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*Dramatic Publishing*



# **THESE TWO COUPLES WENT TO ITALY ...**

A Play  
by  
**PAUL RUSCONI**



**Dramatic Publishing**  
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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# **These Two Couples Went to Italy ...**

**A Full-length Play  
For 3 Men and 2 Women**

## **CHARACTERS**

**MARIE and TOM, a married couple from New York.**

**JANET and CARL, a married couple from Indiana.**

**ITALIAN MAN**

**NOTE:** The actors portraying Marie, Tom, Janet and Carl are all roughly the same age (40s-50s).

**SETTING:** The play takes place in Italy.

**TIME:** Now.

**Set requirements:** Cafe tables/chairs, train compartment, rubble of Leaning Tower of Pisa.

**Approximate running time:** 80-90 minutes.

**Punctuation Note:** “//” in or at the end of a line of dialogue indicates that the speaker is interrupted by the following speaker.

# These Two Couples Went to Italy ...

## Scene 1. Central Station, Milan

*(TOM and MARIE sit at a table in a train station café. They wear sunglasses. There are suitcases on the floor around them. On the third chair [its back is to the audience], is a painting wrapped in a coat.*

MARIE. What are we going to do now?

TOM. Just sit here and wait for the train.

MARIE. Just sit here? We're just going to sit here in the middle of the station? With that? *(She points at the painting.)*

TOM. Don't point at it, Marie!

MARIE *(stops pointing)*. We can't just sit here. We need to do something, Tom. We need to get out... Isn't there an earlier train we could take?

TOM. We're going to Pisa.

MARIE. What's so special about Pisa?

TOM. They won't be looking for us there!

MARIE. Don't snap at me!

TOM. Well, keep your voice down!

MARIE. I'm hungry. I need to eat.

TOM. We'll eat on the train.

MARIE. I can't wait that long. *(She picks up her purse and stands.)*

TOM. What are you doing?

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MARIE. I'm going to get something to eat.

TOM. Somebody might see you.

MARIE. I don't care. I'm starving.

TOM. Sit down.

MARIE. You told me there was food here.

TOM. I don't give a shit what I said.

MARIE. This is a fucking train station. A fucking train station.

TOM. Marie!

*(MARIE exits. TOM picks up his USA Today. He pretends not to care that MARIE has left, but he is looking for her.)*

*Lights up on JANET and CARL. They sit at the same type of table and chairs as MARIE and TOM. CARL sits with his back to TOM. JANET and CARL wear matching track suits, sneakers and full fanny packs. There are some postcards on the table and suitcases on the floor around the table. CARL points a camera at JANET. JANET smiles.)*

JANET. Do you have the sign in the background?

CARL. What sign?

JANET. The Milano sign, lit up there on the ceiling.

CARL. Oh, yeah, there it is.

JANET. Now, is it centered over my head, Carl?

CARL. The sign?

JANET. Yes, the sign. How else will we know where we were when we took this? Oh, wait, Carl. I almost forgot. *(She digs into her fanny pack and pulls out two Italian flags. She holds one in each hand.)*

CARL. All right. One, two...

JANET. Wait! Are the flags the same distance from my ears as the Milano sign is from the top of my head?

CARL. What?

JANET (*waves the flags*). The flags, Carl. The flags and the Milano sign should frame my face.

CARL. Oh. Okay, Janet, hold on.

JANET. It's a good thing one of us has an eye for pictures.

I know exactly the picture I want to take in Pisa, Carl.

The Leaning Tower of Pisa and me, leaning. It will be so perfect. I got this idea months ago. Good pictures have to be planned. You know none of those pictures they say are candid are really candid. Have you got it?

CARL. Almost. Stand up a little.

JANET (*adjusts*). That poster, the two French people kissing? Planned. The two people? Not even French. Not even people—models who looked French told to stop at a particular spot on the sidewalk and told to kiss in a particular way for the camera. That's the key to a great candid picture, Carl. Planning. How's that?

CARL. Move the flags about two inches from your head.

JANET (*adjusts*). And all my planning will pay off, Carl.

My Pisa picture will win the contest.

CARL. What contest?

JANET. The Ultimate Travel Picture Contest. You know, in *The Beacon*.

CARL. The contest Joan wins every year?

JANET. Joan's pictures aren't even that good. It's just that she travels the most. Look what she won with last year—that sunrise over the Great Wall of China. Please. It was just another sunrise, except for that Great Wall and all those Chinese people. Her picture didn't mean



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anything; there was no message. But how can I compete with China?

CARL. A little higher, Janet.

JANET (*adjusts*). But she'll never win the national competition, because Kodak is looking for an ad campaign with a message—you can't build an ad campaign around a picture without a message—and Joan's pictures don't have messages. They're exotic and pretty and colorful, sure, but zero message. But me leaning in front of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Carl, now that's a picture with a message.

CARL. What's the message?

JANET. That it's hard to keep your balance in life, Carl. It's about the precariousness of life...

CARL. Oh.

JANET. The struggle to maintain your dignity and poise and stability in an unstable world...

CARL. Uh-huh.

JANET. It's about making the best of your situation. It's about the human spirit, really; that's what it's about—the triumph of the human spirit. See, we're like the tower; the tower won't be knocked down, and we won't be knocked down. We can do anything if we try. That's the message, Carl. It's all about the lean.

CARL. But if I'm the one taking the picture, Janet, it's my picture. I'm the one who's going to win that contest.

JANET. It's my picture, Carl. My idea, my picture. I thought about it. I planned it. You're just pushing the button on the camera. Any fool can take a picture, but a picture with a message has to be planned. What's taking so long?

CARL. The light is flashing.

JANET. The red light?

CARL. It should just be a minute.

JANET. I can't hold this position much longer, Carl. Is it above my head?

CARL. Is what above your head?

JANET. The Milano sign. Carl, the Milano sign is in the picture with me, right?

CARL. Yes, Janet.

JANET. And the flags are framing my face?

CARL. Yes, Janet.

JANET. Then take the picture. I'm cramping.

CARL. I think the camera's jammed.

*(He pushes the button several times, but there is no flash. JANET leans over the table and reaches for the camera.)*

JANET. Jammed again? *(Flash. The camera whirs, film re-winding.)* Carl!

*(Lights up on TOM, still reading the newspaper. MARIE returns and sits down.)*

MARIE. There's a policeman out there.

TOM. Did he see you?

MARIE. I don't think so.

TOM. You don't think so?

MARIE. Well he didn't follow me in here.

TOM. If you'd just sit down like I said.

MARIE. You said there'd be food here.

TOM. There is food here ...

MARIE. My blood sugar is dropping.

TOM. Eat the toast.

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MARIE. I can't eat toast.

TOM. Have *panini*.

MARIE. What's a *panini*?

TOM. How should I know, Marie. Why don't you go up there and see?

MARIE. It's probably disgusting ...

TOM. We're in a train station. You can't expect caviar.

MARIE. You would say that. You're so fucking cheap.

TOM. I'm not cheap. I've got a lot of money.

MARIE. Cheap people always have a lot of money, Tom.

You can't be cheap and have no money, then you're poor.

TOM. I'm not cheap.

MARIE. Cheap, cheap, cheap.

TOM. Why do you always have to hassle me, Marie?

MARIE. You got us into this.

TOM. People are staring at us.

MARIE. You know what? For one week, I won't say anything. I'll say yes. I'll say no. That's it. *(She looks away from TOM.)*

*(Lights up on JANET and CARL. JANET bangs the camera against the table. The camera whirs.)*

JANET. You can't even work a point-and-shoot. All of our pictures are going to be of me half in and half out of the frame.

CARL. It's not my fault, Janet. It's the camera.

JANET. All of our pictures are going to be ruined.

CARL. I'm sure the pictures are fine.

JANET. How can you say that, Carl? You don't know. We're not going to have any pictures of the trip. How are we going to remember the trip?

CARL. We'll remember the trip.

JANET. What will we show people? I was so looking forward to that. I wanted to have the neighbors over after we got back.

CARL. Like Joan's luau after she went to Hawaii?

JANET. No, not like Joan's luau after she went to Hawaii. That's not original...

CARL. With the tiki torches and that trench.

JANET. Anybody would have dug a trench! I wanted to have a potluck with an international theme—something French, something Italian. We could have the Lees bring something Chinese or Korean or whatever. And after dinner I wanted to present a slide show of our pictures. I had it all planned, Carl. A slide show under the stars. I'd set up tables and chairs on the back patio like an outdoor café in an Italian *piazza*, and with each slide I'd tell a unique and personal travel story from our trip.

CARL. We don't have a back patio...

JANET. We can build one. The point is, I can't do any of it if the pictures don't come out.

CARL. We can still have people over...

JANET. They'll want slides, Carl. They'll want proof that we were here.

CARL. We've got lots of postcards.

JANET. Postcards are so impersonal. Me and you and French bread in front of the Eiffel Tower, now that's a picture. Was that on this roll?

CARL. Paris was a few rolls ago. This roll was just Milan.

JANET. Good. I don't want to remember Milan anyway. One disaster after another. Why did Joan make such a big deal about this city? There's nothing to see. The domo and that other church? Everyone knows that the

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best churches are in Rome. The Pope lives there, for God's sake. And *The Last Supper* was such a disappointment. You wait in that line and when you finally get in there it looks just like it does on the postcard. I mean, if I'm going to stand in line to see something, I expect to see something. Like at Disney World. You could wait in line all day at Disney World and not even know it, because you feel like you're doing something. The lines are always moving. There's always something to see.

CARL. Well, they know how to do things at Disney World.

JANET. You can say that again, Carl. You don't really appreciate it until you go to other places. (*She bangs the camera on the table.*) Goddammit rewind! (*She continues banging the camera on the table.*)

(*Lights up on TOM and MARIE. MARIE looks away from TOM.*)

TOM. I'm hungry, too. I missed dinner, too. "I can't eat that." (*Beat.*) If I wanted to eat, I'd eat what they have. I know how to survive. (*Beat.*) Okay, don't fucking talk to me, okay? I don't care. If you had kept your mouth shut in the first place // we wouldn't...

MARIE. Me?

TOM. You heard me.

MARIE. This wasn't my fault...

TOM. The nun told us the church was closed.

MARIE. Churches don't close!

TOM. Sure, Marie, you would know better than a nun.

MARIE. I only wanted one picture.

TOM (*points at painting*). Well, we got one picture.

MARIE. You got it, Tom. You took it off the wall //

TOM. I didn't mean to...

MARIE. You didn't mean to?

TOM. It was an accident.

MARIE. You were touching it, Tom. Who even touches the paintings in a museum?

TOM. It was a church, Marie, not a museum.

MARIE. You're always touching things.

TOM. I wasn't touching it.

MARIE. Touching, touching, touching //

TOM. It was crooked on the wall.

MARIE. So you had to go ahead and straighten it.

TOM. You know how that bothers me, Marie.

MARIE. You don't know when to stop.

TOM. That nun was yelling at you.

MARIE. She wasn't yelling at me. She saw you touching the painting...

TOM. I didn't realize...

MARIE. Screaming like that in a church...

TOM. I was straightening it...

MARIE. Women like her shouldn't be allowed to be nuns...

TOM. It came right off the wall. There was no alarm...

MARIE. Pretending that she couldn't understand what I was saying...

TOM. and then we were out of there...

MARIE. She knew exactly what I was saying.

TOM. and it was in my hands. It was so easy.

MARIE. Why didn't you drop it somewhere, Tom?

TOM. What if something happened to it?

MARIE. That's not our problem, Tom.

TOM. We can't just dump it on the street.

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MARIE. So instead you're going to carry it around with you? (*She points at painting.*) Tom, it's *The Last Supper*! You think no one's going to notice //

TOM. Stop pointing at it!

MARIE. Maybe we could bring it home with us, hang it in the dining room. A souvenir. Gee, you went to Milan, you saw *The Last Supper*, *The Last Supper* was stolen, and now *The Last Supper* is hanging in your dining room. You think the neighbors aren't going to figure it out?

TOM. It's not the real *Last Supper*.

MARIE. Oh, right, Tom, it's not the fresco. What have we got to worry about? It's just a study da Vinci painted before he did the fresco.

TOM. Keep your voice down!

MARIE. A painting by da Vinci. Who's going to miss that?

TOM. Marie!

(*POLICEMAN enters behind MARIE.*)

MARIE. Good thing da Vinci didn't paint the fresco crooked on the wall, because then you would've had to straighten that, too.

TOM. Marie!

(*POLICEMAN stands behind TOM and MARIE. He opens a bag of potato chips and begins eating them. TOM secures the coat around the painting.*)

*Lights up on JANET and CARL. The camera is open on the table. JANET holds the exposed film in her hands.*)

JANET. This can't happen in Pisa, Carl—my picture. We have to buy a new camera.

CARL. We don't have the money to buy a new camera.

JANET. The hotel in Pisa is already paid for, and the replacement credit cards will be at the hotel in Rome. We have enough money until we get to Rome.

CARL. I had to buy another train ticket, remember?

JANET. We must have some money left over.

CARL. You said we couldn't buy anything until we get to Rome. You won't even let me buy a newspaper.

JANET. Can't you go two days without checking the lottery, Carl?

CARL. You have your hobby, Janet, and I have mine.

JANET. You should have kept the money in the neck pouch.

CARL. Here we go.

JANET. Everybody knows that you have to be careful when you go on a trip like this, with all the Gypsies and terrorists and foreigners //

CARL. We're foreigners, Janet.

JANET. You know what I mean.

CARL. You left my wallet in the hotel lobby.

JANET. You can't walk around a foreign hotel lobby with your wallet in your back pocket, Carl. Don't you know anything? That's how robberies happen; they bump into you and take your wallet.

CARL. They didn't have to bump into me, Janet. You made it easy for them. You took out my wallet //

JANET. I thought I gave it back to you. The point is, if you had been wearing the neck pouch...

CARL. All that money hanging around my neck, it was killing me...



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JANET. It would have been safe. It would have been hidden and attached to you ...

CARL. I couldn't even stand up straight ...

JANET. None of this would have happened ...

CARL. I had to practically undress every time we had to pay for something.

JANET. You can't bear even the slightest inconvenience.

CARL. Do you want to wear the neck pouch, Janet?

JANET. What kind of a man are you? Do you want me to get kidnapped by a bunch of Gypsies?

CARL. Why do you keep talking about Gypsies, Janet? We haven't seen any Gypsies.

JANET. How would you know, Carl? They're around. Read the books. And they're looking for people just like you. Look at you. You're such an easy mark.

CARL. And you're not?

JANET. It has nothing to do with the way we're dressed. It's the way that you carry yourself. You're so American.

CARL. What is that supposed to mean? I am American. We're both American.

JANET. But anyone can tell that you haven't been anywhere in the world.

CARL. You haven't been anywhere in the world, either, Janet.

JANET. But I blend in more. Ask Joan.

CARL. What does Joan know?

JANET. Joan is a traveler, Carl. Joan would never take off her neck pouch. Joan would never carry her train ticket in her wallet.

CARL. Where else would I carry my train ticket?