

The Accidental Death of an Anarchist



(1970)

By Dario Fo

*Liberated from
capitalist control
to educate the masses
by
Socialist Stories*

Characters

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO

MANIAC

CONSTABLES

INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET

SUPERINTENDENT

MARIA FELETTI

Prologue

We wish to make it clear that the dialogue in this play is based on a reconstruction of authentic documents from the Pinelli case. There was no need to invent any of the situations that you will find represented here.

There is no greater equaliser than the stupidity of men – especially when those men have power.

A point worth noting:

At the moment that the anarchist was about to plunge from the window down onto the pavement where Pinelli had fallen, there was a group of journalists present, from various major Milan-based newspapers. These journalists were coming from a press conference that had been taking place at police headquarters.

ACT ONE

Scene One

An ordinary room at central police headquarters. A desk, a filing cabinet, a cupboard, a few chairs and a coat-stand on which are hanging a dark overcoat and a black hat. There are also a typewriter, a telephone, a window, and a door on either side of the stage. On-stage, INSPECTOR BERTOZZO and a POLICE CONSTABLE are engaged in interrogating a man: the MANIAC. [1]

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: *(As he flicks through a pile of paperwork, he turns to the MANIAC, who is seated, calm and relaxed)* Ha, so this isn't the first time you've passed yourself off as someone else! Here it says that you've been caught twice posing as a surgeon, once as a captain in the bersaglieri... three times as a bishop... once as a marine engineer... in all you've been arrested... let's see... two plus three, five... one, two... three... eleven times in all... So this makes the twelfth.

MANIAC: Correct. Arrested twelve times... But I must point out, Inspector, arrested, but never found guilty... My record is clean!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Well... I can't imagine how you've managed to duck out of it every time... But I can assure you you're going to get a dirty record *this* time: you can count on it!

MANIAC: I know how you feel, Inspector: a spotless record just waiting to be sullied – it would make anyone's mouth water.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Very funny... According to your charge sheet, you were arrested while passing yourself off as a psychiatrist, a lecturer, formerly teaching at the University of Padova... Trading under false pretences... You do realise that you could go to prison for that?

MANIAC: Certainly – false pretences perpetrated by a *sane* person. But I'm mad, Inspector: certified mad! Look, I've got my medical record, here: sixteen times in the nuthouse... and always for the same reason. I have a thing about dreaming up characters and then acting them out. It's called 'histrionomania' – comes from the Latin *histriones*, meaning 'actor'. I'm a sort of amateur performance artist. With the difference that I go for 'Théâtre Vérité' – my fellow performers need to be real people, but people who don't realise that they're in my plays. Which is just as well, 'cos I've got no money and couldn't pay them anyway... I applied to the Arts Council for a grant, but since I don't have political backing...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: You had the nerve to charge two hundred thousand lire for a single consultation...

CONSTABLE: (*Standing behind the MANIAC*) Jesus!

MANIAC: A reasonable rate for any self-respecting psychiatrist... Sixteen years studying before you qualify!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Sure, but when did *you* ever study psychiatry?

MANIAC: Sixteen years I've studied... Thousands of lunatics like myself... day after day... And at night too! Because, unlike your normal psychiatrist, I slept with them... Often as not, three to a bed, because there's always a shortage of beds these days.

Anyway, feel free to check. I think you'll find that my diagnosis for the poor schizophrenic I was arrested for was spot-on.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Your two hundred thousand lire was pretty spot-on too!

MANIAC: But Inspector, I had to... it was for his own good!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Ah, for his own good, eh? So a big bill's part of the cure?

MANIAC: Sure! If I hadn't stung him for two hundred thousand, do you really think the poor bastard, and more particularly his family, would have been satisfied? If I'd asked for a mere fifty thousand, they'd have thought: 'He can't be a lot of use. Maybe he's not a real professor. Must be newly qualified...' But this way, it knocked them sideways and they thought: 'Who is this man? God Almighty?' And off they went, happy... They even kissed my hand... 'Thank you, Professor...' Kissy-kissy-kissy.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: I'll say this – you run a good line in patter!

MANIAC: It's true, though, Inspector. Even Freud says: 'Be you sick, be you ill, the best cure is a big fat bill – for the patient *and* for the doctor!'

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Now, let's take a look at your visiting card... (*He shows the card*) If I'm not mistaken, it says here: Professor Antonio Rabbi, psychiatrist. Formerly lecturer at the University of Padova... Come on, now, talk your way out of that one...!

MANIAC: First of all, I really am a lecturer... I teach drawing, actually... Decorative, free-hand, I do evening classes at the Church of the Holy Redeemer...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: I'm impressed, my compliments! But it says here: 'Psychiatrist'!

MANIAC: Well done – but after the full stop! Are you familiar with the rules of grammar and punctuation? Read it properly: Professor Antonio Rabbi. Full stop. Then there's a capital P. Psychiatrist! Now look, you can't tell me it's going under false pretences to say: 'psychiatrist.' I presume you're familiar with the grammar of the Italian language? Yes? Well in that case you should know that if a

person writes 'archaeologist' it doesn't mean he's studied – it's like saying 'stamp collector', 'vegetarian', 'chronic arthritic'...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Yes, but what about this: 'Formerly lecturer at the University of Padova'?

MANIAC: I'm sorry, now *you're* the one trading under false pretences: you just told me that you knew the rules of grammar and punctuation, and now it turns out that you can't even read properly...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: I can't even *what...?*!

MANIAC: Didn't you see the comma after the 'formerly'?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Oh yes... You're right. I didn't notice it.

MANIAC: So you didn't notice it! You didn't notice it, and just for that you'd send an innocent man to prison?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: You're really mental, you know... What's a comma got to do with anything?

MANIAC: Nothing, for someone who knows nothing about grammar...! I think you should come clean – I want to see your school reports... Who was responsible for promoting you... (*The INSPECTOR tries to interrupt him*) Let me finish...! Remember, the comma is the key to everything! If there's a comma after the 'formerly', the whole meaning of the phrase changes.

The comma indicates a pause for breath... a brief hiatus... because 'the comma always indicates a change of intentionality.' So it goes like this: 'Formerly', and here we could do with a sarcastic sneer, and if you want to add an ironic chuckle, all the better! 'Formerly...' (*He grimaces and gives a high-pitched laugh*) 'Lecturer at the University, another comma, of Padova...' It's like it's saying: 'Come on, what do you take me for... Pull the other one... Only an idiot would fall for that!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: So I'm an idiot, am I?

MANIAC: No, you're just a bit short on grammar... I could

give you lessons if you like. Do you a decent price... I say we start straight away... there's a lot of ground to make up. Recite me a list of the personal pronouns.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Will you stop pissballing about! I think we can all agree that you've got performance mania, but I'd say you're just pretending to be mental... I'd lay money you're as sane as me!

MANIAC: Hmm, I don't know about that. Mind you, being a policeman does funny things to the brain... Let's have a look at your eye, a moment.

He presses down his lower eyelid with his thumb.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Will you stop that! Let's get on with your statement!

MANIAC: I could type it myself, if you like, I'm a qualified typist, forty-five words a minute...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Stay right where you are or I'll have the handcuffs on you!

MANIAC: You can't! Straitjacket or nothing. I'm mad, and if you put handcuffs on me... Article 122 of the Penal Code states: 'Any public official applying non-clinical or non-psychiatric instruments of restraint on a psychologically disturbed person, thereby resulting in a worsening of his condition, commits a crime punishable by five to fifteen years imprisonment, and loss of pension and rank.'

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Read up on the law, have we?!

MANIAC: Know it inside out. Studied it for twenty years!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Where did you study law?

MANIAC: In the nuthouse! Very good for studying, you've no idea! There was a paranoid clerk to the court who gave me lessons. A genius, he was! I know it all. Roman law, Italian law, ecclesiastical law... The Justinian code... the Frederican... the Lombard... the Greek Orthodox... the lot! Try me with a few questions!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: No thank you. Can we get on. It

says nothing in your CV about your being a lawyer!

MANIAC: Ah, no, I'd never want to be a lawyer. Defence never was my style. Too passive. I prefer sitting in judgement... handing down sentences... coming down like a ton of bricks! I'm one of yours, Inspector. You can call me Antonio, if you like.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: You just watch your step... I've had enough of you taking the mickey.

MANIAC: Alright, alright...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Now this might be interesting. Have you ever passed yourself off as a judge?

MANIAC: No, unfortunately. Chance never arose. I'd love to, though: best job in the world! First of all, they hardly ever retire... In fact, just at the point when your average working man, at the age of 55 or 60, is already ready for the scrapheap because he's slowing down a bit, losing his reflexes, your judge is just coming into his prime. A worker on the line's done for after the age of fifty – can't keep up, keeps having accidents, chuck him out...! Your miner has silicosis by the time he's 45 – get rid of him, quick, sack him before he sues for compensation! Same goes for the bank clerk, after a certain age he starts getting his sums wrong, starts forgetting the names of the bank's clients, can't tell a discount rate from a mortgage rate. Off home, you... move along, son... You're past it...! For a judge it's quite the opposite: the more ancient and idio... (*He corrects himself*) ...syncratic they are, the higher they get promoted, the classier the jobs they get! You see them up there, little old men like cardboard cutouts, silly wigs on their heads, all capes and ermine... with two pairs of glasses on cords round their necks because otherwise they'd lose them... And these characters have the power to wreck a person's life or save it, as and how they want: they hand out life sentences like somebody saying: 'Maybe it'll rain tomorrow...' Fifty years for you... Thirty for you... Only twenty for you, because I like your face! They make the law and they can do what they like... And they're holy too...

Don't forget, in Italy you can still be done for slander if you say nasty things about judges... In Italy... and in Saudi Arabia! Ah, yes, yes... The judge is the job for me – what a role! What wouldn't I give to be able to play a judge just once in my life? An Appeal Court judge would be lovely! 'Your Honour... this way please... silence in court... please be upstanding for the judge... Oh dear, lost our marbles, have we, Sir? I'll let you know if I find them...'

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Right. Now are you going to stop this nonsense? You're doing my brain in. Sit down! Right there. And shut up.

He pushes him towards the chair.

MANIAC: (*Reacting hysterically*) Hands off or I'll bite!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: What do you mean, bite?

MANIAC: You. I'll bite *you*. On the neck *and* on your gluteus maximus! Nyung...! And piss-all you can do about it. Article 122b: 'Provocation and violence towards a person of diminished responsibility.' Six to nine years, with loss of pension!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Sit down, or I'm going to lose my temper! (*To the CONSTABLE*) And what are you doing standing there like a prat? Sit him down!

CONSTABLE: But he bites, sir!

MANIAC: Precisely. Grrr! Grrr! ...And I should warn you, I've got rabies. Got it from a dog... A rabid mongrel who took off half my bum. He died, I survived. Survived, but I'm still infected: grrr grrr! Woof, woof!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: That's all we bloody needed – not only is he away with the mixer, he's got rabies too! Right, are we going to take your statement or not? Come on, be a good chap! Then I'll let you go... promise...!

MANIAC: Oh no, don't throw me out, Inspector. I feel safe here with you... I feel protected, somehow! Life's so dangerous out there on the street... People are so horrible... Driving around in their cars, hooting their

horns, screeching their brakes... And going on strike! Then you've got trams and subway carriages with their doors shutting all of a sudden... Squish...! Keep me here with you... I can help you get confessions out of your suspects... And subversives... I know how to make nitroglycerine suppositories...!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Right. Shut! Up!

MANIAC: Inspector, either you let me stay here with you, or I'm going to throw myself out of the window... What floor are we on? The third...? One short, but it'll do. I'm going to jump, and when I'm down there, splattered on the pavement, groaning in my death agony... because I assure you it won't be an easy death... I'll groan and I'll scream and I'll tell the journalists that it was *you* who threw me out. Here we go!

He runs to the window.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*He tries to stop him*) Please! Stop it! (*To the CONSTABLE*) Put the catch on that window!

MANIAC: Alright, then, I'll throw myself down the stairwell.

He runs to the door.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Oh for God's sake! Now I've really had enough! Sit down! (*He pushes him onto a chair, and then addresses the CONSTABLE*) You, lock the door... take the key and...

MANIAC: ...throw it out of the window...

The CONSTABLE goes towards the window, in a daze.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Yes, throw it... NO... Put it in the drawer... close the drawer... take the key out...

The CONSTABLE moves mechanically, doing as instructed.

MANIAC: ...put it in your mouth and swallow it!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: No, no, no, NO...! *Nobody* gives me the run-around! (*To the CONSTABLE*) Give me that

key. (*He opens the door to show the MANIAC out*) Get out, go, leave...! And throw yourself down the stairs if you want... Do what you like... Get out, or I'll be the one going crazy!

He pushes him out of the room.

MANIAC: No, Inspector... Have a heart... Don't push like that...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Get out! (*Having finally succeeded in getting rid of the MANIAC, he closes the door*) Oh, at last!

CONSTABLE: Don't forget, Inspector, you've got a meeting with Dr Bellati, and we're five minutes late already.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Eh? What time is it? (*He looks at his watch*) Oh for God's sake! That imbecile has left me so's I don't know if I'm coming or going... Come on, we'd better get a move on...

They leave the room. The MANIAC peeks in at the other door.

MANIAC: Yoo-hoo, Inspector... Can I come in? Don't be angry. I've only come back to pick up my papers... Not talking to me, eh? Oh come on, no hard feelings... Pax... Well, look at that, not a soul in sight. I'll just have to help myself... (*He does so*) Medical record... visiting card... Oh look, here's my charge sheet too.... Too bad, tear it up, there you go, nice knowing you. (*He picks up more papers*) Another charge sheet. Who's this one? (*He reads*) 'Burglary...' A trifle, a trifle... You're free! (*He tears it up*) And what did you do? (*He reads it*) 'Taking and driving away... insulting behaviour...' Rubbish... Off you go, son, you're free! (*He tears it up*) Free, the lot of you! (*He pauses to read one of the sheets*) No, not you... You're an arsehole... You can stay... You're going to do time! (*He places the sheet in a prominent position on the desk and then opens the cupboard, which is bulging with files*) Nobody move... the Day of Judgement has arrived! Amazing! Would these all happen to be charge sheets? How would it be if I put a match to the lot of them...? (*He pulls out a*

cigarette lighter and is about to set fire to a bundle of papers when he reads the title page) 'Judge's Report on the Death of the...' (*The he reads the label on another bundle*)
 'Judge's Decision to Adjourn the Inquest of...'

Just at this moment, the phone rings. The MANIAC answers it.

Hello, Inspector Bertozzo's office... Who's calling? No, I'm sorry, I can't get him for you if you won't tell me who's calling... Well fancy that... the Inspector... Himself in person?! I don't believe it! Oh come on! What a pleasure... Inspector Defenestra...! No, nothing, nothing... And where are you calling from? Oh, of course, how silly of me, from the fourth floor... Where else? Anyway, what do you want with Bertozzo? No, he's busy at the moment, so you'll have to tell me. What's that? A High Court judge is being sent up specially from Rome...? If you ask me, he's being sent up to re-open the case of the death of the anarchist. Sure – it must be because Rome's not happy with the way the original inquest was put on hold when the judge adjourned it. That's what you've heard as well? Oh, it's only a rumour... I thought as much... First it suits them to a T, and then they have second thoughts... Of course, of course, they're responding to the pressure of public opinion... Do me a favour! When did they ever give a damn for public opinion... Exactly, and here's Bertozzo, laughing like a drain. (*He moves the phone away slightly and laughs*) Ha, ha! And making rude gestures... Ha, ha! (*He pretends to call over to BERTOZZO*) Bertozzo, our friend on the fourth floor says it's all very well for you to start cackling, you're not stuck in the middle... But he and his boss are in deep shit... (*He pretends to be BERTOZZO laughing*) Ha, ha... He's suggesting that you'd best keep your heads up! Ha, ha... No, this time it's me who's laughing! Frankly, I'd be very happy to see your boss the Superintendent up to his neck in it... Yes, I mean it sincerely, and you can tell him I said so... Inspector Anghiari – that's me, by the way – would be *delighted*... And so would Bertozzo, listen to him laughing. (*He holds*

the phone away from him) Ha, ha! You hear that...? And who cares if they flush you down the pan... Yes, you can tell him that too: Anghiari and Bertozzo couldn't give a shit! (*He lets out a tremendous raspberry*) Prrrrutt. Yes, it was Bertozzo who did the raspberry. Alright, no need to get hysterical...! Good man, we'll talk about it when we meet. So, what was it you were wanting from Bertozzo? What documents? Yes, you tell me, and I'll write them down. The copy of the judge's reasons for putting the anarchist's inquest on hold... Fine, I think we can provide that... And the copies of the statements... yes, yes, it's all here in the archive... Oh yes, quite right, you're going to have to start doing your homework... you and that ex-concentration camp commandant boss of yours... If the judge who's coming is even half as much a stickler for procedure as they say... Know him? Of course I know him! His name's Malipiero, Judge Malipiero. Never heard of him? Well, you will. As it happens, he spent time in a concentration camp during the War – on the receiving end... You should ask your boss, maybe he remembers seeing him there. OK, I'll get the stuff to you right away.

See you... Wait, wait! Ha, ha, Bertozzo just said something really funny... You won't blow a fuse if I tell you, will you? You sure? Alright then, I'll tell you. He said... Ha, ha... by the time this visiting judge's finished with you, they'll probably give you a nice posting down in the South somewhere, Vibo Valentia in Calabria, maybe... where the police station only has one floor and the inspector's office is in the basement... Ha, ha... you get it? In the basement! Ha, ha! Ha, ha, you like that? You didn't like it? OK, save it for another day. (*He listens to the voice on the phone*) Fine, I'll tell him straight away. Bertozzo, the soon-to-be-Calabrian inspector [2] at the other end of the line tells me when he catches up with the pair of us, he's going to give us a punch on the nose! Roger, message received, prrrutt (*A raspberry*) from both of us, over and out!

The MANIAC puts down the phone and returns to rifling through the papers.

'To work, your Honour, because time is getting short.' God, I've come over all hot flushes! If I manage to persuade them that I really *am* a High Court judge... if they don't tumble me... it'll be a cracker! Let's see now, first of all, find a walk... (*He tries a walk with a slight limp*) No, that's the clerk of the court. (*He tries another*) Arthritic, but dignified! There, not bad, with a bit of a crick in the neck... like a retired circus horse... (*He tries it, but then decides against it*)

No, I think I'd prefer the 'palais glide', with the little twitch at the end. (*He tries it*) Not bad! And the 'wobbly knee'? (*He tries it*) Or maybe a stiff knee, grasshopper style. (*He tries it. Short sharp steps, rocking from heel to toe*) What about the glasses... No, no glasses. The right eye closed a bit... there, that's right, slight squint when reading, man of few words... a bit of a cough: cough, cough! No, no cough... How about a twitch? Hmm, we'll see how it feels come the time. A bit of a smoothie, maybe, nasal tone, jovial sort: 'No! My dear Superintendent, you're going to have to stop that, you're not running a concentration camp now, you know – you should remember that once in a while!'

No, I think I'd prefer something different: cold, detached, short-shrift, bit of a drone, slightly shortsighted, gloomy sort... has glasses, but only uses one lens: like so.

He tries this out, as he sorts through a few papers.

Well, look at that! Brilliant! Just what I was looking for! Hey, calm down, son... Back in character, if you don't mind! All present and correct? Let's see: the judge's reasons for adjourning the inquiry into the anarchist's death... Ha, and here's the police report into the anarchist group in Rome, the one that was run by the male dancer... Very good!

He places all the documents in his bag. He goes over to the coat-stand and puts on the black overcoat and the dark hat that are hanging there. Re-enter INSPECTOR BERTOZZO. He doesn't recognise him in this guise, and is momentarily taken aback.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Hello, can I help you? Are you looking for someone?

MANIAC: No one at all, Inspector. I've just come back to get my papers...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: What – you again? Get out!!!

MANIAC: Please, just because you're in a bad mood, no need to take it out on me.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Get out!

He pushes him towards the door.

MANIAC: Oh for God's sake! You're all neurotic in here! First there was that lunatic who's going round looking for you, to smash your face in.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*This stops him in his tracks*)
Who's that? Who's going round looking for me?

MANIAC: A character in a white roll-neck. [3] Hasn't he given you a smack in the gob yet?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: A smack in the gob?

MANIAC: That's what he said, I said.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Listen, I think I've wasted enough time with you. Would you do me a favour? *Piss off*, and don't come back!

MANIAC: What, never, never, never? (*He mimes blowing him kisses. The SUPERINTENDENT reacts irritably*)
Take my advice – next time you meet the Inspector from upstairs, you'd best duck!

He exits. INSPECTOR BERTOZZO gives a great sigh of relief, and then goes over to the coat-stand. He sees it is empty.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*Running after him*) Huh – the bastard! He goes round pretending to be mad, and then he steals your overcoat...! Hey, you! (*He stops the CONSTABLE, who enters at this moment*) Quick, get after that head-case... the one who just left... he's gone out with my coat... and my hat... and probably my briefcase too... That's right, that was mine too! Quick, before he gets away!

CONSTABLE: At once, Sir... (*He goes to the door, but then stops. He speaks to someone outside the door*) Yes, Sir, he's in his office.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*He rummages around to find the sheets that were torn up by the MANIAC*) Where the hell have those charge sheets gone?

CONSTABLE: Inspector Bertozzo, the Inspector from the Special Branch upstairs would like a word with you.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO *raises his head from the desk, gets up, and goes over to the door.*

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Hello, there...! I was talking about you just a moment ago, with some nutter, who said... Ha, ha, can you imagine it... He said the next time you see me, you're going to give me... (*From outside the door we see a rapid movement of somebody's arm.*

BERTOZZO *receives a punch in the face, which sends him reeling as he completes his sentence*) ...a smack in the gob!

He falls to the ground. The MANIAC peers in through the opposite door and shouts:

MANIAC: I told you to duck!

Blackout. A musical interlude: a march in the style of the 'Entry of the Clowns'. This continues for as long as is necessary to change the scene.

Scene Two

The lights come up, and we find ourselves in an office which is very similar to the previous one. The furniture is more or less the same, although arranged differently. On the wall at the back of the stage hangs a large portrait of the Italian President. There is also a large window, which is wide open. On stage are a CONSTABLE, and the MANIAC, who is standing facing the window, with his back to the door. After a moment, enter the INSPECTOR FROM THE FOURTH FLOOR. He is wearing a sports jacket and a roll-neck sweater.

SPORTS JACKET: (*Murmuring to the CONSTABLE standing at the door*) What does he want? Who is he?

CONSTABLE: I don't know, Sir. He came sweeping in here like he was God Almighty. He says that he wants to talk with you and the Superintendent.

SPORTS JACKET: (*He is continuously massaging his right hand*) Wants to talk, does he? (*He goes over to the MANIAC*) Good morning, I gather you want to see me.

MANIAC: (*He looks him up and down, coolly, and barely moves his hand to raise his hat*) Good morning. (*He watches curiously as the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET continues massaging his hand*) What have you done to your hand?

SPORTS JACKET: Er, nothing... Who are you?

MANIAC: Nothing, eh? So why do you keep rubbing it? An affectation, is it? Or is it a nervous tic?

The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET becomes impatient.

SPORTS JACKET: Could be... I said, with whom do I have the pleasure...?

MANIAC: I knew a bishop once who used to rub his hand like that. A Jesuit.

SPORTS JACKET: Are you suggesting...?

MANIAC: (*Ignoring his reply*) You should see a psychiatrist. When people keep rubbing their hands like that it's a sure sign of insecurity... guilt complex... and a lousy sex life. Do you have problems with women, perhaps?

SPORTS JACKET: (*Losing his temper*) Right! That'll do!
He bangs his fist on the desk.

MANIAC: (*Referring to his gesture*) Impulsive! There's the proof! Tell me the truth – it isn't a tic at all, is it...? You've just given someone a right-hander, haven't you? Come on – own up!

SPORTS JACKET: What d'you mean, 'own up'? Would you

mind telling me who you are? And among other things, you might care to remove your hat!

MANIAC: You're right. (*He removes his hat with studied slowness*) I hope you don't think I was being rude, keeping it on... It's just that you've got the window wide open... and I have a real problem with draughts. Don't you? Would you mind if we closed it?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes I would!

MANIAC: Oops, sorry I spoke! Pleased to meet you. Professor Marco Maria Malipiero, first counsel to the High Court...

SPORTS JACKET: (*Taken aback*) Oh I see...

MANIAC: (*Ironically, aggressively*) What do you see?

SPORTS JACKET: Nothing, nothing.

MANIAC: Precisely... (*Once again aggressive*) You see nothing! Who was it told you that I was supposed to be arriving to take a second look into the business of the anarchist's death?

SPORTS JACKET: (*In a tight spot*) Well, actually... I...

MANIAC: I'd like the truth, please... I get terribly upset when people lie to me... I have a tic too, see... here in my neck, and when people lie to me, look, it starts to twitch.... look, see? So, did you know I was coming, or didn't you?

SPORTS JACKET: (*Swallowing nervously*) Yes, I did know... But we weren't expecting you so soon... actually...

MANIAC: Of course – and that's precisely why the Supreme Court decided that I should come up early... We too have our informants, you know. And so we've caught you on the hop, eh? Does this worry you?

SPORTS JACKET: No, no, of course not... (*The MANIAC points to the nerve twitching in his neck*) ...Oh, alright, yes, it does... (*He shows him to a chair*) Sit down, please... Can I take your hat for you...? (*He takes it, but then has second thoughts*) Or maybe you'd prefer to keep it...?

MANIAC: No, no, help yourself, it isn't mine anyway.

SPORTS JACKET: Eh? (*He goes towards the window*)
Would you like me to shut the window?

MANIAC: Not at all. Don't put yourself out on my account. I wonder, would you mind calling in the Superintendent... I'd like to start as soon as possible.

SPORTS JACKET: Certainly... But wouldn't it be better if we all went to his office. It's a bit more comfortable.

MANIAC: I'm sure it is. But it was in this office that the unfortunate business with the anarchist happened, wasn't it?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes, it was.

MANIAC: (*Flinging his arms open*) Well, then!

He sits down and takes a number of documents from INSPECTOR BERTOZZO's briefcase. He also has another, enormous bag with him, from which he pulls an assortment of odds and ends: a magnifying glass, a pair of tweezers, a stapler, a judge's wooden gavel and a copy of the Penal Code. Over by the door the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET is talking quietly to the CONSTABLE.

MANIAC: (*As he continues putting his papers in order*) If you don't mind, Inspector, I'll have no whispering while I'm here. Out loud, please!

SPORTS JACKET: I'm sorry. (*Turning to the CONSTABLE*) Ask the Superintendent to join us at once, if he can.

MANIAC: And even if he can't.

The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET corrects himself.

SPORTS JACKET: Yes, even if he can't.

CONSTABLE: (*He exits*) Yessir...

SPORTS JACKET: (*For a moment he watches as the JUDGE orders his papers and pins a number of sheets up on the side wall, on the flaps of the shutters, and on the cupboard. All*

of a sudden he remembers something) Oh yes... The statements! *(He picks up the phone and dials a number)* Hello, get me Bertozzo... Where's he gone? Upstairs to see the Superintendent?

He replaces the handset, then picks it up again to dial another number. The MANIAC interrupts him.

MANIAC: Pardon my interrupting, Inspector...

SPORTS JACKET: Yes, your honour...?

MANIAC: This Inspector Bertozzo that you're so concerned about, would he maybe have something to do with the re-opening of the anarchist's inquest?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes... no... I mean, well, since he's the one with all the paperwork...

MANIAC: We don't need it... I have everything we need here, so why bother getting a second copy?

SPORTS JACKET: Well I suppose we could do without.

From off-stage we hear the angry voice of the SUPERINTENDENT. He comes flying into the office with CONSTABLE following close behind looking embarrassed.

SUPERINTENDENT: What exactly did you mean by that, Inspector, to come to your office if I can, and even if I can't?

SPORTS JACKET: I'm sorry, Super... It's just that since...

SUPERINTENDENT: Just that since be damned! You're getting too damn big for your boots, d'you know that? What's more, I'm not at all amused by your insolent style of behaviour... Especially when it comes to punching your colleagues in the face!

SPORTS JACKET: But Superintendent... Didn't Bertozzo tell you about the raspberry and his moronic joke about one-storey police stations in Calabria?

The MANIAC pretends to be sorting out his paperwork. He suddenly ducks beneath the edge of the desk, and then re-emerges.

SUPERINTENDENT: Raspberries!! Look, let's not start behaving like children. We need to keep on our toes... we're in the hot seat now. (*The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET signals to him desperately, in an attempt to shut him up*) ...with all these bloody journalists running round making insinuations... telling lies... and don't try to shut me up, because I believe in speaking my mind and I don't care who... (*The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET gestures towards the JUDGE, who pretends to be absorbed in something else*) Ah, yes...! And who's this, for God's sake?! A journalist? Why didn't you tell me...

MANIAC: (*Without raising his eyes from his paperwork*) No, Superintendent, don't worry, I'm not a journalist... There won't be any nonsense like that, I can assure you.

SUPERINTENDENT: I'm very glad to hear it.

MANIAC: This young man here, who, in my opinion, is rather too irritable for his own good, and who, as I gather from your conversation, also appears to be allergic to raspberries... (*Confidentially, taking him aside*) A word of advice, Superintendent... speaking as a father: this boy needs a good psychiatrist... You should take him to see this friend of mine... He's a genius. (*He hands him a visiting card*) Professor Antonio Rabbi... ex lecturer... watch out for the comma...

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Not knowing how to disengage himself*) Thank you, but if you'll allow me, I...

MANIAC: (*Suddenly changing tone*) Certainly I'll allow you... Sit down, and let's get started... By the way, did your colleague tell you that I...

SPORTS JACKET: Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot... (*To the SUPERINTENDENT*) This gentleman is Professor Marco Maria Malipiero, first counsel to the High Court...

MANIAC: I wouldn't insist on the 'first'... Let's just say 'one of the first'!

SPORTS JACKET: As you wish.

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Having difficulty recovering from the*

shock) Your Honour... I really don't know...

SPORTS JACKET: (*Coming to his help*) His Honour the Judge is here to re-open the inquiry into the case of the ...

SUPERINTENDENT: (*In an unexpected reaction*) Oh of course, of course, we were expecting you!

MANIAC: You see, you see what a straightforward man your superior is? He prefers to play his cards openly! Learn from him! Another generation, another school, I would say!

SUPERINTENDENT: Another generation...!

MANIAC: Actually, if you don't mind my saying so, there's something very, how can I put it, familiar about you... As if we've met before somewhere... years ago. You wouldn't happen to have been in charge of some concentration camp during the War, would you?

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Stammering*) Concentration camp...?

MANIAC: No, no, of course not, what am I saying?! A man like yourself running a concentration camp? Unheard of! So, let's get down to business. (*He thumbs through his papers*) Right, now, according to these statements... On the evening of the... the date's immaterial... an anarchist, a railway shunter by profession, was right here in this room, being interrogated as to whether or not he had been involved in the bomb attack at the Milan Bank of Agriculture, which caused the death of sixteen innocent civilians. And here we have your precise words, Superintendent: 'There was strong evidence pointing in his direction'! Was that what you said?

SUPERINTENDENT: Well, yes, but that was only right at the start, your Honour... Later on...

MANIAC: We'll stick with the 'right at the start' for the moment... One step at a time. So, at about midnight, the anarchist was 'seized by a raptus' – these are still your words – he was seized by a 'raptus' and went and threw himself to his death from the window. Now, what is a 'raptus'? Bandieu says that a 'raptus' is a heightened form

of suicidal anxiety which can seize even people who are psychologically perfectly normal, if something provokes them to extremes of angst, in other words, to utter desperation. Correct?

SUPERINTENDENT and SPORTS JACKET: Correct.

MANIAC: So we need to find out who or what it was provoked this anxiety, this desperation. I suspect that the best way would be if we do a reconstruction.

Superintendent, the stage is yours.

SUPERINTENDENT: Me?

MANIAC: Yes, go ahead: would you mind re-enacting your famous entrance?

SUPERINTENDENT: I'm sorry, what famous...?

MANIAC: The one that brought about the 'raptus'.

SUPERINTENDENT: Your honour, there must be a misunderstanding here. It wasn't me who did the entrance, it was one of my officers...

MANIAC: Tut, tut, tut, it's not very nice to pass the buck to your subordinates. In fact I find it rather naughty... Come on, now, play your part...

SPORTS JACKET: I think I should explain, your Honour, it was just one of those tricks of the trade that the police occasionally use, to put pressure on a subject to confess.

MANIAC: Who asked your opinion? I was speaking with your superior! You should learn some manners. From now on, you only speak when spoken to... Understand? And now, Superintendent, I'd like to see you doing that entrance.

SUPERINTENDENT: Oh alright. It went more or less like this. Our anarchist suspect was sitting there, right where you're sitting now. My colleague – er, I mean, I – came in somewhat brusquely...

MANIAC: Well done!

SUPERINTENDENT: And I went for him!

MANIAC: That's what I like to hear!

SUPERINTENDENT: My dear railway shunter, not to mention subversive... You'd better stop making fun of me...

MANIAC: No, no... Stick to the script, please. *(He waves the statements)* No censorship here, if you don't mind... That wasn't quite what you said!

SUPERINTENDENT: Well, I said: 'Have you quite finished taking the piss?'

MANIAC: Well done. And then what did you say?

SUPERINTENDENT: We have evidence to prove that you were the one who planted the bombs at the station.

MANIAC: What bombs?

SUPERINTENDENT: *(In a lower tone, more discursive)* I'm talking about bombing on the twenty-fifth...

MANIAC: No, no, use the same words you used that evening. Imagine that I'm the anarchist railwayman. Come on, let's have you: 'What bombs?'

SUPERINTENDENT: Don't play dumb with me! You know very well what bombs. The ones you planted on the train at the Central Station eight months ago.

MANIAC: Did you really have this evidence?

SUPERINTENDENT: No, but as the Inspector was explaining just now, the police use these ploys every once in a while...

MANIAC: Aha... Shrewd move!

He slaps the SUPERINTENDENT on the back, much to his surprise.

SUPERINTENDENT: But we had our suspicions... Since the suspect was the only anarchist railwayman in Milan... there was a good chance it was him...

MANIAC: Absolutely – I agree... crystal clear. Since it's obvious that the bomb on the railway must have been planted by a railwayman, by the same logic we can say that the bombs at the Law Courts in Rome were planted by a

judge, the bombs at the Monument to the Unknown Soldier were planted by a soldier, and the bomb at the Bank of Agriculture was planted by either a banker or a farmer, take your pick... (*He turns nasty*) Do me a favour, gentlemen... I'm here to conduct a serious inquiry, not to play cretinous word-games! So let's get on with it! Here it says: (*He reads from a sheet of paper*) 'The anarchist seemed unaffected by the accusation, and was smiling incredulously.' Who made that statement?

SPORTS JACKET: Me, you honour.

MANIAC: Well done. So he was smiling... But it also says here – and this is word for word what you said at the time: 'Undoubtedly one element in his suicidal crisis had been the fear of losing his job, of being sacked.' So? One minute he's smiling incredulously, and the next he's terrified? Who was it terrified him...? Who was it hit him with the bombshell that he was about to lose his job?

SPORTS JACKET: Er, well I, er...

MANIAC: Now look, please, there's no need to play coy with me. I know you're not running a girls' school here... I don't see why, when every police force in the world comes down like a ton of bricks, you have to be the only two going gently-gently. Don't you ever watch the police crime serials on TV? It's your absolute *right* to carry on like that. Of course it is!

SUPERINTENDENT and SPORTS JACKET: Thank you, your honour!

MANIAC: Don't mention it. Anyway, I realise it can be hard for you: you say to an anarchist: 'Things are looking pretty bad for you... Let's hope your employers don't find out you're an anarchist... Know what I mean? Otherwise bang goes your job on the railways...' And naturally he gets depressed... To tell the truth, anarchists are very attached to their jobs... Basically they're just petty bourgeois... attached to their little creature comforts... regular income every month, Christmas bonus, pension, health insurance, a peaceful old age... Believe me, there's no one like your

anarchist for planning for his old age... I'm referring to your present-day anarchists, of course... your wishy-washy anarchists, not the real anarchists of yesteryear, the ones who were 'hounded by persecution from one country to the next...' Speaking of persecution, Superintendent...? Oh no, my goodness, what am I saying?! Anyway, to recapitulate, you put the anarchist in a state of terminal depression, blacken his day for him, and he throws himself out...

SPORTS JACKET: If you'll allow me, your Honour, it didn't happen straight away... There's still my contribution to come...

MANIAC: Ah yes, Inspector, you're right... First of all you went out. Then you came back in again... And after a dramatic pause, you said... Come on, Inspector, let's have your lines... Imagine that I'm the anarchist again...

SPORTS JACKET: Right, fine. (*He goes out of the door, and comes back in, playing his part*) 'I've just had a phone call from Rome... I've got a bit of news for you: your friend – sorry, your *comrade* – the dancer, has confessed... He's admitted that he was the one who planted the bomb at the bank in Milan.'

MANIAC: Was this true?

SPORTS JACKET: Of course not.

MANIAC: And how did our railwayman take this?

SPORTS JACKET: Badly, in fact. He went white as a sheet, asked for a cigarette... lit it...

MANIAC: And threw himself out of the window.

SUPERINTENDENT: No, not straight away, actually...

MANIAC: But you did say 'straight away' in the first version, didn't you?

SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, I did.

MANIAC: What's more, you yourself told the newspapers and the TV that before his tragic gesture, the anarchist was 'in a tight spot'. Was that what you said?

SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, 'in a tight spot'.

MANIAC: And what did you go on to say then...?

SUPERINTENDENT: That his alibi, that he had spent the afternoon of the bombing playing cards in a bar by the Canal, had collapsed.

MANIAC: And that therefore our anarchist was *also* strongly suspected of the bombing at the Milan bank, in addition to the trains. And you ended your statement by saying that the anarchist's suicide was an 'obvious admission of guilt'.

SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, Sir.

MANIAC: And you, Inspector, were announcing to all and sundry that there was proof that he was a villain and a hardened criminal. But just a couple of weeks later, Superintendent, you issued a statement to say – here it is – (*He shows him a piece of paper*) that 'naturally' – I repeat, 'naturally' – there was no such evidence against our poor railwayman. Am I right? So that he was completely innocent. And you, Inspector, even went as far as to say: 'The anarchist was a good lad.'

SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, fair enough... We'd made a mistake...

MANIAC: Of course, of course... We all make mistakes... But if I might say so, you went right over the top: first you arrest an innocent citizen more or less at random, then you abuse your powers by detaining him beyond the legal limit, and then you go and traumatise the poor man by telling him that you have proof that he's been going round planting bombs on railways; then you more or less deliberately terrorise him that he's going to lose his job; then you tell him that his card-playing alibi has collapsed; and then comes the *coup de grâce* – you tell him that his friend and comrade in Rome has confessed to the bombings in Milan. In other words, his best friend is a mass murderer. Thereupon he becomes terminally depressed, observes that 'this is the death of anarchism', and throws himself out of the window!

I mean, are we crazy or what? If you ask me, when you give a person the run-around like this it's no wonder he gets seized by a 'raptus'. No, I'm sorry, in my opinion you are all extremely guilty! I regard you as totally responsible for the anarchist's death – you should be charged at once with having driven him to suicide!

SUPERINTENDENT: You can't be serious, your honour! You said it yourself, our job is to interrogate suspects, and if we want to get them to talk, every once in a while we have to use tricks and ploys, and sometimes psychological violence...

MANIAC: But here we're not dealing with 'once in a while'. This was continuous, premeditated violence. To start with, did you or did you not have proof that this poor railwayman had lied about his alibi? Answers, please!

SUPERINTENDENT: No, we didn't have specific proof...
But...

MANIAC: I'm not interested in 'ifs' and 'buts'! Is it or is it not the case that at this precise moment there are two or three old age pensioners right here in Milan who could have corroborated the anarchist's alibi?

SPORTS JACKET: It is.

MANIAC: So you lied, on TV and in the papers, when you said that his alibi had collapsed and that there was a whole pile of evidence against him? It seems that you don't only use your tricks and traps and porky-pies to get suspects to confess – you're quite happy to foist them onto an unsuspecting public too! Where did the information come from, that the anarchist dancer had confessed?

SPORTS JACKET: We made it up.

MANIAC: Well, how very creative! You should take up writing, you two. And you'll probably get the chance, believe me. Plenty of time to write, in prison.

So, feeling a bit knocked out, eh? Well, I think I should add that down in Rome they have a stack of evidence of major procedural irregularities having been committed by

the pair of you. You're done for: the Ministry of Justice has decided that you must be made an example of, and that you must be dealt with with the full severity of the law, so as to restore the public's lost faith in the police.!

SUPERINTENDENT: What? I don't believe it!

SPORTS JACKET: How could they...?

MANIAC: It's true, I'm afraid: your careers are in tatters! Blame it on politics, friends! At the start you served a useful function: something had to be done to stop all the strikes... So they decided to start a witch-hunt against the Left. But now things have gone a bit too far... People have got very upset about the death of our defenestrated anarchist... they want someone's head on the block, and the government's going to give them – *yours!*

SUPERINTENDENT: Ours?!

SPORTS JACKET: That's right!

MANIAC: There's an old English proverb that says: 'The Lord of the Manor set his mastiffs on the peasants... The peasants complained to the King, so the Lord of the Manor went and killed his dogs, to make amends.'

SUPERINTENDENT: And you really think...

MANIAC: Well, who am I, if not your executioner?

SPORTS JACKET: What a poxy job!

SUPERINTENDENT: I've been set up... and I know who did it... Ha, he's going to pay for this!

MANIAC: I'd say a lot of people are going to be very happy to see you two get your come-uppance...

SPORTS JACKET: They'll make mincemeat of us! Can you imagine the headlines? The humiliation... the sniggering... the jokes behind our backs...

SUPERINTENDENT: Everyone turning their backs on us, pretending they don't know us... They won't even give us a job as car park attendants by the time we're finished!

SPORTS JACKET: What a bastard world!

MANIAC: No – what a bastard government!

SUPERINTENDENT: Your Honour, you're going to have to advise us. What do we do now?

MANIAC: How should I know?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes – what would *you* advise?

MANIAC: If I were in your shoes...

SUPERINTENDENT: Yes?

MANIAC: I'd throw myself out of the window!

SPORTS JACKET and SUPERINTENDENT: What?!

MANIAC: You asked my opinion... the way things are looking... rather than have to endure the humiliation... Take my advice, jump! Why wait? Wait for what? What's left for you in this lousy world? Call this living? Bastard world, bastard government... Bastard bloody everything! Jump!

He hauls them over to the window.

SUPERINTENDENT: No, your Honour, what are you doing? There's still hope!

MANIAC: There's *no* hope, you're done for... Understand...? Done for!! Jump!

SUPERINTENDENT and SPORTS JACKET: Help! No, stop...! Don't push!

MANIAC: I'm not pushing. You've been seized by a 'raptus'!

He forces them both up onto the window ledge and pushes them, trying to get them to jump. Enter the CONSTABLE who had gone out at the start of the interrogation.

CONSTABLE: What's happening, Sir?

MANIAC: (*Letting go of them*) Ha, ha, nothing. Everything's fine... Isn't it, Inspector? Eh, Superintendent? Come on, put the officer's mind at rest.

SUPERINTENDENT: (*He comes down, from the window-sill, shaking*) It's...er... alright... relax... It was only...

MANIAC: ...A 'raptus'.

CONSTABLE: A 'raptus'?

MANIAC: Yes. They were trying to throw themselves out of the window.

CONSTABLE: Them too?

MANIAC: Yes, but not a word to the press, eh!

CONSTABLE: No, sir.

SPORTS JACKET: It's not true, though – it was you, your Honour, you were trying...

SUPERINTENDENT: Exactly.

CONSTABLE: You were trying to throw yourself out, your Honour?

SUPERINTENDENT: No, he was doing the pushing.

MANIAC: It's true, it's true: I drove them to it. And they were in such a desperate state that they were almost ready to go... When a person is desperate, it takes practically nothing...

CONSTABLE: I know, sir!

MANIAC: And now look at them, they're still in a panic... Ooh, look at those long faces!

CONSTABLE: (*Excited at being brought into the conversation by the JUDGE*) Yes, Sir, up shit creek without a paddle, you might say...

SUPERINTENDENT: Constable!

CONSTABLE: I'm sorry, I meant, er, down the pan...

MANIAC: So flush the chain, and away we go...! Cheer up, gentlemen!

SUPERINTENDENT: It's all very well for you... If you were in our position... Do you know what, there was a moment just then when... I was actually almost about to throw myself out!

CONSTABLE: Throw *yourself* out, Sir? You yourself, personally?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes. Me too!

MANIAC: You see, you see, Superintendent – amazing, the effect of a ‘raptus’! And whose fault would you say it was?

SUPERINTENDENT: Those bastards in the government... Who else? ...First they give you a free hand... ‘Let’s have a bit of repression, create a climate of subversion, the threat of social disorder...’

SPORTS JACKET: You bend over backwards for them, and then...

MANIAC: No, no, no... not at all... The fault would have been entirely mine!

SUPERINTENDENT: Yours? Why?

MANIAC: Because not a word of what I said was true! I made it all up!

SUPERINTENDENT: What do you mean? You mean to say that down in Rome they’re not really out to get us?

MANIAC: Never even crossed their minds.

SUPERINTENDENT: And what about the ‘stack of evidence’ against us?

MANIAC: Doesn’t exist.

SPORTS JACKET: And the business about the Ministry wanting our heads on the block?

MANIAC: All lies: they all love you, down in Rome. They think the sun shines out of your you-know-whats.

SUPERINTENDENT: You’re not just having us on, are you?

MANIAC: Not at all! The government thinks you’re entirely wonderful! And by the way, the English proverb about the lord killing his dogs? I made that up too. Whoever heard of a lord killing his dogs to satisfy a peasant? If anything, it’d be the other way round! And if a dog happened to die in the fray, the king would immediately send its owner a wreath and a telegram of condolence.

The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET goes to say

something. The SUPERINTENDENT is nervous and tetchy.

SPORTS JACKET: Unless I've got this wrong...

SUPERINTENDENT: Of course you've got it wrong... Leave this to me, Inspector...

SPORTS JACKET: Certainly, sorry, sir...

SUPERINTENDENT: I don't understand, your Honour, why you wanted to set us up like that...

MANIAC: Set you up? Not at all, it was just one of the 'tricks of the trade' which we visiting judges also like to use every once in a while, in order to demonstrate to the police that such methods are uncivilised, not to mention criminal!

SUPERINTENDENT: So you still think that when the anarchist jumped out of the window, it was because we drove him to it?

MANIAC: But you just said as much yourselves, a moment ago... when you panicked!

SPORTS JACKET: But we weren't even in the room when he threw himself out! Ask the officer, here!

CONSTABLE: It's true, your Honour. When he threw himself out, they'd just gone out!

MANIAC: That's like saying that if a man plants a bomb in a bank, and then goes out, he's not guilty, because he wasn't there when it went off! Ha! You run a fine line in logic here.

SUPERINTENDENT: But no, your Honour, there's been a misunderstanding... The constable was referring to the first version... but we're talking about the second.

MANIAC: Oh yes, of course... There's a bit of a rewrite, the second time round, isn't there.

SUPERINTENDENT: Well, I wouldn't exactly call it a rewrite... more like a correction.

MANIAC: Fair enough. Let's take a look at this 'correction'.

The SUPERINTENDENT signals to the INSPECTOR IN

THE SPORTS JACKET.

SPORTS JACKET: Well, we have...

MANIAC: Don't forget that here I also have your statements for the second version. Please, go ahead...

SPORTS JACKET: We've altered the time of our... what can I say... our ploy about the anarchist's alibi and so on...

MANIAC: How do you mean?

SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, well, you see, we stated that our session with the anarchist, when we tried to trick him, didn't happen at midnight, it happened at about eight in the evening.

SPORTS JACKET: Twenty-hundred hours, if you prefer...!

MANIAC: Ah, so you've brought the time of his flying lesson forward by four hours! A sort of super-summer-time, eh?

SPORTS JACKET: No, not the time of his fall. That still happened at midnight... the same as before. There were witnesses.

SUPERINTENDENT: Including the journalist who was down below in the courtyard at the time, you remember? (*The MANIAC indicates that he doesn't*) The one who heard him bouncing off the ledge and hitting the ground, and came running over... He took a note of the time it happened.

MANIAC: OK... so the terminal depression happened at eight o'clock and the suicide happened at midnight. So now what do we do with the 'raptus'? What I mean is, unless I'm mistaken, your whole version of the suicide is based on this 'raptus'...

Everyone concerned, from the judge who did the original inquest through to the Public Prosecutor, has always stressed that the poor devil threw himself out because of a... *sudden* 'raptus'... and now, hey presto, you've done away with the 'raptus'!

SUPERINTENDENT: No we haven't. Not at all.

MANIAC: Yes you have. We now have a gap of four whole hours between the moment when you, or your colleague, comes into the room and perpetrates this monstrous joke that 'we have concrete proof', and then the suicide. So where's my 'raptus' gone all of a sudden? After a gap of four hours, the anarchist would have had time to recover from a lot more than just your little porky pies... You could have told him that Bakunin was a supergrass for the police and the Vatican combined, and he'd have got over it!

SUPERINTENDENT: No, there *was* a 'raptus', but we just wanted to show that it couldn't have been caused by our feeding him false information... precisely because there was a gap of four hours between then and the time of his suicide!

MANIAC: Of course – you're right! That's brilliant... Well done!!!

SUPERINTENDENT: Thank you, sir.

MANIAC: So that way nobody is going to be able to lay the blame at your door! Alright, a few white lies were told, but they couldn't have been the reason for his death!

SPORTS JACKET: Exactly. So we're not guilty.

MANIAC: Congratulations! We still don't have the faintest idea why the poor wretch threw himself out of the window, but that doesn't matter! For the time being, the main thing is, you're innocent.

SUPERINTENDENT: Allow me to thank you again. I must admit, I was beginning to think that you had it in for us.

MANIAC: How do you mean?

SPORTS JACKET: That you'd made up your mind that we were guilty.

MANIAC: Oh my goodness, no... Quite the opposite. I realise that I have been rather provocative, but I only did to force you to come up with ideas that were sufficiently convincing for me to be able to help get you out of this mess.

SUPERINTENDENT: I'm really grateful to you... It is good to know that the judiciary is still a policeman's best friend!!!

MANIAC: You might even say 'collaborator'...

SPORTS JACKET and SUPERINTENDENT: Of course.

MANIAC: But you're going to have to collaborate too, if you really want me to get you out of this... and put you completely in the clear.

SUPERINTENDENT: Absolutely.

SPORTS JACKET: My pleasure.

MANIAC: Well, the first thing we're going to have to prove – absolutely irrefutably – is that during that four-hour gap the anarchist had lost all trace of his famous 'psychological collapse', as the inquest judge called it at the time.

SPORTS JACKET: Well, there's the statement by the officer here – and mine too – where we say that, after a moment's uneasiness, the anarchist relaxed again...

MANIAC: Do we have that in black and white?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes, I think so...

MANIAC: Oh yes, here it is – in the second version of the events... (*He reads*) 'The railwayman became more relaxed and said that he didn't have a good relationship with the ex-dancer.' Excellent! And let's not forget that our railwayman was very well aware that the anarchist group in Rome was choc-a-bloc with spies and police informers... I believe he himself had said as much to the dancer: 'The police and fascists are using you as a way of creating a climate of social disorder... Your group is full of paid provocateurs... who seem to be able to do what they like with you... and the Left's going to carry the can for all this...'

SPORTS JACKET: Maybe that was why they had a row?

MANIAC: Very possibly, and since the dancer seems to have ignored his warnings, maybe our railwayman was beginning to think that he was a police spy too.

SUPERINTENDENT: Ah yes, could be.

MANIAC: And therefore not worth worrying about. Case proven. The anarchist was happy!

SPORTS JACKET: In fact he was smiling... You remember – I said so, in the first version.

MANIAC: True, but unfortunately we have a small problem – in the first version you also said that the anarchist lit a cigarette, and that he was ‘utterly dejected’.

SUPERINTENDENT: You’re right, your Honour, that was *his* idea. I told him, I said: ‘We’re supposed to be police officers – leave the fancy screenplays to the movie-makers...’

MANIAC: You know what I say? The only way to find a sensible solution to all this is to chuck it all in the bin and start over again.

SPORTS JACKET: You mean draw up a third version?

MANIAC: Not at all, not at all – just make the two we’ve already got a bit more plausible.

SUPERINTENDENT: I agree.

MANIAC: So, Rule Number One: What’s said is said, and can’t be unsaid. We have to take it as given that you, officer, and you, Superintendent (or someone acting on your behalf), played your little charade... that the anarchist smoked his last cigarette, and uttered his famous last words... But here’s where the difference comes: he didn’t throw himself out of the window, because it wasn’t yet midnight, it was only eight o’clock in the evening.

SUPERINTENDENT: As in the second version...

MANIAC: And, as we know, railwaymen are very particular about time-keeping.

SUPERINTENDENT: So this gives us plenty of time to change his mood... and to delay his suicidal intentions.

SPORTS JACKET: Things were going swimmingly!

MANIAC: Yes, but how did this change come about? Time on

its own is not sufficient to heal certain wounds...
 Somebody must have given him a hand... I don't know... a
 kind gesture, or something...

CONSTABLE: I gave him a piece of chewing gum!

MANIAC: Well said. And you?

SUPERINTENDENT: Um, I wasn't there...

MANIAC: No, this is a very delicate moment, you must have
 been there!

SUPERINTENDENT: Oh alright, I was.

MANIAC: Right, now, for a start, can we say that you were
 both a bit *moved* by the state the anarchist had got into?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes. In fact I felt really sorry for him.

MANIAC: And might we also say that you, Superintendent,
 were also sorry to see him feeling so bad...? You are, after
 all, a sensitive sort of chap, are you not?

SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, I was ever so sorry... Sad, even.

MANIAC: Perfect! And I bet you couldn't resist going up to
 him and putting your hand on his shoulder...

SUPERINTENDENT: No, I don't think so.

MANIAC: Oh come on, a fatherly gesture...

SUPERINTENDENT: Well maybe... I don't remember.

MANIAC: I'm sure you did! Please, tell me you did...!

CONSTABLE: He did, he did... I saw him!

SUPERINTENDENT: Fair enough, if he saw me...

MANIAC: (*Turning to the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS
 JACKET*) You, on the other hand, gave him a friendly pat
 on the cheek... like this.

He gives him a friendly pat on the cheek.

SPORTS JACKET: No, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I
 most definitely did not... No friendly pats on cheeks.

MANIAC: You do indeed disappoint me... And do you know

why? Because that man was not only an anarchist, he was a railwayman! Have you forgotten that? And do you know what this railwayman means? It's something that goes back to the childhood of every one of us. It means train sets – clockwork... electric... Didn't you ever have a train set when you were a kid?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes, I did... A steam train... With real steam... An armoured train, of course.

MANIAC: And did it go toot-toot?

SPORTS JACKET: Sure, toot-toot...

MANIAC: Wonderful! When you said 'toot-toot', I saw your eyes light up! Inspector, I just *know* that you felt affection for this man... because in your subconscious you connected him with your train set... If your suspect had been... a bank clerk, or something... you wouldn't have given him a second thought... But he was a railwayman... and you, I just *know*... you gave him a friendly pat on the cheek.

CONSTABLE: That's right, that's right – I saw him... He patted him on the cheek. Twice!

MANIAC: See...? We have witnesses! And what did you say as you were patting him on the cheek...?

SPORTS JACKET: I don't remember...

MANIAC: I'll tell you what you said: you said, 'Cheer up... don't look so miserable (and you called him by his name), you'll see, this won't be the death of anarchism!'

SPORTS JACKET: No, I don't think so...

MANIAC: Oh come now... for goodness sake... You *did* say it... Otherwise I'm going to get annoyed. My neck, look at my neck. Did you or did you not say it?

SPORTS JACKET: Oh alright, if it makes you any happier...

MANIAC: Well say it, then... I have to put it in the statement.

He begins writing.

SPORTS JACKET: Well, I said... 'Cheer up (*name of actor*), don't look so miserable... You'll see, this won't be the

death of anarchism!'

MANIAC: Well done. And then you sang a song.

SPORTS JACKET: We sang a song...?

MANIAC: Of course... Because you were all in such a good mood... You were all friends, comrades, even... And you couldn't resist having a good sing. Let's see, what could you have sung? How about an anarchist song? 'Nostra patria è il mondo intiero', I imagine...

SPORTS JACKET: No, I'm sorry, your Honour, but we really can't go along with that, an anarchist sing-song...

MANIAC: Oh, you can't, eh? Well, you know what I say? At this point I give up! You can damn well sort yourselves out... It's down to you! I'll string together the facts that you've told me so far... and do you know what will come out – excuse the terminology – a big bloody mess! Yes, really! You say one thing, then you contradict it... First you give one version, then half an hour later, you give a completely different one... You can't even agree among yourselves. You tell the world's press, and, if I am not mistaken, the TV news as well, that 'naturally' there are no written minutes of your interrogation of the anarchist, because there wasn't time, and then all of a sudden, a miracle, we find that we have two or three – and all signed by his very own hand! If one of your suspects was to contradict himself one half as much as you have, you'd have had him hung, drawn and quartered by now!

Do you know what people are going to think of you? That you're a bunch of bent bastards and liars... Who do you think is ever going to believe you again? And do you know why people won't believe you...? Because your version of the facts, as well as being total bollocks, lacks humanity. Not a shred of fellow-feeling... You never ever let yourselves go... Let rip... Laugh, cry... Sing!

People would be happy to forgive all your cretinous blunders if they could only see two decent human beings behind it all – two policemen who, just for once, allowed

their hearts to rule their heads, and agreed to sing the anarchist's favourite song with him... just to make him happy... 'Nostra patria è il mondo intiero...' It would bring tears to their eyes... They'd sing your praises, shout your names from the rooftops, hearing a story like that! So please, for your own sakes... Sing!!

He sings the song, quietly at first, and encourages the POLICEMEN to sing. At first they are embarrassed, but then, one after the other, they join in.

Raminghi per le terre
E per i mari
Per un'idea lasciamo
I nostri cari.

Come on, sing up! (He puts his arm round their shoulders to encourage them)

Nostra patria è il mondo intiero...

Let's have a bit of oomph, for God's sake!

...Nostra legge è la libertà
Ed un pensiero, ed un pensiero...
Nostra patria è il mondo intiero...
Nostra legge è la libertà
Ed un pensiero
Ribelle in cuor ci sta... [4]

*The lights fade on the singers.
Blackout.*

ACT TWO**Scene One**

The stage is still in darkness. We hear again the song that ended Act One. The lights come up, and as they reach full intensity, the chorus ends in a descanted finale.

MANIAC: (*Clapping, hugging his fellow singers and shaking hands all round*) Well done, brilliant! I think we can say that we've done it. How could anyone possibly doubt that at that moment the anarchist was in an extremely good mood?!

SPORTS JACKET: I'd say he was probably even happy.

MANIAC: Of course he was! He felt at home. It felt like being in his anarchist group in Rome where, as we know, there were always more plain-clothes police than there were real anarchists.

SUPERINTENDENT: 'He emerged spiritually unscathed from the onslaught of our false accusations.'

MANIAC: So, no 'raptus'. The 'raptus' comes later. (*He points to the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET*) When?

SPORTS JACKET: Around midnight.

MANIAC: And what caused it?

SUPERINTENDENT: Well, I suppose the reason...

MANIAC: No, no, no, for goodness sake! You suppose

nothing... You're not supposed to know anything about it, Superintendent!

SUPERINTENDENT: *Why* am I supposed not to know anything...?

MANIAC: For the love of God, here we are, going to extraordinary lengths to get you out of this mess, to prove that you had nothing to do with the death of the anarchist... because you weren't even there...

SUPERINTENDENT: You're right, I'm sorry... I wasn't thinking.

MANIAC: Well you *should* be thinking, Superintendent... Pay attention... So, as Totò [5] said in one of his farces, 'At this time, the Superintendent was not in the station'! But the Inspector was.

SPORTS JACKET: That's true, I was. But I went out shortly afterwards...

MANIAC: Oh, here we go, passing the buck again. Now, there's a good chap, tell me what happened around midnight.

SPORTS JACKET: There were six of us in the room: four constables, myself, and a lieutenant from the carabinieri.

MANIAC: Oh yes, the one who then got promoted to captain.

SPORTS JACKET: That's the one.

MANIAC: And what were you doing?

SPORTS JACKET: We were interrogating the anarchist.

MANIAC: What, again? 'Where were you... what were you doing... don't get funny with me, son...!'

SPORTS JACKET: Not at all, your Honour... No, we were interrogating him jokingly...

MANIAC: You're kidding! Jokingly?!

SPORTS JACKET: No, really... Ask the officer, here...

He pushes the CONSTABLE towards the JUDGE.

MANIAC: No need to. It may seem incredible... (*He waves a*

sheet of paper) ...but here it is, in the statement made to the judge who adjourned the inquest!

SPORTS JACKET: Certainly, and he never raised any doubts about it.

MANIAC: Ha, I can well believe it... But in what sense, 'jokingly'?

SPORTS JACKET: In the sense that we were being playful... We were interrogating him but trying to have a laugh at the same time.

MANIAC: I don't understand; were you playing Blind Man's Buff? Putting funny hats on? Blowing trumpets?

SPORTS JACKET: Well, we didn't quite go that far... But we were having a bit of a chuckle... A few jokes, a few gags...

CONSTABLE: That's right, we were having a laugh. You know, the Inspector might not look it, but he's got a terrific sense of humour... When he's on form some of his interrogations are hilarious... Ha, ha, he's terrific!

MANIAC: Now I understand why the government's decided to change your motto.

SPORTS JACKET: Change our motto?

MANIAC: That's what I said – the Ministry's already decided.

SUPERINTENDENT: They're going to change it?

MANIAC: Well, not so much change it as complete it... How does it go at the moment?

SPORTS JACKET: 'The police – at the service of today's citizens.'

MANIAC: Well, from now on it's going to be: 'The police – at the service of today's citizens – to give them a good laugh!'

SPORTS JACKET: Ha, ha, pull the other one, your Honour!

MANIAC: Not at all, I quite believe that you treat your suspects 'jokingly', as you say... I remember, I was in Bergamo at the time when they were interrogating the members of the so-called 'Monday Gang' – you

remember? – there was even a priest involved, and a doctor, and the man who ran the chemist's shop... virtually the entire village put on trial, and then found innocent. Well, I was staying in a little hotel right near the police station where the interrogations were taking place, and just about every night I was woken up by shouting and screaming. At first I thought it was the sound of people being beaten up... but then I realised that they were *laughing*. Yes – the suspects were laughing: 'Ha, ha, oh Jesus! Stop it, ha, ha! Help, you're too much! Inspector, stop it, I'll die laughing!'

SUPERINTENDENT: Joking apart, you do of course know that every one of the officers involved, from the chief inspector to the lowest constable, all went to prison for that?

MANIAC: Yes. For comical behaviour liable to occasion a breach of the peace, wasn't it? (*The POLICEMEN have had enough of his joking*) No, no, I'm being serious. You have no idea how many completely innocent parties move heaven and earth just to get themselves arrested and brought to this station! You think they're anarchists, communists, autonomists, trade unionists... No, the truth is, they're all just poor, sick manic depressives, hypochondriacs, gloomy people, who disguise themselves as revolutionaries just so's they can be interrogated by you... and at last have a damn good laugh! Get a bit of enjoyment, for once in their lives!

SUPERINTENDENT: I would say that you're not just making fun of us, your Honour, you're taking the piss!

MANIAC: Goodness, no, I wouldn't dream of it...

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Rubbing his arms*) Would you mind if I shut the window? It's turned cold all of a sudden...

MANIAC: Go ahead... You're right, it has turned a bit parky!

SPORTS JACKET: That's because the sun's just gone down.

Responding to a gesture from the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET, the CONSTABLE goes to shut the window.

MANIAC: Exactly. But on the evening in question, it appears the sun didn't go down.

SPORTS JACKET: What?

MANIAC: I said: on the evening when the anarchist threw himself out of the window, did the sun stay up? Are we to assume there wasn't a sunset?

The three POLICE OFFICERS don't know what to make of this. They look at each other.

SUPERINTENDENT: I don't understand.

The MANIAC pretends to get annoyed.

MANIAC: All I'm saying is that here we are, at midnight, in the middle of December, and the window was still wide open. In other words, it couldn't have been cold... And if it wasn't cold, that can only mean that the sun hadn't gone down... Or maybe it went down later than usual – one o'clock, perhaps, like Norway in July.

SUPERINTENDENT: Not at all. We'd just opened it to get a bit of fresh air in, hadn't we?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes, there was a lot of smoke.

CONSTABLE: The anarchist smoked a lot, you know!

MANIAC: So you opened the windows. And the shutters too?

SPORTS JACKET: Yes.

MANIAC: In December? At midnight, with the thermometer sub-zero, and a freezing fog...? 'Open the windows – who cares if we all die of pneumonia!' You must at least have had your coats on?

SPORTS JACKET: No, we were in our jackets.

MANIAC: Oh very sporty!

SPORTS JACKET: But it wasn't cold at all. Honestly!

SUPERINTENDENT: Quite mild, really...

MANIAC: Oh yes? That evening the weather forecast for the

whole of Italy said that it was going to be cold enough to freeze the knackers off a polar bear, and you weren't cold... In fact it was positively spring-like! What do you have here – your own personal Gulf stream running through the drains under police headquarters?

SPORTS JACKET: Excuse me, your Honour, but I don't understand; a short while ago you told us you were here specially to help us, but instead all you've done is cast doubt on everything we say, poke fun at us and make us feel like shit...

MANIAC: You're right, maybe I have been overdoing it. But I feel like I'm doing one of those idiot puzzle games you get in kids' comics: 'Find the 37 mistakes made by Inspector Biggio Stupidoni.' I don't see how I'm supposed to help you. (*The POLICE OFFICERS sit there, dumb and disconsolate*) Alright, alright... no need to sit there looking like you're at a funeral – cheer up! I promise, no more joking. Total seriousness! So let's forget about all the earlier business...

SUPERINTENDENT: Good idea.

MANIAC: ...and let's concentrate on the nitty-gritty: the anarchist's jump.

SPORTS JACKET: I agree.

MANIAC: So, our anarchist, seized by this 'raptus' (in a minute we'll have to see if we can find a more plausible reason for this) ...suddenly gets up, takes a short run, and... wait a minute – which of you gave him a leg-up?

SPORTS JACKET: What do you mean, a 'leg-up'?

MANIAC: I mean, which of you stood next to the window with his fingers interlocked like so – to give him a good foot-hold – and then... Whee! Heave-ho, and out he goes!

SPORTS JACKET: Surely, your Honour, you're not implying that we...?

MANIAC: No, please, don't get me wrong... I was only wondering... after all, it is rather a high jump, with not

much of a run-up, and without a little helping hand... I wouldn't want anyone to be able to suggest...

SPORTS JACKET: There's nothing to suggest, your Honour, I assure you – he did it all by himself...!

MANIAC: Did our friend perhaps have bouncy rubber heels?

SPORTS JACKET: No he did not...

MANIAC: Alright, so what do we have? On the one hand we have a man who stands about five foot feet tall, all on his own, with no help, and with no ladder handy... On the other, half a dozen police officers, only a couple of yards away, and one standing right next to the window, who were unable to stop him in time...

SPORTS JACKET: But it was all so sudden...

CONSTABLE: And you have no idea what a slippery customer he was... I only just managed to grab him by one foot.

MANIAC: Ha! You see, you see, my technique of provocation works! You grabbed him by one foot!

CONSTABLE: Yes, but his shoe came off in my hand, and down he went anyway.

MANIAC: Never mind. The important thing is that his shoe came off in your hand. That shoe proves irrefutably that you were trying to save him!

SPORTS JACKET: Irrefutably and incontrovertibly!

SUPERINTENDENT: (*To the CONSTABLE*) Well done!

CONSTABLE: Thank you, Super...

SUPERINTENDENT: Shush!

MANIAC: Just a minute... something doesn't quite fit here. (*He shows the POLICE OFFICERS a sheet of paper*) Did our suicidal friend have three shoes?

SUPERINTENDENT: Three shoes?

MANIAC: That's what I said. One ended up in the hands of this officer here... We have his statement to that effect, a

couple of days after the event... (*He shows them the sheet of paper*) Look, here.

SPORTS JACKET: Correct, your Honour... He was interviewed by a journalist from *Corriere della Sera*.

MANIAC: But in this Appendix here, we're assured that as the anarchist lay dying on the pavement below, he still had both his shoes on his feet. This was witnessed by various bystanders, including a journalist from *L'Unità* and various other press people who happened to be passing.

SPORTS JACKET: Well, I can't imagine how that happened...

MANIAC: Neither can I! Unless this officer was very quick about it, and went rushing down to the second floor, stuck his head out of the window as the anarchist was coming past, put his shoe back on mid-flight, and then shot back up to the fourth floor just in time for the body to hit bottom.

SUPERINTENDENT: There, you see, you see, you're making fun of us again!

MANIAC: You're right... I couldn't resist it... I'm sorry. So, three shoes... Would you happen to remember if he was a tri-ped?

SUPERINTENDENT: Who?

MANIAC: Our suicidal railwayman... If it turns out he had three feet, that would explain why he had three shoes.

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Tetchily*) No, he was not a tri-ped!

MANIAC: Alright, no need to get ratty... Anyway, that's the least you'd expect of an anarchist!

CONSTABLE: That's true!

SUPERINTENDENT: Shut up, you!

SPORTS JACKET: Oh God, what a mess... We're going to have to find a plausible explanation, because otherwise...

MANIAC: I've got it!

SUPERINTENDENT: Let's hear it.

MANIAC: Here goes: obviously, one of his shoes was too big, so since he didn't have a handy insole lying around, he put another, smaller shoe on first, and then put the bigger one on, on top of it.

SPORTS JACKET: Two shoes on the same foot?

MANIAC: Yes. Perfectly normal... Remember galoshes? When people used to go round wearing rubber overshoes...

SUPERINTENDENT: Exactly. *Used to.*

MANIAC: No, but people do still wear them... And do you know what I say? I say that what the officer was left holding wasn't a shoe at all, it was a galosh.

SPORTS JACKET: No, that's impossible: an anarchist in galoshes...! Only conservatives wear galoshes...!

MANIAC: Anarchists can be terribly conservative, you know...

The phone rings. They all freeze. The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET picks up the phone.

SPORTS JACKET: Excuse me... Yes, what is it... Hang on a moment... (*To the SUPERINTENDENT*) It's the desk sergeant downstairs, he says there's a journalist at the main entrance asking to see you, Superintendent.

SUPERINTENDENT: Oh yes, I told her I'd see her today. She's the one from *L'Espresso* or *L'Europeo*, I don't remember which... Ask him if her name's Feletti.

SPORTS JACKET: (*Down the phone*) Is her name Feletti? (*To the SUPERINTENDENT*) Yes, Maria Feletti.

SUPERINTENDENT: That's the one... She wanted an interview. You'll have to ask her to come back another day. I'm busy today...

MANIAC: I wouldn't dream of letting you do that: I can't let you get yourself into hot water on my account.

SUPERINTENDENT: How do you mean?

MANIAC: I know that journalist – she's a mean lady... not the sort of person to get on the wrong side of... Very touchy!

She's quite capable of doing you a very nasty article... You really ought to see her!

SUPERINTENDENT: But what about your Inquiry?

MANIAC: It can wait. Haven't you realised yet that you and I are all in the same boat? And it's best to have people like that with us, not against us, believe me!

SUPERINTENDENT: Oh alright. (*Turning to the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET*) Have her sent up.

SPORTS JACKET: Send her up to my office.

He puts the phone down.

SUPERINTENDENT: Will you be leaving now?

MANIAC: Wouldn't dream of it... I'm not a man to abandon my friends. Specially not at times of danger!

SPORTS JACKET and SUPERINTENDENT: You're staying?

SUPERINTENDENT: Who are you going to say you are, though? If the journalist finds out who you really are, and why you're here in the first place, she's going to splash it all over the front page! Why don't you just come out with it - you're out to destroy us!

MANIAC: No, don't worry, I'm not out to destroy you at all. She won't have the first idea who I really am.

SPORTS JACKET: She won't?

MANIAC: No, of course not. I could just be someone else... It'd be child's play for me, believe me. Criminal psychopathologist... Head of Interpol... Head of forensic... Take your pick... Any time the journalist gets you in a tight corner with a particularly nasty question, you just give me a wink and I'll join in... The important thing is to keep you two in the clear.

SUPERINTENDENT: This is very good of you, your Honour...

He shakes his hand emotionally.

MANIAC: You'd better stop calling me 'your Honour'. As from this moment I am Captain Marcantonio Banzi Piccinni, from the Forensic Department... OK?

SPORTS JACKET: But there's a real Captain Banzi Piccinni... He works out of Rome...

MANIAC: Precisely. That way, if the journalist writes something we don't like, it'll be a cinch to show that she made it all up... We simply call in the real Captain Piccinni from Rome.

SPORTS JACKET: That's amazing... it's brilliant! Do you really think you can do the part of the Captain?

MANIAC: Have no fear – during the War I was an army chaplain with the bersaglieri.

He opens his bag and rummages around in it.

SUPERINTENDENT: Shush! Here she is! (*The JOURNALIST enters*) Ah, Miss Feletti, do come in.

JOURNALIST: Good morning. Which of you gentlemen is the Superintendent?

SUPERINTENDENT: I am. Pleased to meet you. What a shame we've only ever met on the phone...

JOURNALIST: How do you do. The officer at the front door was giving me a hard time...

SUPERINTENDENT: I'm sorry – all my fault – I forgot to tell him you were coming. May I introduce you to my colleagues here... Constable Pisani; the inspector in charge of this office...

JOURNALIST: Very pleased to meet you.

SPORTS JACKET: The pleasure is all mine... Miss.

He gives her a military handshake.

JOURNALIST: Ouch, that hurt!

SPORTS JACKET: I'm sorry...

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Pointing to the MANIAC who is busy fiddling around*) ...and finally Captain... Captain?!

MANIAC: Here we are... (*When he stands up, we see that he is wearing a false moustache, a black patch over one eye, and a brown leather glove on one hand. The SUPERINTENDENT is momentarily lost for words, so the MANIAC does his own introductions*) Captain Marcantonio Banzi Piccinni, of the Central Forensic Department. Please excuse the stiff handshake... Wooden, don't you know... Souvenir of the Nicaragua campaign – ex-parachutist with the Contras, working with the CIA... Make yourself at home, Miss.

SUPERINTENDENT: Would you like something to drink?

JOURNALIST: No thank you... If you don't mind, I'd like to start right away... I'm afraid I'm in a bit of a rush. Unfortunately my article has to be in tonight in time for the morning edition.

SUPERINTENDENT: Fine, as you like. We're ready, so let's get started.

JOURNALIST: I have a few questions I'd like to ask. (*She reads from her notebook*) The first is to you, Inspector, and you'll have to excuse me if it's a bit provocative... If you don't mind, I use a tape-recorder... unless you object, that is...

She takes a tape-recorder from her handbag.

SPORTS JACKET: Well, actually... we don't...

MANIAC: Absolutely no problem – go ahead... (*To the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET*) Rule Number Two: Never say no.

SPORTS JACKET: But supposing something slips out... If we want to deny it, she'll have the proof...

JOURNALIST: Excuse me, gents, is there a problem?

MANIAC: (*As if everything is fine*) No, no, not at all... The Inspector was just telling me what a remarkable woman you are – brave, fearless, progressive, dedicated to the cause of truth and justice... come what may!

JOURNALIST: The Inspector is too generous...

SPORTS JACKET: So, fire away.

JOURNALIST: Why is it that you're known as 'The Window-Straddler'?

SPORTS JACKET: The Window-Straddler? Me?

JOURNALIST: Yes. 'Inspector Window-Straddler'.

SPORTS JACKET: And who, might I ask, calls me that?

JOURNALIST: I have here a photocopy of a letter from a young anarchist in San Vittore prison. He was remanded in custody the same week that the anarchist fell to his death, and he says some interesting things about you, Inspector... And about this very room.

SPORTS JACKET: Oh yes? And what does he have to say?

JOURNALIST: (*Reading*) 'The Inspector on the fourth floor forced me to sit on the window-sill with my legs hanging over the edge, and then he started provoking me: "Go on, throw yourself out," and insulting me... "Why don't you jump...? Too scared, eh? Go on, get it over with! What are you waiting for?" I had to grit my teeth and hold on tight, because I really was on the point of jumping...'

MANIAC: Excellent. It reads like something out of a Hitchcock film.

JOURNALIST: Please, Captain... my question was directed to the Inspector, not to you... How do you reply to that?

She reaches the microphone in the direction of the
INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET.

MANIAC: (*Sotto voce, to the INSPECTOR*) Cool, calm and collected!

SPORTS JACKET: I have nothing to say to that... And in fact I would like to ask *you* a question: in all sincerity, do you really think that I had the railwayman sitting across the window too?

MANIAC: Sssh – don't fall for it. (*He hums to himself*) Here she goes, swinging low, bye, bye... vulture...

JOURNALIST: Am I right in thinking you're trying to disrupt

the proceedings, Captain?

MANIAC: Not at all... Just humming. And if you'll allow me, I have a question for you too, Miss Feletti... What do you take us for – a TV ad for washing powder...? You're trying to suggest that we do the 'window test' with every anarchist we get our hands on?

JOURNALIST: No doubt about it, you have a wonderful way with words, Captain.

SPORTS JACKET: Thanks... You got me out of a tight spot, there...

He slaps the MANIAC on the back.

MANIAC: Go easy with the back-slapping, Inspector... I have a glass eye!!

He points to his black patch.

SPORTS JACKET: A glass eye?

MANIAC: And mind how you shake my hand. It's artificial.

JOURNALIST: While we're on the subject of windows, in among the papers handed over by the judge who adjourned the inquest there's no sign of the forensic report on the trajectory of the fall.

SUPERINTENDENT: What trajectory of what fall?

JOURNALIST: The trajectory of the fall of our alleged suicide.

SUPERINTENDENT: What use would that be?

JOURNALIST: It would enable us to tell whether the anarchist was alive or dead at the moment that he came out of the window. In other words, whether he came out with a bit of impetus, or whether he just slithered down the wall, as appears to have been the case... Also whether there were any broken bones in his arms and hands (which there were not – which suggests that the alleged suicide did not put his hands out in order to protect himself at the moment of impact – a gesture that, if he had been conscious, would have been normal and absolutely instinctive...)

SPORTS JACKET: Yes, but you're forgetting that we're dealing with someone who threw himself out because he *wanted* to die!

MANIAC: Doesn't mean a thing. Here, unfortunately, I have to say the lady is right... As you see, I am entirely objective. There have been many experiments done on this front: they've taken potential suicides, thrown them out of windows, and they found that right at the last moment all of them, zap... put their hands out to protect themselves!

SUPERINTENDENT: A fine support you're turning out to be... You're mad!

MANIAC: That's right. Who told you?

JOURNALIST: But the most disturbing detail, on which I would appreciate an explanation, is the fact that, again among the materials handed over by the judge who shelved the inquest, there is no sign of the cassette tape that recorded the precise time of the phone call that rang for the ambulance... a phone call which came from here, at Central Police Headquarters, and which, according to the people at the ambulance station, occurred at two minutes before midnight.

At the same time, the journalists who were present at the scene all stated that the fall happened at precisely three minutes past midnight... In other words, the ambulance was called five minutes before the anarchist went out of the window. Could any of you explain this curious discrepancy?

MANIAC: Well... we quite often call an ambulance in advance, just in case... Because one never knows, does one... And as you see, sometimes it turns out to be a good idea.

SPORTS JACKET: (*Slapping him on the back*) Well done!

MANIAC: The eye – watch out...!

SUPERINTENDENT: I don't quite see what you're accusing me of. Is it a crime all of a sudden, to plan ahead? A mere

three minutes before time... Anyway, in the police we pride ourselves on keeping one step ahead!

SPORTS JACKET: And if you care to check, I'm sure you'll find that all those journalists' watches were running slow... I mean, fast...

SUPERINTENDENT: Or maybe the time-stamp clock at the ambulance station was running slow when we phoned them...

CONSTABLE: Very possible, Sir.

JOURNALIST: Sounds more like *Alice in Wonderland!*

MANIAC: What's so strange? We're not in Switzerland, you know... In Italy people set their watches as and how they feel like... fast, slow... this is a nation of artists and rebels, Miss Feletti! Individualists who set their own terms with history.

SPORTS JACKET: Well said, brilliant!

He slaps him on the back again, and we hear the chink of the glass eye falling on the floor.

MANIAC: There, you see?! What did I tell you...? You've knocked my eye out!

SPORTS JACKET: (*Going down on all fours to look for it*)
Excuse me, Miss, what were you saying?

JOURNALIST: We were talking about how we're a nation of artists and rebels... and I must say, I have to agree with you: some of our judges seem to be particularly rebellious: strange how they can write off perfectly satisfactory alibi witnesses... not to mention losing vital evidence like cassette tapes and forensic reports on trajectories, and neglecting to ask themselves how come ambulances turn up five minutes before time... All mere trifles, of course! And what about the bruises on the back of the dead man's neck, for which there has not as yet been any satisfactory explanation.

SPORTS JACKET: You should be careful, Miss... Loose talk can be a dangerous thing...

JOURNALIST: Was that a threat?

MANIAC: No, no, Superintendent... I really don't think the lady is indulging in loose talk at all... I imagine she's referring to a version of the events which I have heard referred to several times... and which, strangely enough, seems to have originated here in this very building.

SUPERINTENDENT: What version would that be?

MANIAC: It is rumoured that during the anarchist's final interrogation, at just a couple of minutes to midnight one of the officers present started to get impatient, and he came over and gave him a mighty wallop on the back of the neck... Relax, Inspector... The result of this was that the anarchist was half-paralysed and started struggling for breath... So they decided to call an ambulance. In the meantime, in an attempt to revive him, they opened the window, put the anarchist in front of it, and made him lean out a bit for the cool night air to revive him...! Apparently, there was a misunderstanding between the two officers supporting him... as often happens in these cases, each of them thought the other one was holding him... 'You got him, Gianni?' 'You got him, Luigi?' And bomp, down he went...

The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET comes towards the MANIAC, seething, but then slips on the glass eye and falls.

JOURNALIST: That's right!

SUPERINTENDENT: Have you gone mad?

MANIAC: Yes. Sixteen times, to be precise.

SPORTS JACKET: What the hell was that?

MANIAC: My glass eye, that's what! Look, you've made it all dirty. Officer, would you mind getting me a glass of water to wash it in?

The CONSTABLE exits.

JOURNALIST: You must admit, that version would clear up a whole series of problems – why the ambulance was called

in advance, why the body appeared to be inert when it fell... and even why the Public Prosecutor chose to use that curious phrase in his summing-up.

MANIAC: What phrase was that? Could you be more specific, my head's already aching!

JOURNALIST: The Public Prosecutor stated, in a written deposition, that the anarchist's death was an 'accidental death'. Please note. Accident, not suicide, as you have been maintaining. There's a lot of difference between an accident and a suicide. But the way the Captain here has just described it, it could very well have been an 'accident'.

The CONSTABLE returns. He hands the glass of water to the MANIAC, who is so absorbed in what the JOURNALIST is saying that he swallows the glass eye with a gulp of water as if it was a pill.

MANIAC: Oh God – the eye! I've swallowed my eye... Oh well, let's hope at least it gets rid of my headache...

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Whispering to the fake CAPTAIN*) What on earth are you playing at now?

SPORTS JACKET: (*Alternating with the SUPERINTENDENT*) Don't you think you've been giving her too much rope? Now she must think she's got us where she wants us.

MANIAC: Just leave it to me. (*To the JOURNALIST*) Right, Miss... I am now going to demonstrate how this last version is totally inadmissible.

JOURNALIST: Inadmissible, eh? In the same way that the judge who shelved the case dismissed the alibi statements by the old age pensioners as inadmissible?

MANIAC: This is the first I've heard of inadmissible old age pensioners.

JOURNALIST: I'm surprised you're not up to date on this! In his summing up, the judge who closed the inquest said that the three alibi witnesses offered by our anarchist friend were inadmissible. Those were the ones who said they had

spent the tragic afternoon of the bombing playing cards with him, in a bar along the Canal.

MANIAC: So why did he say they were inadmissible?

JOURNALIST: In the judge's own words: 'The people we are dealing with here are old, sick, and in at least one case disabled.'

MANIAC: And he actually wrote that in his final document?

JOURNALIST: Yes.

MANIAC: Well, who's to say he's wrong? Objectively speaking, how can anyone expect some ancient pensioner, who's probably a war cripple into the bargain, or maybe been invalided out of the factory – an *ex*-worker, note that, an *ex*-worker – to have even the minimum psychological and physical qualities required for the delicate task of being a witness?

JOURNALIST: Why not an *ex*-worker? What do you mean?

MANIAC: Do you live in the real world, Miss Feletti? Instead of jetting off to Mexico, Cambodia and Vietnam, one day why don't you try visiting Marghera, Piombino, Rho or Sesto San Giovanni? Do you have any idea of what condition a worker is in, these days, by the time he gets to his pension? (And from the latest government statistics it appears that fewer and fewer of them actually do!) They're squeezed dry, worn to a frazzle. Hardly an ounce of life in them!

JOURNALIST: I think you're rather overstating your case.

MANIAC: Oh yes...? Well, in that case you should go and look in at one of the bars where our old age pensioners go to play cards, and you'll find them crawling up the wall, calling each other names, and not even able to remember who dealt the last hand: 'Oi, it was me who put down the seven of spades.' 'No, you put it down in the last game, not this one.' 'What do you mean, the last game, this is the first game we've played today... You're going senile.' 'No, you're the senile one – you seem to have forgotten, diamonds is trumps, not hearts.' 'Oh is it – I thought it was

clubs.' 'You're out of your mind!' 'Out of my mind? Who do you think you're talking to?' 'I don't know? Do you?' 'Don't have the first idea.'

JOURNALIST: Ha, ha, you're too much. But joking apart... isn't it maybe their fault, if they end up in this pitiful state?

MANIAC: No, not at all. It's society's fault! But we're not here to sit in judgement on the world capitalist system, we're here to discuss whether witnesses are reliable or not. If a worker's a wreck because he's been over-exploited or because he's had an accident in the factory, that should not concern us; our concern is with justice and law and order.

SUPERINTENDENT: Well said, Captain!

MANIAC: If you don't have the money to buy yourself vitamins, proteins, wheatgerm, Royal jelly and calcium phosphate for your memory... well so much the worse for you, I, in my capacity as judge, must tell you no... I'm sorry, but you're out of the game, you're a second-class citizen.

JOURNALIST: Ha – you see, you see – I knew that when we got down to basics we'd get back to class prejudice... class privilege!

MANIAC: And who has ever suggested otherwise? I agree absolutely. Our society is divided into classes, and so are witnesses – there are first-class witnesses, and second-, and third-, and fourth-class. Age doesn't come into it. The point is, people go to university. They study for years. And all for what? To be treated in the same terms as some half-starved old age pensioner? You must be joking!

The MANIAC comes out from behind the desk, and we see that he has a pirate-style wooden leg. Everyone looks at him in astonishment. The MANIAC continues, casually:

Vietnam. Green Berets. Operation Cobra, rescuing prisoners behind the lines... Not a nice experience, all in the past, though, prefer not to talk about it!

The door opens. INSPECTOR BERTOZZO looks in. He has a patch over one eye.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Excuse me, may I interrupt?

SUPERINTENDENT: Come in, feel free, Bertozzo...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: I just wanted to drop this off.

He is holding a metal box.

SUPERINTENDENT: What's that?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: It's a copy of the bomb that exploded at the bank...

JOURNALIST: Oh God...!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Don't worry, Miss, there's no fuse in it.

SUPERINTENDENT: Put it down there... Now, there's a good chap... I want you to shake hands with your colleague here... Come on, you too, Inspector... Friends again!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Hold on, Super – he could at least explain why he went and gave me a black eye...

The SUPERINTENDENT elbows him in the ribs.

SPORTS JACKET: Don't pretend you don't know. What about the raspberry?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: What raspberry...?

SUPERINTENDENT: That'll do, gentlemen... We have visitors...

MANIAC: Indeed we do...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Superintendent, all I want to know is what on earth got into him... He comes into my office, and without so much as a by your leave... Smack!

MANIAC: He could at least have asked permission first!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: There, you see... But excuse me, your face is a bit familiar.

MANIAC: Must be because we're both wearing eye-patches.

EVERYBODY: (*Laughing*) Ha, ha!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: No, no, seriously...

MANIAC: Allow me to introduce myself. Captain Marcantonio Banzi Piccinni... From Forensic.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Piccinni? No... You can't be... I know Captain Piccinni personally...

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Giving him a little kick*) Oh no you don't.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Oh yes I do...!

SPORTS JACKET: Oh. No. You. Don't!

He kicks him.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Look, don't you start again...

SUPERINTENDENT: Forget it...

Another kick.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: We were at police college together...

He is kicked by the MANIAC too.

MANIAC: I thought your superior just told you to forget it!

For good measure he also hits him round the back of the head.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Hey, stop that!

MANIAC: (*Pointing to the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET*) It was him.

The SUPERINTENDENT brings BERTOZZO over to the JOURNALIST.

SUPERINTENDENT: If you'll allow me, Inspector Bertozzo, I'd like to present Miss... I'll explain after... Miss Feletti... Journalist. Know what I mean?

Another dig with the elbow.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: My pleasure. Inspector Bertozzo... No, I don't know what you mean.

He receives a kick from the SUPERINTENDENT, and another from the MANIAC. The MANIAC is beginning to enjoy this; he also kicks the SUPERINTENDENT. At the

same time he slaps both BERTOZZO and the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET on the back of the neck. BERTOZZO thinks that it was the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET who did it.

You see what I mean, Superintendent – he’s always picking on me...!

To end with, the MANIAC gives the JOURNALIST a slap on the backside, and then points to the SUPERINTENDENT.

JOURNALIST: Superintendent, that’s hardly a proper way to...

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Thinking that she is referring to the bickering*) You’re right, I don’t know what’s got into them. Bertozzo, stop that and listen to me! This lady is here for a very important *interview*. Know what I mean?

He gives him a little kick and a knowing wink.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Oh, I see...

SUPERINTENDENT: Now, Miss, if you would like to ask Inspector Bertozzo a few questions... Among other things, the Inspector is quite an expert on ballistics and explosives.

JOURNALIST: Oh yes – could you clarify one thing for me...? You were saying that in that box there’s a facsimile of the bomb that went off at the bank.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Well, an approximate replica, since all trace of the original bomb was lost. If you follow me...

JOURNALIST: But one of the bombs was retrieved, wasn’t it? Unexploded...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Yes, the one from the Bank of Commerce...

JOURNALIST: Could you explain to me why, instead of defusing it and sending it to Forensic – which would be normal practice, so that it could be thoroughly examined – when they found it they took it straight out into the yard and blew it up?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: I'm sorry – why do you ask?

JOURNALIST: You know perfectly well, Inspector... By destroying the bomb, they also lost the signature of the killers...

MANIAC: It's true. In fact we have a saying in Forensic: 'Tell me how you make your bombs, and I'll tell you who you are.'

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*Shaking his head*) Hey, no... that's definitely not Piccinni.

The MANIAC picks up the bomb.

SUPERINTENDENT: Of course he isn't. Shut up!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Ah, I thought he wasn't. Who is he, then?

He receives yet another kick.

MANIAC: If Inspector Bertozzo will allow me, in my capacity as head of the Forensic Department...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Who are you trying to kid...? What are you up to...? Leave that box alone, it's dangerous!

MANIAC: (*He kicks him*) I am from Forensic, young man... Would you mind standing over there, please?

SUPERINTENDENT: Do you really know what you're doing?

The MANIAC looks at him disparagingly.

MANIAC: You see, Miss, a bomb of this sort is so complex... Look at all these wires... two detonators... the timing mechanism... the firing mechanism, all sorts of little levers... as I was saying, it's so complex that they could very well have hidden a second delayed-action time bomb inside it, and you'd never find it unless you wanted to spend all day taking it apart piece by piece... And by that time, Boom!

SUPERINTENDENT: (*To BERTOZZO*) He sounds like a real expert, doesn't he!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*Stubbornly*) Yes, but he's still

not Piccinni...

MANIAC: So that's why they decided to 'lose the bomber's signature', as you put it... They preferred to explode the bomb right there in the courtyard, rather than risk it blowing up and having an even worse massacre on their hands... Convinced?

JOURNALIST: Yes, this time you really have convinced me.

MANIAC: Amazing, I've even managed to convince myself!

SPORTS JACKET: And I'm convinced too. Well done.
Good thinking.

He shakes the MANIAC's hand energetically. It comes off in his hand.

MANIAC: There – you've pulled it off. I told you it was wooden!

SPORTS JACKET: I'm sorry.

MANIAC: You'll be pulling my leg off next.

So saying he screws the hand back in place.

SUPERINTENDENT: (To BERTOZZO) Would you like to say something, Bertozzo, to show that our department's not asleep on the job either?

He gives him an encouraging pat on the back.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Certainly. The real bomb was rather complicated. I saw it. A lot more complex than this one. Evidently put together by people with a lot of know-how... Professionals, you might say.

SUPERINTENDENT: Careful how you go, there...!

JOURNALIST: Professionals? Military personnel, perhaps?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: More than likely.

The other three all start kicking him.

SUPERINTENDENT: Idiot...!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Ouch! Did I say something wrong?

JOURNALIST: (*As she finishes writing*) Excellent. So what did you do? Even though you were well aware that to construct – let alone plant – a bomb of such complexity, would take the skills and experience of professionals – probably military people – you decided to go chasing after this fairly pathetic group of anarchists and completely dropped all other lines of inquiry among certain parties who shall remain nameless but you know who I mean.

MANIAC: That's true, if you're going to go along with Bertozzo's version, but you can't take his opinion as gospel, because he's not really an explosives *expert*... He does it more as a sideline, a hobby!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*Insulted*) What do you mean, a hobby...?! What do you know about anything...? Who are you? (*Turning to the two other POLICE OFFICERS*) Who is he...? Can someone explain?

The others kick him and force him to sit down.

SUPERINTENDENT: Relax...

SPORTS JACKET: Don't worry...

JOURNALIST: Calm down, Inspector... Relax... I'm sure that everything you said was true. Just as it's true that the police and the judicial establishment have moved hell and high water to lay the blame at the door of this crazy, confused gang of pathetic dreamers, with the vaudeville dancer at their head!

SUPERINTENDENT: You're right – they did look confused – but that was only a façade they were putting up so's nobody would know what they were up to.

JOURNALIST: OK. So let's take a look behind that façade. What do we find? Out of the ten members of the group, two of them were your own people, two informers, or rather, spies and provocateurs. One was a Rome fascist, well-known to everyone except the aforementioned pathetic group of anarchists, and the other was one of your own officers, disguised as an anarchist.

MANIAC: Mind you, I know the officer in question, and I

can't imagine how he ever got away with it. He's as thick as two short planks. Ask him who Bakunin was and he'll tell you it's a Swiss cheese, the one without the holes!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: How come he's such a know-all? I hate people like that... But I know I know him from somewhere!

SUPERINTENDENT: I must disagree with you, Captain. The officer in question is a fine operative, very well trained!

JOURNALIST: And I suppose you have plenty more of these very well-trained operatives scattered around the Left groups?

SUPERINTENDENT: I see no reason to deny it, Miss. Yes we do.

JOURNALIST: I think you're just calling my bluff, there, Superintendent!

SUPERINTENDENT: Not at all... In fact you may be interested to know that we have one or two right here in the audience tonight, as usual... Watch this.

He claps his hands. We hear a number of voices from different parts of the auditorium.

VOICES: Sir...? Yessir...! Sir...!

The MANIAC laughs, and turns to the audience.

MANIAC: Don't worry – they're all actors. The real ones sit tight and don't say a word.

SUPERINTENDENT: You see? Our agents and informants are our strength.

SPORTS JACKET: They help us to keep an eye on things and keep one jump ahead...

MANIAC: And to plant bombs so as to have a good pretext for a police-state crackdown... (*The POLICE OFFICERS are startled by this*) I was just pre-empting the lady's obvious come-back.

JOURNALIST: Too easy, really. Anyway, can you explain: since you had every member of that pathetic little band of

anarchists under close surveillance, how was it that that they managed to organise such a sophisticated operation without you intervening to stop them?

MANIAC: Watch out, she's coming in for the kill!

SUPERINTENDENT: The fact is, during the days in question, our undercover agent was absent from the group...

MANIAC: It's true, he even had a note from his mum (this is true, this is!).

SPORTS JACKET: Please... (*Under his breath*) Your Honour...!

JOURNALIST: But your other informer, the fascist, he was there, wasn't he...? In fact the judge in Rome considered him to have been the main organiser of the whole thing, the person who, once again in the judge's own words, had taken advantage of the naivety of those anarchists in order to involve them in a terrorist conspiracy the true criminal nature of which they did not suspect. As I say, those are the words of the judge himself.

MANIAC: A hit, a palpable hit!

SUPERINTENDENT: Well, for a start, I have to tell you that the fascist you're talking about was not one of our informers at all.

JOURNALIST: Oh no? Well in that case how come he was always popping in and out of police headquarters in Rome? And the political section in particular...

SUPERINTENDENT: I've only your word for that... This is the first *I've* heard of it.

MANIAC: (*Going to shake the SUPERINTENDENT's hand*) Well said! Touché!

The SUPERINTENDENT shakes his wooden hand, and is left holding it.

SUPERINTENDENT: Thank you... Oh dear, your hand... I'm sorry!

MANIAC: (*Indifferent*) You can keep it. I've got another one here.

He takes another hand out of his bag; this time it's a woman's hand.

SPORTS JACKET: That's a woman's!

MANIAC: No, it's unisex.

So saying, he screws it into place.

JOURNALIST: (*Taking some papers from a folder*) Ah, so this is the first you've heard of it, eh? And I suppose nobody's told you either that out of a total of 173 bomb attacks that have happened in the past year and a bit, at a rate of twelve a month, one every three days – out of 173 attacks, as I was saying (*She reads from a report*) at least 102 have been proved to have been organised by fascist organisations, aided or abetted by the police, with the explicit intention of putting the blame on Left-wing political groups.

MANIAC: (*Gesturing with an open hand under his chin*)
Terrific!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: I'm sure I know him – I'm going to have that patch off!

MANIAC: (*Intervening, ironically*) What are you trying to suggest, Miss, with these blatant provocations? Are you saying that if the police, instead of wasting their time with a raggle-taggle bunch of anarchists, had concentrated on more serious possibilities – for example paramilitary and fascist organisations funded by big industrialists and run and supported by leading figures in the armed forces – then maybe we'd have got to the bottom of all this?

SUPERINTENDENT: (*To BERTOZZO, who is about to blow a fuse*) Don't worry... Now he's going to turn the whole argument on its head. I know how he works now. It's Jesuit dialectics!

MANIAC: If that's what you're thinking, then I have to say, yes... you're completely right... If we'd taken *that* route,

we would certainly have come up with some juicy titbits.
Ha, ha!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: So much for Jesuit dialectics!

SUPERINTENDENT: He's gone mad!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*In a flash of inspiration*) Mad!
The nutter... It's him!! that's who he is!

JOURNALIST: I must say, to hear a policeman saying such things... is a bit disconcerting!

SUPERINTENDENT: Well, you should keep them to yourself and don't go spreading them around.

He leaves BERTOZZO and goes over to the MANIAC and the JOURNALIST.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*He pulls the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET aside*) I promise you, I know that man... He's not from the police at all – he's just pretending.

SPORTS JACKET: We're perfectly well aware of that. But don't let the journalist hear you.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: But he's a nutter... Don't you understand?

SPORTS JACKET: You're the nutter... Shut up, I can't hear what they're saying!

MANIAC: (*During the above exchanges the MANIAC has been in earnest conversation with the SUPERINTENDENT and the JOURNALIST; he continues out loud*) ...Of course, you're a journalist, and you could really go to town on a scandal like this... It wouldn't be very hard to discover that the main intention behind the massacre of innocent people in the bank bombing had been to bury the trade-union struggles of the Hot Autumn [6] and to create a climate of tension so that the average citizen would be so disgusted and angry at the level of political violence and subversion that they would start calling for the intervention of a strong state!

SPORTS JACKET: I don't remember where I read that – was it in *L'Unità* or *Lotta Continua*?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*He goes up behind the MANIAC and pulls his eye-patch off*) There, look! You see, he's got an eye, he's got an eye!

SUPERINTENDENT: Have you gone round the twist, Bertozzo? Of course he's got an eye! Why shouldn't he have?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: So why was he wearing an eye-patch, if he's got an eye?

SUPERINTENDENT: You've got an eye under your patch... and people don't go pulling your patch off! (*He takes him aside*) Just shut up for a minute, I'll explain after.

JOURNALIST: Oh, how marvellous, you wear an eye-patch just for fun?

MANIAC: No, it's so as to keep a low profile.

He laughs.

JOURNALIST: Ha, ha, ha... Now, I'd be interested to hear more about this scandal of yours.

MANIAC: Oh yes... A huge scandal... A lot of Right-wing politicians arrested... A trial or two... A lot of big fish compromised... Senators, members of parliament, colonels... The social democrats weeping, the *Corriere della Sera* having to sack its editor... The Left calling for the fascist parties to be banned... And then... the Chief of Police would be commended for his courageous stand... and promptly given early retirement.

SUPERINTENDENT: No, Captain... I can't accept these gratuitous innuendos...

JOURNALIST: This time I have to agree with you, Superintendent... I believe that a scandal of that scale would actually do credit to the police. It would give the average citizen the sense of living in a decent society for once, where the system of justice was a little less unjust...

MANIAC: Certainly... and as such it would have served its purpose! Are the people calling for true justice? Instead of that we'll give them a justice that is just a bit less unjust.

And if the workers start shouting 'Enough of this brutal exploitation', and start complaining that they're tired of dying in the factories, then we give them a little more protection on the job... and step up the compensation rates for their widows!

They want revolution...? We give them reforms... reforms by the bucketful... We'll drown them with reforms... or rather we'll drown them with *promises* of reforms, because we're never going to give them reforms either!!

SUPERINTENDENT: The man's completely mad!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Of course he is. I've been trying to tell you that for the past hour!

MANIAC: You see, your average citizen doesn't actually *want* all the dirt to disappear. No, for him it's enough that it's uncovered, there's a nice juicy scandal, and everyone can talk about it... As far as he's concerned, that is real freedom, the best of all possible worlds... hallelujah!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*Seizing the MANIAC's wooden leg and shaking it*) Hey – look! his leg... it's false, can't you see?

MANIAC: Of course it is... walnut, to be precise.

SUPERINTENDENT: It's alright, we know, we know...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: No, it's a *false* false leg... It's strapped to his knee!

He sets about undoing the straps.

SPORTS JACKET: Idiot... Leave him alone! I won't have you taking him apart!

MANIAC: No, let him go ahead... Thank you... I was starting to get pins and needles all up my thigh.

JOURNALIST: Do you mind?! Why do you always have to interrupt? Just because his wooden leg isn't real, you're not suggesting that he's...?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: No, I'm just trying to tell you... he's a faker... a 'hypocritomaniac'... He's no more a

war-wounded captain from Forensic than I am...!

JOURNALIST: So who is he, then?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: He's just a...

The SUPERINTENDENT, the CONSTABLE and the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET run over and haul him off, to shut him up.

SUPERINTENDENT: Excuse us, Miss, he's wanted on the phone.

They move her to the front of the stage, to distract her. Then they take INSPECTOR BERTOZZO, sit him down at the desk and force him to pick up the phone.

SPORTS JACKET: (*Muttering to BERTOZZO*) Are you trying to destroy us? Idiot!

Downstage, the JOURNALIST and the MANIAC continue their conversation, oblivious of the POLICE OFFICERS.

SUPERINTENDENT: Don't you understand... that's got to stay secret! If the journalist finds out that they're re-opening the inquest into the anarchist, we're done for!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Who's re-opening the inquest? (*Once again the phone is almost shoved down his throat*) Hello?

SPORTS JACKET: You're asking *me*?! You're the one who's saying he knows what it's all about... in fact you know damn-all... You're all yakety-yak... Coming in here and causing trouble...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: I'm not causing trouble... I just want to know...?

SUPERINTENDENT: Shush... (*He raps him over the knuckles with the phone*) Get talking on that phone, and shut up!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Ouch... Hello, who's calling?

JOURNALIST: (*Continuing her conversation with the CAPTAIN*) Oh, that is terrific! Superintendent, you have

no need to worry. The Captain... or rather, the ex-Captain, has told me everything.

SUPERINTENDENT: What has he told you?

JOURNALIST: Who he really is!

SPORTS JACKET and SUPERINTENDENT: He told you?

MANIAC: Yes, I couldn't carry on pretending... And anyway... she'd already tumbled me.

SUPERINTENDENT: I hope he made you promise not to put it in your paper?

JOURNALIST: Not at all. This is how I'm going to start the article. (*She reads from her notes*) 'I Met a Plain-Clothes Bishop at Police Headquarters'!

SPORTS JACKET and SUPERINTENDENT: A bishop?!

MANIAC: Yes. My apologies for not having let you in on my secret.

With a simple gesture he turns his collar round so that it becomes a dog-collar, complete with black shirt-front.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*Giving himself a smack on the forehead*) So now he's a bishop! I sincerely hope you're not going to believe him?

The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET picks up a big rubber stamp and jams it in BERTOZZO's mouth.

SPORTS JACKET: You're getting Very Boring!

The MANIAC takes out a red skull-cap and places it on his head; with austere, simple gestures he unbuttons his jacket to reveal a baroque gold and silver cross; then he places on his finger a large ring with an equally large purple gem.

MANIAC: Allow me to introduce myself: Father Augusto Bernier, Vatican *chargé d'affaires* responsible for relations with the Italian police.

He reaches out his ring for the CONSTABLE to kiss, which he does, eagerly.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*Coming forward, and pulling*

out his rubber-stamp dummy) Vatican chargé d'affaires...?

MANIAC: Ever since the assassination attempt on the Pope, the Church authorities have felt that it would be a good idea to maintain regular channels of communication...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Oh no, you don't! No! This is going too far – a constabulary cardinal?!

The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET jams the rubber stamp back in his mouth, and pulls him aside.

SPORTS JACKET: We *know* he's talking bollocks, but he's doing it to save us... Understand?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Save you? What is this? He's promised you eternal salvation too?!

SPORTS JACKET: Pack it in, and kiss his ring!

He forces him across to kiss the MANIAC's ring. In the meantime, effortlessly, the MANIAC has succeeded in getting his hand kissed by all the other characters.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: No way! Kiss his ring? You must be joking! You've *all* gone mad. He's infected you all!

The INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET and the CONSTABLE hurriedly dig out a couple of large sticking plasters and slap them over his mouth, more or less covering the bottom half of his face.

JOURNALIST: Oh dear, what's the matter with the poor man?

MANIAC: Some kind of seizure, I should say. (*He takes out a hypodermic syringe that he has concealed in a prayer book, and prepares to give BERTOZZO an injection*) Hold him, a moment, this will do him good... It's a Benedictine tranquilliser.

SUPERINTENDENT: Benedictine?

MANIAC: Yes, Father Finnigan's Special. (*With cobra-like rapidity he gives BERTOZZO his injection; then, pulling out the needle, he says:*) there's still a bit left – would you like some too?

Without waiting for a reply, he injects the SUPERINTENDENT, with the agility of a banderillero at a bullfight. The SUPERINTENDENT emits a stifled groan.

JOURNALIST: You won't believe this, your Eminence, but a moment ago, when you were talking about the scandals, and you said, 'that is real freedom, the best of all possible worlds... hallelujah'... I immediately thought – I hope you'll pardon the irreverence...

MANIAC: Go ahead, go ahead...

JOURNALIST: I immediately thought: 'Phew – what a load of priest-talk!' I hope you're not offended.

MANIAC: Why should I be offended? It's true – it was priest talk... but that's because I'm a priest.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO picks up a felt-tip pen, turns round the portrait of the Italian president, and writes on the back of it: 'He's mad! He's a certified schizophrenic.' Then he holds the message up behind the BISHOP's back.

Did you know that when Saint Gregory was elected Pope, he discovered that his subordinates were up to all kinds of skullduggery in an attempt to cover up various outrageous scandals? He was furious, and it was then that he uttered his famous phrase: *Nolimus aut velimus, omnibus gentibus, justitiam et veritatem.*

JOURNALIST: I'm sorry, your Eminence... I failed Latin three times...

MANIAC: It means: 'Whether they want it or not, I shall impose truth and justice. I shall do what I can to make sure that these scandals explode in the most public way possible; and you need not fear that, in among the rot, the power of government will be undermined. Let the scandal come, because on the basis of that scandal a more durable power of the state will be founded!'

JOURNALIST: Extraordinary...! Would you mind writing that down for me...?

The MANIAC writes the sentence – an adaptation of the words of Pope Gregory – in the JOURNALIST's notebook. Meanwhile, the INSPECTOR IN THE SPORTS JACKET snatches the President's picture from BERTOZZO and begins tearing it up.

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Going to stop him*) What have you done? You've torn up the President's portrait! You could go to prison for that! What's got into you?

SPORTS JACKET: Didn't you see what he was writing, Sir...?

He points to BERTOZZO.

SUPERINTENDENT: You've got a point, about certain people having a mania for melodramatic messages to the people... But that was no reason to go shredding up the President's portrait... Shame on you!

The JOURNALIST stands behind the MANIAC as he writes, apparently pondering the meaning of Saint Gregory's words.

JOURNALIST: So in other words he's saying that even when there aren't scandals, they need to be invented, because it's a good way of maintaining power and defusing people's anger.

MANIAC: Correct. A liberatory catharsis of tension... And you journalists are the privileged high priests of the process.

JOURNALIST: Privileged? You must be joking! Not in the eyes of our government! Every time we discover a scandal, they go potty trying to stop the truth getting out.

MANIAC: Certainly... *our* government... But *our* government is still pre-Napoleonic... pre-capitalist... You should take a look at the governments of more developed countries... Northern Europe, for example. You remember the 'Profumo' scandal in England? A minister of defence, caught up with drugs, prostitution and spying...!!! Did the state collapse? Or the stock exchange?

Not a bit of it. If anything they came out of it stronger than before. People thought: 'The rot's there, so let it float to the surface...' We're swimming about in it – even swallowing some of it – but nobody comes round telling us that everything's fine and dandy, and that's what counts!

SUPERINTENDENT: Surely not. That would be like saying that scandal is the fertiliser of social democracy!

MANIAC: Spot on! Manure! *Scandal is the fertiliser of social democracy!* In fact I'd go even further: scandal is the best antidote to the worst of poisons – namely when people come to realise what's really going on. When people begin to realise what's going on, we're done for! But look at America – a truly social-democratic society. Did they ever try to censor the true facts about the massacres carried out by the American troops in Vietnam? No they did not! It was on the front pages of all the papers – photos of women butchered, children massacred, villages destroyed. And do you remember the scandal of the nerve gas? The Americans had manufactured enough nerve gas in the US to wipe out the entire population of the world three times over. But did they try to hide the fact? Not a bit of it! In fact, when you turned on the TV, there they were. Trains. 'And where are those trains going?' 'To the seaside.' 'And what are those trains carrying?' 'Nerve gas. It's going to be dumped at sea... A few miles off the shoreline!' So that supposing there's a little earthquake one day, the containers will crack, and the nerve gas will come bubbling up to the surface, glug-glug-glug, and we'll all die. Three times over!

They've never tried to hush up these scandals. And they're right not to. That way, people can let off steam, get angry, shudder at the thought of it... 'Who do these politicians think they are?' 'Scumbag generals!' 'Murderers!' And they get more and more angry, and then, burp! A little liberatory burp to relieve their social indigestion.

JOURNALIST: But excuse me – you say America's so free, but what do you have to say about the calculated murder of

terrorists, with their families, and the burning of an entire black area of Philadelphia?

MANIAC: I was talking of the 'right to liberatory burps', not the 'right to life'.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Get your hands up...! Backs against the wall or I shoot!

SPORTS JACKET: Bertozzo, are you out of your mind?!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Hands up, I said... And you too, Superintendent... or I warn you, I may not be answerable for my actions!

JOURNALIST: Oh God!

SUPERINTENDENT: Calm down, Bertozzo!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Calm down yourself, Sir... you'll see... *(He pulls several sets of handcuffs out of a drawer in the desk, passes them to the CONSTABLE and tells him to handcuff everyone)* Go on – handcuff them to the coat-rail.

As it happens, at the back of the stage there is a raised horizontal bar, to which all the characters are promptly handcuffed, one handcuff round their right wrist, the other round the bar.

And you don't have to look at me like that. In a minute you'll realise that this was the only way I could get a hearing.

The CONSTABLE is not sure whether to handcuff the JOURNALIST as well.

Yes, the lady too... And handcuff yourself as well, while you're at it. *(Turning to the MANIAC)* Now, you, Mr Bigmouth Bullshit, you will do me the favour of explaining to these people who you *really* are... or, since I'm getting very sincerely sick of the sight of you, I'll blow your damn head off...! OK?

The POLICE OFFICERS and the JOURNALIST protest at his irreverent tone to such an august personage.

Shut up... you!

MANIAC: I'm happy to explain, but I'm afraid that if I just tell them, straight out, just like that, they're not going to believe me.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Maybe you'd like to sing it, then?

MANIAC: No, I'd just need to show them my medical card, my papers from the nuthouse, and all that...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Fair enough... Where are they?

MANIAC: In that bag, there.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Go get them, then. No funny business, mind, or I shoot!

From his bag the MANIAC takes half a dozen personal documents.

MANIAC: There...

He hands them to BERTOZZO.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*He distributes them to each of the characters, who take them with their unhandcuffed left hands*) There you are, ladies and gentlemen... Seeing is believing!

SUPERINTENDENT: Nooo! An art teacher? Indefinite sick-leave? Subject to paranoid delusions?! So he's a bloody mental case, then?

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*Sighing*) Haven't I been trying to tell you that all along?

SUPERINTENDENT: (*Reading from a medical card*) It's a list of psychiatric hospitals – Imola, Voghera, Varese, Gorizia, Parma... He's done the lot of them!

MANIAC: I have indeed... the Grand Tour!

JOURNALIST: Fifteen electric shock treatments... Twenty days solitary confinement...

CONSTABLE: (*Reading from a report*) Pyromaniac. Arsonist.

JOURNALIST: Let me see? Burned down the library at Alexandria... Egypt... in the Second Century BC...?!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Impossible. Give that here! (*He takes a look*) No, look, he wrote it in himself, the bit about Egypt!

SUPERINTENDENT: So he's a forger too, as well as being a hoaxer, an impostor and a quick-change artist...

The MANIAC sits to one side, with an innocent air, and with his big bag on his knees.

I'm going to lock you away for this, for a long time...
Fraudulent impersonation!

MANIAC: (*All smiles*) Tsk, tsk!

He gestures to indicate 'not possible'.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: You can't, Sir. He's certified, Sir, certified mad.

JOURNALIST: What a shame. I had a really nice article all lined up... and he's gone and spoiled it!

SUPERINTENDENT: I'll spoil *him* when I get my hands on him... Bertozzo, will you please undo these handcuffs...

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: Maybe better if I don't, Sir... You know that in Italy nutters are like the sacred cows in India... God help you if you touch so much as a hair on their heads!

SUPERINTENDENT: The bastard... Coming here... Pretending to be a judge... Pretending that he was re-opening the inquiry into the anarchist... When I think of the shock he gave me!

MANIAC: That's nothing compared to the shock I've got for you now! Take a look at this! (*From his bag he pulls the bomb that BERTOZZO had left on the desk*) Count to ten, and we all get blown sky-high!

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: What are you doing...!? Put that down... Don't be stupid!

MANIAC: I'm mad, not stupid... Mind your language, Bertozzo... and drop that gun... or I stick my finger in the firing mechanism here, and poof, away we go!

JOURNALIST: Oh God! Please, Mr, er...!

SUPERINTENDENT: Don't fall for it, Bertozzo... There's no fuse in that bomb... How can it possibly explode?

SPORTS JACKET: Correct... Don't fall for it!

MANIAC: Alright, then, Bertozzo – since you're such an expert... even if you are ungrammatical... See if you can spot the firing mechanism... Look in there... See? It's a Longbar acoustic.

INSPECTOR BERTOZZO: (*He feels faint. He drops the gun and the keys to the handcuffs*) A Longbar acoustic? Where did you find that?

The MANIAC picks up the keys and the gun.

MANIAC: I had it in here... (*Pointing to his big bag*) I've got everything in here! I've also got a tape-recorder on which I've been recording everything you've said since I came through that door. (*He takes out a tape-recorder and shows it to them*) There you go!

SUPERINTENDENT: And what are you planning to do with it?

MANIAC: I'm going to make a hundred copies of the tape, and send them to all the papers... and to the political parties, and to the ministries... Ha, ha... it'll be a scorcher!

SUPERINTENDENT: No, you couldn't do that... You know perfectly well, everything we said was deliberately twisted and distorted by the fact that you were pretending to be a judge!

MANIAC: So? Who cares? the important thing is to have a good scandal... *Nolimus aut velimus!* So that the Italian nation can march alongside the Americans and the English, and become a modern and social-democratic society, so that finally we can say: 'It's true – we're in the shit right up to our necks, and that's precisely the reason why we walk with our heads held high!'

Postscript

In this Postscript written for the 1974 Einaudi edition of Accidental Death of an Anarchist, Dario Fo describes the genesis of the play and its impact in Italy.

How did we hit upon the idea of staging a show based on the theme of the State massacre? Here, we were driven once again by force of circumstances. During the Spring of 1970 the comrades who were coming to see our shows – workers, students and progressives – were asking us to write a full-length piece on the Milan bombings and the murder of Pinelli, a piece which would discuss the political motives and consequences of these events. The reason for their request was the terrible shortage of information on the subject. Once the Press had got over the initial shock, they went silent. The newspapers of the official Left parties – with *L'Unità* at their head – refused to take sides, and limited themselves to the odd comment such as: 'This is a worrying episode', or 'The circumstances surrounding both Pinelli's death and the massacres at the banks are obscure and shrouded in mystery.' They had decided to wait for 'light to be shed' – waiting, so as to avoid making too much fuss.

But no. This was precisely the time to make a fuss, with every means available: so that people who are always thinking about other things, who don't read much and don't read well, and even then are only interested in their own patch, could be told how the State is capable of organising a massacre and at the same time organise the mourning, the public outrage, the

medals for the widows and orphans, and the official funerals with carabinieri presenting arms and standing to attention.

At the beginning of that Summer, Samonà-Savelli had published the book *La Strage di Stato* (published as 'Italian State Massacre', Libertaria, London, 1971): this was an extraordinarily detailed documentation, packed with material, which showed great courage and determination on the part of its authors. Then, in the Autumn, legal proceedings were started by Inspector Calabresi against the newspaper *Lotta Continua*, and its editor Pio Baldelli. It was at this point that we too realised that it was time to get something moving as soon as possible.

We in turn embarked on a research project. A group of lawyers and journalists made available to us photocopies of several articles which had been prepared by democratic and left-wing newspapers but never published. We were also lucky enough to get our hands on various documents from the court proceedings, as well as being able to read the judges' Order for the Pinelli case to be shelved (and, as we know, the important trials which, in some people's view, would have 'shed light' on the episode, were subsequently postponed and then abandoned definitively: by reason of the non-accidental death of the actor). [7]

We drew up a first draft of the play. It was, naturally, a farce, because such was the painful grotesqueness of the court proceedings and the contradictions in official statements. We were informed that we might be running the risk of legal proceedings, with trials and charges being brought against us. Nevertheless, we decided not only that it was worth the effort to try, but also that it was our duty as political militants. The important thing was to act and to act fast.

The first night of the play, in our converted warehouse theatre in via Colletta, coincided with the trial of Pio Baldelli. It was an extraordinary popular success: every evening the theatre was sold out half an hour before the performance began, and we ended up performing with people on the stage, in the wings. Despite the provocations: the usual phone calls from unnamed callers telling us that there was a bomb in the theatre; the interventions of the Flying Squad; the way the

bosses' Press highlighted the incident; despite all this, we were encouraged to hold firm by the lawyer comrades in the Calabresi-Baldelli case, and performances continued, with full houses, away past mid-January.

Our difficulties began when we set off on tour. In via Colletta [8] we were on home ground. Outside Milan, the comrades who were organising things for us went out to try and hire theatres, cinemas and dance halls. There was more than one hall-owner who refused to let us use his premises, even though we were prepared to pay for any damage, since somebody had had a quiet word with him. Somebody who didn't want to lose his job as local police chief.

Often, though, apparent defeats were turned into victories. At Bologna, for example, we were denied the use of the 1,500-seat Duse Theatre. But instead we managed to get the 6,000 seats of the Sports Stadium, and the people came and packed it. It began to become clear that the police and one or two mayors more or less in league with the government, were making an effort to prevent certain things being known about... Well, certain things absolutely *had* to be known about.

But what has been the real reason for the show's success? It is not so much the way it mocks the hypocrisies, the lies that are organised so grossly and blatantly (which is putting it mildly) by the constituted organs of the State and by the functionaries who serve them (judges, police chiefs, prefects, undersecretaries and ministers); it has been above all the way it deals with social democracy and its crocodile tears, the indignation which can be relieved by a little burp in the form of scandal; scandal as a liberating catharsis of the system. A burp which liberates itself precisely through the scandal that explodes, when it is discovered that massacres, giant frauds and murders are undertaken by the organs of power, but that at the same time, from within the powers-that-be, other organs, perhaps pushed by an enraged public opinion, denounce them and unmask them. The indignation of the good democratic citizen grows and threatens to suffocate him. But he has a sense of satisfaction when he sees, in the end, these same organs of this rotten and corrupt society, pointing

the finger at this selfsame society, at its own 'unhealthy parts', and this gives him a sense of freedom throughout his whole being. With his spirit suitably decongested, he shouts: 'Long live this bastard shit society, because at least it always wipes its bum with soft, perfumed paper, and when it burps it has the good manners to put its hand in front of its mouth!'

Accidental Death of an Anarchist has been running for two seasons now. It has been performed something like 300 times, and has been seen by more than 300,000 people. In the meantime, the spiral of the strategy of tension has increased, and has created other victims: the play has been brought up to date, and its message has been made more explicit. With the death of Feltrinelli, [9] a long introductory section was added, and the title was changed to *Morte accidentale di un anarchico e di alcuni altri sovversivi* ('Accidental death of an anarchist, and of other subversives'). Our immediate intention was to make it clear that the State massacre is continuing relentlessly, and that it remains motivated by the same people. The same people who have kept Valpreda and his comrades in prison in the hope that they will die; the same people who have beaten a young man in the streets of Pisa and then in prison and finally killed him; the same ones who are behind a revolutionary militant getting stabbed in Parma – not just an 'anti-fascist youth', as the revisionists are claiming. The same people who are preparing for an Autumn of reaction and violence, preceding it with blackmail against the movement, against all those who are not willing to bow their heads.

But unluckily for them, they will have to realise that there are a lot of us... and that this time their burp is going to stick in their throats.

For the La Comune Theatre Collective
DARIO FO

NOTES

1. The figure of *il Matto* – the Madman, here rendered as the ‘Maniac’ – is a typical Fo figure – someone rejected by society who has access to the truth. A Madman appears in two episodes of *Mistero Buffo* contained in this volume. In one he gambles with death, and in the other dices with the soldiers at the foot of the cross.
2. In the Italian edition, the reference to the ‘comissario Calabrese’ amounts to a pun suggesting the name of Luigi Calabresi, from whose fourth-floor office railwayman the anarchist railwayman Giuseppe Pinelli fell to his death on 15 December 1969. He was to sue the Left-wing newspaper *Lotta continua* for defamation, and was subsequently assassinated. Hence the reference to the non-accidental death of the actor in the Postscript. Italian audiences would have been familiar with a newspaper photograph showing Calabresi wearing a polo neck sweater and sports jacket.
3. See note 2.
4. This song is on a old record compilation by Dischi del Sole, available in the Italian archive of Red Notes, c/o BP15, 2a St Paul’s Road, London N1.
5. A famous Neapolitan actor and comedian.
6. The Hot Autumn was a large-scale movement of workers’ and students’ struggles which developed in late 1969, and were to spread throughout Italy during the following years.
7. See note 2.
8. Via Colletta – the warehouse in Milan occupied by the La Comune theatre collective, which was the base for their militant theatrical activities.
9. Head of the influential Left-wing publishing house of that name. Found dead in suspicious circumstances, with explosive materials near a power pylon. His death has never been explained.