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A WINTER MAGIC



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Ferdinando Frega

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Gillette Trailer 17 — Nando the Scribe

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A warm Mediterranean city, within the Italian borders, had hosted me for sixty-one years: a restless body searching for its real dimension, and a mind that was already living in America.

My America. The one that made me cry whenever I looked at the flag, accelerating my heartbeat in impossible ways. The one that would one day host me, waiting to welcome me into the depths of its land.

It was on that day that I received a phone call from my aunt. She told me my grandparents had died. Old age.

Three hundred kilometers separated us, but nothing and no one could have stopped me. I got in my car and drove. Four hours later, I arrived.

The house was closed. A neighbor, as soon as she saw me, greeted me, and invited me in for a coffee. But my time was not that.

I always had the house keys. A typical Frega trait: preventing the problem is always better than having to find the solution. That is who we were.

I went inside. I could still smell the house, the rooms, the wardrobes, the kitchen, and that fireplace that had kept me company during the winter of 1977, when I was just twelve years old. Everything that had gone was no longer there. But the memories were still there.

Instinct pulled me toward the attic.

Two little mice greeted me. Not scared at all. They were there as if they had been waiting for me, as if they had to guide me toward something.

They led me to a cardboard suitcase, closed, covered in a thick layer of dust.

Curiosity pushed me to open it. The two mice looked satisfied, as if they had completed a task.

Inside, I found a notebook.

A unique handwriting, all block letters, unmistakable. It was my father's.

One story carried a date: February 21, 1955. Coincidentally, the exact day of my birth — only the year was different. He had written those lines ten years before I came into the world.

He was writing to God.

He asked for a family, a wife, and children. And one in particular: a boy. He would name him Ferdinando, after his father. But his request did not end there.

I started crying intensely. I was afraid of wetting the notebook, so I switched to the sobbing-without-tears mode. The one I used only in life, in the presence of women — one of my ways to make them surrender, one of my ways to cheat. I am Frega.

His description of how he wanted his son was detailed. And, without dragging it out, in the end I found myself. Who I am.

And that was one of those moments when I asked myself a single question:

Who was my father?

Genealogy did the rest. Because together with that question, with my surname, with what I am, people today always ask the same thing:

Is Frega real, or are they tricksters? A bit of both. We are the Frega.

My father asked God for a son.

God granted the request.

But the delivery was wrong.

The model was American.

It arrived in Italy.

Nando

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