

Piattaforma ZOOM

English Lessons on line

One session of the

2025 - 26 year

English Course

Teacher:



Ms Rosa Leto

Hi! We are back!

This work represents only a brief glance among all the activities of the course carried out on the Zoom platform.

Once again we have composed a few stories, a product of our creative skills but to us they represent the evidence of our improvement in the use of the English Language.

Some of the stories are the recollection of happy moments of life, others describe someone who has had a special impact on

our growth as reliable adults,
some other stories narrate
awkward situations in a satirical
mood.

We had fun in writing them
and we hope they will be a
source of fun and wisdom for
you, too.

THE ZOOMPALS



Aldo

**THE MAGIC
OF LOVE**

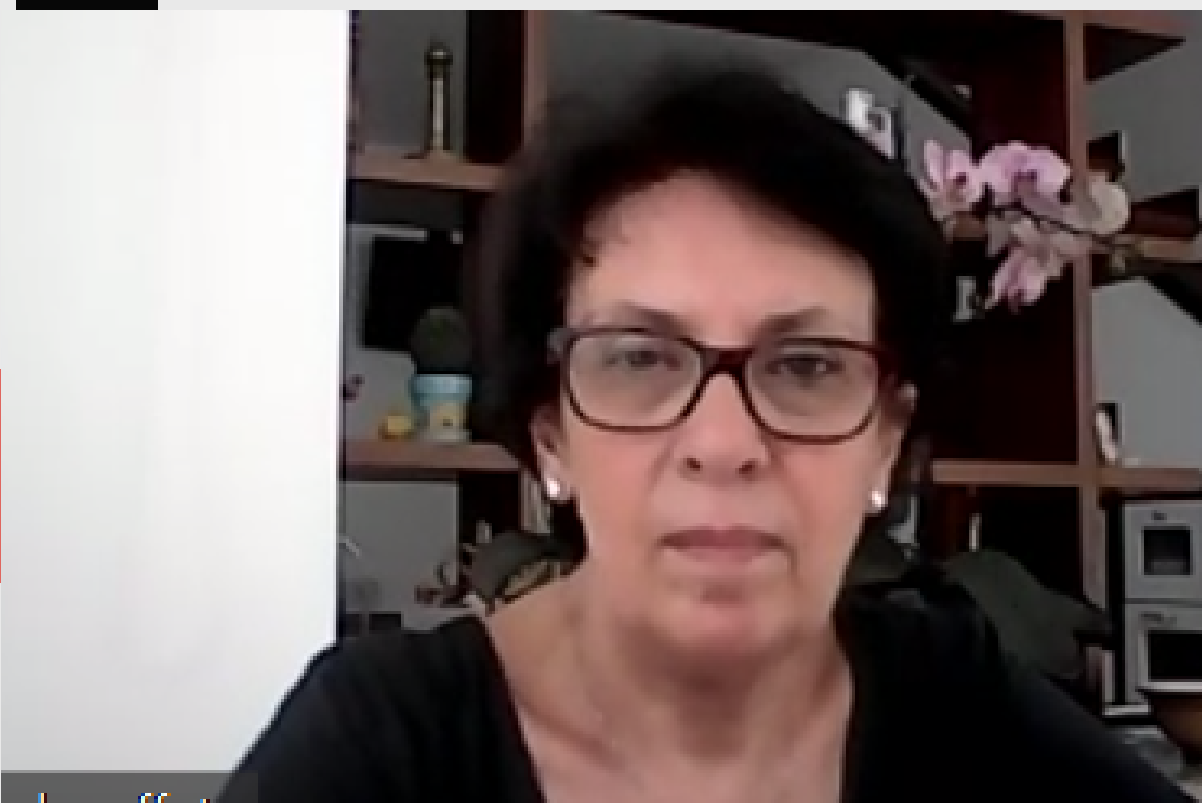
Pg.1



Claudio

THE TSARS' ROUTE

Pg. 4



Fernanda

**AN UNEXPECTED
GIFT**

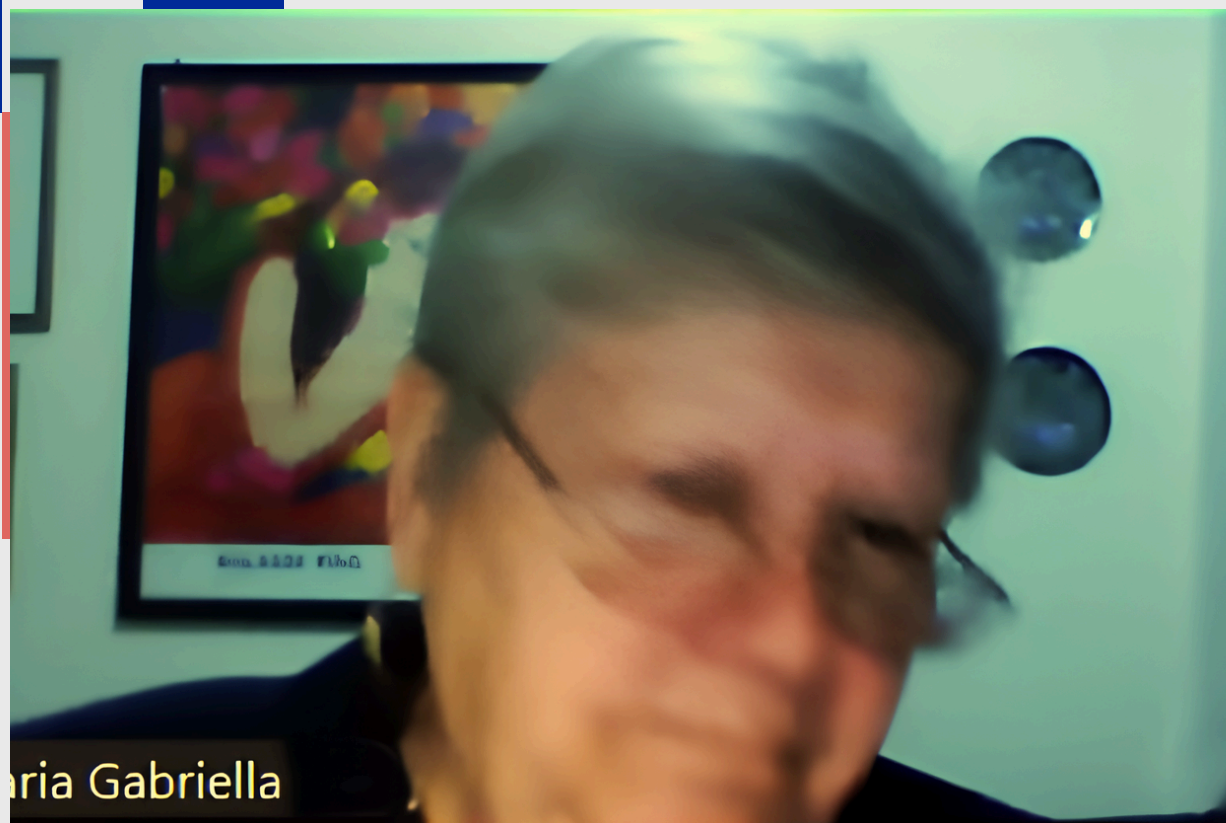
Pg.12



Francesca

**CHILDHOOD
MEMORIES**

Pg. 16



Gabriella

**MISSING
A FERRY**

Pg. 20



Laura

THE CAMEL RIDE

Pg.23



Licia

MY HAPPY PLACE

Pg.26



Marcella

**LANDING ON A
MAGICAL CITY**

Pg.31



Marilena

**A DREAM IN
MY DRAWER**

Pg.35



Mariolina

PARIS IN MY HEART

Pg.41



Rossella

**SOME OLD LADIES,
A LABRADOR,
BURRACO AND ..I**

Pg.44



Valeria

**GIVING A PILL TO
A NAUGHTY CAT**

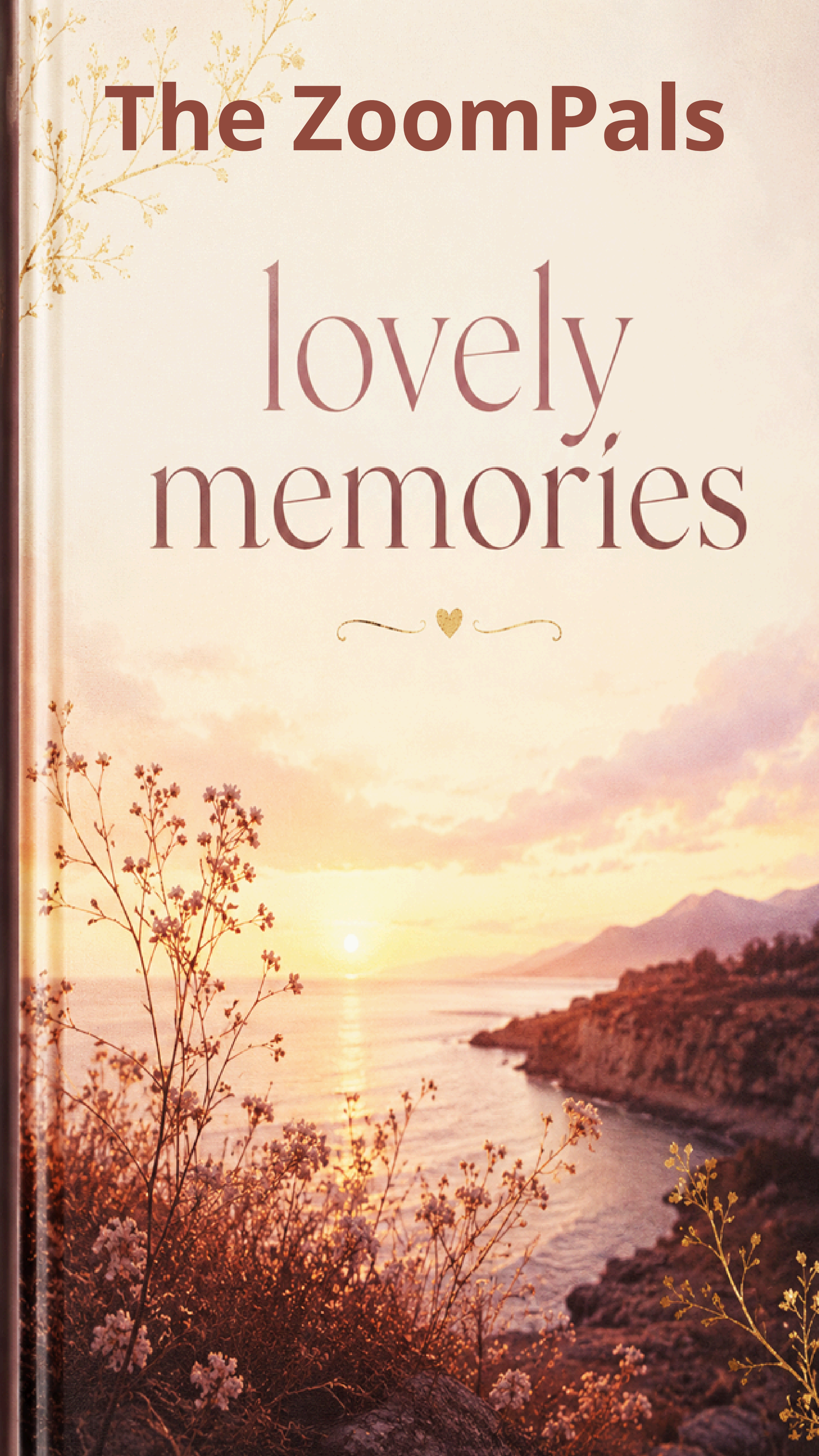
Pg. 48

You're
Invited!

Enjoy the reading
of these stories !

The ZoomPals

lovely
memories



The Magic of Love

Dear teacher,

I was asked to write a story, true or fictional.

Well, I thought I have a true story about a grandfather and his grandson building a fairy tale.

Our story begins on "the Bench of Poetry' in a cold winter at Bardonecchia.

My grandson and I were sitting on that bench when he asked me: “ nonno... facciamo una favola?" And I began to tell him about a bear cub who had got lost and missed his mother... "ma come si chiamava? Facciamo Poldo? Ed era triste?"

I said that Poldo was his name and he was very frightened because the darkness of the evening was falling.

"Ma la sua mamma lo trova?" He asked with a hint of concern.

Facing that worried face, I hurried to say that mothers have a special feeling about their children , so she could easily find Poldo; my grandson's facial expression changed to a large smile that broke out into a cry of joy when I proposed him a doughnut at the bakery nearby.

I realized that more than the story it was the magic moment arisen between me and my grandson to be described.

I tried to look for the appropriate words to describe the feeling of the moment bringing to mind my grandson's dreamy expression, but you know I feel much better with images than with words: I am able to see the reality that surrounds us better and deeper through the lens of a camera.

So, I think you can find in a more intuitive way the atmosphere of the moment watching the inspired portrait of my grandson and imagine the sense of complicity from the other side of the lens.



The Tsars' Route

There are journeys that begin with a ticket, a suitcase, or a map, and others that begin much earlier: in a silent desire, in a subtle yet profound curiosity that pushes you to seek something else you don't know yet. This journey was one of those.

It wasn't just a journey through different places, a journey of landscapes but also of intense perceptions, encounters and little daily surprises that left their mark, transforming ordinary days into everlasting memories.

These pages are born from the desire to preserve that experience and recount it, not as a simple itinerary, but as a collection of living fragments: emotions, discoveries, and transformations. Because some journeys end when we return home, while

others continue within us, forever changing our way of looking at the world.

I'm referring to a cruise along a river route approximately 1,400 kilometers long between Moscow and St. Petersburg, called the Tsars' Route in homage to Russian history. At that time, Vladimir Putin was ruling Russia during his first term (2000).

So in August 2001, my wife, my two young daughters and I booked the trip with an agency in Palermo and a few days later at first light we flew from Palermo to Milan. In Malpensa Airport we met the Italian travel agent and the tour group members.

Then, in the early afternoon, we took a scheduled flight to Moscow, arriving about four hours later.

Upon arriving at Vnukovo Airport, we were picked up by our Russian guide and,

after passing through border controls, we caught a bus to the Moscow river port.

We stayed on a motor vessel about a hundred meters long equipped with comfortable cabins with an external view, large meeting spaces inside and outside, a cinema room, a library, a restaurant, and bars.

We spent two full days in Moscow: a time too short to explore the immense city, but enough to visit the Red Square with St. Basil's Church and the Kremlin with its golden domes, an important artistic and historical complex. We then visited the underground, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The immense underground transports huge crowds of people dozens of meters below along endless escalators, and visitors will discover there mosaics, coats of arms, bas-reliefs, decorations, and more.

We also visited several Orthodox churches with onion domes. In these churches there are no statues, only icons.

Starting from Moscow, we first crossed the Moscow Canal and the Volga River, the largest river in Europe, considered by Russians to be the mother of all rivers.

Then, in succession, we passed three large lakes: Ribinsky Lake,

White Lake, and Lake

Onega, the deepest

lake in Europe. After

traveling a stretch of

the Svir River, we

entered Lake Ladoga, the largest in Europe, with over 600 islands, before arriving in St. Petersburg. A

fascinating waterway, dreamed of by Tsar Peter the Great and later realized by digging canals, building 18 locks, and overcoming a 163-meter difference in altitude between the two cities: a marvel of engineering, in



short. A journey rich in literary and scenic inspiration, passing through various places of interest offering an overview of rural and imperial Russia. We crossed waterways rich in lake animals and wooded landscapes dominated by birches, pines and broadleaf forests where the tranquility and silence were interrupted by the passage of the motor vessel with its powerful diesel engines.

We stopped at several ports along the river route:

Uglich: Ancient city with the Church of St. Demetrius on the Blood, built on the spot where little Dimitri died (Boris Godunov – Puskin)

Yaroslavl: Historic city on the Volga, part of the Golden Ring (a famous tourist route featuring ancient cities rich in medieval history, architecture and spirituality)

Goritsy: Known for the Monastery of St. Cyril on White Lake.

Kizhi: Island in Lake Onega famous for its wooden churches.

At each stop we were welcomed with great joy by the local people who offered us smoked fish and tried to sell us local craft products.

We finally arrived to St. Petersburg sailing along the Neva River; the city, founded by Peter the Great, is called the Venice of North and is famous for its rivers and canals and is full of imperial palaces, churches, squares, and granite embankments.

We spent there three full days : We visited many places by City bus tour with the following significant stops:

Visit to the Peter and Paul Fortress.

Visit to the Hermitage Museum, one of the most important museums in the world for the vastness and number of works of art.

Visit to the Catholic Cathedral of St. Catherine.

A stop in front of the Winter Palace with the Alexandrine Column and in Birzhevaya Square, where we saw the tip of Vasilievsky Island emerging from the Neva River with the Peter and Paul Fortress, the original nucleus of St. Petersburg.

The next day we were accompanied to St. Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport and caught a Tupolev plane to Moscow. From there, we caught an Alitalia flight to Milan and then to Palermo.

The journey along the Tsars' Route was a journey through centuries, landscapes, and identities: from the two great imperial capitals to the cities of rural areas, from golden domes to the silence of the forests. It

was not merely a geographical shift, but a journey through the history of an empire that left profound traces in European art, culture, and memory.

Each stop recounted the power and magnificence of the tsars, but also the contradictions and transformations of a world that still fascinates today with its splendor.

The sumptuous residences, cathedrals, legendary railways, and vast horizons have created a unique mosaic, where past and present continually intertwine.

The Tsars' Route thus remains an intense and evocative experience: a journey that lives on in the memories of those who travel it, leaving them with the feeling of having followed the thread of a grandiose complex and unforgettable history.

An unexpected Gift

Despite the pleasant spring air and the warm sun, that morning I was in a bad mood.

I was walking with two bags full of food and my mind full of nasty thoughts.

The pavement was narrow and a lot of obstacles made my walk difficult.

A few meters in front of me, an old lady, walking in the opposite direction, stopped near a flowering plant next to a main door, waiting for me to let me pass.

So I quickened my pace.



"Thank you so much," I said as I got close to her looking down on the pavement.

"I fell down six months ago, but I'm not giving up!" she replied in a clear voice.

I stopped, put my bags down and looked at her face: white hair, light blue eyes, lots of wrinkles on her cheeks and shiny white teeth in a dazzling smile.

"YesI tumbled in the street" she went on speaking to me" My daughter doesn't want me to go out for a walk but I need to walk...what about you?" she asked me.

"Yes, I..." I began to say something but she continued talking,

" I had a knee operation last year,..look!" and, saying this, she lifted her trousers up to her

knees to show me the scar with great satisfaction " They did a good job, didn't they?"

I looked at her knee holding back a laugh.

What a strange little woman! How much energy in that little body and even if she was leaning on a stick, her face showed a proud expression.

“...My husband died four years ago...God rest his soul! We lived together for sixty years" she looked down and placed her hand on my arm.

I put my hand over hers and smiled.

“...I loved him so much...he was a gentleman..." she said tenderly.

“...and he was good-looking too... a real man indeed! Do you understand what I mean?" she added laughing.

"However, today is a beautiful day...isn't it?" she said looking straight in my eyes and then continued "I'm so happy I have met you! You are such a nice woman! I hope to meet you again" and unexpectedly she hugged me.

I was confused but returned her hug.

"Ok, I have to go now!" she said suddenly "I need to walk"- And she went away with her uncertain and swaying gait.

I stood there for a few minutes watching her walk away , but the warmth of her embrace had made my sadness and bad mood go away.

"What unexpected gift! Thank you little lady!"

Childhood Memories

When our teacher asked us to write a story about a personal experience, a place, or a special person, I immediately thought of my primary school teacher. In my life, I have had many teachers, but Rosa Passerini is the only one I remember with deep affection and admiration.

She was a beautiful woman, tall and elegant. She was a widow and she was very proud of her only daughter. Rosa had a charismatic and sunny personality; she was always available to help us. You could see that she truly loved her job. She wasn't just a teacher; she was like a "second mother" for all twenty-four of us.

I remember my first day of school as if it were yesterday. We were small and a bit lost in our black uniforms and white collars. To put us at ease, she lined us up by height and assigned our desks. I was of medium height, so I sat in the second row next to Daniela, a blonde girl with long braids. In front of us, there was the teacher's desk. From there, she guided us into the world of knowledge.

Those were the years of the famous TV quiz "Lascia o Raddoppia?" and the conductor of this program was Mike Bongiorno.



Rosa was very creative: to help us remember the subjects, she organized a similar show in class! She even built small booths for the "contestants." I secretly wanted to be the "valletta" (the assistant), but she chose Daniela, but my bad mood had a short life because I was the star of irregular verbs! I felt so proud when I won candies or small toys as prizes.

Life in Ferrara, in the Po Valley, was difficult because of the climate. Because of this weather, I was often sick at home. But I was never alone: Rosa always called my house to check on my health and explain what she had taught in class.

I loved Italian, but I was terrible at arithmetic. Rosa understood my struggle

and, sometimes, she gave me a "6" just to keep me motivated. I admired her so much that I decided I wanted to be a teacher just like her.

My career eventually followed a different path, but I have never forgotten her lessons of kindness. She has a permanent place in my heart.

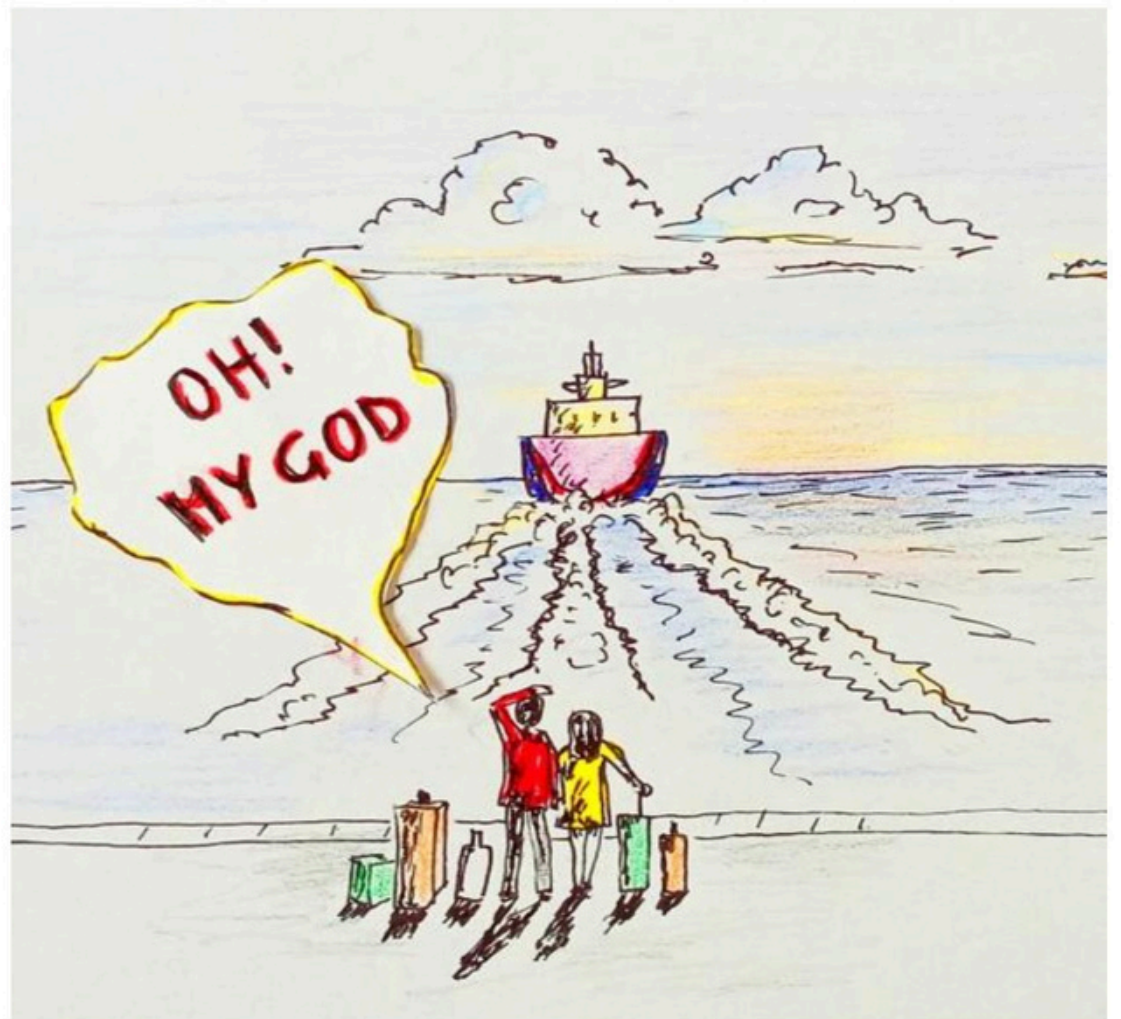
Missing a Ferry

Many years ago my husband and I missed a Ferry- Boat which went from Civitavecchia to Palermo and that experience is still printed in my mind.

After a lovely holiday in Sardinia, where we had been under the spell of the stunning beauty of its wild nature, we had to organize our trip back to Palermo. So we had booked a boat from Olbia to Civitavecchia and then a cabin on the ship leaving from there. We could sleep in a comfortable cabin and arrive in Palermo perfectly relaxed, refreshed and ready to go to work. Perfect timing !

But things didn't go exactly that way! I had felt quite tense since we had got on the boat from Olbia. I did not know why . Probably just the stress of travelling by sea . Well... the boat from Olbia wasted time docking and the ship to Palermo departed fifteen minutes in advance owing to some technical problems in the port . So guess what ? The ship to Palermo left leaving us sitting in the car on the pier with all our luggage!

My husband was furious!!



The Tirrenia representative suggested us to drive to Naples and take a ship from there the following day and he offered us a first class cabin and a free dinner on the boat. A heated discussion started. We did not know what to do, We were

supposed to be at work the following morning... it was too late to inform the people there.....Finally my husband decided to drive all the way to Palermo . We travelled all night and at 5 o'clock we were at home. We were exhausted. At 8 o'clock we were at work. That morning looking at our faces no-one would have believed that we had had a lovely holiday in Sardinia.

The Camel Ride

At the end of February, I went to visit Egypt.
I have for a long time wanted to visit Egypt.

I have always been fascinated by its culture and its extraordinary monuments : the imposing massive Pyramids and the silent, ambiguous Sphinx, the finely decorated tombs of the Pharaohs, the wonderful city of Luxor, Abu Simble Temples carved into the rock, the Temple of Karnak and the enormous and amazing GEM, the new Egyptian museum in Cairo covering 500,000 square meters, with the astonishing treasure of Tutankhamun, which alone covers an area of 7,000s square meters.

Everything is amazing there but what I mostly loved was the Camel Ride. Many tourists in my group were scared to get on a camel, on the contrary I was excited like a child and I wanted to have this fantastic experience.

As soon as I got on, the camel driver tried to secure my feet in the stirrups. Unfortunately my feet didn't reach the stirrups because I am short and also my legs are short. Therefore they remained dangerously free and I was without any support. I was equally and unconsciously happy, but I had to tighten my knees onto the camel's body to keep myself secure.



Then, when the camel was standing up, I had to turn my torso first back and then forward, to adapt myself to the camel's movements, always with my knees clenched. Finally when the camel was on its feet, it started walking and I started swaying back and forth with it, I was over the moon even though in the following days ..there were some inconveniences.

. Well...think of that! At my no longer young age I had ridden a camel !!

I will always remember this exciting experience, even though in the following days my legs were really sore.

My happy Place

A "happy place" is a special, deeply, intimate place, tied to memories, intense emotions or nostalgia, where the mind and the spirit find peace and reconnect with themselves. For many years the island of Stromboli was my happy place.

My husband and I discovered this pearl of the Aeolian Islands when we were young and until his death a few years ago, we used to spend two weeks there every summer. In the early years of our marriage we used to rent an old Aeolian style house, white and cubic, which stands up better the

tremors of the earth. Afterwards we preferred to stay in a hotel, La Sciara or La Sirenetta, whose bungalows have very comfortable rooms, perfectly equipped and with a private beach and a swimming pool.

Stromboli is an island full of surprises and contrasts. When you draw near to

it by

hydrofoil,

you cannot

help being

overwhelmed



by the magnificence of the scenery

and tempted to explore it. A black

giant, the volcano called "Iddu" by the

locals, stands out imposingly against

the deep blue sea. The coastlines are amazing but the inland is also full of charm. At dusk you can rent a boat to go under the Sciara del Fuoco and watch from the sea the spectacle of incandescent rocks which descend to the sea. During violent eruptions the lava flow slides down the slope and pours into the sea releasing large columns of steam. Trekking enthusiasts can take part in the excursion that starts from the centre of the village, behind the small church, arriving just at 200m from the crater. Trekking on the volcano takes about three hours at an ordinary pace; from the summit you can see the Island of

Strombolicchio, the Sicilian coast, the Calabrian coast, the Strait of Messina and the three still active craters of Stromboli.

The Islanders are kind and friendly and welcome the tourists with warmth.

Aeolian cuisine is inspired and variegated; fish is central to every meal. The main characteristic is the use of many herbs: rosemary, oregano, basil, garlic, mint and a special type of capers called "cucunci". Stromboli is not a fashionable tourist island: no noise, no confusion, no cars, only bicycles and electric minicars can be used. At night the street lights are off

and you walk using flashlights. It's a real antistress refuge.

I haven't been back to Stromboli for four years; it would be too painful without my husband. But the island will always remain in my heart as a place of beautiful memories and unforgettable moments, where I was very happy and which I remember with sweet nostalgia.

Landing on a magical City

During my first year of retirement ,
I had the opportunity to take a
wonderful trip to Norway. In February
2008 my friend Robert, a professor of
Social Psychology at Bergen
University, invited me to a
Conference, which allowed me to
have a week holiday in this beautiful
city.

In the past Bergen was the capital of
Norway and , at the same time, a
wealthy city of the Hanseatic League;
the numerous coloured wooden
houses, typical of Hanseatic cities,

testify to its past splendour. Nowadays these homes have been converted to cozy guesthouses or exclusive shops.

Bergen is the city of the seven hills ,like Rome. I particularly enjoyed walking up the Floyen Hill, which was the destination of our daily walks.

We loved reaching the top where you can enjoy a stunning panoramic view of the city and the fjords.

During my stay I had the opportunity to meet some University professors ; they were friendly and easy going, very different from the Italian ones.

I visited the Munch museum and the Toldhaugen, where the

Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg used to live in summer; nowadays it is the venue for the Bergen International Festival.

Over the years I have treasured the memory of my beautiful holiday but the most precious memory is my landing at Bergen airport.



For approximately fifteen minutes the plane flew over an astonishing landscape; the fjords were covered with white snow, in sharp contrast

with the dark blue sea and sky. I have never had such a magical landing.

When I remember this experience, in my mind , I see wonderful colours,

I breathe clean crisp air ; I listen to Grieg's music in my "inside" ear , his Piano Concert with its magical harmony.

A Dream in my drawer

Yes, it's true... I confess. I love everything that is British, but above all the Queen. No.... not Camilla.

Queen Elisabeth II !

My truly great dream is to go to London to visit the Exhibition

“ Queen Elisabeth II- Her Life in Style”

The exhibition opened on April 10th and



will run until October 18th 2026.

It is held at the King's Gallery, Buckingham Palace and features about 300 of the Sovereign's dresses,

handbags, jewellery and shoes, worn by her over the years, both in official and private engagements. It spans all ten decades of her life: from childhood to adulthood, from being a princess to becoming a queen.

The main iconic dresses I would particularly like to highlight and photograph are:

1- Her coronation dress, designed by the royal designer Norman Hartnelly, a sumptuous cream-colored silk gown with gold and silver embroidery, featuring the national emblems of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

2 -Her wedding dress, in ivory-colored silk, with 10,000 pearls and crystals. Ears of wheat and star-shaped flowers are also embroidered.

3-The dress worn for the opening of the 2012 London Olympics, an elegant peach-colored dress with lace, designed by Angela Kelly.

This exhibition is part of the celebration for the Centenary of the Queen's birth, who would have fulfilled 100 on April 21st 2026.

My curiosity arose from the fact that Queen Elizabeth II is the longest-reigning queen in British history, and her dresses, complete with matching hats, have made her a style icon. With

her original outfits and pastel-colored dresses, Queen Elizabeth has influenced fashion and created a much-loved character.

Besides the Queen's old age and her composed, good-natured smile made me fall in love with her and probably you are wondering why I have become such an enthusiastic fan.

Well ...to me she is what a monarch should be like. Well-educated, aware of the burden of responsibilities towards the country and its citizens, intelligent and wise, full of humanity towards people.

Despite her position, she was a woman with a life full of problems, both

family and government, which she stubbornly faced with determination and poise.

She had a steel and very conservative character but she had a strong dedication to her role and led her reign through a great transformation, making the monarchy more visible and loved.

Which of the messages did I most appreciate?

“ My life will always be dedicated to your service”, naturally referring it to England.

And the most surprising news?

During her reign, 12 US presidents and 7 popes succeeded one another.

What a long and interesting life she had!

I hope my dream comes true and that on my return home in autumn I will tell you everything about it.

Paris in my Heart

I have travelled since I was a young girl, both in Italy and in Europe. Then, as an adult, the time has come that your children, unfortunately, are compelled to go away to work, often abroad, too. My son has worked in France for a long time, at first in Provence, then in Paris. My husband and I have often gone to visit him, and we have stopped there for long periods, too.

Although we have already been to Paris, in these occasions we could "savour" the goodness of the city, enjoy the elegance of its tree-lined boulevards and the beauty of its period buildings having plenty of time away from the stress of everyday life. We did

a lot of sightseeing by underground, not being bound by groups or organized tours, and we could choose freely the daily itineraries. In part we were leading an almost "homely" life, with the possibility of cooking and meeting together around a kitchen table, trying to create a family atmosphere to make our son feel at home again.

This routine left me with a memory of these places full of emotional notes unlike a trip only for tourism purposes.

I feel Paris, but also Aix-en-Provence, as they were my



hometowns. I have a strong emotional tie with them. I remember with love the long walks along the boulevards and the Seine, the visit to my loved impressionist painters to the Musée d'Orsay and to the Orangerie, the wonder of the Opéra Garnier, the wealth of the Rue des Capucines, the climb to the Sacre Coeur, the majesty of the Tour Eiffel.... and also the Tarte Tropeziennne and its story.

Paris is always in my heart and I hope I will soon return there.

Some old Ladies, a Labrador, Burraco and . . .I

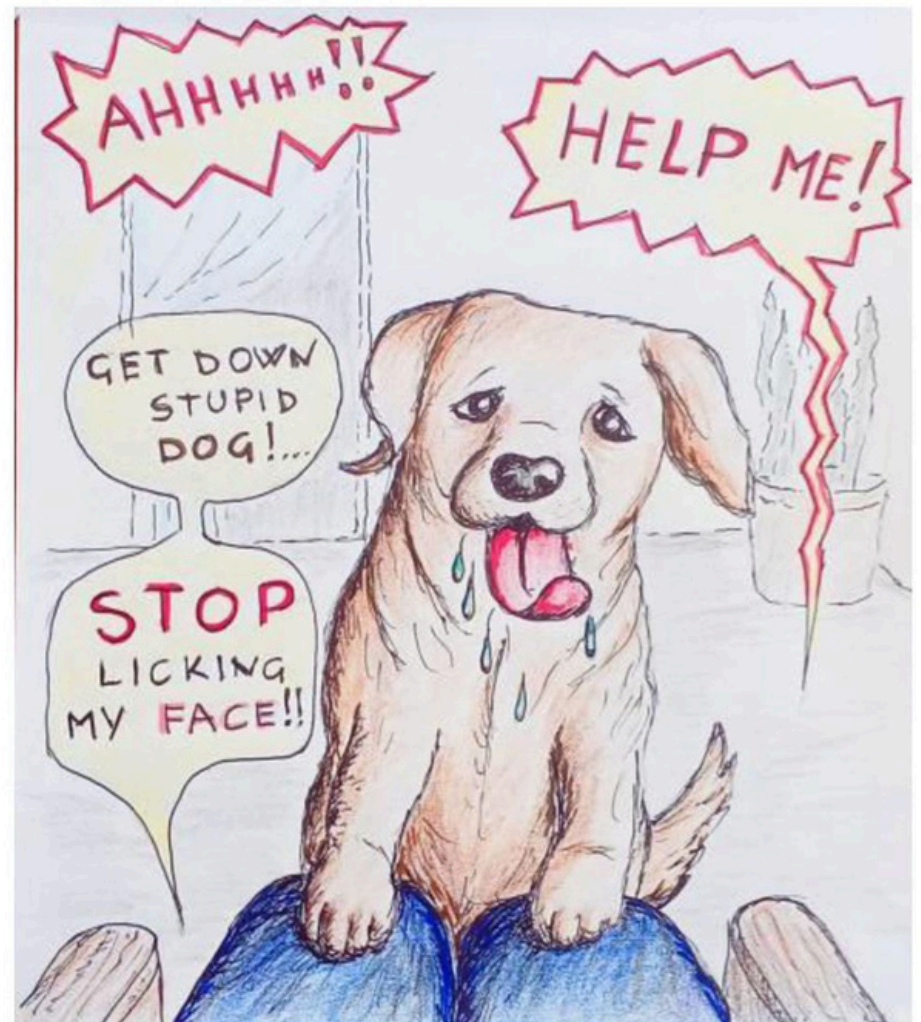
I had not seen Maria Laura for a while, so her invitation to lunch on 1st May took me by surprise. She had also invited some of her friends and her grandchildren to a barbeque in the garden and with the promise of a game of Burraco in the afternoon. I was alone at home and my fridge was almost empty. So I accepted the invitation with joy.

She was waiting for me at the end of the driveaway of her gorgeous villa, leaning on her walker because of a recent thighbone surgery. She smiled at me and we shared a warm hug. Then I was introduced to the other guests, a bunch of almost inconsolable

widows, five 'girlies' in their eighties, proudly showing their home-made traditional Sicilian dishes; pasta al forno, meat rolls, caponata. . . . "everything made with their own hands!" And all those goodies were for the joy of Laura's grandchildren who tucked eagerly into the barbeque stuff and ate half a tray of pasta with the same enthusiasm.

After lunch Maria Laura told us that she needed to take a brief nap. After lying down on the sofa she disappeared under a blanket. After two hours' awkward waiting my mood was changing for the worse. I got up from my armchair to see what was going on. Two ladies were immersed in fierce gossip, another two were sharing appetising recipes

and complaining about their hideous diets and in a corner almost hiding one was mumbling some kind of rosary.



Suddenly a huge Labrador, which had managed to get inside probably through a window, started to go around us getting closer and closer to my seat. All of a sudden he put his big paws on my lap and started licking my face all over. I stood up screaming like a crazy. Thank God! Maria Laura came back to the light from her dark 'cave' saying: "Calm down! He is a sweet big boy !" I dashed to the bathroom to wash

my face determined to leave that place immediately.

When I was back Moses, the dog, had been confined somewhere outside and the ladies were sitting at the table. "Are you ready?"

Maria Laura said, holding a pack of cards.
"Let's play Burraco!"

Giving a pill to a naughty Cat

I have always loved cats. Several years ago I had five cats at home. One of them, Trilly, was very mischievous and her health was rather delicate. One day it was necessary to give her a pill which would help her to heal. I picked her up and placed her on my lap, holding her body firmly with my arms as if she were a new born baby.

I applied a gentle but firm pressure in order to open Trilly's mouth. She was very worried and scared, too. She slipped away and hid behind the sofa of the living-room. The pill fell on the floor, of course. I tried again placing Trilly on my lap, holding her front

paws firmly. Then I forced her jaws open and pushed the pill into Trilly's mouth.

I held her mouth closed and counted up to ten. Later surprisingly I found the pill into the goldfish bowl while Trilly was trying quietly to eat the poor fish.

I took a new pill from the pill box and called



my daughter but the cat ran away in a flash clinging to the curtains of the living-room. No pill this time either! Then the cat came down from the curtains and ran away like a rocket breaking some figurines and two nice and

precious vases. I had to sweep carefully away any broken piece of figurines and vases trying to find the pill! Yes,--. it was right there! I was angry but I am a stubborn person. I never give up! Now I knew what to do! I had to cheat her. I mixed a crumbled pill with her favourite biscuits and so... Thank Good !!
..she took the pill. But ...did she? No wonder if some bits of a pill are lying well hidden somewhere under a piece of furniture !!

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***Thank
you!***