

Right you are! (If you think so) – Act I

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In Italiano – [Così è \(se vi pare\)](#)

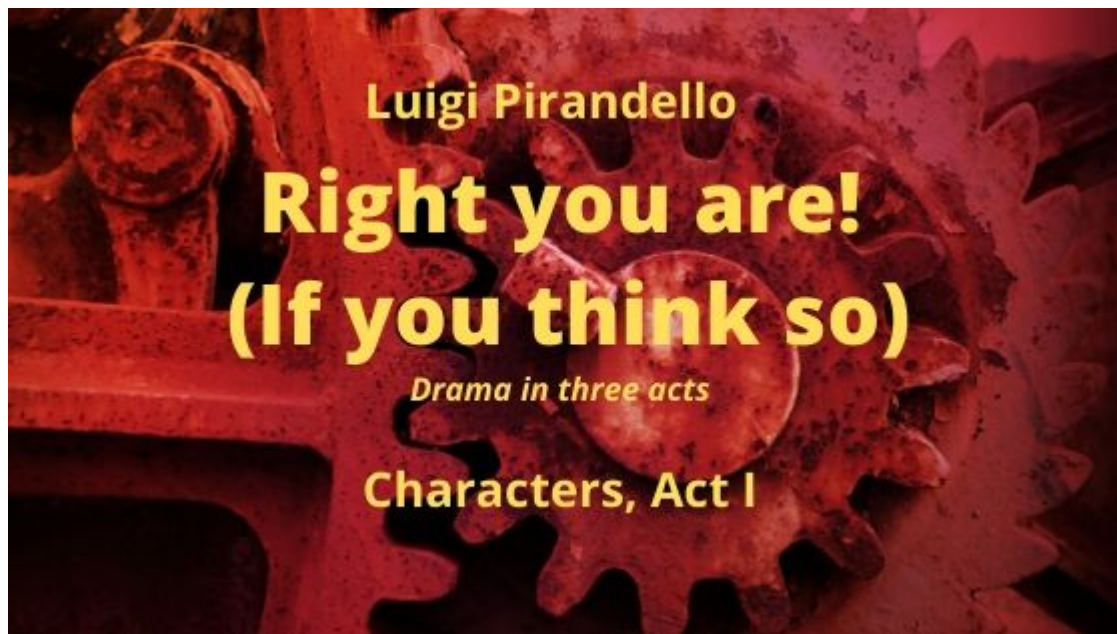
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Right you are! (If you think so)

Act I

English version by Arthur Livingston – (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1922)

Characters

Lamberto Laudisi

Signora Frola

Ponza, *Son-in-law of Signora Frola*

Signora Ponza, *Ponza's wife*

Commendatore Agazzi, a provincial councillor

Amalia, his wife

Dina, their daughter

Sirelli

Signora Sirelli, his wife

The Prefect

Centuri, a police commissioner

Signora Cini

Signora Nenni

A butler

A number of Ladies and Gentlemen

Our Own Times, in a Small Italian Town, the Capital of a Province

The parlor in the house of Commendatore Agazzi. A door, the general entrance, at the back; doors leading to the wings, left and right.

Laudisi is a man nearing the forties, quick and energetic in his movements. He is smartly dressed. in good taste. At this moment he is wearing a semi-formal street Suit: a sack coat, of a violet cast, with black lapels, and with black braid around the edges; trousers of a light but different color.

Amalia, Agazzi's wife, is Laudisi's sister. She is a woman of forty-five more or less. Her hair is already quite grey. Signora Agazzi is always showing a certain sense her own importance from the position occupied by her husband in the community; but she gives you to understand that if she had a free rein she would be quite capable of playing her own part in the world and, perhaps, do it somewhat better than Commendatore Agazzi.

Dina is the daughter of Amalia and Agazzi. She is nineteen. Her general manner is that of a young person conscious of understanding everything better than papa and mamma; but this defect must not be exaggerated to the extent of concealing her

attractiveness and charm as a good-looking winsome girl.

As the curtain rises Laudisi is walking briskly up and down the parlor to give vent to his irritation.

Laudisi: I see, I see! So he did take the matter up with the prefect!

Amalia: But Lamberto *dear*, please remember that the man is a subordinate of his.

Laudisi: A subordinate of his... very well! But subordinate in the office, not at home nor in society!

Dina: And he hired an apartment for that woman, his mother-in-law, right here in this very building, and on our floor.

Laudisi: And why not, pray? He was looking for an apartment; the apartment was for rent, so he leased it – for his mother-in-law. You mean to say that a mother-in law is in duty bound to make advances to the wife and daughter of the man who happens to be her son-in-law's superior on his job?

Amalia: That is not the way it is, Lamberto. We didn't ask her to call on us. Dina and I took the first step by calling on her and – she refused to receive us!

Laudisi: Well, is that any reason why your husband should go and lodge a complaint with the man's boss? Do you expect the government to order him to invite you to tea?

Amalia: I think he deserves all he gets! That is not the way to treat two ladies. I hope he gets fired! The idea!

Laudisi: Oh, you women! I say, making that complaint is a dirty trick. By Jove! If people see fit to keep to themselves in their own houses, haven't they a right to?

Amalia: Yes, but you don't understand! We were trying to do her a favor. She is new in the town. We wanted to make her

feel at home.

Dina: Now, now, uncle dear, don't be so cross! Perhaps we did go there out of curiosity more than anything else; but it's all so funny, isn't it! Don't you think it was natural to feel just a little bit curious?

Laudisi: Natural be damned! It was none of your business!

Dina: Now, see here, uncle, let's suppose – here you are right here minding your own business and quite indifferent to what other people are doing all around you. Very well! I come into the room and right here on this table, under your very nose, and with a long face like an undertaker's, or, rather, with the long face of that jail bird you are defending, I set down – well, what? – anything – a pair of dirty old shoes!

Laudisi: I don't see the connection.

Dina: Wait, don't interrupt me! I said a pair of old shoes. Well, no, not a pair of old shoes – a flat iron, a rolling pin, or your shaving brush for instance – and I walk out again without saying a word to anybody! Now I leave it to you, wouldn't you feel justified in wondering just a little, little, bit as to what in the world I meant by it?

Signora Frola (*with some alarm*): But he was quite calm, I hope, quite calm?

Agazzi: Calm? As calm as could be! Why not? Of course!

The members of the company all nod in confirmation.

Signora Frola: Oh, my dear friends, I am sure you are trying to reassure me; but as a matter of fact I came to set you right about my son-in-law.

Signora Sirelli: Why no, Signora, what's the trouble? Agazzi. Really, it was just a matter of politics we talked about...

Signora Frola: But I can tell from the way you all look at me... Please excuse me, but it is not a question of me at all. From the way you all look at me I can tell that he came here to prove something that I would never have confessed for all the money in the world. You will all bear me out, won't you? When I came here a few moments ago you all asked me questions that were very cruel questions to me, as I hope you will understand, and they were questions that I couldn't answer very well; but anyhow I gave an explanation of our manner of living which can be satisfactory to nobody, I am well aware. But how could I give you the real reason? How could I tell you people, as he's doing, that my daughter has been dead for four years and that I'm a poor mad mother who believes that her daughter is still living and that her husband will not allow me to see her?

Agazzi (*quite upset by the ring of deep sincerity he finds in Signora Frola's manner of speaking*): What do you mean, your daughter?

Signora Frola (*hastily and with anguished dismay written on her features*): You know that's so. Why do you try to deny it? He did say that to you, didn't he?

Sirelli (*with some hesitation and studying her features warily*): Yes... in fact... he did say that.

Signora Frola: I know he did; and I also know how it pained him to be obliged to say such a thing of me. It is a great pity, Commendatore! We have made continual sacrifices, involving unheard of suffering, I assure you; and we could endure them only by living as we are living now. Unfortunately, as I well understand, it must look very strange to people, seem even scandalous, arouse no end of gossip! But after all, if he is an excellent secretary, scrupulously honest, attentive to his work, why should people complain? You have seen him in the office, haven't you? He is a good worker, isn't he?

Agazzi: To tell the truth, I have not watched him particularly, as yet.

Signora Frola: Oh he really is, he really is! All the men he ever worked for say he's most reliable; and I beg of you, please don't let this other matter interfere. And why then should people go tormenting him with all this prying into his private life, laying bare once more a misfortune which he has succeeded in mastering and which, if it were widely talked about, might upset him again personally, and even hurt him in his career?

Agazzi: Oh no, no, Signora, no one is trying to hurt him. Nor would we hurt you either.

Signora Frola: But my dear sir, how can you help hurting me when you force him to give almost publicly an explanation which is quite absurd – ridiculous I might even say! Surely people like you can't seriously believe what he says? You can't possibly be taking me for mad. You don't really think that this woman is his second wife? And yet it is all so necessary! He needs to have it that way. It is the only way he can pull himself together; get down to his work again... the only way... the only way! Why he gets all wrought up, all excited, when he is forced to talk of this other matter; because he knows himself how hard it is for him to say certain things. You may have noticed it...

Agazzi: Yes, that is quite true. He did seem very much excited.

Signora Sirelli: Well, well, well, so then it's he!

Sirelli (*triumphantly*): I always said it was he.

Agazzi: Oh, I say! Is that really possible? (*He motions to the company to be quiet*):

Signora Frola (*joining her hands beseechingly*): My dear

friends, what are you really thinking? It is only on this subject that he is a little queer. The point is, you must simply not mention this particular matter to him. Why, really now, you could never suppose that I would leave my daughter shut up with him all alone like that? And yet just watch him at his work and in the office. He does everything he is expected to do and no one in the world could do it better.

Agazzi: But this is not enough, madam, as you will understand. Do you mean to say that Signor Ponza, your son-in-law, came here and made up a story out of whole cloth?

Signora Frola: Yes, sir, yes sir, exactly... only I will explain. You must understand – you must look at things from his point of view.

Agazzi: What do you mean? Do you mean that your daughter is not dead?

Signora Frola: God forbid! Of course she is not dead!

Agazzi: Well, then, he is mad!

Signora Frola: No, no, look, look!...

Sirelli: I always said it was he!...

Signora Frola: No, look, look, not that, not that! Let me explain... You have noticed him, haven't you? Fine, strong looking man...

Editors's note – in the original 1922 translation the paragraph continues as follows:

Well, when he married my daughter you can imagine how fond he was of her. But alas, she fell sick with a contagious disease; and the doctors had to separate her from him. Not only from him, of course, but from all her relatives. They're all dead now, poor things, in the earthquake, you understand. Well, he just refused to have her taken to the

hospital; and he got so over-wrought that they actually had to put him under restraint; and he broke down nervously as the result of it all and he was sent to a sanitorium. But my daughter got better very soon, while he got worse and worse. He had a sort of obsession that his wife had died in the hospital, that perhaps they had killed her there; and you couldn't get that idea out of his head.

Editor's note – a footnote by the translator in the 1922 edition gives the original 1917 Italian of the paragraph:

Signora Frola: No guardino... guardino... Non è neanche lui!... Mi lascino dire. Lo hanno veduto – è cosè forte di complessione... violento... Sposando, fu preso da una vera frenesia d'amore... Rischio di distruggere, quasi, la mia figliuola, ch'era delicata... Per consiglio dei medici e di tutti i parenti anche dei suoi (che ora poverini non ci sono più) – gli si dovette sottrarre la moglie di nascosto, per chiuderla in una casa de salute... ecc.

Editors's note – but in the 1952 edition of this translation in Eric Bentley's Naked Masks, Bentley has changed the rest of the paragraph above to read as follows (the implication being that the original Italian text states that Ponza's physical lovemaking was too violent, and so the earlier translation was bowdlerized for 1922 audiences:

violent... when he married my daughter he was seized with a veritable frenzy of love... he risked my little daughter's life almost, she was frail... On the advice of doctors and relatives, even his relatives – dead now, poor things – they had to take his wife off in secret and shut her up in a sanatorium. And he came to think she was dead.

Editor's note: and then both texts continue:

Just imagine when we brought my daughter back to him – and a pretty thing she was to look at, too – he began to scream

and say, no, no, no, she wasn't his wife, his wife was dead!

He looked at her: No, no, no, not at all! She wasn't the woman! Imagine my dear friends, how terrible it all was.

Finally he came up close to her and for a moment it seemed that he was going to recognize her again; but once more it was "No, no, no, she is not my wife!" And do you know, to get him to accept my daughter at all again, we were obliged to pretend having a second wedding, with the collusion of his doctors and his friends, you understand!

Signora Sirelli: Ah, so that is why he says that...

Signora Frola: Yes, but he doesn't really believe it, you know; and he hasn't for a long time, I am sure. But he seems to feel a need for maintaining the pretense. He can't do without it. He feels surer of himself that way. He is seized with a terrible fear, from time to time, that this little wife he loves may be taken from him again. (*Smiling and in a low, confidential tone*): So he keeps her locked up at home where he can have her all for himself. But he worships her – he worships her; and I am really quite convinced that my daughter is happy. (*She gets up*): And now I must be going. You see, my son-in-law is in a terrible state of mind at present. I wouldn't like to have him call, and find me not at home. (*With a sigh, and gesturing with her joined hands*): Well, I suppose we must get along as best we can; but it is hard on my poor girl. She has to pretend all along that she is not herself, but another, his second wife; and I... oh, as for me, I have to pretend that I am mad when he's around, my dear friends; but I'm glad to, I'm glad to, really, so long as it does him some good. (*The Ladies rise as she steps nearer to the door*): No, no, don't let me interrupt your party. I know the way out! Good afternoon! Good afternoon!

*Bowing and smiling, she hurries out through the rear door.
They all remain standing, astonished, stunned, looking into
each other's eyes.*

Silence.

Laudisi (*coming forward among them*): So you're having a look
at each other? Well! And the truth?

He bursts out laughing.

Curtain

1917 – Right you are! (If you think so)

Drama in three acts

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