

Roberta Mezzabarba

The Notebooks of Tuscia

Viterbo

A Rose and Its... Machine



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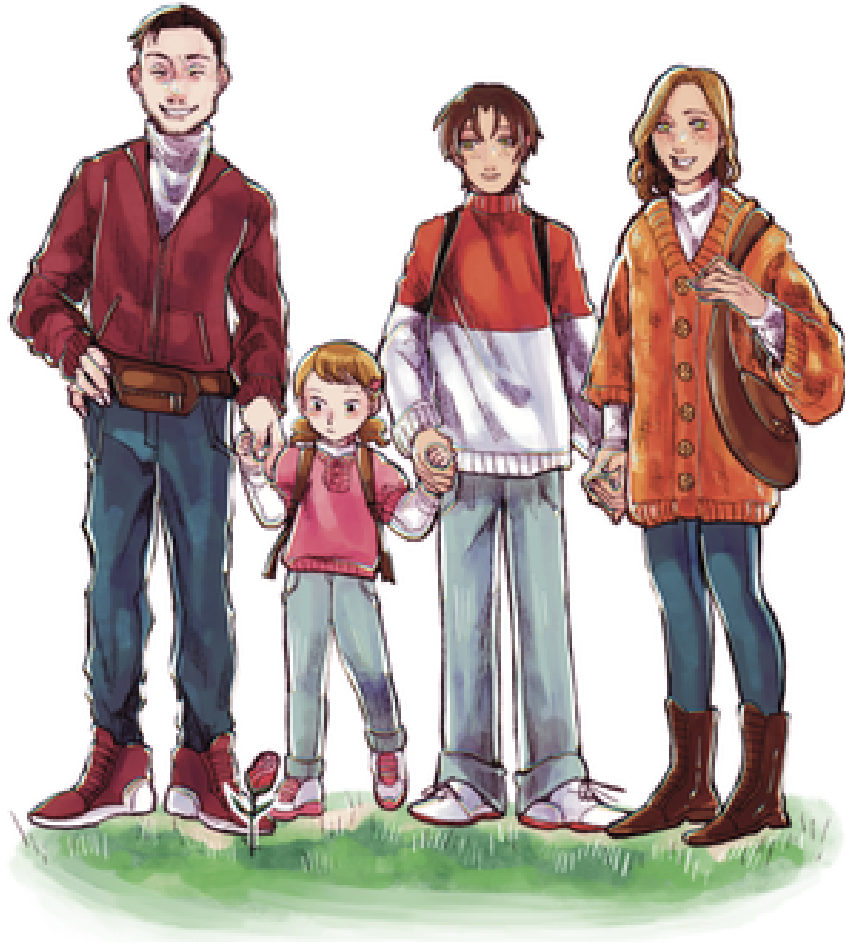
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The characters



The Rossi Family



Raffaele

Don Alfredo



A planned departure

Michele had been planning the trip for months, meticulously organizing every detail to ensure he would be in Viterbo by the evening of September 3rd.

He had left Viterbo after graduating, in search of a job, and had lived in Sant’Arcangelo di Romagna for over fifteen years in . He had moved there with Teresa, and together they had brought two children into the world: Matteo and Rose.

He had been very cryptic about the stops on the journey that would bring him back, at the end of that summer, to the place where he had been born and grown into a man.

He travelled from Romagna down to Tuscany, stopping in Florence and some small villages along the way, and the day before they had officially entered the province of Viterbo.

Michele took his family to Capodimonte and left them to be enchanted by the beauty of Lake Bolsena and its two islands, which stood guard like guardians.

The children were speechless and asked their father why he had ever left such a beautiful place.

Surprised, Michele couldn't think of an answer, but simply told them that the best was yet to come.

“You're not telling me the whole truth, Michelaccio.” Teresa whispered in his ear as she hugged him from behind, wrapping her arms around his waist.

Michele turned his face and kissed his wife on the cheek, giving her nothing more than a smile in return.

* * *

It was the morning of the 3rd of September and the Rossi family was on its way to Viterbo.

Michele was already savouring their arrival, but he couldn't have imagined what awaited him: he had been away from Viterbo for years, but he never expected his city to be overflowing with people and cars—it seemed absolutely chaotic!

By sheer luck, he managed to find a parking spot in Valle Faul.

Michele had barely stepped out of the car when the kids began squealing with excitement.

“Dad, what an amazing sight!” Rose exclaimed, pointing to a grassy clearing at the edge of the car park.

“Is that a giant?” Matteo added.

Then, in unison, they said, “Can we go see it?”

Teresa and Michele looked at each other and nodded: the two children were off, eager to begin their adventure.

Teresa smiled at Michele.

“This promises to be a day *someone* has planned down to the last detail... you know, you’ve hardly told me anything about your city.”

“Rest assured, after today, you won’t be able to say that any more!”

The Awakening

The children had filled the air with questions, and only then did Michele sit down on the grass, right on the giant's belly, followed by the children and Teresa, and begin to tell his story.

“Once upon a time there was a giant statue, a sculpture of titanic proportions that had travelled a long way before finding its home. This great sculpture, called *The Awakening*, was created by J. Seward Johnson Jr. in 1980 for the International Sculpture Conference Exhibition: a giant emerging from the earth with its face and several parts of its body protruding in a very... striking way.”

“Yeah, Dad, it's super cool!” Rose burst out, barely catching her breath.

“The artist later revealed that with this work he wanted to symbolise the awakening of man and his consciousness in a noble and vivid way.”

As Matteo listened to his father, he started taking pictures with his smartphone.

“As soon as it was created, this massive installation was placed in East Potomac Park, in Washington D.C., Maryland. Then, in 2008, the giant was relocated to the National Harbor in Prince George’s County, Maryland, where it currently stands.” Michele paused, waiting for the inevitable question he knew was coming.

“But if *The Awakening* is in the United States, why are you telling us this story?” Rose asked, sounding both disappointed and a little sulky.

“I see I’ve raised a super investigator, someone who isn’t satisfied with just listening to stories but wants to dig deeper! You should know that the giant in America, made of aluminium, has a fibreglass replica. The artist created it in 2009 for the G8 Summit held in Sicily. After the event, the great statue was moved from Syracuse to Rome. Then, on May 3, 2011, this giant was placed here, in this spot called Valle di Faul, and it’s been here ever since.”

“I think this statue means that even if someone tries to bury beautiful things, they eventually find their way out.” Matteo said in a soft voice, almost as if he were speaking to himself.

Michele hoped he could convey the love he felt for his city to his children and Teresa, and he was determined to give it his all to succeed.

“Now, let’s take the lift that will bring us to the heart of the city where I was born and raised!”

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