

Angelo Grassia

FINALLY WE ARE HERE



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Аннотация

After the great success obtained with "The mystery of the book", Angelo Grassia returns with his second book, a full of mystery, love and feelings story. "Finally we are here" is the continuation of "The mystery of the book".

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Laura, a beautiful girl with green eyes, after reading "The mystery of the book", impressed by the story decides to contact the author for more information. The two meet at the Bar Bazzanti in Gaeta, the same Bar where last year he had known Sabrina, another beautiful girl with green eyes. Laura tells she was fascinated by the story, and she bought from the same second-hand dealer a ring belonging to Claudia and also a postcard Vittorio had sent just before they became husband and wife. This was the last postcard left. The only one missing from Angelo's collection. Laura shows it to him and Angelo is impressed. He thinks it was Fate who sent Laura with that postcard and the message written on

it was directed to him. On the postcard there was written: Finally we are... with love, Vittorio. From this message Angelo understands it is now time to publish the entire manuscript of Vittorio, he had received as a gift the year before from a junk dealer never seen before. The manuscript tells about the mutual feelings between father and son, and about the beautiful love story between Vittorio and Claudia, they were engaged to meet in a street in Como called "the street of the stars", where the stars, in fact, with their magical splendour they seemed to be whispering: "Love yourselves... The best thing in life is love!"

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Finally we are here

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As the wave of the sea is my mind:

it jumps impetuous and it agitates trembling!

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Thanks

1

After the publication of my first book "The Mystery of the Book", extraordinary and unexplained events continued to occur.

The first unexplained event I remember with great joy and with great emotion, occurred on 06/24/2017, when I made the first official presentation of the book in a library. It was a special day for me, because this great opportunity was given to me: to make my first book known.

I still remember, with emotion, that day. It was a hot day, the air was unbreathable.

My best friends renounced to a day at sea to be next to me on such a particular day. I went to the library full of happiness, bringing with me the famous typescript given to me by Sabatino, now my greatest friend, but then he was a stranger for me, the cheerful chubby man, the second-hand dealer of the Gaeta market, and I also brought the famous booklet containing the poem "A Claudia Mia", on the first page of which there was a bust of Vittorio taken from a photograph. My intention was to declaim this beautiful poem, full of feelings for the loved one; in my opinion it was written not by immersing the nib in the ink-containing ink-pot, but directly in the heart of the person who wrote it, so beautiful.

The hall was full of people: the first bearer spoke starting to comment on the book, then the second intervened and finally

it was my turn. I was calm and happy, and I began to discuss my book, the reason I had written it, of all the background that had led to its birth. Everything was going well, until the moment when I decided to declare the beautiful poetry. I picked up the little book and proudly I showed it to the public, I opened the first page and the picture of Vittorio jumped in my eyes. It was the same photo, the picture of all time, the photo I had seen dozens of times, but at that precise moment it seemed different.

In that picture I had always seen Vittorio looking gruff and above all very sad, but at that moment his image seemed different to me, he seemed amiable, sweet, kind and particularly happy; he was thrilled by all sides, as if he wanted to thank me for what I was doing for him at that moment: to bring to light the poem he sent to his beloved Claudia for the five years of marriage. Seeing him so happy as ever, I was so moved that the words did not come out of my mouth because of the too many tears falling from my eyes and I asked to be replaced in the reading of the poem.

At that moment I felt a strange sensation, as if Vittorio was sending me the following message: "Angelo, I'm happy for everything you're doing for me."

After the presentation, my friends joined me at home to have a little party and so I spent the evening in a carefree way, forgetting for a moment what had happened in the afternoon. But when I was alone and I went to bed, I could not get to sleep. I was thinking about what to do: that event had shocked me, I had to tell someone who could understand me, and who better than

Vittorio's relatives?

That night I made the decision to finally contact the nephew I had found among the papers, the note announcing his birth.

The next morning, after a sleepless night, I got up early and I pondered what to do. I absolutely had to contact Gianguido, Claudia's and Vittorio's nephew. At 8 am I contacted him by Messenger and, attaching a photo of the ticket announcing his birth, I wrote to him: "Excuse me, are you by chance Claudia and Vittorio Palladino's nephew?"

I awaited for his message impatiently. Finally, after about two hours, here is his answer:

"Yes, and who are you?"

And I, trembling with joy: "I have to tell you a story happened to me, if you give me your phone number I'll call you. You know, at a huckster I found a box full of letters from your family and a book written by your uncle Vittorio. reading it, I was so moved that I cried. After reading, unexplained events occurred to me. The book entitled "A man to remember" was written by your uncle Vittorio to remember his father Luigi. Well, this story has moved me so much that, for a few days, I did not think of anything else. I thought about what I could do to divulge this beautiful story. Then, after a series of unexplained events, I decided to write this little book. And tell me: are Vittorio's daughters still alive? Because I would like to tell this story to them too. "

Gianguido, perhaps a little surprised, immediately replied to

me: "Uncle Vittorio married my dad's sister, Claudia, he met her in Como. He, a Neapolitan man, was in Como to work in the Bank of Italy, they got married and they moved to Rome, he made a career up to be on the Board of Directors of the Bank of Napoli. They had two daughters, Virginia and Anna Maria, unfortunately young death. My aunt Claudia is dead a few years ago, she was about 94 years. Uncle Vittorio was a very particular person, very intelligent, passionate horse-player, painter and, now I know, writer. I gladly give you my number. See you soon."

This message left a deep wound in my heart. Claudia's death and, above all, the premature death of the two daughters shocked me. Immediately I called Gianguido and I told him everything had happened to me: I still remember I was sobbing, because every time I tell this story I get emotional. We stayed at the phone for more than an hour and, from that moment on, we remained good friends: we spoke different times and he told me many things about Claudia and Vittorio's life.

In mid-July, I received a message from a Facebook friend containing a video poem. I started the video and I listened to a poem declaimed by a great actor, voice actor and storyteller, known to all but me: Diego De Nadai. As I listened to this poem, I realized that Diego with his deep voice could give life to this poem. Immediately I thought Destiny was suggesting to me the next steps to be taken. It wanted to give life to two beautiful poems "A Claudia mia" and "For the birthday of grandfather

Luigi" and who better of Diego De Nadai could achieve this purpose?

I contacted him immediately, I sent him the two poems and he immediately started to work. On July 26, the two videos were published, and up to now more than 5,000 people have listened to these poems. Someone wrote to me they had heard the heart vibrate, another saw a tear drop from the eyes, another still: I was inebriated with these words carved by deep love and so on. All these comments have made me particularly happy, as I have achieved the primary purpose of my life: making these two poems immortal, which, without me, who knows where they would end.

Sometimes I think, as, for some kind of coincidence, the best events linked to the book happened on special occasions: 24 June San Giovanni, 26 July Saint Anna and 20 September my birthday. When I first heard the Poems recited by Diego De Nadai, I burst into tears. In my life I have rarely cried, but, after reading Vittorio's book, I always find myself crying. I cried when I read his book, I cried when I finished writing the book, I cried when I saw it done, I cried when I finished the book trailer and sometimes I cry now as I write this book and every time I think about Claudia and Vittorio.

This story has upset me, it has changed my life.

2

In August, I returned to Formia for my summer holiday. The first thing I did was to go to the huckster in Gaeta to Sabatino, I had not seen him since a year.

When I saw him, I showed him the book I had written and I told him the whole story. He listened incredulously but carefully and finally he hugged me kissing me: since then we have become good friends. Before leaving, I left him twenty copies of the book, so that he could give it to his customers.

The following day, Sabatino called me and he said:

"Angelo, come to me, I found the last things of the family of Claudia, I'll put them aside".

Hearing those words, I left everything I was doing and I ran to him.

Sabatino made me find the last postcards he had found in storage and they were all those Claudia had received from Vittorio, some 45-turn discs that surely belonged to Virginia and other various papers.

He told me: "It's better you keep these things, I'll give them to you".

I greatly appreciated his gesture, I thanked him and I rushed home to examine the things he had given me.

After about 10 days I get the following message on Messenger:

"Mr. Grassia good afternoon. Last night Sabatino gave me

your book. The story of Vittorio and Claudia has also made dream myself! I have a wonderful ring of Claudia bought at Easter and a postcard that Vittorio wrote to her in 1939 just before marrying. Now I have finished reading your novel and I would like to thank you! I drank it, beautiful, thank you very much. For August holiday I'm out but I'll be back next week and I'll finish the month in Gaeta. Are you at Serapo at the sea? If you like it, we can greet us! Thanks again. Laura "

I was very happy and I replied her we would certainly meet at the end of the month.

During the period of mid-August I was also busy: I had to accompany my daughter to Milan, and, finding myself very close to the house of Gianguido, I took the opportunity to combine business with pleasure. I phoned him and I asked if, finding myself in those parts, I could pass by him, so as to know each other closely. He replied he was very happy and he would host me for dinner at his home in a village near Como. I was very happy and that day, before going to Gianguido I anticipated the departure of a couple of hours: it was my firm intention to go first to Como to visit the place where Vittorio and Claudia had met.

When I arrived in Como, the first thing I did was to go to Via Indipendenza and precisely to Claudia's house, the house number had changed during the years and it was previously communicated to me by Gianguido. I walked backwards and forwards a couple of times and finally I decided to stop under Claudia's house for a few minutes. While I stood in

contemplation admiring the house, imagining Vittorio and Claudia entering and leaving the front door, I had a flash of genius. I took my mobile phone from my trouser pocket, I connected it to YouTube and, making a certain tribute to Claudia, I started the video containing the poem dedicated to her and recited by the beautiful voice of Diego De Nadai, specifically this:

To my Claudia
Five years of love
- in good harmony –
We fulfil today
oh my Claudia!
Already five years
Are passed since the day
we said happy
each one yes ...
Again today,
I repeat you “yes”...
to have you close
I swear I am happy!
Forget a few
Bicker of an hour ...
and like that day
you repeat me again
the sweet word
of faith and love

that made happy
every day my heart ...
... and we begin happy
the lustrum is coming
loving us so much
by loving us ..
Our cares,
with tender affection,
turn them all
to our little angel!
Two names in the heart
are now written to me
and only death
makes them prescribed
We follow the street
of our Destiny
the good God assists us
in our way! ..

However, being in the crowded street, I lowered the volume. Arrived at the third stanza and precisely at the point: "still today I repeat "yes" to you", the bells of a church very close began to play at party so as to cover the sound of the poetry. I looked at the time: it was 3:50 pm, it is strange, I thought, do the bells ring at this time? I had a moment of loss. I did not believe my ears! I recovered from the amazement, I interpreted this sound of bells as a sign of gratitude Claudia had wanted to send me, for this

noble and sweet gesture accomplished by me, to bring under her house the beautiful poetry given to her by her beloved husband.

Sometimes I ask to myself: "Will not it have been the same Vittorio, to push me unconsciously to make this gesture of love for his sweet Claudia, to make her perhaps forgive him something and, to let her know he is still in love with her?"

It is a question I unfortunately cannot find an answer.

After this simple reflection, I headed for the church from which the sound of the bells came. To my surprise, I discovered that it was the San Fedele one, in which Claudia and Vittorio marked their marriage.

"What a strange coincidence," I thought.

I decided to take a walk for Como. From Via Indipendenza, I went to Via Vittorio Emanuele.

At the end of this road, before arriving at the Dome, I noticed on the right the famous newspaper kiosk, in front of which Claudia and Vittorio met. In a moment my mind returned to the 40s, I imagined the Como of that time and I seemed to witness in person, at their first meeting. I passed the Dome and I headed under the Portici of Via Plinio, in those years, meeting place for the young.

It was as if I were doing a sort of pilgrimage: I went on pre-established routes to pay homage to Claudia and Vittorio.

I did not realize the time had flown in a hurry. Gianguido was waiting for me, it was time to reach him.

Seeing me he was very happy, as I too, also because he was

the direct nephew of Claudia, as a son of his brother, and so, for me, it was a great joy to be able to talk to a person very close to Claudia . I had dinner at his home, he was very kind and he told me many things about this family, and I listened to him with interest and pleasure. At the end we said goodbye, with the promise we would meet again as soon as possible.

3

Saturday 19 August, while I was returning from Milan, Laura wrote me the following message:

"Good afternoon, Mr. Grassia, how are you? If you are on the Viareggio beach we can say hello later, I'll take my walk and I show you the postcard Vittorio sent to Claudia in 1939".

I replied: "I'm sorry Laura, but right now I'm coming back from Milan, tomorrow I have to go to Rome and so if it's all right for you we can meet next Monday morning at 9 at Bar Bazzanti, so we have breakfast together".

She, a little sorry for this long wait, replied: "Ok, Monday at Bar Bazzanti".

The next day I went to Rome early, because I had to accompany my wife to my daughter Daria's house. When I arrived in Viale Gorizia, I made her come out of the car in a hurry and I said: "We'll talk later, when you're finished, I'll pick you up."

I immediately went to Via Livorno, under Vittorio house and I began to take a few steps along the road. Sant'Orsola Church is just in front of Vittorio's house, where Virginia and Anna Maria made their first communion. I noticed the door was open and, at 10:30 am, the church was deserted. I went in, I went to the sacristy and I addressed myself to the man in charge to have a mass in suffrage of Luigi and Vittorio.

The person to whom I had addressed myself, showing me the calendar, told me: "Do you want a particular date or is it okay any date? I ask you this, as we have a possibility for the next 11:00 mass. "

I answered it was all right, what better time, I went back to church, I listened to the mass and I also made communion. Before returning to Viale Gorizia to take my wife and return home, I stopped to buy cigarettes and, strangely, I decided to buy a card to scratch and win. I Scratched the ticket and with great joy I saw I won € 50.00. I thought to myself: "It is Vittorio's work, he wanted to repay me the money I spent for the mass."

The following morning, as I usually do every day, I went to the Bar Bazzanti for the classic breakfast. But that day was different: I had an appointment with Laura.

I sat down at a table on the outside veranda of the room and I was waiting patiently. Suddenly, I see a beautiful tall girl with blond hair, approaching my table.

"Mr. Grassia?"

"Yes."

"Hi, I'm Laura."

"Hi, please," I replied.

"It's a pleasure for me to meet you. You know, I read your book and I loved it. This story has also struck me, and as I said in the message, at Easter, finding me from Sabatini I bought a ring belonged to Claudia but I left it in Rome, surely I will send you a picture as soon as I return home. "

I looked at her and I realized she had also beautiful green eyes, the same of Sabrina, the same beauty.

While I was absorbed in my thought, I saw Cristiana, the friendly owner of Bar Bazzanti, approaching the table: she came to take orders that day. Who knows, maybe she had noticed something special.

In fact, before leaving, Cristiana told me:

"Angelo, I'm sorry, but is she the famous Sabrina of the book?"

"No," I replied. "Her name is Laura, she has the same beauty as Sabrina, the same blonde hair, the same green eyes and she comes from Rome too. Will it be a coincidence, a coincidence or what? "

Cristiana nodded and she returned to the bar.

At that point Laura smiling sweetly continued: "Angelo, apart from the fact I had a huge desire to meet you, but my coming here is another. I came for a simple reason, I want to show you the postcard I took from Sabatino along with the ring. Sabatino gave the postcard to me spontaneously after I had chosen the ring and I was paying it. Think, that day I was very sad, and Sabatino encouraged me with a beautiful smile, he understood I was sick and he wanted to pull me up. Giving me the postcard, he told me about the Claudia who lived in Rome and he found that ring in the pocket of a coat. I was very happy, but at the same time I was amazed at the fact he lived like me in Via Indipendenza. The boyfriend's message was positive. I encouraged and I went

home happy. I talked about it with my children and my husband and satisfied, I put the postcard in the glass cabinet in plain sight. I came it out just to show it to you. "

She opened the bag and, pulling it out with such sweetness, added: "Here I show you, I thought it might have some importance for you".

I thanked her and I started to watch it. It was the usual postcard Vittorio wrote to Claudia. I read with superficiality what was written on, my attention was directed only and exclusively to possible numbers to be able to play to the lot in the next extraction. I did not find particular numbers, apart from the date, 4 October. 1939 and the post office stamp, Naples, in good evidence. I was perplexed for a moment. Among the thousand thoughts flashing my mind, this seemed to me the most rational: "Perhaps yesterday, having made him say a mass, Vittorio sent Laura to make me play these numbers. Perhaps this is Vittorio's message " .

I asked kindly to Laura the permission to take a picture of the postcard to be able to observe it at home.

Laura nodded, aware of the importance of the thing. We sat at the bar for some time talking about Claudia, Vittorio and the book. I saw she was very interested in this story. Then I added: "Just this morning I decided to write the second book, reporting entirely the story written by Vittorio".

And she, encouraging me, in a subtle and melodious voice: "You are doing well, Angelo, you are doing well. You absolutely

must do it, because it's a beautiful story ".

At the end Laura greeted me with a promise: to send me the photo of the ring after her return to Rome.

That day I decided to play the numbers 9 and 39 on the wheel of Naples.

The next day, August 22, looking at the draw, I saw the numbers on the wheel of Naples were very different, but both the 9 and 39 had come out, but on the wheel of Cagliari.

Instinctively, I took the phone and I went to look for the picture of the postcard more carefully, thinking that maybe it was not the message Vittorio wanted to give me, maybe he wanted to make me understand something else.

In fact, on the postcard there was written: "Finally we are ... Affectionately Vittorio".

I know this sentence was addressed to Claudia, to tell her their marriage was close, but inside me I considered the phrase was addressed to me. Laura was chosen by Vittorio to deliver this message to me. With these words, delivered to me immediately after my decision to write entirely his book, Vittorio wanted to let me know he wanted the publication of his book. In fact, he wrote to Claudia hundreds of postcards but this was the last one, there were no more. I wonder then, among the many cards Sabatino still had at Easter, why did he give Laura just this? Could he give another one with a different message, why this one?

This is another mystery surrounding the history.

On the day 24/08/2017 the following numbers were issued to

the superenalotto (Italian lottery):

40 year of the marriage of Claudia and Vittorio

45 year in which Vittorio wrote the poem

72 number found on a letter

85 year of birth of Luigi

88 number found on the negative

That night unfortunately I played a two-way system, I realized only a few 3 and some 2.

Other readers of my first book were more fortunate. In fact, I received several messages from people who, hit by history, played the lot.

A reader sent me this message:

"Mr. Grassia, I wanted to thank you, because, reading his book that among other things I liked very much, I also decided to play the lot. Well, June 3, I do not know why, I was reminded of the date of the poem 25/1/45. I played € 2 on the Naples wheel and I won € 9,000.00. May God bless you. "

I replied: "I am very happy you enjoyed the book so much and you won the lot, you are evidently a sensitive person, and the book perhaps rewards the good-hearted ones."

A few days ago another reader wrote to me on 19/08/17 he played the date of the marriage of Claudia and Vittorio 25/1/40 on all the wheels and also he won the tern.

I am very happy for them, but even more so because my book manages to help people with good feelings.

While I'm writing, I get the news on 11/10/2017 in Aversa

a 45,000.00 Euros tern has been won playing on the wheel of Naples the numbers 7/10/78.

Well, even these numbers were inside my first book. We do not yet know who the lucky winner is, but I sincerely hope that, to be kissed by luck, he was one of my readers.

Following this series of extraordinary and inexplicable events, the only right and wise thing I could do to pay tribute to these two great men, Luigi and his son Vittorio, was to tell their lives.

I do not know why I was chosen and by whom.

But I have the certainty of having been chosen by someone or something, also because my motto is: "Rien n'est plus beaux, que l'amour"

What follows is the book Vittorio wrote and in a certain sense it has changed my life.

4

LAUDARE DIGNOS, HONESTA
ACTIO EST
SENECA .. 102

To my cousin LUIGI PALLADINO

For you, my cousin, I liked to tell the deeds; if narrations can be called the poor scraps of my inexperienced pen, I dedicate with affection and admiration this my tenuous job, begging you to excuse if unaware of "the beautiful style" I have not been able to illustrate your life as it really was, and in its depth, and in its apex.

Therefore, I beg your pardon and nevertheless I hold on the hope this homage be pleasing to you and it remains as a pledge of my sincere friendship.

Vale Stefania Palladino

Ortobello, 25 May 1906

LUIGI

Born from a wealthy family of the province, Luigi had reached the age of six always enjoying all the satisfactions the splendour can grant to children and, endowed with a sweet and serene nature, he had been filled with kisses and caresses, gifts and surprises; the sun had fallen on the child's days, always illuminating his little head.

But a sudden wind rose to dry up the harvests of wealth,

of joy, of the hope of that young life, of that candid youth. Due to financial difficulties, his family began to decay, doing bad business from day to day so that, in two years, he lost all his substance, plunging into a harrowing misery. So Luigi, aged eight, the age in which children enjoy the games more and abandon themselves to the carefree joy of their green years, found himself in the most frightful misery, and he was forced to leave the toys to earn a living.

With the reflection of a man and with the will to work, he went to a coiffeur who, in exchange of his little services, thought of his existence.

From this moment on he began his hard but laborious life, painful but honest, unbearable sometimes but always loyal and reputable.

Do not believe that, having only eight years, he had not understood the full depth of his misfortune, because the smile was banished from his lips, the joy no longer shone in his clear eye and the childish brigades counted one less companion, while the despair took possession of his soul, supported only by a bright dream that came back with his fantasy of a child unaware of the world. He did not know how to set a goal, but he often repeated what he felt impressed in his soul in fiery characters: "when I will be twenty years old! .."

In this period of sorrow he also lost his father, which increased his despair, so he moved to Naples with his family, where a new series of troubles began for him and his family.

Also here he went to a coiffeur but, not being brought for this job, he entered as a garçon in a hotel. Meanwhile the years passed and his early ideas matured, acquired at the school of misfortune. He had heard of "foreign parts", where good positions could be reached with work that would have enabled a comfortable life, he inquired, he made his decisions and bold and confident in the future at fourteen he decided to leave for England.

His mother, more fearful and wary, at first denied him her permission, but he did so much, so much ... that at last, the mother satisfied him and, being far from Naples, for family reasons, she wrote him a letter where, showing him all her motherly love ... "who does not know who is not a mother ...", with loving and effective words she exhorted him and advised him on the way to go, in the harsh path of life, repeating that, in the most painful moments, re-read those characters, in which she had infused all her soul, and he would have drawn the comfort that she would send him with her thoughts every day, every hour, every moment. And in fact, how many times in the tortuous path that Fate had traced to him, the poor boy felt the need to read those phrases, so as to resume the courage he felt was missing, and use a spur to overcome all the obstacles he encountered on his journey.

How many times, rereading those characters, he wiped his bitter tears and resigned himself to his worries; how many times he kissed that piece of paper and how many times, finding himself alone among unknown and sometimes bad people, he felt

the need for maternal caresses, those sweet caresses are a balm for the hardly felt human heart, and he vented on that little piece of paper the intensity of his affections.

The day of departure arrived and the intrepid Luigi, simulating the displeasure to leave the family, remained calm and prudent until the last moment, giving courage to his parents and repeating, between a hug and a handshake: "When I will be twenty years I will return, when I will be twenty years old I want to be the pride of the family. Yes ... I will be "and he left.

But when he was alone, in his third-class compartment, he gave vent to his tears and with death in his heart he said goodbye to the beautiful Parthenope, where he left his loved ones, to Italy, his beloved homeland, to the beautiful ever blue sky, to fertile countryside, to the luxuriant city, and with his head in his hands, he fell into complete abandonment, until his mind, clouded by the painful and various emotions, clouded his sight. It made him lose the notions of what had happened, it made begin a dream his past and he felt only the jerks and the dull noise of the convoy like a beating and repeating of doors, a recollection of memories and dreams, a set of leaves shook by the wind.

5

After a few days of tiring voyage, Luigi arrived in London, the city with the eternal fogs, it welcomed and adopted the poor Italian boy, but it always conserved its existence as a strict stepmother, subjecting him to the hardest trials, to the hardest fights, to the most harsh rigors and making him experience all the atrocious spasms of the exile, the humiliations of the needy, all the moral and physical pains. As soon as he arrived he was hosted by a relative of a friend of his, and the following day he showed up at an agency to look for a place to earn a living; he was offered a post of garcon in a small pension, and he willingly accepted, just to start work, since he could stay under the responsibility of a with a modest work. In the new place, he was in charge of the hardest services, the most tiring tasks, and in return very little inedible food and inhumane treatments; but he had to endure, because, beyond the need, he wanted to learn English at any cost (not knowing anything about this language, he tried to make himself understood using a bad French he had learned by himself in six months in Italy).

He endured all the hardships, though he often swallowed bitter tears.

After some time, he went to another pension, then into a bourgeois family, and even here he counted a succession of troubles; he occupied other places, always tiring and not very

lucrative. Finally he found a "place" in a palace of a Milord, who had since six months a model of bride, a dear and beautiful Lady of twenty years with physical qualities and with the most noble virtues that woman can hold.

The two spouses took Louis as a close look, they took an interest in him; and soon he became their "enfant gâté" (darling).

Giorgio, as the masters called him, was their trustee, and his only mission, in that house, was to bring to the masters, on their orders, a tray with three glasses filled with champagne, one for each master and the other for him. So much was their affection for him that, in the evening, they did not retire to their rooms if their "enfant gâté" had not gone to rest before.

But, like gold, he had to be tried by fire, therefore his adverse destiny did not want to abandon him.

Now he had found a delightful oasis in the desert of his life, he had the misfortune of meeting in the "house master" a perverse man, whose bad instincts, aided by envy, flared up and changed into a relentless hatred for the poor Luigi. The wicked man always amused himself by torturing him with words and deeds, and he bitterly bit the day with his sneers, his lashings, his outrages, continually tearing his wound with the scorn of his beloved homeland "Italy".

Perhaps it was the most painful period of his life and we can easily understand it by looking at it from the psychic side. We think about the poor Luigi alone, without relatives; without friends; let us think of his heart, very much tried by the

troubles, the incessant fever of nostalgia that tortured him and we imagined his sad thoughts, his melancholic days, his painful vigils.

Let's see him sad and meditative to tread the foreign soil, wander among unknown people, speak a different idiom, look at a foreign sky and we think about his patriot love magnified by distance, changing to the profound religion that painted Italy not as a beloved land, but as a Supreme Idol, infusing him with courage, giving him faith, constancy, stirring up his leaps and heroic deeds, exhorting him to noble undertakings and making him repeat the verses of Cavallotti in the Song of Songs:

"To her my prayers, I ask her the boldness. Faith, the perseverance, the magnanimous angers. I dream her in the nights, I see her in the nights.

I give her affections, tears, for her I fight and I believe. And the heart beats in turmoil and a fever conquers it, while the sweet image looks at me and smiles at me ".

And who does not love the country?

"... they also love them.

The native caverns, the same proud, " Metastasio says.

So we think about the torment of his heart, about the heart of the exile, he dreams about his country and he raises this dream to the most sublime peaks of the Ideal, he hears insults on it with atrocious and overwhelming words.

Let us think about the revolt of his whole being against the reprobate who dares to despise his most sacred possession,

seeking to condemn his religion, ardently hurting his idol. And every day Luigi had to undergo this torture, every moment he felt despising his beloved homeland.

Yet, even though he was tormented by constant insults, Luigi stifled his pain and anger and he had the magnanimity to write to his mother he was pleased and happy, while some tear came to fall on the sheets of paper, as if to deny his words.

Finally the hour of the revolt sounded. One day while Luigi, the Master of the House and all the family members were at table, they were struck by the rhythm of a Neapolitan song "Oì Mari", sung in the street and accompanied by the organ of an Italian wandering player. Hearing the music of the sweet little known song, Luigi felt his heart moved, thundering, his temples beating him like hammers, the blood flowing to his head and a pile of pious memories, dear memories, happy memories coming to invade his adolescent youthful seventeen mind. But, at the same time as he was prey to these sweet emotions, the harsh voice of the Master of Home called him to the harsh reality:

"Do you hear, Giorgio, your Italians? They can do only this, miserable ones! "

These words were the lit fuse that gave fire to the out mine since some time in the heart of Luigi, in the complete revolt of his whole being. These injuries led him to paroxysm: he forgot himself, angry like a beast who defends his offspring, he would have jumped around the neck of the Master of Home if he was close to him, but as he sat opposite him, he grabbed a glass and

he threw it to his face with a mad laugh and a cry of rage like a roar.

Then there was an indescribable scuffle; all the servants became pale, astonished: the Master of the House with a wound in the forehead from which flowed a trickle of blood lost in the thick eyebrows, with eyes inflamed by hatred, with the mouth half open covered by a reddish foam, he wanted to throw himself on Luigi, who, fearless with his arms folded, was waiting with defiance of the brute's fury! But luck would have it that the Milord moved from an adjoining room and, hearing that devil, he rushed to the place where the drama unfolded and he was amazed by the gruesome picture offered to his eyes. He wanted to be informed of everything and, with his authority, he tried to calm those troubled souls from the incident; in fact, little by little the calm was restored, the Master of the House had the care he needed, Luigi retired to his room and soon the palace returned to its normal state. On the second day the Milord discharged from his service the Master of the House with the order to leave the palace immediately.

In the meantime Luigi had already regretted his excess of anger and for how much he recognized his anger was legitimate, in his good heart, he felt a hint of remorse and who knows what he would have given to make appear everything a painful dream. He reproached for letting himself be carried away by rage and he would have gladly made the time retreat, to stop that rage. He did not think, in his adolescent mind, human affairs are the work

of Fate, a powerful God who governs the destinies of men and an arbiter he rises among them working, destroying, sometimes denying, but often as Filicaia in "Providence" : "Or he pretends denying or he grants in denial".

Fate had wanted that event, because Luigi's life had a change. In fact he (always stimulated by the unknown force of fate) ardently desired to change "place" because those places, reminding him of the tragedy of which he was the protagonist, made him experience continuous emotions, aroused him sad thoughts and everything that surrounded him appeared dismal and creepy; so he decided to find another place at any cost.

He had a sincere friend who occupied a good position: he confided in him and he had from him the promise of making him find a good seat soon.

After a few days, Luigi was satisfied; through his friend he had a "place" in a Hotel, that is, in a company of those who make the season in the best Hotels in Europe and abroad.

That new place made him very happy because, in addition to job satisfaction, it was a lucrative place and he had the prospect of a beautiful future; moreover, his good character, or rather his moral qualities, captivated all the souls of his superiors and colleagues and soon he saw himself surrounded by the affection of all. He worked assiduously and during the hours of rest he also tried to study and, finally, after a few months, having vacated a position as second secretary, the director considered it well to admit Luigi, being himself the most suitable to occupy that place

quite important. His joy was Indescribable, seeing himself reach the base of his ascent, prefixed and long coveted, seeing start the realization of his desires that aroused new and stronger hopes to get a day a reward to the many moral and material endeavours endured .

But the hard trials were not ended for him: the company, after the season in London, sailed for Algeria. The journey was very beautiful, the long expanse of the sea reflected, like a mirror, the pure blue of the sky, the ship was running fast on the waves cut by the helix and then joined in a long foamy furrow. Nature was in perfect calm and all the crewmen were smiling at the ocean, in the sky, in the sun

But there is no rose without a thorn; the crossing, at first happy, changed into great danger, into an indescribable fright. They entered the Strait of Gibraltar when great clouds appeared on the horizon, which, driven by a sudden, impetuous wind, run and succeeded each other with dizzying rapidity, gradually covering the sky. Strong bursts elevated the waves banging against the sides of the ship, the cabins, the trees.

The captain, an old sea dog, was not disturbed by the change of weather, but when the vigorous blows of the sea began to damage the ship and the lightning came to illuminate that terrible spectacle, he understood the danger and although he tried to appear calm in his concise orders, a visible disturbance upset his hard features of an expert sailor.

The fright and the panic of the crew cannot be imagined:

someone prayed, someone wept, someone desperate, all implored the help of Providence.

Luigi, attached to the mast, contemplated the hellish ridden of the shocked elements, while invaded by a great sadness, he thought about all his past life and the memories evoked in his mind one by one, recalling his painful childhood and sad adolescence. He saw every day of his gray days, all the troubled nights, and he thought about him again and again when he felt alone, abandoned by everyone, imploring a smile, a caress, a dear word, and he had to suffocate his full affections, showing an indifferent face to those around him. Now he could almost sing victory, he saw himself at the mercy of those angry waves, whose frightful depths opened from time to time, showing they had swallowed the fragile ship in the midst of that stormy ocean.

The struggle between life and death was terrible. From each one the irreparable loss was savoured and everyone felt a harrowing agony. A more impetuous stroke of the sea truncated the mast, after a few moments Luigi had abandoned it to return to the cabin; certainly Providence watched over him. The captain saw himself lost, but in the most desolate moment, when all the minds in Heaven had forgotten the earthly goods and waited for their fate, Neptune appeared with his trident and he ordered the storm to calm down. In fact, little by little the storm ceased, the clouds thinned out and a light breeze, moving more and more the clouds, puffed the sails, rippling the surface of the sea became quiet.

Hope shone in everyone's eyes, the captain improvised repairs to the ship and with the help of the Divine Hand, after a few hours, they entered a nearby port. The second day they continued the journey and finally they landed at the coasts of Africa.

So Luigi becomes a guest of Algiers and he begins his laborious but peaceful life, radiated by a bright star he believes to see in his path, the star points him to the right path to lead him to the goal.

Meanwhile time passes and from Algeria he returns to England, then to France, then to Belgium, Austria, Germany, always counting numberless adventures; finally, at the age of twenty, satisfied, enlightened by a life full of smiles, he thinks the time has come to see his beloved mother, his relatives, his childhood friends and the dear shores of his country.

Luck, this time, accompanies him: for his Company he has to do the season in a large hotel in Rome. This is how, after seven years, Luigi returns to his homeland and enthusiastically he sees the exquisite peaks, the pleasant lakes, the playful valleys, the colourful gardens. Beautiful, bold, animated by new hopes he flies in the arms of his expectant mother awaiting for him.

Moving is the scene inside the familiar walls, cheered by the arrival of the wandering exile for so many years that, as a child and abandoned to himself, could get dirty in the mud and instead he returned an honest man, whole, industrious with the moral embellished by encyclopaedic knowledge he learned in his travels and adventures, strong by the four languages he knows, he speaks

with ease and elegance, always in a deferential way and without presumption.

He revisits his native village, Orbetello, and he feels happy to tread the soil, of which every atom awakens him a "souvenir", a sweet remembrance, a dear memory and moved by so many resurrections he swears on the ashes of his ancestors and on the images of the protective deities, to do always excellent work, to regain his rank, which tore him a cruel destiny and to make his beloved land palpitate with pride.

Then he leaves to continue his life, happy to feel now in port, confident to reach one day the desired goal.

Now it is the time of the modest storyteller to send to the protagonist of this simple story, the genuine narration of his cases and his adventures, his most fervent wish: "a smooth path, surrounded by joys, consolations, illuminated by hope, infused by happiness, where a guardian angel leads him shortly to the goal, filling him with all the satisfactions he deserves for his elevated feelings, for his generous heart, for his iron will for action, for all his misfortunes, for all his moral and material penalties, for all his sacrifices, for all that concerns his life, which is nothing but a succession of troubles fought and won with resignation, self-denial, honesty and the job."

STEFANIA PALLADINO

Orbetello, 25 May 1906

6

Stefania Palladino, a well-known writer of the time in which she lived, had begun, perhaps involuntarily, to tell the pathetic and adventurous life of her cousin Luigi.

I do not know the motive has induced her to do so: did she do it for the kinship between them, for a lively sympathy towards the cousin or for the interest aroused by chance?

I elevate, however, an affectionate and devoted thought to her memory and I thank her, not only for the accomplished human gesture, but also for the way she has always presented the figure of my Father, putting particular emphasis on the qualities and exalting the feelings.

I, the eldest son of Luigi Palladino, on the threshold now of seventy-seven, having, throughout this period, known men and things, I believe my parent is:

"AN HOMME MEMORABLE".

So I continue the story of Stefania Palladino, invoking the benevolence of all those who will read the whole affair if, with the help of God, I will be able to complete it and I ask their forgiveness if they should notice in my work a gesture of presumption.

When my father came back from England, with the savings he had accumulated, not so much for the lavish earnings but for the imputed deprivations, the first thing he did was to give to his mother a dignified arrangement. During her son's stay abroad, she had lent her work as a governor to a noble Neapolitan family.

From what they told in my adolescence and what I remember, one day my father, turning to his mother, told her: "Mum I gave you a gift: I bought the fabric for a dress; I want to see you even more beautiful than what appears in my eyes. I also know a good dressmaker and I am sure she will satisfy you; in a few days, when you want, we'll go with her for the pack. "

The mother, already by nature emotional and perhaps remembering some circumstances not happy of the past, embraced his son with so much effusion, whispering these words: "Look a bit what my son have done for me!"

And the day came when my father took her to the seamstress. This, by the name of Virginia, gave them a warm welcome and, having arranged them, immediately took care to show the models that, more than others, suited her. Her suggestion was widely shared and appreciated.

On the street, then, they commented about the meeting and Donna Anna, so it was called my grandmother, said to her son: "I'm really satisfied. That dress is beautiful and kind and I

think she does very well her job. How did you meet her? "

My father, a little surprised by this question, with a rather mischievous smile, answered:

"She is the sister of a friend of mine, mother; to tell you the truth, however, Virginia is not a professional dressmaker but she has learned the art of cutting and sewing at the French nuns she attends in the hours of freedom and leisure. When I told her about you and I told her about the gift I wanted to give you, she encouraged me so much, to the point of telling me she would accompany me for the choice and purchase of the fabric. And so it was: together we did the shopping " .

The dress was soon packed and the mother wanted to wear it for the first time to go to church to listen to the Mass. Perhaps she meant to thank God for the treasure of the son he had given her, the only living male, after four daughters brought into the world, all married but forgotten, in large part, perhaps because far away, from their branch duties.

My father and her mother lived in Naples near Piazza Amedeo, in a building located at the intersection of two streets: Via Vittoria Colonna and Via Giovanni Bausan, in a modest but well-kept house. The origins, sometimes, are not contradicted; Donna Anna was born as a lady and she remained so, even if poverty and loneliness had been for a long time her only and faithful companions.

Her scion, her one and only big treasure (as she used to say) had assured her a life not well-off but serene. Sometimes the

serenity and the health are worth more than money!

Luigi, however, for work reasons, was forced to move continuously and the poor mother was also used to this. She said she felt equally calm, because she knew well the feelings that animated his son and, consequently, of the actions that he performed.

At that time, to make a career in hotels, the so-called "Certificates" were needed: certificates issued by the owners or managers of the companies where he had worked to explicitly declare the tasks performed and the skills demonstrated during the entire stay in the hotel.

The big hotels of that time welcomed a high class clientele and, as a consequence, they required in the personnel they assumed adequate gifts and unexceptionable moral requisites. The career, therefore, was a function of these "Certificates" and furthermore, in order to advance well or to do so with a certain solicitude, it was particularly necessary to have a perfect knowledge of foreign languages, particularly of English and German.

All the best Seasonal Posts were almost all, sooner or later, the prerogatives of my father, who, having begun to work in that branch at an early age, knew his job well and in his long stay in England he had learned that language very well. .

They told me in one of his stops in Naples, a little more prolonged than usual, happened something: one day my grandmother, in tidying her son's room, found under the pillow

a letter addressed to him. Which mother would not care to know who was the person who contacted with her son? And so giving a fleeting glance at the first words and the signature, she became aware of his secret; something that a mother's heart had perhaps already foretold: Luigi and Virginia loved each other!

When his son returned in the evening he noticed in his mother's eyes a greater tenderness, because her eyes glistened with joy and maternal love. She went to him whispering in his ear, jokingly smiling:

"Little scoundrel ... little scoundrel ..., you make love with Virginia!".

My father had so much respect for his mother and he apologized confirming joyfully his feeling. So his mother told him these words:

"I am very happy with your choice. May God one day allow and bless your union ".

8

Donna Anna lived, now, a peaceful life. She was happy and pleasant with her state, but unfortunately, she had on her face the traces of her past sufferings and in the physical the damage suffered in the most anguished period of her existence. A sad day she fell ill and there were no cures that could save her. Before taking her last breath, she called his "only treasure" and she thanked him for all he had done for her; she praised him for his affectionate feelings and she blessed him. She also had the strength to say:

"Bride Virginia. She is the woman of your life. You will certainly be happy with her! "

So we arrived in the year 1907 and during that winter season, my father was "hired" by the Engadine Kulm Hotel in St. Moritz. On his return, in the spring of 1908, his Virginia, for him also second mother, awaited for him with anxiety, with love and affection. On 10 December 1908 they happily married in the Church of S. Rocco on the Riviera di Chiaia, following the permission from the Parish of the Ascension in Chiaia, to which they belonged. My father, always modest, and my mother, even more modest than him, went to live in a small house on a high floor of a building located in Parco Margherita n. 23, near Piazza Amedeo. That was their first love nest; in that place they conceived their firstborn, that is me, I came to the world the

morning of 4 October 1909, the day of the festivity of Saint Francis, the poor man from Assisi.

With my birth, my father felt his responsibilities increase. He spoke English very well (he had been in England for more than 10 years); now it was necessary to improve in the German language. Then he worked to have a place of greater stability: he wanted to stay for at least a couple of years in the same place, not only to be near his young bride, but to help her in my growth.

The place fortunately came and it was also very welcome. My father went to cover the place of 1st Maître at the Hotel Vittoria in Naples, where he remained until September 1910.

Hence still a necessary shift for his career, he went to the city of Rome and, precisely, to the Gran Hotel Royale, located in Via XX Settembre.

My mother and me, this time, followed him to the new residence, settling in a small, furnished apartment, near a certain Ragazzoni family, in the nearby Via Colline, behind the hotel.

In Rome, my father found himself very well. The company of my mother and mine gave him greater vigour and a lot of serenity and enthusiasm in the fulfilment of his duties.

But the career required more sacrifices, still other journeys. In June of 1912 they offered my father the summer season at the Palace Hotel in Livorno and he, always for that famous issue of the "Certificates", gladly accepted. In fact, at the end of the same, he saw his dream of returning to Naples crowned, which pleased my mother too, since Naples was her native city and the usual

residence of her family. We see him as 1st Maître at the Gran Hotel Eden in Naples from 23 April 1913 to 19 February 1914 and, immediately afterwards, always in the city, at the Savoy Hotel, precisely on 20 February 1914.

In Naples, favoured by an old friend, my father managed to have a small but comfortable house in a building on the Riviera of Chiaia 211, owned by the Duca Maresca of Serracapriola. Then, the Riviera of Chiaia was the most beautiful and elegant artery of Naples, both for the grandeur of its buildings, its thick walls, (so with warm rooms in winter and cool in summer: in those days there were no heaters!) and for natural exposure to the South. In front of the Riviera there is the Villa Comunale, through which you find yourself in the much vaunted Via Caracciolo, flanked for a long stretch from that "always blue" sea, as one of the most famous Neapolitan songs says.

In that road there is no stranger, or tourist who does not stop to look at the beauty of the landscape: the characteristic Vesuvius, the old and artistic Castel of the Ovo and on the right, at the top, the much-vaunted Hill of Posillipo, destination of all the lovers and inspirer of the great Neapolitan poets.

The Via Caracciolo, in the past, was considered the "living room of Naples", the place of the elegant walk, especially on Sunday morning, after the ritual listening to Mass in the nearby Church of Santa Caterina da Siena. In this way, the most high-ranking ladies of the city agreed to show off their lavish toilets, as well as all the youths or for the pre-arranged meetings or even

for the hoped for first encounters.

I still remember when this street, in the evening and at night, was illuminated by the famous "gas lamp posts". The walk at that time was even more suggestive: how many words and phrases of love were uttered in it; how many oaths and promises of love, how many tender and passionate kisses have been exchanged! (it is worth remembering the verses of this old and beautiful song: "Tutto passa, fernesce e se scored... 'o destino d' 'o munno è accussì ...").

This road is also famous abroad for the fame of its large hotels, as well as its restaurants: those who do not remember the famous "Zi "Teresa", the "Bersagliera" the "Transatlantico" open day and night and the famous hotels scattered along the entire coast: the "Excelsior" the "Santa Lucia" the "Vesuvio" the "Royal" and the "Continental", all sources of happiness for the countless tourists, coming from all parts of the world and wealth for part of the population, used to living mainly with tourism.

9

Meanwhile, our country, neutral after the siege of Sarajevo, began to intervene in the conflict: the symptoms were everywhere evident. The war was soon declared and my father, belonging to the class of 1885, was mobilized in January 1916. Naples was not a very populated city: it could be considered, at that time, a great country: everyone knew each other. Did you want to find someone to talk to? It was enough to go to Piazza S. Ferdinando to see, after a short time, the person you wished to meet, or else in a position to immediately give you news of what you were looking for.

My father had made a name for himself in the hotel environment, both for the expertise acquired by travelling half the world, and because he was known as an affable and kind person.

The president of the Italian Red Cross, Marquis La Via, knew very well my father, as a close friend of the owner of the Hotel Santa Lucia. Having heard of my father's call to arms, he sent someone to call him and he asked if he would be willing to work with Major Pavone in the opening of a Territorial Hospital for War Injuries, planted in Naples, in the immediate vicinity of the Mergellina Metro, at the beginning of Corso Vittorio Emanuele. My father accepted the job very willingly and, after a few hardships and setbacks, the hospital in question, called

"Regina Elena", was ready to work. My father wore the gray-green uniform and, after a brief interview, they gave him the rank of health sergeant, with the specific task of providing the provisioning, the canteen and many other tasks only he knew how to disengage thanks to his competence, given the scarcity of the staff assigned to the hospital itself.

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