

MAKE HIM SUFFER

A MONOLOGUE

By JANE CAFARELLA

TIME: 1940. ANGELINA, 40, pleads for her husband to be released from the No.1 internment camp for Enemy Aliens in Tatura in Central Victoria, Australia, during WW2.

Signor, my name is Angelina Cafarella. I am here for my husband, Gaetano. I have not seen him since they bring him here three months ago. No, no! I don't want to talk to him. I come to talk to you.

My husband, he talks too much. Every day, the customers come to our shop and ask: "What have you got to say about politics today, Gaetano?", and my husband says, "Mussolini is a great man. A friend of the Italian people."

(Shaking her head). Bedda Matri! We are Australie since 1923 - but my husband he refuse to be naturalised.

My friend, Rosaria, says, "Your husband talks too much. We should watch out for our own skins."

So, I plead with him, "Acurra, aqua in bocca - for the sake of the children, please don't talk politics in the shop."

My father, too, he begs him, "Be careful what you say. We are not in our own country. You never know what can happen."

But my husband shouts at us: "Stai zitto, deficite! What do you or your father understand about politics?"

(Smiling) Well, you know what happen? The next day about five or six Australie take vigil outside our shop. They say, "Don't go in there. They're dagoes. They're fascists. They're Mussolini's people."

That day we sell nothing. The next day, also nothing. We have to close the shop. The next morning the police come and take my husband away to the camp.

Beat.

Signor, at that time I have three children and one coming, and no money. My father he takes a job at a fruit stall at the Victoria Market, but it is not enough. He is old and can't work hard anymore. We have no food. We have reached the lowest. *(She makes the sign of the cross.)* Jesu mia misericordia!

But God is good! The priest, Father Modotti sees my husband is not in church. He comes with food and says he will ask the Archbishop to put a word for him. "Perhaps, if your husband can help the church, the church can help him," Father Modotti says. "What can your husband do?"

(Sbrugs) Do? Nothing! My husband does nothing. He never likes to work - only to read and talk, but these things you only discover after. Many things you discover after. Three years ago, I am pregnant with my third child. My husband and I argue about money. I fear he will hurt me and the child will be born dead. I run next door for help. That night my son is born on the couch of the neighbour.

My father says, “Your husband mistreats you. Let us leave this place. We have a house and family in Sicily.”

(Shaking her head). What is there for young people on the island? The old women cry as they wait for letters from their children.

Beat.

After they take my husband to the camp,, my fourth child – a girl, is born in the hospital. The nursing sister hands me my baby - “Here’s your little Mussolini”.

I want to punch that nurse in the nose. But I am ill and can’t defend myself.

You see how I suffer, with this husband who is all talk and trouble?

(Smiling guiltily as she looks at the letter.) But God is good! There is a labour shortage. Dr Mannix, the Archbishop, he needs someone to wash his car, tend the lawns and look after the garden at St Mary’s Church in North Melbourne, near our house.

He asks you to release my husband so he can do this job. It is an important job, a good job, a quiet job. My husband can talk, but who will listen? Only God.

I don’t want to be awful, because my children might think ill of me, speaking of their father this way, but, *(fervently)* pi favuri!

MAKE HIM SUFFER!

She hands over the letter.

ENDS

(Based on a true story)

Approx. 650 words

Translation from Sicilian dialect:

Bedda Matri - Literally “beautiful mother”, meaning Mother of God

Acurra, aqua in bocco – Be careful, shut your mouth! (literally, water in your mouth).

Stai zitto, deficite! – Shut up, moron!

Jesu, mia misericordia! - Jesus, have mercy on me