

The Year of Three

Ferdinando Frega

THE YEAR OF THREE — 1993 SEQUEL I

So many things happen in a life, all at once, that forgetting becomes natural — emotions aren't remembered, they're lived in the moment. Facts stay in the memory.

That morning of May 29th, I showed up on the second floor of the Chamber of Commerce in Reggio Calabria. I was 28. A woman met me, introduced herself as the president's secretary, and said the entrance was downstairs — I'd probably gotten lost.

Actually, I was summoned here as a council member of the commercial agents board. Here's the telegram.

Let me see: Mr. Frega Ferdinando, summoned May 29th, 9:30 — but there must be a mistake. Maybe she meant another Frega. Your father, perhaps. You're too young. This has to be an error. Your ID, please.

She checked, and ten minutes later came back with the president himself, who greeted me warmly — the youngest council member in the Italian agents' board.

The secretary looked at me the way you look at a wounded bison that isn't dead yet, unsure where to strike first. Once she recovered: Mr. Frega, forgive me — what is it you actually do?

Thank you for the "Mr.," but I only finished middle school, no diploma. I sell razor blades — retail, not even wholesale yet. They told me I'm not ready.

So why were you appointed here, and by whom?

I've asked myself the same thing. A colleague I worked with 2000 years ago likes to play these jokes on me. I never ask why.

Wait — you're also on the national board of Confcommercio Italia. That came from them too. And you only sell Gillette blades?

Yes, ma'am. Retail only. Though imagine if one day I made and sold them wholesale, across a bigger territory. What would happen then?

Should we ask your colleague from 2000 years ago?

Ahahahahah.

The meeting begins. Twelve of us. A president is named, a secretary, council members, a treasurer — and one role remains, with everyone looking at me: press officer.

I decline. I was never any good at that.

Ferdinando