THE NEW HOUSE

BLADEFREGA



THE NEW HOUSE

As soon as they got married, they decided to live in Cosenza.

It was where my father was officially based, and Gillette routed all company correspondence and materials there.

My mother was expecting her first child.

Back in the 1960s nobody knew the baby's sex in advance.

The tests available were invasive, risky, and nobody was willing to gamble with a child who had not even been born yet.

Ahahahah.

Christmas 1963 arrived.

Gillette approved my father's transfer to Reggio Calabria.

My mother was happy.

Her baby would be born in the place she knew best.

Her city.

There was one joke that kept circulating through the corridors of the house:

"What a tragedy if they looked at my child's identity card and discovered he was born in Cosenza. What would my relatives think?"

Ahahahah.

They found an apartment only two hundred meters from my grandparents' house.

The obvious assumption was that my mother, only seventeen years old, would have family support nearby.

Perhaps someone could help with the baby when needed.

But life decided to play a different game.

The relationship between mother and daughter was already damaged.

Her father believed education could be solved with beatings.

That never worked.

Not once.

Even when my mother later tried to apply the same method to her own children, the result was identical.

Failure.

Young.

Beautiful.

Striking.

And a complete devil.

She could think of a hundred ideas before breakfast and carry out a hundred more before dinner.

But she was my mother.

Teresa, my sister, was born in January 1964.

A girl.

No relatives rushed to visit.

Most arrived weeks later.

Almost as if a funeral had taken place.

Such was the culture of a southern Italian city where the true resources of society were believed to be men.

Males.

The same society would need another sixty years to discover that reality worked differently.

Perhaps my literature introduced the subject.

Understanding it is another matter.

Well, thirteen months later I arrived.

February 1965.

And suddenly the Three Wise Men appeared from Cosenza and every surrounding village.

A celebration.

The male heir had arrived.

The generation would continue.

My father was an energetic man.

In the following eight years another ten children could easily have appeared.

Instead, there were abortions, one after another.

My father disliked condoms because he claimed they destabilized him.

My mother preferred another method.

She used the credit card.

The doctor solved the problem.

One afternoon my mother went to the hairdresser.

As always happens in such places, confidences were exchanged.

Someone mentioned that the landlady's son was about to get married and they were looking for another tenant to replace us.

My mother was very good at mathematics.

She came home, called my father, and delivered a simple equation.

"Within seven days, buy a new house. We're leaving."

My father earned only 750,000 lire per month.

But my mother had a haberdashery and clothing shop.

One phone call to my paternal grandfather and money suddenly materialized.

The property broker showed my father a rough, unfinished apartment.

The owners wanted seven million lire.

My father's account contained exactly seven million lire.

Not one lira more.

Not one lira less.

He bought it.

The apartment had internal walls.

Nothing else.

No completed structure.

No proper facilities.

My mother wanted to kill him.

"Where the hell are we supposed to sleep without doors, windows and a bathroom?"

My father laughed.

"I am Frega."

"By May 1973 we'll be living in the new house."

In March 1973 two more Fregas arrived.

Twins.

Years later my father would say:

"But I got out in time. How the hell did they get in?"

And I always gave the same answer while everybody laughed.

"The problem is never getting in, Dad. That part is easy."

"The problem is getting out in time."

"Maybe you're out of sync."

"Your Bulova watch is running a few seconds slow."

Ahahahah.

He never borrowed from a bank.

No mortgage.

No loans.

Friends and people who knew him extended credit.

And he never broke his word.

On 30 May 1973 we moved in.

Just my father and me handled most of the move.

After two days of carrying furniture, I was eight years old and hauled a washing machine up three floors and into the apartment by myself.

We were finally in our own home.

Nobody would ever throw us out.

At least that was the theory.

Years later my parents died and one of my brothers managed to take possession of everything.

But that is another story.

Bye Dad.