

### *Homage to De Sica*

The old man and the boy stood holding hands at the crossroads, their battered shoes sunk almost to the top of the laces into the sand along the side of the road. Earlier they had taken shelter from the sun under a large oak tree thirty yards from where they were now standing. But they had moved out from under the tree almost an hour ago so as not to miss the possibility of someone seeing them and stopping to pick them up as they headed south. The boy could see a shimmering light rise from the lake in the distance where they had spent the night before. He mentioned it to the old man who, as he released the boy's hand from his own, shifted the dusty bag they had between them but said nothing. After a minute or two the boy took the old man's hand again. He looked up the road to the north and hoped a car or truck would soon come by and offer them a ride. The old man began to mutter and repeat softly to himself: "Cristo Cristiello! Tu sei buono, ma e piu buono quello. Cristo Cristiello! Tu sei buono, ma e piu buono quello." It was something he had heard the old man do before and thought it was a prayer meant to bring someone—anyone—in a vehicle that would take them at least part way to where they wanted to go.