

The Year of Three

Ferdinando Frega

THE YEAR OF THREE — 1993 SEQUEL III

It was still early on that March morning when someone rang the doorbell.

Everyone immediately started asking who it could be. My daughter Giorgia smiled and, with perfect confidence, announced:

"Finally. They have come to arrest you."

As it turned out, it was only the postman.

The evening before, he had forgotten to deliver a telegram. Afraid that the mistake might cost him his job, he decided to correct it at dawn. For him, the hour was apparently a minor detail.

My wife opened the telegram out of curiosity. It read:

"Her Illustrious Ladyship and her husband are invited to attend the event to be held on May 30th at the Hall of the Archons in Reggio Calabria, entitled: Twins Born in the Year 1993."

Please contact the secretariat within three days of receiving this telegram to confirm attendance. No expenses will be incurred."

We looked at each other.

Thirty-three years had passed. Events like that do not happen often. We were curious.

My wife immediately began her campaign of recommendations.

Behave yourself.

Do not do anything impulsive.

Remain calm and lucid.

Accept whatever they give us.

Then come home quietly.

She was smiling as she said it.

She knew perfectly well that advising the wolf how to behave among sheep is usually a waste of time.

Ahahahah.

The day of the event finally arrived.

The hall was crowded. We recognized nobody. At least, I did not.

Time had changed everyone's faces.

Curiously, almost nobody had brought their children.

The program began with a speaker, an obstetrician who had worked at the clinic during those years.

She recalled that 1993 had been extraordinary.

There had been fifty-four twin births.

Of those, fifty-one were girls.

Only three were boys.

Afterward, the clinic director took the stage and invited the three couples who had produced the male twins to come forward.

When I heard my surname, my wife quietly made the sign of the cross.

A new adventure was beginning.

She knew I would speak.

She simply did not know what I was going to say.

The first couple was asked what they believed had caused their twin birth.

The husband answered energetically that good food and great passion had probably played the decisive role.

The audience laughed and applauded.

The second couple received the same question.

This time the wife answered, suggesting that an advanced hormonal treatment might somehow have influenced the outcome.

Then it was our turn.

My wife quickly took control of the microphone before I could.

She explained that twin births ran through my family history: myself, my father, and before him my grandfather.

In her view, it was predictable.

Almost natural.

Everything was proceeding safely.

Then she attempted the fatal mistake.

She tried to hand me the microphone.

I intercepted it.

This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

I could not waste it.

I explained that during those years I had been working for Gillette in the wholesale business.

Naturally, I said, twin births were easy to explain.

It was the same principle as our promotions:

Take two, pay for one.

The room exploded with laughter.

Encouraged by the reaction, I continued.

"It was a demanding year, 1993. An unforgettable one. But I would also like to point out that I never had the good fortune of meeting any of the ladies present here before then."

The ladies smiled.

The husbands smiled less.

A balance was restored to the universe.

Eventually the event came to an end, and we headed toward the exit.

Just as we were leaving, several ladies stopped me.

"Mr. Gillettenarrative," they called.

And at that moment I understood something.

The years pass.

Faces change.

Memories fade.

But stories travel faster than people.

I had arrived as Ferdinando.

Somehow, my stories had arrived before me.