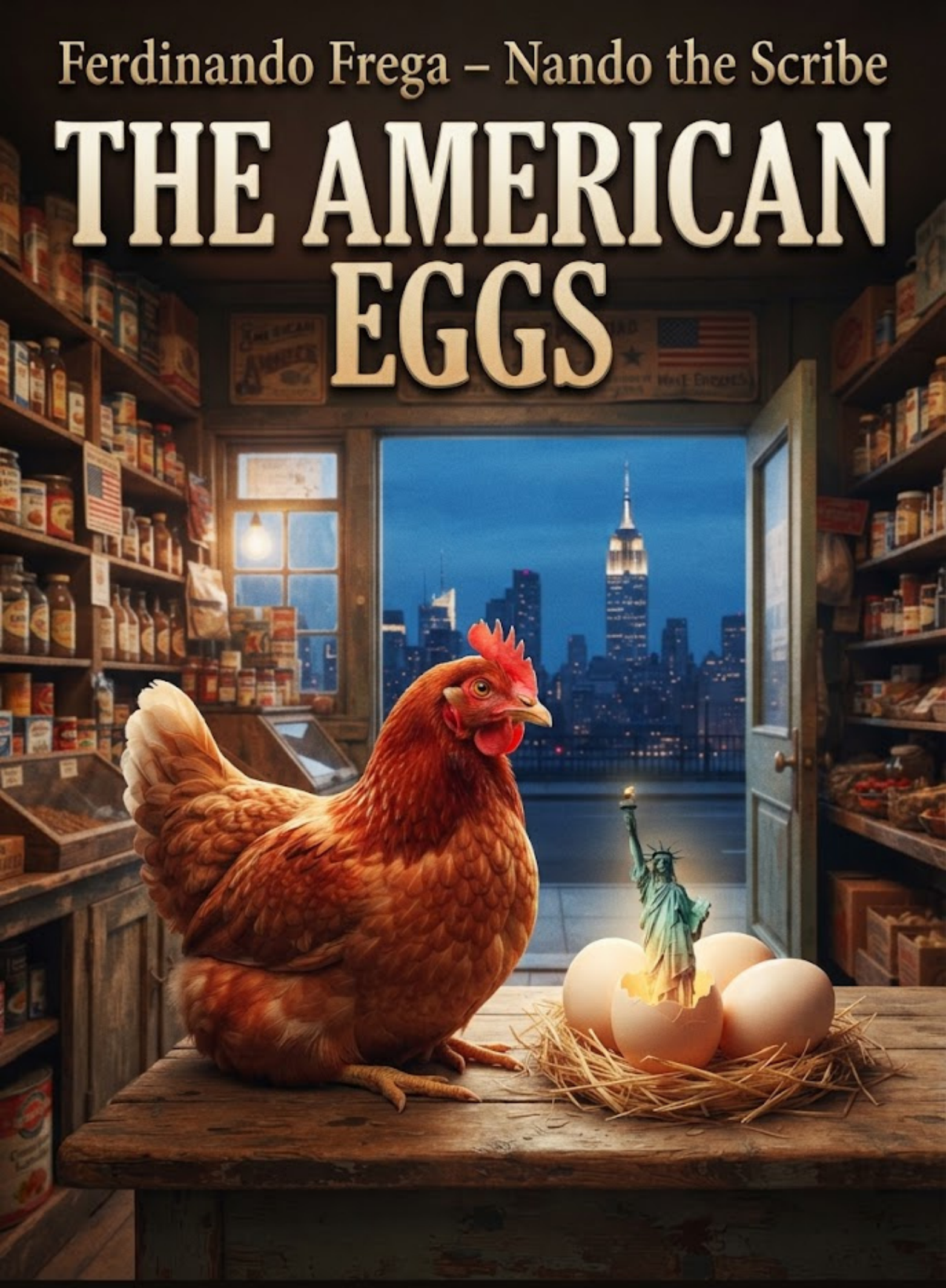
Ferdinando Frega – Nando the Scribe

THE AMERICAN EGGS



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GILLETTE AND THE AMERICAN EGGS

Gillette Trailer 16 — Nando the Scribe

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The plane had just landed. My wife and daughter were both incredulous and suspicious: a new beginning had turned into uncertainty, and hearing so many people speaking a different language was something completely new for them.

JFK Airport, New York, was welcoming us. For me, it meant coming back home — to my land — which had gone from being a promise of identity to a conquest and a new perspective.

To put it briefly: when the Stork was supposed to drop me off in New York 61 years ago, she got dazzled and charmed by a Calabrian hawk and decided to leave me on the slopes of the Aspromonte mountains. But that is another story.

We picked up the luggage and got into a yellow taxi. The driver asked where we were headed, and I gave him the address. Then he asked where we were coming from and where I was originally from.

I answered, “Queens, NY.”

During the ride, complete silence. When we arrived, I asked for the fare: “22 USD by card; if you pay cash, 14 USD.”

I looked at him with friendly intent, and he said, “I worked for 12 years in Naples and learned that only this way I can keep paying for my vices. And from the luggage, I could tell you were coming from Italy. Welcome to New York.”

The house was new and beautiful, with a single entrance from the street and only a few steps to climb. The two women looked at each other and spoke through their silences — but I, with my built-in 'female code' since birth, could read the shades and the thoughts behind their gazes.

“We're home,” I told them. “Later I'll go get some groceries.”

I went out to stock up on food. I do not like supermarkets: Walmart welcomes everyone, but customers pay dearly at Walmart. My suppliers remain at the small local shops, those places where exchanging a few words or a joke lets me gather real news — and write about my life.

“And for eggs, Jack, where can I buy them fresh?”

“Behind this street, there is a Turk named Kan. He has a few hens of his own that he guards carefully. See if he has what you are looking for.”

A few steps later, I arrived. He even spoke Italian — and that is when the surprises began.

He took me to the back of the shop to show me his hens: I counted only nine, and one of them had a patch on her wings with the colors of the Italian flag. Curious, I asked what it meant.

Proudly, he said, “That's Camilla. She comes from Italy, from Naples — Forcella district. My uncle gave her to me. She lays wonderful eggs. These are eggs you can drink fresh, no need to cook them. I never feed my ladies with chemicals — only natural food, the way we do in Turkey.”

He asked if I wanted to try some, and of course, I accepted, “What better occasion?”

We sat at a little table inside the shop, chatting, and he brought me a plate with three eggs.

“Just laid by my Camilla. Nando, you are a lucky man,” he said.

They were warm to the touch. I waited for him to sit down before continuing the conversation.

He asked what I wanted to drink. “American coffee, please.”

I started to pierce the first egg — but there was no hole. I tried another, then the last one.

All three were hard-boiled.

…A miracle. We were in America.

A hen that lays eggs already boiled — no need to cook them. I did not show surprise or alarm; I just asked Kan how much he would want to sell Camilla for. He asked why.

He smiled, “Did you like the eggs?”

I told him I wanted to give them to my daughter, who loves hens.

Inside, I was thinking either a million-dollar project… or a fraud waiting to be understood.

I paid, said goodbye, and left. I did not mention anything to anyone, but the next day, I went back.

“Good morning, Kan. Could I have some more drinkable eggs today?”

“Of course, have a seat. I will bring them right away.”

“I would like to go into the coop and pick them up straight from Camilla.”

“I am sorry, Nando, but last night we cooked her for a birthday party. But I will bring you some other eggs.”

Same ritual, same table, same plate: three fresh eggs, meant for drinking — but once again, hard-boiled, and ready to eat.

I paid, left, and thought: the American dream.

Or maybe… he is the one trying to find me — and still has not?

Welcome to America

Nando

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