MY SURPRISE

Ferdinando Frega – Nando the Scribe



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FRAME

I had just arrived at the clinic where my daughter does her motor rehabilitation, one of those moments you never delegate to anyone, being there means being inside the problem, not a spectator at a baseball game.

I had sat down in the space reserved for people like me, a small table with a single chair, far from everyone but not from their glances.

Just when I thought I had secured the position, from a nearby table, patients in the middle of their siesta and cigarette called me over to keep them company, and they showed no hesitation in making clear they welcomed my presence.

Only one of them knew that I write, and when we were alone he used to call me Mr. Gillette, spending a broad, satisfied smile, while I scolded him for it, unable to do anything else.

We were in a land, Calabria, where I could have been kidnapped, homeland between the 60s and 90s of the biggest and most profitable kidnappings for ransom, eight-figure sums. Here there were no abductions, those belonged to other zones, other lands, other cultures, where the word love was used to motivate and justify, and later to be forgiven, because here no one left without an agreement first, we weren't in Cincinnati.

There was a 65-year-old professor and a 34-year-old teacher, both disabled, both in wheelchairs, discussing geometry and ancient languages between themselves with the confidence of people who had taught their whole lives. I remained the listener, a non-paying spectator.

When they finished, they both turned to me and said: excuse us, but what do you do for a living?

And I, smiling, answered: I write the books where professors like you learn, and I sincerely hope you manage to be good teachers.

They fell silent, but as I walked away I said: ah, I almost forgot.

The absolutely perfect geometric figure is not the square, as you both lowered yourselves to argue, but the triangle, as if the sum of two or more triangles made a square, and a certain Pythagoras also built some theorems, though I don't recall how many he published, I only know he made quite a

few.

And another thing, the linguistic foundation that allowed humanity to evolve is not, as you stupidly claimed, Latin, those poor fools had only 2,000 words, and then came the Greeks, who brought 8,000, and gave birth to philosophy, the one that lets us think that one day we'll be better.

And to think that the letter "J" of the alphabet isn't Italian, yet it has always been fundamental to so many identities. Just think of JAVE, then JESUS, then Juliana the Gillette CEO, then Jejurikar the P&G President, and then think that my name is Frega, with an F, because the J would have been far too cumbersome for me, a surprise I would never have gotten used to.

Ferdinando