

# Sicilian Limes

[*Lumie di Sicilia*]

By Luigi Pirandello

[1910]

[translated by Isaac Goldberg  
from *Plays of the Italian Theatre*  
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## PERSONS

- MICUCCIO BONAVINO, musician in a country band.
- MARTA MARNIS, mother of
- SINA MARNIS, singer.
- FERDINANDO, waiter.
- DORINA, maid.
- GUESTS.
- WAITERS.

*TIME:*The present. *PLACE:* A city in Northern Italy.

*SCENE:* A hallway, furnished simply with a small table and several chairs. The corner to the left of the actors is hidden from view by a curtain. There are doors at the right and the left. At the rear, the main door, of glass, is open and leads to a dark room across which may be seen a decorated door, likewise of glass, which affords a view of a splendidly illuminated salon. The view includes a table, sumptuously spread.

*NIGHT.* The hallway is in darkness. Some one is snoring behind the curtain.

Shortly after the rise of the stage curtain Ferdinando enters through the door at the right with a light in his hand. He is in shirt sleeves, but he has only to put on his dress-coat and he will be ready to serve at the table. He is followed by Micuccio Bonavino, evidently just from the country, with his overcoat collar raised to his ears, a grimy bag in one hand and in the other an old valise and the case of a musical instrument. He is so cold and so exhausted that he can barely manage his burden. No sooner has the light been brought in than the snoring behind the curtain ceases.

**Dorina.** [*From within.*] Who is it?

**Ferdinando.** [*Placing the light upon the little table.*] Hey, Dorina! Get up! Can't you see that we have Signor Bonvicino here?

**Micuccio.** [*Shaking his head so as to get rid of a drop at the tip of his nose.*] My name's Bonavino.

**Ferdinando.** Bonavino, Bonavino.

**Dorina.** [*Yawning behind the curtain.*] And who's he?

**Ferdinando.** A relation of madame's. [*To Micuccio.*] And just how may you be related to madame, please? Cousin, maybe?

**Micuccio.** [*Embarrassed, hesitant* ] Well, really, there's no relationship. I am . . . my name's Micuccio Bonavino. You know that.

**Dorina.** [*Her curiosity roused, she steps from behind the curtain, still half asleep.*] A relative of madame's?

**Ferdinando.** [*Provoked.*] Can't you hear? [*To Micuccio.*] Countryman of hers? Then why did you ask me whether *zia* Marta was here? [*To Dorina.*] Understand? I took him for a relative, a nephew. I can't receive you, my dear fellow.

**Micuccio.** What? Can't receive me? Why, I've come all the way from the country, on purpose!

**Ferdinando.** On purpose? What for?

**Micuccio.** To find her!

**Ferdinando.** She's not here. I told you she can't be found in at this hour.

**Micuccio.** And if the train just came in, what can I do about it? I've been traveling for two days.

**Dorina.** [*Eyeing him from head to toe.*] And you look it!

**Micuccio.** I do, eh? Very much? How do I look?

**Dorina.** Ugly, my dear fellow. No offense.

**Ferdinando.** I can't receive you. Call again tomorrow and you'll find her. The madame is at the theatre now.

**Micuccio.** What do you mean, call again? Must I go? Where? I don't know where to go in this town, at night. I'm a stranger. If she isn't here, I'll wait for her. Really now. Can't I wait for her here?

**Ferdinando.** I say No! Without her permission.

**Micuccio.** What permission! You don't know me.

**Ferdinando.** That's just it. Because I don't know you, I'm not going to get a bawling-out on account of you!

**Micuccio.** [*Smiting with a confident air and with his finger making a negative sign.*] Rest easy.

**Dorina.** [*To Ferdinando, ironically.*] Indeed, she'll be just in the proper mood to attend to him this evening. [*To Micuccio.*] Can't you see? [*She points to the illuminated salon in the rear.*] There's a party on tonight!

**Micuccio.** So? What party?

**Dorina.** An evening in [*she yawns*] her honor.

**Ferdinando..** And we'll get through, God willing, by daybreak!

**Micuccio.** All right, no matter. I'm sure that the moment Teresina sees me. . .

**Ferdinando..** [*To Dorina.*] Understand? He calls her Teresina, he does. Plain Teresina. He asked me whether "Teresina, the singer" was in.

**Micuccio.** Well, what of it? Isn't she a singer? That's what they call it. Are you trying to teach me?

**Dorina.** Then you really know her well?

**Micuccio.** Well? Why, we grew up together!

**Ferdinando..** [*To Dorina.*] What shall we do?

**Dorina.** Let him wait.

**Micuccio.** [*Piqued.*] Of course I'll wait. What do you mean? I came on purpose to . . .

**Ferdinando..** Take a seat there. I wash my hands of it. I must get things ready. [*He leaves in the direction of the salon at the rear.*]

**Micuccio.** This is fine, indeed. As if I were . . . Perhaps because they see me in this condition . . . If I were to tell Teresina when she returns from the theatre. [*He is seized by a doubt and looks about him.*] Whose house is this?

**Dorina.** [*Eyeing him and poking fun at him.*] Ours -- as long as we stay.

**Micuccio.** So, then, things are going well. [*He inspects the place anew, staring into the salon.*] Is it a large house?

**Dorina.** So so.

**Micuccio.** And that's a salon?

**Dorina.** A reception hall. Tonight there's a banquet there.

**Micuccio.** Ah! What a spread! What bright lights!

**Dorina.** Beautiful, isn't it?

**Micuccio.** [*Rubbing his hands contentedly.*] Then it's true!

**Dorina.** What?

**Micuccio.** Eh, it's easily seen, they're well. . .

**Dorina.** In good health?

**Micuccio.** No, I mean well off. [*He rubs his thumb against his forefinger, in a manner to suggest the counting of money.*]

**Dorina.** Why, do you know who Sina Marnis is?

**Micuccio.** Sina? Ah, yes, yes, now I understand. Zia Marta wrote me about it. Teresina. Certainly. Tere-sina: Sina . . .

**Dorina.** But wait a moment. Now that I think of it. You [*She calls Ferdinando from the salon.*] Do you know who he is? The fellow that she's always writing to, the mother . . .

**Micuccio.** She can't write, the poor little thing . . .

**Dorina.** Yes, yes. Bonavino. But . . . Domenico. Your name's Domenico, isn't it?

**Micuccio.** Domenico or Micuccio. It's the same thing. We call it Micuccio where I come from.

**Dorina.** You're the fellow that was so sick, aren't you? Recently . . .

**Micuccio.** Terribly, yes. At death's door. Dead. Practically dead.

**Dorina.** And Signora Marta sent you a money order, didn't she? We went to the post-office together.

**Micuccio.** A money order. A money order. And that's what I've come for! I have it here -- the money.

**Dorina.** Are you returning it to her?

**Micuccio.** [*Disturbed.*] Money -- nothing! It's not to be mentioned. But first . . . Will they be much longer in coming?

**Dorina.** [*Looks at the clock.*] Oh, about . . . Sometime tonight, I imagine . . .

**Ferdinando.** [*Passing through the hallway, from the door at the left, carrying kitchen utensils and shouting applause.*] Bravo! Bravo! Bis! Bis! Bis!

**Micuccio.** [*Smiling.*] A great voice, eh?

**Ferdinando.** [*Turning back.*] I should say so. A voice . . .

**Micuccio.** [*Rubbing his palms.*] I can take the credit for that! It's my work!

**Dorina.** Her voice?

**Micuccio.** I discovered it!

**Dorina.** What, you? [*To Ferdinando.*] Do you hear? He discovered her voice.

**Micuccio.** I'm a musician, I am.

**Ferdinando..** Ah! A musician? Bravo! And what do you play? The trumpet?

**Micuccio.** [*At first, in all seriousness, makes a negative sign with his finger; then*] Who said trumpet? The piccolo. I belong to the band, I do. I belong to our communal band up at my place.

**Dorina.** And what's the name of your place? Wait; I'll recall it.

**Micuccio.** Palma Monetchiaro. What else should it be named?

**Ferdinando..** And it was really you who discovered her voice?

**Dorina.** Come now, my boy. Tell us how you did it, sonny! Wait and listen to this, Ferdinando.

**Micuccio.** [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] How I did it? She used to sing . . .

**Dorina.** And at once, you being a musician . . . ch?

**Micuccio.** No . . . not at once; on the other hand . . .

**Ferdinando..** It took you some time?

**Micuccio.** She always used to be singing . . . sometimes out of pique. . .

**Dorina.** Really?

**Micuccio.** And then again, to . . . to get certain thoughts out of her mind . . . because . . .

**Ferdinando..** Because what?

**Micuccio.** Oh, certain unpleasant things . . . disappointments, poor little girl . . . in those days. Her father had died. . . I, -- yes, I helped her out a bit . . . her and her mother, *zia* Marta, . . . But my mother was against it . . . and . . . in short . . .

**Dorina.** You were fond of her, then?

**Micuccio.** I? Of Teresina? You make me laugh! My mother insisted on my giving her up because she didn't have anything, and had lost her father . . . while I, come good or evil, had my position in the band. . .

**Ferdinando..** So . . . You're not related at all, then. Lovers, maybe?

**Micuccio.** My parents were against it! And that's why Teresina sang out of spite. . .

**Dorina.** Ah! Just listen to that. . . And you?

**Micuccio.** It was heaven! I can truly say: an inspiration from heaven! Nobody had ever noticed it -- not even I. All of a sudden . . . one morning . . .

**Ferdinando..** There's luck for you!

**Micuccio.** I'll never forget it. . . It was a morning in April. She was at the window, singing. . . Up in the garret, beneath the roof!

**Ferdinando..** Understand?

**Dorina.** Hush!

**Micuccio.** What's wrong about that? The humblest of folk can have the greatest of gifts.

**Dorina.** Of course they can! As you were saying? She was at the window singing. . .

**Micuccio.** I had heard her sing that little air of ours surely a hundred thousand times.

**Dorina.** Little air?

**Micuccio.** Yes. "All things in this world below." That's the name of it.

**Ferdinando..** Eh! All things in this world below, . .

**Micuccio.** [*Reciting the words.*]

All things in this world below,  
Live their day and then depart;  
But this thorn that pricks my heart,  
Darling mine, will never go.

And what a melody! Divine, impassioned. . . Enough of that. I had never paid any attention to it. But that morning. . . It was as if I were in paradise! An angel, it seemed that an angel was singing! That day, after dinner, ever so quietly, without letting her or her mother know a thing about it, I took up into the garret the leader of our band, who's a friend of mine, uh, a very close friend, for that matter: Saro Malvati, such a kind-hearted chap, the poor fellow, . . He hears her, he's a clever boy, a great leader, so they all say at Palma, . . And he says, "Why, this is a God-given voice!" Imagine our joy! I hired a piano, and before it was got up into that attic. . . Well. Then I bought the music, and right away the leader began to give her lessons. . . Just like that, satisfied with whatever they could give him from time to time. What was I? Same as I am today; a poor, humble fellow, . . The piano cost money, the music cost money, and then Teresina had to eat decent food. . .

**Ferdinando..** Eh, of course.

**Dorina.** So that she's had the strength to sing. . .

**Micuccio.** Meat, every day! I can take the credit for that!

**Ferdinando..** The deuce you say!

**Dorina.** And so?

**Micuccio.** And so she began to learn. You could see it all from the very beginning, . . . It was written above, in heaven, you might say. . . . And it was heard throughout the whole country, that great voice of hers. . . . The people would come from all around, and stand beneath the window in the street, to hear her. . . . And what spirit! She burned, she really was afire. . . . And when she would finish singing, she'd grasp me by the arm, like this [*he seizes Ferdinando.*] and would shake me. . . . Just like a madwoman. . . . For she already foresaw. She knew that fame was hers. . . . The leader told us so. And she didn't know how to show me her gratefulness. *Zia* Marta, on the other hand, poor woman that she was . . . .

**Dorina.** Was against her career?

**Micuccio.** I wouldn't say that she was against it -- she didn't believe it, that was it. The poor old lady had had so many hard knocks in her life that she didn't want Teresina to take it into her head to rise above the position to which she had been so long resigned. She was, in plain words, afraid. And then she knew what it cost me, and that my parents. . . . But I broke with them all, with my father, with my mother, when a certain teacher came from outside. . . . He used to give concerts. . . . A. . . . I can't remember his name now -- but he had a fine reputation. . . . When this master heard Teresina and said that it would be a sin, a real sin not to have her continue her studies in a city, in a great conservatory . . . . I broke with them all. I sold the farm that had been left to me by an uncle of mine, a priest, and sent Teresina to Naples.

**Ferdinando.** You?

**Micuccio.** Yes, I. -- I.

**Dorina.** [*To Ferdinando.*] At his expense, don't you understand?

**Micuccio.** I kept her there for four years, studying. I haven't seen her since then.

**Dorina.** Never?

**Micuccio.** Never. Because . . . . because she began to sing in the theatres, you see, here and there. . . . She'd fly from Naples to Rome, from Rome to Milan, then to Spain, then to Russia, then back here again, . . . .

**Ferdinando.** Creating a furore everywhere!

**Micuccio.** Eh, I know all about it! I've got them all here, in the valise, all the papers. . . . And in here [*he removed from his inside coat pocket a bundle of letters.*] I have all the letters, hers and her mother's. . . . Here you are: these are her words when she sent me the money, that time I was on the point of death: "Dear Micuccio, I haven't time to write to you. I confirm everything that mamma has said. Get better at once, become your old self again, and wish me well. Teresina."

**Ferdinando.** And did she send you much?

**Dorina.** A thousand lire -- wasn't it?

**Micuccio.** That was it. A thousand.

**Ferdinando.** And that farm of yours, if I may ask -- that you sold. How much was it worth?

**Micuccio.** How much should it be worth? Not much . . . A mere strip of land. . .

**Ferdinando.** [*Winking to Dorina.*] Ah!

**Micuccio.** But I have the money right here, I have. I don't want anything at all. What little I've done, I've done for her sake. We had agreed to wait two, three years, so as to let her make a place for her- self. . . Zia Marta kept writing that to me all the time in her letters. I speak the plain truth: I wasn't waiting for the money. So many years had passed I could wait a while longer, . . . But seeing that Teresina has sent it to me, it's a sign she has enough and to spare; she's made a place for herself. . .

**Ferdinando.** . I should say! And what a place, my dear sir!

**Micuccio.** Then it's time . . .

**Dorina.** To marry?

**Micuccio.** I am here.

**Ferdinando.** Have you come to marry Sina Marnis?

**Dorina.** Hush! That's their agreement! Can't you understand anything? Certainly! To marry her!

**Micuccio.** I'm not saying anything. I simply say: I'm here. I've abandoned everything and everybody yonder in the country: family, band, everything. I went to law against my parents on account of those thousand lire, which came unknown to me, at the time I was more dead than alive. I had to tear it out of my mother's hands, for she wanted to keep it. Ah, no sirree -- it isn't the money! Micuccio Bonavino, money? -- Not at all! Wherever I may happen to be, even at the end of the world, I won't starve. I have my art. I have my piccolo, and . . .

**Dorina.** You have? Did you bring along your piccolo, too?

**Micuccio.** Sure I did! We're as one person, my piccolo and I. . .

**Ferdinando.** She sings and he plays. Understand?

**Micuccio.** Don't you think I can play in the orchestra?

**Ferdinando.** Certainly! Why not?

**Dorina.** And, I'll bet you play well!

**Micuccio.** So so; I've been playing for ten years. . .

**Ferdinando.** Would you mind letting us hear something? [*About to take the instrument case.*]

**Dorina.** Yes! Bravo, bravo! Let's hear something!

**Micuccio.** Oh, no! What would you want, at this hour. . .

**Dorina.** Anything at all! Please, now!

**Ferdinando.** Some little air. . .

**Micuccio.** Oh, no. . . Really! . . .

**Ferdinando.** Don't make us coax you! [*He opens the case and removes the instrument.*] Here you are!

**Dorina.** Come, now. Let's hear something. . .

**Micuccio.** But, really, it's impossible. . . Like this -- alone. . .

**Dorina.** No matter! Come on. Make a try!

**Ferdinando.** If you don't, I'll play the thing!

**Micuccio.** For me, if you wish. . . Shall I play for you the air that Teresina sang that day, up in the garret?

**Ferdinando and Dorina.** Yes, yes! Bravo! Bravo!

**Ferdinando.** "All things in this world below"?

**Micuccio.** All things in this world below. [*Micuccio sits down and begins to play in all seriousness. Ferdinando and Dorina do their best to keep from bursting into laughter. The other waiter, in dress coat, comes in to listen, followed by the cook and the scullion. Ferdinando and Dorina caution them by signs to listen quietly and earnestly. Micuccio's playing is suddenly interrupted by a loud ringing of the bell.*]

**Ferdinando.** Oh! Here's madame!

**Dorina.** [*To the other waiters.*] Be off, now. Open the door. [*To the cook and the scullion.*] And you, clear out! She said she wanted to have dinner served as soon as she came back. [*The other waiter, the cook and the scullion leave.*]

**Ferdinando.** My dress coat. . . Where did I put it?

**Dorina.** There! [*She points to behind the hangings and leaves in haste.*]

[*Micuccio arises, his instrument in his hand, abashed. Ferdinando finds his coat, puts it on hurriedly, then, seeing that Micuccio is about to follow Dorina, stops him rudely.*]

**Ferdinando.** You stay here! I must first let madame know. [*Ferdinando leaves. Micuccio is left in dejection, confused, oppressed by an uneasy presentiment.*]

**Marta's voice.** [*From within.*] In there, Dorina! In the drawing room! [*Ferdinando, Dorina and the other waiter enter from the door at the right and cross the stage toward the salon in the background, carrying magnificent baskets of flowers, wreaths, and so on. Micuccio sticks his head forward to get a look into the salon and catches sight of a large number of gentlemen, all in*]

*evening dress, conversing confusedly. Dorina returns in a great hurry, hastening to the door at the right.]*

**Micuccio.** *[Touching her arm.]* Who are they?

**Dorina.** *[Without stopping.]* The guests! *[Exit.]*

*[Micuccio stares again. His vision becomes clouded. His stupefaction and his commotion are so great that he himself does not realize that his eyes are moist with tears. He closes them, pulls himself together, as if to resist the torture inflicted upon him by a shrill outburst of laughter. It is Sina Marnis, in the salon. Dorina returns with two more baskets of flowers.]*

**Dorina.** *[Without stopping, hastening toward the salon.]* What are you crying about?

**Micuccio.** I? . . . No. . . All those people . . . *[Enter zia Marta from the door at the right. The poor old lady is oppressed by a hat and a costly, splendid velvet cloak. As soon as she sees Micuccio she utters a cry that is at once suppressed.]*

**Marta.** What! Micuccio, you here?

**Micuccio.** *[Uncovering his face and staring at her almost in fear.]* Zia Marta! Good Lord, . . . Like this? You?

**Marta.** Why, what's wrong with me?

**Micuccio.** With a hat? You!

**Marta.** Ah, . . . *[Shakes her head and raises her hand. Then, disturbed.]* But how on earth did you come? Without a word of warning! How did it happen?

**Micuccio.** I. . .I came. . .

**Marta.** And this evening, of all others! Oh, heavens, . . . Wait. . . What shall I do? What shall I do? Do you see how many people we have here, my son? Tonight is the party in honor of Teresina. . .

**Micuccio.** I know.

**Marta.** Her special evening, understand? Wait. . . Just wait here a moment. . .

**Micuccio.** If you, if you think that it would be best for me to go. . .

**Marta.** No. Wait a moment, I say. . . *[She goes off toward the salon.]*

**Micuccio.** I wouldn't know where to go. . . In this strange city. . .

*[Zia Marta returns, and signals him with her gloved hand to wait. She enters the salon and suddenly there is a deep silence. There are heard clearly these words of Sina Marnis: "A moment, my friends!" Micuccio again hides his face in his hands. But Sina does not come. Instead, zia Marta enters shortly afterward, without her hat, without her gloves, without her cloak, now less burdened.]*

**Marta.** Here I am. . . Here I am. . .

**Micuccio.** And . . . and Teresina?

**Marta.** I've told her, . . I've brought her the news. . . As soon as . . . as soon as she can get a moment, she'll come. . . In the meantime we'll stay here a little while, eh? Are you satisfied?

**Micuccio.** As far as I'm concerned, . .

**Marta.** I'll keep you company. . .

**Micuccio.** Oh, no, . . . if . . . if you'd rather . . . that is, if you're needed there. . .

**Marta.** . . . Not at all. . . They're having supper now, see? Admirers of hers. . . The impresario, . . Her career, understand? We two will stay here. Dorina will prepare this little table for us right away, and . . . and we'll have supper together, just you and I, here -- eh? What do you say? We two, all alone -- eh? We'll recall the good old times. . . [*Dorina returns through the door at the left with a tablecloth and other articles of the table service.*]

**Marta.** Come on, Dorina, . . Lively, now. . . For me and for this dear boy of mine. My dear Micuccio! I can't believe that we're together again.

**Dorina.** Here. In the meantime, please be seated.

**Marta.** [*Sitting down.*] Yes, yes. . . Here, like this, apart from the others, we two alone, . . In there, you understand, so many people. . . She, poor thing, can't very well leave them. . . Her career, . . What else can she do? Have you seen the papers? Wonderful happenings, my boy! And as for me, I'm all in a whirl, . . It seems impossible that I should be sitting here alone with you tonight. . . [*She rubs her hands and smiles, gazing at him through tender eyes.*]

**Micuccio.** [*In a pensive, anguished voice.*] And, she'll come? She told you she'd come? I mean . . . just to get a look at her, at least. . .

**Marta.** Of course she'll come! As soon as she can find a moment to spare. Didn't I tell you so? Why, just imagine what pleasure it would be for her to be here with us, with you, after such a long time, . . How many years is it? So many, so many. . . Ah, my dear boy, it seems an eternity to me. . . How many things I've been through, things that . . . that hardly seem true when I think of them, . . Who could have imagined, when . . . when we were yonder in Palma when you used to come up into our garret, with its swallows' nests in the rafters, remember? They used to fly all over the house, and my beautiful pots of basil on the window-sill, . . And donna Annuzza, donna Annuzza? Our old neighbor?

**Micuccio.** Eh, . . [*Makes the sign of benediction with two fingers, to signify, Dead!*]

**Marta.** Dead? Yes, I imagined so. . . She was a pretty old lady even then. . . Older than I. . . Poor donna Annuzza, with her clove of garlic, . . Do you remember? She'd always come with that pretext, a clove of garlic. Just when we were about to send her down a bite, and . . . The poor old lady! And who knows how many more have passed on eh? at Palma, . . Ah! At least they rest yonder, in their last sleep, in our churchyard, with their beloved ones and relatives, . . While I. . . Who knows where I'll leave these bones of mine? Enough of that. . . Away with such thoughts!

*[Dorina enters with the first course and stands beside Micuccio, waiting for him to help himself.]*  
Ah, here's Dorina. . .

**Micuccio.** *[Looks at Dorina, then at zia Marta, confused, perplexed; he raises his hand to help himself, sees that they are grimy from the journey and lowers them, more confused than ever.]*

**Marta.** Here, over here, Dorina! I'll serve him, . . . Leave it to me. . . *[Does so.]* There. . . That's fine, isn't it?

**Micuccio.** Oh, yes . . . Thanks . . .

**Marta.** *[Who has served herself.]* Here you are . . .

**Micuccio.** *[Winking, and with his closed fist against his cheek making a gesture of ecstatic approval.]* Uhm . . . Good . . . Good stuff.

**Marta.** A special honor-evening . . . Understand? To it, now! Let's eat! But first . . . *[She makes the sign of the cross.]* Here I can do it, in your company.

**Micuccio.** *[Likewise makes the sign of the cross.]*

**Marta.** Bravo, my boy! You, too . . . Bravo, my Micuccio, the same as ever, poor fellow! Believe me . . . When I have to eat in there . . . without being able to cross myself . . . it seems to me that the food can't go down . . . Eat, eat!

**Micuccio.** Eh, I'm good and hungry, I am! I . . . I haven't eaten for two days.

**Marta.** What do you mean? On the trip?

**Micuccio.** I took plenty to eat along with me . . . I have it there, in the valise. But . . .

**Marta.** But what?

**Micuccio.** I . . . I was ashamed . . . It . . . it seemed so little . . .

**Marta.** Oh, how silly! . . . Come, now. . . Eat, my poor Micuccio, . . . You certainly must be famished! Two days . . . And drink . . . here, drink . . . *[She pours some liquor for him.]*

**Micuccio.** Thanks . . . Yes, I'll have some . . . *[From time to time, as the two waiters enter the salon in the background or leave it with the courses, opening the door, there comes from inside a wave of confused words rind outbursts of laughter. Micuccio raises his head from his plate, disturbed, and looks into the sorrowful affectionate eyes of zia Marta, as if to read in them an explanation of it all.]* They're laughing.

**Marta.** Yes . . . Drink . . . Drink . . . Ah, that good old wine of ours, Micuccio. If you only knew how how I long for it! The wine Michela used to make, Michela, who lived underneath us . . . What's become of Michela, my son?

**Micuccio.** Michela? Oh, she's fine. She's fine.

**Marta.** And her daughter Luzza?

**Micuccio.** She's married . . . Has two children already. . .

**Marta.** Is that so? Really? She'd always come up to us, remember? Such a happy nature, too! Oh, Luzza. And to think of it . . . Just to think of it . . . Married . . . And whom did she marry?

**Micuccio.** Toto Licasi, the fellow that worked in the customs house. Remember him?

**Marta.** Him? Fine . . . And donna Mariangela is a grandmother! A grandmother already . . . Fortunate woman! Two children, did you say?

**Micuccio.** Two . . . yes . . . [*He is disturbed by another roar of merriment from the salon.*]

**Marta.** Aren't you drinking?

**Micuccio.** Yes . . . Right away . . .

**Marta.** Don't mind them . . . They're laughing, naturally . . . There's so many of them there . . . My dear boy, that's life. What can a person do? Her career . . . It's the impresario . . .

**Dorina.** [*Reappears with another course.*]

**Marta.** Here, Dorina . . . Let me have your plate, Micuccio . . . You'll like this . . . [*Serving.*] Tell me how much you want . . .

**Micuccio.** As you please. . .

**Marta.** [*As above.*] Here you are. [*Serves herself. Dorina leaves.*]

**Micuccio.** How well you've learned! You make my eyes bulge with astonishment!

**Marta.** I had to, my boy.

**Micuccio.** When I saw you come in with that velvet cloak on your back . . . and that hat on your head . . .

**Marta.** Necessity, my son!

**Micuccio.** I understand . . . eh! You must keep up appearances! But if they ever saw you dressed like that in Palma, zia Marta . . . --, I

**Marta.** [*Hiding her face in her hands.*] Oh, good heavens, don't mention it! Believe me . . . whenever I think of it . . . shame . . . shame overwhelms me! . . . I look at myself. I say, "Is this really I, so bedizened?" . . . And it seems that it's all a make-believe . . . as in the carnival season . . . But what's a person to do? Necessity, my son!

**Micuccio.** Of course . . . certainly . . . once you get into that life . . . But, she's really 'way up in the world, hey? . . . You can see that -- really 'way up? . . . They . . . they pay her well, eh?

**Marta.** Oh, yes . . . Very well, . . .

**Micuccio.** How much per performance?

**Marta.** It depends. According to the seasons and the theatres, you see. . . But let me tell you, my boy, it costs money. Ah, how much it costs, this life we lead, . . . It takes all the money we can get! If you only knew the enormous expenses! It all goes out as fast as it comes in, . . . Clothes, jewels, expenses of every sort. . . [*A loud outburst of voices in the salon at the rear cuts her short.*]

**Voices.** Where? Where? Where? We want to know! Where?

**Sina's voice.** A moment! I tell you, only a moment!

**Marta.** There! That's she! . . . Here she comes. . .

**Sina.** [*She comes hastening in, rustling with silk, sparkling with gems, her shoulders, bosom and arms bare. It seems as if the hallway has suddenly been flooded with light.*]

**Micuccio.** [*Who had just stretched his hand out toward the wine glass, sits transfixed, his face flaming, his eyes distended, his mouth agape, dazzled and stupefied, as if in the presence of a vision. He stammers.*] Teresina, . . .

**Sina.** Micuccio? Where are you? Ah, there he is. . . Oh, how are things? Are you all better now? Fine, fine, . . . You were so sick, weren't you? Oh, I'll see you again soon. . . Mamma will stay with you in the meantime. . . Agreed, eh? See you later. [*Dashes out.*]

**Micuccio.** [*Stands amazed, while the reappearance of Sina in the salon is greeted with loud shouts.*]

**Marta.** [*After a long silence, in order to break the stupefaction into which he has fallen.*] Aren't you eating?

**Micuccio.** [*Looks at her stupidly, without understanding.*]

**Marta.** Eat. [*pointing to the plate.*]

**Micuccio.** [*Inserts two fingers between his neck and his be grimed, wilted collar, tugging at it as if to make room for a deep breath.*] Eat? [*His fingers drum against his chin as if in self-confessed refusal, to signify: "I've lost my appetite, I can't." For a while he is silent, overwhelmed, absorbed in the vision that has just left him, then he murmurs:*] What she's come to! . . . It . . . it doesn't seem true. . . All . . . in that style. . . [*He refers, without scorn, but rather in a stupor, to Sina's nudity.*] A dream. . . Her voice, . . . Her eyes. . . It's no longer she. . . Teresina, . . . [*Realizing that zia Marta is shaking her head sadly, and that she, too, has stopped eating, as if waiting for him.*] Fie! . . . No use thinking about it. . . It's all over, . . . Who knows how long since! . . . And I, fool that I was . . . stupid. . . They had told me so back in the country . . . and I . . . broke my bones to get here. . . Thirty-six hours on the train . . . all for the sake of making a laughing-stock of myself . . . for that waiter and that maid there . . . Dorina, . . . How they laughed! . . . I, and . . . [*Several times he brings his forefingers together, as a symbol of his union with Sina, and smiles in melancholy fashion, shaking his head.*] But what else was I to believe? I came because you . . . Teresina, had . . . had promised me. . . But perhaps . . . Yes, that's it . . . How was she herself to imagine that one fine day she'd be where she is now? While I . . . yonder . . . stayed behind . . . with my piccolo . . . in the town square. . . She . . . making such strides, . . . Lord! . . . No use thinking of that. . . [*He turns, somewhat brusquely, and faces zia Marta.*] If I have done anything for her, nobody zia Marta, must suspect that I have come to . . . to stay. . . [*He grows more and more excited, and jumps to his feet.*] Wait! [*He thrusts a hand into his coat pocket and pulls out a*

*pocketbook.*] I came just for this: to give you back the money you sent to me. Do you want to call it a payment? Restitution? What's the difference! I see that Teresina has become a . . . a queen! I see that . . . nothing! Let's drop it! But this money, no! I didn't deserve that from you . . . What's the use! It's all over, so let's forget it . . . But money? No! Money to me? Nothing doing! I'm only sorry that the amount isn't complete . . .

**Marta.** [*Trembling, shattered, tears in her eyes.*] What are you saying, my boy? What are you saying?

**Micuccio.** [*Signals her to be quiet.*] It wasn't I who spent it. My parents spent it while I was sick, without my knowledge. But let that make up for the tiny amount I spent for her in the early days . . . Do you remember? It's a small matter . . . Let's forget it. Here's the rest. And I'm going.

**Marta.** What do you mean! So suddenly? Wait at least until I can tell Teresina. Didn't you hear her say that she wanted to come back? I'll go right away and tell her . . .

**Micuccio.** [*Holding her back in her seat.*] No. It's useless. Understand? [*From the salon comes the sound of a piano and of voices singing a silly, salacious chorus from a musical comedy, punctuated by outbursts of laughter.*] Let her stay there . . . She's in her element, where she belongs . . . Poor me . . . I've seen her. That was enough . . . Or rather . . . you better go there . . . Do you hear them laughing? I don't want them to laugh at me . . . I'm going . . .

**Marta.** [*Interpreting Micuccio's sudden resolution in the worse sense, that is, as an attitude of scorn and an access of jealousy.*] But I . . . It's impossible for me to keep watch over her any more, my dear boy . . .

**Micuccio.** [*All at once reading in her eyes the suspicion that he has not yet formed, his face darkens and he cries out.*] Why?

**Marta.** [*Bewildered, she hides her face in her hands but cannot restrain the rush of tears, as she gasps between sobs.*] Yes, yes. Go, my boy, go . . . She's no longer fit for you. You're right . . . If you had only taken my advice . . .

**Micuccio.** [*With an outburst, bending over her and tearing one of her hands from her face.*] Then . . . Ah, then she . . . she is no longer worthy of me! [*The chorus and the tones of the piano continue.*]

**Marta.** [*Weeping and in anguish, she nods yes, then raises her hands in prayer, in so supplicating, heartbroken a manner that Micuccio's rage at once subsides.*] For mercy's sake, for mercy's sake! For pity of me, Micuccio mine!

**Micuccio.** Enough, enough . . . I'm going just the same . . . I'm all the more determined, now . . . What a fool I was, *zia* Marta, not to have understood. All for this . . . all . . . all naked . . . Don't cry . . . What's to be done about it? It's luck . . . luck . . . [*As he speaks, he takes up his valise and the little bag and starts to leave. It suddenly occurs to him that inside of the little bag there are the beautiful limes that he had brought from Sicily for Teresina.*] Oh, look, *zia* Marta, . . . Look here . . . [*Opens the bag and supporting it on his arm pours out upon the table the fresh, fragrant fruit.*]

**Marta.** Limes! Our beautiful limes!

**Micuccio.** I had brought them for her . . . [*He takes one.*] Suppose I were to start throwing them at the heads of all those fine gentlemen in there?

**Marta.** [*Again beseeching him.*] For mercy's sake!

**Micuccio.** [*With a bitter laugh, thrusting the empty bag into his pocket.*] No, nothing. Don't be afraid. I leave them for you alone, *zia* Marta. And tell them I paid the duty on them, too . . . Enough. They're for you only, remember that. As to her, simply say, for me, "The best of luck to you!"

[*He leaves. The chorus continues. zia Marta is left weeping alone before the table, her face buried in her hands. A long pause, until Sina Marnis takes it into her head to make another fleeting appearance in the hallway.*]

**Sina.** [*Surprised, catching sight of her weeping mother.*] Has he gone?

**Marta.** [*Without looking at her, nods yes.*]

**Sina.** [*Stares vacantly ahead of her, engrossed, then with a sigh.*] The poor fellow . . .

**Marta.** Look . . . He had brought you . . . some limes.

**Sina.** [*Her spirits returning.*] Oh, how beautiful! Just see . . . how many! What fragrance! How beautiful, beautiful! [*She presses one arm to her waist and in her other hand seizes as many as she can carry, shouting to the guests in the salon, who come running in.*] Didi! Didi! Rosi! Gegè! Cornelli! Tarini! Didi!

**Marta.** [*Rising in vehement protest.*] No! Not there! I say no! Not there!

**Sina.** [*Shrugging her shoulders and offering the fruit to the guests.*] Let me do as I please! Here, Didi! Sicilian limes! Here's some for you, Rosi, Sicilian limes! Sicilian limes!

## CURTAIN.

[*Translator's note: The new version (1920) has a different ending. Sina, instead of gaily distributing the limes to her guests, stands in tears before her former sweetheart, who repudiating her remorse, thrusts the money into her bosom and leaves.*]