

STREETS OF GOLD
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CHARACTERS:

IMMIGRANTS:

SLOVAK FAMILY

JOSEPH , Father
FRANCIS, Mother
PAVEL, Son
EMILY, Daughter

ITALIAN FAMILY

MARIO, Father
BIANCA, Mother
ILLARIA, Daughter
JOHN, Son
GUISSEPPE, Grandfather

FROM THE OLD WORLD

LUIGI, Guisseppe's friend
ANTONIO, Guisseppe's friend
GINA MARIE, Guisseppe's wife

OTHER IMMIGRANTS

DIVAK, Croatian miner
BORIS, Russian miner, from Carpathian Mountains
PETE, Irish miner

OTHER CHILDREN:

GEORGE, Slovak
BILLY, Local boy

LOCALS

BOSS, Mine Boss
HANK, Mine inspector
JOE, Elevator operator
SAMUEL SR. Store owner
SAMUEL, His son

The issue of whether or not to unionize is here discussed between the Irish character PETE, and MARIO, a newly arrived Italian immigrant.

From Act One, STREETS OF GOLD

PETE:

Tell me something, Mario. Have you noticed that at the end of the day, whatever you make you have to spend all of it at the store, their store -the company store -and if they ever pay you a little more for working, they take it back from you as quickly by raising the prices in the store, so you can't get ahead, you can't get out, your stuck here doing and saying as they please with the bosses gettin' richer and richer and us having no hope for a better life.

MARIO:

But...We have a house. Real wood floors.

PETE:

You don't own the house. The company owns the house.

MARIO:

....I have a picture of George Washington.

PETE:

Do you realize we gotta dig slate just to get at the coal, breakin' our backs haulin' it up like it was coal, only we don't get paid a dime for it? Same time, we gotta pay for the powder that blasts it all out; we gotta pay for the shovel and the pick that moves it, and we even gotta lay the track that gets to it -all for nothing!

MARIO:

Mister Pete, what you trying to say to me?

PETE:

(Takes out a sheet of paper)

You know what this, don't you, Mario.

MARIO:

It is a piece of paper.

PETE:

It's a piece of paper that says you'll join the union.

(Pause)

MARIO:

And this Union...what does it do?

PETE:

Well, for one thing, it gets us more money.

MARIO:

And how does this union get us more money?

PETE:

If we all agree to stop working, we can tell the company how it's going to be.

MARIO:

Make money by no working?

PETE:

Well, yeah.

MARIO:

And this union, who is in charge?

PETE:

There is a boss -a union boss.

MARIO:

I still have a boss in the mines, too?

PETE:

Your boss is still your boss, but you'll have a union boss, too.

MARIO:

Which one tells Mario what to do?

PETE:

Well, both of them will, but if your Union boss tells you not to work, you listen to him, first.

MARIO:

Not to work so to make money.

PETE:

Well, yeah.

MARIO:

So then, this union boss, he pay Mario, too?

PETE:

No, he don't pay you.

MARIO:

But I listen to him, first -instead of the boss who does pay me.

PETE:

Yeah.

MARIO:

Yes.

PETE:

Uh-huh.

MARIO:

I see.

(MARIO is acting as though he has won the argument. This unsettles PETE)

PETE:

Don't ya see? The safety bosses don't even check the air's no more, cause it's just as easy for them to get a whole other bunch off the boat then it is to keep the ones they got alive?

MARIO:

The boss, he likes Mario. I know this, Mister, Pete, I know.

PETE:

The boss says, "Kill a mule, buy another. Kill a man, hire another."

MARIO:

Mister Pete, when I come to this country, there is terrible storm. All the time, the boat, she is up and down, up and down. Mario, he gets down on his knees and prays to God: "Please, let my family live; let my family come to America!" Now, we have a house. I have a job. Why would I want to sign a paper that puts me back onto a stormy ocean?

PETE:

They call us foreigners, don't they? Daygos, Micks, patch hunkies. Just cause you got off the boat don't mean you've gotten anywhere. Just cause you're in America don't make you an American. You got to fight for that, and that's what I'm trying to get you to do: Be a real American; stake your claim here, by God.

MARIO:

(Beginning rampage)

I am an American! Mario is an American!

PETE:

(Folding up paper and leaving)

Go on in there and tell your wife and your family you're not going to sign nothing -tell 'em things are just fine as they are. Then, tell them what you do each day in the mines - how you are treated -how "safe" it is for ya. So if you don't come home one day, at least they'll know what happened.

(PETE leaves, MARIO remains calling after him)

MARIO:

(Continuing rampage)

Mario is an American! Ask me about America, I tell you. New York, first American city! America so big it has two oceans! First President of the America -general Georgia Washington. When he is a little boy, he goes out chops down apple tree -I don't know why. When his momma ask him, "Hey Georgie do you chop down the apple tree?" he say, "Momma, I no can tell a lie -I choppa down the apple tree." -because in America, presidents no lie to nobody no-time. Go ahead, ask me about America, I tell you -you dumb Irish mick!

Play continues.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STREETS OF GOLD SEE:

The Coal Country of Western Pennsylvania
Articles and Letters

TO PRODUCE STREETS OF GOLD, , Contact Tom DeTitta at tdetitta@earthlink.net