

SALVATORE

No. Sleep. Go to sleep.

She falls asleep in the dead silence of the night. SALVATORE is seized by a sort of chill a deep, troubled feeling.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (2)

3

He gazes through the window at the city, with its shimmering lights still moving in the darkness, suddenly shrouded in a heavy curtain of rain. But he gazes off, beyond the row of houses, beyond the dark sky; the shadow of a wind chime plays across his face summoning up endless memories, drawing forth from the infinite depths of oblivion a past that he thought had vanished, been wiped out, and instead now re-emerges, comes back to life, takes on light, superimposing itself on the mellow middle-aged features of his face, in the shadow of the city shaken by the storm, until another image is formed, an ancient, remote image...

4 GIANCALDO. CHURCH AND SACRISTY. INT. MORNING

4

An image from over forty years before. In the baroque church of Giancaldo. SALVATORE is nine years old. Dressed as an altar boy, he is kneeling by the altar with a little silver bell in his hands. The congregation is also kneeling. The PRIEST is consecrating the Host. Little SALVATORE has just got out of bed, is still half-asleep, yawns and doesn't notice that the PRIEST is standing there with the Host in the air glaring at him, as if trying to tell him something.

PRIEST

Pss! Pssst!

SALVATORE finishes yawning and opening his eyes meets the withering look of the PRIEST. He gets the message at once and rings the bell. Now the PRIEST can carry on, lifts the chalice and the bell is heard again.

Cut to:

The service is over. The PRIEST is in the sacristy removing his vestments. And SALVATORE is also there, removing his altar-boy tunic.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

But how can I make you understand?
Without the bell I just can't go
on! Always half asleep, you are!
What do you do at night anyway? Eat
instead of sleep?

SALVATORE

Father, at my house we don't even
eat at noon. That's why I'm always
sleepy. That's what the vet says.

The PRIEST has finished disrobing. He takes the bell SALVATORE was holding during the service and turns to leave.

PRIEST

All right, Toto, get moving, I've
got things to do. Say hello to your
mother.

(CONTINUED)

SALVATORE

Can I...

PRIEST

(Interrupting him)

And don't ask if you can come...
Because you can't!! Shoo, shoo, off
with you!!

SALVATORE gives a shrug and leaves. The PRIEST goes down a corridor, opens a door, another corridor, and finally a door leading to an outside courtyard. He cuts across it and disappears into another door.

The PRIEST enters a movie house. Not very big 200 seats on the main floor and another seventy in the balcony. Along the walls, posters of films to be shown are stuck up between the light fixtures. In one corner, a statue of the Virgin Mary with flowers. The CLEANING LADY has finished work and is leaving. Up in the balcony, over the last row of seats, are the holes of the projection booth. The middle hole is camouflaged by the huge head of a roaring lion, all in plaster, and the lens of the projector can be glimpsed between its sharp teeth. there are two smaller holes, through which the figure of a man can be made out, appearing and disappearing...It is ALFREDO, the projectionist. He is around forty, skinny and bony with a tough peasant face. He has finished loading the projector and is checking the carbons in the arc lamp. Then he removes the glass from one of the holes and looks down into the theatre, at the PRIEST who waves his hand.

PRIEST

OK, Alfredo, you can start!!

He sits down an by himself in the middle of the empty theatre. Up in the booth, ALFREDO lights the arc lamp and sets the projector going.

Down in the theatre, the light goes off and out of the lion's mouth streams the glowing ray aimed al the screen. String music, sweet and ominous, spreads through the theatre. On the screen appear the credit titles of an American film of the 1940s. The PRIEST screws up his face and holds the bell in his right hand resting on the arm of his seat.

At the back of the theatre, behind the last row, a curtain moves, opens a crack and SALVATORE'S gaunt little face appears. He has managed to sneak in somehow and stands there without a word, spellbound, watching the 'movie' on the glowing screen. The credit titles have long come and gone. The story is at a turning-point.

Up above, in the hole of the booth next to the lion, ALFREDO watches the film, but his eyes keep looking down at the PRIEST, who is now drumming the bell with his fingers. On the screen, the male and female lead, two Hollywood stars, are in close-up; the dialogue is passionate, romantic. SALVATORE, carried away by those faces, by the way they talk, by the beauty of the woman, slowly slips down the length of the curtain until he is sitting on the floor, his eyes glued to the screen.

The love scene reaches a climax, the music crescendos, and the love-struck couple finally fall into each other's arms and kiss. Instinctively, the PRIEST raises the bell into the air, as in some age-old ceremony, and gives it a loud ring...

Up in the booth ALFREDO hears the bell; it's the signal he's been waiting for. He takes a slip of paper from a pad prepared for that purpose and sticks it into the loops of the film containing that specific scene as it winds on to the reel. The projection continues...

...And also the kiss of the two actors. The PRIEST'S nervous look lingers on those black-and-white lips meeting and now pulling apart for one last declaration of love before separating. SALVATORE is wide-eyed, he's probably never seen a man and woman kiss before, it's a vision that for him has all the attraction of forbidden fruit, the horror of sin. The screen is now filled with the figure of a woman getting undressed, showing for one instant the white, voluptuous flesh of her broad, naked shoulders. SALVATORE stares in open-mouthed wonder. The PRIEST, in a fury, grabs the bell and shakes it for all he is worth. From the sound of the bell to another sound...

6 GIANCALDO. MAIN SQUARE. EXT. DAY

6

The tolling of the bell-tower rings out over the square. It is noon. The vast square, pale and dusty, is alive with people. A noisy line of men, women and cows waits in front of the fountain to get water. Peddlers hawk their wares in mournful cries. People come and go in front of the town hall. The working men's club is deserted. The entrance of the Cinema Paradiso is shut. Hanging outside is the poster of the film that has just been seen on screen. Up above, the windows of the projection booth are open. The hum of the projector can be heard and the loud, lofty music typical of 'THE END'. Then dead silence. The showing is over.

7. CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. DAY

7.

Despite the speed, numerous white streaks spin around on the reel, created by the slips of paper ALFREDO has inserted into the loops. He is rewinding the film by hand on the film-winder. When he's not talking, ALFREDO usually sings to himself. SALVATORE stands beside him, taking in everything he does with those quick, thieving eyes of his

(CONTINUED)

ALFREDO
(Harshly, shouting)
You must not come here! How many
times do I have to tell you?

And he slows down the reels with his hand. The slips of paper are about to arrive. Here's the first.

ALFREDO
If the film catches fire, runt that
you are, you'd go up in a burst of
flame...whoosh! And turn into a
piece of...

SALVATORE
(Overlapping him)
...and turn into a piece of
charcoal!!

He's used to his terrorisms, pays no more attention. Not even his grim look scares him. Anyway, ALFREDO catches the joke, starts to give him a slap, but instead reaches over and picks up a pair of scissors.

ALFREDO
(Angrily)
Christ, that's a sassy little
tongue you've got! Watch out, or
someday I'll snip it off.

And he snips a piece of film, pastes the ends together and goes on turning the handle. SALVATORE picks up the strip of film and gives it a closer look. He sees a series of frames all alike with a man kissing a woman.

SALVATORE
Can I have it?

ALFREDO snatches it out of his hand, furiously, at the end of his string. He shouts.

ALFREDO
No!!! Are you deaf or something?
I've got to put this back in when
we wind up the film again! You're a
real pain in the neck!

SALVATORE reaches into a basket full of strips of film. He takes out a handful: all kisses that have been cut.

SALVATORE
Then why didn't you put these back
when you wound up the films again?

ALFREDO is caught out. He stops the film where another slip of paper is stuck in and cuts the scene:

ALFREDO

'Cause sometimes you can't find the right place any more and so...well, actually...they stay here.

(Finding an excuse)

Besides, there are more kisses than you can count.

SALVATORE

(Excited)

So I can have these?

ALFREDO explodes, flies off the handle. He grabs SALVATORE by the shoulders and shakes him.

ALFREDO

Look, Toto! Before I kick your ass all the way to China and back, let's make a deal. These strips here are yours, I give them to you. However! One you're not to stick your nose in here any more. Two I'll keep them for you, because you can't take them home for God forbid and save our souls, if they catch fire, all hell will break loose! OK? Oh!!! And now scam!

He takes him and turns him towards the stairs. For him the matter is closed. He returns to the film-winder. SALVATORE sneaks back and while ALFREDO's attention is elsewhere, snatches up a handful of movie frames scattered on the counter, stuffs them into his pocket and...

SALVATORE

What sort of deal is this? The strips are mine! So why can't I come see them?

And he stares at ALFREDO with a sly, saucy look. ALFREDO clutches his hand, darts forth like an arrow and is about to give him a kick in the ass. He shrieks:

ALFREDO

Get out!! And don't show your face here again!

And before the kick reaches its destination, SALVATORE has already dashed off down the spiral staircase.

That was not the first theft of film strips. SALVATORE's hand reaches into a flowery metal box jammed full of pieces of film. He takes out a few frames and holds them up against the kerosene lamp.

Gazes at the figures that remind him of the films seen at Cinema Paradiso, and in a whisper mangles fragments of dialogue, the shooting of guns, the musical climaxes...

SALVATORE

Bang! Bang! Bang! Shoot first,
think later! This is no job for
weaklings! Treacherous dog!

The house has no lights, is gloomy and cold. SALVATORE's mother, MARIA, is leaning on the table in front of him. She is young, around thirty, and her pretty face is haggard, marred by all the sacrifices. She is sewing some clothes, is a seamstress. LIA, his four-year-old sister, is sleeping on a cot in one corner. The kerosene lamp projects the trembling shadow of the film strips on the wall, figures of prairies, gunslingers, thugs. SALVATORE's voice changes, turns even tougher.

SALVATORE (CONT'D)

Hey there, you lousy bastard, take
your hands off that gold, You black-
hearted pig, stay away from me, or
I'll smash your face in!
'Ntantatah!!!...

In the heap of movie frames there are also several photographs. SALVATORE picks them up. Family keepsakes. A man in an army uniform. Then the same man with a girl beside him whose smiling face can be recognized as MARIA. SALVATORE takes a closer look at the man's face, then whispers to his mother:

Ma, if the war's over, how come
Daddy's never come back?

MARIA looks up at him with a sweet smile.

MARIA

He'll be back, he'll be back...
You'll see. One of these days...

But there is not much conviction written on her face. She looks back down at her sewing. SALVATORE goes on looking at the photos.

SALVATORE

I don't remember him any more-Ma,
where's Russia?

MARIA

It takes years to get there. And
years to come back...Now go to bed,
Toto, it's late.

SALVATORE puts the photos back into the box and tucks the box under LIA's cot near the charcoal burner.

9

GRADE SCHOOL. COURTYARD. EXT. DAY

9

A noisy crowd of little children in black smocks, white collars and blue bows moves about the large courtyard where there are two tall palm trees. The boys head for one door, the girls towards the opposite one. The Janitors line them up two by two, ready to enter. Here and there, parents and relatives accompany the younger ones. Beneath one of the palms, SALVATORE pulls off the altar-boy tunic, stuffs it into the khaki-colored cardboard schoolbag, takes out the smock and puts it on, as one of his schoolmates passes by. It is MASINO, and he's crying desperately because he doesn't want to go to school. His FATHER drags him along, yelling:

MASINO'S FATHER

You can fool your mother but not me! Get yourself a damn diploma and become a policeman. You good-for-nothing!

MASINO

I don't want to go to school'

The sound of the bell. The black lines move up the steps towards the school.

10

FOURTH GRADE. INT. DAY

10

SALVATORE is sitting at the front-row desk next to PEPPINO, a little freckle-faced boy. His attention, like that of the whole class, is concentrated on what is taking place at the blackboard. The TEACHER is standing there, watching a plump little boy, shy and not quite all there, do a two-figure multiplication it is NICOLA SCORSONE, known as 'COLA'. He is red in the face, has one purple ear and one white one. He stares in terror at that '255 x 15' written on the blackboard. The TEACHER yells, waving a birch rod in her hand.

TEACHER

Well then?! Five times five equals...?

COLA stops to think a moment, then...

COLA

Thirty!

The TEACHER grabs him by the purple ear and bashes his head against the numbers on the blackboard. A large thud echoes through the room, followed by a roar of laughter. The TEACHER slams her rod on the desk.

TEACHER

Silence!!
(Then to COLA)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

TEACHER (CONT'D)
The five times table. Dunce! One
times five, five!!
(The class repeats with
the TEACHER, in a sing-
song chorus:)
TEACHER and CLASS Two times five,
ten! Three times five, fifteen!
Four times five, twenty!

With a wave of the rod, the TEACHER silences the class, and finishes the sing-song with the fateful question.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
Five times five?

COLA
(Timidly)
Forty...?

Another blow of the head on the blackboard. Hubbub. Slapping of the rod on the desk. SALVATORE secretly shows COLA the picture of a Christmas tree on one page of the book, and mouths the word 'twenty-five'. COLA smiles, he has finally caught on.

TEACHER
I'm asking you for the last time,
blockhead! Five times five
equals...?

COLA turns to her with smiling eyes and answers blissfully:

COLA
Christmas!!

SALVATORE clutches his head in anger, watches the TEACHER flogging COLA on the back with the rod. COLA screams at every blow, and at every blow the laughter in the class grows louder. SALVATORE stares at the rod moving up and down rhythmically. But he is not thinking of the pain his schoolmate is feeling, but is drawn, rather, by that strange regular beat, finds it similar to another regular beat, that of...

11 CINEMA PARADISO. BALCONY AND MAIN FLOOR. INT. DAY 11

...the rolling pin ALFREDO uses to flatten out a reel of film that has just been unloaded. SALVATORE carefully watches ALFREDO 5 every move. He is not in the projection booth, but up in the balcony, standing on top of the last row of seats. He peers through the hole next to the lion's head. His bright little eyes fix in his mind the things ALFREDO does, as he loads the film into the projector, shuts the fireproof housings, turns on the amplifier, checks the carbons in the arc lamp, then lowers his head to have a look into the theatre and finds himself face to face with SALVATORE.

(CONTINUED)

ALFREDO
 (Sternly)
 What are you doing here?

SALVATORE
 I bought a ticket. I've come to see
 the film.

Meanwhile the USHER comes up behind him and grabs him by the collar, and he almost jumps out of his skin. ALFREDO laughs.

USHER
 (Yelling)
 Go sit downstairs! You good-for-
 nothing sponger! !
 (To the audience)
 Worse than rabbits they are!

SALVATORE has run downstairs. The main floor is more crowded than the balcony, like every Sunday, and there is a greatdin. The BOY selling ice-cream, soda pop and candy shouts and runs around like a chicken with its head off. Now the lights dim, the hubbub dies down and the performance starts. Before the film there is a preview for Stagecoach. The screen fills with images of John Wayne, the pursuit of the stagecoach by hostile Indians etc...

SALVATORE is sitting in the front rows, right under the screen, next to BOCCIA, COLA, MASINO, PEPPINO and OTHER KIDS, all with their noses in the air. BOCCIA, the biggest show off of the group, is smoking a cigarette. An OLD MAN appears through the entrance curtain, takes a couple of steps and shouts:)

FIRST OLD MAN
 Hello, everybody!

AUDIENCE
 (At once)
 Ssssssh!!! Ssssssh! Silence!

FIRST OLD MAN
 Can't I say hello?

USHER
 It's a double-feature today.

FIRST OLD MAN
 I couldn't care less. I come here
 to sleep.

All at once, a chorus of shouts and whistles fills the theatre. Up on the screen, a globe of the world appears, spinning among the stars, the logo announcing the newsreel.

AUDIENCE
 (Hooting and whistling)
 For Christ's sake! Cut it,
 Alfredoooo!

The CHILDREN in the front rows also yell, but SALVATORE goes on being alert. He turns and looks up at the holes of the projection booth, as if it were an impregnable fortress. He watches the crazy dancing of light in the glowing stream that opens towards him in a cone. And besides, that lion's head, mysterious, almost gruesome, emphasizes the enigmatic secret of the movies. In his dreamy eyes, that lifeless lion seems to wake up with a ferocious roar.

SALVATORE has a frightened look...Another lion roaring. But up on the screen. The MGM lion. The throng of children imitate the famous growl all together, shaking their heads in unison.

CHILDREN
 Grrrr! Grrrrr!

The film starts: it is Visconti's La terra trema. SALVATORE is in bliss. His wide eyes looking up at the magic square of light. The title music. Another OLD MAN enters at the back of the theatre, but before sitting down, says hello in a loud voice.

SECOND OLD MAN

Greetings to one and all!

AUDIENCE
 SSSSSH' Drop dead! Silence! Hey,
 kids, we're here to see the film!

Now there is an important sequence. The audience is silent. Concentrated on the screen. BOCCIA passes the lighted cigarette to SALVATORE. He takes a puff and hands it on to the others without ever taking his eyes off the screen. The beautiful star of the film appears on screen. A different kind of attention takes hold of the excited audience. SALVATORE and the others stare at her with open mouths...She leans towards the leading man, a languid expression, their profiles touch. But all at once, just at the best part, there is a sudden jolt.

The kiss isn't seen.

AUDIENCE (CONT'D)
 (Disappointed)
 Ahhh! What a shame! I've been going
 to the movies for twenty years and
 I never saw a kiss!

CONTINUED:

SALVATORE is the only one to laugh to himself. He knows what has happened.

AUDIENCE (CONT'D)

And when will we see one?

Up in the balcony, the audience is more sedate. The tickets cost more and the people are richer, more refined. Among them, a MAN with a moustache, the look of a public notary, is sitting right in front of the railing. Seriously, without batting an eye, he spits down below with contempt. Right on the dot, a voice is heard, followed by a chorus of protests.

VOICE and AUDIENCE Bugger!!! Ssssh!!! Silence!!

12

SQUARE AND ENTRANCE OF CINEMA PARADISO. EXT. NIGHT

12

The bell-tower rings midnight. The square is nearly deserted. Except for a landowner near the refreshment stand, with a moustache and a hat, DON VINCENZO by name, who is picking out from a group of labourers the men he'll be needing in the country at dawn. He chooses, points his finger, calls...

People come out of the movie house after the last showing. The USHER locks the front door as ALFREDO climbs down from the projection booth. Among the crowd there is only one kid, SALVATORE. Tired, half-asleep. He's seen all the showings. He starts to walk away when he catches sight of his mother standing on the opposite corner, wrapped in an old coat. She's waiting for him, in a temper. SALVATORE drops his eyes to the ground, mortified. He knows what's coming. He goes over to her timidly, uncertain, gives her a questioning look.

MARIA

I've been looking for you all day.
Did you buy the milk?

SALVATORE

No...

MARIA

Then where's the money?

SALVATORE

Somebody stole it.

MARIA gives him a slap. SALVATORE holds back the sobs, but his eyes brim with tears. ALFREDO and the USHER are nearby, have heard everything.

MARIA

What'd you do with the money? Go to
the movies?

(CONTINUED)

SALVATORE nods his head and the sobs increase. MARIA, in despair, flies off the handle, slaps him again, but looks as if she doesn't really want to, as if deep down she forgives her son's escapade. ALFREDO catches on, speaks up on behalf of

SALVATORE.

ALFREDO

Signora Maria, don't do that. He's just a kid.

(To SALVATORE)

And why are you telling fibs?

(To MARIA)

We let him in free. He must have lost the money inside the movie theatre...

(SALVATORE stares at him in amazement, goes on listening to him.)

How much did you have?

SALVATORE

Fifty lire...

(MARIA wipes away his tears.)

ALFREDO

(To the USHER)

What you find tonight on the floor between the seats?

The USHER reaches into- his pockets, pulls out some odds and ends.

USHER

A comb, two heel-savers, a box of tobacco...

ALFREDO very skillfully reaches out with fifty lire he has taken from his pocket. And like a magician he draws the money out of the USHER'S hand.

ALFREDO

...and fifty lire!

(To MARIA)

See?

He hands over the money under the USHER'S astonished eyes.

MARIA

Thanks, Uncle Alfredo. Thanks. Good-night.

She walks away, dragging SALVATORE by the hand. ALFREDO gives him a wink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALVATORE smiles and winks back, but he's not very good at it; he can't manage to shut only one eye. Everybody leaves and the square empties, as the VILLAGE IDIOT comes up to the group of labourers, beside DON VINCENZO, motioning them all to get moving.

IDIOT

It's midnight. I've got to shut
down the square! Go away. The
square's mine! The square's mine!!

13

CEMETERY ROAD AND VILLAGE ROAD. EXT. DAY

13

SALVATORE, dressed as an altar boy, walks alongside the PRIEST who is wearing the ceremonial vestments. They are tired, have walked a long way. Behind them a donkey pulls a wagon containing a little white coffin and a bunch of flowers. Behind that a little procession the parents and relatives of the dead child. The road is very wide, covered with white earth. The spring sun is dazzling. The funeral procession kicks up a cloud of dust that makes everything blurred and hazy, like a dream, rimmed around the horizon by the blue line of the sea. The procession now turns into the large gate of the cemetery. ALFREDO, working in the fields, takes his hat off and watches the coffin as it passes by.

Cut to:

The funeral is over. The PRIEST and SALVATORE are walking back to the village. ALFREDO appears out of the countryside on a bicycle with a hoe and other farm tools in the basket. He comes pedaling up beside them.

ALFREDO

Good morning, father. It's hard on
the feet, huh?

PRIEST

(Breathless)

Yeah!...Getting there's downhill
and all the saints help you. But
coming back! The saints stand there
watching you, that's all! God's
will be done.

SALVATORE is about to open his mouth, wants to say something to ALFREDO, but he doesn't have time. ALFREDO pedals harder and rides off.

SALVATORE is crestfallen. He looks at the PRIEST, then at the bicycle riding away. His eyes light up an idea! He suddenly yells:

SALVATORE

Ouch! Ouch! My foot! I can't walk!

(CONTINUED)

He limps. Throws himself to the ground as if a snake had bitten him. The PRIEST leans over in alarm. Up ahead in the distance, ALFREDO turns around to look.

Cut to:

There is a smile on SALVATORE'S face. He is riding on the crossbar of ALFREDO's bicycle. On their way back lo the village.

SALVATORE

Alfredo, did you know my father?

ALFREDO

Of course I knew your father. He was tall, thin, pleasant, and had a moustache like mine. Always smiling. He looked like Clark Gable.

There's something SALVATORE wants to talk about, but he doesn't know how to start. He has a try with an innocent stratagem.

SALVATORE

Alfredo, now that I'm older, I'm not saying I can start coming to the projection booth, to the movie house...But...maybe, why don't we become friends?

ALFREDO knows exactly what the little rascal is up to, and answers in a strange, theatrical tone, as if he were repeating something he knows by heart, a remark taken from some old film.

ALFREDO

'I choose my friends for their looks, and my enemies for their brains...'

(Laughs)

You're too smart to be my friend. Besides, as I always tell my kids, be careful to pick the right friends!

SALVATORE

(Surprised)

But you don't have any kids!!!

ALFREDO

(Spluttering)

All right, all right! When I've got kids that's what I'm telling them!

The outlying houses of Giancaldo finally heave into sight.

14 SALVATORE S HOUSE. EXT. DAY

14

LIA, SALVATORE'S kid sister, is crying outside the front door, terror stricken. Her face is smeared with smoke and her little dress half scorched and soaking wet. MARIA is distraught, damp with sweat, and tries to console her, hugging her in her arms.

MARIA

Stop crying...The fire is out...I'm here...That'll do, that'll do...

ALFREDO and SALVATORE come up behind them. SALVATORE has barely leapt off the bicycle when his mother sails into him like a fury, shrieking:

MARIA (CONT'D)

Miserable boy! You're the ruin of me! Your sister would have been burnt alive if I hadn't been there! And all your fault!

SALVATORE darts off, chased by his mother, swift as a deer. ALFREDO doesn't understand what has happened, leans over LIA, who goes on bawling her eyes out, and sees on the ground, in the middle of the water, a flowery box all charred and still smoking, and all around scraps of film reduced to ashes and several singed photographs, the photos of SALVATORE'S father. ALFREDO gets the message now, looks up at MARIA, who has caught SALVATORE and is dragging him home, hitting and slapping him all the way. SALVATORE covers his head with his hands to stave off the blows. MARIA turns to ALFREDO, in a stern, indignant voice.

MARIA (CONT'D)

But aren't you ashamed of yourself, Uncle Alfredo, playing with a little boy at your age?!

ALFREDO

(Cowed)

But...what's it got to do with me?...

MARIA

And who gave him all those films? Promise you won't give him any more of this trash! Don't let him set foot any more in the movie house. The boy's crazy! Crazy! All he talks about is movies and Alfredo! Alfredo and movies!!

ALFREDO is crestfallen, didn't think that SALVATORE'S craziness, his morbid passion for movies, could go this far.

(CONTINUED)

ALFREDO

I give you my word, Donna Maria.
(MARIA now turns one last
time to her son.)

MARIA

God's got to grant me one wish!
Send your father back home! And
he'll see you get what's coming to
you!

SALVATORE lowers his hands, looks at her and with the
dreadful sincerity of children:

SALVATORE

Daddy's not coming back...He's
dead.
(An icy flash runs through
MARIA'S eyes.)

MARIA

It's not true! No! It's not true!!!
I'll show you he's coming back!

And she beats him desperately, as if to enforce her stubborn
hope, slap after slap. This time ALFREDO doesn't step in,
lets MARIA give vent to her rage and fury, but SALVATORE'S
cries make him feel guilty.

AND PROJECTION BOOTH. EXT/INT. DAY

Another Sunday. A crowd of men has gathered in the square
around the café where there is a loudspeaker. They are
listening to the running commentary of the soccer games. They
check their Sisal pools coupons. NICOLO CAROSIO'S VOICE
...We're at the seventh minute of the second half. Turin is
leading one to zero. The goal was scored by...(The scene is
seen from above, by ALFREDO who peers out of the window of
the projection booth. CAROSIO'S voice drowns out the
soundtrack of the film being shown. ALFREDO is bored. He goes
over to the projector, looks through the hole...It's the last
sequence of the film. The music swells to a climax as 'THE
END' appears on the screen. Swift as ever, ALFREDO turns on
the lights in the theatre' stops the projector. Looks back
through the hole, to see...)

PARADISO. INT/EXT. DAY

...the house packed to the rafters. Voices and laughter of
the children. Smoke, ice-cream, soft drinks. The USHER has
opened the emergency exits to let in air. He fights off the
gate-crashers who are trying to get in free. The sound of the
sports commentary fills the theatre. The village BLACKSMITH
is sleeping in his seat, his head thrown back and his mouth
wide open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The KIDS blow up the empty ice-cream sacks and pop them next to his ears. Bang! The BLACKSMITH wakes up with a start, in a sea of laughter. He yells:

BLACKSMITH

Ah! I'll wring all your necks!! Or
my good name means nothing! !!
Lousy brats!

SALVATORE doesn't laugh. He is sad. He turns and looks up at the projection booth. He sees ALFREDO through the lion's mouth. ALFREDO also catches sight of him. SALVATORE gives him a timid wave of the hand, as if asking if he can come up a moment. The look on ALFREDO'S face is unmistakable, irrevocable: NO! SALVATORE'S not surprised; after what happened it won't be easy to win him over. Yet there must be some way. But what is it? As usual, SALVATORE is smart as the devil when he's out to get something. Through the emergency exit he sees a woman pass by with a packet in her hand. It is ALFREDO'S WIFE, and the packet is his supper. SALVATORE leaps to his feet and runs out to her.

SALVATORE

Signora Anna!

17 CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION ROOM AND SQUARE. INT/EXT. DAY 17

ALFREDO starts up the projector. It's time for the documentaries and cartoons. SALVATORE peers in from the top of the stairs. He's scared of ALFREDO'S reaction, but pricks up his courage and shows him the packet. ALFREDO sees him, is about to pounce on him...

SALVATORE

(On the defensive)

Your wife told me to bring you
this.

His expression betrays the 'put on'. ALFREDO sighs, realizes it's another one of his little games.

ALFREDO

(Sternly)

Give it to me!...

He takes the packet, unwraps it and lifts the lid, shuts it again and puts the container inside the lamp of the projector to keep it warm. SALVATORE hasn't missed a single gesture, but speaks with his eyes to the poor.

SALVATORE

I told my mother you weren't the
one who gave me the films. That it
wasn't your fault. But I thought
you said the film could catch fire
just to scare me. Now that I know,
I won't steal any more from you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

SALVATORE (CONT'D)

That's all I wanted to say. I'm going.

He turns to leave but ALFREDO takes him by the shoulder and stops him.

ALFREDO

Toto, come here.

All things considered, there is something in that little boy, maybe his feverish passion, that strikes him. He'll talk to him seriously, without resorting to terrorism, try to convince him. He lowers the volume of the monitor, sits down on the stool. SALVATORE raises his eyes from the floor and looks at him at last...

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Now listen to what I've got to say. I took up this profession when I was ten years old. In those days there weren't these modern machines. The films were silent. The projectors were run by hand, like this, with a crank. And you wound the crank all day long. It was really rough going! If you got tired and slowed down' boom! Everything would go up in flames!

SALVATORE

Then why don't you want to teach it to me too? Now that there's no more cranking, and it's easier?

ALFREDO

(Firmly)

Because I don't want to, Toto! This is not a job for you. It's like being a slave. You're always alone. You see the same film over and over again, because you have nothing else to do. And you start talking to Greta Garbo and Tyrone Power like a nut! You work on holidays, on Christmas, on Easter. Only on Good Friday are you free. But if they hadn't put Jesus Christ on a cross...You'd work Good Fridays too!

SALVATORE

Then why don't you change jobs?

ALFREDO sighs, irritated. He reaches out to turn the knob of the carbon rods. He gazes at SALVATORE as if he were a grown-up, somebody who's making things hard for him.

(CONTINUED)

ALFREDO

Because I'm an idiot. How many other guys in town know how to be a projectionist? None! Only a jerk like me could do it. Besides I wasn't lucky. When I was a kid there was the war! When I grew up, another war! Now it's all different. Times have changed. And you want to be a dope like me? Huh? Answer me!

SALVATORE

No...

ALFREDO

Good for you, Toto. Good for you... I'm only saying this for your own good...

He gets up and, speaking all the while, goes into a closet with a bucket in it, the toilet of the booth. He turns his back and pees.

ALFREDO

Cooped up in here you die of heat in the summer and of cold in the winter. You breathe in smoke, gas fumes, and earn practically nothing.

SALVATORE listens to him, but taking advantage of the fact he can't be seen, he turns the knob of the carbon rods, just as he had seen done a moment before...

SALVATORE

(In a loud voice)

But don't you like anything about what you do?

SALVATORE gazes at the photos on the wall: Keaton, Garbo, Snow White. ALFREDO smiles to himself. Sure, there's something about that damn job he likes:

ALFREDO

With time...you get used to it. Besides, when you hear from up here that there's a full house and that people are laughing, having fun... Then you're happy too.

ALFREDO is lost in thought, doesn't notice that the documentaries and cartoons have finished. The screen is blank. And down in the theatre laughter is not heard but an uproar of whistling and swearing. SALVATORE'S eyes sparkle, he seizes the opportunity.

17 CONTINUED: (3)

He turns on the lights and stops the projector, just as ALFREDO would have done. At which ALFREDO buttons up his pants in a hurry and rushes over alarmed, but sees that everything is in order. SALVATORE looks at him all smiles, as if he expected a medal for civil bravery. Instead, ALFREDO reacts like a wild animal.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

So I've been wasting my breath? You pretend to agree with me, but as soon as my back is turned, you do what you want!

(He gives SALVATORE a kick in the ass, shrieking:)

Get out of here! I don't want to lay eyes on you again! This is the last straw! Your mother's right, you're crazy!!

(He pushes him towards the stairs. SALVATORE suddenly vanishes, scared out of his wits. ALFREDO talks to himself, in a fury:)

But how'd he do it? The little bastard! By watching, he's learned! It's incredible!

He peers out of the window, yelling, as he sees SALVATORE running through the square.

I'm letting the box office know you're not to set foot even into the theatre! There are no more tickets for you! And I'm also talking to Father Adelfio! You won't be an altar boy any more either!!! You little runt!

SALVATORE looks at him. Hates him. Yells something offensive:

SALVATORE

Alfredo, go fuck yourself!!!

But his words are drowned out by the sudden shouting of the people outside the café.

CROWD

Goal!! Holy Mother of God!!!

A MAN in the crowd crumples to the ground. The others swarm around him, alarmed. They hold up his head. His face is pale. They check the coupon he is clutching in his hand. A voice rises like a siren from the crowd.

MAN

Ciccio Spaccafico's won the Sisal!!!!!!

(The yell can be heard...)

18 CINEMA PARADISO. INT. DAY

...inside the movie house. The audience murmurs. Somebody opens an emergency exit...

SPECTATOR'S VOICE

The Neapolitan's won the lottery!!!
Let's go see, kids!!! Northerners
are always lucky!

The whole audience leaps up and heads for the exit. Pushing. Shouting. Laughing and Joking.

19 SQUARE AND VILLAGE. EXT. MORNING

19

Summer has come. The village has a different look. The peddlers sing their monotonous refrains in the village streets. In one street, women are busy canning tomatoes. In one corner of the square, the SHEARER has finished clipping the donkey and is now shaving the hair of a row of bare-chested URCHINS with nothing on but their underwear. Then another MAN disinfects them by spraying them with the hand pumps used to spray trees in the country. The URCHINS laugh. The BILL-POSTER is hanging up the posters of a new film, 'TODAY AT CINEMA PARADISO .

20 GRADE SCHOOL DINING HALL. INT. MORNING

20

The fifth-grade exams. In the vast dining hall all the children are seated, one for each desk, under the watchful eyes of the teachers. SALVATORE, BOCCIA, PEPPINO, MASINO and COLA have taken places here and there, as nervous as everybody else. The EXAMINING BOARD MEMBER is dictating the text of the arithmetic problem.

EXAMINING BOARD MEMBER

A merchant owns two stores. In the first he sells fruit and vegetables. In the second he sells nails and cement... (The PRINCIPAL comes in, interrupts the dictation.)

PRINCIPAL

Excuse me, professor. Here are the
men taking the exam for the
elementary school certificate.

(Turning to the door)

Come in, please...

All the children turn to look. A MAN around thirty enters, ill at ease. The children recognize him and laugh mischievously. The second is the BLACKSMITH, the one who falls asleep at the movies. The third is a twenty-year-old-boy, ANGELO.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The fourth is ALFREDO, embarrassed and red in the face. SALVATORE is speechless. Gives a slightly ironic laugh. There is a look of revenge in his shrewd little eyes.

CUT TO:

The assignment is now being carried out. There is dead silence in the hall.

TEACHERS and the PRINCIPAL move about, checking to be sure there are no notes being handed around or other forms of 'collaboration'. The four outsiders are having a hard time. It can be seen on their faces. ALFREDO is also in trouble, doesn't know how to solve the problem, the calculations are too difficult. He looks at the desk next to him, where SALVATORE is sitting. SALVATORE is about to look up at him, but ALFREDO immediately looks away, too proud to let himself be seen.

The exchange of glances continues, grotesque, almost comical. SALVATORE meanwhile writes down numbers and operations quite quickly. ALFREDO can't stand it any longer, is nervous, beaded with sweat. He's sorry he ever showed up. SALVATORE laughs up his sleeve, now he has the upper hand. ALFREDO tries sneaking a look at his exercise book in order to copy something. But SALVATORE turns his back, hiding it from sight. ALFREDO tries sneaking a look at somebody else's exercise book, but the damn kid also covers it. It looks like a conspiracy against him. ALFREDO has no way out. He has to accept the idea of eating humble pie. He looks at SALVATORE, motions him with his eyes in a conversation of glances. He asks for help, but SALVATORE stands firm, implacable.

ALFREDO tries to put it into words in a low voice.

ALFREDO

YOU jerk. Tell me how to solve this
fucking problem!

TEACHER

Ssssh! Silence back there!!

ALFREDO insists with his eyes. SALVATORE makes him understand with gestures that he could help him maybe, but...on one condition. He imitates the gesture of winding the crank of the projector. ALFREDO gets the message. It's pure blackmail. He rubs his hand over his sweating face, raises his eyes to the ceiling as if he were swearing. Then he surrenders, accepts the condition. SALVATORE is serious, does not flaunt his victory, but you can tell he is happy. He takes out a sheet of paper he had already prepared, with the solution to the problem, rolls it up into a tiny ball and as soon as the TEACHER passes by, takes aim and flicks it to him. ALFREDO'S hand catches the precious and dearly bought message in mid-air. Their quarrel is over.

2I VARIOUS SETTINGS. INT. DAY/EVENING

2I

A bright, lilting tune marks the rhythm of the quick, blurred images, as in a dance, the images of ALFREDO teaching SALVATORE all the secrets of the projectionist trade.

ALFREDO slips the reel on to the projector, unrolls the trailer and hands it to SALVATORE. SALVATORE mounts the film on the sprockets. Now SALVATORE sets the projector into motion, opens the shutter and stands on tip-toe to see the screen from the hole...

A shot from In nome della legge. The main-floor audience applauds a line spoken by Massimo Gironi. And from the balcony, the same little MAN with the face of a public notary spits below.

MAIN FLOOR VOICE

Bastard!! Pencil-pusher!!

ALFREDO shows SALVATORE the running of the film. He points to a place on the projector.

ALFREDO

Pay attention. This is where it can easily catch fire. If it happens, the first thing you've got to do is break it off, here and here, so the whole reel doesn't go up in flames.

On the screen, a shot from Riso amaro. A kiss. Unrelenting, the PRIEST rings his bell. SALVATORE licks the film on one side, then on the other. He laughs.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

You understand which side the gelatin's on?

SALVATORE

It tastes wonderful!

A shot of Amedeo Nazzari in La figlia del capitano. A jump, an out-of-rack frame. The audience whistles.

AUDIENCE

Fraaaame!! Wake up, Alfredo!

SALVATORE tries to do a hand-binding. ALFREDO winds the film, hangs a slip on a nail in the wall.

ALFREDO

These are the shipping invoices for the film. They are always to be kept. You see?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALVATORE

OK, Alfredo.

Down on the main floor, a scene from Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Everyone screams and hides their faces when Hyde looks at the camera.

AUDIENCE

Holy Mother! What a face! So ugly!

One young man, ANGELO, doesn't hide his face. He looks up at a young woman, ROSA, in the balcony, who turns and smiles at him.

ALFREDO gives SALVATORE a wooden stool. He's had it made especially for him, so he can be high enough to reach the reels of the projector and the arc lamp. SALVATORE climbs up on it. He laughs, all excited.

ALFREDO

Now you can run it by yourself.

SALVATORE gives another smile. He is posing in a photographer's studio. He is all dressed up for first communion, holding a white lily. The flash goes off like lightning during a storm. Now SALVATORE is posing next to his mother and little sister. They smile without hugging. Another flash of light. Click!

22

FIFTH GRADE. INT. DAY

22

Another click. The transparency of Rita Hayworth in her black gown from Gilda. MASINO is pasting it inside a minute pair of plastic field glasses. Other pupils crowd around him in excitement.

MASINO

(In a whisper)

Christ, what a piece of ass!!!

But there is not a cheerful atmosphere in the class - on the contrary, a strange silence. The pupils are all standing around the teacher's desk, having received their end-of-the-year report cards. PEPPINO, who shared SALVATORE's desk, is saying goodbye to his schoolmates. BOCCIA, COLA, the others. They have serious, sad expressions. He and SALVATORE kiss like grown-ups. The TEACHER is standing among them. One of the schoolmates does not respond to PEPPINO's goodbye gesture. He takes a few steps back, serious, scared, his eyes lowered.

TEACHER

Di Francesco, aren't you saying
goodbye to your schoolmate?

(DI FRANCESCO gives his
head a little shake.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

TEACHER (CONT'D)

The TEACHER leans over to
him.)

But why?

(DI FRANCESCO whispers,
almost into her ear.)

DI FRANCESCO

My father says he's a Communist...

23 SQUARE AND PROJECTION BOOTH, CINEMA PARADISO. EXT/INT. DAY 23

Another farewell scene in the square. PEPPINO to his grandparents. His father and mother are also there, saying goodbye to the old folks. There are tears. The cardboard suitcases tied with string are loaded on to the luggage rack of the black car. The scene is watched by SALVATORE and ALFREDO, up in the window of the projection booth. They look like old friends. On the sound monitor, the strains of some American musical comedy tune.

SALVATORE

Will they really find work in
Germany?

ALFREDO

Who knows?...It's like an
adventure.

(In a theatrical voice)

Hope springs eternal...

(PEPPINO from the distance
gives one last wave at
the window of the
projection booth.

SALVATORE waves back.)

SALVATORE

Peppinoooo! Come back soon!!

The black car drives off, leaving a cloud of dust that envelops the suppressed sobs of the grandparents standing there waving handkerchiefs. SALVATORE watches the car drive off. He mumbles:

SALVATORE

Good thing Germany's closer than
Russia.

ALFREDO rubs his hand through his hair.

24 CINEMA PARADISO. BALCONY AND BOOTH. INT. EVENING

24

The lion's head with the beam of light, seen from the balcony. SALVATORE'S face appears in the hole beside it, as he peers down at the images of the Settimana Incom newsreel. The audience is distracted. The snoring of a man sleeping can be heard. A pair of urchins pick up a cockroach with their hands, tip-toe down the aisle.

(CONTINUED)

The sleeping man is the same old BLACKSMITH, with his head thrown back. A little hand drops the cockroach into the gaping mouth. The URCHINS take to their heels. The BLACKSMITH squirms, wake up with a start. Spits, while everybody laughs. The newsreel is now about missing soldiers in Russia.

COMMENTATOR

The Defense Minister has announced a new list of names of Italian soldiers, so far considered missing and now confirmed as dead. Families concerned will be notified directly by military authorities.

SALVATORE pays careful attention, sees the black-and-white shots of the last war. The Russian campaign. The troops in the snow. Now in detail a heap of personal objects found on the corpses. Documents, clothing, glasses, photographs. One quick detail catches SALVATORE's eye among those photographs, for one instant he sees one he thinks he recognizes. He quickly sticks a slip of paper into the take-up reel, as when marking the kisses to be cut.

The hands of an OFFICIAL tear off several forms and give them to MARIA who is sitting in front of the desk. She is dressed in black. SALVATORE stands beside her, holding her hand. They have black bands on their arms. An empty stare in their eyes. MARIA is pale, a cold look in her sunken eyes. Her heart is bursting in her breast. And a lump in her throat prevents her from speaking. She looks at her husband's belongings, identifies them a gold chain, an ID card and the photograph, the one SALVATORE saw in the newsreel. MARIA strokes it with her fingers. SALVATORE comes up and looks, as the OFFICIAL concludes:

OFFICIAL

...Unfortunately we don't know what war cemetery he's buried in...This is the form for the pension. If you'd like to sign it...

MARIA walks through the city. She holds SALVATORE by the hand. SALVATORE looks up, trying to catch her eye. He sees her crying, in silence. The heartbroken tears of someone who has lost the one last hope, but held back, so as not to be seen by the child. SALVATORE presses close and puts his arm around her waist. They turn the corner, and walk off in the noisy city, disfigured by the ruins of war. A poster for Gone with the Wind catches SALVATORE's eye. He smiles.

27 CINEMA PARADISO. BOX OFFICE. PROJECTION BOOTH. SQUARE. 27
INT/EXT. EVENING

Winter has returned. On the screen, a sequence from I pompieri di Viggiu. The theatre is jam full. The sea of heads sways and shakes at the irresistible jokes of Toto.

Some people have climbed up on the window-sills. The aisles are crammed, and the way down to the screen, where grown-ups and children sit on the floor, their noses in the air. Some people munch crusts of bread they've brought along from home. Almost everybody is smoking. A woman laughs, holding the baby she is nursing. In one corner, at the end of one of the aisles jammed with people standing, a girl laughs, but every now and then her expression reveals a look of deep pleasure.

Her body moves slightly. Clinging to her from the rear is a man bathed in sweat.

They are making love standing there among the crowd, which notices nothing and goes on laughing.

In the balcony ANGELO is holding hands with ROSA. The curtain over the entrance is open. People are also standing there, seeing what they can from the distance, even a corner of the screen through the forest of heads. But the line continues on outside...All the way to the entrance of the movie house, out in the square. There are crowds of people, shivering from the cold, who protest, shove, risk provoking incidents. The PRIEST, Father Adelfio, is exhausted, tries to calm them down.

PRIEST

Don't shove! There's no room! For heaven's sake! I can't give another showing, it's late!

VOICES IN CROWD

Father Adelfio, we've been here for an hour! There are people inside who've seen it twice! ! ! Move on!! Ouch!! My foot!!!

It has just stopped raining, the bell-tower rings eleven o'clock. On the poster of the film a ' LAST DAY' sticker. The PRIEST, the TICKET-SELLER, the USHER and TWO CARABINIERES push the crowd back, close the front door. The protest grows louder. Fists pound the door.

CROWD

Open up!!! Father Adelfio!!
(The audience in the theatre hears the uproar.
Reacts:)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AUDIENCE

Ssssh! Sssssh! Be quiet out there!!
What the hell!

From the window of the projection booth, ALFREDO and SALVATORE look at the crowd down below, yelling and complaining. Some of the people look up at them.

VOICES IN CROWD

Alfredooo! We want to get in!... Tomorrow you're taking it off! (ALFREDO spreads his arms out as if to say there's nothing he can do.)

SALVATORE

Why can't we show the same film tomorrow?

ALFREDO

It's got to be sent to another town. And if we don't the owner of that movie house gets pissed off.

SALVATORE

Too bad!

The crowd sways nervously. The CARABINIERES give order.

CARABINIERES

(Exasperated)

Stop! Go home, all of you!
Otherwise somebody's going to end up in jail!' That's enough!

ALFREDO

(Dramatically)

'Joe! A mob doesn't think, doesn't know what it's doing...'

SALVATORE gives him a curious, inquisitive look. ALFREDO smiles.

ALFREDO

Spencer Tracy said it in Fury.

(Mischievously)

What'd you say if we let these poor devils see the film, Toto?

SALVATORE stares at him in amazement, all excited.

SALVATORE

Wonderful! But how can it be done?

ALFREDO turns away from the window. He gives a smirk, imitates the tough American movie stars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALFREDO

You don't believe my words, but
you'll have to believe your own
eyes!...And now get your ass off
that damn stool, boy!

SALVATORE laughs, eagerly, as if he were about to see a whole new movie. He climbs off the stool. Both of them move towards the projector...

28

PROJECTION BOOTH AND SQUARE. INT/EXT. EVENING

28

Trying not to put his hand in front of the lens, ALFREDO removes the frame with the glass that protects the projection. He wheels it around and motions SALVATORE to look...On the wall behind the projector: the film picture appears gradually, reflected by the glass, moves as the glass moves all the way over to the window looking out over the square. There it disappears. SALVATORE can barely believe his eyes, as if it were a piece of magic. He takes a quick look through the hole to see if the film is still showing on the screen. It is.

ALFREDO

(Mysteriously)

Go to the window, boy, and have a
look...

SALVATORE goes over to the window. Looks out. The reflected beam of light ends up on the white row of houses facing the square. It's like another screen. Except the images are backwards, like when you look in a mirror. And here and there are the windows of the houses...For SALVATORE, it's a wonderful spectacle, like a dream, ravishing.

SALVATORE

Alfredo, it's beautiful.

A voice is heard in the crowd of people jammed around the entrance to the movie house.

VOICE IN CROWD

(Shouting)

Hey, look there!! The movie!!

All heads turn to look at the house behind them.

CROWD

Oh, praise the Lord!! It's true!
Look! The movie!! There's Toto!!
Hurry! Hurry!...THANKS,
ALFREDOOOO!!

And everybody runs over to the other side of the square, in front of the strange new screen.

(CONTINUED)

ALFREDO and SALVATORE watch with glittering eyes. SALVATORE lays his hand on the shoulder of his great pal.

SALVATORE
Good for you, Alfredo!

A close-up of Toto projected on the houses, and one of the windows opens. A MAN appears, in his pajamas. Dazzled by the light, he shades his eyes with his hand. He sees all those people looking at him and laughing together.

CROWD
Shut the window!! Shut the window!
Go to bed!!

The MAN is dazed. Doesn't now what's going on. Looks around, and sees the black-and-white figures of the film dancing around him. He pops back inside, slams the window shut, almost cared.

VOICES IN CROWD
(To ALFREDO)
Sound!!! Sound!! Alfredooooo!!

ALFREDO
What do you say, should we make
them happy?

SALVATORE
(Smiling)
Sure, sure!

ALFREDO takes the loudspeaker of the monitor, rings it over to the window, turns it around towards the square. He turns up the volume and the sound-track fills the square. A chorus of approval.

CROWD
Aaaaaaaa! At last!

ALFREDO
(Looking at SALVATORE)
Do you want to go down there?
(SALVATORE gives a
contented nod.)
Go on.

SALVATORE runs on. ALFREDO looks wistfully towards the huge image in the square. Down in the square SALVATORE heads for the crowd, his eyes trained on the house-front screen. Behind him, the door of the movie house opens. The PRIEST, Father Adelfio, sees the film being projected on the house front, the people standing or sitting on the ground, laughing. His eyes nearly pop out of his head. Then he motions over the TICKET-SELLER, whispers something into his ear. The TICKET-SELLER strides over to the shivering spectators, pulls the pad of tickets out of his pocket.

TICKET-SELLER

Ladies and gentlemen! You have to
buy tickets! Reduced rate!

An irresistible chorus of Bronx cheers washes over him.
SALVATORE looks around, highly amused.

CROWD

Fuck off!! The square belongs to
everybody!

(The VILLAGE IDIOT peers
Out Of the crowd, all
worked up.)

VILLAGE IDIOT

No!!! The square's mine!!! Come on,
kids, no joking around here!!!
Otherwise...

The crowd roars with laughter. SALVATORE laughs too, as if
carried away by it all. And over the general merriment looms
the shadow of ALFREDO, standing in the window of the
projection booth. All at once, on the house-front screen, the
image of Toto slows down for an instant, a white blister
appears and spreads until it fills the whole screen. The
crowd gives a start of bewilderment and fear. SALVATORE jerks
his head around to look at the booth.

The film bursts violently into flame among the gears and
sprockets of the projector. ALFREDO is taken off-guard. He
breaks the film running into the take-up reel, but is unable
to do it for the delivery reel. He grabs the film which is
catching fire and pulls it out quickly, tries to stop the
flames from reaching the reel in the fireproof housing. A
desperate race against the speed of the fire. The flames on
the floor burn his legs. ALFREDO gives a jump, slows down the
movement of his hands for an instant and inevitably the
flames run ahead, reach the upper housing. It's like an
explosion. The flames leap out, striking him full in the
face. ALFREDO doesn't have time to scream, struggles
desperately and falls to the floor. Meanwhile the flames
envelop everything.

The flash of the flames flares up in the windows of the
projection booth. SALVATORE is appalled, elbows his way
through the moving crowd. Inside the movie house the
murmuring of the audience can be heard, growing louder and
louder. A scream...

PARADISO. INT. EVENING

A violent spurt of flames leaps out of the mouth of the plaster lion's head, into the darkness broken by the screams of people rushing for the exits.

32 SQUARE AND CINEMA PARADISO ENTRANCE. EXT. EVENING 32

The crowd streaks out of the movie house, enveloped in a cloud of black smoke.

CROWD

Heeeelp! Run for your lives!!!

In the general panic, SALVATORE tries in vain to get inside, elbows his way towards the street with the stairs leading to the projection booth. The audience clashes against him, knocks him to the ground, almost trampling him underfoot. He is suddenly seized by a superhuman force; gets up, claws his way desperately ahead, with people falling on top of him and to the floor. He finally succeeds, starts up the stairs...

33 CINEMA PARADISO. STAIRS AND PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. EVENING 33

The place is filled with smoke. The air is suffocating. SALVATORE streaks up the stairs, gasping for breath. The projection booth is enveloped in flames. ALFREDO's body on the floor, burning. SALVATORE moves quickly, throws a blanket over his shoulders, drags him by the feet over to the stairs, as boxes and other objects fall on him. Using the same blanket, he stamps out the flames that have seared ALFREDO'S clothes. With the force of desperation, he drags him further down the stairs which have been reached by the smoke but not by the flames. ALFREDO doesn't move, his face is burnt. SALVATORE looks at him and only now is panic-stricken, lets out a terrified shriek, like a wounded colt.

SALVATORE

Alfredo! Heeeelp! Help!!!

34 CINEMA PARADISO. INT. EVENING 34

The plaster lion looks like a dragon spitting fire and smoke. The statue of the Virgin Mary is also in flames. And the movie screen.

35 SQUARE AND CINEMA PARADISO. EXT. EVENING 35

The fire has been put out. Nothing remains of the movie house but the skeleton. Everything has gone up in smoke.

People stand around, dismayed. They gather around the PRIEST, who is at once grieved and shocked, to express their solidarity and comfort.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

VOICES

What a pity! Poor Alfredo! What a terrible thing!! Cheer up, Father, is there something we can do?'

VILLAGE IDIOT

(Laughing)

Burnt up...Burnt up.

PRIEST

What'll we do now! The town will have to get along without movies! Who's got the money to rebuild it?

CICCIO SPACCAFICO, the man who won the Sisal pools, comes up, dressed in style. He looks up at the charred cinema. It looks like a battlefield after an enemy attack. From the smoke and ashes to...

36 CINEMA PARADISO. EXT. EVENING

36

...The great lighted sign of the CINEMA PARADISO . The movie house has been rebuilt. New facade. New billboards. There are people moving about the entrance. It is the evening of the inauguration...

37 CINEMA PARADISO. INT. EVENING

37

The lobby is crowded with people, authorities, special guests. There is the MAYOR, FATHER ADELFINO and the new owner, CICCIO SPACCAFICO, dressed to the teeth. The MAYOR cuts the ribbon. Flashbulbs pop. Clapping.

GUESTS

Cheers' Congratulations, Don Ciccio!

The procession advances towards the stairs leading into the theatre. FATHER ADELFINO, with a nostalgic sigh, blesses the lobby, then the corridor. Lastly, the new auditorium, which resounds with toasts and cheers.

AUDIENCE

To the Cinema Paradiso!

The PRIEST sprinkles the new seats, the walls, the screen with holy water...

38 CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. EVENING

38

Now FATHER ADELFINO is blessing the brand-new projection booth. He also blesses the new projectionist: SALVATORE. He is very nervous, but serious, self-possessed. His worried-looking mother is also there for the occasion. The PRIEST turns to SPACCAFICO.

(CONTINUED)

PRIEST

How'd you solve his being under age?

SPACCAFICO

I took out a license as projectionist, thanks to friends down at the guild offices. But I don't know a thing about it. Officially, I do the job...
 (Smiling at Salvatore)
 ...but Toto earns the money.

PRIEST

Fine.

(To SALVATORE)

Always be careful, my boy. Don't ever go to sleep. Be sure another accident doesn't happen. Do everything poor Alfredo taught you. And may God bless you.

SALVATORE nods his head seriously, assuming a responsible expression. His mother kisses the PRIEST's hand.

MARIA

Thanks, Father. Thanks.

SPACCAFICO

And now enough of this gloomy atmosphere. Life goes on! I want to see you happy and smiling!

Laughter. The laughter of the large audience at the first showing of the inauguration film. Among the spectators, SALVATORE'S mother, MARIA, and his kid sister, El A. Up on the screen, a man and a woman kiss. The first time a kiss has been seen at the Cinema Paradiso. The audience murmurs, surprised and excited.

AUDIENCE

Ooooooh! They're kissing!! Look at that!! Christ, that's news!!

An OLD LADY sitting next to the MAYOR, crosses herself, flabbergasted. CICCIO SPACCAFICO chuckles. Rubs his hands: these are going to be golden times for him. FATHER ADELFIGO gets up and stalks out of the theatre, indignant; he'll never set foot in the place again. The love theme gets louder and louder...

40 PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. EVENING

40

The same music spreads through the booth from the monitor. SALVATORE is by himself. He is watching the film through the hole but strangely enough, the story doesn't absorb him. ALFREDO'S absence makes him nervous, he gazes at the stool he used to sit on. It has been repainted. A voice from the rear of the cabin:

ANNA'S VOICE

Toto?...

SALVATORE turns and at the top of the stairs sees SIGNORA ANNA and behind her, ALFREDO, her husband. He is wearing a pair of dark glasses and walks with the help of a cane. He has lost his sight, but not his spirit. He smiles:

ALFREDO

Any room for me in this Cinema Paradiso?

(SALVATORE runs over and embraces him.)

SALVATORE

Come in, Alfredo.

ANNA

(to SALVATORE)

Toto, will you bring him home when you close down?

SALVATORE

Yes. Signora Anna.

(To ALFREDO)

I'm glad you came.

CUT TO:

ALFREDO is now sitting there immobile. He listens to the soundtrack of the film. SALVATORE studies the way he stares into empty space, and the idea of darkness frightens him. There is something new in ALFREDO'S manner, as if having grazed death and the loss of his sight had endowed him with a deeper knowledge of men and life.

ALFREDO

How's school?

SALVATORE

OK. OK. But now that I've got a job, I'll probably stop going...

ALFREDO

Don't do that...Sooner or later you'll be left empty-handed.

(CONTINUED)

SALVATORE

Why? What do you mean?

ALFREDO

Toto, this isn't for you. For the moment, the Cinema Paradiso needs you, and you need the Cinema Paradiso. But it won't last...Some day you'll have other things to do, more important things...

He reaches out and touches SALVATORE'S face to 'feel' his expression.

ALFREDO

That's right, more important. I know it. Now that I've lost my sight I see more. I see everything I didn't see before...

As ALFREDO moves his hand from SALVATORE'S face, we see that he is now a young man, and that ALFREDO is older, grayer.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

And it's all thanks to you, who saved my life. And I'll never forget it...

SALVATORE doesn't understand his strange words. ALFREDO can 'feel' he is troubled.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

And don't put on that look. I haven't gone off my head yet. You want proof?

And he gives a joking smile. SALVATORE is curious, expects one of his fiendish tricks.

SALVATORE

(Smiling)

Yes. I want proof.

ALFREDO

For example, at this moment the film's out of focus. Go see.

SALVATORE stands up in disbelief. He looks through the hole, and indeed the film is out of focus. He puts it back into focus, flabbergasted.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

(Smiling)

It's hard to explain, Toto...

41 CAFE IN THE SQUARE. INT/EXT. MORNING

41

As the BILL-POSTER attaches to the café door a poster of Catene - the coming attraction at the Cinema Paradiso - CICCIO SPACCAFICO is speaking on the phone in the phone booth. He is clearly peeved.

SPACCAFICO

Only two days? Are you joking?!...
What do I care if all the copies
are reserved?...Catene for only two
days in a place like this! Why,
people will eat me alive!...

Standing beside him listening is SALVATORE. He is carrying school books under his arm. In the café, several curious ONLOOKERS laugh as through the café window they watch some unemployed PEASANT MEN dancing together at the club. SPACCAFICO listens nervously, then shrieks as if he were about to eat the phone.

SPACCAFICO (CONT'D)

...I know, I know. But even if I
start showing at eight in the
morning it wouldn't be enough! This
is a big town now and you people at
the Titanus know it perfectly well!
I'm your sole agent and if I get
pissed off I'll write straight to
Lombardo, in Rome!! I'll give you
guys a good run-around!! If I get
my dander up, I can let fly, if my
name's Spaccafico!!

Cut to:

SPACCAFICO AND SALVATORE are now outside the café, head towards the square. In front of the movie house, the CHARWOMAN is at work. SPACCAFICO is so nervous he lights two cigarettes without noticing it. SALVATORE is turning something over in his mind.

SALVATORE

Don Ciccio, I've got an idea...You
remember that old abandoned movie
house where they're supposed to
build those low-rent houses?

SPACCAFICO

So what's that got to do with it?

SALVATORE

The projector's all rusty, but I
could fix it in two or three days.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

SALVATORE (CONT'D)

Give the place a good cleaning, put
in some seats and bring in a
projectionist and we'll show Catene
in two houses.

SPACCAFICO

(Shrieking)

What the fuck you talking about?
You getting into the act too, Toto?
Titanus has trouble giving me even
one copy and I have to say thanks!
If I ask for two, the least they'll
do is cut off my head and play ball
with it!

A shrewd look glitters in SALVATORE s eyes. He smiles.

SALVATORE

Who says we need two copies?

42 CINEMA PARADISO. INT. DAY

42

The house is jammed with people. Almost bursting at the seams. The last scenes of Catene move across the screen. Tears stream down the faces of the men and women. The children are unusually silent. Even the BLACKSMITH is awake, indeed whispers ahead of time all the lines of Nazzari and Yvonne Sanson, knows them by heart. Among the crowd in the balcony there is ALFREDO and his wife, the MAYOR, DON VINCENZO the landowner, the schoolteachers. Now the music is loud, heart- rending. 'THE END' appears on screen. The lights go on. And there is a great din and uproar as one audience leaves and another arrives. The race for empty seats. Quarrels. The CARABINIERES help the USHER maintain order and persuade the people who want to see the film again to get up and leave.

USHER

(Exasperate)]

That's enough now! You've seen it
ten times! I need the seats! I wish
you'd all get the galloping runs!

CARABINIERES

Easy! Easy! Through the emergency
exits, quick! Stop the jabbering!!

43 CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION BOOTH. INT.

43

The end of the film slips through the sprockets. SALVATORE switches off the motor. He is particularly fast in taking the reel out of the housing. And even faster in dropping it into the sack BOCCIA is holding open for him.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

SALVATORE

Now get running and bring me the first reel. Meanwhile I'll start showing the news!

BOCCIA

OK, Toto!

44 VILLAGE STREETS AND COUNTRYSIDE. EXT. DAY

44

BOCCIA speeds like an arrow on his bicycle through the village streets. Tied to the parcel-rack is the sack containing the second part of Catene. He now turns off the main street and takes a short-cut down a country road. He pedals as fast as he can. Until he disappears into the distance, beyond the trees.

45 ENTRANCE OLD ABANDONED MOVIE HOUSE. EXT. DAY

45

BOCCIA finally reaches the old movie house, which has been more or less spruced up. Here too people are lined up in front of the posters of Catene. CICCIO SPACCAFICO is waiting impatiently on an outside staircase. He too is holding a sack, containing the first part of the film. The bicycle pulls up in front of him. The sacks are exchanged.

SPACCAFICO

Quick! Give it to me! Here's the first part. Get moving!

BOCCIA heads back to the Cinema Paradiso, to take the first part to SALVATORE. SPACCAFICO dashes up the stairs, and hands the sack to a MAN standing in the door, through which the bare projection booth can be seen, and the projector which SALVATORE has put back into working order. SPACCAFICO yells in excitement.

SPACCAFICO (CONT'D)

Here you are! Quick, quick!! People are waiting!

46 OLD ABANDONED MOVIE HOUSE. INT. DAY

46

In fact, inside the old freezing cold movie house, the audience is grumbling. Everyone is wrapped in overcoats and woollen scarves and are sitting on chairs they've brought from home and wooden benches. The hum of the projector is heard at last. The lights go down. The grumbling subsides. The words 'PART TWO' appear on screen and then the images of the film.

47 VARIOUS COUNTRY ROADS AND VILLAGE STREETS. EXT. DAY/SUNDOWN

Meanwhile BOCCIA pedals his way swiftly through the countryside on his way to the Cinema Paradiso...

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

FADE.

Now BOCCIA is on his way back to the old movie house. To carry out another exchange of sacks containing the reels of film.

FADE.

Another race back to Cinema Paradiso. BOCCIA starts looking tired, his breath is short. And daylight starts fading into the colours of sundown.

FADE.

The last fading light of sundown.-BOCCIA is pedalling once more back to the old movie house. With the same sack tied to the parcel-rack. He is exhausted. On his last legs. He slows down, then stops.

48 CINEMA PARADISO. INT. EVENING

48

The lights are still on. In the thick blanket of smoke, the crowd stirs nervously. Shouting. Whistling.

AUDIENCE

Hey, when's it starting!! We've got
ploughing to do in the morning!!
Toto, get a move on!! Heeey!!

49 PROJECTION BOOTH. INT/EXT. EVENING

49

In the booth, the projector is turned off. SALVATORE looks nervously out of the window...at the square. But not a sign of BOCCIA. A CARABINIERE peers in through one of the holes.

CARABINIERE

What are we going to do, Toto? The
whole place here is up in arms.
They've been waiting more than a
half hour.

SALVATORE

What can I do?

50 OLD ABANDONED MOVIE HOUSE. INT. EVENING

50

Here too the audience is up in arms. They're waiting for Part Two to start. CICCIO SPACCAFICO tears his hair with rage.

SPACCAFICO

Where's the fucking bastard got to?

SPECTATOR

Let's get one thing straight, Don
Ciccio!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

SPECTATOR (CONT'D)
I'm waiting ten minutes more, and
if you haven't started... you're
giving me my money back!!

AUDIENCE
(In chorus)
Well said! Well said! We want our
money back!!

SPACCAFICO
Easy! Easy! What about my showing
you the first part again? Huh?

People shout, whistle, give Bronx cheers.

AUDIENCE
No! First part, my foot! We want to
see how the story ends!!

Down in the front row, PASQUALE, the man who sells black
market cigarettes, stands up.

PASQUALE
I've seen the whole works! You want
me to tell you how it ends?

A shoe comes flying at him.

AUDIENCE
Nooo! No! Shut up, you jerk!!

5I VILLAGE STREETS AND COUNTRY ROADS. EXT. EVENING

5I

SALVATORE has got himself a bicycle and is going off to look
for BOCCIA. He pedals fast, turns into the country short cut.
Looks around not a sign of Boccia. By now it is dark. He
sees a MAN in the window of a farmhouse, calls out to him.

SALVATORE
Boccia! Boccia!

SALVATORE rides on. Now he's in the open country. All of a
sudden he seems to hear something. He stops. Pricks up his
ears. It's a sort of moan - he can't figure out if it's an
animal or a man. He turns on the flashlight he has brought
along. Takes a closer look around.

Catches sight of a bicycle wheel on the ground behind a bush.
That's where the moan is coming from! He creeps over in
alarm. Next to the bicycle he now catches sight of the sack
with the film. And the moaning gets louder.

SALVATORE (CONT'D)
(Alarmed)
Boccia, what's wrong?

(CONTINUED)

He runs over to help his friend. Behind the bush he discovers BOCCIA humped up between the legs of TERESA, a prostitute. He moves with all the fury of his young years. SALVATORE has never seen people making love before and is speechless.

SALVATORE

Damn you, what are you doing?

BOCCIA

(Shouting)

Oh, Christ, it's so good!!!

(And he goes on ramming it home.)

TERESA

Hey, cut it out! Go away. Shoo!

With a confused look on his face, SALVATORE picks up the sack and walks away, looking over his shoulder at the couple who go on tossing around more and more frantically.

BOCCIA lets out a shriek of pleasure that rings through the countryside, as SALVATORE pedals off like a madman and disappears into the trees.

Music and the naked body of Brigitte Bardot. A row of youngsters on the main floor stare at the naked actress, all excited. A regular rhythmic tremor runs through them, half-hidden by the back of the seats.

A scene from a horror film. The frightened faces of the audience. Off in one corner, the door of the men's toilet opens and a MAN with a contented look comes out, followed by TERESA, who motions another one to come in. In the projection booth, SALVATORE is eating the meal his mother has brought him.

A gangster film. The tense faces of the audience. A gun battle. Rounds of machine-gunfire in the night. The shots echo through the theatre. A LITTLE BOY claps his hands over his ears. Alternating with the machine-gunfire on screen, a real pistol shoots the back of one of the spectators, the landowner DON VINCENZO, who slumps down in his seat without anybody noticing...The shooting continues up on screen...

SALVATORE'S hand holds a lighted match under a piece of film, before the horrified eyes of SPACCAFICO and the USHER, and the puzzled expression of

ALFREDO.

SALVATORE

What'd I tell you? It doesn't catch
fire!

ALFREDO

Progress! It always arrives too
late!

A scene from Seven Brides for Seven Brothers. The only empty seat in the theatre is the one where DON VINCENZO was killed. A flower has been tied to it with string. All the other seats are taken.

Fade to:

ROSA and ANGELO are sitting next to each other. They are watching a different film. But she has a baby in her arms they have got married, have set up a family.

In the balcony, the MAN with the face of a public notary spits down below with a contented look. But this time the main floor takes its revenge and a blob of shit hits him square in the face.

53

CINEMA PARADISO. INT. MORNING

53

In the morning the theatre is empty. All the doors are shut. Light filters in through the open windows up above, illuminates the posters of coming attractions and the yellowish screen. Off-screen, a woman's voice and a boy's voice are heard.

TERESA'S VOICE

(Off-screen)

Come on...That's right...relax...

(Laughing)

...Don't be scared...

SALVATORE'S VOICE

(Off-screen)

Is it true that if I bleed I've got
to squeeze lemon juice on it?

TERESA'S VOICE (OFF-SCREEN)

(A loud laugh)

Lemon juice?...That's a new one for
you! Who tells you this crap...Take
it easy...That's right...You see,
it's not painful, is it?

Slow pan along the walls of the theatre, the empty aisles, discovers SALVATORE on the floor between the seats with TERESA, the prostitute who has already been seen. SALVATORE is making love for the first time in his life.

(CONTINUED)

He is awkward and clumsy. There is an uncertain look in his eyes, his livid face is dripping with sweat.

TERESA

...There you are! That's right,
that's right! Keep going...

(SALVATORE is quicker, has
learned the lesson.

TERESA goads him on.)

Ah!!! There, now you're a real man!

A man! ? A real calf!

(SALVATORE's panting
slackens into a deep sigh
of pleasure.)

The blade of a knife, clutched in a hardened hand. A blow. A cry of pain. A calf falls like a dead weight to the ground...SALVATORE photographs the animal in the throes of death with his 8mm movie camera. As well as the faces of the MEN who now bleed and skin it quickly. In the vast slaughter-house, the voices of the men and animals mingle together.

SALVATORE'S eye is quick to catch the most unexpected expressions of ordinary people. His movie camera is always ready, like a hunter's rifle. Now he is shooting...

A meeting in the square: the passionate reactions of the peasants listening to a speaker who flails his arms around.

At school: the old SCHOOLMISTRESS sitting at her desk, sunk in God knows what dreams, her eyes staring off into empty space, as a tear runs down her pale, unhappy face, and the unknowing STUDENTS carry out their assignments.

At the railroad station: the nervous excitement of the people waiting on the platforms. SALVATORE pans his camera on to TWO MEN fighting. But an arriving train comes in between. Salvatore follows the train, pans along the cars. The train stops.

-A door opens and the passengers climb out. Several TRADERS, a CARABINTERE, a group of commuting STUDENTS, the TICKET-COLLECTOR, a distinguished looking COUPLE and lastly, a GIRL who stops in the middle of the viewfinder. SALVATORE is immediately attracted by her face. He goes on shooting without leaving it a moment. He follows her through the lens. She is very beautiful, must be around sixteen, a simple, sweet face, blue eyes. She is certainly the daughter of the distinguished looking COUPLE who got off just before she did. The little family moves off down the platform. Salvatore follows the girl's movements, as if hypnotized. Now she passes by him, turns towards him for one moment, as if trying to figure out where he is aiming that funny-looking gadget. SALVATORE smiles at her, entranced.

55

HIGH SCHOOL. COURTYARD. ENTRANCE. EXT. MORNING

55

The JANITOR is ringing the bell. In the courtyard, on the other side of the gate, the STUDENTS prepare to enter. SALVATORE is with a group of schoolmates, including BOCCIA. And they all stare, wide-eyed, at the GIRL from the station. She has her books under her arm and is walking by herself.

SALVATORE

You know that one there?

BOCCIA

She's new. Not bad though. Nice-looking.

SALVATORE has the look of somebody seeking for an idea, some way of picking up a conversation with her.

SECOND STUDENT

Her father s the new bank director.
Loaded, luxury and easy living!

FIRST STUDENT

People who jerk off with a shirt so
they won't get their hands dirty.
(Laughs.)

All at once, BOCCIA and SALVATORE notice that the GIRL drops her lunch without noticing as she is about to enter the school. They fly off, swift as arrows. It's a chance not to be missed. BOCCIA is the quicker, is already in the lead. SALVATORE gives an angry gesture. A flash come into his eyes, the same flash he had as a little boy when he finds the right way to hit home. He picks up his step, trips BOCCIA and brings him to the ground. He pounces on him and lets go with his fist. He starts running again. Picks the bundle off the ground. Catches up with the GIRL from the station, nervous and inexperienced, but polite.

SALVATORE

Look, you dropped this.

And he hands her her lunch with a smile. She recognizes him.

ELENA

Oh, thanks. I hadn't noticed...

She takes the bundle as SALVATORE touches her hand delicately.

SALVATORE

My name's Salvatore...And yours?

ELENA

(Smiling)
Elena. My name's Elena.

(CONTINUED)

SALVATORE is very flustered. He feels as if all his blood were throbbing in his head. He tries to say something else, but the words catch in his throat.

SALVATORE

I...I...The other time at the station.

BOCCIA suddenly grabs him by the collar and yanks him away. ELENA is frightened, puts her hand over her eyes so as not to see.

PARADISO.PROJECTION BOOTH.INT.AFTERNOON

SALVATORE has a black eye, swollen shut. He is setting up a little 8mm projector on a stool. ALFREDO is sitting in one corner. He has come to keep him company. He listens to the sound-track of the movie being shown.

ALFREDO

Chaplin's Modern Times! Right, Toto?

SALVATORE

That's right, Modern Times.

ALFREDO

I've shown it so many times I know it by heart. The first time I showed it, in 1940, was the Sunday my first wife died. They kept it hidden from me all day so they wouldn't have to close down the movie house. I only found out that night, after the last show. Those are things you never forget...

(Changing his tone.)

So, Toto, how are these home movies going?

SALVATORE has switched on the little projector and a square of light appears on the wall beside ALFREDO, with the scenes shot in town.

SALVATORE

Yes.

The shots of the slaughter-house have appeared.

ALFREDO

(Whispering)

What is it, what is it? What's the picture?

CONTINUED:

SALVATORE

It's people in the slaughter-house
killing a calf. There's blood all
over the floor, like a lake. And
through this lake another calf
passes by on its way to die.

ALFREDO is concentrated, as if SALVATORE'S description transmitted the real image to him, the colours, the forms. The railway station has appeared on the wall, and the sequence of ELENA. SALVATORE does not move, does not say a word, as he gazes at those blue eyes looking into the camera. ALFREDO senses something funny in the boy's silence.

ALFREDO

Now what can you see?

SALVATORE

Nothing, there's nothing. It's all
out of focus.

ALFREDO

(Smiling)

Is there a woman?...Tell me the
truth...

SALVATORE is shamed, uncertain, doesn't know what to say. A tender look filters through ALFREDO'S dark glasses. He has obviously caught on and whispers:

ALFREDO

There is a woman.

SALVATORE is forced to admit it, with a sigh.

SALVATORE

Yes, it's a girl I saw at the
station.

ALFREDO

What's she like? What's she
like?...

And as other shots of ELENA appear on the screen, SALVATORE describes her. As only somebody in love could.

SALVATORE

She's nice. My age...Slender, with
long hair, brunette. She had big
blue eyes, a simple expression and
a little beauty mark on her lip,
but really tiny. You can only see
it close-up. And when she
smiles...She makes you feel...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He stops. Only now does he realize that he has let himself be carried away by passion, by the desire to talk about her. ALFREDO smiles, spellbound...

ALFREDO

Eh! Love...what a mystery!

SALVATORE turns off the projector and heaves a deep sigh, almost of liberation. ALFREDO'S sympathy does him a lot of good. It's nice to be understood. He moves over closer to him. ALFREDO runs his hand through his hair, whispers:

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

I understand you, Toto...The ones with blue eyes are the most beautiful. Whatever you do, you can't make friends with them.

SALVATORE is comforted by the way he talks. He didn't think it was possible to put into words the things he has felt since meeting ELENA. He nods his head. ALFREDO sighs.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Eh, there's nothing to be done about it! The heavier a man is, the deeper his footprints. And if he's in love, he suffers, because he knows he's up a one-way street. Because love is a meaningless thing when a man gets it into his head to do what he wants...

SALVATORE is touched by his sensitivity, by his intense, passionate, sweet way of speaking.

SALVATORE

What you say is wonderful! But sad...

ALFREDO

(Smiling)

They're not my words. John Wayne said it in Shepherd of the Hills.

SALVATORE suddenly changes expression, as if discovering he was being made fun of.

SALVATORE

Stinking two-timer!!
(And they burst out laughing.)

A grey, windy day. It is opening-time and the shutters of the movie house are being rolled up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALVATORE is about to enter through the small door of the spiral staircase, when in the distance he catches sight of...

ELENA crossing a street with her books under her arm. She is alone. SALVATORE doesn't stop to think twice, dashes off, runs through streets full of dust, another square, turns the corner, but has lost sight of her. He looks around in all directions there she is! He starts running again. And finally catches up with her, all out of breath, practically speechless with emotion.

SALVATORE
Hi, Elena!

ELENA
Hi. Why are you running?

SALVATORE
No particular reason...

He is entranced by her eyes. He wants to tell her all sorts of things, say all the words he has memorized a thousand times. But now he can't get them out. His knees tremble. He does his best to overcome his confusion, but all that comes out is:

SALVATORE
Nice day, huh?

A gust of wind envelops them in a cloud of dust and a clap of thunder rends the air. ELENA laughs, amused by the blunder.

ELENA
Yes, nice day.
(SALVATORE laughs too. He gazes at her long hair tossed by the wind. She turns to leave.)
...I've got to go now. Bye-bye.

SALVATORE
Bye-bye, Elena.

ELENA walks away. And SALVATORE also turns to leave. Only now is he seized by disappointment, regret at not having made the best of the opportunity. He talks to himself.

SALVATORE (CONT'D)
...What an idiot! What an idiot!
'Nice day'! Christ!!

BEDROOM.INT.DAY

SALVATORE projects images of ELENA on his wall. He lies across his bed gazing at her image.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALVATORE

You probably don't believe me, but I'm going to become the leading man in your life. Sure, I don't look like Marlon Brando, but look at me, really look at me. Am I really so ugly? So should I try once more? Maybe It'll succeed. What do you say?

ELENA seems to be saying, Yes. As SALVATORE kisses ELENA, her image disappears. He is left with his face against the wall in the white light from the projector.

AND ELENA'S HOUSE.INT.DAY

SALVATORE is in a phone booth. The telephone will certainly help him feel less nervous.

SALVATORE

Hello, can I speak to Elena, please?

WOMANS VOICE

Yes.

SALVATORE recognizes ELENA's voice, changes his tone, turns sweeter, more personal.

SALVATORE

Is that you, Elena?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yes...

SALVATORE

Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't recognize your voice. This is Salvatore, remember?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yes...

SALVATORE finally speaks, says everything all in one breath, without stopping, without hesitating, in order to leave no room for shyness.

SALVATORE

Listen, I know that every time we see each other I make a fool of myself, but I'm not like that, I swear. It's just that when I see you, I feel shy, the right words don't come to me, I don't have the courage to say that all I do is think about you...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALVATORE (CONT'D)
 (He has finally got it out. He's dripping with sweat, but happy at having succeeded. He continues.)

That's right, Elena, you're the last thing I think of when I go to sleep and the first when I wake up in the morning. And at night I always dream of you. I know, it's not good on the phone. But please, don't get me wrong. Because I love you very much...

WOMAN'S VOICE
 (Interrupting him)
 If you don't stop phoning her, I'm calling the police!

SALVATORE
 (Stunned)
 But excuse me, who's speaking?

At ELENA'S house, a WOMAN who is visibly in a state is speaking on the phone.

ELENA'S MOTHER
 I'm Elena's mother, you filthy pig!

SALVATORE feels like dropping through the floor, tries to get a word in to explain, to apologize, but the flood of insults overwhelms him.

SALVATORE
 I'm sorry, Signora, maybe there's a misunderstanding...I...

WOMAN'S VOICE
 And don't call my daughter any more. Never!

SALVATORE has no choice but to hang up, disappointed, defeated. He's so mad he starts slapping himself.

HOUSE.EXT.AFTERNOON

Good Friday. ALFREDO comes out of his house, leaning on SALVATORE'S shoulder. They go off down the street, towards the church. SALVATORE has finished recounting his misadventure.

ALFREDO
 I told you, the blue-eyed ones are the most difficult.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALVATORE

But why? There must be some way to make her understand!

ALFREDO

Don't think about it, Toto. Don't even try. With feelings, there's nothing to understand.

SALVATORE gives an angry gesture. This time ALFREDO'S words do not quiet his frenzy, don't help him. He moves away from him a few steps.

ALFREDO stands there motionless in the middle of the road.

SALVATORE

Stop it! I've had enough of your sermons! You act as if you created the world!

A bicycle streaks by ALFREDO, who gives a startled jump, as if it were about to run into him. He raises his voice, panic-stricken.

ALFREDO

Heeey! Totooooo! Don't get pissed off with me now! Come here! I don't know where the fuck I have to go.

A MAN on a bicycle almost collides with ALFREDO. SALVATORE fumes, goes over to him listlessly. ALFREDO puts his hand back on his shoulder and they start walking again. ALFREDO has calmed down, but his voice is determined.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

And the next time be careful how you talk. Not to take credit away from the Lord, but if I had created the world, in all modesty, certain things would have come out better. But unfortunately such was not the case.

SALVATORE

(Laughing)

You see, it s like I say. You always have an answer for everything.

ALFREDO

I want to make you happy, Toto! I'm going to tell you a story.

And he squeezes SALVATORE'S shoulder. It's the signal for taking a rest. They sit in a doorway. ALFREDO starts telling his story, and his way of speaking is hypnotic, magical.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

With those eyes lost in empty space, it's as if his thoughts and his words came in from some other dimension, mysterious, hidden...

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Once upon a time a king gave a feast and there were all the most beautiful princesses of the realm. Basta, one of the guards, saw the king's daughter: she was the loveliest of all! And he immediately fell in love with her. But what could a poor soldier do compared with a king's daughter?!...One day he managed to meet her and told her he couldn't live without her. The princess was so struck by the depth of his feeling that she said to the soldier 'If you will wait a hundred days and a hundred nights beneath my balcony, then in the end I'll be yours.' Christ, the soldier ran off there and waited! One day, two days, ten, twenty...Every night she looked out of her window, but he never budged. Come rain, wind, snow, never budged! The birds shat on him and the bees ate him alive! After ninety nights he was gaunt and pale and tears streamed from his eyes but he couldn't hold them back. He didn't even have the strength to sleep any more. The princess kept watch...And on the ninety-ninth night, the soldier got up, picked up his chair and left!

SALVATORE

No! You mean right at the end?

SALVATORE is amazed, dumbfounded; that ending has made a deep impression. They start walking again.

ALFREDO

That's right, Toto, right at the end? And don't ask me what it means. If you figure it out, let me know...

SALVATORE

I'll be damned'

Before the high altar, the Virgin Mary in tears clutches three spikes in her hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And beside her is another statue Christ descended from the cross. MEN and WOMEN stand in line to kiss Christ's wounds. Many people are sitting between the pews. SALVATORE helps ALFREDO take a seat, and at that moment catches sight at the far end of ELENA on her way to the confessional.

She kneels down on one side, just as FATHER ADELFIGIO comes out of the middle booth and goes to the altar to say something to the sacristan. SALVATORE'S eyes light up. He has had a brainstorm.

He leans over and whispers something into ALFREDO'S ear. ALFREDO nods his head. SALVATORE is so happy that he gives him a pat on the cheek, like a caress. Then he hurries over to the PRIEST. Says something in a low voice, gesticulates with some agitation, points to the pew where ALFREDO is sitting. The PRIEST tries to say he can't now, but SALVATORE insists, and wins. The PRIEST goes over to ALFREDO, leans over.

PRIEST

What is it, Alfredo? Right now, of all times!

ALFREDO

(In a grave voice)

Father Adelfio, I have a very serious doubt that is torturing my soul. And you've got to help me, because I've lost all peace of mind...

SALVATORE watches from a distance. He sees the PRIEST put on an alarmed expression and then sit down beside ALFREDO. Everything's ready. He creeps over to the confessional. ELENA is there, kneeling down waiting for the PRIEST to arrive. In an instant, without anyone noticing, SALVATORE pops inside the confessional. He shuts the little door below and draws the purple curtain. On the other side of grille, only a few inches away, those eyes that keep him awake all night.

ELENA

Father, I have sinned...

SALVATORE

(In a low voice)

We'll talk about that later.

ELENA

(Surprised)

But...who...

SALVATORE

(Interrupting her)

Sssssh, Be quiet, pretend everything's normal. I'm Salvatore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELENA'S eyes pop in amazement.

ELENA

What are you doing here?

Meanwhile ALFREDO and the PRIEST continue their unusual and animated discussion. The PRIEST is appalled, crosses himself.

PRIEST

But Alfredo, what you're saying is horrifying!

ALFREDO

I know. But take the-miracle of the loaves and fishes, for example! I think about it a lot...How is it possible for...

In the confessional, the whispered conversation between SALVATORE and ELENA continues.

ELENA

(Annoyed)

There was a terrible rumpus at home. My mother told my father. And how could you have mistaken my voice?!

SALVATORE is mortified, on tenterhooks, keeps an eye on ALFREDO and the PRIEST through a crack in the curtain.

SALVATORE

Forgive me, Elena. It was stupid of me. But I had to talk to you.

She looks up at him and her eyes are even more beautiful in the candlelight. This time SALVATORE finds the courage to speak to her calmly, with determination. That grille probably helps him, allows him to see without being seen.

SALVATORE (CONT'D)

You're so beautiful, Elena...That's what I wanted to tell you. When I meet you, I can't put two words together because...you give me the shivers. I don't know what you do in these situations, what you're supposed to say. It's the first time. But I think I'm in love with you.

ELENA gazes through the grille at the two shining specks of his eyes. She is bewildered by that flood of passion. At that moment, an OLD WOMAN kneels down on the other side of the confessional and her face appears behind the grille.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

OLD WOMAN
 Father, I have sinned...
 (SALVATORE turns to her,
 instinctively.)

SALVATORE
 I absolve you in the name of the
 Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.
 Go in peace, my daughter.

And he slams the panel shut in her face. ELENA is barely able to control her laughter.

SALVATORE
 When you laugh, you're even more
 beautiful.

She pulls herself together again and puts on a serious, but tender look.

ELENA
 Salvatore, it's awfully sweet of
 you. And even though I don't know
 you, I like you. But...I'm not in
 love with you.

For SALVATORE, it's as if a knife had plunged straight into his heart. He sits there gazing into her eyes, at the beauty mark on her lip, without moving. Then through the crack sees ALFREDO and the PRIEST conversing nervously, God knows what they're saying. And he turns back to her.

SALVATORE
 I don't care. I'll wait.

ELENA
 For what?

SALVATORE
 For you to fall in love with me
 too. Listen carefully. Every night,
 when I get off work, I'll come and
 wait beneath your window. Every
 night. When you change your mind,
 open your window. That's all. I'll
 understand...

He smiles at her. She is upset by those exaggerated words, but also intrigued.

The PRIEST has meanwhile solved the problem that ALFREDO has made up as an excuse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PRIEST

(Exhausted)

You understand now? You see it clearly?

ALFREDO

(Hypocritically)

Oh yes, father. Now everything's clear.

PRIEST

And the next time don't go around saying such heresy. You survived the fire at the movie house. But no one can save you from the fire of Hell!

AND ELENA'S HOUSE. EXT. NIGHT

Sweet poignant music accompanies SALVATORE's long waits beneath the window of ELENA'S room... A warm early summer night. The last spectators wander off into the streets. The VILLAGE IDIOT makes his rounds of the square.

SALVATORE is beneath her window. He waits. The shutters are open, but not the windows with the curtains. ELENA peers at him through a dark crack...

Fade to:

A rainy night. SALVATORE is back there again. Determined, headstrong. A dog keeps him company, taking shelter under an overhanging roof. The window is shut...

Fade to:

SALVATORE'S hand adds another check to an endless row of checks on the calendar. A check a day...

Fade to:

Another night. Wind. The window is still shut. SALVATORE's eyes are the eyes of a lovesick man prepared to face the hardest battles, just to win, just to conquer his loved one. She peeks at him through the crack, but he can't see her...

Fade to:

The paces of the calendar are covered with checks. Several months have gone by. SALVATORE adds a check on the last page, on 30 December. Tomorrow night will be...New Year's Eve. The streets are empty. Loud merry voices can be heard coming from the houses. Old discarded objects hail down from balconies. Firecrackers explode here and there. SALVATORE is there in the same old place, as usual.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The shutters are open, but not the windows, and all is darkness inside. SALVATORE is wrapped in a large overcoat and stamps his feet to keep warm...

HOUSE. GIANCALDO. INT. NIGHT

Toasts are being prepared in SALVATORE's house. MARIA is there with her daughter, LIA, then ALFREDO with his wife, ANNA. SALVATORE is the only one missing for the "family" to be complete. The bottle of spumante and the Christmas cake are ready. The radio is on with the New Year's Eve programme.

MARIA

(Nervously)

But why hasn't Toto shown up? The movie house is closed at this hour!

ALFREDO has a know-all look. He tries to put her mind at rest.

ALFREDO

He had to do something for me...

Over the radio, music and merrymaking

HOUSE.EXT.NIGHT

More sounds of merrymaking, coming from ELENA's house. SALVATORE listens to it, sees the shadows of her parents and relatives, maybe even hers, ready to celebrate, welcome in the New Year. But further on, that window remains dark and shut. SALVATORE gazes at it again.

There is a new look in his eyes, like a gleam of hope. Maybe it's the specialness of that night, maybe it's the fire crackers, the festive atmosphere, but something tells him that's going to be the right night. The night when she'll open her window. In fact, a light suddenly goes on in the room. SALVATORE'S eyes sparkle, have already taken on the hue of victory.

The window is pulled open, and his heart starts pounding like a drum. The music reaches its climax. Two hands come out. SALVATORE shuts his eyes for a moment, to hold back the flood of feeling. He opens them again and sees.....The hands reach out and take hold of the shutters and pull them shut. The light goes out. It is midnight. An echoing voice does the countdown.

RADIO VOICE

Six, five, four, three, two, one, zero! Happy New Year! Happy New Year!

And a roar of voices, shouts, explosions, fills the air. SALVATORE has remained standing there immobile, speechless. Disappointed. Defeated.

65 SALVATORE S HOUSE. GIANCALDO. INT. NIGHT

65

At his house, glasses are about to be raised. There is a strange, tense merriment. MARIA is unable to conceal her concern, her presentiment. She glances at the door, hoping to see SALVATORE appear.

ALFREDO

(To Maria)

There's nothing to worry about.
He's probably with his friends.

(To all)

Let's toast!

EVERYBODY

(Toasting)

Here's to you! Here's to you! Happy
New Year!

MARIA

For Toto too, here's to you!! Happy
New Year! !

Everybody echoes MARIA'S toast...

66 ELENA S HOUSE. EXT. NIGHT

66

But SALVATORE is not happy in these first few minutes of the New Year. He feels hurt, humiliated, rejected. He walks off amidst the old discarded objects flying down from the terraces. That was his last night. He's not showing up beneath that balcony any more.

67 CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. AFTERNOON

67

Outside there is a violent thunderstorm. The pounding of the rain and the rumbling of the thunder drown out the soundtrack of the film being shown. Two buckets are on the floor to catch the water dripping through the roof. SALVATORE is alone. For the first time he feels he hates the profession he's got into. He is tearing up the calendar where he checked off the nights he spent waiting for ELENA. He tears it into a thousand pieces, as if trying to wipe out the traces of his grief. He is so absorbed in his thoughts that he doesn't notice that someone has appeared at the top of the stairs and quietly entered the room. And now stands there watching him in silence. The thunder is deafening. That someone is ELENA. She comes up behind him, realizes he is thinking about her. Whispers.

ELENA

Salvatore...

Loud passionate music is heard on the monitor. SALVATORE turns and sees her as if in a dream. It is a sudden blow to the heart.

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED:

67

The look on her face is wonderfully sweet, the look of somebody who knows she is madly loved and who now realizes at last that she is in love too. For SALVATORE it is an overwhelming, almost unbearable moment...A long passionate embrace that is never-ending. They are happy, cling to each other never to leave each other again.

They spin around, end up against the wall where strips of film are hanging, the first-part endings and the trailers. Another intense look, their eyes locked...And it is their first kiss. A kiss at first timid, hesitant, almost clumsy, and then becomes resolute, poignant. Amidst the film strips dangling around and touching their young faces. Meanwhile the film has finished, the projector turns uselessly...Down below the screen is blank, the audience whistles...But SALVATORE hears nothing, neither the whistles nor the useless whirring of the reels in the projector. All he hears is her breathing, and he feels is the warmth of her skin.

68 VARIOUS SETTINGS. INT/EXT. DAY

68

The happiest, most vivid moments SALVATORE and ELENA spend together:

A country outing. They eat a lavish salad using the flat branches of the prickly pear for plates.

A chase through an endless field of wheat. In the projection booth. A cake with seventeen lighted candles. SALVATORE and ELENA blow them out together. And then a kiss.

69 ROAD AT THE EDGE OF TOWN.EXT. DAY

69

SALVATORE is driving an old beaten-up Balilla he bought from a car-wrecker. ELENA sits beside him, having the time of her life. They roar with laughter. The car jolts, moves by fits and starts, jarred by the holes in the road, and besides SALVATORE is not such a hot driver. She fondles him.

ELENA

(Ironically)

You have a great future as a driver. If they don't arrest you first!!

SALVATORE

That's nothing to do with it, it's the car that's still being run in...

He has barely finished the last sentence when the car gives a sudden violent shudder. A sharp report. A cloud of white smoke issues from the motor. And the Balilla stops dead in its tracks. ELENA and SALVATORE cannot smother their wild laughter. They embrace.

(CONTINUED)

ELENA

SO now how do we get home?

Cut to:

The two of them are standing beside the empty road, looking bored, as they have already been waiting a long time for someone to go by, a car, a wagon. When all at once a car comes around the bend, heading for town. SALVATORE and ELENA flag it down.

The DRIVER slows down. The back door opens, a MAN gets out. An alarmed and startled look comes over ELENA's face that man is her FATHER. She sees him stride over in a rage.

He has almost reached SALVATORE, who tries to be polite, to make the best of the situation.

SALVATORE

Hello, Dr Mendola...Hem...

ELENA buries her face in her hands, so as not to see...

SALVATORE has a bruise on his cheek and two Band-aids on his face. He got himself a good thrashing, and then some. The house is jammed, as on the great occasions. Curiosity is written all over the faces of the audience. But what they're seeing is not a film, but an installment of Double or Nothing. SALVATORE is standing by a teleprojector which has been set up in the central aisle of the balcony. It is a machine that makes it possible to project television show on the screen. ALFREDO is sitting beside him.

ALFREDO

(In a low voice)

Toto, are you pulling my leg or something? How is it possible to see this television without film?

SALVATORE

Just so, Alfredo. There isn't any. And if you buy a television set, you can watch it at home, without any fuss...

ALFREDO

(Sceptically)

Could be...But I don't like this business. It smells fishy to me.

ELENA is sitting in one corner of the balcony with her parents. Sitting beside her FATHER is the owner of the movie house, SPACCAFICO, who thanks him.

SPACCAFICO

(In a low voice)

You see what a bright idea, Dr Mendola? But without the bank loan how could I have bought the machine? If we don't get organized around here, in this day and age, we'll meet the same end as the Punch and Judy shows!

ELENA is not very interested in the TV show. She sneaks a look at SALVATORE. From the looks on their faces, it is clear that things are not going very well. He gives her a nod, as if to say he wants to speak to her and that she should figure out some way! ELENA leans over to her MOTHER, whispers something into her ear.

7I

CINEMA PARADISO. TOILET. INT. EVENING

7I

ELENA's MOTHER stands waiting in front of the women's toilet, gazing at Mike Bongiorno emceeding the TV show in the distance.

Inside the toilet, ELENA is standing on the toilet seat whispering to SALVATORE, who is standing on the toilet seat of the men's toilet.

Their eyes are barely able to peek over the flush tank which they have uncovered. ELENA is worried.

SALVATORE

Could it be your father doesn't like the work I do...That my family's too poor...Is that it?

She gives a nod of the head, but only faintly, so as not to wound his vulnerability. SALVATORE sighs.

ELENA'S MOTHER

(Off-screen)

Elena!

ELENA

All right! !

(To Salvatore, in a whisper)

For the moment it's impossible to see each other...As soon as school is out, we're going to go stay with friends in Tuscany. We'll be there all summer...Maybe if you came up, we could meet in secret...

(CONTINUED)

SALVATORE

(Crestfallen)

But we're opening the outdoor movie theatre this summer. What will I do all this time without seeing you?!

ELENA

I'll write to you every day. Don't worry. I love you. The summer'll be over and I'll be back...

They reach out to kiss each other. Who knows when they'll be able to see each other again?

ELENA'S MOTHER

(Off-screen)

Elena!

ELENA climbs down, pulls the chain and walks off, leaving SALVATORE standing there on the toilet seat.

Summer has come. A bevy of barefoot children chase after the carts carrying the carters' families to the beach to go swimming. SALVATORE, helped by the USHER, has finished loading the disassembled projector on to a wagon in order to carry it to the outdoor movie house. The USHER has hung a sign on the Cinema Paradiso to the effect that 'Showings to continue at the Imperia Arena', and now climbs into the wagon.

The horse moves off slowly and the monotonous clatter of its hoofs reminds SALVATORE that the summer is going to be long this year, longer than ever. And he leans on the projector that totters and lurches from the jolting of the wheels. A cart carrying a cheerful and noisy family pulls up alongside the wagon. There are the MEN from the slaughter-house. They recognize SALVATORE.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSE MAN

Well, look who's here!! Cecil B. De Mille! Hey, Toto!! When are you coming to shoot another film?!?

And they laugh, with their gaping toothless mouths. SALVATORE doesn't feel like joking, not even like answering. He looks away, so as not to see their leers. He wants to be by himself.

The beach is almost deserted, dotted here and there with groups of bathers. The carts and horses are scattered in the sand, near the Imperia Arena, where some WORKMEN are putting on the finishing touches for the new opening. The wagon arrives and SALVATORE and the USHER unload the projector.

A sultry evening. The jacklights of the octopus fishers twinkle on the dark horizon. The sound-track of a comic film reverberates over the sea, the laughter of the audience mingles with the sound of the shallow waves breaking on the rocks. A group of LITTLE BOYS in a boat pulls away from shore. They join some more boats standing still in the water, all of them crammed with LITTLE BOYS all looking in the same direction... towards the screen of the open-air movie at the water's edge. There is a funny scene.

LITTLE BOYS

All seats are sold out! Free
entrance and payment on the way
out!! Sssssh!!

And they guffaw noisily. Their laughter is echoed by more laughter, in the distance...

...the laughter of the Arena audience, scattered among the metal chairs. By dint of laughing, the people in one of the rows of chairs tip over backwards. Screams, laughs, whistles. The projection booth has a door at the back with stairs leading down to the rocks. SALVATORE is sitting on the ground, bare chested, tired and sticky with sweat. He is reading a letter from ELENA. He is so engrossed the words can almost be read on his face.

ELENA'S VOICE

(Off-screen)

Salvatore, my darling, here the days never end. I find your name everywhere if I read a book, do a crossword puzzle, thumb through a newspaper...You're always before my eyes. Today I've got some rather bad news. At the end of October we're moving to the city where I'll attend the University. It'll be hard to see each other every day. But don't worry, whenever I can get away I'll always come running to you, to the Cinema Paradiso.

On the Arena screen, with its potted plants and palm trees, a very funny scene is being shown. The audience again bursts into wild laughter. And the audience of LITTLE BOYS in the boats also laugh. One of them, laughing himself to tears, loses his balance and falls into the water. The others howl with laughter. A voice rises up out of the carousel of boats.

URCHIN

Fuck me! I've caught an octopus! An
oooooctopus!

FADE

75 VARIOUS SETTINGS. INT/EXT. DAY

75

The August sun is blazing hot. People are forced to stay inside when the sirocco blows. The streets are empty. And there is a strange silence. Nothing can be heard except far in the distance, from somewhere in the country, the love song of some carter...SALVATORE hears it too, stretched out on the floor of his room, his eyes fixed on the ceiling where flies buzz around nervously. The MAILMAN comes down the street on his bicycle, rides up to SALVATORE and hands him a letter...Sitting in the shade of a white wall, SALVATORE reads the letter. Next to him, the dog that kept him company at night, beneath ELENA's window. He gazes up at him as if looking for news of her.

IMPERIA. PROJECTION BOOTH. EXT/INT.EVENING

The Arena is crowded with sun-burnt faces. On screen, scenes from Ulysses. On a shelf in the projection booth, there is an enormous pack of letters. SALVATORE is worn out. The waiting has destroyed him. He looks like a madman. As he winds up one of the parts of the film, he repeats her name obsessively, under his breath.

SALVATORE

Elena...Elena...Elena...

Now he is sitting outside on the back steps, a few yards from the sea. There is a breeze this evening, the waves are rather high and the boats of 'gate-crashers' can be seen out in the water, rolling fitfully but not dangerously. SALVATORE stretches out, gazes up at the inky sky and talks to himself, just like a madman, whispering...

SALVATORE

When will this shitty summer be over?

(Half shutting his eyes)

In a film it'd already be finished...

(Smiling)

...Fade-out and cut to a nice thunderstorm!!! Huh? that'd be perfect!

A clap of thunder explodes in the air. Loud, rumbling. SALVATORE'S eyes pop open. The Arena audience looks up in alarm at the sky...The 'gate-crashers' in the boats also look up and see a streak of lightning ushering in another clap of thunder. One of those storms is building up that ruins late summer nights. SALVATORE gives a contented smile as the cloudburst pours down violently, suddenly...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Arena audience scatters with a howl and scurries over to the overhanging roofs of the projection booth, to take shelter and to go on watching the film despite the rain...

The LITTLE BOYS in the boats quickly pull tarpaulins over their heads...But SALVATORE does not get up. He lets the rain fall on him, goes on laughing, incredulous and stunned as if a real miracle had taken place. And as he shuts his eyes and lifts his head up, to catch more rain on his face, and gives himself up to that marvellous feeling of joy, a mouth comes to rest passionately on his lips it is ELENA. SALVATORE opens his eyes in utter amazement, it seems like a vision, another hallucination created by the rain...Instead no, it is really her!

SALVATORE

Elena!...But when...

ELENA

I got back today. You can't imagine the excuses I had to make up to be here...

SALVATORE's lips interrupt her. It is an intense, a stupendous kiss. They've probably never been so happy as they are at that moment. They cling to each other as the rain goes on streaming over their bodies, mingling her hair with his, binding them ever closer.

77

CINEMA PARADISO. ENTRANCE. EXT. DAY

77

Autumn has arrived. In the streets, the PEASANTS prepare the barrels for preserving the grape must. ALFREDO is sitting in front of the Cinema Paradiso with SPACCAFICO and the USHER. It is a quiet moment, they chat, while the humming of the projector and the sound track of the film can be heard through the window of the booth. The MAILMAN stops and hands SPACCAFICO a folded sheet of paper.

MAILMAN

Don Ciccio, this is for Toto. Give it him...

(And he pedals off on his bicycle.)

ALFREDO

What is it?

SPACCAFICO unfolds it, reads it, claps his hands on his head, in alarm.

SPACCAFICO

Holy blood of Judas! Now what am I going to do??!

78

UNIVERSITY. EXT. DAY

78

ELENA is waiting near the University. She paces nervously back and forth. Glances at her watch. He's late. She looks around in all directions and sees him at last. He comes running up to her. They embrace...

ELENA

So what'd they say?

SALVATORE

The army says that, as a war orphan, I don't have to serve in the military, but nothing can be done. It's a bureaucratic error. I have to leave. Day after tomorrow morning. They're sending me to Rome. But they'll discharge me ten days later. Let's go...

He takes her hand, turns to go to a café. ELENA holds back. She has caught sight of her FATHER's car approaching. ELENA turns to look and in a faint voice reveals the reason for her nervousness.

ELENA

No, Salvatore. You'd better go. It's my father.

SALVATORE

Good, this way we can finally talk. I'll convince him this time.

ELENA

He won't be convinced, Salvatore. He has other plans for me.

SALVATORE

Who?

ELENA

The son of one of his colleagues. Don't act that way. We'll talk about it later. Wait for me Thursday at the Cinema Paradiso. I'll be coming with the five o'clock bus.

SALVATORE looks with longing as ELENA drives away with her father. ELENA gives him a meaningful look through the window. SALVATORE returns the look, but stands there motionless, with a grim expression, like someone who knows how to take the treacherous blows of life. The car drives off and with it ELENA. Their eyes hang on the same thread. The thread of hope and now of fear.

79 CINEMA PARADISO. ENTRANCE. EXT. MORNING

79

The poster of Il Grido hangs on the billboard outside the theatre. SPACCAFICO replaces 'THURSDAY' with a 'TODAY' sticker. The CHARWOMAN is washing the floor of the lobby. SPACCAFICO shouts up to SALVATORE, who is in the projectionist's booth. SPACCAFICIO says that tomorrow he'll be leaving and today is his last day on the job, and he's sorry.

SPACCAFICO

Toto, this is no film for the common herd. One day'll be more than enough...So tonight, please set up tomorrow's film, so the projectionist who is coming will find it ready.

SALVATORE

OK...

SPACCAFICO understands SALVATORE's sadness.

SPACCAFICO

Cheer up, Toto. I'll be here waiting for you. No one's taking your job away from you. Don't worry!

80 SQUARE AND PROJECTION BOOTH, CINEMA PARADISO. EXT/INT. DAY 80

The bus has pulled into the square but among the people getting out there is no sign of ELENA. SALVATORE stands nervously up in the window of the projection booth, glances at his watch. It's already five-thirty and she hasn't come. He checks the projector. The first part has just begun and the reel is full of film.

The first part is now about to finish, the reel is almost empty, and ELENA still isn't there. SALVATORE is extremely nervous, worried, mortified by his meeting with her FATHER. He sees ELENA's face pulling away in the car. Thinks back over her terrible confession. He paces back and forth, as if he were in a prison cell, thinking up solutions...The stair light finally goes on; there she is SALVATORE dashes over and down the stairs to meet her. He comes down the final turn of the spiral staircase and finds himself face to face with ALFREDO, who is slowly making his way up with the help of his cane. SALVATORE freezes to the spot. ALFREDO senses his disappointment.

ALFREDO

You weren't expecting me?

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

SALVATORE

(Nervously)

No, Alfredo, I was coming to help you...

ALFREDO

(Smiling)

You were expecting her? Huh?

SALVATORE doesn't answer. He's too worried, too upset. ALFREDO climbs another step, whispering.

ALFREDO

...It's a nasty business waiting by yourself. In company it's better. No?...Then I'll leave.

As usual ALFREDO'S sweetness comforts SALVATORE, indeed suddenly gives him a bold idea, one that quiets his nervousness. He puts a hand on ALFREDO'S shoulder.

SALVATORE

Alfredo, I need your help!

81 ROAD TO THE CITY. EXT. AFTERNOON

81

The Balilla speeds as fast as it can down the road to the city, where ELENA s family has gone to live. SALVATORE drives along in a state of agitation. The idea of having to leave without seeing ELENA is his obsession. An obsession he refuses to accept...

82 CINEMA PARADISO.PROJECTION BOOTH.INT.AFTERNOON

82

The second part has begun, the reel is full. For the first time in many years, ALFREDO is alone in the booth, sitting in front of the projector, and he feels helpless. Not only because he's blind, but also because there is nothing he can do for SALVATORE. A strange agitation comes over him, as if he were experiencing the same anxiety troubling his 'Toto' at that moment. Meanwhile, the film roll on and with it, time, minutes...

83 CITY.EXT.AFTERNOON

83

SALVATORE has already reached the city. He slows down at the bus terminus. Looks at the people waiting, but she is not there... He asks several girls in front of the University. But they haven't seen her...

He phones from a phone booth. But nobody answers. His self-control is about to give way to desperation...

84 CINEMA PARADISO.PROJECTION BOOTH.INT.AFTERNOON

84

On the reel there is less film. Like an hourglass with the sand trickling through...

HOUSE IN THE CITY.EXT/INT.AFTERNOON

SALVATORE comes streaking up in front of her house. He screeches to a stop, dashes out like greased lightning. His nerves are tense, a slight tremor runs through his whole body. He rings the bell, but nobody answers. A MAN who lives in the building opens the front door and comes out.

SALVATORE seizes the chance and climbs up to the third floor. He pounds on the door furiously, almost cracking his knuckles. But all to no avail; there is nobody at home. He shrieks, panic stricken.

SALVATORE

Open up! Open up! Elenaaa!

And in fact, there is somebody inside: ELENA's MOTHER. She sits there immobile, without a word.

The pounding on the door reverberates in the room, but she does not budge, determined to ignore that desperate message.

PARADISO.PROJECTION BOOTH.INT.AFTERNOON

The reel spins faster. The film is almost ended. By now there is very little time...

87 ROAD TO THE VILLAGE. EXT. SUNDOWN

87

And SALVATORE is on his way home, defeated. He drives as fast as he can. He is in a terrible state, can't figure out what's happened. Can't explain it. And that's what hurts.

88 CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. SUNDOWN

88

The words 'THE END' appear on the screen...and the film runs out, leaving the projector turning uselessly. ALFREDO is alarmed. He can hear that the film is finished, but doesn't know where to begin. He gropes around. He's scared. Like a little boy calls his mother when he's lost in a crowd, so old ALFREDO calls

SALVATORE.

ALFREDO

TotoooooO! TotoooooO!

The few people down in the audience start whistling and complaining about the film they haven't understood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPECTATORS

Lights! Christ, what a piece of
crap!! We want OUR money back!!!
Heeeey!! Bandits!!

Others are shouting that they like the film.

89 CINEMA PARADISO. ENTRANCE. EXT. SUNDOWN 89

The Balilla screeches to a stop in front of the theatre.
SALVATORE darts out and runs to the stairs...

90 CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. SUNDOWN 90

SALVATORE turns the lights on in the theatre and turns off
the projector, trying to calm down ALFREDO, who has got to
his feet, frightened.

ALFREDO

But where'd you go, Toto?!!

SALVATORE

I'm here! Take it easy! Take it
easy!

And he folds him into his arms, like calming down a little
boy who has had a nightmare. He whispers, still out of
breath:

SALVATORE (CONT'D)

Sit down, sit down...

ALFREDO quiets down as SALVATORE lowers him into a chair, and
asks him the only question upon which his last hope depends.
Did she come?

ALFREDO

No, nobody came.

And he embraces him, almost as if to comfort him in his great
disappointment.

For SALVATORE it's really the end: she's not coming. Tomorrow
he'll be leaving without having seen her again.

SALVATORE'S hands remove the photographs of Amedeo Nazzari
and of ELENA from the wall, slip them into one of his
pockets.

Now the hands open the metal containers of tomorrow's film,
take . out the reels to set them up, pick up the receipt -
his last before leaving - and with the same mechanical
gesture, hang it on a nail, as usual.

91 ROME. VARIOUS SETTINGS, MILITARY LIFE. EXT/ INT. DAY/NIGHT 91

A wild frenetic sequence, set to the pace of military life...SALVATORE, in uniform with close-cropped hair, answers his superior, shouts:

SALVATORE
Radio Operator Di Vita Salvatore!
Third Battalion, Ninth Company,
sir!!!

Target practice. SALVATORE fires all the shots in the cartridge, one after the other...

A SECOND LIEUTENANT barks out a march rhythm in the blazing sun.

SECOND LIEUTENANT
One, two, one, two!! Attention!
Left march!

SALVATORE sneaks out of line, goes over and slips a letter into the mailbox and hurries back to his place.

On one of the public phones in a square of Rome, SALVATORE is phoning ELENA. Nobody answers. He slams down the receiver, as the line of SOLDIERS waits its turn...

Night-time. A large plastic bag full of water. A thud. SALVATORE wakes up with a start in a lake of ice water. He lets out a terrified shriek as the others laugh, protected by the dark.

SALVATORE
Aaaaaaah! Heeeeeelp!!

In the large dormitory, the SERGEANT is handing out the mail. He throws a pile of letters on SALVATORE'S bunk. They are his letters to ELENA, stamped 'ADDRESS UNKNOWN'.

Mess duty. SALVATORE is washing Up, in a sea of water and grease. He rimes a pan full of tomato sauce with a tap hose. A spurt of red water splatters him in the face.

A training run. Another letter which SALVATORE drops into the mailbox...

A cold, rainy night. SALVATORE stands stiff as a poker in front of the Ammunition depot. It is his first guard duty. Soaked to the skin, gazing wide-eyed into empty space.

COLONEL'S office.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

SALVATORE

(Aggressively)

Colonel, I was supposed to spend ten days here and it's been about a year, and I haven't ever gone borne. I'd like a furlough, at least!

SALVATORE is in the guardhouse. A cold, dark, filthy cell. His nerves start to give way. He bows his head in despair.

Hospital. SALVATORE is exhausted, run-down. The night-stand is jammed with medicines. He lies in bed without moving, staring off into empty space, and repeats obsessively in a low voice, as if talking to himself.

SALVATORE (CONT'D)

Elena...Elena...Elena...

He has touched the extreme of suffering, a young man who has been denied love and affection, his rights, freedom. A NURSE comes up.

NURSE

Di Vita Salvatore, get ready, your discharge has come through.

SALVATORE registers this information with his eyes and nods absently.

92 GIANCALDO. SQUARE AND STREETS. EXT. DAY

92

The bus disappears around the corner leaving SALVATORE standing there alone. It is a blazing hot day. The sirocco wind blows the yellow dust in all directions. The square is empty, the billboard in front of the closed movie house announces a Western. SALVATORE puts his suitcase on the ground, looks around. Everything exactly the same, immobile. Only one new feature in the cafe there's a jukebox playing 'Estate' sung by Milva.

SALVATORE turns towards the Cinema Paradiso. The projectionist is at the window of the booth, smoking a cigarette. Who knows who he is, where he came from. A hot flurry of dust. SALVATORE turns and sees a dog leaping around him, wagging its tail. It's the dog that kept him company during his nights beneath the window. SALVATORE gives a start of joy, drops his suitcase and leans over to stroke him. Then he hugs him, as if he were an old friend.

93 ALFREDO'S HOUSE. INT. AFTERNOON

93

SALVATORE goes to see ALFREDO. He is still in bed, has just woken up. He is glad to hear his 'Toto'. He feels his forehead, his eyes and cheeks, as if to 'see' him.

(CONTINUED)

ALFREDO

You 're thinner...You can tell
you've not been treated well.

As usual, you can't hide anything from ALFREDO. SALVATORE senses something different in him that he can't figure out, like same wild restlessness within).

SALVATORE

They tell me you never go out,
never talk to anybody. Why?

ALFREDO

Toto, sooner or later there comes a
time when talking or keeping quiet
is the same thing. So it's better
to shut up.

(Changing his lone)

It's hot in here. Toto, take me to
the beach.

The sea is ruffled and the air is less sultry, easier to breathe. SALVATORE and ALFREDO walk slowly along the waterfront. ALFREDO totters slightly, holds on to SALVATORE, who is telling him something very funny.

SALVATORE

At the Christmas party the
lieutenant pinches a girl's ass.
The girl turns around: it's the
daughter of the commanding officer.
The lieutenant is scared to death
and says: 'Miss, if your heart is
as hard as what I have just
touched, I'm done for!

And they roar with laughter. They look like two old school buddies telling each other dirty jokes. They stop beside a low wall. ALFREDO knows that those laughs are simply a way of uselessly dancing around the countless things that are troubling SALVATORE. And he breaks the ice, while SALVATORE is still laughing.

ALFREDO

(Seriously)

Did you ever see her again?

SALVATORE'S laughter dies away, taken off-guard as he is. Then he lights a cigarette.

SALVATORE

No. And nobody knows where she is.

ALFREDO

It was probably meant to be like this. Each of us has a star to follow. So now what are you thinking of doing?

It's a terrible question, and SALVATORE has no answer to it. In fact, would rather not even talk about it. He changes his tone, as if he hadn't heard it, laughs, trying again to ding to the funny jokes he heard during military service.

SALVATORE

Listen to this one...The commander says to the sergeant: 'You remember that windmill that used to be there?' 'Yes, sir, I remember the mill's gone but the wind's still there!'

And he bursts into nervous laughter. But this time ALFREDO remains cold, unmoved, does not laugh with him. SALVATORE gradually falls silent. He doesn't know what to say. For the first time in his life, he doesn't know what goal to aim for, doesn't know what to do. The cloud of smoke wreaths his nervous face, now he seems to relax, whispers:

SALVATORE

You remember the story of the soldier and the princess?
(ALFREDO nods his head.)

SALVATORE (CONT'D)

Now I understand why the soldier went away just before the end. That's right, just one more night and the princess would have been his. But she, also, could not have kept her promise. And...that would have been terrible, he would have died from it. So instead, for ninety-nine nights at least he had lived with the illusion that she was there waiting for him...

This time SALVATORE is the one to explain something to ALFREDO. And ALFREDO realizes how bitter his story is and, above all, that the boy standing there is no longer a boy...

ALFREDO

Do like the soldier, Toto! Go away!
This land is cursed.

(They are now leaning against a boat on the beach. ALFREDO goes on whispering his words.)

(MORE)

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

When you're here every day you feel like you're at the center of the universe, it seems like nothing ever changes. Then you go away, one year, two...And when you come back, everything's different. The thread has broken. You don't find those you were looking for, your things no longer exist. Isn't that the case?...You've got to go away a long time, for many, many years, before coming back and finding your people again, the land where you were born...But not now, it's impossible. Now you're blinder than I am.

(Intense words, straight from the heart, and SALVATORE is spellbound. He whispers with a smile:)

SALVATORE

Who said that? Gary Cooper, James Stewart, Henry Fonda? Huh?

(ALFREDO also gives a gentle smile)

ALFREDO

No, Toto, nobody said it. I say it! Life's not like you saw it in the movies. Life...is harder.

(He lays his hand on SALVATORE'S shoulder, gives it a hard squeeze.)

Get out! Go back to Rome. You 're young, the world is yours! And I'm old...I don't want to hear you talk any more, I want to hear talk about you.

SALVATORE gives a shudder that runs through his very soul. The setting sun lies colorless on the horizon.

Night. The square is empty. SALVATORE is sitting on the church steps. His head in his hands. He has to make a decision leave or stay. And why?... 'What decision will he make?' is the question that keeps ALFREDO awake, in his hot dark bedroom...

MARIA, his mother, also can't get to sleep. She knows, senses, that her son is on the verge of an important turning-point. But what will he decide? What will happen?...

Also LIA, his sister, feels a strange, heavy tension in the air. And doesn't sleep. She's probably wondering where SALVATORE is at that hour...

He's sitting on the ground. But even if he were to go to bed he wouldn't sleep. He rubs his face with his hand. The church bell chimes four a.m...

ALMOST THIRTY YEARS LATER, another distant bell is chiming four a.m. And SALVATORE is once again wide awake. He is thinking, with his hand on his face, just like then. And the same decision to make: what to do? Stretched out beside a sleeping WOMAN, he goes on staring at the window. Outside, the storm has passed. The long memory has almost faded, only the sound of a train surfaces in his mind...

96 GIANCALDO RAILWAY STATION. EXT. DAY

96

It's the train that THIRTY YEARS EARLIER had pulled into the station of his home town before leaving for Rome. SALVATORE hugs his MOTHER and SISTER. The moment has come to say goodbye to ALFREDO. The old man is deeply moved. A heart-rending trembling comes into his husky voice.

ALFREDO

Don't come back any more, don't think about us, don't turn round, don't write, don't give in to nostalgia. Forget us all. If you can't hear it and come back, don't come looking for me, I won't let you into the house, you understand?

They clasp each other tightly, as if they knew they wouldn't be meeting again...

SALVATORE

Thanks for all you've done for me.

ALFREDO

Whatever you do, love it like you loved that projection booth of the Paradiso when you were little...

The train moves now. Hands wave in the air, drawing further and further away. The PRIEST has arrived at the last moment and waves goodbye from the distance.

PRIEST

(Shouting)

Goodbye, TotooooooO!!! I got here too late. What a shame!

The figure of ALFREDO and the others can no longer be distinguished. Only a distant blur at the end of the track.

97 PUNTA RAISI AIRPORT. EXT. DAY 97

THIRTY YEARS LATER, a plane flies over Sicily. It lands on the runway and seems to emerge from the sea and flatten out towards the slopes of the dark mountains. Salvatore's face appears among the clouds reflected in one of the plane windows. He has the tense look of the man who suddenly comes home after the adventure of life has carried him afar, wandering the world, where he has forgotten everything. From the plane window to another window...

98 SUPERHIGHWAY. INT/EXT. DAY 98

...the window of the taxi-cab driving SALVATORE to his home town. The scenery moving by on either side of the road summons up sweet memories. A lot of things have changed, but the colors are still the same. The yellow running through the entire landscape is unmistakable. And all those black birds perched in a row on the guard-rail are crows.

The cab now approaches the outskirts of Giancaldo. But if the sign, hadn't been there with the name on it, it could be an entirely different place...

99 SALVATORE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. EXT/INT. DAY 99

The house where SALVATORE'S MOTHER lives is also new, nearer the sea.

The old lady is sitting alone in an armchair in the parlor, knitting a white sweater. Her hands move very swiftly, almost mechanically.

The hands of a woman who is waiting. The front doorbell rings twice. MARIA stops short. That is what she has been waiting for. She mumbles in excitement.

MARIA

It's Toto...I knew it...

And she scrambles to her feet, dropping her knitting in the chair, one needle dangling over the edge. She hurries off, forgetting that she still has the ball of white yarn in her apron pocket. And the yarn runs off the needles and the knitting comes undone quickly as she moves about the house, goes down the stairs to the front door.

There the yarn stops and MARIA's excited voice is heard.

MARIA'S VOICE

(Off-screen)

Toto!...

SALVATORE'S VOICE (OFF-SCREEN)

How are you, Mamma?...

(CONTINUED)

The camera now moves, discovering them through the parlor window, hugging each other outside the front door. Under the curious eyes of an old bored dog.

100 SALVATORE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. INT. DAY

100

MARIA is no longer wearing an apron. Mother and son are sitting side by side at the kitchen table...

MARIA

Lia'll be so glad to see you,
you'll see. And you won't recognize
the kids any more, they're grown up
by now.

SALVATORE

(Smiling)

They're always writing to me saying
they want to come to Rome!

SALVATORE looks around; It's a place he's never seen before,
and yet it's his mother's house.)

MARIA

See how pretty the house is? We did
everything over.

(Smiling)

If it hadn't been for you!

(Getting up)

Come, I have a surprise....

She takes him by the hand and leads him out to the hallway.
SALVATORE looks at her and feels a pang. She seems smaller,
age withers the body, she is slightly stooped, her hair is
gathered into a knot at the back other head.

MARIA

You must be tired. If you want to
rest, there's time before the
funeral.

SALVATORE

(Interrupting her)

No, Mamma, it only takes an hour by
air, you know.

MARIA

(Smiling, ironically)

You shouldn't tell me that now.
After all these years!

SALVATORE gets the message, feels guilty. Thinking about it,
it seems incredible that he has never come before. MARIA
opens a door, steps aside to let her son in, whispers:

(CONTINUED)

MARIA (CONT'D)

I put all your things in here. Go
in, go in...

SALVATORE takes a few steps, is flabbergasted at the sight of his old room perfectly reconstructed and preserved. It looks like a museum, the museum of the past. Despite the bed, the clothes in the cupboard, the books on the shelves, it is perfectly clear that no one has ever lived in it and never will live in it. MARIA senses his perturbation, remains standing in the doorway as if to leave him alone...SALVATORE goes over to the bed, looks around the old 8mm movie camera, the projector, his documentaries, the bicycle hanging on the wall, the photographs of his favorite movie stars. But what mostly catches his eye is a tiny framed photograph: SALVATORE as a little boy and ALFREDO, standing smiling in front of the Cinema Paradiso. Strange, at that time ALFREDO was younger than he is now! It's as if he were standing there before him one last time. That impressive figure, his good-natured but firm look, touches his heart. From ALFREDO'S smiling face to...

...the coffin where his old blind friend rests for ever. The funeral procession winds its way down the main street. At the intersections, , cars stop to let the black hearse pass by. People cross themselves. The old men remove their hats. Store shutters are lowered. Then, when the procession has passed by, the cars start up again, the old men put their hats back on, the shutters are pulled up.

SALVATORE is in the front row with his MOTHER, next to ALFREDO'S WIDOW. SIGNORA ANNA says in a whisper, her eyes fixed on the coffin.

ANNA

He would have been happy you came,
Toto. He always talked about you.
Always! Right to the end! He was
terribly fond of you...

Tears come to her, she is unable to say any more. SALVATORE gives her a hug, deeply touched by her words.

ANNA

He left two things for you. Come
see me before you leave.

SALVATORE nods his head. He gazes intensely at the coffin covered with flowers and is grieved as if he were ashamed never to have come to see the man who had been like a father to him. But why had he forgotten him?

Up in front, leading the procession, he sees a young PRIEST with an altar boy beside him, and these figures are also like chisels scraping the rust off his soul and bringing old feelings to light again.

The procession reaches the square. The dark column stands etched in the dazzling early-afternoon light. SIGNORA ANNA motions the driver and the procession comes to a halt. It is ALFREDO'S last farewell to the place where he had spent the best years of his life the Cinema Paradiso. Everyone turns to look and SALVATORE also turns, taken by surprise...It has fallen to pieces: doors and windows boarded shut, crumbling walls, a piece of the sign dangling down, weeds and mildew in the cracks and on the roof. The square has changed completely, is unrecognizable. Buildings, stores, sign boards and lines of cars creeping at a snail's pace in a deafening chorus of honking horns. And the central square has turned motorcycles. SALVATORE turns slowly to look behind him, towards the small crowd, and is entranced by the unexpected sight of faces that he recognizes at once, despite the many years that have gone by: the MAN AT THE BOX OFFICE, the USHER who also served as bill-poster, the CHARWOMAN, the CARABINIERE SERGEANT, and further on behind ROSA and ANGELO, the lovebirds who had met in the movie house and then got married. They all have white hair. And they too have recognized him, give little hello nods and gestures. Another face he seems to recognize: why sure, it's SPACCAFICO, the owner. How old he's become! He also looks up and his eyes meet SALVATORE'S. A hello nod. SALVATORE makes his way over to him through the crowd. They shake hands heartily, without a word, both touched. The procession starts up again.

SALVATORE

(Under his breath)

How long's it been shut?

SPACCAFICO

Six years ago this May. No one came any more. You "know better than me, Mr. Di Vita, the crisis, television, videos. By now the movie business is only a dream. The city's bought it now to make a new parking lot. Next Saturday they're tearing it down...A pity!...

SALVATORE is disconcerted, irritated by that 'Mr. Di Vita'. Besides, finding out that the movie house is to be torn down depresses him, after all, it's a piece of his life...And all those curious faces staring at him.

SALVATORE

But why do you call me 'Mr. Di Vita'? It didn't used to be that way...

SPACCAFICO

Well, it's hard to call an
important person by his first name.
But if it really matters to you,
I'll call you...

(Smiling)

Toto!...

SALVATORE smiles at that. Meanwhile, the procession has reached the church. SALVATORE excuses himself and goes over to the hearse. Old SPACCAFICO watches him go, then says, almost to himself)

SPACCAFICO

Bless you, Toto.

The coffin is unloaded. SALVATORE has asked to be one of the bearers into the church. As he moves off slowly with that weight on his shoulder, somebody catches his eye on the other side of the sidewalk. An old woman, sixty or seventy years old, with a plastic bag in her hand. She crosses herself quickly. SALVATORE recognizes her she was the one he made love with for the first time. TERESA, the prostitute. The coffin is carried into the church, followed by the little procession.

The little house is sunk in the darkness of evening and the ground floor windows are lit up. The rustling of the sea can be heard. The family is having supper. The table is set with the finest silver and the company china has been brought out. LIA is also there with her husband, ALFIO, and their two children. FILIPPO, fifteen, and SARA, thirteen. The television is on, but the sound has been turned practically all the way down. SALVATORE'S presence arouses a special excitement. The children look at their uncle with a certain awe, after all they don't really know him.

SARA

(Playfully)

Uncle, the next time Granny comes
to Rome, I want to come along too.
I want to see what you do when you
work...

SALVATORE

(Smiling)

Fine. But I warn you, there isn't
much to see. I sell much more smoke
than fire...

The CHILDREN laugh. At the sight of them, LIA, ALFIO and MARIA also smile.

ALFIO

(To SALVATORE)

Watch out, don't get too familiar
with those two

(indicating the children)

they're worse than cannibals.

They'll take advantage.

Everybody laughs again. Even MARIA laughs a lot. SALVATORE looks at her; he had never seen her laugh like that, amused, at peace.

FILIPPO

You leaving tomorrow, Uncle?

SALVATORE doesn't know what to say. He feels drunk. It has been a day of violent upheavals, a series of almost overwhelming emotions and now he knows nothing on the one hand, he'd like to stay, let himself drift on the sweet tide of family life, be completely carried off by the rolling waves of his own past: on the other, he wishes he had never come. He forces himself to smile again.

SALVATORE

I don't know, Filippo. I don't
know...

They go on eating, but SALVATORE isn't very hungry. He peers at LIA eating out of the corner of his eye, feels deeply bound to her she has a few white hairs and light wrinkles line her face.

Then he looks at her husband, ALFIO, he's going bald but he tries to hide it by combing over the little hair left. Who knows what their marriage is like, he wonders. He looks back at LIA, and it's as if she sensed it, she looks up, guesses the nature of his thoughts, imagines what he is trying to figure out, a blush colors her cheeks and she smiles. SALVATORE returns a conniving smile. The ringing of a phone. SARA starts to get up to go and answer it, but MARIA stops her with a glance of the eye.

MARIA

(To SALVATORE)

It must be for you...They've been
calling all afternoon. They wanted
to know if you're leaving this
evening or tomorrow...

Everyone turns to SALVATORE with questioning looks, making him feel even more restless and undecided. The phone goes on ringing.

103 CINEMA PARADISO. EXT. DAY . 103

The TRAFFIC cops are trying to break the front door down with their shoulders. Once, twice, and at last, the door flies open with a screech, kicking up a cloud of dust. SALVATORE enters by himself...

104 CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. DAY 104

SALVATORE'S silhouette stands out against the light in the open door. Slowly he makes his way into the empty theatre. A thick layer of dust lends everything a gray, rarefied look. The light streaming in from the windows up above teems with strange mates of dust, like a haze.

Cobwebs hang like long veils from the ceiling. SALVATORE walks down the middle aisle. The rows of seats are unhinged, what was once the wooden veneer has warped from the dampness. He looks around as if he were thumbing through the album of his memories.

The screen dangles from its frame. The emergency exits are boarded and nailed shut. Observing the emptiness of the theatre, SALVATORE has the feeling he can hear the howling, the whistling and voices of the audience, as he remembers it. But only for one brief moment, then the silence returns. A mouse creeps along one wall, stops near a pile of dust. SALVATORE is attracted by that little gray mass. He goes over as the mouse scampers off, takes a closer look and recognizes the shape of half a lion's head covered with dust. He moves it with his foot, then looks up at the projection booth, repeating the same gesture of bygone years. But the lion's head is no longer there, only the outline of it on the wall, and cobwebs have covered the holes of the booth, those little square openings that had caused him such long suffering as a little boy...SALVATORE now climbs up the spiral staircase. Each step kicks up a little cloud of dust.

The little booth, yellow with fumes, appears before him again. Now it looks like some big, empty cave. The projector is no longer there, nor the equipment. Who knows where they junked them?! The only thing left is a clump of film strips still attached to the wall: trailers, Part One endings, etc...There he had kissed ELENA for the first time, and strips of film like those had grazed their faces. Now they are caught up in the coils of cobwebs. And where the film-winder once stood, the nails remain with thousands of yellowing receipts. Of all the films shown at the Cinema Paradiso Palace. And three more boxfuls of them are on the floor.

And the windows overlooking the square are bolted shut and the glass broken. SALVATORE peers out of one of the cracks in the window and sees the village...which is now a city. A different world he no longer knows.

105 CAFÉ IN SQUARE. INT/EXT. DAY

105

The cafe in the square has been completely renovated. The CASHIER and BARMEN have young, unfamiliar faces. SALVATORE holds out the receipt with a tip.

SALVATORE

A double whisky, please.

Several BOYS are sitting at the corner tables, talking about girls. Others stand playing 'war games', shake around to the obsessive strains of some electronic tune.

A man comes up to SALVATORE and asks for his autograph. Then SALVATORE turns to the plate-glass window overlooking the main street, where the workers' club once was. And like a flash, a shudder freezes him to the spot.... Two steps away from him, through the glass, a stunning vision, which casts him beyond time, chills his blood: there before him is ELENA! But she is still young, young as she was then! Sweet, luminous, alluring, exactly the way he saw her the first time at the station.

She is waiting to go across the street with a bunch of books under her arm...Have the passing years had no effect on her? Or is she an hallucination? No! It's a dream! Or is he dead too, like ALFREDO? SALVATORE doesn't know how to explain it. And he is suddenly seized by a feeling of panic. His glass drops to the floor...As the GIRL walks off...

106 GIANCALDO. STREET. EXT. DAY

106

At the age of fifty-five, SALVATORE feels no scruples about wandering the streets of his home town, spying from a distance on an eighteen-year-old girl. There's nothing he can do about it. He stares at her with the amazement of someone who discovers that miracles exist. Now he is nearer to her. How lovely she is! It's her, no doubt about it! Exactly the same. Except she has a different hair-do and is wearing different clothes: ELENA didn't wear slacks. The GIRL goes up to a parked motorcycle. She removes the padlock and fastens her books to the rack. SALVATORE is standing there a few steps away, and without stopping to think, moves a little closer, discreetly, politely.

SALVATORE

Excuse me, Miss...

(She turns to look at him, indifferent, but friendly. He looks at her wonderful blue eyes.)

I'm so sorry, I thought you were someone else.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

106

GIRL
(Shrugging)
Well.

She has already started the motor of her bike. A flip of the accelerator and off she goes, her hair flying in the wind.

SALVATORE follows her with his eyes until she disappears around the corner.

107 SALVATORE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. INT. AFTERNOON

107

The old shots of ELENA getting off the train and walking away, casting a curious look at the camera...SALVATORE is watching her again, projected on the white wall of his room. He also watches the other shots of those happy long-gone days the picnic, she at the beach, smiling, joyful...And again SALVATORE doesn't understand, or doesn't want to understand. But these scenes could have been shot yesterday, so identical to ELENA is the girl he saw on the street...And the wound which he thought had healed years ago, starts bleeding again.

The lingering note of suffering for a romance that had ended without his ever knowing why, and the endless explanations that had been sifted through by his young mind, start slipping through his soul again, like those shots slipping again through an old 8mm projector.

Through the crack of the door, MARIA sees those images on the wall, SALVATORE rocking his head back and forth slowly, like he used to do as a boy when he cried. She somehow feels his grief, his bitterness, lowers her eyes and walks away without a word, as the little shiny rectangle on the wall remains blank, empty...And SALVATORE sits there gazing at it, as if he saw other scenes which his camera never set down on film, only his memory.

108 HIGH SCHOOL. STREETS AND LITTLE SQUARE. EXT. DAY

108

The HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS are coming out after school. Happy young faces. That GIRL 's motorcycle can be seen in a rear-view mirror. SALVATORE is at the wheel of the car ALFIO has lent him. He has obviously followed that motorcycle before. He waits with an eagerness he thought he had long lost, a determination to understand, to get to the bottom of the matter, which frightens him and at the same time overwhelms him hopelessly.

And here she comes. She unlocks the padlock and prepares to speed off. SALVATORE starts the motor and follows her a short distance away. The GIRL heads for the new residential district on the outskirts.

109

SALVATORE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. INT. DAY

109

MARIA is setting the table. LIA and her family are eating at her house today. SALVATORE is sitting again, with a lighted cigarette, gazing through the window at the shrubs tossing in the wind and the rolling sea. The air whistling through the cracks of the windows lends a heaviness to the silence, like the troubled look on his face. MARIA glances at him.

MARIA

What are you thinking, Toto?

SALVATORE looks at the old woman's lovely face, a faint smile. on his lips. There was always something like an unspoken rule between them, the rule of silence, of unconfessed complicity. And now he feels that rule has to be broken. He speaks quietly, as if to curb the tumult of his feelings of guilt.

SALVATORE

I was thinking...that we've never talked, Mamma...When I was little I saw you as if you were already old. That's probably true with all kids... Who knows?

(She nods, then sits down before him. He strokes her old, skinny, heavily veined hands...)

But only now do I realize you were young, you were beautiful, had a whole life before you. But how...

(Sighing)

...how could you have lived alone all that time, with no one to look after you? You could have remarried...Why not? At the time I probably wouldn't have understood, but I would have later...

MARIA doesn't answer, but she is not troubled. An inner peace lends her a sweet, quiet expression. Then she too agrees to break the rule of silence.

MARIA

I never had anybody. If that's what you think...I didn't want anybody. I always remained faithful. First to your father, then to you, to Lia.

(With a shrug)

That's the way I'm made, there's nothing I can do about it.

(Smiling)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARIA (CONT'D)

And you're like me, you're too honest and too attached to the things you love...But I don't know if that's a good thing. Faithfulness is a bad business. If you're faithful, you're always alone!

SALVATORE is immersed in the profound truth of those words. And he says nothing. The silence is broken by the ringing of the phone. A menacing sound, which SALVATORE cannot bear. He knows they are calling him from Rome, gives a nervous gesture, stands up and pulls out the plug. The silence returns, the whistling of the wind. MARIA lowers her eyes.

It's my fault! It would have been better if I hadn't called you...

SALVATORE sits down again, leaning closer to her. He stubs out his cigarette in the already overflowing ashtray.

SALVATORE

(Whispering)

No...It's nothing to do with you. It's just that I was scared of coming back. Now, after all these years, I thought I was strong, that I had forgotten lots of things. Instead, I find it's quite the opposite, as if I had never left. And yet, I look at Lia and feel as if I didn't know her, and you, Mamma...I abandoned you, ran away like a thief, thought only of myself, and never gave you an explanation...

MARIA

(Interrupting him)

And I never asked for one! You have nothing to explain. I always thought that what you did was right, and that was that. With no beating around the bush...

(Smiling, playing it down)

Only one thing made me suffer: bolting the door shut before going to bed at night...

SALVATORE

You never used to do that!

She smiles like a little girl who is about to confess the fibs she has told.

MARIA

No, no...When you used to work at the movies, I could never get to sleep at night until you came home. Then when you arrived, I pretended to be asleep, but I heard all your movements. Then when you fell asleep, I'd get up and bolt the door. Then, when you left, every time I did it, I felt as if I had left somebody outside the door, far away....

SALVATORE listens to his MOTHER'S words, surprised and entranced by the poetry of her way of speaking...

MARIA

But you were right to leave. You succeeded in doing what you wanted to do...

(Sighing)

When I call you, a different, woman always answers. I pretend I know them so they won't have to go through the embarrassment of introducing themselves.

(Smiling)

I'm sure they take me for a crazy old woman. But so far I've never heard one voice that really loves you...I would have known. And yet, I'd like to see you...settled down...fall in love...

(Gazing into his eyes)

But your life's there. Here there are nothing but ghosts, Toto! Let it go.

She has said this with a subtle allusiveness in her voice. And SALVATORE realizes she has always known everything. But he doesn't answer her. They look at each other a Long time without speaking. Their rule of conniving silence has come back into play, as before, forever. It is her expression that tells him to leave, to take the plane and fly away...

But SALVATORE has not taken his MOTHER'S advice. Re has not left. Something holds him there still, leads him to go on looking.

The GIRL'S motorcycle is parked in the courtyard beyond the gate of a small house. He is studying it from inside the car parked in a corner of the small square, near a café. Re has been there some while, but is not nervous, waits there with determination...

(CONTINUED)

Several windows in the house are lit, but no one can be seen through the curtains. Nothing but shadows pass by every now and then. Now the light in one of the windows goes out, and the light on the stair goes on. The front door opens and the GIRL comes out with a tall, sturdy-looking, elegantly dressed GENTLEMAN around fifty.

They converse but are too far away for their voices to be heard. SALVATORE watches them come out the gate and climb into a car. They look like father and daughter. The car now drives off and passes right by him. A gleam of light, the reflection from the headlights, falls on the GENTLEMAN'S face. He recognizes him at once, from the birthmark on his temple...

SALVATORE
(To himself)
Boccia!

His eyes flash, he's afraid he's understood. And now the craze to get to the bottom of it all gnaws away at him. There is no turning back.

111 CAFÉ. AND SMALL SQUARE. INT/EXT. EVENING

111

SALVATORE'S hands rifle through a phone directory. He is in the cafe, on the other side of the glass door leading to the little square. His finger runs down the column of names...

SALVATORE
(Mumbling)
His last name was Lo Meo, Vincenzo.

He has already put the token into the slot and dials the number, looking at the two lit upstairs windows of that house, where the mystery of his life may be hiding. SALVATORE hears the first ring, his heart in his throat...A shadow appears in one of the windows. And a voice answers.

VOICE ON TELEPHONE

Hello? (It's a woman's voice. SALVATORE shuts his eyes, is about to speak, but the lump in his throat silences him...)

VOICE ON TELEPHONE

Hello? Hello?

He still hesitates, can't get a word out, as if he had lost his voice or didn't know what to say. He hangs up. The shadow at the window also hangs up, then disappears...

SALVATORE is at a loss, sits down at one of the tables near the phone in the almost empty cafe. At the far end, a group of five people watching television.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARMAN

You want something?

And he turns back to the television. SALVATORE lights a cigarette. He is uncertain. Once again he has to lake an important decision redial the number and seek a face behind that shadow? Or forget the whole thing, the GIRL, BOCCIA, the shadow, and go away? Yes, best go away. He gets up and leaves. He can be seen through the window turning the comer. A pack of cigarettes and a lighter lie on the table, he has forgotten them. And the lighted cigarette bums down in the ashtray. A few moments have gone by. Footsteps, and a hand picks up the lighter and the cigarettes. It is SALVATORE who now, on a sudden urge, slips another token into the slot. The shadow reappears at the window. The same voice as before.

VOICE ON TELEPHONE

Hello, who's speaking?

SALVATORE answers at last, keeping his eyes shut, whispering:

SALVATORE

I'd like to speak to Signora
Elena...

VOICE ON TELEPHONE

Speaking. Who is it, please?

SALVATORE feels a terrible pang, continues:

SALVATORE

Salvatore.

Silence, charged with tension. Then the voice continues weakly, as if puzzled.

VOICE ON TELEPHONE

Salvatore...who?

He runs his hand over his forehead, his eyes, as if to soothe the turmoil he feels inside.

SALVATORE

Di Vita. Salvatore Di Vita. Do you
remember?

Another pause chilly, heavy. SALVATORE opens his eyes, looks at the window. Her shadow is motionless, as if cut out of cardboard.

SALVATORE

Elena, I'm here, in the bar, across
the street from your house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The shadow moves slowly, a hand pulls aside the curtain. It's a moment of heart-rending emotion...She appears. And they see each other from a distance, after thirty years, each of them with a phone receiver to their ear. But she is somewhat in the dark, against the light, it's impossible to make out her features. Her voice gives a sudden start, instantly controlled.

VOICE ON TELEPHONE

Certainly, I remember...

SALVATORE'S eyes glisten, try to pierce the distance and the darkness to get a better look, but in vain.

SALVATORE

Elena. I'd like to see you...Let's meet.

ELENA lets the curtain drop and goes back to being a shadow. She whispers the words.

VOICE ON TELEPHONE

It's been so long. Why should we meet? What good would it do?

SALVATORE

Please, don't say no.. .

But her voice is firm, unshakeable, even if quivering with emotion.

VOICE ON TELEPHONE

I'm old, Salvatore. And you too. It's best not to meet. Goodbye.

The shadow hangs up, disappears. The light goes off.

112 DIFFERENT SETTINGS. INT/EXT. EVENING

112

The wind is stronger now, the streets and the square are empty. SALVATORE is at the wheel of the car, driving aimlessly around the town. He has rediscovered the woman who conditioned his whole life and they hadn't had the courage to meet. An obsessive musical heat, fraught with rage, pours out of the car radio.

113 SALVATORE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. INT. EVENING

113

A phone ringing drowns out the sound of the television and the wind whistling outside. In the half-darkened room, MARIA picks up the receiver...

MARIA

Hello?

(CONTINUED)

No one answers, but she can sense the presence of someone who now hangs up. MARIA is alarmed.

MARIA

Who could it be at this hour? And
where is Toto?

SEAFRONT AND PIER. EXT/INT. CAR. EVENING

SALVATORE stands motionless on the pier, facing the storm-tossed sea. He feels relieved by the roar of the waves that dispels his bitter thoughts, blurs them, but does not wipe out the look of suffering in his eyes. A flashing light seems to approach behind his back. SALVATORE turns and is blinded by the headlights of a car parked at the beginning of the pier. The splattering waves lend the scene a hazy cast and diffuse the glare of the flashing headlights. Now the lights move towards him. And SALVATORE also takes a few timid steps forward... They are close. The car has almost stopped. But it is impossible to make out the person at the wheel who now reaches over to open the other door. A voice can be barely heard over the raging sea. It is ELENA's voice.

ELENA

Salvatore!

SALVATORE approaches, accepting the invitation, enters the car and shuts the door. The headlights go off and the car remains there suspended between the open sea and the harbor with its rocking boats. Inside the car, not a word. Two dark figures gaze at each other, unintelligible, as if the night were trying to further delay that meeting. The glowing reflection of a wave higher than the others now lights up their faces. ELENA was right, they are no longer the faces of teenagers, but of people on in years who study each other, searching for a truth. The howling of the wind and the crashing of the waves are louder, but ELENA and SALVATORE /rear nothing, sit glued to their seats, fixed in the endless gaze that envelops them. He is the first to break the silence in a faint voice.

SALVATORE

How'd you know I'd be here?

ELENA I don't know how many years have gone by, but some things about you I do remember. There weren't many, places you could have gone. I looked around...

SALVATORE turns on the light of the rear-view mirror. Finally they can see better. They look at each other a little ill at ease, making the inevitable comparisons with the memory of their young faces. SALVATORE carefully observes her graying hair, her blue eyes lined with wrinkles, the somewhat faded beauty mark on her lip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALVATORE (CONT'D)
You're still beautiful...

ELENA
Don't be silly...I'm old.
(She looks down troubled
by the way he has of
gazing into her eyes,
speaks almost mumbling
her words.)
Don't look at me like that, please.
(And she switches off the
light. But this time it
is less dark, things can
be seen.)
Why'd you come back?

SALVATORE
Alfredo died. Do you remember him?

ELENA
Of course I remember him. I'm
sorry. You were terribly fond of
him.

A moment of silence. It's hard to find something to say.

SALVATORE
I saw your daughter. She's
beautiful! Who knows how many
Salvatores must be running after
her...

ELENA
(Smiling)
One or two. Bur there're not all
that many Salvatores.

SALVATORE also smiles, but a puzzled smile as if what she has
said had thrown him off-guard.

ELENA (CONT'D)
I've got a son, too...he's older.
And you, do you have children?

SALVATORE
No. And I'm not married.

ELENA sits there in silence. A veil of sadness clouds her
eyes. SALVATORE'S too...

SALVATORE (CONT'D)
Are you happy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELENA

All things considered, yes. Even if
it wasn't what I dreamt of then...

Again SALVATORE is thrown off-guard, as if the round key of his enquiry had met with only square locks. She continues.

ELENA (CONT'D)

My husband...you know him.

SALVATORE

Sure, sure! Boccia...
(With a bitter smile)
What's he do?

ELENA

Politics. He's the district
representative. We met at the
University in Pisa.

Then instinctively, in a shy voice, SALVATORE asks the question that he probably wouldn't have asked a moment later.

SALVATORE

And...how come you never married
that guy from Tuscany?

The white foam of the waves splashes up over the wall of the pier, dashing against the car windows. The shadow of the trickling water is superimposed on the agony of their faces. ELENA hides her embarrassment beneath a faint but haughty smile.

ELENA

I didn't want to...I had to fight
tooth and nail. But in the end I
won...

SALVATORE is unable to smile. It's as if the void were growing and swelling within. Thunder and lightning shatter the roaring of the wind and sea, but it does not rain. Now her smile fades away.

ELENA

At that time...I was waiting for
you...

There is no resentment in her words. She has said them fondly. With the serenity of someone who has suffered greatly and then found a strong convincing way of suffering no more. For SALVATORE, it's as if one of those thunderbolts had pierced his heart. He leans over, gazing into her shining eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SALVATORE

But I've never forgotten you,
Elena!

ELENA

(Whispering)

Nor have I. Even though you
disappeared...

SALVATORE is staggered, feels as if he were plunging into the void. What she has said strikes him as grotesque. ELENA strokes his hair, as if to restrain his sinking heart, gives a sweet smile.

But what's the point of talking
about it? We risk being pathetic
and ridiculous.

(And she tries to change
the subject.)

You still live in Rome?

But SALVATORE ignores the question. He doesn't want to change the subject. He feels that everything is crumbling inside him, the alibis and excuses he had had to give himself in order to accept the end of their romance. And instead, now the tables seem to have completely turned. Without realizing, he shouts desperately, staring wildly at her and shaking her by the shoulders.

SALVATORE

What do you mean, you were waiting
for me?! What are you saying?

(He controls himself at
once, continues,
breathing heavily.)

The last time we saw each other, we
made a date to meet at the Cinema
Paradiso. You remember? And you
didn't come, you disappeared
without leaving a trace, nothing!
I'll tell you how many years have
gone by: more than thirty!!!

Quiet rears stream down Elena's face, glisten with the reflections of the lightning and the waves.

ELENA

I kept that date.

(SALVATORE laughs at the
absurdity of it. A
nervous, heartbroken
laugh, which slowly melts
away as she goes on to
say:)

But I was late...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ELENA (CONT'D)

(Tears continue to stream out of her blue eyes, but she tells her story in a calm voice.)

I had a fight with my family. I tried to convince them again that they couldn't separate us. But it was futile. They had decided to leave Sicily once and for all. Which is what we did. I didn't know what to do any more, what to say. And I said yes, I'd do whatever they wanted. In return, my father promised to let me see you one last time, to say goodbye. But I hoped that by seeing each other we could take advantage of it and make a decision...I thought we would run away together.

(She holds back her sobs. Dries her tears with the back of her hand, and continues:)

My father drove me to the movie theatre. But you weren't in the projection booth. Only Alfredo...

Her voice continues over the scene of same thirty years before...

CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. AFTERNOON Flashback.

ELENA'S VOICE

(Off-screen)

And I didn't have time to wait for you to comeback...

From the bottom of the spiral staircase, ELENA'S FATHER is waiting nervously, yells up at the projection booth.

ELENA'S FATHER

Elena! Hurry up!!

YOUNG ELENA

All right, Daddy!...

In the projection booth, ALFREDO is sitting on a stool, near the projector. Seen from the rear, the YOUNG ELENA is leaning over beside him, she is excited, her eyes are red and swollen with tears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELENA'S VOICE

(Off-screen)

So I told Alfredo how things stood and fiat I was leaving the same evening, and I asked him to tell you everything. He was very kind, he listened carefully, then...

ALFREDO answers YOUNG ELENA, stroking her hair.

ALFREDO

Easy, easy.

(Sighing)

Listen carefully to what I have to say. If you want me to tell Toto what you've told me, I will. But if you want my advice, forget it. It's better for both of you if you don't see each other...

(YOUNG ELENA gives a start of resentment, listens with surprise.)

Dear girl, fire always turns into ashes! Even the deepest love ends sooner or later. And after that other loves appear, lots of them. Toto, he can't understand fiat now. If I tell him he won't believe it, he'd be capable of killing me...But you can understand, you've got to understand...Do it for him!

WATERFRONT. INT. CAR. EVENING

SALVATORE sits there without moving, pale as a sheet, looks as if he had grown even older. As if the whole world has fallen in on him. For ELENA, it was a painful but liberating story. She dries her last tears.

ELENA

It's the first time I've had to chance to tell the story. I never mentioned it to anybody.

SALVATORE

(In a daze)

Alfredo, damn him! He cast his spell on you too!

ELENA

I told him I'd take his advice. But before I went away I left you that note...

(SALVATORE gives her a quick look, a questioning look. He listens.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELENA (CONT'D)
 I was on my way down the stairs...
 (Her voice continues, laid
 over the...)

CINEMA PARADISO. PROJECTION BOOTH. INT. AFTERNOON Flashback

ELENA has already said goodbye to ALFREDO, is on her way down the stairs, but stops short.

ELENA' S VOICE
 (Off-screen)
 I thought Alfredo couldn't see me.
 So I snuck back up...

She tip-toes back without making any noise. Goes over to the film-winder. Takes out a pen, looks for a scrap of paper, but doesn't see any. Her eyes fall on the film receipts hanging on the nail. She tears off the top one, turns it over and scribbles a message on the back.

ELENA' S VOICE (CONT'D)
 I wrote you where you could find
 me, and that I'd wait for you.

She hangs the scrap of paper back on the nail, well in sight. She creeps out, glancing at ALFREDO, who hasn't noticed a thing.

118 WATERFRONT. EXT/INT. CAR. EVENING

118

ELENA finishes telling her story. She heaves a Jeep sigh.

ELENA
 But you disappeared all the same.

There is a haunted look in SALVATORE's eyes, he is searching his memory for something he can't find, then suddenly sees, as if in a dream...his hand thirty years before going through the routine gesture of hanging a receipt on the nail, over the others, mechanically, without even looking...and he shuts his eyes as if fearing the truth. Her last words have wounded him. He shakes his head, then in a faint voice:

SALVATORE
 Oh, how I looked for you, Elena!
 You'll never know. I wrote,
 telephoned, nothing. Nobody ever
 answered. But I dreamt of you for
 years! That's why I went away...and
 never came back here.

And his anguish breaks free, dissolving into quiet, almost childish tears. ELENA is startled by his reaction. She caresses him, passionately.

(CONTINUED)

They embrace and remain like that, she with her face buried in his shoulder, he leaning on hers with his tear-filled eyes.

SALVATORE (CONT'D)

Even as the years passed, in all the women I met, I was only looking for you. I had success it's true, but there was always something missing...

She is deeply moved, goes on caressing him gently until he calms down. The car windows are steamed up. The sea, the harbor, the waves have disappeared. Nothing remains but the sound of the storm. SALVATORE takes her face between his hands. They gaze at each other, their faces practically touching. He murmurs:

SALVATORE

I'd never have imagined that all this had to end because of the man who was like a father to me. A crazy lunatic!
(She gives a faint smile.)

ELENA

He wasn't crazy. In the beginning I was upset. I think I really hated him. But then, with time, I understood what he said...and your silence too.

SALVATORE whispers one last dreadful revelation. And it's as if he had got a terrible weight off his chest.

SALVATORE

But I never saw that note!
(He squints, as if to stress the absurdity of the idea.)
I must have covered it with my hand, without realizing it, that's the only explanation...
(But strangely enough, ELENA is not surprised.)

ELENA

What difference does it make to find an explanation? That's the way it went. But Alfredo didn't betray you, he was the only one who really understood you. Salvatore, if you had chosen to be with me, you'd have never made your films. And that would have been a pity!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED: (2)

118

ELENA (CONT'D)

Because they're wonderful, I've
seen them all.

(Her eyes glitter with
joy, then she smiles,
almost ironically.)

But you shouldn't have gone and
changed your name. You should have
kept your own.

Tears stream down Salvatore's cheeks. He gives her a look of
longing, of desire.

ELENA embraces him. They kiss with heartrending tenderness,
with the same passion of their first kiss amidst the strips
of film brushing their faces, so many years ago. And they
make love, clasped in the cramped quarters of the car, like
two teenagers. Passionate kisses, embraces, deep sighs. Their
hair damp with sweat, their hands clasping, their fingers
interweaving. Then the frenzy subsides into a deep,
tumultuous pleasure, of immense loving and immense grief...As
outside the wind and the waves go on rating around that car
which seems suspended in empty space.)

119 ALFREDO'S WIDOW'S HOUSE. INT. DAY

119

SIGNORA ANNA'S hands place an old wooden stool and a rusty
round metal can on the table.

ANNA

These are the things he left to
you...

SALVATORE is sitting by the table. He has finished the cup of
coffee SIGNORA ANNA has prepared for him. He picks up the
stool, recognizes it at once: it's the one ALFREDO had made
for him as a little boy so he could climb up and put the
reels on the projector.

ANNA

When they showed your films on
television, he was happy. He'd plop
himself down there and all his
ailments were forgotten. He knew
all the words by heart, every one,
and I'd describe what was going on.
And when the papers talked about
you, I had to read them two or
three times...

SALVATORE examines the can, wonders what it can be. He opens
it: inside is a reel of film, wrapped in a plastic bag, well
preserved. Those objects bring a pang to his heart, and the
things that ANNA said, but he feels disappointed, as if he
expected to find something else.

SALVATORE

Did he ever think of meeting me?

(CONTINUED)

ANNA

No, never! One time your mother said that if he wanted, you'd have surely come. He got furious and said 'No, Toto mustn't come back to Giancaldo, never!!' He didn't say it to be mean. He was a decent man. Who knows what he could have been thinking? Towards the end he'd say such strange things. And a moment before he shut his eyes, he told your mother not to let you know.

A cloud of yellowed scraps of paper flutters into the air and as it falls slowly to the ground another handful is flung up. SALVATORE is in the projection booth, looking through the countless yellowed receipts, stuffed away in boxes. He looks at them one by one, then throws them into the air. A desperate search, almost a defiance of the passing of time. He continues with greater determination, flings piles of receipts into the air, glances at a few dates, a film title, tries to discover the oldest dates at the bottom. He moves swiftly, his hands plunge in, then fling up a nimbus of paper and dust. But to no avail...He stops, short of breath. His eyes go over to the nails in the wall, where other stacks of receipts are hanging. He gets up and goes to look at them, thumbs " it through them hastily, in anger...

He yanks off two or three packs, which come off, nail and all. Only then does he notice that at the bottom of those blocks of yellowed paper, there are some more sheets, much older, almost brown. His eyes concentrate on the mildewed scraps of paper. He leans over, picks them up and goes through them one by one, delicately, because they crumble in his fingers...And then all of a sudden, some film titles he recognizes from that time. He goes on thumbing through them, and all at once an astonished look appears on his face in his hands is a receipt that has been turned over. It's the one! The message scribbled on it can still be seen. He reads it.

SALVATORE'S VOICE

(Off-screen)

Salvatore, forgive me. I'll explain later what happened. Not finding you here was terrible. Unfortunately, this evening, my mother and I are leaving for Tuscany. We're moving there. But you're the only one I love, I'll never be with anybody else, I promise.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED:

120

SALVATORE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
 Here's the address of a girlfriend
 of mine where you can write to me.
 Don't abandon me. Love and kisses,
 Elena.

He clasps the scrap of paper, and his brimming eyes darken
 with regret.

121 CAFÉ~ IN SQUARE AND ELENA'S HOUSE. INT/EXT. DAY

121

ELENA stands near the window overlooking the little square,
 listening on the phone to SALVATORE'S voice. She can see him
 through the transparent curtain speaking on the phone down
 below in the café.

ELENA
 When are you leaving?

SALVATORE opens his eyes, tosses away his cigarette.

SALVATORE
 This afternoon. Elena, in the
 future maybe we could...

ELENA interrupts him, speaks softly, tenderly.

ELENA
 No, Salvatore...there is no future.
 There's only the past. Even meeting
 last night was nothing but a dream,
 a beautiful dream.

(Smiling)
 We never did it when we were kids,
 remember?

(Down in the cafe,
 SALVATORE nods his head
 slowly, desperately.)
 Now that it's happened, I don't
 think there could have been a
 better ending.

(It's farewell. SALVATORE
 glances one last time at
 that window.)

SALVATORE
 I'll never agree with you. Never,
 Elena.

122 CINEMA PARADISO. EXT. DAY

122

The square, unusually empty. There is no one, and no cars and
 motorcycles are parked in the middle. The stores are shut.
 And there is an unreal silence. The houses on the two streets
 on either side of the theatre are covered by enormous pieces
 of gray canvas.

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED:

122

Only now does the camera discover in the distance, a crowd of curious onlookers waiting in front of the movie house, kept at a safe distance by firemen and policemen. Old SPACCAFICO is in the crowd. SALVATORE is also there. He gazes at the front of the old movie theatre...

123 CINEMA PARADISO. INT. DAY

123

The inside of the theatre, completely empty...All of a sudden, a blinding flash and...

124 SQUARE AND CINEMA PARADISO. EXT. DAY

124

...a deafening roar rends the air, accompanied by a surge of amazement in the crowd. And the Cinema Paradiso suddenly collapses, folds inward and disappears for ever in a gigantic cloud of white smoke that rises into the air, carried by the wind towards the crowd...

125 ELENA' S HOUSE. INT. DAY

125

The echo of the explosion is also heard in ELENA'S house. She is alone. And the bang distresses her, as if something had burst inside her. From her face to...

126 SQUARE AND CINEMA PARADISO. EXT. DAY

126

SALVATORE's face, stiff, unmoving, his eyes fixed on those falling ruins, on that season of his life turning into smoke and dust. Enveloped in the white cloud, SPACCAFICO stands crying in silence.

Mice dart out of the ruins in terror, scamper nervously into the square. A group of youngsters scream, amused and excited. Among them, ELENA'S DAUGHTER, smiling... SALVATORE sees her joking with friends and pointing to some boys chasing the mice across the square, hooting and laughing. As a white-haired OLD TRAMP, filthy and covered in rags, makes his way through the crowd. There is an empty look in his eyes and he repeats obsessively in a low voice:

VILLAGE IDIOT

The square's mine, the square's
mine, the square's mine...

SALVATORE recognizes him, it's the VILLAGE IDIOT, the one who used to close down the square at night. He watches him walk off, raving, with nobody even noticing. The crowd now moves over to the huge empty space where the movie house once stood. The murmuring voices are drowned out by the deafening roar of an airplane. From the ruins of the Cinema Paradiso, fade to...

127 ROME. STUDIO VIEWING-ROOM. INT. DAY

127

...SALVATORE'S hands giving a STUDIO PROJECTIONIST the rusty metal can left him by ALFREDO.

SALVATORE

Please check the splices. As soon as you're ready you can start.

PROJECTIONIST

OK. Congratulations on your film. It's terrific.

SALVATORE

Thanks.

A COLLEAGUE of SALVATORE comes up behind him.

SALVATORE (CONT'D)

Well?

COLLEAGUE

The distributor is opening up the film earlier. The press conference is in the afternoon. The actors will also be there, the producer, just about everyone.

An ASSISTANT comes up to them.

ASSISTANT

The official notification of the award just came out, but we've already received a mountain of telegrams. Aren't you happy?

SALVATORE

It's all right. We'll talk about it later.

SALVATORE walks off towards the viewing theatre.

SALVATORE is by himself in the small viewing theatre. Now the lights go down. The beam of light shines out of the little square hole of the projection booth and the screen lights up. A number trailer goes by and then SALVATORE sees the first shots.

A start of intense amazement and joy suddenly runs through him, astounds him, delights him. It's the best piece of film he has ever seen...

It consists of all the kisses ALFREDO cut out of the films and kept for him, when he was a little boy.

(CONTINUED)

They have been spliced together, one , after the other, at random, some of them even upside down. And yet it looks like a first- rate editing job.

In rapid sequence the passionate kisses between actors and actresses, names famous and names unknown in the history of movies. Greta Garbo, Gary Cooper, Alida Valii, Rudolph Valentino, Ingrid Bergman, Clark Gable, Anna Magnani, Humphrey Bogart, Marlene Dietrich, Amedeo Nazzari, Luisa Ferida, Vittorio De Sica, Rita Hayworth, Tyrone Power, Doris Durante, Massimo Gironi, Marta Abba, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Assia Noris...

A whole movie season summed up in a few fragments, a few seconds. A bizarre, poignant, melancholy parade.

SALVATORE is overwhelmed, moved to tears. It is the most profound act of love he has ever seen. He laughs as tears shine in his eyes. Up on the screen, another kiss, the last kiss marking the happy ending of a film. And the age-old words appear 'THE END'.