

Best' generation

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Every reference to facts and people doesn't reflect reality
and it's random.

*“Abolish the public pulpits; they are like a house of tolerance.
He who preaches is often the manager of the brothel.”*

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CHAPTER 1

The buildings of the suburbs seemed so high they hid the sight of the sky. From below and with my ass resting at the doorstep of the door, I only saw the roofs.

Over time I went to the city to look away from my enclosure. I thought politics would serve the needs but I realized you could do everything in the system, except fundamental things. Fundamental things are related to everyone's happiness, but saying it becomes rhetorical.

We were grandchildren of hippy' generation and children of counterculture. Those like me were so sickened by words and concepts that they had no more stodgy impulses. Ours was the generation of rats: animals addicted to the environment in which they lived in, ready to feed on plastics, mud, shit and every slag coming out of the sewers. The ones like me didn't bring love or controversy, but only a capillary grudge. The ones like me were part of the generation afflicted by Pete Best's disease.

The place and time when you were born has an impact. When you are very young, you hope your life will be better than the one you had with your parents. Then time runs and you realize how hard is scraping along.

My father was born in 1925 at Borgo Cerreto, a village on the Valnerina. It was a dark and difficult period not only for political and social issues. My grandfather Giuseppe, carpenter, stuffed chairs and carved wooden staircases. My grandmother Angelina came back from the fields carrying wood and baskets of vegetables on head.

As a child, Dad was packing hay and a spike of wheat a spike of wheat pierced his cornea. He held this accident as a souvenir.

He needed a driving license to work. He had always passed the examinations except visits for disability recognition. If you have a license you are not invalid. He spent his whole life with his butts on the bike as a delivery man in a weary job, for an indifferent master.

Umbria is a land of saints where religiosity is rooted in its bowels except in daddy's ones. Maybe this point of view must have struck his father-in-law. My mother's father was a Communist worker at a Brescia arms factory.

Bernardo, my grandfather, after met my father, told his daughter the Umbers were good people. So his daughter became my mother; the story is this, more or less.

At the time when Bernard was the head of the factory pavilion in the late 1920s, fascists hit hard. They came at night to get you out of bed and lead you to the police station for clarification. A cousin of my mother - a young Black shirt - assured my grandfather that sooner or later, they would have gone to take him.

My grandmother Emilia, a socialist woman because Christ was socialist, complained about it to the police headquarters because Bernardo did not do any political propaganda. Well, the fascist cousin was pulled away.

Bernardo the red stayed strong during those twenty years and he never mad the cards. Then, he waited again and again but the Chinese never came to Brescia and so one day, tired of waiting for them and with a heart attack, he died.

Do you know the song of SubsOnica, the one that says: *how'sot bangin' after a gunshot?*

It's a song of the 1999s and not the '70s, yet it caught up with them.

The first news that struck me was the death of Luciano Re Cecconi. That evening of 18th January 1977, I was in the living room with my mother. We waited for my father to come for dinner. I can still remember the words of the journalist: *Incredible news. The Lazio football player, Luciano Re Cecconi, is died.*

What do you do when holding a gun? You want to be respected and you just want to frighten your interlocutor. What if that doesn't frighten him? If the guy you're in front of shoots him first, what's the point in holding a gun in your drawer?

Luciano Re Cecconi, was called “the wise man” was returning to play after an injury; he entered the jeweller' shop of an acquaintance and a few moments later, the irreparable thing happened. A joke which ended badly, I was the fiction of a robbery.

The jeweller lived with the anxiety from proletarian financing; one doesn't work to get his money stolen, right?

During particular historical periods there were truths that served not to disturb the public opinion. Today, years after the incident, other hypotheses are advancing like that Luciano didn't speak a word that evening.

Our neighbourhood, like others in Rome, was the funeral scene of episodes that were becoming a commonplace. On January 7, 1978, at Via Acca Larentia between Tuscolana and Appia, two MSI militants were killed during an ambush; another died a few hours later following the clashes with the police forces arising from a protest demonstration. At a distance of four kilometres and a month and a half from that time, on February 28 at Piazza San Giovanni Bosco, a militant of Lotta Continua died.

The years of lead were not only characterized by terrorism but also by revenge and retaliation between groups of opposing political matrix. All this was happening under our house. The policy was entering massively even in the stadiums but through a slower process that took place later and would transfer its battlefield from the road to sports facilities, by blending the reasons for our cheers with the ideological ones. Paradoxically, soccer has cleared the asphalt from the spilled blood containing the phenomenon within its limits and exasperating the aspect of cheering.

I was still trying to understand why we males pissed while standing and the women did it sitting, when in the morning of March 16th, 1978, the scudocrociata teacher of letters entered the classroom, who in tears informed the red teacher of technical education the terrorist group called the Red Brigades had kidnapped one of the most prominent politicians in our country.

We of the lower middle class lived the affair with childish suggestion. They told us to be careful when we went around because, there were so many police officers but if the agents were not up to the American television series, then these Red Brigades, maybe, didn't exist either.

Our teachers explained Aldo Moro was trying to get the Reds into government after thirty years of opposition. It was on the eve of the parliamentary vote, which, for the first time since 1947, would have sanctioned the entry of the Communist Party into government majority.

In politics, a man's misfortune doesn't only help his opponents but also some of his friends.

Ordinary inquiries today shows camorristi, mobsters, criminals of various species, took steps to release Aldo Moro upon request of men in government and a few of his party friends. But for the strong currents of his group, the Honourable wasn't to be saved. The greatest weight had the international equilibrium.

History says whoever tried to serve the State, lost his life. Those who tried to fight against the State burned the lives of others and their own.

Reality was different from the one studied at school during the lessons of civic education and modern history. The deviations of the secret services, the international infiltrations and the financial environment, which controlled some apparatuses: what confusion was our democracy!

Today the Earth looks like a poisoned ball, yet we fight for its odds. In Calabria there's 'Ndrangheta, in Puglia there's Sacra Corona, in Campania there's Camorra and in Sicily Cosa Nostra. In the rest of the country, you'll find the State.

At school the teachers reflected on the percentage the political deployment. Mathematics and technique: Communist Party; Letters and Italian: Christian Democracy; History and Sciences: Socialist Party; Music: Social Movement. You learned to prostitute yourself, and the commitment to study was already mild that you couldn't compromise your years by irritating teachers with a faith opposed to them, and as far as ideologies were concerned you could express them by smearing the toilet of your section. Regarding the ethics of educators, well, no one cared. As far as I was concerned, I learned soon to solve the issues with a shrug.

One aspect, which made its way, was the model perpetuated by television. It was obvious in the small business: for example, everybody mangled their names, and it was often an American diminutive (sometimes French), you just had to truncate your details and add a Y. Amazing. A letter not used in our language strengthened an ego full of youthful acne. It synchronized you with a reality, which already in that time, before Internet, seemed absolutely

virtual. That is, if your name was Americanized, French or Hispanic, you felt more at the centre of things and the centre of things was TV. Calling you Tony instead of Antonio was shaping your identity. Rock and movie stars were whistling at you from the posters or the screen, and you had to answer them, be worthy. Your father, however, had called you Antonio, Francesco or Vladimiro for reasons related to a relative, or to tradition.

After the meeting of Jalta in '45 (shortly before the end of the World War), for which was the partitioning of the world into two blocks, this was a duty to be paid: the "plan Y".

It's still also today, indeed even more. Your school education has been incomplete, partial, in the strictest sense of the term: a system preparation. Advertising thought to the rest.

That's what I understood. Those like me are those who have not participated, those who were not protagonists but bearers of anonymous stories and spectators of something happened above their own head and, at the same time, before their own eyes.

Today I find myself thrown into a global, correct, aseptic dimension to show the symptoms of a private freedom, which is then a twofold way. What has changed?

The sky looks more polluted. The politics in the service of high finance and never had the lords gone to Liverpool. They fly to Monte Carlo with their personal jet. Everything is so distant.

More than anything else is you. You and your blue car, the bodyguards that protects you, and the financial forces that moves you. A pawn well paid. You speak and manage, you decree, you piss from the top of the tower on the passers-by, which never catch you.

You curse live, fight on television and preach in the squares, but fuck in the dungeons of your beautiful castle where, nymphomaniacs more than paedophile, sodomize the ignorant virgins. You knelt at the altar of power, the real only Christ you sanctify.

You are the atomic bomb of the world, elaborate, invisible and who insinuates in the way, comes out to the TV; you are the weapon of destruction for the brains of the masses, you are the cancer no

chemotherapy can cure. You are the oxygen of the vile, the enslaved, and the mercenary.

Lose yourself in the chatter and in your collusion. It's the way you are, swindler and politician of shit.

Best' generation

CHAPTER 2

My room window overlooks the inner courtyard. In the summer, you can hear people fuck, kids who don't sleep, condos farting in the toilet of survival.

Five students inhabited the apartment upstairs. They left the blinds open and I felt they fought because one of them was in possession of an onion that was not hers. I followed the quarrel from the window when the door of my room suddenly opened.

- There's Archimede at the intercom – my mother says.

I'm going to answer: - So what?

- Bestemmia sent me a message, saying the funeral is tomorrow.

- Ok. I'll see you there.

We went to school together with Bestemmia. Giovanni da Verrazzano Institute was red with red professors in a red district.

Cobra was two years older than us, attending the Fronte della Gioventù and passing the fliers of his fascist friends. In that school, no one ever came in with fliers of the Fronte.

Bestemmia and I were unconscious and we liked to defy fate.

A classmate showed us as leaders and others called home to scare us. An inscription under the intercoms, afterwards we suffered the first fight, two slaps and a couple of kicks. We were young and they were convincing.

Gradually we began to attend a section outside the area of the Italian Federation Young Communists in the sequel of two bigger skirts who knew more than us about life and weaning. What did politics have to do with all

this? Obviously nothing, but we earned our first blowjob.

Bestemmia and I were two sluts who hopped from one side to the other, Cobra was attending the Fronte and Nazi environments and Archimede was a freak activist of the FIGC. The Taciturno, however, was a convinced agnostic in any point of view.

February 16, 1980 was a date changed our adolescence forever. The opening of a subway line connected the peripheral areas with the rest of the city.

The old town was a walkway for Saturday afternoons and other weekdays. The shuffle for Via del Corso and the show in front of Charro's showcases where the original camperos were exposed, were inevitable stages because at that age nothing mattered to anyone without an original camperos and I sold my family gold for those shoes.

The time had come for us to change the soles of our shoes. Right for the door but to continue travelling, we needed shoe-boots!

I don't remember where I was when the arrived news of the massacre in the skies of Ustica on June 27, 1980, and up till today we didn't understand how things went. I remember though that on August 2, 1980 I was in the living room. I had finished breakfast and I was getting ready to go down the street for playing soccer, as usual. The sun was high and beat sharply impressing always more the images of the extraordinary edition of the TG1. People were coming back to Bologna on weekends and people were leaving for holidays. An explosion and you exist no more. Gone.

Reconstructing the plot of the bombing at Bologna station is a complex operation because the evasive groups and the criminal gangs represented the suture with the sectors of the Secret Service. They called them State Massacres, a tension strategy, that is, you had to worry about imminent danger.

1983 was the year of revelation for Archimede because American magazine Time elected the computer character of the year and his friend obtained one, gained experience of it till he became one of the most trusted elements in the neighbourhood.

When Taciturno became an adult was struck by the myth of the financier and fiddled with Cobra - whose father was a bank official – in stock market, starting with few money, and since luck kissed their ass, they succeeded to float for a while.

At that time I had some passion. I loved music and football. They called me like a Real Madrid striker. My surname was and is still Santini and so because of that vice of people to which I was referring, to all I was Santillana.

It was played on the sidewalk, in an open space, in a lay-by. The game lasted from morning till night; at lunch time the first half was over and in the afternoon the second half started. At the time, the losers and winners met again at Elvezio's Pizza, just below the house. A meal just left the oven like it was never there; this was its true exclusivity: Elvezio cooked only dishes to be heated on the following days. We had a snack with warm supplì and ice-cold chinotto. Tablecloths, seats, and tables: every detail was imbued with grease and the bottle of chinotto leaked off if it was not kept at the bottom. The fried fries impregnated the napkins passed by the brewery.

Elvezio had a tone of voice nasal and metallic but the manners were of excessive treat typical of those who love contact with the public. We liked him and we loved him, maybe even because we were kids with pockets full of money. The place was large; the bench like those of a train wagon and the coffee tables were in the middle, so we could sit in eights. Behind the counter, Elvezio had a big TV, which was always on. At the beginning of every newscast, a religious silence was created because some imminent catastrophe was always expected. We only heard the noise of jaws and the verses of our uneducated drinking.

In those years only male journalists could conduct the newscast. Even the three channels of the national TV were divided according to the political address of the country reflecting the percentages. In the early '90s, private networks, fuelling competition, flanked the three national networks. In the same period, the woman journalists multiplied and we at the time stayed attached to that screen at the pizza shop witnessing the change. The news seemed more pleasing and effective.

The Internet is integration to all of us. We registered ourselves at the National Forum and since then, we actively participate as voters in the

Female Italian Championship of Television Journalists. I can't explain whether it's a trend but it's our madness. Everyone has his own favourite one and he cheers for her. Why a female journalist?

A part of attractiveness, female TG journalist represents the antithesis to a prototype of a woman a man of power tends to shape, which is a cliché evidently many men prefer.

I only cheer for Manuela Moreno of TG2. I don't want to sign the praises of my beloved, but the only thing I can say is mine is a fierce cheer. We see TG, vote and fight on the forum.

Recently, news joins us. That is, it touches you in return. I don't know if the first journalist to comment was Moreno, but I spoke with Archimede about it, which also had been impressed by it. In the subsequent days Bestemmia was added to the debate, and he stayed awake all night watching his special one before falling asleep.

It was an in-depth study of a politician who had entered the scene in recent years, Honourable Andrea Franzoni. He's been an old acquaintance and in the early years we called him Passe-partout, then retrospectively, on the basis of the development of our relations with him, it became Infame.

We knew Infame in a racing room. He was a friend of Brando, one who grew up with today and us we see occasionally because of work.

Infame was the kind of man who was excited about the anecdotes about the delinquency and about whatever fact or crime.

For example, the delinquency in Rome was of exclusive relevance to the Banda della Magliana but they were all taken by terrorism and in this context the crimes happened in the background. In addition to novels and TV productions, I remember the bullshits of people who claimed to know a guy who was a distant relative.

You listened to stories like the one of an affiliate sitting at a coffee table, when a few water drops poured from a resident who was being used to water the flowers, and he seized the velvet jacket of the Marauder who, furious, entered the doorway with a gun in search of the sprinkler.

At that point, a relative of the narrator of the legend always intervened. He was a guy who knew how to speak to the Rogues and who was heroically able to calm the gang of bandits who at the end offered him a brandy and they became friends.

We spent the evenings talking and Infame blindly believed in the things he told us. At the time we called him Passe-partout because hanging out with him enabled us to open all doors. You thanked him for not having sex with your little friend who always hung on his lips. It was the age in which the feeling split you into four: your baby ate the Infame with her eyes and would have given up her virgin booty to go up into his room to suck the best of his age. At that time, the boys hardened their hearts as well as their cocks and the girls were fucked up for their pussies.

Infame breathed the air of political power. His father was a deputy in the ranks of the PRI. He was also the secretary in one of the five-party coalition governments.

He dumped us concepts heard by his father. He would have taken jurisprudence and followed his parent's political career. Infame was expected by a future that has already been planned.

We, immersed in the hedonism of the 80s where everything seemed possible even if the lira was the most stable currency, were choosing the person, instead of an ideology or a party. Even the Cobra and Archimede, as opposing poles of the company, were subjugated by the charisma and the possibilities Infame offered.

We gave a helping hand to his father's secretariat during a referendum campaign. We ate like pigs at three or four dinners and there was a lot of pussy in search of glory, so we understood why Infame spared our little buddies. It was just... another dimension.

CHAPTER 3

We were all present at the funeral of Bestemmia's father. Bestemmia learned as a kid to do shopping and the shopkeepers remembered his name. However, we forgot him after his first blasphemy.

His home is now empty, but his bed, the bed of all of us, has always been a landing, the terraces where the sheets or pavement lay. A parent's funeral is a matter that sooner or later will affect everyone, so before the blade of destiny falls, it is better to be prepared.

Function ended. Bestemmia was shaken. Now he had to accompany the coffin to the holy field. We saluted him and allowed him go. He still turns to me: - Oh, Laziale: thank you!

- For what?

- For being there.

- One of these nights we'll go to the pub, ok?

- Yes, that's fine. Maybe tomorrow.

- Okay. See you tomorrow then.

And so we're at the pub. There is a new brew we have to taste with the artichoke, cooked ham and truffle sandwich, or at least what's left of the truffle. Bestemmia sneezes and looks around.

- The last two years have been hell - he says - diseases devastate the family as well as the sick...

- Another beer?

- Yes.

- Ah - I told the waiter - two more!!

- Listen, we're going to the Banda Larga, under the gallery, on Saturday. I don't know if it's necessary, and if you want to come...
- I'll let you know; let's see how I feel...
- As you want, no problem, before we see the game.
- Can I ask you a question? – He said to me, while giggling, so I understood where he wants to drive at.
- The usual stinky red and yellow?
- Why are you called Lazio and not Rome?
- Lazio is derived from Latius, which means the territory of the Romans. It's Latin, the mother tongue. Get a move buddy, because I don't live forever!

He clouds himself. Here comes the beers and we are sipping from the edge.

- In short - he says - the other day I looked at the TG and I saw that shit on video!
- Yes, I know, he's a prominent man now.
- A big shit.
- He made us smell the good life.
- Exactly. He's really an infamous.
- Sometimes I think we should pay him...
- Yeah. And how?
- I don't know. But it would be right – I say, trying to instigate.
- Let it go, we've made too many messes.

We got the sandwiches and we chew the bitterness of our memories. Infame was coming and going back to the USA for updates and studies. Who had ever been in the States?

I loved the conjunction which started from the delta of Mississippi, passed through Nashville, touched Memphis and gave rise to rock and roll. I loved the Blues and its purists, the jazz. Broadway, Manhattan, movies. I loved American narrative, Bukowski, Fante, Carver and Kerouac. This was my America. America was a place for the soul where so many Americas coexisted: a place where messages came to contaminate and enhance themselves.

Infame wanted to engage concretely. It was the post-tangentopoli period and the parent's party was swept away, but the honourable still held adherence. Our friend managed to engage in a new political force. He was a dolphin, a puppy of other dolphins and puppies in the undergrowth of the offices and sections that made up the structure of each party and he climbed up different positions. He took the first steps within the provincial youth groups and became a member of the Political Executive in seven years.

Here, we came into play. We contributed to his propaganda, we were sure that we would have advantages. After his last return from the United States, he began to use terms like crowdfunding, i.e fundraising. When I was able to understand, as elementary as possible, he was a company and we were the shareholders. And the task of companies is to balance budgets and gain profits. The one of Infame was not a common work of conviction but of evangelization. His work on the sides, on me and on Bestemmia, was made easier by the fact we had no hips or spine. Cobra and Archimede, though, barricaded on opposite positions, were loyal to their own principles. The song of Infame was always the same.

Ideologies are faded. The sooner you're convinced, the better for everyone. What have these ideologies produced in history? Nothing, indeed only disasters. I'm not saying it: it's the news.

Of course, someone can say only an ideology can make you feel alive, supportive, and in full communion with the human race.

Do you know how I answer? With another question: do you prefer a sweet lie or a bitter truth? And the truth, my friends, is if you don't help yourself first, you will never be able to help anyone else.

Obviously, it was a confidence made by a friend because he never dreamt of speaking in public in these terms. The essence was this. He understood everything.

I had about fifteen million, Bestemmia supported with a few more. Archimede and Taciturno participated with a dozen apiece. Cobra wanted to do things great and extended to forty. Infame had secured the invalidity pension for my poor father, joking about the fact it would have been easier to get it if he was a fake invalid. And then it had to solve Cobra's case

relating to the stadium fight. Finally, here was an old case for Archimede's father against the institution dismissed him from the office.

We used the old centres of the neighbourhood and neighbouring areas as a vote tank; above all, there were the preferences Cobra gave to Infame for his curve friends. In this case we talk about so much stuff because Cobra being among the first in Italy to have been wary of the stadium, was known and enjoyed cross-friendships among the fans of the whole country.

This allowed the infamous car to get to its destination. It was a capillary job. We were pushing the car. Infame succeeded in matching his father's enterprise: he was elected deputy. He had an office, a secretary, and so many other beautiful things.

It seemed impossible it had happened. And we all succeeded together. None of us had ever made anything good until then and this thing excited us collectively. Cobra and Archimede had to plug their nose and that effort made them appear like two veterans who appreciated the result obtained more than Bestemmia and I. All of us thought we would soon be going to the cashier.

For one year Infame looked after us well, because of his new commitments. From that moment, we only saw him on TV. He had a bodyguard, which discouraged any contact. Even though, we tried without good results. That's how it ended.

Saturday. The usual quarrel of the schoolgirls upstairs was aired in the entrance hall. They were arguing because on their way back from work, no one wanted to go to the grocery market.

Sometimes I just want to stay under the door to look at the sky and have a chat with friends. I like looking at the sky, even when it rains.

On Saturday night, three or four forty-year-old dressed with retro clothes, bellies hidden from the shirt off the pants or from the sweatshirt. Our movements were being retro, but now it's different and we don't have to deal with it anymore. No girl will get around, we go to the pub just to have a drink, listen to past music and cut the rug. No personality fights, just an unusual desire for lightness.

Bestemmia was dancing '70s disco music, Archimede new age of the '80s. I loved the Clash and got myself lost in the supermarkets between the Spanish bombs and the rock casbah. Taciturno never lets his favourite

rhythms appear, but we concluded his confidentiality included even his musical qualities.

We went down the stairs leading to the Banda Larga. The bar area was illuminated with green and pink and the bartender was one with a shaved skull, earring and curly goatee. Wearing a black t-shirt, so in the coloured lights you could recognize him without going wrong: it's the old John Lee D, now only called Duilio.

He looked at us and with a snobbish expression, asked us what we would take.

- A tropical - I said, raising my voice to overcome the volume of the music.
- I'll have, a pina colada - Bestemmia shouted.

Taciturno looked around. He whispered his order to Duilio. The music was high and Duilio was annoyed by the low tone of Taciturno, so he made repeated his confession: - Are you fucking kidding me? Do you want a tachipirine?

- What barman are you... don't you know it?
- My friend, we're in a disco, not in a pharmacy!

Bestemmia and I laughed: - A tachipirine? - I asked.
- Yes - replied Taciturno. - It's a Brazilian cocktail!
- Yeah, well... - Bestemmia laughed.
- I remember always taking it; maybe it said tachipirinha but...

We couldn't keep the laughter, so he cut short and gave a Corona with lemon peel, and then we moved over to the couches and let people dance. There were some guys who dancing out of line, another did punk moves and the others were dancing in Woodstock style. Overall, these were the usual Saturday night wildlife. It's a place for suburban dancing, just a place where you could listen to a salsa motif and then an old disco.

Taciturno was gone. We went to the toilet but he wasn't there. This place is just a lousy discotheque toilet, with papers, folders, maps, and smells of vomiting. We then got out. We stayed motionless and with our hands in our pockets, looking around us. Then, Bestemmia gave me a nudge in my lower belly: - Here, I found him!

He is at the centre of the track dancing the Macarena. After all these years we discovered his favourite step is South American.

At three o'clock the DJ greeted everyone and ended with Bowie Heroes. Every time I listen to this song, I feel important. We went out as heroes and arrive at the intersection between the bank and the gate.

We smoked cigarette lights of our forty years old. The others were leaving. Archimede and I remain at the intersection between the bank and the door. It was nighttime, by then: we saw Ursula, once the neighbourhood queen, crossing the road.

The traffic lights were in the background as if we were at a fashion show. She was no longer a girl but had charm, a great personality and always had a magnificent ass. She had blond bob of hair but the most exciting part were her calves, which posed on her high heels and seemed to shine.

It's time to go home. I entered by trying to make no sounds. I overlooked the window and Brotonlo the cat, did the nighttime ride. Meows and sits on the deckchair. I went out to the balcony and I was going to scratch it; it's my cat and I knew he liked it. He rumbles and I get another cigarette. It's a starry night and the background of Brontolo leaves me as quiet as if everything was really ok.

It was a nice night. In your youth, you lived with the fear of things had not yet happened. The vague perception of them was an unknown thing, which left them lost. Now it seems to live suspended between a sunset and a dawn.

Brontolo was still rumbling in the night. This is what I envy to cats, almost as if they were suspended between Ying and Yang.

I waited for the sunrise after other cigarettes. It arises between the buildings around and exits the parabolic antennas like an unnatural phenomenon. It's more beautiful than any other. It was just I.

CHAPTER 4

Ursula reopened the remembrance drawer. She was engaged to Duilio, who today is the barman of the Banda Larga, but at that time he was John Lee D, the King of the Rock in our neighbourhood.

He was the king and she was his queen. They came out only in the lights of the night. They was a convoy of accompanying with plastic dresses that looked straight ahead and that pass, in our eyes, was a phosphorescent locomotive split towards the future.

In that future John Lee D lost the throne because time, despite keeping a more relaxed rhythm compared the rock music, it's a more constant element of it and makes sure you never reign forever, unless the musical virtuosity are so indispensable to resist. Lee D's iron riffs didn't win over his era, they rusted and he was no longer king as Ursula was no longer his queen.

I was the Fax guitarist and I thought the group of John Lee D aimed only on the image while the Fax just loved the music. We liked to experiment with various genres and I think we had bases. I boasted a discrete musical culture even though my mind was a liver full of gallstone to remove.

One of the events, which influenced my life, was the death of John Lennon. John's existence for me began with his end. Not having lived as a contemporary ached me. I spent time reading up and staying for hours in bookstores and libraries in search of anecdotes, essays and biographical notes still eluded me, as if this somehow filled the distance and the years, which had separated me from that period.

I often thought about what would have been of me if he had never existed but a guy like John would never have just passed.

Ursula also venerated him more than anything else. The suggestion brought me to talk to her about my theory of Lennon's death.

In '71 John left England to live in New York. In America he didn't make a good kid. He attended radical extremists, participated in the Marches for peace. The Government of the United States did not like the resonance of his deeds. John's phone was under control and the FBI stalked him.

He wrote "Gimme some truth" for Richard Nixon, pre-announcing the Watergate scandal. No one knows if the president listened to the song but official documents testify how John's positions were clear to the White House. Moreover, they were urged by King Elvis to take measures against subversive and controversial English man.

In '75, John won his battle against the U.S. Immigration office that repeatedly attempted to expel him and the following year he received the definitive residence permit. In October of the same year, his long-awaited son was born by Yoko and he withdrew to a private life.

Until the 80s, Lennon led the life of a quiet bourgeois devoted to the family. John was pleased of it, but time passed, his son grew up and maybe even boredom. It was worth retrying a new beginning.

In November 1980 he released Double Fantasy, his first album after five years of inactivity. On the night of December 8th, John and Yoko came home. John heard someone called him. He turns. It will be his last moments of life.

Mark David Chapman was a Beatles fanatic. He worked as a security guard in Atlanta and was confident with firearms. He moved to Hawaii where he was a victim of a nervous breakdown, which brought him to the brink of suicide. In '79 he got married in Honolulu to an American girl of Japanese descent. His fanaticism for Lennon was obsessive. In October 1980, he left the security guard work in Honolulu, signing with Lennon's name and reaching New York after buying a 38 calibre for 169 dollars. On the night of December 8th in front of the Dakota building, he put an end to his obsessions.

That's the story. My theory, however, was twisted and flimsy. Despite the excellent relationship between Lennon and the Carter government, following the Nixon government, there is no doubt John's past was uncomfortable. There's also no doubt, despite the changes, there are side powers to those politicians composed of military structures and secret services supported by an indissoluble patriotic spirit.

Hence my speculation: Lennon was killed at the moment when he interfered again outside the door after returning to the scenes. And who performed the act was one who had already shown signs of madness. A guy like that with a gun in his hand can do anything and if it's absurd to admit his mind was so sick that he was led by an unknown puppeteer, he would be taken into little consideration: Don't you think it was the perfect person to push for a similar case?

To all, I was a mythomaniac but no one took me seriously as Ursula. From that moment on, for a long time, we were indissoluble.

Liverpool was my second hometown. There was no day I didn't dream of going there. I knew the port area was re-evaluated over the years with the opening of a subsidiary of the Tate Gallery on docks near the maritime museum.

All I saw of Liverpool, the photographs and archive footage, were fascinating in its desolation. I still have an old black and white postcard sent to me by the Fax keyboardist, who filmed the port as it once was. Behind the postcard, beyond Greetings, the caption "STEVEDORES, ALBERT DOCK 1945" was written, alongside a message from my old friend: "Oh my God!"

My dream became reality. We left, Ursula and I, and we came to Liverpool. These were the most beautiful days of my life. The virtual presence of the Beatles was a concrete suggestion. We were walking around Matthew Street, the street of clubs and the pubs. The narrow alleys, brick buildings and all those colours seemed to recreate a picture lost over time and would remain indelible. Even the beer had a different taste. We stopped briefly, for prudence, at the Albert Dock, the port area. I was electrocuted and I could have died in serenity. We stayed to stare at the river Mersey thinking about John's melancholy when he saw passing ferries in New York City because they reminded him of his hometown.

From that moment, Ursula became my bride. I idealized her and she was a perfect being. John Lee D had returned to being Duilio and there was no room for losers. All this happened only in my head and space was restricted also to me.

Ursula gave Infame a wink. I felt a serious resentment when they started hanging out together. Infame invited her to a couple of dinners for her

father's issues and she took advantage of that moment. There's always lots of pussy, which accompanies politicians.

I developed a personal grudge for the radical chic and the iridescent world of alternative. Yes, they weren't proletarians, they weren't workers and they weren't unemployed, they weren't working, they were snobbish and also rich kids. They tried to appear underground but were effectively moderate.

When gods descend the steps of paradise to sit together with others, they did it to divide their own slopes. Until the moment when Ursula began to hang out with Infame, I adored her because I thought she was disgusted by the political banquets. These were those flattery attitudes called public relations. Ursula was a radical in pussy, but bourgeois with her ass and it would remain a constant and secret wound.

At Scala Reale Bar, in front of a daily political chronicle that deals with the last wage increase of the MPs, I listen to Bestemmia blasphemes in the company of the elderly.

Mr Vittorio says: - Look here: mobile phones, domestic airline tickets, trains, theatre, cinema and stadium tickets. Life insurance, pensions, liquidations, offices and staff, cars. The restaurant ticket...

- Eh - said sarcastic Mr Orlando - well we have tickets...

- Yes - resumes Vittorio - Hospital ticket - and downed a heavy laughter mixed with cough.

The elders wasted time at bar with cards or checkers. They usually met at the post office or the market, or they taken care of carrying the grandchildren to school. They left church with the hope their life expectancy would be lengthened, despite everything.

Many of them lived the city hastily when they worked. These neighbourhoods didn't belong to them, so they continued to feel like strangers because they came from towns: it's from where they started off with their suitcase and it was at that place where they continued to think even when they were absorbed or absent, and they continued to look for why they were here now and here again; They were going to tell of the place of birth to strangers, of towns no one knew and of whom nobody cared, towns were not even more like those they left.

We accompanied Mr Vittorio from the vineyard. He was a skilled worker, but he had an accident at work, which caused him to amputate his arm. The

arrival of the cold gave him more pain on the hooped arm, but Vittorio didn't lose his humour. We brought him a demijohn for him up the elevator, and he pretended not to worry we didn't steal it.

Let's go back to the bar to see who's here. It's raining and it's hot. We sweated for the humidity we turn doped of anti-inflammatory.

When you go for a walk and raise your eyes to these palaces, these huge suburban boxes - of what once was peripheral - you only discovered deteriorated terraces. Each one has its parabolic and air-conditioning drawer. In the cities, to live you needed to have a dehumidifier at home; otherwise you wouldn't sleep at night. Survival is expensive.

Archimede joined us and we sat at an outdoor table. Scala Reale wasn't a bar like the others. It was a space managed by the constituency: whoever gets up first and has time and necessity, holds it for a week. Often, almost always, is a self-service that works. For us, it became some kind of office. Apart from Bestemmia who works half a day at his uncle's restaurant, starting his turn before ten o'clock in the morning and ending never more than two o'clock in the afternoon, we all used it for work matters.

Archimede put his computer skills at the disposal of those who paid him better. Whoever seeks him, knew he could leave a notice at the bar and Archimede, after an evaluation, will contact him.

Cobra is an abusive driver, has a private client which he accompanies when there is need, without questioning problems and without asking too many questions about what and who: sometimes this job can be dangerous. If there is a lousy face at the bar, this one definitely contacts Cobra for a job. The club ground of Taciturno is on the moderate leaflets, he likes to walk but he doesn't rely on the advertising companies, and the shopkeepers of the area usually drops flyers at the bar regarding offers or new openings, while Taciturno goes around forging other mailboxes.

About me, I teach you to stand on stage. I'm not a common music teacher. I also do private guitar lessons but to diversify, I have broadened the relevance and I conduct the make-show courses, as I also advice and develop the faculties of a live artist. Each of us, in short, has got his own niche and doesn't bang too much in life.

A police car stops. An agent approached our table and asked us if we knew a certain Cobra. We looked from behind the sunglasses to prepare the most

convenient answer when the cop gets obsessed over and tells: - Hey, what do you have in those bags?

The guard beckons one of our colleagues left in the car to get off.

- Really - Archimede says - we know Cobra.
- Yes - I add - I'll see you sometime...
- Ah! Well, well, well - says the big one.
- But why? - Asked Bestemmia - what happened?
- Your friend fell with on a bike behind a bush. He was very drunk. Two passers-by noticed him and informed us. We went to the place. When he saw us he started screaming at the two passers-by, claiming they had thrown him out of the way with their car.
- Well - I say - maybe the two passers-by really threw him off the road and after being afraid, they informed you...
- The two passers-by are eleven-year-old kids and they don't have a driving license!
- Anyway, what does this have to do with? – Asked Bestemmia.
- Go to the local station and pick up your friend...

So we go to get Cobra. We see him getting out of the central clairvoyant. Let's go back to the Scala Reale Bar and make him a coffee.

- Ah... my head - he complains.

Yes, his head: His skull was heavy due to the helmet covered with stickers. We helped him get rid of it, Cobra had his mouth kneaded and mumbles rambling words. However, you find truth from being drunk.

- In short – Bestemmia asks him – do you know what you've done?
- You're a bunch of jerks - Cobra says.
- And why? – Asks Bestemmia.
- He was right - says Cobra, pointing at me.
- For what purpose? – Asks Bestemmia.
- I saw the TV. A conference was scheduled yesterday behind Piazza Navona and Infame was invited. So I went, I tried to get in but they kicked me out.

- What would you have wanted to do?
- I don't know. I was ready to split the face to that Pharisee.
- You have to stop with these jerky initiatives – scolds Bestemmia. – What did you want to achieve?
- At least I did something.
- Did they recognize you? Did he see you?
- They just made me exit... better... I didn't really get in.

At the arrival of Taciturno, I was exposed in an indictment on the relevance of a vengeful plan. Passively looking at the face of Mr Franzoni on TV and listening to his speeches, made my anger rise, so I had the idea of an action to attack the image of Infame. I spoke to Archimede and he thought if we could never get our money back, we could avenge using Internet but we couldn't imagine getting any concrete result. Bestemmia and Taciturno were surprised as they listened to Archimede's theories about the feasibility of the thing.

- It would be necessary - explains Archimede - to use an anonymous proxy server, i.e a software placed between the PC - the client - and a server - a data centre to which the PC connects-transmitting the requests of one and the answers of the other. In practice a means. The data centre (server) sees the address of the intermediary (proxy) but not that of the computer (client). Do you understand?
- No – answers Taciturno.
- Well – Archimede continues – the process is complex because the server is a server farm, that is, a series of servers placed in one place to manage its centrality. They are typically made in environments protected from unauthorized access. I'll think about it.
- What language are you talking about? – Bestemmia is sarcastic. He and Taciturno look each other like sceptics but they know well Archimede is much more than a computer expert: he is also and especially the only hacker we know.

What looked like a project which was meant to be a dalliance, had become a kind of criminal plan. Archimede is able to materialize any vague idea.

- However – pontificates Taciturno – here we need information, something concrete. We have nothing. What do we do?
- He's right – Bestemmia supports him.
- Oh, you two have enthusiasm to sell – I say, upset.
- No – Taciturno says – you're the one who threw yourself off the net. As always.
- Santillana – Archimede intervenes – we have little information. You have to get busy and find information or at least get something to use. Nobody goes anywhere in this way.
- Yes – I admit – you have to go around the neighbourhood and contact some people. Someone you remember who has had to deal with him.
- I have an idea - says Cobra.
- That is? – Asks Archimede.
- Brando – he answers.
- Brando? – Asks Archimede.
- Yes, Brando, maybe they still have a rapport.
- Well, yes, Brando! – I say. – It's right, he made us known him and we don't know of other people who could attend it yet and, above all, who are willing to speak with us.
- What would you like to do? – Asks Bestemmia.
- Right – says Taciturno – you won't want to involve him. Brando was the chattiest within the neighbourhood!
- Exactly – says Cobra – we have to use this feature.
- And call it a feature - laughs Bestemmia.
- Well – I conclude – someone must call him saying that so much time has passed from our last talk, and that just the other day we were talking about the old days... the usual things, of course.
- Ok – says Archimede – but without be straight, I recommend. Let's make sure it's repatriation.
- I mean, like a dinner - I say.
- Yes – Archimede says – and I recommend: to drink! Without exaggerating, of course. Must be loosening up.
- I'll on it! - Says Cobra.
- No, you don't – Bestemmia laughs.
- Don't you trust in me? – Asks Cobra.
- No! - Answers Bestemmia.
- Go to hell! - Greeting Cobra while raising his middle finger.

CHAPTER 5

I wake up in the middle of the morning. The night was agitated because the students upstairs were tearing each other apart up till two o'clock because of housework shifts.

The rain brought down the temperature and air pollution but it didn't lower the level of my mother's sarcasm. She is standing in front of my room.

- Does the master like coffee?

I shave myself and I go off. On the pedestrian strips covered with yellowish leaves, dozens of pigeons are there to peck on the fronds. The mood improves, even if it's cold because rain also sweeps away moisture.

It's late winter, at the corners of the streets, one could see smoke from the roasters' stove of the chestnut sellers. It's going to be Christmas very soon and the sidewalks are the abusive marketplaces of immigrants. In front of the shops of Via Tuscolana along a bumpy route of rugs and blankets, hawkers exhibited their goods. They are ready to hide their counterfeit merchandise in a heartbeat once they heard the arrival of the city police; then the swift ones move with duffel bags on the traffic island to observe the situation.

The shopkeepers are exasperated by their presence and applauds the advent of the guards as the hawkers curses this axe which makes them sweat continuously, as much as the cold makes them beat their teeth and the smog poses on their curly hair.

It jars with Christmas. In the daily dispute between hawkers and merchants, guard's acts as the arbitrators but despite the law, it's complicated to define

who is the victim and who is the executioner. Their promised land is this sidewalk.

Bangladeshi boys inhabit the fifth floor in our building. Monir is the most cordial and we call him Er Cipolla because when it's his turn, he always cooks onion soup, which stomped the stairs. On the night of Christmas Eve, Monir rings at the door of the neighbour and at the one of the tenant downstairs and in complicated Italian, he apologized for the confusion generated during the year, leaving a box of Panettone alongside a bottle.

I walk in front of an unattended parking lot. Braccetto the local addict, is trying to make ends meet as a car guard.

- Do you have any shrapnel?
- Wait till I look... here it's.
- Thanks... this morning I needed them...
- Yes I know...
- No, here the guards stopped me.
- They're going, huh?
- The Minutes have already made me a statement alongside the fine. They took away everything.
- How much did they take from you?
- All! But don't you understand?
- Can I ask you a question? - I ask.
- A question?
- Yes, only one - I insist.
- But what do you want, oh!
- Do you still remember Honourable Franzoni a few years ago?
- The Honourable... Who?
- Yes, you remember the television, a phone call...
- But I do not remember anything, oh!
- All right, don't do anything, good day.
- But where are you going? Give me some shrapnel...
- Again? I have no more...
- Give me a tenner, right? Maybe so I can remember better...
- Here is the tenner. Now?
- Now what?
- Do you remember the Honourable or not?

They call him Braccetto because he lacked an arm. He sleeps in an abandoned utility car and smells so much. His walk is shaky and his end point has almost come to fruition. Braccetto is HIV-positive. Some nights, when it's cold and raining, Don Ottavio opened the car door to make sure he's still breathing and bring him a pair of blankets. In the morning He gets up, drinks from a can and stays in the parking lot to raise coins. The shit continues to drop in his pants.

He tells me about a few years ago when it was the period of the electoral elections. They invited him to a television broadcast. He went there. A skinny fellow who presented the broadcast on a private TV welcomed him.

Braccetto was good. They asked him about his childhood, his neighbourhood, about the cursed form of diabetes that had taken his arm away from him. Then, the question about when he made his first hole and why and how and if the amputation had been the cause of the first overdose.

After advertising, Mr Franzoni phoned - he, Infame - who praised the showman, presented his social point of view and pointed to some of the historic details of the neighbourhood. He calmed down Braccetto - *his friend Braccetto*, he said - giving him a phone number and some hope. Cheers, greetings and compliments for the broadcast exploded.

That's all Braccetto can tell me now. Unfortunately it's not enough.

Sitting at Scala Reale Bar, we talk about the division of tasks. Bestemmia and Taciturno are nervous. Involvement in Infame's operation scares them beyond any prediction. None of them imagine my motivation is due to memories related to Ursula. It's undeniable some women never leave.

- Guys, I have to do about an hour and a half - I say.

- Where are you going? - Asks Taciturno.

- I have a lesson with a girl who plays in a female punk band.

- Oh, when did you start again? - Asks Bestemmia.

- I never stopped. There are times when you work and others when you are not working.

- I prefer the seconds - says Taciturno.

- It depends on the job - replies Bestemmia. - If you like what you do - he continues - then there is nothing wrong with working.

I greet them and I go, sure to find them in the same place in a couple of hours. I'm headed to a box in Cinecittà area. I'm coming in and so I send a message for someone to come and pick me up. A girl with a piercing nose and short hair dyed green comes by.

- Are you Emilio? – She asks.
- Yes, Hello!
- Hi, I'm Pat of The Cicale. Come on, I'll introduce you to the others.

We descend down the slopes leading to the car garage of an apartment building. We run through the tunnels and then she knocks at a damper. In front of me there are three girls of about the age of sixteen, with big boobs and shaved hair, brooches and piercings. The Cicale, I suppose.

- Hi, I'm Emilio, girls.
- Hello – they answer in a chorus.
- Good. Tell me what you need.
- We really don't know yet - Pat says. She's the one who came to pick me up. - We wanted you to listen to us first, and tell us what you think of us.
- All right.

Pat is singer and a guitarist. Nat is a solo guitarist. Val is a bassist and singer, and Don is a drummer.

- I suppose these diminutions are related to your names.
- Yes, but for us, they are not diminutives, they are art names. I am Natalia. She is Patrizia. They are Valeria and Donatella.

A wild fantasy, I'm thinking to myself.

- Okay. What music do you do?
- Well, as I explained to you in the message - says Pat, who obviously is also the leader of the group - we play punk music.
- I see. And why are you called The Cicale?
- For Heather Parisi - says Natalia.
- The Parisi?

- Yeah - Don, the drummer, says - we like the song.
- Okay, what fuck does Parisi with punk music? – I reply irritated. - And then – I continue - how old are you?
- Sixteen and a half - says Pat - almost seventeen.
- Seventeen: What about the Parisi that has to do with you?
- My mother like her... - she says.
- Okay, girls, listen: you're telling me you play punk music, but before I begin, I've seen there are elements in excess or better, out of context.
- That is: explain better - Nat says.
- The Parisi, your Cicale, your Mom... girls, punk is another thing!
- We can say we don't play punk music - says Pat.
- Yes, but this has to do with this... - I reply disconsolate.
- Well, at least can you listen before you judge it? - She says.
- Sure. Let me hear something.
- Let's make our own version of *Cicale Cicale*.
- Oh... - I sigh.

They start. I Listening. I'm Reluctant. Displeased. They're going at it. They play. They know what they're doing. They have listened to music. I'm surprised and I'm not saying anything. I ask them to let me listen to other songs. They approach with *La Notte Vola* of Lorella Cuccarini. And I'm still surprised. It's punk. That is, a despicable punk, but The Cicale is there. They overturn the songs, restructure them, and distort them. They keep the refrain but the laps were hard, rough and metallic. They revisited in their own way all those TV soundtracks of Saturday. I like them, even if the punk was another thing. At the end of their performance, they await my judgment like anxious schoolchildren. I get up and applaud them convincingly. They get excited.

- If you want, I can give you a hand.
- Of course we want, Emy - Don says.
- But at a pact, don't call me Emy, please. Call me Emilio, Santini or Santillana, if you like, but don't use nicknames, okay?
- All right, Emilio, sorry - Don says.
- Emilio, but what did you say? - Pat asks.
- What? - I ask.
- Are you Emilio Santini also called Santillana?

- Yes. Have we met you before?
- But you... you're the Fax guitarist, maybe?
- I was the Fax guitarist. Yes, it's me.
- No, but this is a magnificent! That is, you are a myth to my mother!
- You said your mother who listened to Cicale Cicale.
- No, she just liked the song, but she has all your CDs. That is, you are a myth. He - Pat is pointing to the other three Cicale - played in those CDs I did listen to a couple of months ago.
- Big, fuck, big, big, big! - They respond in a chorus.
- All right, I'm going. Say Goodbye to your mother – I say, winking at Pat - maybe next time you'll introduce me to her, okay?

I'm out and I'm in the street. I walk and I feel light, my heart laughs, the wrinkles disappear. I'm back at the bar where my friends are waiting for me. Sometimes life is very simple. It would be nice to compliment it a bit.

CHAPTER 6

Scala Reale Bar, resident's meeting. Agenda: Hiring of a new doorman, due to negligence on the part of the cleaning company.

Brando joined the assembly. We thought we'd invite him tonight to hide our real intentions. And then, our resident's meetings had always been a fun. At the end when everyone was back home we would lower the bar shutters for a spaghetti.

We greet Brando in a warm and treacherous manner, looking like a pack of hyenas ready for attack. He works for a travel company and therefore is almost always around as a guide. Brando, above all, is the one who introduced Infame to our group.

The administrator opens the meeting. The accountant of the fourth floor, a solemn counsellor, echoes him by repeating the concepts and gestures as if he's in front of the deaf and dumb. When the administrator explains *after the umpteenth attempt brought forth by the tenant Pacchia against the cleaning company, he decided to hire a doorman, the accountant indicated to the tenant Pacchia in a not very elegant manner*. A half-fight starts. Pacchia threaten with complaints, and the administrator begs the accountant of the fourth floor not to gesticulate and that master Caterino should manage to appease Pacchia. The Monir gang smile.

The administrator starts again: - *If there were no objections, I would go ahead with voting to approve the hiring of a new doorman.*

The indefatigable accountant, such as a television studio assistant, mentions on the residents to raise their hands for the vote. Someone in the same group with Monir interprets the gesture at the moment of applause. The rest of us all agree, pouring out claps of which no one understands the reason why.

Brando looks relaxed and amused: - You know, I've fallen in love.

Brando is one of those who often fall in love. This time, it's the turn of an American woman from New Jersey with which he engages into a chat with. He doesn't know her, but he only imagines about her. He wants to move to the city.

He's demoralized because his PC today didn't recognize the modem and he couldn't connect, so asks to Archimede if he could go to his home to download the drivers. Archimede replies it was late now, and he's already asleep.

Brando begins to complain, arguing when one needs friends they don't help him. Taciturno explains it's precisely because we're trying to help him, we don't help him finding the drivers for the modem: to prevent him from connecting with the American woman he loves and not to commit yet another love craps.

Brando assures it's not a suggestion: this time he's really in love. Bestemmia reminds him of all the times he believed he was and was not. He gives him reasons about the past, but adds that now it's different.

The administrator, meanwhile, tries to understand the orientation of the residents. Everybody's chatting with his or her neighbours. Some are laughing. Some read the newspapers. Others are yawning.

In that confusion the accountant slams his punches on the table to draw attention. They resume the yelling and discussions and because of time, the feeling of exasperation and fatigue, everyone only manages to curse the person next to the hallway. The assembly's suspended. Or postponed, both! Either way, it's bedtime for everyone.

Amongst the rush of tenants returning to the door, the most peaceful were Mr Vittorio and Mr Orlando.

First tells to the other: - Another beer?

- Ok - approves the second. So they sit down and Taciturno prepares two small beers.

Bestemmia slices ham for appetizer, Taciturno cuts the melon. Cobra, a skilled cook, checks whether Bestemmia had taken all that was needed for the vegetable carbonara. In fact, it would not be vegetable only but also a more caloric one because he decided try to sprinkles with truffles instead of

cheek lard; as a precaution, Cobra also prepares the classic recipe: - Eight kg of maccheroni will be enough? - He asks.

We look at him unflappably by making a mark of assent. I commit myself to preparing the beers.

Brando, meanwhile, snaps at Archimede and insists for the drivers. Archimede replies saying he's tired and it's late, so he requests to enjoy the evening in peace.

Vittorio and Orlando both finish beers and greet by declining the dinner invitation and then go away.

Now we are alone.

Brando takes us hostage and lets off steam. About lashing out, Taciturno tries to recall when Bestemmia took refuge at the old Simca abandoned at the parking lot to read a porn movie called Filippozzi. Bestemmia looks at him badly but the action of Taciturno has an effect because Brando chuckles and asks *how many times we went to masturbate in that old car?*

Memories emerge again. Football matches, jokes, early concerts and disco raids.

Brando pulls a photo out of his wallet which show us all during a party. It's difficult to accept that image because it's dated back to more than twenty years ago. However, it means Brando still wants to do so in his own way.

It's ready! - Says Cobra. He comes to the table with two frying pans on which he had slowly refocused the two versions of the carbonara. We start to eat and the silence falls, interrupted by the first oesophageal absences, which, by hand, become an endless challenge of vulgar masculine fun. We are still in the era of free fart, a tradition that resists the government crises and successions of the republics.

We continue to stick out our forks into the two pans and indisputably, these are the most appetizing snacks because the warm tortiglioni had a better taste.

We looked devastated by the meal, commenting like hypocrites now, at our age, not if but a little more so.

Cobra stares at me and asks: - Should I put the sausages on the plate?

- In the meantime, light it, wait about half an hour – I answer.

Archimede now enters the scene. He asks to clear the table to set up the computer because he wants Brando to start at the journalist's forum.

Everyone explain the sense of the site, the Championship and the Golden Register to Brando. We make him visit the personal pages of the journalists. Cobra goes to put the sausages on the plate, which now are boiling, while we enter the forum and give Brando details on the functions. His friend is so enthusiastic who prays Archimede to sign up him.

Cobra asks how many sausages we want and Archimede says him to load the plate. Then he moves with Brando on a smaller table to allow reuniting the big table. He actually downloads the videos in which Mr Franzoni speaks. He wants Brando to open the discourse and possibly give some revelation.

Cobra support the sausages grill to the table and we eat again.

- Aren't you coming? Brando, the sausages get cold! - Says Cobra.

- Wait a moment! – He sits at the other table – they are talking about Andrea (Mr Franzoni).

Brando lingers despite our recalls. It's *gloomy* – Taciturno says in a low voice.

- But whom cares come and eat... - screams Bestemmia.

Brando joins to us. Tasting sausages.

- Why do you care so much about Andrea? - I ask.

- Guys – he says – what a career he has had! Among us he's the one who has done better.

- Well – says Archimede – he's been busy; he's worked, and paid back, right?

- Yes – I say – it's also right.

- Brando – Taciturno yells – Are you jealous, huh?

- No, what are you saying? - He replies.

Brando looks sad. *What wrong, Brando?* – Asks Cobra.

- No, it's... - He pauses.

- What? – Archimede asks.

We can see you're getting all emotional.

- He was my best friend... - he says.
- He was a good friend of all - replies Bestemmia.
- Yes, but your wife didn't run away with him! - Adds Brando.
- What? – I ask.
- Lavinia...
- Lavinia? The young girl he was dating at the time?
- We got married five years later.
- Are you married to Lavinia?
- I was married.
- Well – Cobra bring back the memories – frankly, Brando, Lavinia has never been yours. She's always been infatuated with Andrea. We all knew it.
- I knew that too, but I thought at that time...
- Fuck - I say - but have you ever been through this phase?
- No, I always liked it.
- We didn't know anything. You've disappeared for a while, why didn't you tell us anything? - I ask.
- I was ashamed. I thought you knew and you were mocking me... I continued to work and travel, thinking this would be of help...
- And did it help? - I ask.
- Yes, in the end, yes. Staying away always helps.
- Eat a sausage – Bestemmia urges him.
- Take another sips - echoes Taciturno.

He starts chewing again, weeping. We look at each other. Silence falls. It's a defeat; we collect revelations, which don't help us.

Brando, meanwhile, has lashed out and asks for another sausage. The hunger is over. He says: - Chew on guys, anyway I'm fine tonight. Thanks for the invitation. We should see us more often.

He sipped coffee, then grappa, and in the meantime he makes him prepare a floppy disk with all the possible photos of Manuela Moreno of tg2. He steals a bottle and comes back to his home happy, claiming friendship is the most important thing in life. So in other words, Brando is leaving.

We're alone.

- And now? - Asks Taciturno.

- We must find the elements - Archimede says - otherwise it's going to be a sterile thing. We would only make a satire and this is not our intention. Who is it for?

The evening ended with an infiltrating depression.

CHAPTER 7

Boring afternoon. The others are working and I'm alone. I go out to stretch my legs. Along the avenue, I see a girl who is walking her dog. The animal wanders around and while trying to play with me it escapes from the grip of the girl. The driver holds his brakes. The girl promptly picks up the leash and scolds the beast for the scare.

Many neighbourhood corners are populated by cats waiting for the cat ladies at the usual hole of a network that fences an uncultivated garden. Boxes, cans and leftovers of food are there and they are licking their whiskers and flirt with the old ladies who assist them. They don't want to play; they sleep over the hoods of cars. If you spend some time scratching and caressing them, when you get back they'll recognize you.

The old ladies are spending half a day. Many don't bring the remnants of meals; they are under the sun cooking for them. They talk to him. The Cats look impatient, hearing the sound of their words; the poor beasts touch women's feet. They are happy to return the following day.

While walking I get a message from Taciturno: there's a weird guy looking for you here at the bar.

I go to the Scala Reale Bar. I greet Taciturno. There's Braccetto, the drug addict, sitting at the table.

- Hi, Braccè. Are you looking for me?
- Yes. I remembered one thing.
- That it?
- Actually, I didn't remember. I just wanted to reflect.

- Think about what?
- If it was just you. So I took time.
- I see.
- Why did you ask me about Franzoni? – Asks Braccetto.
- Political issues...
- Oh, well...
- Yes, he is now an important person and you know that politics is a nasty cat to play with; soon there will be new elections... In short, we wanted to rebuild his ascent...
- You wanted... but who are you?
- I work for a political information site. Do you understand?
- Ah, are you a journalist?
- Exactly. A journalist, yes...
- Ah, that's the reason for all those questions.
- It's our job, my dear...
- Well...
- So what?
- Dude, do you have 10 bucks?
- Braccetto what the fuck!
- Well, if you're a journalist, I'm a source. So...
- And being the source is your job?
- In my opinion, you are a journalist at least as I am a source but I don't give a fuck about what you do and why.
- Ok! Here is your 10 bucks. Now, speak.

I take him to a secluded corner of the bar, and then go to the bathroom, open the cell phone and prepare the recorder. I come back.

- I don't know if it's important...
- No, you made it important; otherwise you give me back the money!
- Well, we sometimes met each other at usual places, telling each other good morning and good night, like people who are familiar with each other, but always in a hurry. Besides when you're a drug dealer, you pay, grab it and run off.
- What did you say?
- What?
- A drug dealer...

- Yes. We met from Trottole.
- Trottole?
- He is the king. Now he owns the villa down towards the sea.
- So you met each other by the Trottole. Are you saying the Honourable was mainlining? Braccetto, don't tell me shit; otherwise you'll give me up the 10 bucks!
- Who's saying shit? The guy is just inhaled.
- What the fuck is you saying? Trottole worked with heroine...
- Trottole even has the best powder in Rome, but it's been reserved for customers of that level...
- But a thing is not clear to me?
- What?
- Did Franzoni come over here in the midst of all of you drug addicts from the suburbs?
- Dude, I don't say it was happening here.
- Where then?
- The spaces downtown, man... you don't know who Trottole is, his tours and friendships, what he became... today he manages many exclusive clubs.
- And you?
- What?
- How can you be sure of what you're saying?
- I was a gofer for Trottole. Then, the disease got worse; no one had someone like me within his ranks.
- And you never thought about blackmailing them, telling about them...
- Dude, do you see me? I would have been manure before it was night because, I have always avoided the uniforms since everyone holds their own destiny.
- So maybe they still see... - I ask.
- I don't know.
- Where's Trottole's villa?
- Dude, these calls for another 50 bucks.
- Holy shit, Braccetto, what the fuck!
- Well, in my conditions, I'll be live for a month with that, if I get there...
- Here it's. So where's the place?
- Down bellow, on Colombo street, before Ostia. I can't tell you more.
- I've finished my money... good day, Braccè, hold on.

Braccetto comes out. I look at Taciturno. We listen to the recording. *We are there, finally!* – Taciturno pulls me and says: *Call the others for an urgent meeting.* As soon as they arrive all the registration began without any explanations.

- What do you think? – I ask at the end.
- Well, it's not concrete evidence – says Archimede - but... that's what we needed.
- We need to develop this - says Cobra.
- And how? – Asks Bestemmia.
- We'll have to find Trottola's villa. And hope something happens – Cobra says.
- Yes, but what? – Asks Bestemmia.
- Well, that can't be said – Archimede says.
- We will need a lot of patience. And luck – Archimede replies.
- It will also be dangerous – says Taciturno.
- Yes – Archimede says – it will also be dangerous. But it's the only trace we have, as long as we're still willing to continue this madness.
- I think we can try – I say.

Archimede and Cobra agree. Bestemmia and Taciturno agree. I'm going to get the pizzas for a frugal meal.

Archimede says it's time to put our website on line. He opens the computer and went to work.

Pirates, we are the buccaneers of the web. It looks like magic: the pages fly, brought by a theoretical wind to a folder with the abbreviation HPCJ. That folder is our site.

Everything is going to be okay in about half an hour. It was easier than expected.

- We're *on line* – Archimede says. We scream with joy and compliment each other. Now no one can give up. We are all dancing and dancing. Dancing together is preferable to dancing alone.
- Let's make a toast to the health of the anonymous people - screams Taciturno. The chalices rise, intertwine and blasphemies of Bestemmia touches the gates of paradise.

It was a heavy day. The surge that took this story suggests me I had to distract myself. After all, I also have my business to carry on. I decide to go and hear The Cicale play in a pub. I greet my friends and I go, accompanied by their sarcasm about my alleged artistic interest in the female band.

I'm coming in. I'm just in time. Usually I frequent these pubs where the music that is consumed is open and free. I sit at a table. In a niche I see Don, the drummer, arranging her instrument. Val tests the bass licks.

Far away from my tribulations, I drown in a beer. Pat comes to greet me.

- Hello Santillana, thank you for coming.

- Thanks to you for the invitation.

- Maybe after it reaches my mother, I'm going to introduce you.

- Oh, very gladly.

- I'm going now. We start in a minute.

They begin with a couple of blues, both by Lee Hooker. These minors still surprise me, light me up and when I get moved, I have to drink. I order another beer and also chips.

The Cicale continue. They have the mastery and knowledge. Then they pause. Pat comes back to my table and I'm completely floored.

- Emilio, this is my mother - Pat says.

Mumbling pleasantries to hide embarrassment. Pat reaches out to her friends and we are alone. She sits down. *Do you remember me?*

She smiles cordially. It's Ursula, the mother.

I'd pretend and say I don't remember. I would like to be as dispassionate as possible to try it out. But I can't. I feel insecure and stuttering. I don't know which way destiny takes her to tonight but Ursula helps me understand.

- I hope I have not been unsuitable. I know you've been around and that I could contact you at the bar. And you're a good person, Emilio. I wanted you to listen to Patrizia and her friends for an objective opinion. They have great enthusiasm, but they are little girls.

- They're really good - I say, pretending casually.

- Oh God, I seem a mother anxious for her daughter's future!

- No problem - I am filled with a confused grudge.

- And have you children?
- I just have the guitar - I say, changing position on the chair.
- Is something wrong, Emilio?
- It's okay. Just a bit of back pain.

Meanwhile, The Cicale played *Tunnel of Love* by Dire Straits in an impeccable way and this distract me because I can't look at Ursula in her eyes, while she manages well to touch my heart.

- Do you remember this song? That pub where there's one band that played cover songs and you are moved. We are in Liverpool.
- Liverpool? Ah, Liverpool... to tell the truth, it's been so long...
- I remember everything, Emilio. What a marvellous days!

She says it, as the rhythm of the song softens, and Pat's voice whispering the verses of Knopfler's turned to a girl: *beautiful like that moon park when we are kids...*

Nat, the solo guitarist, makes his solo of the song and I have to cry. I tell Ursula I'm going to the bathroom. I wash my face. It's wrong to drink when you feel emotional, but Ursula isn't expected. When you try to live quietly, life brings you complicated emotional obstacles. It's as if each time you overcome yourself. And it's much easier to get out of a war than through a sentimental tunnel.

We back to the table. Ursula is talking to her daughter's dear friends. I greet and I go home before the last song of The Cicale so as to give me a professional tone, reassuring Ursula about my commitment with the group. I tell her I have a photographic service in mind and would like to consider the possibilities for a CD.

I hug her. We take another appointment for the next occasion. I go home. I've always loved goodbyes. There is some dignity found in getting up without turning back because there's a voice that whispers you that you have made it, even if you are staggering.

Walking down the street I think of John and all the people who for cause or merit I have met. It's true that, as he sang, *I loved them all in my life*.

CHAPTER 8

In the streets of Tuscolana with the holidays approaching, a jazz band playing Christmas swings. There's one with a drum, one with a trombone, one with a banjo, one blowing the alto sax and another with the tenor sax, all dressed as Santa Claus. The sounds echoes through the streets and people overlooks the beautiful balconies holding kids who throw coins wrapped in tissue paper and banknotes in barrettes.

The unscheduled programme surprises people. A spontaneous applause comes from the terraces when one recognizes a piece adapted with the cheerful rhythm of the banjo and brass playing in the background. The players are going for the next street, leaving cheerful sound full of Christmas colours.

Meeting at the Scala Reale Bar. This week Taciturno got the management. In practice it's a collective conduction.

Archimede informs us there had been a failure to provide services to Mr Franzoni. He argues there's probably already a complaint against some unknowns and if it's not yet there, it will be.

Cobra answers to the mail, and in his honour there are constant contacts with a couple of social centres, one of the *rebel youths*, and group sites of ultras throughout the country.

Taciturno and Bestemmia are responsible for following up the discussion forum. They are the moderators. I manage the blog and satire.

It's time to develop Braccetto's information. We will have to do some stalking, surveillance, and need someone who Infame has never seen or known in the past. There's no time to waste, one has to wait at the location and wait.

- We need your friend, the photographer - Archimedes tells me.

It was a New Year's Eve. I held a dauntingly light Mexican beer and I was watching people dance.

A blonde with a bob danced with a little boy. He was a trunk that could only move if he fell, she kept the rhythm of the steps at the gym. Both deserved to die and they didn't give fuck about the music.

The DJ played *Spirits in the material world* and it was not nice to degrade the Police dance like that.

At the stroke of midnight, everyone was on the run. The only ones left there's a guy and I who alternated shots with alcohol regurgitation.

- Don't you dance? - I asked.

- No, I don't like it.

- So why are you here?

- To drink and to look at others – he said.

- Oh, I understand.

- He must be a Secretary - he continued.

- Huh?

- The girl you're looking at must be a secretary... - he repeated.

- Yes, yes. You're right. She must be a secretary...

We kept exchanging glances of complicity when someone was so clumsy to deserve our attention. Neither of us knew a better place to go to die on the last day of the year.

- Where have I seen you before? – He asked.

- I don't know – I replied.

- I'm a rock photographer... - he murmured from inside the glass.

-Ah... - I answered – I play rock and blues, you know...

- Oh, that's it. You're the one with the Fax.

- Yes, I'm the one of the Fax.

- Now I remember. You're good - he said.

- Thank you – I replied.

- Let's get a beer and hell with this New Year's Eve!

We went out. The guy was called Rigatone.

Rigatone arranged the equipment at the concerts and followed the order service, but also worked at a photographic studio and when he went to shows, he always tried to capture the musicians.

He happened to set up Mc Cartney's son's computer and was electrocuted by the nanny. Paul told him thank you shaking the hand with the right. Rigatone was telling us that those fingers have made history, but when I remind him that Macca is left-handed, he concludes that Oh! Well, it's the same thing.

Embracing Rigatone, following a vague concept linked to the transitive property, for me it's like embracing Lennon who embraced McCartney who handed over to Rigatone. It's the only contact I have with John.

Rigatone remembers the fight with the guitarist of *Simple Mind*, which spat because he never passed at Ostia Lido, the musician's friend. Rigatone swore by spitting in the fruit salad housed in the group's dressing room. Or of Madonna's driver who darted amongst the people waiting out of the building, almost touching them.

He evokes the gentleness and kindness of Gilmour, the man who walked a few centimetres from the ground to the choir. He recalls the mummified music of Mick and Keith, wrinkled for the intense life of a rolling stone. And still the strangeness of Prince and the tension in Michel Jackson's group.

What remains indelibly imprinted at Rigatone, are the unbroken and endless corridors in the basement of the halls, the Spartan or extra luxury dressing rooms, according to the needs and whims of the stars. The stars who took refuge in their rooms, away from the scenes of the stage, are absolutely human beings, closed between vices and virtues, spur, intuitions and easy to listen.

Rigatone lives in a house of forty square meters. The walls are covered with photos and posters. He maintains a revolving four-sided cabinet, with four hundred CDs. The other two thousand six hundred are in a tall walnut library of one meter and eighty.

Ours are the dialogues of presumptuous leaders, who are convinced to have seen all in the musical field.

- Rock – says Rigatone – it's a high-rank whore who charges well. So we settled for a blow-job from an old bitch.
- That's what happens with pirated music - I say.
- And then, to be clear - he continues - the latest fancy live music don't know how to do it. However, they're okay on the cover of these photos.
- No, not everyone. In fact, I wanted to talk to you about a group of girls.
- Why are you talking to me?
- I was thinking about a photo shoot.
- Bah, that sounds good. And who are you to them?
- It's a vague idea; I could be their manager or produce them.
- If you need, I still have contacts.
- Well. Besides, there's another question.
- You and your friends are completely crazy, you know?
- Rigatò, we need a hand...
- But, remember, you owe me a favour...
- What favour?
- In due time, when everything is finished...
- Ok. My proposal is this: you help us to frame the honourable and I'll let you in on the bargain.
- What business?
- The group of punk girls. We'll manage them as a company: half and half.
- What if the chicks break and can't make it?
- Why don't you come and hear them?

A phone call and we head to The Cicale headquarter.

We park and go down to the box. Pat, Nat, Val and Don are already there. I introduce Rigatone as a great veteran of rock events in Rome. The Cicale loosen up gradually and their friend falls perfectly in the part of the old uncle. There is a lesson on rock for some girls with a lot of quality.

- Rock hasn't changed things – Rigatone says – but I like to think it was a trend. The big stars today are multi-millionaires, in practice they are companies, but have summarized the thoughts and frustrations of girls and boys who until the middle of the past century waited for a nod to enter society.

Punk music shocked the *old-fashion-way* in Great Britain, and the poet Dylan sang of another America, the psychedelic with its excesses, incited to widen

the horizons of the Mind; The "Who" wanted to die before becoming old, concept unrelated to human factors; The sorrows of "Waters" linked to the war-related developments and how it became insensitive and of ice. The visions of Jim and the doors in America engaged in Vietnam, the disillusionment of the Stones compared to the role of stars acclaimed towards the contradictions of a world visited on tour.

Well, girls, I've lived all this inside my room listening from a new stereo from time to time I could afford a better one and then, at some point I saw them all, at least those who are still there, from behind the scenes of a stadium or a palace, but still in front of me.

It was all fascinating and amazing, when you see them in a few steps you think of nothing other than people like you, and that now, just as we are talking, exist and are doing something in the other part of the Earth, like us at the moment.

The fundamental thing is the message, always the message and this makes them, or makes what they have done, special because it has been listened to by millions of people all over the world.

In a nutshell, the common denominator of all these messages was the uncompromising NO to the war and to what devastates our society. Rock had tried to imagine a better world, perhaps using illicit means like drugs, challenging as long as he could. It was phenomenal propulsion for a new thought. The lives of millions of people would have been different without rock music. Without those illusions and even violent visions, our society would be stuck in the past century.

Even politicians, who decided our destiny, had experienced a rock myth in their adolescence. Too bad when they come to legislate, they forget about it. If there's a limit to music, it's not being able to climb the last ramp of stairs, those that lead to management or, to use a poetic term, the scale and the heaven's door. Rock dies not because there are no more musicians or myths to be framed, but because this new generation that had to change the world and who had been fed up with all those messages, once they cross the threshold of the buttonhole, they think all messages received are childish and without implementation plan, more or less like the generation before them, which had them classified.

In this way, Girls, to paraphrase Neruda, you die slowly.

The four Cicale listened in religious silence. They get up and hug him. If we were at the university, they would have carried him on their shoulder. But why does Rigatone not fall into politics?

At the end of this meeting, we improvise a jam session with the theme Police. I take a guitar and Rigatone takes photos. Everyone has his own instrument. Half an hour of improvisation, then we greet and go out.

- So, what do you think? - I ask.

- You are right. They have talent and head. I even liked the versions of the Cuccarini and the Parisi. These girls know how to do everything.

We go for dinner with some perspective in our pocket.

Days go by. Cobra now stays day and night at Via Garibaldi, along the alley, which leads from Trastevere to Gianicolo, where Mr Franzoni lives. It's a quiet area, in which you can see tourists and buses.

Sitting on the bike with sunglasses, Cobra looks like someone halfway between a shady guy and a cop. every hour he sends messages to Archimede, reporting the movements he thinks are strange. So far we have only pictures of Infame, who comes and goes the house for his commitments. These are conferences, public meetings and meetings at Palazzo Montecitorio.

The second stakeout is between the pine forests of Castel Fusano and the one of Castel Porziano, on the Via Colombo, a short distance from Ostia. It's the area called Infernetto. It's the place where Trottola live, according to the indications of Braccetto.

Rigatone also lives here for about a week. Between trees and cottage streets, he sleeps and eats in a car that changes every day with ours in the hope of not stirring suspicion. Armed with wide angled lens he rains down curses due to the boredom, which – claims Rigatone – killing more of mosquitoes in a pond. It's located on a hillock from where he could see the entrance and also a part of the interior of the villa.

After three days of surveillance in Inferno, we find out Braccetto's directions are correct: from Rigatone's shots, it turns out the person leaving the villa aboard an Alfa roadster is Trottola. If Infame passes here, he wouldn't escape.

Meanwhile, ten days had passed. During this time there's a moment of apprehension. It happened on the sixth day of applause. Three blue cars passed under Rigatone's lens, but at the villa's height they continued without stopping. False alarm.

Big shot. In Rome there is a radio we listen to continuously. It's Radio Rock. For some time it also broadcasted Italian rock on another frequency. Rigatone knows someone within the network and we can put Cicale on the playlist for the New Year's Eve, organized by the radio at the boat on the Tiber.

The period leading up to Christmas ended without barrels. Meanwhile, thanks to Cobra's footsteps, we have a culture of political commitments. And even on the photographer's work. For example, the telephoto lens magnifies your subject but narrows the field of view while the wide-angle does the opposite. Elementary for Rigatone but obscured for the rest of us. Taciturno and Bestemmia are depressed because they thought we would solve the operation within a shorter time.

- I'm not saying on the first day - Bestemmia replies, sitting at the bar - But at least after a week, we have evidence, fuck!

- That's what I'm saying, too - Taciturno says - if one is made of cocaine, he needs cocaine. When should he go pick it up?

Archimede doesn't even listen to them. He is convinced at most after the epiphany, something will happen. Fortunately, The Cicale distracts me and I couldn't go into paranoia for a single question: I'm work for two. The tension is high and could be cut with a knife. Christmas comes and passes without any gifts of fate.

CHAPTER 9

Rigatone and I chase The Cicale in their headquarters to prepare the New Year's show.

In the wake of the midnight lentils, each of us assemble at our friend's house as tradition dictated. With regards to our surveillance task, we decide to take a week of vacation.

In the days preceding the last of the year, the city was subject to rains and thunderstorms that raised the river's level. Passing over the Testaccio Bridge, I stop by the parking lot and stay on the bridge to make sure the water don't go over the embankments, since I'm concern about the ease of the boat.

The sky is wrapped in overlapping and violet clouds. Brown waters covered the pits and flooded the surrounding fields. The lanes beneath the wall are muddy. Around it, all the rivers are rising and widening.

On December 30 early in the morning, I'm in front of street number 30, above the drop through which you access the shore. In silence you can hear the bubbling sound of the river but it's so dark the boat couldn't be seen. The waters dropped like my worries and Rigatone's one. Each of us is getting ready to say goodbye to the year as he could. Yet we have not deal with Cobra.

As a boy he had always been a foolish splinter and it's complicated to place him at the centre of a collective project. Dismissing the deliveries, he doesn't follow the directions and doesn't take any breaks. He does the right thing. He convenes us with some utmost urgency for an extraordinary meeting at the Scala Reale Bar.

It's the evening of December 30th. The climate is mild here, the neighbourhood is torn asunder by test barrels for the next night and at dinner time and traders begin to lower their shutters.

Before the meeting I go to the box of The Cicale, to see how they are and whether they are excited.

Ursula tells me she will be present too. All this, however, don't strike me now because Cobra is taken over by anxiety and sends messages after every 15 minutes, telling me to hurry.

I greet hastily and this, perhaps, increase my fascination in front of women. I don't care. I'm in anguish and I try to hurry up. Arriving at the bar, my friends are all here. There is also Rigatone.

- You did! - Cobra scolded at me.

- I'm at the box - I apologize.

- How are the girls? - Rigatone asks.

- Excited - I reply.

- Well, well - he concludes.

- Have you finished? Can I talk? - Cobra screams.

- What happened? - Asks Bestemmia, while preparing some beer.

- Do you think it's time to drink? - Asks Cobra.

- It's always time to drink. But then, you're one to talk...

- Okay, listen to me: maybe we are arrived where we wanted - Cobra says.

- What? - Archimede asks.

- This morning I was at the Hotel near Villa Borghese. There was a trade union meeting where the Honourable was also invited. At the end of the convention, after the greetings, he was entertained with people who were asking him what he had been up to, during this New Year's Eve and he replied in like this: *nothing exceptional, I'm invited to the house of my old friend near Ostia, by the sea. At midnight we go out into the garden to see the fires... a simple party just to be happy.* Do you understand?

- Boom! Here's the best bang of New Year! - Bestemmia says.

- Let's hope he doesn't have so many friends out there! - Archimede says.

- What do you mean? - Asks Cobra.

- It's better not to claim victory. There's always the possibility of coincidence, like if he has other friends by the area - Archimede says.

I look at Rigatone and he looks back at me: - We didn't consider the unlikely option - I say.

- Skip New Year's Eve at the barge - he says.

After a quick analysis we realize maths is not an opinion: we are two, one for The Cicale project, which have to move forward as well as for the Infame operation and therefore, Rigatone will stand in front of Trottole's villa and I'll go to the boat. After all, would be enough some pictures which portrayed Mr Franzoni entering into Trottole's home and talking to him, so the question arises spontaneously: *what is an honourable's home like with a well-known convicted felon?*

In the evening we have light problems with the photos, but Rigatone is handling these issues. If fate will help us, we could hope to have a toast together for midnight.

Cobra will follow the Honourable's car from the exit of his house, to the Gianicolo, to the point of arrival hoping this corresponds to the same spot where Rigatone is located. Both will stay in touch; all of us, somehow, will be in touch with each other. It will be like being tuned to the same frequency.

Archimede talks to Rigatone: - What do you think you're using? - He asks.

- Wide angle and telephoto lens, both of them! - He answers.

- Do you think you can do it?

- You make him come, and then I'll think about it – Rigatone just goes ahead.

- Well, anyway, I'll come with you - Archimede says.

- To do what? - Asks him Bestemmia.

- Moral support, but above all, laptop, digital camera and scanner. Let's start with digital material to anticipate the events. Next we prepare the rest.

- We are also here - says Bestemmia. Taciturno nods: - I'm lending the SUV to my cousin. It has dark windows and is spacious.

- As soon as we get the photos, we come out swinging at the bell - Cobra exclaims. In fact we are all worried because none of us has predicted that events would have matured so suddenly.

At 6 pm on 31st December. It goes down that evening. The appointment with The Cicale is at the Trattoria Da Zio Pepito. There's also Ursula to accompany them and my first thought is if she is wearing red underwear. Let's keep chatting with the cold wind in the face so we don't get the part of the first to arrive. Another cigarette and we walk.

I'm nervous. I check often my cell phone. Ursula notices it, The Cicale too.

- Problems? - Asks Nat.

- Yes, issues with people.

- By the way, and your friend? - Ursula asks.

- It has a problem - I say - hopefully he can come for good wishes.

Everything is quiet. I'm waiting for news. We move and arrive at a road, which leads under the bridge. It's dark down there; we are down the river, worried about the attacks of wharf rats. After the downhill, we could finally get a glimpse of the boat: blue, white and shiny with phosphorescent decorations that made it look like a fairy-tale in the midst of so much filth and it seems to have to leave for an unreal journey.

The upper room is lit with red lights reflecting in the river waters and in the dark of the evening.

7 pm. Cobra's messages indicate the car of the honourable has left and from Porta Portese passes through via Marmorada, arrives at the Piramide Cestia and halts at Via Ostiense.

At the barge, in the meantime, in front of the ticket office, people are waiting to enter. Those who blow on the palms of their hands to warm themselves up, other jump. The ambience is mixed, someone is dressed in a dark jacket and tie, and I'm angry because it doesn't seem to rock as the lady in fur following him.

Others are dressed in sportswear. A little boy, careless of the cold, wore Totti's white t-shirt and more than a fan of the player, he looks like the lifeguard of the boat.

A blonde with a hair bob clings to herself and speaks subtly with the kid. He gives her a kiss on the nose and she rubs off his dripping nose. You really don't understand how they might have come to this place.

At 7:20 pm. The Honourable's car is on Via Cristoforo Colombo, a road which arrived from Rome and led to Ostia. At the height of the pond in the Euro zone, communications with the kids are interrupted. No one answer anymore. I'm dying. How I wish I liked to be with them.

Ursula and I get in line and enter, while the girls, having greeted a group of fans cheering for them, pass via a back entrance. Ursula is embarrassed by my disinterest: who would have said one day this would happen?

The buffet is in the galley room. People crowds around the table.

- We women at parties act like bastards! - Says Ursula.
- Actually - I say - they're going to go ahead and eat everything!
- So much for the diet - she says laughing.

I look at her and go to the window to check the connection. The phone's notches are at its best, but the guys don't respond.

Pat comes back, embracing her mother.

- Excited, darling? - Ursula asks.
- A bit. But all is wonderful, is amazing atmosphere. Thank you Emilio - She says to me - a very special night.
- Oh, you're talking like in the TV show - I tell her, finding a bit of cordiality – yours is not a punk language.
- Okay. Then fuck you! That's right?
- Well, yes. Much better.
- I'll be back. I recommend - she says - just entertain my mother.

I raise the cup and try to be nice with Ursula. We hoard of wild boar sausages. I've never tasted fried cream and sage. We toast with a sparkling wine as an aperitif. Everyone is reserved to their own group, when an assistant announces we can sit upstairs in the dining room.

We have to go through the stairs and get out of the hall. The river runs alongside, indifferent. It's cold and on the opposite shore, the test for the midnight fires is made.

I urge Ursula to reach our table where there are also the girls. I remain on the ladder outside, in an attempt to call. Cobra answers, at least one is still alive.

- Oh, but what's happening? - I ask - Why don't you answer? What are you doing? Do you want to tell me something?
- I'm running; leave me free the line because I have to call the others...
- But how it proceeds...
- Don't break my balls, Santillà, make us work...

End the phone call. I'll be dead at midnight. I climb the ladders and enter inside the illuminated living room. A woman with black hair and a red overcoat welcomes me. She congratulates me, I tell her I'm a follower of the band playing and she shows me the table where Ursula and the four Cicale are seated, waiting for me. I find as a gift a lighter, an old Zippo with the inscription nicotine.

They give us icy water and white wine. I light a cigarette and look around. Behind us, a family with a baby are being photographed with the DJ. I wink the baby and tell him these girls - the girls who are with me - are the band, which have to play. The mother urges the kid to take a picture with The Cicale, he climbs between the legs of Don and Val and while all five make the sign of the horns, I take a picture of them. I greet the child saying we'll see you later, boy.

On our left, there's a table with girls and boys. A blond boy with a ponytail, a girl I understand she is his sister and a curly brunette who must be the blond girlfriend.

- Good wine - says Ursula - what is it?
- It's the Falanghina - I answer.
- Great.

Far from our sight, there's a table made of twenty people who make everything to make them heard. The head is a brunette girl, dressed in a jacket, dark pants and a black top, which leaves everything exposed except her tits. Intriguing her diners, putting them in posing for pictures. They get bored because they wait for the first dishes, the girl sings a song and makes jokes of which she laughs alone.

I exit again on the ladder, trying to call again. No way. I panicked. I send them different poisonous messages and then come back to the table.

- Are you all right, Emilio? - Nat the guitarist asks.

- Yes, no problem, don't worry - I reply, to minimize.

At 9:00 pm. A message from Taciturno arrives on my cell phone: *Stop and go. Punch and run away. Long life to pussy!*

I walk out over the ladders to seek for explanations. It's free, but Bestemmia isn't responding. I'm going crazy.

I come back to the table when they serve us the first dishes: risotto with radicchio and nuts. We still pour wine into our glasses. From the table of twenty people, one could notice signs of imbalance. The brunette of the photo removes her jacket, back and navel naked, small tits. We accept bets about which dish will be finish in the cold waters of the river.

9:30 pm. A message from Taciturno's cell phone: *Greetings*, he writes. *Greetings fuck!* I answer: *can I know what is happening?*

Game over, he writes. Game over means the play is ended. A disturbing message. The conversation ends.

I'm down. A tall and solemn waiter serves the second dish: crêpes with salmon and shrimp. We devour and finish our first bottle of wine.

Second dishes are coming, and we change wine. It's the time of the Sauvignon, bring by the usual solemn waiter. The woman who welcomes us at the entrance takes off his red coat. She is bandaged with white dress with pink and green flowers, which shows a maternal and prominent breast. The fact she's passing table by table to make sure everything is a pleasurable is an exciting moment. The Cicale looks at chuckles, and me while Ursula is impassive.

Second dishes arrive. Grouper with cherry tomatoes and seafood, Parisian potatoes and tomatoes stuffed with Parmesan eggplants. Sauvignon no longer makes me connect.

10:30 pm. The message ringtone is a trumpet: it's Rigatone's cell phone. "*Elp if yu can, bai filling daun.*" His English is like a life sentence and yet it's not from him. Easy influence me with the lyrics of the Beatles: Help is a song written by Lennon, in need of deep help. Public opinion knows the Liverpool band as an innocuous band, but the fabulous four are a pirate station of subliminal and satanic messages with the discs played on the contrary, the sinister covers, the alleged deaths, the hypothetical funerals,

the actual toll as the one accomplished by Charles Manson in '69 in Los Angeles and claimed with the songs written by Helter Shelter and Piggies. Hallucinations, of course, but I have a bad idea because unlike the Beatles, Trottole band doesn't play. While I'm thinking, arrives the message of Helter Shelter with a file of horror film laughter.

I'm dark and lost in the night. Someone is playing with me. Or maybe my friends have been discovered and people, who contact the number he repeatedly had been calling within the last few hours, are sending messages. 11:30 pm. The Cicale are preparing for their number. I'm alone with Ursula. The ringing of cell phones could be heard, and also people loosening their belts and with head cloudy they try to send phone messages.

Meanwhile, an appetizing pineapple dessert is served. At the point of getting up and going into the hall below for the imminent toast, we approach each other as if we are in the middle of a sea storm, rather than firmly tucked to the riverside.

We move to the environment where it's possible dancing. The Cicale are already on the stage and start the playlist, as expected, with Hendrix's "Fire". Ursula wiggles and asks me to join. I don't even listening her and I keep tormenting myself. I go back outside while Don, the bass player, grabs the microphone and screams *Happy New Year!*

I take my cell phone. The last message is from Archimede: *we're coming to pick you up, asshole!*

It's almost midnight and soon the entrance will be free. I look. Between the crowds of little boys who want to get in, they are wiping a SUV with dark windows: they are my friends, or rather, I hope so. I swear. The SUV's high beam headlights are turned on and off. Then it opens the small doors.

They are really my friends. I look at them silently to study their mood. They approach slowly. These four assholes seem to have come out of Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs. Archimede, Bestemmia, Rigatone and Taciturno have serious faces. A few feet away from me, Bestemmia opens his arms and ends the old year as he begins the new one: just Bestemmia.

The others laugh and I begin to understand. I embrace them warmly, one by one: - Damn you!

- You got cold feet, eh? - Archimede says.

- Damn you! - I answer.

- Do you see that? - Rigatone repeat to Archimede: - What did I say to you? He got cold feet.
- Damn you!
- Great, it did great... - Taciturno make his debut- after an hour it's already over...
- Yes - says Rigatone – Everything went great.
- Fuck, then why did you put it for so long? - I ask.
- Already we are there, we don't want to waste time. After the photos, we moved to send the articles ready with the anticipations of the shots made with the digital camera - Archimede explains.
- We had the time to pick your ass up - says Rigatone.
- Pieces of shit... and the rest of the pictures? - I ask.
- They are already safe. At my home - replies Rigatone.
- This time we'll break his ass – Bestemmia swears.

I can't wait. Rhetorically and with emphasis, I ask: - And Cobra? Where is the man who never quits, and without whom all this would not have been possible?

- Oh, you know him, don't you? - Archimede asks.
- He has gone to the sea - says Taciturno - he wants to be alone.
- Because he's a Lazio fan, like him - says Bestemmia, pointing at me - the society of scandals. Is it possible?

All of them improvise a chorus for Cobra and me. I'm nervous and not for insults. I knew them: I know them: they know I'm waiting for information about the operation and cruelly they are taking time and letting me suffer.

- And it was almost New Year – he has taken Rigatone - but why don't you start it with a good action: change team!
- Exactly - Bestemmia continues - why Lazio?

I'm excited to explain: - I like music, literature and sports. And of all these disciplines, I like cursed stories and cursed heroes because in their madness there is a sense of existence.

I played rock music and this was my life. Rock had a concentration of curses like Lazio, but Lazio's team was heavenly.

I could be just a Lazio's fan; it is a matter that goes beyond football, a way of living in its own way, beyond the common tendencies and ways of understanding and manifesting its passion.

They looked at each other in silence. Rigatone reminded others that I had gone crazy: - Let's face it, it's stress - he said.

- Yes, we don't do it anymore, sorry - Archimedes said.

- What about rock and Lazio? - Asked Bestemmia - then explain it to me...

- You would not understand - I'm telling you - that you're *laziofobic*...

And we simulated a brawl of hugs and kisses that smelt like Falanghina. Now I got updates on the details and looked at the first photos on my computer. I quickly read the article titled: *what's a perfect candidate for the Regional doing at the home of a convicted felon?*

We continued talking as the New Year arrived. Across the river, the display of the fires began and we stood there looking back on the wall.

- Oh, but the girls? - Rigatone asked.

Already. The girls. Now their part may have already been completed. Let's run. The rock record began; The Cicale was at the table with their friends and Ursula.

Good year! Said Rigatone. When they saw it, the girls surrounded and embraced him. Ursula and The Cicale thanked us.

- It was beautiful - said Don, the drummer.

- Yeah. Too bad that you didn't hear us - Nat scolded at us.

- Boys - Ursula asked - All right? Emilio, you've been through a hallucinating night, but what happened?

- Well - said Rigatone - we were on a mission on behalf of God!

- Yeah, yes - I said - it was just a mission.

Rigatone sits down and eat some dish remained. He drinks again and again, tired. Our friends are in the hall below dancing. I'm alternating between them and Ursula. The most pressing thing at that time is to find out if she is wearing red underwear.

However, it's the New Year. The crates pump up *Enola Gay* despite war, hunger, and natural cataclysms. Yes, *Enola Gay* and the boat seem to take flight. *Enola Gay* of unemployment, charges, social anger, insecurity. Terrorism. It's the New Year with friends and women who had fight strong. From here down the boat, we look out at the portholes. The river flows by side without thinks about the dirt it 's carrying, the fires are so sparkling to occlude the sight of the sky as if to dispel the forces with prayers of mercy. *Enola Gay*, they all seem crazy. It's a new year and over our heads, we still have political and international balances we hadn't yet decided on.

And the music goes on. It flows on our lives inconclusively. *Enola Gay*, we dance and everyone goes on the dance floor. *Enola Gay*, and the smooth-haired blonde moves like a queen of the night. It's rock and roll, just rock and roll from our long life, which fascinate us even though it couldn't change anything. It's all is given us and we hold it tight. *Enola Gay*, can you imagine it? And that old damned keyboard riff, which is freaking out...

Rigatone and I are sitting at the table. He says to me: - And now you have to keep your promise.

- What promise? - I ask.

- Our pact: in due course you would have done me a favour.

- Yes, it's true. Tomorrow afternoon.

- All right. Tomorrow afternoon.

We continue following people dancing. The blonde with blonde bob, dances with the slick-looking kid and his dripping nose. She seems to make step at the gym and she doesn't cares about music.

- She must be a secretary - says Rigatone. Then I remember and we start laughing.

It's a new year, 2005. Everything is as its eighteen years ago.

CHAPTER 10

I come back home at the early morning light of the New Year. I come from Ursula's house. Well, she respects tradition. Her underwear was really red. It wasn't revenge, but only a great sense of solitude.

I open the door, my mother is already standing there: - Happy New Year.

- Thank you. You too.

- Was the night good?

- Very well.

- Are you at lunch?

- Ah, no... I have a half-engagement with Rigatone...

- All right, go to sleep now.

The New Year begins with the aim of teaching Rigatone how to play blues. That was the favour. He had seen so many musicians who, for once, he would have loved to be like one of them. This is the first purpose.

The second is I will look after The Cicale. I don't want what happened to me to happen to them. I don't forgive Mr Franzoni for the certainty of a record contract. At that time it wasn't difficult to make me believe he was involved everywhere. Music was my life and that vain promise was the end. He didn't have to laugh at my dreams. There are times when you are enthusiastic and determined but at the same time that electricity makes you feel alive is your weak point and makes you fragile. I'm so sure to have changed my way that, then I don't have the strength to get up.

Please, don't tell me the fairy-tale about the fact you can get everything if you want: it's for the predestined, one in a million. The remaining million must be arranged.

From that moment after the change, which took the career of the Infame, tired, I put my guitar in a black trunk and locked it up in a closet. I recovered it occasionally when I had the feeling of never seeing the sky from the bottom of the door. Life is empty without music, much dustier than my wardrobe.

I dreamed of Ursula, I dreamed of abducting her and that mirage held me to my feet. I expected to see her enter the cellar and stop to listen to my resentment towards a system, which made us meat for slaughter, I wanted to open her eyes to the sea of misinformation of the future, on conformism and on TV. About our fears, childish naivety and the black men always lurking on the loneliness that would have been, isolation and homologation, and the total control of an individual.

That's why I was playing. And Infame told me I was right; he said my problem was the same he had. Ursula was a secret hope. I could explain why I was trembling in front of life and I was constantly depressed because I couldn't achieve the goals the society imposed as unique. I was talking too much.

Ursula went straight away with a distant and cold gaze, and I learned from her the carelessness of the world, which wanted us all a mass. She hadn't time for my mental masturbation, like everyone else.

Yes, she went straight, in the wake of Infame. She had made her choice. I like Duilio, after all. The defeat joined us.

A great deal of people had the same interests and these didn't resemble yours. The sidewalks were crowded with people who are shrugged and contended for every square inch of breath. A traffic light told you when you had to stop and when to go. A traffic policeman counted on your steps. A priest was washing after your soul.

You had to be at the Daily Show at dawn and sunset, with people running out to watch the eclipse and it really didn't matter whether you liked it or not, you had to stay there and not to try to change it.

The hours flew away, your best years gone, you've spent time wasting your life. You have occupied an existence another could have developed in a different way.

Your cursed doorway, inconclusive friends, your unnecessary thoughts...
How could you complain if everything else kept you at a distance?
Life, this incomprehensible terrain, sometimes makes strange turns and
shows you an old motive of the times gone by: *do you still remember me?* Of
course, you have a new chance, but the lost time remains in the wind vortex
and nobody can give it in return.
What remains of those moments? The saying that life begins at forty is not
true. Life continues as it is.

All this is Pete Best's disease. But yes, the old Beatles drummer replaced a
minute before they took the path to immortality. On the threshold of
paradise, he is precluded from money, fame and success.
Fuck, it's fate, you have no fault, and it's a pawn exchange game: another
instead of you. The world is full of Pete Best, which no one remembers
and, for this reason, staying alive is a heroic act.

Also Ursula said it, when we joked during hard times and I wondered her
what's the worst thing could possibly have happened?

She always answered the same way: *you could have been Pete Best.*

We are all Pete Best and in a manner of speaking we had to adapt to what is
left.

My dad knocks at the door of my room; he enters and opens the window.
The light of the day enters, while the tape from past vanished.

- Best wishes.
- Hello dad, best wishes to you.
- It's four o'clock.
- Now I get up, I have to go to Rigatone...

I get dressed. Actually today I just changed the tune. I use a calendar where
time is not scaled by fractions and number or seconds, but by punctuation
marks. Points, commas, and head marks a cohesive or segmented period. I
choose the breaks and it's not important if they don't go in time with the

rest, I know very well I have deleted fractions from my head but not from life.

All I do is to oppose the punctuation. I'm not person of a science, even though grammar is a set of rules, which teaches you how to speak and write correctly. My thoughts are free and when I read I'm happy.

Do you understand? Maybe not very well, but you don't have to be too severe with yourself. It's just rock and roll, anyway, whether you like it or not.

Epilogue

Rigatone's home. We connect guitars to amplifiers. Break lessons on Chicago Blues. Beer, taralli and television. TG2, Manuela Moreno and her blond hair. It turns me on. She is my darling Manuela. The white suit makes her brighter.

Doesn't stop the controversy surrounding the photos of Mr Franzoni, published by a website, who was portrayed as he attended a party at the villa of the prejudiced Pasquale Lanza, also known as Trottola.

The story is about the relationship between politicians and crime. The Honourable is outraged at the on-going speculation in place.

All these controversies - the Honourable says – are just manipulations and populism from my opponents. I am sure I will clarify everything and leave them at the disposal of the judiciary.

However, within the party, everyone wonders about the opportunity of his candidacy at the upcoming regional elections, which no longer seems to be so obvious ...

All yesterdays ago remain under my shoes. I continue playing the blues lesson, taking time with those same shoes and it's like getting rid of the crap of existence.

Boom boom boom, gentlemen. This is Pete Best's Blues.

Best' generation

THE AUTHOR

Enrico Mattioli is born in Rome on 16 July 1966.
He is a coherent man: every year, on the same day, in the same month,
he celebrates that old anniversary.

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