

**Luigi Pirandello**



*Six Characters  
in Search  
of an Author*

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[goodpress@okpublishing.info](mailto:goodpress@okpublishing.info)

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# ACT I

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The spectators will find the curtain raised and the stage as it usually is during the day time. It will be half dark, and empty, so that from the beginning the public may have the impression of an impromptu performance. Prompter's box and a small table and chair for the manager.

Two other small tables and several chairs scattered about as during rehearsals.

*The ACTORS and ACTRESSES of the company enter from the back of the stage: first one, then another, then two together; nine or ten in all. They are about to rehearse a Pirandello play: Mixing it Up. [Il giuoco delle parti.] Some of the company move off towards their dressing rooms. The PROMPTER who has the "book" under his arm, is waiting for the manager in order to begin the rehearsal.*

*The ACTORS and ACTRESSES, some standing, some sitting, chat and smoke. One perhaps reads a paper; another cons his part.*

*Finally, the MANAGER enters and goes to the table prepared for him. His SECRETARY brings him his mail, through which he glances. The PROMPTER takes his seat, turns on a light, and opens the "book."*

**The Manager** [*throwing a letter down on the table*]. I can't see [*To PROPERTY MAN.*] Let's have a little light, please!

**Property Man.** Yes sir, yes, at once. [*A light comes down on to the stage.*]

**The Manager** [*clapping his hands*]. Come along! Come along! Second act of "Mixing It Up." [*Sits down.*] [*The ACTORS and ACTRESSES go from the front of the stage to the wings, all except the three who are to begin the rehearsal.*]

**The Prompter** [*reading the "book"*]. "Leo Gala's house. A curious room serving as dining-room and study."

**The Manager** [*to PROPERTY MAN*]. Fix up the old red room.

**Property Man** [*noting it down*]. Red set. All right!

**The Prompter** [*continuing to read from the "book"*]. "Table already laid and writing desk with books and papers. Book-shelves. Exit rear to Leo's bedroom. Exit left to kitchen. Principal exit to right."

**The Manager** [*energetically*]. Well, you understand: The principal exit over there; here, the kitchen. [*Turning to actor who is to play the part of SOCRATES.*] You make your entrances and exits here. [*To PROPERTY MAN.*] The baize doors at the rear, and curtains.

**Property Man** [*noting it down*]. Right!

**Prompter** [*reading as before*]. "When the curtain rises, Leo Gala, dressed in cook's cap and apron is busy beating an egg in a cup. Philip, also dressed as a cook, is beating another egg. Guido Venanzi is seated and listening."

**Leading Man** [*To MANAGER*]. Excuse me, but must I absolutely wear a cook's cap?

**The Manager** [*annoyed*]. I imagine so. It says so there anyway. [*Pointing to the "book."*]

**Leading Man**. But it's ridiculous!

**The Manager** [*jumping up in a rage*]. Ridiculous? Ridiculous? Is it my fault if France won't send us any snore good comedies, and we are reduced to putting on Pirandello's works, where nobody understands anything, and where the author plays the fool with us all? [*The ACTORS grin. The MANAGER goes to LEADING MAN and shouts.*] Yes sir, you put on the cook's cap and beat eggs. Do you suppose that with all this egg-beating business you are on an ordinary stage? Get that out of your head. You represent the shell of the eggs you are beating! [*Laughter and comments among the ACTORS.*] Silence! and listen to my explanations, please! [*To LEADING MAN.*] "The empty form of reason without the fullness of instinct, which is blind." -- You stand for reason, your wife is instinct. It's a mixing up of the parts, according to which you who act your own part become the puppet of yourself. Do you understand?

**Leading Man.** I'm hanged if I do.

**The Manager.** Neither do I. But let's get on with it. It's sure to be a glorious failure anyway. [*Confidentially.*] But I say, please face three-quarters. Otherwise, what with the abstruseness of the dialogue, and the public that won't be able to hear you, the whole thing will go to hell. Come on! come on!

**Prompter.** Pardon sir, may I get into my box? There's a bit of a draught.

**The Manager.** Yes, yes, of course!

*At this point, the DOOR-KEEPER has entered from the stage door and advances towards the manager's table, taking off his braided cap. During this manoeuvre, the Six*

CHARACTERS *enter, and stop by the door at back of stage, so that when the DOOR-KEEPER is about to announce their coming to the MANAGER, they are already on the stage. A tenuous light surrounds them, almost as if irradiated by them -- the faint breath of their fantastic reality.*

This light will disappear when they come forward towards the actors. They preserve, however, something of the dream lightness in which they seem almost suspended; but this does not detract from the essential reality of their forms and expressions.

*He who is known as THE FATHER is a man of about 50: hair, reddish in colour, thin at the temples; he is not bald, however; thick moustaches, falling over his still fresh mouth, which often opens in an empty and uncertain smile. He is fattish, pale; with an especially wide forehead. He has blue, oval-shaped eyes, very clear and piercing. Wears light trousers and a dark jacket. He is alternatively mellifluous and violent in his manner.*

THE MOTHER *seems crushed and terrified as if by an intolerable weight of shame and abasement. She is dressed in modest black and wears a thick widow's veil of crêpe. When she lifts this, she reveals a wax-like face. She always keeps her eyes downcast.*

THE STEP-DAUGHTER, *is dashing, almost impudent, beautiful. She wears mourning too, but with great elegance. She shows contempt for the timid half-frightened manner of the wretched BOY (14 years old, and also dressed in black); on the other hand, she displays a lively tenderness for her little sister, THE CHILD (about four), who is dressed in white, with a black silk sash at the waist.*