

Marco Ciaramella



He was good

CAST:

Arduino: The swindler

Vitaliano: Friend of Arduino

Duilia: Arduino's wife

Electra: Duilia's sister

Federica D'Anniballe: Lawyer

Allegra: Insurer

Marshal Rocca: Marshal of the carabinieri

Brigadier Columbus: Carabinieri Brigadier

Erasmus: Henchman of the moneylender

Onofrio: Henchman of the moneylender

Ndao: Extra-community accomplice of Arduino

FIRST ACT

The scene takes place in the living room at home.

On stage: Arduino, worried, walks back and forth while Vitaliano does gymnastics in his friend's house, alternating exercises with the dumbbells on the exercise bike.

Arduino: At this point, nobody can keep me out of jail!

Vitaliano: Sure you too, doing all those fake invoices! Didn't you know that sooner or later they would discover you?

Arduino: I had calculated that it would take longer. In the meantime, I thought I could put aside a nice nest egg and disappear from circulation.

Vitaliano: Why? Where did you want to go?

Arduino: In Santo Domingo, to live a nabob life.

Vitaliano: How could you just think you could get away with it?

Arduino: I remind you, that the invoices were issued by ghost firms, that's why I was convinced that it would take much longer before they found me.

Vitaliano: Ghost firms? What do you mean?

Arduino: In the sense that I was buying failed companies for one euro and with these I had fun playing with VAT.

Vitaliano: Explain yourself better because I don't understand!

Arduino: Do you know that VAT on purchases is on credit, while VAT on sales is on debt?

Vitaliano: At least I know this!

Arduino: The game consisted in having these firms issue false sales invoices, in order to reclaim the VAT with the only company that appeared in my name. The result thus allowed me to be often on credit with the Treasury. Not only that, by increasing costs, the profit was lowered and I also paid less taxes.

Vitaliano: It seems a little complicated to me. Anyway, about your real company, why did you hire all those non-EU citizens if I never saw them work?

Arduino: They brought me money!

Vitaliano: Did they bring money to you? But if they gave the impression of not having a euro!

Arduino: How dense you are! It's very simple: I hired them and they, with a fake paycheck, went to the bank to ask for a small loan. Once the funding was given, we each took half the money. The pact was that they paid the first two installments, after which I fired them and when the bank went to look for them, they found no one else.

Vitaliano: That's why you had so many workers!

Arduino: That's why I'm in trouble now!

Vitaliano: You are a true scam genius!

Arduino: Obviously not. Yet we never went to the same bank, nevertheless something went wrong.

Vitaliano: You know the truth always comes out!

Arduino: But it happened too early. The intention was to withdraw after this latest scam, but I didn't make it.

Vitaliano: Wouldn't you really have done others?

Arduino: Of course not! I will tell you more: even now I would be economically settled, but that notification ruined me. Now I can no longer flee abroad, since they also withdrew my passport.

Vitaliano: I could have a solution.

Arduino: You could have what?

Vitaliano: A solution, are you deaf?

Arduino: *(In a mocking tone)* Then let's hear this genius!

Vitaliano: If you use this tone, I won't tell you anything.

Arduino: Now don't getting touchy!

Vitaliano: Listen carefully: you must die.

Arduino: *(Touching wood)* You should die, ugly owl!

Vitaliano: But there are several ways to die.

Arduino: I only know one.

Vitaliano: How can you not understand? You can even pretend to die ...

Arduino: *(Fascinated by that solution)* Do you know that I like the idea ?! If I were dead, nobody would look for me anymore and then, with a false identity, I could flee abroad. However, to implement the plan, I would need a hand.

Vitaliano: *(Spreading his arms)* Friends are not needful in times of need?

Arduino: First you have to hide the money in a safe place. Could you keep them for me, what do you think?

Vitaliano: Sure! Nobody would ever think of searching them at my place.

Arduino: But you don't have to spend them.

Vitaliano: I would never do it, they're not mine!

Arduino: However, if you help me to stage my death, there will be a nice reward for you too.

Vitaliano: So tell me: what do you need?

Arduino: First of all, a corpse.

Vitaliano: That doesn't seem a problem: I go to the morgue and steal one.

Arduino: (*Sarcastic*) Of course! And maybe even carry it away on your shoulders!

Vitaliano: What if I also stole the coffin?

Arduino: This could be a good solution.

Vitaliano: But how do I do it? Do you have a plan?

Arduino: Of course I have it! Listen carefully: from now on you will have to go to all possible funerals, until you find someone who has chosen to be inhumed.

Vitaliano: How do I know if he was vaccinated before he died?

Arduino: But you are just an ignorant! I didn't say immuned but inhumed which means buried in ground! Let's move on, which is better. The same night, then, you will return to exhume it and cover the hole.

Vitaliano: But if they put the tombstone in it, how do I do it?

Arduino: I have to teach you everything! That is put only after the ground has settled. Sometimes even more than a year passes.

Vitaliano: I thought ...

Arduino: You better not think, but do it! Don't ask too much of your brain, for today it has already given!

Vitaliano: But how do I get the coffin with the dead up from the ground? It is too heavy.

Arduino: (*Impatiently*) You don't have to raise the coffin. You just have to open it and take the corpse away. Then you will put the body inside my car, and once you find a quiet area, you will set a fire.

Vitaliano: Then, I really have to put on the dead man on my shoulders!

Arduino: Thinking back yes, however, you will be paid by weight. What do you say?

Vitaliano: I say it makes an impression on me.

Arduino: However, if you do the math, the game could be worth the candle.

Vitaliano: And this payment by weight, how much would it amount to?

Arduino: You tell me, come on!

Vitaliano: Forty thousand?

Arduino: So then I really die, but from hunger! Let's say twenty thousand?

Vitaliano: Didn't you say that you are already economically settled? What are you doing now? The stingy with me?

Arduino: Okay, let's do thirty thousand and let's not talk about it anymore!

Vitaliano: It is me who have not to talk about it, so let's do thirty-five thousand.

Arduino: I didn't think you were so good at bargaining, anyway, let's do thirty-five thousand, but not a euro more!

Vitaliano: But the coffin, how do I open it?

Arduino: With a screwdriver. You will simply have to unscrew the bolts with which the lid is closed.

Vitaliano: I will act as soon as possible.

Arduino: Meanwhile, take this. *(By giving him the wedding ring)* You will put it in the car, it will serve as proof for identification.

Vitaliano: But do we'll tell your wife the truth?

Arduino: Absolutely not, she would betray herself, she is unable to lie. You will only inform her when some time has passed, so that she can reach me in Santo Domingo.

Vitaliano: But she will suffer a lot in believing you dead.

Arduino: It is the price he will have to pay to conduce a comfortable life in the future.

Vitaliano: As you want! Although it seems to me an unnecessary badness.

Arduino: Do as I tell you, otherwise we risk blowing everything up!

Vitaliano: But the burial chamber, where do you want us to set it up?

Arduino: You say it as if you were to exhibit a painting exhibition!

Vitaliano: It's just to do things right. After all, it is not for everyone to be able to choose for their funeral!

Arduino: You just need to know that we will set it up here at home. I'm really curious to see the reaction of the people who knew me.

Vitaliano: In your room?

Arduino: *(After thinking about it)* No, better, here in the living room, because I would have an idea. See this hole? *(Showing him the floor)*

Vitaliano: Yup.

Arduino: From here we had plans to build a spiral staircase that should have arrived in the tavern. The coffin will be positioned just above this opening. In doing so, I will have the opportunity to listen to the speeches of the people who will come to give me the last farewell, since I will be hidden right there.

Vitaliano: However, if they entered from below, they could find you.

Arduino: I strongly doubt it. It is possible access that place only by opening the door at the bottom of the garage, which has been locked for years now, of which I have the only copy.

Vitaliano: So will you stay hidden there until the time of your escape?

Arduino: Exact! Therefore you must be the one to bring me the food.

Vitaliano: What if your wife notices your presence?

Arduino: To prevent this from happening, you will persuade her to move to her sister for a while, offering to take care of the plants yourself. This way you will also justify your presence in this house when you come to bring me food.

Vitaliano: Sure you have everything planned in a minute!

Arduino: To defraud people, it takes an elastic mind. There are those who use their brains to develop the cure of the century, or to invent devices that will change people's habits, instead I use it to make money.

Vitaliano: If I may say so, you use it to the detriment of others.

Arduino: This is only a small detail!

Vitaliano: I can't deny that I would love to have a mind like yours.

Arduino: My dear, this is a gift of nature and it is not given to everyone to have it! Anyway, now let's go back to our plan. Do you know what you should do?

Vitaliano: No.

Arduino: You could go stock up on supplies, which I'll put in the basement fridge.

Vitaliano: All right! But you give me the money.

Arduino: Are you afraid that I won't give it back to you? After all, won't I give you all my money? In fact, I'm going to prepare them immediately, so, on your return, you can already take them away.

Vitaliano: Okay, so I'm going to stock up for your pantry.

Arduino: See you later! *(Vitaliano comes out)* Better prepare the money before Duilia returns. *(And he leaves the scene. After a few moments Duilia enters)*

Duilia: Honey, I'm back, where are you?

Arduino (offstage): I'll be right there!

Duilia: Where are you? I am impatient to show you this brochure, are you in the study?

Arduino (out of scene): I'm coming, I'm coming! *(He enters with a large suitcase that he tries to hide under the table while the woman is intent on looking at the brochure)*

Duilia: *(Turning around suddenly)* But you are telepathic! I see you've already packed your bags!

Arduino: *(Embarrassed)* What bags?

Duilia: I saw what you hid under the table. *(Gently approaches)* Honey, did you want to surprise me?

Arduino: In a way, yes.

Duilia: I knew it! So where are you taking me? I would love to go to the Maldives. Look at that paradise: beach, sun and wonderful sea. *(Showing the leaflet)*

Arduino: I hadn't thought of the Maldives exactly, but something very similar.

Duilia: *(Impatient)* So what? Come on, honey, tell me!

Arduino: If I told you, it wouldn't be a surprise anymore.

Duilia: And when would the departure be scheduled?

Arduino: This will depend on external factors.

Duilia: Won't it be because of the job? How many times do I have to tell you that you don't live to work, but you work to live ?!

Arduino: I totally agree with you! You will see that for my departure, it will only be a matter of days.

Duilia: Yours? Why? Won't you take me with you?

Arduino: Sure! It was just a slip of the tongue. I couldn't go anywhere without you!

Duilia: Do you know you're a little weird today? You pack a suitcase and then let me understand that you have not planned anything. There is something that does not convince me. Have you decided to run away?

Arduino: Why should I do it? Everything is booming, I would have no reason.

Duilia: So hurry to decide the date, I can't wait to leave!

Arduino: And I don't ?!

The doorbell rings.

Duilia: Who will it be?

Arduino: It should be Vitaliano.

Duilia: But couldn't you find a friend less strange?

The doorbell rings a second time.

Duilia: If he doesn't stop, I'll beat him!

Arduino: Maybe if we open to him, he will stop. *(As he prepares to do it)* However, even if it doesn't seem, he has hidden qualities.

Duilia: Then he hid them really well!

Arduino opens the door to the friend who enters with the shopping bags.

Duilia: What are you doing? Are you moving to us?

Vitaliano: *(Caught off guard, looks for an excuse)* But... I... I just brought something for a snack.

Duilia: For the snack? And how much do you want to eat? Ah, I understand. Are you waiting for me to go so you can have a party? And maybe you also invited some damsels!

Vitaliano: Who would we have invited?

Arduino: She means some girl.

Vitaliano: I wish! The only thing I have to carry, and also on my shoulders, is scary!

Duilia: *(Addressing Arduino)* But what he is saying?

Arduino: Nothing. You know how he is! he's a bit...

Vitaliano: A bit like?

Arduino: We were saying that sometimes you are weird. *(Winking at him in a gesture of understanding)*

Vitaliano: Ah, a little weird in that sense!

Duilia: Listen, weird in that sense, can you tell me what all those supplies are for?

Vitaliano: He told me to buy them.

Duilia: He would be the weird one, huh?! Come on, tell me why you ordered him to buy all that stuff?

Arduino: If you really want to know, we were trying to prepare a surprise party for your birthday.

Duilia: But if it is in two months!

Arduino: We had one big thing in mind, so we thought we'd take advantage.

Duilia: (*Approaching her husband affectionately*) You are so nice! And what did you buy? I want to see. (*He rummages through the bags and begins to extract objects. Vitaliano not only does not prevent her, but helps her to get them out*) Tuna fish? Canned mackerel? Poor wine? Canned meat? White bread? You had a gala evening in mind.

Arduino: Do you see it why I hide things from you? I knew you were going to misunderstand. Now, however, let me explain: the tuna and the white bread are used for canapés, and the wine to deglaze "les escargots", I can't do it with Brunello of Montalcino!

Duilia: What about canned meat?

Arduino: (*Thoughtfully, try to come up a credible idea to justify that food*) He needs that. You should know that, while assembling the canapés, he always gets very hungry.

Duilia: But can't he make a few more canapes and eat that?

Arduino: Are you crazy?! He hates tuna, not only does he not like it, he also became allergic.

Vitaliano: Since when?

Arduino: Do you remember Gigi's birthday party? (*Winking again*) That you threw up and turned red like a pepper?

Vitaliano: Gigi's party? Oh yes. Foolish me! It was such a bad experience that I had tried to forget it.

Duilia: Excuse me for doubting two good guys like you, but sometimes my jealousy is stronger than me and it makes me have absurd doubts. Now that it's all cleared up, I'm going to change my clothes. (*After which she leaves the scene*)

Arduino: (*Angered*) You also helped her get the supplies out of the bags!

Vitaliano: (*Innocently*) So we did quicker.

Arduino: I must be really crazy to make a deal with you! Come on, put all the stuff in that pantry, then I'll take it where you know.

Vitaliano: Can you tell me what I did wrong?

Arduino: You could tell her, since it was supposed to be a surprise, that you couldn't show her. Instead you got it all out. Luckily you didn't take out the toothpaste. *(Removing it at that moment from the envelope)* Otherwise what recipe could I have invented for this?

Vitaliano: In fact, it was the next object I was going to show her.

Arduino: That's enough! Say no more! Rather, did you inquire if funerals are scheduled in the coming days?

Vitaliano: Of course, I'm not as stupid as you think! There will be one today. And as luck would have it the dead man is a guy who should also be more or less of your build and your age.

Arduino: Very well and are you ready?

Vitaliano: More than ready.

Arduino: So go now, Duilia will come back soon and I wouldn't want her to hear that tonight you're going to steal a dead man.

Vitaliano: Why? it's not true?

Arduino: Don't you remember we decided to keep her in the dark about the whole thing?

Vitaliano: I remember it! So I'm going.

Before going, Vitaliano puts the stuff in the pantry.

Arduino: Okay, go! *(Then he accompanies him to the door. As soon as Vitaliano has left, Duilia comes back on the scene)*

Duilia: Did stupid go away?

Arduino: Don't call him that! He's a good guy, he's just a little ...

Duilia: But of so many people you know, did you have to choose him as a friend of the heart?

Arduino: What can I tell you? He can help me.

Duilia: What can an idiot like that ever do?

Arduino: If you knew him better, you would find that it's not that bad. In fact, I would also advise you to indulge him.

Duilia: Indulge him? In what?

Arduino: I don't know, maybe if he wanted to do you a courtesy, you accept.

Duilia: I don't think I'll ever need him.

Arduino: This can never be known. Life could hold surprises for you!

Duilia: Don't tell me you're also becoming a philosopher?

Arduino: No, but one day these words could be useful to you.

Duilia: One day? To me?

Arduino: Yes, to you, who always plan everything and who discourages you when faced with the unexpected. Sometimes you have to hold on regardless.

Duilia: When you speak like this, I almost understand Vitaliano better than you, and this should make you think!

Arduino: (*Approaching his wife and hugging her*) It doesn't matter, the only thing you need to understand is that I love you and will love you forever.

Duilia: I too my darling.

The doorbell rings.

Duilia: Did the pain in the ass return?

Arduino: I'm sure not, however I'm going to see. (*After looking through the peephole*) Golly! That's not good.

Duilia: Don't tell me they are Jehovah's Witnesses?

Arduino: Worse.

Duilia: Those of the vacuum cleaner?

Arduino: Much worse! But now I don't have time to explain you. You have to open and say that I left for work and that you don't know when I will return.

Duilia: So why don't we pretend we're not home?

Arduino: Trust me, she would come back, you can be sure. I don't want to make her suspicious, everything must seem normal.

Duilia: And what should she be suspicious of?

Arduino: Now go open and do as I told you. You will see that, not finding me, she will go away. I can't waste time with her now. If she strikes up a conversation, we'll be here all day.

Duilia: All right, but as soon as she comes out, I demand that you tell me everything!

Arduino: Promised.

Duilia: (*Goes open*) Hi, who are you?

Federica: I am the lawyer D'Anniballe. *(She enters handing Duilia her business card and, even before the landlady has told her to come in, she has already gone to the table to put down all the series of papers she has brought with her)* Can I come in?

Duilia: Please come in. *(A few folders fall to the floor. Duilia helps her collect them)* So, what do I owe your visit to?

Federica: It is soon said. I'd like to speak with Mr. Arduino Nencetti. I'm in charge of his defense.

Duilia: He's not here at the moment, but can I know the reason for this appointment?

Federica: I assume you are the wife and apparently also in the dark about the story.

Duilia: Yes, I am Duilia Sarti, the wife of your client and I am very curious about what accusations my husband should defend himself against.

Federica: Without going around it too much, I inform you that the charges against which Mr. Arduino must defend himself are: tax fraud, false accounting and fraudulent bankruptcy. So we will have to work hard and quickly to put up a good defense.

Duilia: There must have been a mistake, my husband cannot be responsible for everything you just told me.

Federica: The facts, unfortunately, seem to say something else entirely. I have examined the files and there seems to be no doubt of his guilt. My intent, however, is to be able to get the charges reduced.

Duilia: It is not possible! Arduino is an honest person and employs many people with all his companies...

Federica: Too many, I would say!

Duilia: Why? Is it a crime to own several businesses?

Federica: Yes, if you do not pay taxes and defraud the VAT office.

Duilia: It means that he will pay a fine!

Federica: *(Greedily flipping through the series of papers to find the right one. Once she identifies what she is looking for, to underline what she is saying, she indicates the point where it is written, tapping with her finger several times)* Maybe you didn't understand the gravity of the situation. Mister Nencetti risks ending up behind bars. I remind you that according to art. 216 of the bankruptcy law, the sanction provided for the entrepreneur who has covered up, distracted or disposed of all or part of his assets for the purpose of prejudicing creditors and who has exposed non-existent liabilities ranges from 3 to 10 years.

Duilia: But you can help him, can't you?

Federica: Perhaps to make him have the minimum of the foreseen penalty, but I certainly cannot cancel the evidence of his misdeeds. Unfortunately, as I said, the charges are many. There is also that of tax fraud.

Duilia: How much would he risk for that?

Federica: *(More and more hysterical)* On the basis of Legislative Decree 74 of 2000, modified by decree 138 of 2011, the penalty for the destruction of the concealment of accounting records which must be kept for the reconstruction of income ranges from 6 months to 5 years. For undeclared incomes higher than 5% of the total, it risks from 1 year and 6 months to 6 years. For the issue of false invoices, it risks from 1 year and 6 months to 6 years. Finally, when the tax evaded is greater than 30,000 euros, there is a risk of 1 to 3 years.

Duilia: Sure that he didn't miss anything! Then we have to hope that you are really good!

Federica: Furthermore, we need to defend him from the accusation of false accounting. Article 2621 of law 69 of 2015, provides for a sanction for the crime of forgery in the financial statements, for companies not listed on the stock exchange, imprisonment for 1 to 5 years.

Duilia: I get it! He will go to jail and they will throw away the key.

Federica: If we manage to put up a good defense, maybe he will get away with the minimum provided, but we must act now. Also because we need to prove he is not involved in the fraud to the banks.

Duilia: I am shocked. I think it will take a real miracle to get that wretched out of trouble. However, he is not at home now, he has gone on a business trip.

Federica: *(Pointing to the suitcase)* Did he leave or has yet to?

Duilia: That's mine, I'm about to leave for a pleasure trip to the Maldives.

Federica: Listen, I would like to give you some advice: if you don't want to become his accomplice, don't favor his eventual escape, on the contrary, if you had the slightest suspicion that this was your husband's intention, you immediately notify me. A header like that would further aggravate the situation he is in and then it would be really impossible not to make him give the maximum sentence.

Duilia: Do not worry! I will do as you say. So if you have nothing else to tell me ...

Federica: I'll be on my way immediately, but I recommend: treasure my warning!

Duilia: Definitely.

Federica takes all the papers to leave, but once again some fall to the ground. Before leaving, she gives another business card to Duilia and then leaves the scene.

Duilia: *(She goes to call Arduino)* Arduino! *(Arduino returns on stage)* Were you waiting for them to arrest you to tell me it?

Arduino: Don't worry honey! I'll fix everything.

Duilia: How did you get to that point? At the end of the day, our standard of living is not so high as to require disproportionate earnings.

Arduino: It's a long story. However, I can assure you that if I have gone that far, it is because I have been forced.

Duilia: Forced? By who?

Arduino: By a loan shark. I was in trouble with the company, taxes and the crisis were sending me to the brink, the banks were cutting my funds, so I made the mistake of turning to one of these moneylenders.

Duilia: But don't you know that those are bloodsuckers?

Arduino: What other alternative did I have?

Duilia: You could quit the business!

Arduino: And end up in misery only for having always adhered to the rules imposed by those who rob us daily? Never! Since being honest doesn't pay, I thought to turn the page. My plan was to repay, with the money that I would defraud the state and the banks, the debt with the moneylender and then gather a sum that would allow us to spend the rest of our days as nabobs in a beautiful heaven on earth.

Duilia: It doesn't seem to me, though, that your plan has worked.

Arduino: In part yes, with the loan shark I am now even.

Duilia: But with the law how do you put it?

Arduino: Let's say I have an idea, although I have yet to see if it will work. However I can't understand where I may have gone wrong. The plan was perfect, I don't understand how they could have noticed it so soon.

Duilia: How will we get out of this situation?

Arduino: I can only promise you that we will get out of it.

Duilia: *(Deeply disappointed)* Let's hope! Now, however, I want to go get some fresh air, I assure you that I can no longer listen to you. I never expected such behavior from you.

Arduino: I implore you! Tell me you forgive me.

Duilia: No. You have deeply disappointed me and it will take me some time before I can forgive you.

Arduino: Sometimes we think we have a lot of time, but it's not like that... please!

Duilia: Do not pray to me, but God to forgive you for what you have done. *(Then she leaves the scene slamming the door)*

SECOND ACT

Same scenography as the first act.

Arduino: (*Worried, think aloud*) Before I disappear, I have to resolve everything, even the debt with the loan shark, otherwise Duilia will pay the consequences.

The doorbell rings and Arduino goes to open.

Vitaliano: Can I come in? Free field?

Arduino: Come on, hurry! We have to solve another problem.

Vitaliano: Another? Wasn't this enough? Now what should I do? Kidnap the Prime Minister?

Arduino: Maybe it would be simpler.

Vitaliano: Whatever it is, get someone else to do it.

Arduino: I have no one else to hire and then, if you follow my instructions, everything will be fine.

Vitaliano: I have not yet completed my first assignment, that you already entrusting me with another. Maybe you didn't notice, but I'm not James Bond!

Arduino: Listen instead of complaining! Duilia is really angry, I promised her that I would solve everything. With my presumed death, with the law I close the game, but...

Vitaliano: (*Interrupting him*) Luckily, then we're good!

Arduino: Let me finish talking! We are not okay at all! I have a debt with a loan shark and even if I die, he will still expect someone to pay him. So before I die, I have to close with that man or he could haunt Duilia.

Vitaliano: But won't she join you?

Arduino: Since she will do it later, imagine what might happen to her in the meantime. Surely that criminal will go back to asking for money until he gets what he want. I don't dare to think what he could do to her! So do you think that after all she could go through, once she finds out the truth, she would be willing to come back with me?

Vitaliano: So why don't you explain everything to her first?

Arduino: I can't. To keep her calm, I told her that I had already paid the debt with the loan shark and now I can't change version. So we have to solve this question too, before staging my death.

Vitaliano: I wonder why you use the plural if it is only me who does things.

Arduino: How picky you are! You know it's better that I don't show myself around too much.

Vitaliano: Until proven otherwise, you are not yet dead, so go ahead and tell him you do not pay!

Arduino: You have not at all to go and tell him that I don't pay him, but to give him the money.
(Pointing to the suitcase)

Vitaliano: Shouldn't I kept that money? What are you doing? Have you not left yet and are you already starting to spend it? Then what do I keep you? The suitcase? Also, if I am not mistaken, my reward is in there too, won't you want to give the loan shark the money you promised me?

Arduino: Do we want to discuss this nonsense now?

Vitaliano: Thirty five thousand euros are not nonsense.

Arduino: Don't worry, there is enough money in this suitcase for the loan shark, for me and for you.

Vitaliano: I wonder why I'm always in last place!

Arduino: Listen instead of wasting time! Now you must go home immediately to hide the suitcase. Then take two hundred thousand euros and with those go to the port and ask for Poison.

Vitaliano: Two hundred thousand? Why, how many are there in here?

Arduino: Who cares? These are just unnecessary details.

Vitaliano: Look, even if I'm not known for my intelligence, I can count and want to know how much money you have.

Arduino: A million.

Vitaliano: And with a million available, do you want to give me only thirty-five thousand?

Arduino: I will need the rest to live. It is my reserve to quit working and live with dignity.

Vitaliano: But with seven hundred and fifty thousand euros you don't just live there with dignity, you buy all of Santo Domingo!

Arduino: Do you see that you can't count? Seven hundred sixty-five thousand remain.

Vitaliano: Maybe it's you who are not as intelligent as I thought, I count well!

Arduino: Ah! The smart one wants fifty thousand!

Vitaliano: *(Reaching out)* It's a deal. After all, two jobs, two payments!

Arduino: *(Reluctantly reciprocates the gesture)* It's a deal wily!

Vitaliano: So I go to the port and ask for this Poison. Then when I meet him, what do I do?

Arduino: Surely, a henchman will take you to the back of the fish shop "the killer shrimp", where the exchange will take place.

Vitaliano: Which exchange? Shouldn't I just leave him the money?

Arduino: No, he will issue you with a sheet certifying that I have paid off the debt.

Vitaliano: Ah, now I understand!

Arduino: Finally!

Vitaliano: Then I go.

Arduino: I recommend: hide the rest of the money well and above all do not give the loan shark the amount he is entitled to without receiving the receipt.

Vitaliano: (*Very thoughtful*) But how do I recognize this Poison? Describe him to me a bit, I don't want to hand over the money to another by mistake.

Arduino: This is the first sensible question you ask me! And this is encouraging, because it means that you will fulfill orders in the right way.

Vitaliano: (*He looks at him in a bewildered face for a few seconds*) Did you give me the answer, or not? What do I have to fill to recognize it?

Arduino: Holy ignorance! You will fulfill I said! I wanted to say that I am sure that you will carry out your task in the best way.

Vitaliano: Then say it without making it so long! What need is there to use those big words that only confuse ideas?

Arduino: I was just thinking aloud, but now give me some time to remember.

Vitaliano: It's just that I'm afraid of making a mistake, maybe I'm not able to do such a thing, it's better if you take care of it in person.

Arduino: Absolutely not. When Duilia comes back, I want to be at home and clear up the whole thing. If she didn't find me on her return, who knows what she might think. Not even seeing the suitcase anymore, she would be convinced that I ran away without her. No, it's decided, you have to go.

Vitaliano: You thought? Tell me what this infamous Poison looks like. Is he tall, short, thin, fat, bald or flowing hair?

Arduino: If you hammer me in this way you deconcentrate me.

Vitaliano: Okay, but hurry up! I don't want your wife to come back all of a sudden. (*Arduino looks at him badly*) I get it, I shut up.

Arduino: All I can tell you about that man is that, for security reasons, he was speaking to me through the peephole of the door that led to the back of the fish shop. I basically only saw one eye of him.

Vitaliano: Security reasons? Weren't you in his headquarters? What could he ever fear?

Arduino: That someone, exasperated and desperate, could get to shoot him.

Vitaliano: The bullets, however, also pass through the doors.

Arduino: Not if they are armored!

Vitaliano: But is the old search no longer done? What need is there to make the barricades?

Arduino: In those environments the precautions are never too many! Do you know how many enemies he could have? He will even have to watch his back from his own henchmen.

Vitaliano: However, at least you should have heard his voice. What was it like?

Arduino: It was a guttural voice.

Vitaliano: How was it?

Arduino: I think he was purposely disguising it to keep me from hearing the real sound, you understand?

Vitaliano: Of course, I'm not stupid! So what do I do? Am I going to trust? What exchange will this ever be?

Arduino: After showing the money to the henchman who will be in front of the door of the fish shop, you will have to ask that they issue you the sheet certifying that we no longer have any commitment with them. Once you receive that, you will deliver the money and you will leave.

Vitaliano: And who assures you that even with that sheet, they will not continue to make requests?

Arduino: Even the bad guys have their own code of honor. I am sure that if I pay my debt, nobody will ask for anything.

Vitaliano: So I'm going.

Arduino: *(Taking him by the arm)* I recommend: don't do take initiatives. If you have any doubt, don't hesitate to call me. Here my life and Duilia's one are at stake.

Vitaliano: I get it! I will do as you said.

Arduino: So I like you: strong minded and determined.

Vitaliano: If you say so!

Arduino: *(Grabbing him by the arm again)* I forgot ... thank you, you are a true friend!

Vitaliano: By now you should know that I would do anything for you!

Arduino: *(Reflecting out loud)* Things are taking a good turn. Now it all depends on him. After all, it seems a bit like that, but it isn't; if he wants, he is capable of anything, I am sure.

Duilia returns to the scene.

Duilia: *(Nervous)* Don't tell me anything, for God's sake, I haven't swallowed the bitter pill yet!

Arduino: But I would like to explain to you how things went.

Duilia: I told you I don't talk to you, I actually go to my room. *(Noting that the suitcase is no longer under the table)* But where did you put the suitcase?

Arduino: Didn't you say you don't talk to me? Then neither do I want to answer this question.

Duilia: Ah, you are even offended! But aren't you ashamed? You have done more ravages than a tsunami and all you can say is that you don't want to answer a trivial question?

Arduino: Please love, don't be so tough!

Duilia: But what love! If you don't understand the situation, I will explain it to you. In a little while you will go straight to jail leaving me without a penny.

Arduino: It won't be like that, I know a person who ...

Duilia: *(Interrupting him)* More than one, you should know a hundred and maybe it would not be enough to get you out of trouble. Even the one who came today said that it will be hard to do it. But then, why didn't you want to talk to her? I didn't get this!

Arduino: I would like to explain to you, but you would refuse to believe in my project. However, it is certainly not a lawyer who could get me out of trouble.

Duilia: So who could do it?

The doorbell rings.

Arduino: Now I'm going to open, it could be my savior.

Duilia: I don't want to hear any more lies, I prefer to go to my sister. At least she doesn't hide a lot of squalid secrets from me.

Arduino: *(After looking through the peephole)* You chose the right time to go, it's not who I thought.

Duilia: I deduce from your face that he is not a very welcome person.

Arduino: Deduce well. And, given who it is, it's better if you go out the back door.

Duilia: Who is now? The Financial Police?

Arduino: Worse! However, I have already resolved this matter. In any case, the further away you are from those people, the better.

Duilia: All right! Today I had enough bad surprises. Besides, solve your problems by yourself!

Duilia is indignant and hears the doorbell ring again.

Arduino: *(As he goes to open)* One moment, I'm coming!

Erasmus and Onofrio enter the scene, two types with a not reassuring appearance. (Torn jeans, chains on the belt, shaved heads and arms covered in tattoos)

Arduino: Hi, who are you? Have we met before?

Erasmus: Don't pretend! I'm sure you remember us. However my name is Erasmus.

Onofrio: I, on the other hand, am Onofrio. And it would be better if you store this name in your mind, because it could be the last one you hear!

Arduino: Frankly, I absolutely don't remember you.

Onofrio: This guy tries to be smart, can I break his leg right away? *(Trying to approach menacingly to Arduino)*

Erasmus: *(Blocking the buddy who seems to be waiting for nothing more than to put his hands on Arduino)* Wait up! I try to refresh his memory: the deadline has expired a week ago.

Arduino: Which term?

Erasmus: The one within which you had to return the two hundred thousand euros.

Arduino: Ah, that term! I didn't realized it was already time! It's true, time flies!

Onofrio: The friend wants to be witty! Let's see if when I show him my faithful "companion" *(Pulling out a huge knife)* will still want to joke!

Erasmus: I remind you that you are already a week late, therefore, your debt has risen to two hundred and fifty thousand.

Arduino: I have been punctual. My man gave you the money a week ago.

Onofrio: Keep going, you will soon regret being born! *(Threatening him remotely with a knife)*

Erasmus: Do not try to play the three card trick with those who have more experience than you. Look, we are not kidding! When we have killed your wife, you will realize who you are dealing with!

Arduino: Wait a minute, don't get heated! That's true, the payment did not happen a week ago, but today.

Onofrio: I've seen so many fools like you who ended up reinforcing the highway pylons.

Erasmus: I see you still want to make fun of me! Then now I will go away, first, however, I will give him the provisions that you know well, then we will see if you insist on not paying.

Arduino: *(Grabbing him by the arm)* I'm not lying. The person I instructed will be making the payment right now.

Erasmus: First of all, take your grubby hands off me, otherwise I'll break them. *(Breaking free with a jerk and becoming even more threatening)* Try to keep your distance! ... Now let's make a phone call and I hope for you that you are telling the truth. Because, otherwise, I will take it out on you and then I will finish the job with your wife and I assure you that it will not be pleasant for either of them. So are you really sure what you say? I hate being fooled!

Arduino: *(After looking at the clock)* Enough time has passed since he left, so yes, I'm sure.

Erasmus: Very well. *(Then, turning to Onofrio)* Call who you know now and see if this jester tells the truth.

Arduino: *(Praying with his hands joined, looking at the sky, thinks aloud)* Let's hope he hasn't had some snags, otherwise this madman will kill us all.

Onofrio: You're right to pray, because if you have told yet another lie, do you know how it ends !? *(Then, he picks up the phone and dials a number)* Hello boss, our man says he sent someone to pay off the debt. Ah, that's not true. Then let's proceed.

Arduino: But how is that possible? By this time he should have delivered the money. Where did that idiot go?

Erasmus: I don't know where he went, but I will tell you where you will go, because, after we finish with you forty days in hospital will be guaranteed! *(When Onofrio is about to interrupt the communication with his interlocutor and make the move to head towards Arduino to move from words to deeds, he passes the phone to Erasmus who replaces him in the telephone conversation. Then Onofrio takes Arduino, increasingly frightened, by the collar. At the moment when he is about to sink the blow, Erasmus, while remaining on the phone, manages to block it in time, in a nice push and pull, until he pulls him hard by the arm preventing him from hitting him)* How? A weird guy just arrived with a suitcase?

Arduino: *(Crazy with joy)* He's my man, I told you I wasn't lying.

Onofrio loosens his grip slightly.

Erasmus: Are you checking the contents of the suitcase? Ok I wait. ... Are they only two hundred thousand? *(Onofrio squeezes harder and starts charging again with the knife and is stopped again by the partner)* I get it! For the moment it's okay, we consider it a deposit... I will report. *(After which he interrupts the communication. Onofrio finally releases his grip and after having slightly accommodated the lapel to Arduino he moves away from him)*

Arduino: However, fifty thousand for a week seems to me a little too much. What interest rate did you charge?

Erasmus: That expected one, neither a point more, nor a point less.

Onofrio: If you don't shut that mouth, in addition to the points of interest, you will need several stitches soon! *(Threatening him with a knife, pretending to cut his throat)*

Arduino: Now if there is nothing else, I would like to be alone, I have something to do.

Onofrio: Certainly you will have to organize your funeral, if you do not respect the agreements!

Arduino: It's just what I had in my mind.

Onofrio: Can't you just stop making jokes! Be careful, however, because if you play with the fire you often get burned!

Arduino: That's exactly what I hope!

Onofrio: This idiot doesn't realize what a sea of trouble he's in!

Arduino: Hopefully soon in the Caribbean!

Onofrio: You have just crossed the limit, now I'm going to give you a good lesson... *(Starting to charge to catch him again and move from words to deeds)*

Erasmus: *(Interposing between the two, he stops his partner, lasting not a little effort, given the impetuosity of the other)* Leave him alone! You will get this satisfaction if he doesn't pay. *(Then, turning to Arduino)* But remember well that we give you a month to pay the fifty thousand. And if you are not on time, the next week will be one hundred thousand and we don't want this, do we?

Arduino: *(Resigned)* Absolutely not!

Erasmus: *(As he opens the door to exit)* That's all for now and remember: thirty days from now. *(Then he drags Onofrio off the scene, reluctant to leave the house without having given Arduino a good lesson. After a few seconds Onofrio returns to the scene to try to grab Arduino again. Erasmus, however, stops him once again and takes him away)*

Arduino: Sons of a stray dog, may them be burned today! With them the game never ends! If I didn't fear repercussions on Duilia, after my alleged death, I would send a letter to the police to report everything that happens to that damned port! *(After hearing the doorbell ring)* Now who the hell is he? But how hard is the life of the scammer! *(After looking through the peephole)* Ah thank goodness! It is Ndao. *(Opens the door)* Come in, come in, what are you doing here?

Ndao: Hi Arduino! I came to greet you.

Arduino: To greet me? You are not telling me the truth, come on tell me it!

Ndao: In fact, there would be a little thing.

Arduino: I could have bet on it!

Ndao: I need some payslips for friends.

Arduino: How many would they be?

Ndao: Thirty.

Ndao: You can do them calmly, I'm in no hurry. It's okay by tomorrow.

Arduino: By tomorrow? Luckily you were in no hurry! Definitely no way!

Ndao: Why, what have you got to do?

Arduino: I just have to die.

Ndao: *(Stunned)* So who makes me the payslips?

Arduino: Congratulations on your sensitivity! You didn't show the slightest displeasure that I might die, you only worried about the payslips.

Ndao: But couldn't you die after making them?

Arduino: This is really too much! I don't make payslips for you, end of story!

Ndao: What a pity! This game would have earned us fifty thousand euros each.

Arduino: Fifty thousand?

Ndao: But, since you're not interested, oh well!

Arduino: I could reconsider the thing. However, I need more time.

Ndao: If you die, you will have a lot.

Arduino: Forget what I said. I can do them for you by three days, take it or leave it!

Ndao: Am I coming to collect them here?

Arduino: No, it's not safe here. A friend of mine will bring them to you.

Ndao: Then tell him to come to the port, to pier seventeen and ask for me. *(Then, handing him a sheet)* This is the list of those you need to hire.

Arduino: Aboubacar Boris Diop, Ibrahima M'Baye Camara, Mamadou Mbougar Sarr; Abdoulaye Haimdou Kane ... never one of you was called Ugo or Ivo? Other than that, I need a favor from you too.

Ndao: If I can, gladly!

Arduino: My fee should be given to a loan shark called Poison. Maybe you know him, because he too has his base of operations at the port.

Ndao: In fact, I know him very well. Many years ago we worked together, then I preferred to take another path, because I could no longer look at myself in the mirror. I could not be so cruel with those unfortunates who came to ask for money on loan.

Arduino: Unfortunately I have to deliver the last tranche to definitively close the accounts with him.

Ndao: Do not worry! I will make the delivery for you.

Arduino: I recommend: you will have to provide within a month from today, otherwise the amount will double.

Ndao: Can ten days after you deliver me the payslips be okay?

Arduino: Very well! *(Noises are heard)* Now you'd better go, I make your way out the back.

Arduino and Ndao leave the scene and Duilia returns.

Duilia: All too quiet. *(In the meantime Arduino returns)* Where have you been?

Arduino: I was cleaning the car.

Duilia: With all that happened today, is your only concern is cleaning the car?

Arduino: Now that things are going well, why not?

Duilia: I think you're trying to change the subject not to tell me who he was.

Arduino: Who?

Duilia: Do you take me for a fool? The one why you told me to get out the back for.

Arduino: Ah, that guy! All right, he was a person who was claiming a payment that I had already made.

Duilia: So why did he claim it?

Arduino: A small, brilliantly solved mistake.

Duilia: But you still haven't told me who should get us out of trouble with finance.

Arduino: Maybe it's better if I don't tell you.

Duilia: Instead it is better if you do it and also in a hurry, for today you have already tested my patience enough. Come on, tell me how this person will help us!

Arduino: I cannot explain as he will do, it is better for you if you don't know, but I can tell you his name.

Duilia: Come on, shoot!

Arduino: Brace yourself! The name is ... Vitaliano.

Duilia: *(After a moment of bewilderment in which she holds her breath)* I correct myself, shoot him which is better!

The doorbell rings.

Arduino: It is probably him.

Duilia: I'm going to get the gun.

Arduino: Please don't do this!

Duilia: So I shoot them both. Maybe it would be the best solution! *(Then she leaves the scene)*

Arduino: *(Goes to open and lets Vitaliano in)* How long did it take you? I came within a whisker of being killed!

Vitaliano: I asked around if anyone knew a loan shark in those parts, but nobody answered me.

Arduino: What a stupid! I told you to ask for Poison.

Vitaliano: I thought it was the same thing.

Arduino: Let's change the subject. Rather, did everything go well?

Vitaliano: Yes, but who wanted to kill you?

Arduino: His hit men. If you didn't hand over the money in time, they would have been violent with me first and then with Duilia.

Vitaliano: What does she have to do with it?

Arduino: Those are sadistic people who want to terrorize you by doing violence to loved ones.

Vitaliano: They were very kind to me.

Arduino: Of course! You went to give them two hundred thousand euros! If you went to tell them that I couldn't pay, surely they wouldn't be so nice.

Vitaliano: In any case, I won't have to go there anymore.

Arduino: I hope so! What about the rest of the money? Is it safe?

Vitaliano: Sure! I took it to the bank.

Arduino: Where did you take it?

Vitaliano: In the bank, what safer than that?

Arduino: But that's dirty money, you shouldn't have brought it there.

Vitaliano: And why didn't you tell me? You asked for a safe place and I thought that was fine.

Arduino: Unfortunately Duilia is right!

Vitaliano: About what?

Arduino: (*Screaming*) About the fact that you're an idiot!

Vitaliano: (*Mortified*) But why? I try to do my best and you treat me badly again.

Arduino: Now stop playing the victim and tell me how you organized tonight.

Vitaliano: I found an even easier way than we thought at the beginning.

Arduino: Come on, talk! Let me know immediately about your change of plans. I do not deny you that the idea that you do your own thing scares me a little.

Vitaliano: A pathologist friend of mine told me that he would have an unidentified corpse at his disposal which the judicial authority has finally ordered to be buried. So it will not be difficult to take possession of the body. He is willing to give us a hand, in this way I will spare myself the trouble of unearthing and burying.

Arduino: But does this doctor have corpses like we have cigarettes?

Vitaliano: What can I say? But since he's willing to give it to us, why ask so many questions?

Arduino: But how much is he asks for his trouble?

Vitaliano: Only three thousand euros.

Arduino: Then it can be done.

Vitaliano: There would also be another thing.

Arduino: When you say so, my blood freeze!

Vitaliano: Listen, before you come to your usual conclusions! The burnt remains, which will be found in the car, will undergo a new autopsy and he will be glad to confirm that they belong to you. Clearly for this he asks for another three thousand euros.

Arduino: It still seems to me an acceptable amount!

Vitaliano: After that they will be placed in a coffin and delivered to the family. At this point a question naturally arises: are you sure that your wife will want to take them home and not expose them to funeral home?

Arduino: In this case, instead of the coffin, you will place the sofa over the hole that leads to the room where I will hide while waiting for my escape. I am sure that, after the funeral, many people will come home to offer condolences to Duilia and we must be very careful not to be caught.

Vitaliano: Of course, I'll take care of everything! We will protect our secret!

Arduino: Do you know that every day that passes I am increasingly convinced that I have done well to turn to you so that you can help me in this matter ?! You are smarter than I thought.

Vitaliano: Thanks, you don't know how happy your words make me!

Arduino: Now take the car keys. And remember to get cans of gasoline to start a fire where you will make the crime happen.

Vitaliano: My plan would be this: I will drive the car against a tree, but first I will insert the corpse tied with the seatbelts and finally I will set everything on fire.

Arduino: Why do you want to buckle the belts? He doesn't risk a fine if they find him without.

Vitaliano: To blow up the pretensioners. So it will seem even more real. Clearly the car will have to be in motion and, if we are lucky, the airbags could also burst.

Arduino: Sometimes you are a genius!

Vitaliano: *(Satisfied)* Now I'm going to fulfill my mission. I arranged with my friend to go and load the body in half an hour, so I have to leave you.

Arduino: Go, go!

Vitaliano: You, after midnight, will have to hole up in the hole, because you will be dead, do we understand each other?

Arduino: What are you doing now? Will you give me orders? However we understood each other. With an excuse I will go out the main door, then I will come back from the back and hide in the secret room, from where I will be able to hear everything, clearly as long as it speaks aloud. So if you want to give me directions, you know how to do it!

Vitaliano: All clear, boss. *(Then go to open the door)* Ah, I forgot: good death!

Arduino: Thanks, of course I don't tell you the same.

THIRD ACT

Same scenography of the first two acts.

Vitaliano, Duilia and Electra are seated on the sofa covering the hole of the secret room.

Duilia: *(Crying out)* How can you be so unlucky !? Bust and slam right into the only tree in the avenue! What an infamous fate!

Electra: Duilia, don't cry, you must be strong!

Duilia: Easy to say! But put yourself in my shoes.

Electra: For that matter, I'd be happy to do it.

Duilia: Today I'm not really in the mood to listen to your jokes.

Electra: (*Mortified*) Sorry! It was certainly not my intention to diminish your sorrow. Mine was just an attempt, among other things failed miserably, to console you. I know it's a terrible moment for you, but I was sincere when I said that, in reverse, I would have jumped for joy.

Duilia: But you've never loved your husband, I have.

Electra: There is a plan written for each of us that is not given to us to understand and yours, unfortunately, provided for this epilogue, dear sister.

Vitaliano: I seem to hear the priest again when he recited the homily.

Duilia: Luckily at least his memory is save!

Electra: Why do you say that? Wasn't he good?

Duilia: In his own way, yes.

Vitaliano: He was a great friend and I will always speak well of him, regardless of what he has done in the past.

Duilia: You too, thank goodness you had to help him, if you didn't do it what could happen?

Vitaliano: And how could I avoid the accident? That was just a fatality.

Electra: Of course only a loser could go and bump into the only tree in the avenue. It's almost like it was done on purpose.

Vitaliano: (*Embarrassed*) You know... when fate calls!

Electra: This is true.

Vitaliano: Who knows what happened inside that car? Why did he lose control? I really wish I knew.

Electra: I, on the other hand, would like to know why the firefighters took so long to put out the fire? There is practically nothing left of him.

Duilia: And did you have to remind me? Thanks for your sensitivity!

Electra: Sorry, but it's happened by now, what changes if I analyze the facts?

Vitaliano: It would be enough to do it only with a little more tact.

Duilia: Vitaliano, even if it no longer matters, I would like to ask you one thing anyway. How did you decide to help him?

Electra: An aura of mystery has been lingering in this room for a few minutes, why don't you try to be clearer? It's as if you want to question the fact that Arduino was good.

Vitaliano: I think, given what has happened, that it is useless to talk about it and that the only sensible thing to do is to bury the past.

Electra: Arduino is the one who is buried by now. Anyway, do you want to tell me what he had done, or do we want to continue with the riddles?

Duilia: Listen dear sister, Arduino was not the person he seemed.

Electra: And what person was he?

Duilia: *(Crying out)* He was a crook, full of debts with loan sharks and the taxman.

Electra: *(Surprised)* What are you saying? Strange, he seemed so good to me!

Duilia: And maybe you misjudge your husband who is a hundred times better than him. Sometimes appearances are deceiving.

Vitaliano: To be precise, I would say only with the taxman. With the loan sharks he had settled the bill.

Duilia: How do you know?

Vitaliano: *(Embarrassed)* How do I ... it's simple, he told me.

Duilia: You know many things but you don't want to tell me. Yet at such a hard time they would comfort me. Knowing the truth would make me feel better.

Vitaliano: It is exactly to make you feel better that I don't tell you anything.

Electra: Look, in my opinion, it's better now if you come to my house for a few days. You don't have to stay in this place full of memories.

Duilia: I thank you, but I can't. How do I do with plants? Those are all I have left of my Arduino. He loved them so much and I can't let them die, I have to take care of them.

Vitaliano: I can take care of those. It will be good for you to get away from this environment.

Duilia: What a strange coincidence! A few days before he died, Arduino had told me to follow your advice. Was it an omen?

Vitaliano: Likely.

Duilia: However, if I find myself like this, it is also because of your suggestions. So now why should I listen to you?

Vitaliano: Look, I didn't push him against that tree!

Duilia: No, but you've clouded his mind. And when you're not lucid, it's easy to get distracted and crash.

Vitaliano: That was a nasty thing to say, you should have kept it to yourself.

Duilia: I'm sorry! You are willing to help me and I repay you in this way. It's just that I have a lot of sorrow in my heart and I can't reason anymore.

Vitaliano: I understand you and I don't blame you.

Electra: Our good Arduino, aspiring Arsène Lupin, who would have said it?

The doorbell rings.

Electra: I am going to open it, it will be someone who wants to offer you condolences. *(Without giving Electra time to say anything, the lawyer D'Anniballe enters and gives her the business card)*

Federica: I'm the lawyer D'Anniballe and I came to offer condolences to my assisted's wife. Can I come in? *(When she is already in the center of the room)*

Electra: It seems to me that you have already entered! And then who do you want to assist? More than dead!

Federica, regardless of Electra's affirmation, approaches Duilia to offer her condolences. In the meantime, the doorbell rings again.

Electra: *(Going to open again)* And who is he now? *(After opening, seeing two carabinieri in the doorway)* Hello, what do we owe your visit to?

Marshal Rocca: Hello, I'm Marshal Rocca and this is Brigadier Columbus.

Electra: Come on in! Please make yourselves comfortable. *(Pointing to their respective chairs)*

Marshal Rocca: Thanks, but we prefer to stand. *(Seeing the brigadier sitting down, the marshal scolds him immediately)* Brigadier, you are dumb, not deaf. *(Mimicking the gesture of getting up instantly. The brigadier obeys, stands up, replies with the military salute as expected from the weapon and the marshal replies in turn)* I want to start by saying that if we are here to disturb you right now, it is only because duty imposes it on us. So now I'd like to know who the presumed deceased's wife is among you.

Duilia: It's me! But... did I get it wrong? Did you say presumed?

Marshal Rocca: You understood perfectly. The reconstruction of the accident dynamics suggests something unclear.

Electra: What does this mean?

Marshal Rocca: Who are you?

Electra: The deceased's sister-in-law, I'm her sister. *(Pointing to Duilia)*

Marshal Rocca: You? *(Addressing the lawyer)*

Federica: I'm D'Anniballe Federica, Mr. Arduino Nencetti's lawyer, or rather I was, since I don't think he'll need one anymore. *(Holding out a business card also to the marshal)*

Marshal Rocca: In this case you can stay both. And who are you? *(Addressing Vitaliano)*

Vitaliano: The dearest friend of the presumed dead man.

Marshal Rocca: Then stay here too, maybe you can provide us with useful information. In the meantime, the brigadier will check your particulars.

The brigadier approaches the people moaning something difficult to understand.

Brigadier Columbus: Ntity.

Seeing the perplexed faces of those present, the marshal intervenes.

Marshal Rocca: He's asking for an identity card.

Brigadier Columbus: Ntity.

The brigadier, after taking the documents, writes the general information of those present.

Federica: Excuse me marshal, can you be more explicit? What does it mean that something is unclear?

Marshal Rocca: The dynamic is somewhat bizarre. The crash was not so violent that it caused a fire. This appears to have been caused later. After the scientific findings, we will know more, however, my experience suggests that it looks being a staging. Given the trouble with justice that her husband had *(Looking at Duilia)*, it would be no wonder if he thought of pretending to be dead in order to disappear from circulation.

Electra: Really?

Duilia: It seems to me an absurd hypothesis. I remind you that an autopsy was also done on the body.

Marshal Rocca: In fact, the pathologist's report complies with the victim's anthropometric data, but we need further confirmation.

Duilia: I assure you that the recognition was not pleasant, however I am sure that the body belonged to my husband, since our wedding ring was found in the car.

Marshal Rocca: If you are so sure, you will have no objection to providing us with the name of your dentist, so as to make a final check. By comparing the dental information collected on the corpse with that held by the dentist, we could understand whether it is the same person or not.

The brigadier returns the documents, but he is a bit confusing, thus forcing the lawyer, Duilia, Vitaliano and Electra to exchange them to regain possession of their own, creating a bit of movement.

In addition, while handing over it identity card to Duilia, he falls it to the ground and when he picks it up, he notices something under the sofa that draws his attention.

Duilia: In this case I can tell you that the family dentist is Dr. Ristori, the one who has the practice in the city center. Do you know the one on the square?

Marshal Rocca: Yes, I know him very well. We will immediately pay him a visit and we hope to be able to close this sad matter immediately!

The suspicious brigadier begins to look even more carefully under the sofa.

Duilia: Go ahead, we have nothing to hide.

Marshal Rocca: I hope for you. However, if you come up with the idea of helping him hide, I remind you that no one will save you from the charges of aiding and abetting and its consequences.

Federica: *(Getting up, to give more emphasis to his words)* Art. 378 of the penal code: anyone who helps to evade the investigations of the authorities, including those carried out by organs of the international criminal court or to escape the searches of this, is punished with imprisonment up to 4 years. *(After which she resides)*

Duilia: Hide him? And where? Under the sofa?

The brigadier begins to moan something to get the marshal's attention and convince him to take a look under the sofa, but he ignores it.

Marshal Rocca: I don't advise you to be sarcastic! Anyway, I hope I don't have to come back with a search warrant again and turn the whole house upside down to find him.

Electra: We are sure that there will be no need. We are a good family and we certainly don't want to pay for poor Arduino's mistakes!

Marshal Rocca: The fact that you are collaborating is in your favor, so I am sure that everything will be resolved in the best way, however, if there were problems we will communicate them to you.

Electra: Is that all now?

Marshal Rocca: There would be one last thing.

Duilia: What?

Marshal Rocca: None of you can leave the country without authorization.

Vitaliano: Neither do I?

Marshal Rocca: You said you were his best friend.

Vitaliano: But I...

Federica: I remind you that if you do not go in front of the investigating authority, if requested, you could also be arrested.

The brigadier crosses his wrists and mimics the gesture of the handcuffs to reiterate the concept.

Marshal Rocca: We have your details, so it will be better for you that you do not transgress this order until we give you the green light. That's all for now, don't bother, we know the way, goodbye! *(The brigadier, to inform the marshal of his suspicions, still tries to moan something, but once again he is ignored. Indeed, with a glare, he is reproached by his superior, who gestures for him to follow him out. The brigadier continues to complain, but then resigns and both leave the scene)*

Electra: But it's astonishing! All these suspicions, these precautions! What had Arduino done? Had he stolen from the Bank of Italy?

Duilia: Worse, he had defrauded the tax department.

Federica: Legislative Decree 74 of 2000 modified by Decree 138 of 2011.

Electra: How did a good person like him end up in that mess? With all those firms he owned!

Duilia: If he went off the rails it was only to save all the workers and therefore the many families that depended on him.

Electra: I'm sure of that, because he was so good!

The doorbell rings.

Electra: And now who will it be? *(Then, turning to Duilia)* You don't bother, I'm going to open it.

(After opening the door) Duilia, there is a lady for you.

Duilia: Make her sit do

A woman wearing a pair of thick glasses enters the scene. It is quite evident, that she sees little so much so that she first bumps into Electra and then goes to Vitaliano, convinced instead of being in front of the landlady.

Allegra: Hello, my name is Allegra Mullet, I am an insurance agent and I need to speak face to face with Mrs. Duilia Nencetti.

Realizing the situation, Duilia gets up and goes towards Allegra, trying to catalyze the attention on herself to make her understand that previously she turned to the wrong person.

Duilia: Insurance agent? Couldn't you wait a few days before coming here? After all, investigations are still ongoing.

Allegra: If it weren't urgent, I wouldn't have bothered you right now. Before explaining it, I would like to ask you if we can remain alone?

Duilia: Of course! Electra, Vitaliano, lawyer can you go out for a moment?

Federica: I would advise you to let me stay, a legal opinion could be useful.

Duilia: Quite right! So if you don't mind, the lawyer stays.

Allegra: There are no problems for me. *(After the other two are gone)* So madam, once the Carabinieri have confirmed that the corpse is that of your husband, how will you manage to carry on?

Duilia: And how do you know that the Carabinieri are investigating to confirm that the charred corpse is my husband's? Then don't you think that how I manage to get by is my business?

Allegra: It is just simple curiosity, since you do not have a job and must also pay the rent of this house

Duilia: But are you an insurer or a radiologist? Because it seems to me that he is making me the x-rays!

Allegra: It was just a way to get to the point.

Duilia: Then it seems to me that you're getting there too slowly! However, if you really care, I can tell you that I will go for a while to live with my sister who has a husband who earns well and also owns a house.

Allegra: But we know that your checking account is zero...

Duilia: Look, I still don't understand where you want to go and not even the reason for such urgency to ask for things you already know. Besides, I'd also like to know how you got hold of all this information. If I'm not mistaken there should be a privacy law.

Federica: *(Passionate)* Be careful dear Mrs. Sole, I remind you that the penalty provided for by art. 167 of the Privacy Code ranges from 6 months to 1 year and 6 months.

Duilia: In any case, don't worry about me, somehow I'll get by, so if that's all, that's the door.

Allegra: And you don't want to tell me anything else?

Duilia: What am I supposed to tell you? If you have anything else to ask, don't beat around the bush and spit it out!

Allegra: Don't tell me that you didn't know that your husband had taken out this life insurance policy and that if he died, you would have received five hundred thousand euros? *(Showing her the contract)*

Duilia: What news is this?

Allegra: What are you doing, do you pretend to be clueless? You will not think that I believe you were not aware of being the beneficiary of this contract.

Duilia: Wait a moment! What do you want to insinuate?

Federica takes the policy and begins to analyze it carefully.

Allegra: I don't insinuate anything. But the whole story seems a bit suspicious to me. Banging in the only tree on the whole avenue is not in itself very credible. Accidents like this tend to hide something else!

Federica: Weigh your words well, if you don't know, the crime of slander, provided for by art. 368 of the Criminal Code, provides for a prison sentence of 2 up to 6 years.

Duilia: Are you thinking that I killed my husband to collect the insurance premium?

Allegra: You must admit that this would certainly not be the first case! Beware that we insurers are not as foolish as you think and we will make all the necessary investigations. In fact, I remind you that in the event of non-accidental death, the insurance does not pay. So you will have the sum only in closed investigations.

Duilia: I can swear to your that I didn't know a bloody thing about this damned policy.

Allegra: So that's all for now. So I tell you, from now on, that we will keep our eyes on you (*Rearranging the glasses by pushing the area between the eyes*) and, before you can cash the check, you will have to wait for the accidental death to be ascertained.

Duilia: You have no pity even for a person who has just lost her husband! You are only good at cashing, when you have to pay, find every possible excuse for not doing it.

Allegra: I remind you that there is an ongoing investigation and that confirmation that the body you have buried belongs to your husband has not yet arrived.

Duilia: Don't worry about this, the truth will come out.

Allegra: I wish it for you! However I warn you: if we were to find out that you have any responsibility in the accident, you can forget that money!

Duilia: Do you think I may have tampered with my husband's car to make him crash into that tree?

Allegra: Who can say that?! You may even have killed him and later have crashed the car into the tree, before setting the fire.

Duilia: But if when the accident happened I was elsewhere!

Allegra: Are there any witnesses who can confirm this?

Federica: (*Turning to the insurer*) What are you doing? Taking my job ? This is what I had to ask my client. Come on, Mrs. Duilia, answer the question!

Duilia: But shouldn't you be on my side?

Federica: Only by preventing the questions of the Public Prosecutor, I can help you.

Duilia: I didn't think I was already at the trial. However, I reply immediately: of course there are witnesses.

Allegra: This can mean everything and nothing. You may have hired an assassin, maybe the guy I saw a few moments ago.

Duilia: But did you see him well?

Federica: I want to hope for you that you are not accusing Ms. Sarti of having committed the crime of instigation to commit a crime!

Duilia: However, this conversation lasted too long, now, if you don't mind, Ms. Eel, I have a husband to cry about, so please do me the courtesy of leaving.

Allegra: Listen, my name is Mullet Allegra.

Duilia: Whatever your name is, if you don't go away immediately, I will definitely make you sad!

Allegra: What I had to say, I said it, so now I can get away from here. *(And she goes to the door. When she reaches the front she literally slams her face into it. After touching it in various parts to understand where the handle is, she opens it. As soon as she walk through the door ...)* Don't cry too much, otherwise the tears could end! *(Sarcastically)*

Duilia: She is a real jackal. *(Then she slams the door on her face)*

Federica: I too just have to say goodbye. If you still need my advice, don't hesitate to call me. *(Holding out his business card for the umpteenth time)* I and my penal code will always be at your disposal!

Duilia: I'll keep this. See you later!

Duilia goes to the opposite door and calls up Electra and Vitaliano.

Duilia: Electra, Vitaliano, you can come back.

Vitaliano: But what did she want?

Electra: She really had an ugly face.

Duilia: She was from insurance. However, for now I have sent her back to the sender.

Electra: Good, you did really well! One should not bother person who has just buried her husband for bureaucratic nonsense.

Vitaliano: *(Screaming)* Okay, all right.

Electra: Why are you screaming? We are not deaf!

Vitaliano: I wasn't screaming, I just exulted with joy, because she made herself respected.

Electra: Sometimes I wonder what kind of friends Arduino chose.

Duilia: I often ask myself this too!

Vitaliano: What a fuss for a liberating outburst! I need to do it because I can't cry. From now on, when I feel like it, I scream, at least I release the tension and the heartache.

Electra: *(Looking at him a little perplexed)* Well! *(Then, turning to Duilia)* You come with me, let's go pack our bags.

Vitaliano: This is a very good idea.

Electra takes her sister by the arm and both leave the scene.

Vitaliano: *(He leans over the floor and, after moving the sofa slightly, calls Arduino in a choked voice)* Arduino, Arduinooooo, can you hear me?

Arduino: *(From under the sofa)* Yes, what happened? I heard you shouted that everything was fine.

Vitaliano: It was to warn you that everything was fine. You know, the carabinieri and the insurer came.

Arduino: What the hell did they want?

Vitaliano: I don't know the insurer what she wanted because she asked to speak with Duilia face-to-face, while the carabinieri want to do a comparative examination with your teeth.

Arduino: And how do they intend to do it?

Vitaliano: Going to your dentist. Duilia has given him his name and address and they will have gone to request your x-rays.

Arduino: Damn! Then my time is running out! They will soon discover that the body found in the car is not mine. *(Angry)* Luckily it was all right! Quick, let's do something!

Vitaliano: And what can we do?

Arduino: More what we can do, what you can do. I, you know, have to stay hidden.

Vitaliano: If you don't tell me how to fix this, nothing comes to mind.

Arduino: Run to the dentist and try to bribe him, make sure that he makes my x-rays disappear.

Vitaliano: Find another idea, by now the carabinieri will already be there.

Arduino: I don't have another idea! Come on, help me, come up with something!

Vitaliano: I could burn the carabinieri station, what do you think? So all the evidence would be destroyed.

Arduino: If you don't have a plan B, we're in real trouble!

Vitaliano: I live on the third floor, I don't have that one.

Arduino: If only I could get out of here, I'd kick your ass, but I can't do it!

Vitaliano: It doesn't seem like a bad idea to me.

Arduino: Burning an entire Carabinieri station to destroy a X-ray plate it seems like a good idea to you? Don't you think that arriving with cans of petrol could make them at least a little suspicious?

Vitaliano: *(Reflecting)* Indeed! But I don't know any other way.

Arduino: In light of the facts, I have to bring forward my escape. I was thinking of doing it in a few days, because I had to prepare documents at this point, since they are ready, I am going away today.

Vitaliano: What documents are you referring to? To the fake passport and plane ticket?

Arduino: No those were ready.

Vitaliano: So which ones?

Arduino: *(After passing him some sheets)* To these. Do you see these payslips? You have to deliver them down to the harbor to a black boy named Ndao, you will find him at pier 17, he is always stationed there. Would you like to do me this last favor?

Vitaliano: Sure! But out of curiosity: all your business is concentrated at the port? Every time you send me over there.

Arduino: It's just a coincidence. Then what does it matter to you where I take care of my business? Just do it!

Vitaliano: Okay, don't get mad!

Electra and Duilia enter the scene with suitcases and see Vitaliano bent over to look under the sofa.

Electra: You've lost something?

Hearing the voice Vitaliano jumps and instinctively moves the sofa back to its original position.

Vitaliano: I ? No. What should I have lost?

Electra: The intelligence, certainly not!

Duilia: Come on, leave him alone, there is no remedy for that!

Vitaliano: I thought I had lost the lighter.

Duilia: But if I've never seen a cigarette in your hand!

Vitaliano: I don't light those!

Electra: *(Addressing her sister)* Do you understand him? *(Then, turning to him)* So what else you light?

Vitaliano: I wanted to say that to release the tension these days I started smoking cigar.

Duilia: Here, these are the keys, water the plants and do no damage to the house, I recommend!

Vitaliano: You can sleep untroubled, I have a green thumb.

Electra: *(Speaking to her sister)* So much thumb and little brain!

Vitaliano: Did you say something?

Electra: Only you have to be careful not to flood everything.

Duilia: We'll talk in a few days on the phone, I have your number.

Vitaliano: But I don't have yours, if you leave it to me, you know, just in case ...

Duilia: *(After taking pen and paper, she write what requested)* Here, but don't lose it!

Vitaliano: Don't worry, it won't happen.

The two women leave the scene.

Vitaliano: *(After moving the sofa again)* Arduino, Arduinooooo.

Arduino: Now what else is there?

Vitaliano: Go ahead, you can go out, nobody is there anymore.

Arduino: *(Finally comes out of his hiding place)* I couldn't stand being in that basement anymore!

Vitaliano: Now you are free.

Arduino: I have planned everything down to the smallest detail and I believe that I will have no problems reaching the destination. Once I arrive, I will contact you and give you instructions on how to get the money delivered to me.

Vitaliano: I will eagerly await your instructions. But tell me one thing: can I come and see you?

Arduino: Of course not! Knowing that you are my best friend, they will keep an eye on you and, if you join me, they will catch me immediately. You will have to wait for the waters to calm down and then slowly you will have to tell Duilia everything and only then she will join me too.

Vitaliano: *(Sad)* Does this mean that we won't meet again?

Arduino: Unfortunately not.

Vitaliano: It is very sad for me to hear you say it.

Arduino: Dear Vitaliano, this is life! However, as the saying goes: never say never!

Vitaliano: I am sure you will forget me quickly.

Arduino: Someone like you is not easily forgotten!

Vitaliano: Do I have to take it as a compliment or as ..?

Arduino: As a compliment, how else would you like to take it? Come on, let me give you a hug my friend!

Vitaliano: *(Returning the gesture)* It is nice to think that, although far away, I have a true friend.

Arduino: Now don't be so melodramatic, I won't be the only one!

Vitaliano: But with no one else will I ever be able to share the experiences I have had with you!

Arduino: I believe it. Anyone else would have already strangled you!

Vitaliano: Stop making fun of me, I know you love me after all!

Arduino: If you know, why do you want to hear it?

Vitaliano: Because I want to impress this moment on my memory. So I can keep it forever.

Arduino: Okay, enough! Otherwise I will be moved and it's not in my style. Now it's time for the greetings, are you ready?

Vitaliano: *(Resigned)* Ready.

Arduino: Goodbye My friend! *(He takes the bags and exits using the back door. Before leaving he turns one last time and raises his hand)*

Vitaliano: *(As he sees his friend come out)* Goodbye, have a good trip! *(Left alone on stage he sits rueful)*

After a few minutes of silence she hears the main door open and sees Duilia enter.

Duilia: I forgot the hair straightener.

Vitaliano: Is Electra out there waiting?

Duilia: No, she stayed in the car waiting, I'm alone.

Vitaliano: Our Arduino has already left, he speeded things up.

At that point Duilia runs into Vitaliano's arms and kisses him lovingly.

Duilia: Finally alone!

Vitaliano: I could no longer stay away from you!

Duilia: If you say so I stay.

Vitaliano: It's better to wait for the waters calm down.

Duilia: We were good! Even my sister believes that I think you're a real jerk.

Vitaliano: If so, Arduino too.

Duilia: Rather, tell me about the insurance policy. I didn't know anything about it.

Vitaliano: I made that policy, pretending to be him and falsifying his signature. You know it's not a problem for me, I've been a counterfeiter for years!

Duilia: It was also a brilliant idea to replace Arduino's x-rays with those of the dead man at the dental office. In this way, the Carabinieri will only be able to find that they are identical.

Vitaliano: And it didn't cost us much, with a little we corrupted the dentist.

Duilia: Even the stunt to report him to the tax authorities anonymously was spot on.

Vitaliano: I tried to speed up the time to get together earlier than expected. Poor Arduino! He often wondered why fiscal police had come to him so early. He had no idea that I had been the spy.

Duilia: Knowing him, you knew he wouldn't passively suffer that situation. As you knew, when you suggested him to stage his death, he would seized the opportunity to get out of trouble and deliver the money to you, not being able to take it with him.

The doorbell rings.

Duilia: Go see who it is.

Vitaliano: *(After looking through the peephole)* He's a friend of mine.

Ndao enters the scene.

Ndao: Hi Poison! I didn't think I'd find you here.

Vitaliano: Nor did I believe that you would spare me the trouble of bringing you these. As you well know, they are from Arduino.

Ndao: By the way, where is he? I should ask him for more payslips.

Vitaliano: I don't think he can do them to you anymore. *(Then, changing tone and becoming threatening)* But I hope for you that you will recover my fifty thousand within the month.

Ndao: *(Afraid)* Sure Poison, don't worry!

Vitaliano: Now beat it!

Ndao: All right, bye!

Vitaliano: *(Resuming the conversation with Duilia)* Poor Arduino! He was terrified when I sent two of my henchmen to ask him for money, while I was laughing at the other end of the phone.

Duilia: You are a true genius!

Vitaliano: But you took a big risk.

Duilia: When?

Vitaliano: When I asked for your phone number and you wrote “ see you soon, honey”.

Duilia: I could not resist anymore, I had to tell you.

Vitaliano: Luckily your sister was distracted.

Duilia: She was too busy mocking you. Other than that, satisfy my curiosity: but if Arduino hadn't paid, what would you have done?

Vitaliano: Friendships are one thing, business is another. I certainly couldn't have shown mercy or weakness in front of my henchmen.

Duilia: So did you know he could pay somehow?

Vitaliano: Sure! Someone like him never runs out of money. However, if I staged all this farce it was because of the sense of friendship that I had towards him, otherwise at the end of the term, if he hadn't paid, I would have killed him, instead I tried to force him to do it.

Duilia: But, love, sorry if I tell you, choosing the only tree on that huge avenue where to crash the car, it doesn't seem to me to have been such a brilliant idea!

Vitaliano: I wanted Arduino to think that I had committed yet another stupid thing. On the other hand, I had to be a fool.

Duilia: We have not yet addressed the last topic.

Vitaliano: Tell me love, which one?

Duilia: When he asks you for his money, will you send it to him or not?

Vitaliano: *(Laughing)* Of course yes! Otherwise what friend would I be? I took his wife away from him, I recovered all the money he owed me, plus we will pocket the insurance money, why shouldn't I give him his? After all, I too have a code of honor!

Duilia: It is for this reason that I fell in love with you, too bad, because after all Arduino was really good!

Vitaliano: Yes, it's true, he was good, but he never considered that in life, sooner or later, you always find one better than you.

THE END