

The Year of Three

Ferdinando Frega

THE YEAR OF THREE — 1993 SEQUEL II

The time comes to review the files, deciding who gets promoted among the new commercial agents. While everyone rushes to grab folders, I take just four and start reading.

There wasn't much in them — more a casual diary than real credentials. But this was Italy, and that was fine.

I lingered on a few stories worth telling.

The first was Mr. Carta, who claimed a mandate from a company that made toilet paper, and had invented a new way to sell it. He'd walk in on clients already loyal to the leading brands, and when his turn came, he'd deliver the line: selling toilet paper is easy — you just need to know where the ass is and where the toilet is.

Then he'd say: this is the ass, that's the toilet, will you take the paper? Everyone laughed.

I was caught off guard. I had to promote him, amid everyone's laughter.

Next came Mr. Prinzi Giovanni, who'd been selling — by truck — homemade bleach, brewed in a river near Cosenza with his father-in-law, no license, no regulation whatsoever. He'd fill tanks with river water, add solvent, and that was the product. Then he'd walk into grocery stores dressed in a suit and tie for credibility, and announce:

Good morning, ma'am, I'm PRINZVANNI of PRINZVANNI & COMPANY, a multinational selling SODIUM HYPOCHLORITE worldwide at a great price — may I leave you a sample?

The frightened shopkeeper would ask: sorry, what product is that?

And he'd answer: BLEACH.

He got promoted too.

Thirty-three years have passed, and I still wonder how good these two salesmen really were — especially the second one, who somehow also won over my mother, Mrs. Gillette.

Ferdinando