

## **Nobody Can Stop Don Carlo - Synopsis**

Ten-year-old Carlo has already been waiting for months for his father to come back. For five months, two weeks and six days. Ever since Carlo's mother threw him out and his father has been sending postcards from Sicily.

His mother doesn't want him. His father won't come back. So Carlo makes up his mind to set off alone to his Italian father and bring him back home.

But at the station, the woman at the ticket office refuses to sell him a train ticket. He's too young, she says, to travel all the way to Palermo by himself.

So without further ado Carlo gets on the train without a ticket. A dog chewing an old ticket saves him when the ticket inspector comes round. Carlo simply says the dog had just eaten his ticket. When Carlo later gets onto the train for Rome, an old woman helps him by hiding him in her sleeper cabin. Once in Rome, however, he misses his connection to Naples and wanders around in desperation in front of the station. Here he is approached by a taxi driver. When Carlo shows him his savings, the taxi driver agrees to take him to Naples. Carlo is thrilled. So this is the famous Italian willingness to help his father always used to rave about!

But the taxi ride comes to an abrupt end in the middle of a farm lane. The taxi driver claims the car has given up the ghost and Carlo will have to give it a push. No sooner has Carlo got out, than the taxi driver makes off at high speed, taking Carlo's savings with him. So much for the willingness of Italians to help ...

Suddenly a tractor with a boy sitting in it stops. When Carlo tells him his story, Matteo is horrified and takes Carlo home, where the whole family is sitting round a table eating spaghetti. Matteo's family immediately take Carlo in and now at last he can satisfy his hunger and feel thoroughly at home among all these nice people. Then Matteo's father drives him to Naples where Carlo hides in a life boat on the ferry and gets to Palermo without being found.

Now at last he is standing at his father's front door. After what feels like an eternity, his father opens the door and the two of them fall into each other's arms. Carlo's father is thrilled at the unexpected visitor, just as Carlo had imagined it would be. Together they go to the beach.

No sooner have they got there, than Carlo's father has a phone call. Jumping up, he promises to be back in half an hour. Carlo waits and waits, but his father doesn't come back. Carlo is desperate, then furious. Luckily he has no difficulty in making his way to the flat, where he finds his father wildly gesticulating and having a shouting match with a woman. When the woman furiously makes off, Carlo just as furiously takes his father to task. Everything just pours out of him – his anger at always having to wait for his father, his disappointment at all the empty promises.

Carlo's father slumps. Carlo has never seen him like this before. His father promises to mend his ways.

A few months later, Carlo's father really is living in Germany again, although not in the same flat as before, as Carlo had imagined he would. But at least it's a beginning. Carlo will somehow make it all come out alright. Of that he is sure ...

### Sample translation:

When the ICE draws up I pick up my case:

I can hear Dad laughing loudly when he opens the door in Palermo and sees me standing there.

"You've come all the way from Bochum by yourself?! What a fellow you are, Carlo. Just like me!"

I switch my mind off, just like I did with the number ten, when I just jumped, without thinking. I can see the coaches of the train all fuzzy, just like when I'm looking through Mum's glasses. Better everything's out of focus, then I won't see the ticket inspector. I'm going to travel without a ticket, and that's that.

I look down at the ground as I get in. Then I walk through the aisle. From one compartment to the next, until I reach the restaurant.

As I sit down at a table we are already moving out of the station. There's no going back. Suddenly we are passing our house. My Italian flag is fluttering from the railing of our balcony that looks onto the railway lines. I would stand there, gazing after the fast trains and making my plan. Now it is the balcony I'm gazing after ...

Tomorrow night I'll be in Palermo. Actually, I wanted to be back by then, with Dad. I was going to get his things from the basement before Mum came home from her night shift ... A man is looking at me strangely, as if he knew I'm travelling without a ticket. I turn away from him because I'm obviously sweating. I wish the floor would open up and swallow me. Immediately.

There is a dog lying between my feet. It belongs to the woman behind me and has crept through under her seat.

I bend down to it and my head disappears under the table. The dog is chewing an old ticket and looks up at me with affection in its eyes. I like dogs. They don't mind me fare dodging or being fat. The main thing is, they get something to eat. And dogs always think I have something to eat on me.

I take a bun out my pocket. The dog immediately wags its tail. And I immediately feel better.

"Tickets, please!"

I flinch and bang my head on the edge of the table. What a noise it makes. I feel sick. I thought ticket inspectors didn't come into the restaurant!

I keep my head under the table and see the unfocussed shoes belong to the inspector and the ticket clipper dangling from his belt.

"Help me, doggy!", I whisper.

But all the dog does is swallow the bun and carry on chewing the old ticket. The inspector has already finished with the man opposite. "Good day!" he calls down to me. "Your ticket, please!"

I crawl back from under the table and brush down my clothes. My tie is crooked and my smart shirt is sticking to my bulging mozzarella tummy. I've been sweating so much that you can almost see through it below my waist.

If the inspector makes me get off the train, the station security people will take me back to Mum.

And then I'll never get to Dad. Never.

"Young man, your ticket!"

"The dog's eaten it", I suddenly say.

Or didn't I say it. The inspector bends down as if he hadn't understood me properly.

"The dog has eaten it. It's not my fault", I say again. I point to under the table.

The inspector slowly crouches down and I help him look: all that is left of the old ticket are some wet remains on the floor and few bits hanging from the dog's snout.

"Well I never ..." Says the inspector.

The woman behind me turns round and immediately pulls the dog back with its leash. "What have

you been up to, Rudi?!" she calls out.

"He's eaten this boy's ticket!" says the inspector and starts to laugh.

The other passengers also turn round. The woman grabs Rudi by the back of his neck and takes a few bits of paper out of his mouth. There is nothing anyone can do. Now everyone in the restaurant is laughing. Except me and the woman.

"Alright then. The dog has already clipped the ticket for me", the inspector says, laughing as he carries on his way.

But the woman won't calm down. She gives Rudi a good telling-off and wants me to choose something from the menu. Her shout. My mouth is dry and my stomach in a knot. I can't get anything down. All the same I order a big piece of chocolate cake plus some cocoa to make the woman leave me alone.