

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## **Rocco and His Brothers** (*Rocco e i suoi fratelli*) 1960 Luchino Visconti

### OVERVIEW

Visconti's film is an adaptation of a storyline in a novel by Giovanni Testori set in Milan. The film follows a poor family that comes from southern Italy and settles in Milan. The story is told in five segments, each named after a brother. Rocco is the middle brother and also the emotional centre of the film. A story of moral decay and familial destruction, the film was welcomed by some critics as a return by Visconti to his realist roots. Visconti explained that he wanted to use the family drama to highlight the causes and consequences of the social upheaval that was changing Italy in the post-war years. The film was certainly hailed by leftists and communists as an overdue expose of the north-south economic and cultural divide in Italy. The film's success with audiences and critics was also due to its combination of three factors: director's art-house style, a story with operatic melodrama and a star-studded cast, including Alain Delon and Claudia Cardinale. Before its release, and after an intervention by the Catholic church, the film was seized by the Italian police. Some controversial scenes were restored, but only after decades. The film won the Silver Lion award at Venice and a host of other awards at less prestigious events.

### SYNOPSIS

Rocco, his mother and his brothers (Simone, Ciro and Luca) arrive from the poor south of Italy to join their oldest brother, Vincenzo, in prosperous Milan. After initial problems in adjusting to their new life in the big city, the drama focuses on the rivalry between Rocco and Simone. Rocco becomes a star boxer, while Simone is washed up. In addition, Simone falls in love with Nadia, a prostitute, who then falls for Rocco and he for her. Madly jealous, Simone rapes Nadia in front of Rocco and then beats his brother to within an inch of his life. Still feeling humiliated, Simone tracks down Nadia when she is with a high-class client on a drive in the country. He murders her and returns to the family apartment, where he confesses to the crime. Ciro goes to the police, but Rocco tries to protect Simone, who evades arrest for three days. Rocco is forced to sign a long-term boxing contract, which takes him abroad, in order to pay off Simone's debts. In the end, although Ciro and Vincenzo have made good, and Luca represents a possibly bright future, the whole family feels the shame of Simone's crime.

### MAIN CHARACTERS

Rosaria	Rosaria is the mother of the fatherless Pardon family.
Vincenzo	Vincenzo is the oldest brother.
Ginetta	Ginetta is his fiancé.
Simone	Simone is the next brother.
Rocco	Rocco is the next brother.
Ciro	Ciro is the next brother.
Luca	Luca is the youngest.
Nadia	Nadia is a prostitute.

### STORY

**Arrival** A group of brothers and their mother disembark from a train at the central station in Milan and wait for their oldest brother, Vincenzo, to meet them. The newly arrived brothers, from oldest to youngest, are Simone, Rocca, Ciro and Luca. After the death of their father, they have come, with their mother, from the deprived south to look for work and start new lives in the north. When Vincenzo doesn't show up, they take a bus, marvelling at the bright lights of the modern city. The stories of the brothers are then told in sections, each devoted to one of them.

## 1. Vincenzo

*In-laws squabble* Vincenzo Pardonì and his fiancé, Ginetta, are the guests of honour at a party hosted by Ginetta's family. The door opens and the rest of the Pardonì family come in, fresh from the train station and led by Rosaria, their mother. After initial kisses and greetings, Rosaria expresses shock that Vincenzo is not wearing black in mourning and that he is rich enough to marry, especially now that his family has arrived and will depend on him. Another problem arises when Ginetta's father realises that the new arrivals have nowhere to spend the night. Both families hurl insults at each other and the Pardonì family leaves.

*Valuable advice* After Vincenzo finds a place for his family to sleep that night, he visits a friend on a building site, who explains how to get housed by the city government without having to pay anything. The trick is to get evicted, then the city takes care of you, rent-free.

*New life* Next, we see the Pardonì family on the street, pushing a cart piled high with their possessions. They come to a huge housing project, where they are directed to their apartment in a cold basement. Waking up early one morning, the family is happy to see snow falling because that means work for the older brothers. Rosaria organises them like a general, feeding them breakfast, getting them dressed and out the door.

*Nadia* Later, Vincenzo meets Nadia, a young woman in the housing project who has been thrown out by her family because she's a sex-worker. He brings her, wearing only a thin dress, into the Pardonì apartment and asks his mother to give the 'poor girl' a coat or something. The mother complies, despite her suspicions, while the young men are intrigued by this attractive young woman. But when she goes into the bathroom, to put on a warm dress given by the mother, she flees out the window.

*New prospects* The family is finally evicted for not paying rent and housed in a nicer apartment rent-free. Hoping to make money from boxing, Rocco and Simone go to a gym, where they are mocked by the others as southern 'hicks.' Simone is spotted by a promoter who trains him up to be a professional boxer. He wins a big match, where he is jeered by Ginetta's family and cheered by his own. Outside the gym, the two families and their supporters get into a street brawl. When they all disperse, Simone finds Nadia waiting for him on the pavement and walks away with her, forgetting that he was supposed to celebrate with his promoter.

## 2. Simone

*Changes* Simone starts a romantic and sexual relationship with Nadia. She tells him how she was seduced as a young girl by an older man, then says it was all a lie and that she was a happy child. Luca works as a delivery boy for a grocery store, Ciro studies for a degree and Rocco has a job at a clothing store, where he is mocked by the female workers as illiterate. When Simone goes to the shop to have his trousers repaired, he borrows money from the owner, which she takes out of Rocco's next pay check. He also steals a new shirt and walks out like a new man. He also sends Rocco to the gym to tell his manager that he won't be around for a few days.

*Luxury life* With the stolen money and shirt, Simone takes Nadia to a lakeside resort, where they marvel at the luxurious hotels and lovely gardens. Simone dreams about making money when he turns professional boxer but warns her that, when in training, he won't be able to make love. When Nadia explains that she is not 'his girl', Simone is upset and says he loves her.

*Stolen jewellery* Back in Milan, Simone returns the shirt he stole from the shop where Rocco works. The manageress is furious with him, but Simone suspects she is attracted to him and, while seducing her, steals her brooch. Later, Nadia hands to Rocco the jewellery given to her by Simone, which she knows was stolen. 'Give it back to him,' Nadia says, 'and tell him I've gone away.'

*Good news* Rocco lies to his brothers, saying the manageress found her brooch. Then he tells them some good news: he's been drafted by the army. Before going to sleep, he gives Nadia's goodbye message to Simone, who is hurt and angry.

## 3. Rocco

*Rocco and Nadia* Rocco, the middle brother, leaves to complete military service in Turin, where he accidentally meets Nadia, who has been released from prison for prostitution. Rocco's innocence inspires her to change her ways and enter an exclusive relationship with him. They talk about their

lives, their fears and feelings, opening up their hearts to each other. Nadia lacks any hope for the future, but Rocco's optimism gives her courage.

*Family news* Serving in the army, Rocco gets a letter from his mother, explaining that the family has moved into a new apartment and are well known because of Simone's boxing success. She regrets that Ginetta got pregnant and Vincenzo had to marry her. Ciro, the fourth brother, is working in a car manufacturing plant after completing night school. He is the only one earning money for the family

*Home!* Rocco goes home for a few days and finds the family in a nice apartment but only his mother to greet him. The brothers are at the church for the baptism of Vincenzo's baby, although the two families are still not visiting each other. Rocco convinces his mother that he can reconcile the two families and joins his brothers at the baptism.

*Defeats* At the boxing gym, Simone's manager calls him a 'sack of potatoes' because he's too slow. When Rocco spars with Simone, the manager likes the younger brother's quickness. Outside the gym, Rocco again runs into Nadia and they become romantic. That night, Simone is badly beaten by a quicker boxer and is jeered as a 'clod'. Then he learns that his manager wants Rocco to take his place and that Nadia is hanging out with Rocco.

*Brutal brother* When Simone is told where Nadia and Rocco go at night, he surprises them by the riverbank and demands an apology from Rocco. Rocco refuses, and Simone rapes Nadia in front of his brother. Afterward, when Rocco doesn't comfort her, she staggers away. Simone then beats Rocco to a pulp and is driven off by his friends. A half-dead Rocco manages to make his way to Vincenzo and Ginetta's apartment but doesn't say what happened. Later, when he meets Nadia, Rocco realises how desperately his brother loves her, but she says that she only loves him. She threatens to kill herself if he doesn't trust her but he tells her to go back to Simone. 'He needs you,' he says. She reluctantly complies but taunts Simone as a weak man and says she hates him, but then submits to his love-making.

#### **4. Ciro**

*Return of Simone* Ciro, the fourth brother, is engaged to Franca, a girl from a middle-class family. Unlike his older brothers, he still lives with his mother and younger brother Luca. One day, he finds Nadia and a drunk Simone in the apartment. His mother is beside herself with grief at what has become of Simone and 'his whore'. Ciro tries to talk sense into Simone, who won't listen. Rocco is sympathetic. 'He's [Simone's] just demoralised,' he says. Rocco also has a plan to restore Simone to his previous healthy life as a boxer.

*Police* When Simone's old manager humiliates him as a penniless no-good in debt to a whore, they fight and Simone steals money from him. The police come to the family apartment to arrest Simone, who is not there. After Ciro goes with the police, the mother and Nadia, who is staying in the apartment, get into a shouting match. Nadia says she's going because Simone has sunk to his lowest level, which is what she wanted, in order to show Rocco how useless his self-sacrifice was.

*A deal* Rocco, Ciro and Vincenzo go to the boxing manager and ask how much he is owed. 400,000 lira is the answer. Rocco says he'll pay it back in three months, but the other brothers think he's crazy. Rocco says that his own manager will put up the money; then he will sign a long-term contract to go on the international boxing circuit and pay it back to him. Everyone knows that Rocco doesn't want to be a boxer but it's the only way to save Simone. Ciro gives some cash to Simone and tells him to leave the house to avoid arrest. Simone says he'll wait for more money when Rocco wins his next fight.

*Murder* Drunk in a bar, Simone is humiliated by his old friends, who rake up his jealousy toward Rocco over Nadia and recall the night when the brothers fought over her. Simone tracks down Nadia, who is with a client in the countryside. He begs her to come back to her; she refuses and he begins to attack her. When she denounces him for ruining her life, he stops. Do what you want, she says, and he repeatedly stabs her with a knife. At the same time, Rocco is winning a big fight.

#### **5. Luca**

*Family celebration* The family, minus Simone but including Ginetta and her baby, celebrate Rocco's victory. Overcome with joy, they invite all their neighbours for a drink, and Rocco toasts the crowd.

Later, Rocco tells his family that he wants to return to their home down south. And if he can't, then maybe Luca will.

*Simone arrives* The doorbell rings and the mother finds Simone at the door. She welcomes him inside, but the others are shocked. Rocco takes him aside and begs him to tell him what the problem is. When Simone tells him about the murder, Rocco cries in his arms and blames himself for Nadia's death. Ciro says they must tell the police, but Rocco says he doesn't 'believe in the justice of men'. Ciro summons the police anyway.

*Simone arrested* Luca visits Ciro on his lunch break and tells him that Simone spent three nights on the roof until the police caught him. 'Satisfied?' Luca says, 'You wanted him caught.' In tears, Ciro says how he had always loved Simone ever since they were little and Simone made him understand the suffering of the peasants. 'He once had good roots,' Ciro says, 'but he let the weeds overtake him...Rocco's a saint...but one mustn't always forgive.'

*The future* Luca says he'll go back south with Rocco, but Ciro says that even there things will have changed. Although most people have lost faith in a changing world, Ciro has not. 'You, Luca, will lead a more honest, upright life,' he says. When Ciro walks back to the factory, his fiancé runs up and they kiss. As Luca goes home, he passes newspapers with a big photo of Rocco under a headline that announces his tour of Europe as a boxing champion.

## THEMES

### 1. *Society: change*

Even in 1960, when the film was released, Italian society was undergoing fundamental change, as dramatised in the film. The moment that the Pardonis family arrives in the big city, they are perceived as outsiders, part of the great wave of migration that brought workers from the poor, agricultural south to the prosperous cities of the north, symbolised by Milan. The lure of the north is illustrated in the opening scenes, when the family ride on a bus and marvel at the lights and energy of the city. Soon, though, these immigrants are called 'Zulu', 'Africans' and do-nothing southerners,' while Simone is said to be 'slow,' 'lazy' and a 'sack of potatoes.' But they are an aspirational family, looking to escape from poverty and make a new life in Milan, where houses are 'going up like mushrooms.' The brothers struggle in their new world, at first finding work only when it snows. Later, Ciro gets a steady job in a factory, while both Simone and Rocco make some money as boxers. A highlight for Rosaria, their mother, is that she is called 'Madam' on the street. 'Imagine that,' she says, with pride. Still, she is shocked by the hedonism and selfishness in the big city, mostly personified in Nadia, but also in the nightclubs and bars that Simone frequents. In her eyes, the new social values have corrupted Simone, whose moral decay and villainous crime bring shame on the family. True, Vincenzo and Ciro adapt to their new environment and make a success of their lives, but Rocco, the moral centre of the family, is ruined by Simone's behaviour. At the end, in order to pay off his brother's debts, Rocco works as a boxer, in a kind of forced labour not so different to that which killed his father down south.

2. *Family* As the title announces, this is a story about a family, five brothers and a widowed mother. Although the family is poor, they have the strength of familial cohesion. We see how close they are on the morning when they wake up and see snow—which means work. They all bustle around in cramped rooms, dressing, eating and laughing with each other before setting out. Leading this coordinated effort is Rosaria, the matriarch, who calls herself the 'hand with five fingers' (sons). In the early sections of the film, the family survives the hardships of city life by pulling together. But even at the beginning, cracks appear. Vincenzo, the oldest, has already separated himself by becoming engaged to a Milanese girl, and he doesn't wear traditional mourning clothes to honour his dead father. Soon, Nadia, the femme fatale, enters the family home and Simone is caught in her wicked web. The familial fabric begins to fray and is slowly torn apart so that, eventually, only Ciro and little Luca are living with mamma. Brother turns on brother, nearly killing each other in a fist-fight and betraying each other to the police. The original family cohesion has been smashed, but it remains a dream, inspiring Rocco to say that he wants to return to the family roots in the south. Moments later, when Simone confesses to murder, the family start to scream and accuse each other. Again, Rocco sums it up: 'We're no longer in God's grace. We've become our own enemies.' The family that began the film has vanished. Vincenzo is living apart with his own family. Simone is a murderer and 'lives with a whore'. Rocco is about to sign a contract that will take him to far away place. Ciro is about to marry and move out. This once-cohesive southern family has been reduced to little Luca and his unhappy mother.

3. *Jealousy* The single most important factor in the destruction of the family is jealousy. Simone and Rocco, who seem closest in age and appearance, are set against each other from the start. With Vincenzo gone, they both seek to earn money through boxing, but Rocco outshines his older brother in the ring and becomes the manager's favourite. It is Rocco who also tells Simone that Nadia has left him. And so, when Simone discovers that Rocco has 'stolen' Nadia from him, he is furious and nearly kills his brother in a fist-fight. Later, his jealousy is inflamed to a murderous extent when his friends mock him about both his brother's boxing success and Nadia's new high-class clients. Crazed, humiliated and angry, he mercilessly kills Nadia. When the mother hears of his crime, she sums it up: 'It's jealousy,' she says, 'that's what ruined him.' Simone's jealousy is born of a rivalry with his closest brother, a competition that he loses in the boxing ring and in love. That double loss increases his feeling of inferiority and humiliation, both within the family and in front of his friends. It's not just that Rocco has what Simone wants; it's that Rocco has taken those things from Simone. Jealousy is a childish emotion, which, in the hands of a grown man, can become murderous.

#### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Rosaria** Rosaria is a strong character, a grieving widow and a matriarchal support for her sons. She is a traditional woman from southern Italy, a pious Catholic and a social conservative, who is quick to condemn Nadia as a 'loose woman'. Rosaria is a proud woman who stands up for herself and her family, but she is also a woman with deep regrets.

*Proud* The first thing we notice about Rosaria is his pride, in herself and her family. Although from a poor rural background, she is, as she says, 'no one's fool.' That quality is well illustrated in the scene where she and her sons go to the house where Ginetta's family is celebrating her engagement to Vincenzo. After an initially warm welcome, tensions flare up between the two families. Rosaria points to the photograph of her dead husband pinned to her breast and says that she is not in a mood for parties. When Ginetta's father raises the question of where she is expecting to sleep that night, she grabs Vincenzo's hand and declares that her son will not let her down. Then, when Ginetta's mother accuses her of spoiling their party, Rosaria has had enough. 'C'mon, boys,' she cries. 'Let's get out of here.' Ginetta tries to intervene, suggesting that Rosaria has misunderstood. 'No, I've understood all right,' Rosaria says. 'They [Ginetta's family] have no respect for my sons' dead father. Heathens!' Rosaria will not permit herself or her sons to be insulted. She is a proud mother from the south.

*Remorseful* Taking responsibility for the family's fortunes, Rosaria feels she is to blame when the family falls apart. She expresses her regret in a scene that begins when Ciro comes home and finds that Simone has returned and brought Nadia with him. Simone had moved out long ago, nearly killed Rocco in a fight and now is heavily in debt. Rosaria calls Ciro into her room, where he finds her sitting on a bed, staring at a statue of the Madonna. 'Is it all my fault?' she asks him. 'Bringing my strong, handsome sons here to better themselves.' It was she, Rosaria says, and not their father, who longed to leave the south. 'And now...Rocco had left home and acts like a curse is on him. And Simone, my dear Simone, lives with a whore!' Rosaria blames herself for everything, a mother's curse.

**Vincenzo** \_\_ Vincenzo, who was once a good boxer, is the oldest son and the one who settled first in Milan. He is a responsible person, who takes care of his family while also devoting himself to his fiancé, later his wife and their young baby. After the first segment of the story, carrying his name, he fades out of the picture simply because he has set up a separate household.

*Practical* Vincenzo fits the role of the oldest son in that he is practical and looks after his mother and younger brothers. He executes that responsibility in an early scene, just after the family has arrived in Milan from down south. They have nowhere to sleep, so he arranges a one-night accommodation and then sets out to find something more permanent. He goes to a friend in the construction business, who gives him advice: take an apartment, don't pay rent, get evicted, then you'll be housed rent-free by the city government. This is exactly what Vincenzo does for his family, even though he is in full-time employment as a construction worker. When Luca shows up one day at work to tell him that the family has been evicted, Vincenzo is overjoyed because his practical plan has worked.

*Kind* Vincenzo is also a considerate person, as illustrated in the first scene in which Nadia appears. When Vincenzo meets her on the stairwell of the apartment building, she is half-dressed and in distress. She explains that her father has thrown her out because she does 'what a poor girl does'. Moved by her situation, and a little attracted to her, as well, Vincenzo takes the bold but kind step of inviting her into the family apartment to find her more clothes to put on in the cold weather. His

mother sizes her up immediately, but Vincenzo feels she is just a young woman who needs his help.

**Simone** Simone is a weak character who falls prey to the fleshpots of the big city. Both Rocco and Luca speak of him as a changed person, who forgot the good 'roots' of his upbringing in southern Italy. Once ensnared by the delightful Nadia, he is on a downward spiral of deceit, betrayal and murder. As a tough boxer, he has the physical strength to inflict pain on others, and, when fuelled by insane jealousy and hate, this is what he does.

**Weak** Simone is a weak-willed person who falls in love with the wrong woman and is unable to break her spell. We see how he gets pulled into that disastrous relationship in the scenes that follow the first meeting in the family apartment. For example, then he walks out of the gym after a boxing match and sees Nadia waiting for him, his face lights up with delight. And after making love, he is besotted with her, unable to stop kissing her and looking at her. Then, he goes to the shop where Rocco works in order to get himself a set of clothes with which to impress her, and he steals a new shirt in the process. That theft is what defines Simone. If he wants something, he will get it without considering the consequences of his actions. Ruled by desire, he is a weak man.

**Jealous** Weak Simone is also prone to jealousy, as illustrated in a scene when he is being tended to after a boxing match. Simone has been beaten and badly bruised. Now, he listens to a companion tell him that his kid brother is going around with Nadia, who dumped him not so long ago. 'Don't tell me you didn't know?' the friend says. 'No, I didn't,' Simone says with a dazed look, partly caused by the fight and partly by what he's just been told. As the friend gives him more details about Nadia, he stares with empty eyes and then snaps at the man who is putting bandages on his face. Suddenly, his face is raging with anger. He is jealous of his brother and soon hunts him down like an animal.

**Vicious** Simone is not quick as a boxer, but he is tough. When that toughness is combined with anger, he can be vicious, as shown in his attack on Rocco and later on Nadia. The first of these is brutal enough, a fight caused by fraternal rivalry over a woman, but the second one is almost unwatchable in its depravity. Nadia is completely helpless, having resigned herself to suffer, and Simone has no pity. Nor can we say that his action is spontaneous, a crime of passion committed in a moment of madness. Instead, it is premeditated and cold. He knows what he wants to do, and even when she cries out for mercy after the first thrust of the knife, he does not hesitate to stab her again and again. It is one of the most disturbing murder scenes in Visconti's films, but given Simone's total moral breakdown, its viscousness is not surprising.

**Rocco** Rocco is the most complicated of the brothers. He is naïve and innocent at the beginning, a young man who becomes a soldier and finds love with Nadia. In some ways, he is a Christ-like figure who endures suffering as a sacrifice for others. He is person with empathy, but his loyalty to his family can also make him insensitive to others. In the end, Rocco is a disillusioned saint, as morally damaged as Simone.

**Empathetic** Rocco's sensitivity to others is illustrated when he has a lengthy conversation with Nadia. After Rocco has joined the army, they bump into each other on the street and sit down to have a coffee. When she says she's just been released from prison for prostitution, Rocco's brow furrows. 'Was it bad?' he asks. Another person might have made a sarcastic or critical remark, but Rocco is too innocent for that. His empathy and cheerfulness encourage her to open up and unburden herself of her worries. At the end of the scene, when she says she's lost hope, Rocco speaks warmly. 'You shouldn't be afraid,' he says. 'Have faith and have no fear. Have great faith.' His optimism acts like a balm on Nadia's bruised self-image, allowing her a few moments of happiness.

**Callous** It's difficult to see how an empathetic person can be callous, but that contradiction is dramatised in the significant scene on top of Milan's cathedral when Nadia (after her brutal rape) is ready to commit suicide. Nadia says that her life is worthless, that she loves Rocco and asks for his help. Just when we are expecting Rocco to take her in his arms and comfort her, he becomes moralistic. 'We're both guilty, especially me,' he says. 'You must go back to Simone [who raped her in front of Rocco].' Nadia says he's crazy, but Rocco's argument is that Simone 'needs' her. That much is true, in a twisted sense, but what about Nadia? Her needs, apparently, count for very little. Rocco's loyalty to the family is greater than his love for this abused and vulnerable woman. His failure to help in her greatest moment of need is shocking. Empathetic one moment and unmoved the next, Rocco is a complex character.

**Forgiving** Rocco's concern for his brother's welfare trumps everything else, as shown toward the end, after Simone has murdered Nadia. When Simone shows up at the family apartment, with guilt

written all over his face, everyone shuns him. Everyone except Rocco, who takes him aside and puts a hand over his mouth to stop him from speaking in front of the others. When he learns that Simone has murdered Nadia, Rocco does not condemn him. He isn't even angry. Instead, he cries on Simone's chest and strokes his anguished face. Later, when the others want to turn him over to the police, Rocco says, 'I don't believe in the justice of men. It's not for us to judge him, but to help him.' Rocco is able to forgive a person who nearly killed him in a fist-fight and then murdered a defenceless woman whom he himself once loved.

**Ciro**      Ciro is a less important figure than Simone and Rocco. More like Vincenzo, he adapts to his new environment, finds a job and gets engaged to a local girl. He is more level-headed than his brothers and tries to avoid problems. At the same time, he is devoted to his family and is torn apart by Simone's behaviour. But his sense of justice is stronger than his loyalty to his brother.

*Responsible*   One of *Ciro's* big scenes occurs when he has just left his fiancé and her father, promising to visit them soon. He is the good boy, the successful one, with a good job and a sense of responsibility. All that is illustrated when he enters the family apartment and finds that Simone and Nadia have moved in, causing Rosaria to lament her decision to bring the boys up north. When *Ciro* goes into to see her, she is desperate and blames herself for Simone's corruption. *Ciro* attempts to soothe her by saying that they can settle everything the next day. And when she breaks down in tears, he puts his arms around her and kisses her forehead. 'I'll think of something,' he says. First, though, he has a talk with Simone, beginning with, 'You're irresponsible. Have a little respect for our mother [i.e., don't live here with Nadia].' Unable to get through to half-drunk Simone, *Ciro* next has a talk with Rocco, pointing out that Luca will be badly affected by Simone's behaviour. *Ciro* is a conscientious person, who acts to protect his mother and his little brother.

*Censorious*   Given his own successful attempt to carve out a decent life for himself in the big city, it comes as no surprise that *Ciro* condemns his brother's life-style. We have seen this side of his character for some time before *Ciro* actually puts his condemnation into action. When Simone comes home and confesses to murdering Nadia, Rocco forgives him, but *Ciro* speaks out immediately. 'Turn yourself in!' he screams. And then, while Rocco speaks about how everyone is to blame, *Ciro* slips out and jumps on his motor scooter. Rocco catches up with him and begs him to stop. But *Ciro* is determined to do the right thing. He shrugs off Rocco and speeds off into the night toward the police station.

*Regretful*    At the very end of the story, we see a side of *Ciro's* character that has been hidden underneath all the drama and moralism. He is on his lunch break at the factory when Luca comes and tells him that Simone, after hiding out for three days, has been arrested by the police. Luca suggests that *Ciro* must be happy to hear that news, but *Ciro* turns a pained face to Luca and says, 'No one loved Simone more than I did.' With tears running down his cheeks, *Ciro* says that Simone was a responsible person once. 'Simone had good roots,' he says, 'but he let the weeds overtake him.' Although *Ciro* condemned his brother's action, he did not condemn him as a person. His deep regret is that Simone changed for the worse.

**Nadia**      Nadia is another complex character. She is certainly the femme fatale who contributes to the ruin of Simone and, by extension, the whole family. She is a prostitute, she is flighty and she changes lovers like a new dress. So, it is easy to dislike her, but she is also an object of our sympathy. She does what many 'poor girls' do to make money, and she appears genuinely in love with Rocco, who gave her courage to believe in herself. She is also candid and confronts reality. She certainly does not deserve her tragic death.

*Audacious*   The complexity of *Nadia's* character is displayed in her first scene, when she is comforted by Vincenzo after being thrown out of her father's apartment. When Vincenzo asks why, her answer is typically glib: 'Oh, the same old stupid story: a girl's honour. They think it's important, but what's a poor girl to do? Can you imagine if all the girls like me suddenly disappeared?' She gives a little laugh at her facetious thought. Minutes later, she enters the family apartment, like a snake slithering into the Garden of Eden. She flounces around, flirting and throwing out more sarcasm, while the boys are impressed with her boldness. They've never seen anything quite like this down south, a young woman as audacious as a man.

*Outspoken*   If we look for a positive side to *Nadia's* character, we can say that she is never dishonest. She might cheat a little in the game of romance, but she usually tells it like it is. A good example of that candour comes in the scene when Simone takes her for a weekend to a lakeside

resort town. Strolling in front of a luxurious hotel, they sit down on a low wall and dream about getting the money to stay in a place like that. Simone says he'll get it by training hard, but that she will have to give up sex during that time. Nadia is half-listening, smoking a cigarette with a blasé expression. But when she hears Simone's talk about sacrifice, she hardens. 'Let's get something straight,' she says with a cross tone. 'We're not married. We just go out sometimes. It may last a year, it may not...After each affair, a good, clean break. Scram.' This is not what Simone wanted to hear, but to her credit, Nadia does not try to deceive him.

*Self-hating* Raped by Simone and abandoned by Rocco, Nadia has reached rock bottom in terms of self-respect. On top of the cathedral, she told Rocco that her life was 'loathsome' until she learned to love him. Then Simone brutalised her and brought her to his level. But worse is still to come, when he tracks her down with her high-status client. She condemns Simone as a hateful beast and spits at him in contempt. Then she says, 'Do what you want. I don't care anymore,' and walks away. He approaches with a drawn knife. She throws off her coat, as if to say, 'Go ahead, you bastard. Do it.' And he does, stabbing her to death. The depravity of the scene is not just Simone's act. It is Nadia's total lack of dignity, her self-hate that does not even allow her to resist death.



(Rocco, right, prevents Simone from speaking in front of the family)



(Rocco and Nadia, when she is about to commit suicide on the cathedral roof)



(Nadia submitting to Simone's murderous hand)



(Simone before he met Nadia)