

ROSA MISTRETТА

Travel agent - 31 years old

You were born in Palermo, from a family that kept you locked in with no chance of rebellion. As a teenager you made many long-distance friends, bonding over a common love for comics: You read manga and nobody else in your school did. At first you just made pen pals, but when you finally got an internet line at home the possibilities suddenly became staggering.

Your first solo trip away from Sicily was to attend a convention: You crashed on the couch of a Tuscan girl you'd met on a fan-fiction website to attend Lucca Comics & Games. Besides finally meeting a few friends in the flesh, your priority was getting in line at the Astra Editions booth to get a signed copy of a fantasy novel you were deeply invested in. But as you waited for your turn, you couldn't help but stare at an illustrator doling out drawings on request; they'd later introduce him to you as Gioele Zacchei, the cover artist.

Maybe it was the way he kept to himself, or his smart, dreamy looks, or the fact that he belonged to a world you considered a sort of myth- the point is, you were terribly fascinated. He'd sent a few glances your way as well, yet he had no intention of coming onto you. But on that same evening, thanks to your friends and his colleagues, you found yourself

sharing a pizza. You talked late into the night and kept seeing each other for the rest of your trip.

You exchanged hundreds of emails over the next year. You literally fell in love with his words and every night you ran to check for his letters. The next summer he came to see you. You got together, and shortly after that you moved to Florence. You'd already considered moving North to look for work, but you didn't think it would happen so soon.

Although you lived with two roommates to save face, you spent most of your nights at his place. You weren't careful enough, and the next year you ended up pregnant. Your heart told you you wanted that child, but you were terrified at the thought of how people would react- your parents, yes, but Gioele as well. But he was wonderful: He asked you to marry him as soon as you told him. To your parents, the baby's birth was simply a bit premature.

So you became a mother at twenty-three. You called your little girl Marina, in memory of the thing you most missed about Sicily: the sea. You regret nothing, she is the best thing that ever happened to you, and those first years as a wife and mother were the happiest of your life.

But your financial situation was desperate: You couldn't find a job, Gioele made little money and up until the wedding he still lived with his parents. They saved you, by moving elsewhere and leaving you the

apartment you still live in. Now, eight years later, things are slightly easier: You work part-time in a travel agency, while your husband still struggles, although he has a few regular clients. And yet, if someone offered you to go back to those sleepless nights right after Marina's birth, to those days when you were so in love with Gioele, so happy with your life, you'd accept right away.

Your relationship has slowly deteriorated over the years, and you're not sure you love him now as much as you did back then. He's a good man and a responsible father, but he hasn't changed at all since your first meeting. Maternity, time and hardships have left their mark on you, for better or for worse: No longer the twenty-something who went wild over an autograph, you're a woman and a mother, and you want to be around adults, not opinionated teenagers blabbering about their inconsistent ideologies.

And Gioele is the most infuriating of them all, a dreamer who makes a big show of talking finance in the abstract, but can't write a shopping list for the life of him and still hasn't noticed you've changed tastes since ten years ago. Sometimes he asks why you don't want to go out anymore and he doesn't seem to get that going out is not the point: You can't stand his niche movie nights with boring "classics", nor do you want to hang around his clique when all they do is compare computers and critique this or that fantasy saga.

Not to mention his unbearable habit of politicising every little thing: Even choosing a vacation spot is a matter of principles! For once you'd just like to relax in a resort, leave Marina to the entertainers and roam the beach for a while,

but no, that's too "bourgeois". You want to go dancing, but it's "too commercial" a hobby for him. So are your tastes: Every singer you like is "mediocre", starting with your favourite, Tiziano Ferro. He just won't accept that you want some levity and he can't see how tired you are of watching him show off.

Giada brought a breath of fresh air into your life. Ever since she moved in last year, you have rediscovered how good it feels to find complicity, to doll yourself up before going out, to have someone to talk to about everything, even make-up and gossip and feminine things. She's from Sardinia and your first points of contact were your mutual love for the sea and nostalgia of your respective islands, but things didn't stop at that, although you have a hard time finding a label for your relationship. Sure, you go to the mall together ("A temple of consumerism!" Gioele proudly proclaims as soon as you tell him), and she once dragged you to Tiziano Ferro's concert, but she's also a confidante, a shoulder to cry on, someone who listens to your innermost thoughts.

She told you she was a lesbian right away; far from hiding it, she usually flaunts her sexuality to get other people to think. Her life hasn't been easy: As a girl she was abandoned by her first love, Franca, when her brother discovered their relationship. You know she feels something towards you, what you still don't understand are your own thoughts on the matter.

You have never been attracted by women and you've always believed you would never be capable of cheating on your husband. But during that concert, you kissed her.

During meetings

You and Gioele struggle to get to the end of the month: Your priorities are paying bills and allowing your daughter to live a dignified life. But this building is full of people who keep asking for useless renovations you can't afford. You try to consider them all, but when faced with excessive expenses you refuse to budge.

Relationships

Luciano Avellini: He's the building manager, and a good man.

Alice Gabbrielli: She takes care of a feline colony in the building. She goes a little overboard with the cats sometimes, but she's always been kind to you and she's Giada's friend on top of it.

Vincenzo Salemi: A meek and well-mannered forty-year-old. He's a childhood friend of Gioele's, but your husband does nothing but speak ill of him for "forsaking his political engagement".

Camilla Lanzi: A doctor, she's a bit too full of herself. Gioele can't stand her.

Gioele Zacchei: You have been married for ten years, but Gioele hasn't changed a bit since then. You're tired of his obnoxious left-wing intellectual act, of his being so contrarian. You'd very much like it if he began to think about your happiness and that of your child, instead of rambling about the state of the world.

Rosa Mistretta: (Your turn to speak)

Giada Fadda: A confident twenty-something ray of sunshine. She knows everything about your problems with Gioele. You went to a concert together and you kissed. You've been plagued by doubt ever since. You don't want to lose her, but you're not sure being with her is what you want; you're no longer certain you love your husband, but you fear that your feelings for Giada may be a consequence of your broken marriage. And then there's Marina. In short, whatever it is you choose to do, it will most certainly be a mistake. So when you saw her again after the concert you acted like nothing had happened. She understood and went along with it.

Ria Santos: She's young and she hasn't been a mother for long, you understand how hard it is to raise her child with an absent husband... But she's so obsessive about it! Every time you run into her she talks about her Luca non-stop, what he eats, how much he weighs, how worried she is over the sneeze she heard a week ago. She'll end up smothering the poor boy.

Dario Ristori: Another childhood friend of Gioele's. The forty-year-old owner of a long-lived soap company. A wealthy bachelor, he's notorious for never attending a council meeting without his lawyer and for demanding ridiculously expensive building improvements.

Attilio Daddioli: Dario's young attorney.

