

## CHAPTER V

THE ROSE TATTOO

There is less loneliness in The Rose Tattoo than in the other plays making use of the theme, and the play ends happily with the prospect of a second marriage for Serafina. She is a woman of great passion; when she loves, it is with her whole heart. Serafina has great love for two persons: her deceased husband, Rosario, and her daughter, Rosa. When her husband is killed while smuggling and her daughter falls in love with a sailor, Serafina feels that all she cherishes in this world has been lost. She does not know, during her twelve years of marriage to Rosario, that her husband was in fact a gambler and an adulterer. Serafina will not face the fact that Rosario had been unfaithful to her until Alvaro, her new admirer, proves this. Before Rosario's death she was blissfully in love with him; she has kept his ashes in an urn as a cherished memento of the man she adored.

When I think of men I think about my husband. My husband was a Sicilian. We had love together every night of the week, we never skipped one, from the night we was married till the night he was killed in his fruit truck on that road there! . . . At night I sit here and I'm satisfied to remember, because I had the best. - Not the third best and not the second best, but the first best, the only best! - So now I stay here and am satisfied now to remember. . . .

I count up the nights I held him all night in my arms, and I can tell you how many. Each night for twelve years. Four thousand - three hundred - and eighty. . . . I grieve for him. Yes, my pillow at night's never dry - but I'm satisfied to remember. And I would feel cheap and degraded and not fit to live with my daughter or under the roof with the urn of his blessed ashes, those - ashes of a rose - if after that memory, after knowing that man, I went to some other, some middle-aged man, not young, not full of young passion, but getting a pot belly on him and losing his hair and smelling of sweat and liquor - and trying to fool myself that that was love-making! I know what love-making was. . . . I'm satisfied to remember the love of a man that was mine - only mine! Never touched by the hand of nobody! Nobody but me - Just me!<sup>54</sup>

For Serafina, the "the big bed was beautiful like a religion." She goes into complete retirement after her husband's death and exerts her efforts to keep her only remaining treasure, her daughter Rosa. She tries to keep Rosa from having anything to do with men. She even locks Rosa's clothes cupboard so that Rosa cannot go to the school dance and meet her boy-friend.

But then Serafina meets Alvaro, another truck-driver whom the playwright describes as

. . . about twenty-five years old, dark and very good-looking. He is one of those Mediterranean types that resemble glossy young bulls. He is short in stature, has a massively sculptural torso and bluish-black curls. His face and manner are clownish; he has a charming awkwardness.

There is a startling, improvised air about him; he frequently seems surprised at his own speeches and actions, as though he had not at all anticipated them.<sup>55</sup>

Serafina cannot help feeling attracted to him. Moreover, she pities his life. Through the exchange of confidences, mutual understanding and attraction occurs. Williams comments on their communication as having "a curious intimacy and sweetness, like the meeting of two lonely children for the first time."<sup>56</sup> Her love for and faith in her late husband has been undermined by her gossiping neighbours, but it is not until Alvaro offers proof that Rosario was really an unfaithful husband that she feels that she can give herself to another man. Alvaro offers his love and she accepts him.

Alvaro: Love and affection! - in a world that is lonely - and cold!

Serafina: It might be lonely but I would not say "cold" on this particular day!

Alvaro: Love and affection is what I got to offer on hot or cold days in this lonely old world and is what I am looking for.<sup>57</sup>

With three dependents to support, Alvaro feels he will be lucky to get a sensible lady, maybe a little bit older than himself. He says, "I don't care if she's a little too plump or not such a stylish dresser! . . . The important thing in a lady is understanding. Good sense. And I want her to have a well-furnished house and a profitable little business of some kind. . . ." <sup>58</sup> He is so

conscious of his poverty that he hasn't dared to concern himself with young girls. He is often nervous and unsure of himself. If he should lose hope, he will need an understanding woman to comfort him. When the play ends, he has found her in Serafina, and Serafina has found a lover to replace her memories.

