

THE LOST TWIN



FEDERICO BETTI

TRANSLATED BY GENTIAN
CANE



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Содержание

Preface	5
I	8
II	14
III	23
IV	33
V	44
VI	55
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	62

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Translated by Gentian Cane

Published by Tektime

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This book is dedicated to all those people who, for any kind of reason, are known as Marco Mezzogori

Preface

He couldn't be aware of the consequences from this sort of action, which exactly at that moment would seem quite normal to anyone.

He did feel really fine and this was the only thing he was absolutely sure.

Of course, not because nothing particularly impressive has ever happened to him: the same daily routine, but to feel good was the most important thing to Him, while nothing occurred till then so that he could think of something to be changed either now or later.

In His case, the notion of time merely was not a matter of concern, as the flow of minutes, hours, days and so on, perfectly matched with the saying "Everything is relative".

One day, just at an imprecise moment, He saw Another one. What was He doing in that place?

Being not able to give an answer, He realized day by day that the Other one had obviously the same rights as Him, including the right to stay where he was indeed.

Anyway, since the first day of his appearance, all has gone smoothly, without any noticeable problem, until something went wrong.

He couldn't be able to identify what had gone wrong, but certainly there occurred something that brought about the change

to this situation. The Other one didn't show up, nevertheless all the rest remained unchanged, the same routine as always. Despite this, He would keep being the same, and for the sake of truth, He was feeling stronger and stronger every passing day...

Two months later...

The man shuddered and could hardly sleep for several days.

He knew that the day of luck could be any usual day of his life, and very soon he would become a father.

All his friends and relatives became aware and were getting ready for the baby party and, exactly on the day the woman has been urgently sent to the Medical Emergency, he called all those who, for the moment, came to his mind and let them know on the forthcoming day of luck.

In the surgery room, the man couldn't wait to see the baby. Perhaps being not aware of what he was doing, he shook his wife's hand as strongly as could be of pain to her.

After a very long wait, she gave birth to her baby and the anxiety faded away.

The woman was sent back to a patient room in the hospital Sant'Orsola of Bologna, along with her husband.

After the required checks, the Head of the Obstetrics Clinic informed the couple about the baby boy size, his weight of about four kilograms and tallness of forty two centimetres.

It doesn't seem to be real to the couple: on that day their dream became true.

After spending the necessary time for recovery and waiting

for the doctors' decision to take her out of the hospital, the man got to the hospital to pick her wife up and along with the baby went home.

At the same evening, the man made contacts with his closest friends and relatives for having a party together on the occasion of his baby boy birth.

It was a real party in a very literal sense, with creamy chocolate cake, desserts, snacks, many drinks and also presents of the newborn baby kit, and while at the end, all were about to leave, it turned out that everyone was coming back home even happier since the news of the baby birth has been released.

Twenty five years later

I

Carla Mezzogori used to live a life without any unusual turn, except that sometimes she used to hang out with her husband or her friends instead, while he decided to stay home and watch any sport in TV.

Both had promptly a good feeling, in harmony with each other, as none of them hadn't shown signs of doing things differently from what they usually did.

It could be said also that both of them were the typical persons habituated to the routine, that is, neither expected something particular from life, nor behaved in such a way to incite their fate beyond their usual daily activities.

They didn't have kids as no such desire had been expressed so far, additionally, they were afraid of having the same fate as Luciano, Carla's brother.

Since the birth, Marco, Luciano's son, had presented some kind of abnormalities, if may be said so, and with the passing of time, his parents found out that their son was suffering from hemiplegia. In other words, he couldn't move the right part of the body because of such disease. He wasn't able to move either the arm or the leg.

Of course that Luciano and his wife, once received the confirmation of diagnosis, did obtain much more information and made a lot of efforts to improve the health of their son,

through therapies and everything else, but health condition and common development of him had led to the decision of Carla and her husband to stop thinking of “giving birth to any baby”.

The missing kid and physical disability of her nephew had helped into the creation of a strong bond between Carla and Marco Mezzogori.

The boy had just turned twenty five and obviously had improvements since his birth, though no recovery could be considered yet.

Within the recent few years, Carla used to go and see her nephew, alone or in company of her husband, at least two or three times weekly; mostly during the evenings, often on her way back home or after dinner.

Just for thirty or forty minutes, long enough to see how he was doing, to have a chat with him and afterwards, she came back home.

Likewise the family of her nephew, Carla with her husband used to live in San Lazzaro of Savena, a county of Bologna, a few kilometers from the center of the capital of Emilia Romagna.

The nephew was living with his family in viale della Repubblica, a street parallel to the street Emilia, therefore it usually took them only a few hundred meters to reach the nephew's apartment, in the vicinities of via delle Rimembranze.

Frankly speaking, Carla Mezzogori didn't have great relationships with her sister-in-law, Marco's mother, nevertheless, Carla handled perfectly the situation whenever she

was going to meet her nephew, sometimes putting a brave face on a bad job.

Perhaps the character of Marisa Lavezzoli; this was exactly the name of the sister-in-law, was one reason why the father of the hemiplegic boy had run away, just when the boy had turned eighteen.

A very bizarre fact that Carla and her husband had realized since the very beginning was that Luciano Mezzogori had gone one day without talking to anybody, leaving nothing in writing or no trace at all, as if he was suddenly eager to change his life leaving the past behind, and go far away and never come back.

The situation of the two remaining family members, Marco and his mother, was not plain sailing.

Since the day her husband ran away, Marisa Lavezzoli has had to take care of her hemiplegic son, and to deal with any therapy or treatment of his physical impairment, and furthermore, she has had to afford the expenses for two surgical interventions Marco underwent during the last years.

From the day Luciano Mezzogori was not along with them, the whole savings had been used for the medical treatment of Marco.

Unfortunately, her mom had never managed to gain a permanent job and always had to be “satisfied” with any small job found occasionally and at a short term, which could have helped her earning enough money to afford the living expenses for herself and her son, as well as the expenses for his medical

treatment and care.

Over the years, things became even worse, and the eviction just arrived: now the mother wasn't even able to pay the rent, which was mainly afforded by her husband before, and in the course of a month, Marisa Lavezzoli and her son were both prompted to move in the apartment where they're actually living.

It was one of the Municipality-owned apartments that usually were given to the low-income people and it only took very little to get the apartment.

Consequently, it happened quite often that every time Marco's aunt went to their apartment, she used to give some money to them in the hope of being used at best.

Because of hemiplegia, the boy had always with himself one orthopedic brace for the shoulders and the right arm and another one for the right leg and moreover, he regularly took the botulinum toxin for reducing the muscular tension.

Marco indeed felt enormously grateful to everyone taking care of him, though he constantly felt himself like a burden to his mother, aunt, and anyone else taking care of him.

Another person, with whom Marco had a close relation besides his mother and the aunt, was the nurse who every morning used to go to his home exactly at the wake-up time and made the botulinum toxin injections.

She always considered him as her own son and he felt deeply grateful to it.

Daniela Rossi, a middle-aged woman, was a member of

the medical staff following up Marco since the day he's been diagnosed with hemiplegia. In the very beginning, the nurses switched with each other in taking care of Marco and helping him to carry out the daily needs, then through his mother, he had expressly declared to be followed by Daniela for the whole time.

Every time the nurse showed up in the apartment, Marco's mother usually went out and stayed alone in any other room, to avoid her presence; usually the injections made by Daniela lasted only half an hour in the morning and evening, and afterwards she used to leave and come back in the morning of the next day.

The same routine was applicable also to Andrea Fusari, the physiotherapy expert who was coaching Marco Mezzogori twice a week.

Exceptions were made only in the cases when Marisa Lavezzoli managed to find one of those small jobs at occasional basis, in which she was usually prompted to go out leaving her son alone: in such case, Ms. Rossi spent all the time with Marco until the return of his mother.

However, in some other cases, Marco used to remain alone at home, and it usually occurred when his mother considered necessary to do shopping unexpectedly.

Normally they counted on the availability of the service offered by the supermarket, it always worked out every time they're making orders through phone calls and home delivery was made by the supermarket in return, while in the case of unplanned purchases, the mother used to go out and made

shopping as quickly as possible to avoid leaving Marco alone for long hours.

The other cases when Marco used to be alone were exactly when he usually wrote on his personal diary.

He made such a decision when he had turned eighteen.

The diary was an inseparable companion of him, through the pages of which the emotions were transmitted, and he used to write down all the feelings, while sometimes he talked to it as if there was a mouth inside and it was able to speak. He recorded events from his everyday life, as well as any thought, emotion, and perception arisen to him.

Obviously, he considered the diary as a tool to give free rein to what he had inside, because he felt imposed to do so in a sort of situation which was never desirable to him.

Before sleep, he used to stay alone in his room, and turned his emotions into small letters written by him in ink.

Usually he tried to finish writing before the nurse showed up and before he laid himself on the bed, and if he couldn't do so, she used to leave him uninterrupted while he kept writing not in a hurry, and right after writing, she began to take care of him.

II

Stefano Zamagni knew Carla Mezzogori as both lived at the same street, in a few meters of distance: he was living next to the Square Repubblica while she lived in the intersection with the first segment of the street Venezia.

The first time they've met was just occasional, as one day he had helped her to take a heavy box out of the car, and thus expressing his willingness to pull it up to the entrance door of the building.

He was passing by the lady's car and immediately had offered his help seeing her in trouble.

In return, she had thanked him and then each of them had been going on their own way.

Since that day, he had met her by chance in the sidewalk and both saluted each other, and while the days passed, the police inspector had begun to get acquainted with the lady and her husband afterwards.

The relation established between Zamagni and Carla Mezzogori couldn't be defined as a true and proper friendship, but more or less a good acquaintance by both parties.

Several times, the couple would also invite Zamagni to spend some hours in their companionship during the evening, and in return, sometimes he would bring some drink and sometimes would invite them for having breakfast at the bar.

In all conversations, they used to talk about a diverse range of topics, including the job (Carla was a state official in the post office of Bologna located in the Mazzini quarter, her husband worked in a mechanic's shop; and they got very surprised when found that Stefano Zamagni was a police inspector), as well as the great attention Carla was paying to her nephew in particular, the bond she had established with him, and how the couple haven't had decided so far to have kids fearing that they would have the same fate. Of course, their conversations did also tackle topics of general interest.

As far as he knew about this family situation, Zamagni was often asking Carla about the health of her nephew trying to avoid any excessive bothering to her family affairs, and in response, Carla told that his condition was more or less stable.

It was obvious that the police inspector didn't always come up with such topic spontaneously, but he often took the chance from the lady, who was the one opening it up.

He only asked her very quickly about the boy's health, because after all he regretted that people may suffer such experiences.

Sometimes, Carla had told him about the relationship with her sister-in-law, which she considered unsatisfactory, as well as about her brother who, many years ago, had disappeared without leaving any trace. Consequently, Zamagni could have been able to assume that the family situation was quite disadvantaged.

All such thoughts disappeared in his head while being at job place, highly involved on solving a complicated case. Among

other things, he recently had experienced the unexpected epilogue of the occurrences related to Atropos case.

Zamagni wasn't yet able to realize the reality of things: he was committed to complete the process that seemed to be a routine investigation of the police, until a very strange and unimaginable thing occurred.

And everything ran so fast.

He was hearing with speakerphone a conversation that could have been very helpful to find the author of all those crimes, while Ema Simoni, one of his neighbors appeared nearby, bringing some food specialties she used to prepare, and exactly at this moment she distinguished the voice speaking on the other side of the phone. Meanwhile Zamagni hadn't realized what was really happening at least for the moment, then immediately he had implied the right connections even though he couldn't realize how it could be possible.

As far as appeared, the person speaking on the mobile phone had to do with Atropos case, but also he had to do with Daniele Santopietro, whom the inspector Zamagni had inquired in the past.

Moreover, there was the letter sent to him and those phone calls he'd received so far.

Haven't you received yet? That means it will come very soon. Meanwhile I wanted to congratulate you, the other person had said to him, and later he had hung up in order to call him back in a few minutes.

I wanted also to let you know something else, he had added, there exists a well-known rule that everyone should see his own business, without interfering in the others' business. I thought you were already aware, but it appears that I'm wrong.

Following the break after the conclusion of investigation on Atropos Association, Zamagni had been highly committed to find out the mysteries that laid around Daniele Santopietro, the encoded letter sent to him as well the anonymous person who had called him. Was it possible for any connection to exist between all these events? And what kind, if any?

He would take care of any single detail at the right time in collaboration with the agent Finocchi, who had always helped him until now, and similarly like Zamagni, had had to do with Daniele Santopietro in the past.

"Now I have to go out to buy a couple of things", said Marisa Lavezzoli to her son, turning on the TV. "I'm gonna leave you alone for a while. Stay calm and watch the TV. What channel do you prefer?"

He made her realize that there was not at all important for him to choose any TV channel, as each seemed to be equal to any other.

His mother put the remote control on the table and went out. Once back home in half an hour, she found her son in the same place like before, staring at the TV, with his eyes wide open.

"You see that I wasn't late enough?", she said, "Now I am completely available for you. I'm gonna go to the dining room

and read something over there. In case you need me, please make a call.”

The son returned with a gesture of approval and, after a while, watching TV, he felt his mother going through some pages.

The evening was also the same as always, the nurse arrived right on time to make the botulinum toxin injections while helping Marco to lie on the bed.

Once hearing the door bell, Marisa Lavezzoli put aside the papers she was reading at that moment, and hosted Daniela Rossi who spent as much time as needed to do her usual work, and afterwards she left away.

The night passed quietly until the appearance of the next morning, and the whole day did pass so.

On the following day, a tragedy occurred.

It was one of those days when Carla Mezzogori, on the way to her job place, usually stopped for a while to see her nephew and sister-in-law and, upon arrival at their house, her sister-in-law just appeared at the doorway having a face expression different from usual. The despair was clearly noticeable, the despair of such a person who has already lost everything and nothing else has been remained.

“What’s the matter, Marisa?”, Carla asked while entering the apartment, “What’s happened?”

After a while, her words have lost for a few instants because of what she saw in front of, and after taking some time to recover from the shock, asked: “How did it happen?”

The sister-in-law kept quiet for some instants before responding to such question, and then merely said these words: “I don’t really know how to explain”.

After wiping the tears streaking on her face, she kept saying: “So I did find him upon returning home. For a while, I went to buy something into the supermarket nearby, I could have been out maybe for... twenty minutes, thirty minutes at maximum.”

For an instant Carla stared at her hemiplegic nephew, lying on the floor of the dining room, and then moved close to the opened window.

“So far, do you have any rough idea what has happened here?”, asked Carla Mezzogori, in a broken voice.

“The only thing that comes to my mind is that someone could have entered the apartment through window in the attempt of robbery and has faced with Marco.”

“Did you check if you miss anything in the apartment?”

“Not yet. It didn’t come to my mind at all”, answered the sister-in-law, “I’m still shocked.”

“I think the best thing to do is to call the Police.”

“Frankly speaking, I don’t see it necessary for the moment”, she objected, “At first, I would prefer to get better from all that just happened to me.”

“As you like”, said Carla, without arguing, “however, I suggest you to call the Police so that they can start investigating as soon as possible.”

“I won’t forget to do so”, nodded the sister-in-law, unable to

hide her intention to cut it short, meanwhile Carla, upon arrival at home, talked to her husband Giuseppe, who in return, advised her to inform the inspector Zamagni on this matter.

“As part of the Police Forces, Zamagni could help us more than anyone else, or even takes charge himself of the case investigation”.

His wife agreed.

While Stefano Zamagni had just finished organizing the whole documentation on his desk related to Daniele Santopietro’s case as well as the letter sent right after the conclusion of Atropos Association’s case, his cell phone began to ring.

“May I?”, asked Carla Mezzogori on the phone.

“I was just checking some stuff, anyway, never mind. Tell me please.

“Well... do you remember Marco, my hemiplegic nephew?”

Zamagni nodded.

“Last night, on my way home after work, I went to his apartment just to see him for a while, and upon arrival, I found myself in front of a scene which I wouldn’t ever wish to be.”

“What happened there?”

“It wasn’t known exactly what’s happened”, started to tell Carla Mezzogori, ”however, my sister-in-law was in tear and my nephew laid down dead on the floor. He was alone at home, this is what my sister-in-law told me. Perhaps...”

“Oh, for God’s sake! I’m so sorry”, said Zamagni to the lady after hesitating for an instant and stopping her seemingly in mid-

flow. “Any clue on the cause of death? Probably he might have fallen down for some reason? Or you think it’s about an attempt of robbery?”

Even the inspector Zamagni didn’t really know how to deal with the situation that suddenly has come upon him.

“Seeing that the window was open, one assumption, though not reliable enough, is the robbery attempt. My sister-in-law will check if she misses something in her apartment, and I guess she has just did it last night or will do it today. She confessed to me that first of all, she would need to get over the shock occurred to her all of a sudden.”

“I got it”, replied Zamagni.

“If there has been a robbery attempt, for sure the perpetrator will be accused for murder. Isn’t it so?”, asked Carla Mezzogori.

“Yes, sure, if it comes out that such assumption is true”, returned the inspector, without taking any position.

“Would you be willing, I mean you and your colleagues, to go there and make an inspection onsite?”

“Frankly speaking, I am a little busy with some other tasks, but however, I will do a favor to you, as my friend, and will go right now to see the situation over there”, nodded Zamagni with a gesture of approval, “It is truly important that nobody should spoil anything in the apartment, although my impression is that the crime scene has been already stepped in, though unintentionally.”

“Yeah, probably”, said the woman, “I’m afraid that my sister-

in-law has touched any object or thing in the apartment.”

“That’s clear. In such a situation, I believe it will be very difficult for anyone who will be in charge of this case, to succeed in capturing the perpetrator.”

“I have no idea what you’re gonna decide to do next, however thanks for your attention and involvement.”

“I will do my best, but I can ensure you nothing”, was the answer of Zamagni who, after hanging up the phone, went to inform captain Luzzi for his absence in office due to a sudden incident happened.

III

Once arrived in via delle Rimembranze and exactly at the place Carla had indicated, Zamagni saw her waiting for him, and after a while, both of them went upstairs to the apartment of Marisa Lavezzoli in which Carla introduced the police inspector to her sister-in-law.

“Nice to meet you”, said Zamagni.

“Good morning”, replied back the mother of hemiplegic boy. “What’s the matter with you coming in this hour?”

“He’s a trustworthy person whom I know for a long time and just thought he’d come here and have a quick look at the apartment, in the attempt to realize what had happened here”, explained Carla Mezzogori pointing to Stefano Zamagni, “I should have been at work, instead preferred to take one day off in order to be here with him. It seemed right to do so.”

“Frankly speaking, I’m quite shocked by what just happened here”, returned Marisa Lavezzoli, “Perhaps it would be better if I stay alone for some time.”

“I don’t mean to bother you, madam”, the inspector tried to calm her down, seeing her upset, “It will take you only few minutes. Carla has told me roughly the general situation and I just wanted to have a look at the apartment. I have no idea who’s gonna take on the responsibility of this case, as it’s not my job to tell it, but what I can suggest is that you make a report to the

police authorities describing in detail what has happened.”

During all the time Zamagni spent talking to the mother of the victim and her sister-in-law, he was also looking around the place, noticing that the apartment was poorly furnished with the minimal stuff at a very low cost.

“Where was the dead body taken to? Did they take it away for the autopsy?”, then he asked the mother.

The woman nodded.

“Tell me a little bit more. What did you say to the persons who came to pick up the body of your son? When did you call them?”

“I went out for a while to buy some groceries, as I always used to do, then once back home, I found my son laid down on the floor”, the woman began to explain, “I had left a window open to allow some air inside the room, without thinking at all of somebody who could enter forcefully in attempt of robbery. Unfortunately, I found my son alone and probably a fight could have occurred between them. When Carla, my sister-in-law showed up, the incident had happened a short while ago, and after she left away, I called the ambulance saying that I found my son dead upon my return home. Unfortunately I was quite shocked and wasn’t aware of what had happened, therefore I merely declared the above without going into details such as the open window and all the rest that I just mentioned right now. The fight and robbery attempt are only my delirious thoughts, probably because of my instability from this tragic incident.”

“Fine, now I think I have a rough idea of what had happened

here”, nodded Zamagni, “However, I’d better get back to work now. I said before to the captain that I would leave shortly for something urgent, while now, I absolutely need to go back and continue what I was doing, otherwise he’s gonna be angry with me.”

The inspector said goodbye to Marisa Lavezzoli and left her apartment together with Carla Mezzogori.

“What do you intend to do next?”, she asked, while both were going down the stairs.

“I don’t know”, answered Zamagni, “I have no idea right now what is the best thing to do. In particular, your sister-in-law mentioned the open window, as an eventual attempt of robbery, but all this has been happened in such a short time? Furthermore, is it possible to measure more accurately the length of time passed from her leaving till she came back home? I wanna say that whoever is going for a robbery attempt should have the material possibility to make it happen, should have the sufficient time to come in, commit the act of robbery and then run away. If then, he comes across an unpredictable situation, of course that the robbery is not supposed to happen quickly. I wouldn’t wish the robbery attempt to be an assumption simply arisen by the “delirious thoughts” of your sister-in-law due to the shock she just experienced. In fact, the open window could be just a detail that misleads us in our inquiry on what had really happened. Are you sure that your nephew hasn’t fallen down accidentally? In this case, the solution would be only with such a statement “nothing

was found". A natural death or something of this kind, and that's all."

"As far as I know Marco, I strongly believe he hasn't moved out the room. At least, in normal circumstances. I think something more or less unexpected has happened indeed", returned Carla Mezzogori.

"I see", said the inspector after all, "In any case, we need to wait for the results of autopsy."

"All right!", she nodded.

"Excuse me now, Carla, but I absolutely need to get back to my pending jobs. I should begin with the verification of some important documents and after all, I wouldn't want the captain getting angry with me as I've been out for long hours. I promised him to get the job done very soon and still need to begin with it."

"Don't worry", she reassured him, "Go back to your uncompleted jobs. Thanks for your particular attention and interest you've shown so far."

"It has been my pleasure", returned Zamagni, "For anything you may have, please don't hesitate to tell me. The worst that may happen is that I couldn't have enough time, but nevertheless, in one way or another everything will be solved."

"Thank you."

"Not at all."

Both said goodbye to each other, and then the inspector got back to work and the lady went home.

Once back to his work desk, Zamagni found the same huge

piles of paperwork waiting for him, the same ones since he left office for going to Carla Mezzogori, then sat down, and after a while started to review the documents related to Daniele Santopietro's case.

After about one hour yielding no positive result, in which he wasn't able to find the connection between Atropos Association, that voice on the phone and Santopietro, the inspector took back the letter sent to him before, but coming to no conclusion at all.

He wasn't finding any connection that could probably help him get a possible solution, therefore he put the letter aside, stood up and went to buy some drinks at the vending machines in the hallway.

While drinking some lemon ice tea in can, he saw his colleague Finocchi coming right there.

"Hi Stefano."

"Hi Marco", said the inspector, greeting back to him.

"How's going on?", asked the agent, "Did you take up work again after the case you've handled with Atropos Association?"

"Pretty much", answered Zamagni, "I meant that I got plenty of rest since the completion of that case, and now I'm still trying to gather some data available in order to find out the connection between Santopietro, the voice of that man over the phone and the letter I've received, but didn't find any clue for the moment. Probably my reference view is not the right one."

"Yes, it could be so", nodded the agent, "Let's get together and review all the details. Perhaps we can find out something helpful

for our further inquiry.”

“All right.”

“If you can wait me for a moment, I’ll go and take a drink just for refreshment.”

“Of course”, said Zamagni, “May I offer it to you?”

“Ah, no... I already owe a pizza to you, next time I have to pay it out, therefore don’t even think to offer me anything to eat, otherwise we’ll never be equal”, returned Marco Finocchi.

“Nevermind.”

“Well, how did you spend those few days of vacation?”, then asked the inspector.

“Nothing special. Just relaxed. What about you, any interesting thing you’ve done?”

“Either me, nothing special, except for an evening party out with my friends, drinking with them.”

Zamagni nodded.

“Shall we leave?”, suggested the agent throwing away the can into the trash bin.

“Yeah, let’s go.”

As soon as arrived at Zamagni’s working desk, both met with captain Luzzi who was waiting for them right there.

“That’s the way how you should work?”, said the superior in a serious tone of voice.

“I’m sorry captain, but I needed to have a fresh and cold drink, and afterwards Finocchi showed up and took also something for himself. Maybe we’ve wasted time, but now promise that

we're gonna set to work really hard. Unfortunately, I didn't find anything that would help us to make the connection between the facts and the people in the inquiry process, but I guess everything will become easier as we're already two persons instead of one".

"I was kidding if you understood me right", the captain said to them, "Among other things and the documentations on your working desk, I noticed the letter that was sent to you before. But I forgot to tell you something important. The expert that examined the text carefully, wasn't able to decode those words written over there, however he found that the letters are in Greek."

"Ah.. therefore, I confirmed the impression I had when reading the text for the first time", admitted Zamagni, "I never have learnt Greek, hence didn't know what to say, but now we are sure about it."

"Yeah. The point is that unfortunately, this expert lacking a full proficiency of Greek language, has failed to provide us with the text decoding. We need to have the decoding from somebody else."

"Sounds good, meanwhile me and Marco will take care of the rest."

"I think you'd have no time for now", said Giorgio Luzzi.

"I'm not clear at all", said the inspector, "What's up? Is something else so urgent that we'd rather leave this at a later time?"

"We still don't know for sure, but I guess we're gonna get to

know very soon.”

“May we have a little bit more of information?”, asked Zamagni kidding.

“You’re right. Now I’m gonna explain it better to you”, returned the captain.

“We’re listening very carefully”, said Finocchi.

“Do you remember a hemiplegic boy?”, the captain began to speak, turning to the inspector.

“...Marco?”, asked Zamagni, after a moment of hesitation.

The agent Finocchi turned around, with a hugely surprised face.

“Ah, sorry, I didn’t think it was about him”, said immediately Zamagni.

“I don’t really understand what you’re talking about”, returned Marco Finocchi to them.

“Do you mean Marco Mezzogori?”, Zamagni asked the captain, who in return nodded as a sign of approval.

“Yeah, I’ve known him, if it’s correct to say so”, then continued the inspector, “I’m informed that he was found dead yesterday in late afternoon.”

“Could you extend some explanation to me as well?”, asked Finocchi.

“I will tell you everything after a while”, Zamagni cut it short, before turning to the captain once more.

“How come you already know that?”

“I’ve been informed about the results of autopsy. It’s been a

murder.”

The inspector still remained speechless and after some moments, the captain began to speak.

“From the results of autopsy, it comes out that a fight has been occurred between the hemiplegic boy and the murderer. Nobody knows the real cause of the fight, but we should keep inquiring further on.”

“Why did you approach to me personally, captain?”, asked Zamagni, “I’ve got acquainted with the boy by chance, at the time he was found dead, and additionally, we need to take care of the verification of these documents. Isn’t anybody else who could be in charge of this case?”

“Perhaps would be”, returned the captain, “but there is one other detail I haven’t yet mentioned to you.”

“What is it about?”

“The boy’s aunt has called the police, probably after the family has been informed on the results of autopsy, and has explicitly demanded you to deal with the investigation of this case.”

The inspector remained silent for a couple of seconds, and then nodded.

“Ok, as you wish.”

“Have you become famous now?”, the agent Finocchi asked Zamagni.

“I don’t think so, but I know personally the boy’s aunt. It was just to do her a favor as she’s my acquaintance by chance. ”

The agent nodded.

“Well, what are you waiting for?”, the captain said to them, as if he was feeling around the pressure that needed to be taken away.

“Let’s go right now”, said Zamagni, and Marco followed him while both of them went down the street.

“Now, it would be the right moment to talk to me and tell me some more things.”

“I’m gonna tell it to you on the way to San Lazzaro of Savena.”

“But what are we supposed to do right there? Do you need to pass by your house at first?”

“No. That’s the place where the murder did occur.”

IV

“Could you let me know on what I’m supposed to do right there?”, asked the agent Finocchi, sat down on the passenger seat while coming close to San Lazzaro of Savena.

“All happened just by chance”, began to speak the inspector Zamagni, driving the car in the attempt to escape from the heavy traffic on the road, “I know shortly Carla Mezzogori, the aunt of hemiplegic boy who remained dead from the murder. She asked me a favor to go and see the apartment where her sister-in-law actually lives. It was very obvious that the boy, given his physical disability, was living together with the mother.”

Marco Finocchi nodded, and then let the inspector to go on with the whole story.

“His mother declared that she went out for a while in the evening of the same day the boy was found dead. She still says of going out to buy some stuff as always, and once back home, she found her son laid down on the floor, with no sign of being still alive.”

“But who could have wanted him dead?”, Finocchi asked such a question to himself and to the inspector as well. “I mean... he was an innocent boy, I guess. I think he hasn’t been harmful to anybody. One of the reasons occurring to my mind right now, is the vengeance for an offence the boy has committed before.”

The agent remained silent for an instant, and then got back to

reasoning.

“But how can we? Perhaps it has to do more or less with a sort of dispute?”

“I couldn’t really make a guess in this regard”, said Zamagni, “If it was about a sort of dispute, who would be the other person the boy has been disputing with? There wasn’t anyone else inside the apartment, is that right?”

“Yeah, exactly”, nodded Finocchi, “It seems nobody, so far.”

“Another assumption is that of a petty thief who enters the apartment forcefully seeing the window left open, comes across with the boy over there, then suddenly a fight occurs between them while the boy is disadvantaged because of his general physical disability.”

“Based on this version, to my opinion there’s a problem in terms of time, which means that, everything is supposed to happen very quickly”, said the agent.

“For now, we can only make guesses”, returned Zamagni, “Until now there are very few facts on which we can give any opinion.”

“What did mother say when you visited her with the sister-in-law?”

“Nothing useful. She merely said of being very shocked and failing to think or speak about it.”

“Yeah”, nodded Finocchi, “Now eventually, since some time has already passed, she could do better, and be able to tell us further information. Perhaps she’s been very confused in her

mind due to the trauma caused by the son's death and can't help thinking of what had happened to her."

"Ok then, we're going to make a try once more", proposed the inspector, "Let's hope things will go better than the last time... We arrived."

After they parked the car along the road, both of them moved towards the apartment where the woman was living, ringed the bell and once introduced themselves, went upstairs to the apartment at the first floor.

"Hello, madam", said Zamagni, "We already know each other quite well, while the person next to me is one of our colleagues. Please, let me introduce you with the agent Marco Finocchi."

"Good morning", returned Marisa Lavezzoli, "I guess you're here again for the investigation on my son's death, isn't it so?"

"Yes, exactly", admitted the inspector, "We'd want to talk a little bit on what had happened to your son."

"But I've already told you", the mother of hemiplegic boy tried to cut it short.

"I know, madam. Please excuse us, but we're in charge to shed light on this case", said Zamagni, in attempt to avoid any sort of dispute with her.

"You may perfectly understand that we're here with the only scope of finding out who is the murderer of your son", added Finocchi, "We've been acknowledged on the autopsy report, results of which reveal that it's been a murder."

"We'd want to catch him and do justice to your son", said

Zamagni.

The lady remained silent for an instant, without opening her mouth, and then said only a few words: “I don’t know if I can help you to do your job. I am still shocked because of what had happened to me.”

“We perfectly understand how you feel”, returned the inspector very empathetically, “and we’ll make sure the situation appears as easy as possible to you. We’re only doing our job, intending to do all that is possible, for bringing the murderer to justice. To make it happen, we also need for your help and for everything else you might know, which would make our job easier.”

The woman still kept silent.

“We cannot exclude a priori any version, but basically, the robbery attempt is less likely to happen due to lack of time”, said Zamagni.

“Have you ever thought that possibly the time has been well planned by the robber, who instead had studied all the timings in detail?”, Marisa Lavezzoli asked both of them, “That is, everytime I go for shopping, I use to do it pretty much at the same timings, hence the thief might have noticed that and then tried to enter the apartment forcefully.”

“It’s likely to happen what you’re saying now”, admitted the inspector, “even though doubts remain in this respect. However, we’re still at the initial phase of our inquiry. For the moment, it would be enough for us to gather as much data as possible.”

“Now I would like to leave me alone”, said the woman, “I’m not in good mood and would want to have some rest, without thinking at all.”

Zamagni and Finocchi stared at each other, and then looked at the mother of the hemiplegic boy.

“Please.”

“Ok”, nodded the inspector, “but please be advised that we’ll need your help to conclude this case, and, for sure, we’ll have to get back to you again.”

The woman nodded in sign of approval and saying nothing else, opened the door and kindly asked the two policemen to leave the apartment.

“Unfortunately, the Forensic Science probably won’t be able to find anything helpful. The fingerprints are already confusing”, said Zamagni, going down the stairs.

“Proceeding in such a way would lead us nowhere”, captain Luzzi pointed out as soon as he learned about the unsuccessful visit to the apartment of the hemiplegic boy’s mother.

Zamagni and Finocchi nodded, and then the inspector added: “As long as the lady seems unwilling to cooperate, it would be extremely hard for us to come to a final solution of this case.”

“Frankly speaking, it hasn’t occurred to my mind before”, said Marco Finocchi, “what about her husband? The hemiplegic boy has had a father, right?”

“It seems that one day he has left away, as if he disappeared into thin air”, explained Zamagni.

“This means that he’s not findable so far?”, asked the agent.

“It seems so, even though I’d want to get in touch with him”, said the inspector.

“At least, he would be able to save his wife suffering from this shock”, asserted Finocchi.

“Would be possible to start searching for him?”, proposed Zamagni, “If we succeed, then we can make him meet his wife again. Even though there’s bad blood between them, I believe the two spouses could become closer to each other for the sake of their son.”

“Yeah, we can have a try”, admitted the captain, “Let’s spread the word then.”

“All right. What else can we do in the meantime?”, the agent Finocchi wanted to know.

“Good question”, Giorgio Luzzi replied to him, “We don’t have yet in our hands any fact or clue that may lead us to a pertinent connection or conclusion. Although it might seem unlikely, this is the only lead to be followed at the moment.”

“Hence, how are we gonna proceed further on?”, asked Zamagni. “I don’t know”, was the instinctive answer of the captain, “We need to squeeze our brains and come up with some idea.”

Since the day in which the tragedy happened, the mother of Marco Mezzogori, had switched from the initial state of shock to a sort of nervous breakdown, and as far as appeared, she had no desire to meet or talk to anyone.

Even Carla, the aunt of hemiplegic boy, so far hadn't been in the apartment of her sister-in-law after the death of her nephew.

The nephew was indeed the true inspirational motive of her visits to that apartment, and this was also because of the cold relationships with her sister-in-law.

Giuseppe Ruspoli, Carla's husband, and Luciano Mezzogori, Marco's father, used to work together in the same mechanic shop, and it occurred once in a while that Carla went to see her brother in the job place.

In this way she had met by chance her future husband.

To be more precise, Luciano was the employer of his brother-in-law given that he was the owner of this mechanic shop and the other one located in Bologna as well.

At that time, Luciano Mezzogori was already engaged to Marisa, her future wife, and it occurred to both couples to get together and arrange a hangout around.

On those occasions, Carla has had also the chance to know Marisa much better, and at once she had the feeling that Marisa seemed a woman unrealised in the full sense. Her husband used to say that she should be dealing with housework, instead of working. She had no kids and her hobbies were just limited to very minimal things. She also used to listen music, and occasionally used to go to cinema with Luciano for watching movies, and that's all.

Her self-realisation has been materialized in her son, Marco, who very soon had presented some problems with hemiplegia.

It was obvious that Marisa was never felt happy and, as if this wasn't enough, her husband also disappeared one day. Carla still hasn't been able to understand the reasons that led to such disappearance; the only thing occurred to her mind was that her husband could no longer bear to see the son in that condition, but in her view, he wasn't that kind of person who could abandon his own family due to such reason.

Moreover, their son now wasn't with her anymore, he's dead already.

Carla didn't know how to cope with such situation, as she was completely aware of the problems and hardships arisen and, on the way to the apartment of her sister-in-law, she wouldn't allow any mistake to herself. In particular, the very first approach would be decisive.

When decided to go and visit her sister-in-law, she saw no significant change happened since the day when she witnessed her sister-in-law with the son laid down dead on the floor.

On the way back home, she passed by her as usual, and went upstairs to her apartment, but once showed up at the door, she noticed that her sister-in-law was not so welcoming.

Once entered the apartment, Marisa immediately said: "I'd want to be alone."

"You should do something to overcome this situation", Carla advised her, "We both know that it has been a big shock, but now the Police is inquiring to find the murderer of your son and do justice for him. Meanwhile, you should think to do your best so

that you can go back to normality.”

“And why would it really matter!”

“I can imagine it’s extremely hard for you, but you should do something. Have you ever tried to go out for a walk around?”

“No”, was the sharp reply of Marisa Lavezzoli.

“You need to try”, said Carla, “You should give courage to yourself in order to shrug off these thoughts. Unfortunately, only the idea that Marco won’t be back amongst us, is very hard even to me, but we cannot help but admit it, and it’s worthwhile to realise that your behavior is not helpful at all.”

“There are only words, what you’re saying, but now I remained alone, and all this due to an incident.”

“I’m fully aware that a petty thief may have come up here through the open window, but, what if he might have an unexpected sickness, and consequently the autopsy results could have proved to be wrong? Have you ever thought about it? It may occur sometimes that even doctors make mistakes, isn’t it so?”

Carla has pronounced these last words mostly in attempt to make her distract from the current situation, because she herself didn’t believe such words said to her sister-in-law.

Carla was convinced that something terrible had happened to her nephew, who perhaps was prompted to fight with a kind of murderer or thief without having the slightest chance to run away unharmed.

“I’m so sorry the problem remains intractable”, Marisa expressed her apologies, “But the situation is quite critical and

believe me, I would get more exhausted before escaping from all this.”

Carla nodded.

“Now I’m going home”, she said at the end, realizing that it was time to go away and leave alone her sister-in-law. Perhaps it was better to take one step at a time, and for the moment, the right thing was to put the conversation to an end.

Marisa said goodbye to her sister-in-law, who left the apartment and went out into the street.

Having behind him several scenarios on the murder, Stefano Zamagni was aware that sometimes the most obvious motive was the true one, while in other cases the true motive was the the most unthinkable one.

Thinking back to what he’d witnessed in Mezzogori’s apartment before and what he’d already learnt about the family, the inspector didn’t know which way to turn.

Although the robbery attempt gone wrong was seemingly the less convincing motive, this shouldn’t be excluded a priori.

Setting aside the robbery attempt by a petty thief who enters forcefully the apartment, who else would be willing to want him dead? However, taking not into consideration the version of robbery, this was the very first question to raise in order to come up with the identification of murderer.

What about if the murderer has been a friend or relative of the dead boy, who for some reasons, could have got a dispute with the boy?

What about his father? Could be possible that he might have a role in this murder? Theoretically, he was not supposed to have the keys of the new apartment, as he had left away times before his wife and son moved to the current one, nevertheless nothing could be excludable indeed.

The above were merely some versions occurred to Stefano Zamagni and Finocchi's mind meanwhile they were still reasoning on this case.

"Is there any news on his father?", the inspector asked captain Luzzi.

"Not yet for the moment, unless he's been found right now."

"So, what is our next step?", asked Marco Finocchi.

"First of all, we can go back to the mother to see if she's able now to help us, then probably we'll have a talk with other neighbours in the building, which may likely help us to get some more information", proposed the captain, "Somebody could have heard or seen any kind of things that may appear useful."

"So, we have to go back to that place", said Zamagni finally. "Meanwhile we're hoping to find the father as soon as possible."

"All right", concluded Giorgio Luzzi.

V

On the next day, Zamagni dhe Finocchi went back to Marisa Lavezzoli, hoping their visit would be much more successful than the previous one.

“Good morning, madam”, said the inspector, showing up at the front door of the apartment. The lady let them enter, then sat on the armchair inviting both of them to sit down as well.

“How are you feeling today?”, the agent Finocchi asked her.

“As usual, more or less”, she answered.

“Do you think you’ll be able to talk to us a little bit?”, Zamagni wanted to know, “More information is needed in order to come to a final solution of this case.”

“I’m not in good mood”, the lady clarified at once, “What would you like to know?”

“Any kind of information that could be helpful to us to move ahead with the inquiry and identify the murderer”, explained the inspector, “we’ve already made some assumptions based on those few facts we’ve acknowledged up to now, nonetheless, we still need much more information. Anything that you may tell us, is very welcomed.”

The lady nodded.

“For the moment, we consider that the version of robbery attempt and consequently, the fight between your son and the robber, is very unlikely to happen”, began to say Zamagni,

“We’re focusing more closely on other motives, although don’t know yet on which element we should focus our attention.”

“I cannot figure out how to really help you. Nothing comes to my mind.”

The inspector nodded, then added: “Have you no idea of anybody else who could have had a reason to hurt your son?”

The lady didn’t speak at all.

“We really understand your state of mind now, but we need you to make a try.”

There was a short silence, and then the agent Finocchi pointed out the short time from the moment the lady left until she went back.

“Could have been someone who has organized this plan well in advance?”, the inspector asked the lady.

“Somebody who’s been very aware of my movements?”

“We can’t figure it out”, Marco Finocchi expressed his opinion, “We’re just making some assumptions. We need your help in order to have something more specific in our hands.”

“Would your son be capable to open himself the front door of the apartment, if seeing the door bell ringing?”, the agent Finocchi asked a question.

The lady shook her head.

“Ok”, said then the inspector, “It occurred to our mind that the murderer could have been a friend or acquaintance of your son who, for some reason, has got a score to settle with him.”

“My son didn’t have friends. The only acquaintances of him

were the nurse who used to assist with the injections of botulinum toxin as well as the rest of medical team that followed him since the very beginning.”

“Could you please tell us the name of the nurse?”, asked Zamagni.

“Her name is Daniela Rossi.”

The two policemen inquired how to find her, then the agent Finocchi added: “Hence, the suspect could be one of relatives, although such assumption could seem very improbable. Right?”

After such declaration, the agent crossed with the eyes of Zamagni and the dead boy’s mother.

“I didn’t mean to hurt anybody”, said immediately Marco Finocchi, “It’s only that I wanna exclude nothing, therefore we need to take also this version into consideration.”

“As regards to what I’ve stated previously, what can you tell us about your husband?”, asked Zamagni.

“He hasn’t been with us for some years”, replied back Marisa Lavezzoli, “I don’t quite remember how many years exactly have been passed. Do you really think that he is the murderer?”

“As we said earlier, at least for now we’re trying to consider everything with no exception”, emphasized the inspector. “Does your husband have the keys of this apartment? ”

“No”, responded the woman, “He never had the keys. He wasn’t with us when I and my son Marco moved to our current apartment.”

“That’s clear enough”, nodded Zamagni, “Do you have any

idea why he ran away?”

“I can explain it with his inability to cope with the present situation.”

“In what sense?”, asked Marco Finocchi.

“To my opinion, he couldn’t bear the health condition of our own son.”

Both policemen nodded.

“Now I feel very exhausted”, said the lady, after a moment of silence, “If you don’t mind, I would like to have a rest.”

“We’re gonna leave very soon”, replied Zamagni. “Do you have any idea how to get in touch with your husband, madam?”

“No I don’t, sorry.”

After saying the last words, Marisa Lavezzoli kindly asked both policemen to leave the apartment.

Taking the chance of being still inside the building, Zamagni and Finocchi decided to talk to other neighbors in order to gather some information, confirmation or denial, in regards with the hemiplegic boy and his family.

They firstly knocked in the doors next to the apartment in which the boy was found murdered, but nobody responded, therefore went upstairs on the upper floor.

“Hello, can we take your time shortly?”, asked Zamagni, meanwhile an elderly woman wanted to know who was knocking in the door. “It won’t take much time. We’ll finish very quickly with you.”

Through the half opened door, the inspector showed the police

identification card and in turn, the woman let them in.

“What’s up?”

“We’d like to talk to you for a while on something happened a few days ago”, said Zamagni. “On the first floor, to be very precise.”

“I have no idea on what you’re talking about, however I will help you, if I might be useful.”

“Do you recognize Mezzogori family?”

“I merely know the mother is living only with her son in that apartment”, replied the woman, “I’ve never seen the father.”

“The son was found dead one day ago”, explained the inspector, without mincing words.

“Oh, what a pity!”, cried out the woman, expressing sadness in her face, “This is the reason why I saw the medical emergency team through the peephole. I heard some noises, therefore I saw through the peephole those who were walking up and down the stairs. But how did it happen?”

“We don’t know exactly, therefore we’re searching for information that may lead us to the right path in our inquiry”, replied Marco Finocchi, “Have you ever seen or heard anything that drew your attention? I mean, besides the fact you just mentioned, the medical emergency team that you saw through the peephole.”

“I am very sorry that I can’t help you further, but recently I don’t usually go out. You know, I am at an age that better not to undertake such risks.”

Zamagni nodded, then asked the old lady if she could be able to provide some other information on the family, any sort of information that could help them to come out of the darkness wrapped around the whole investigation.

“Unfortunately, I can’t say much to you”, she declared, “I know that the mother was taking care of her son all the time and I think there was also another person... a nurse, maybe? ... Or a doctor?... who used to come to their apartment day by day. Don’t know what she was doing exactly but I think she used to provide assistance to the son. He was suffering from a kind of paralysis.”

“Anyway, I thank you a lot for welcoming us”, said the inspector, “We apologize for bothering and taking your time.”

“Nevermind. No need to worry at all. I would like to offer my help, though only for a little. I really hope to have been useful to you.”

“Although your statements aren’t new facts to us, again we’ve confirmed those we already knew”, admitted Zamagni. “We’d be very grateful if you’d let us know if something else comes to your mind, or if occurs to hear or see any kind of fact or information that draws your attention.”

“For sure I’ll do it, with great pleasure”, said the old lady, saluting both policemen.

The inspector gave his business card, then both of them said goodbye to her and left the apartment with the intention to contact other neighbors inside the building. They soon realized that only elderly people were living in that building, who all

confirmed, more or less, what they already knew.

In fact, none of them had ever seen the father of hemiplegic boy, however such information did mean nothing, and as far as appeared, even the family didn't have any dispute or claims against them, besides the disability problem of Marco Mezzogori and the economic hardships. The poor economic situation was a normal conclusion drawn by Zamagni and Finocchi who explained this with the fact that both mother and her son used to live in a building owned by the Municipality of San Lazzaro of Savena, at an estimated low price.

During the time spent there, both policemen had been able to talk to the majority of neighbors, besides those ones living at the same floor with Marisa Lavezzoli, but, in all cases they'd have enough time to go back there considering the long time the investigation would take.

Once getting in the car, the inspector Zamagni informed the captain about the confirmation enabled by some neighbors in the building as well as the interviews to be made as soon as possible with the rest of them, and then informed him about the intention to go and meet the nurse who used to take care of the hemiplegic boy, and lastly, they'd get back to work after completion of all the above tasks.

"All right", agreed Giorgio Luzzi, "Meanwhile, I'm letting you know that the father is not trackable yet."

Since the day the tragedy has been happened, Miss Daniela Rossi waited for the police to come and see her in person over

the following days, because, other than his close relatives, she was probably the person who perfectly knew Marco Mezzogori.

The lady welcomed Stefano Zamagni dhe Marco Finocchi at her own apartment situated in the street Carlo Sigonio in Bologna and accommodated them in the dining room.

“Would you like to drink something?”, she asked, “Even simply a glass of water or a cup of coffee.”

“I’ll have a cup of water with pleasure, if you don’t mind”, said the inspector, and the agent Finocchi also demanded the same.

Nodding, Miss Rossi left for a while and came back with two bottles of ice water, one natural and one sparkling, and with two glasses, served in a tray. “I have also water at normal temperature, if you don’t prefer it cold.”

“We don’t intend to disturb you more”, said Zamagni also thanking her.

“As you like”, said the woman lastly, and then asked them about the reason of their visit. Though she was able to guess it.

“We’re following up the case of Marco Mezzogori”, began to speak Zamagni pouring some natural water in the glass. “It’s about a hemiplegic boy whom you knew very well.”

Daniela Rossi nodded.

“As you’d probably learned, the boy has been found dead on the floor of his apartment and the autopsy results have shown that it’s a murder.”

“I am pretty aware”, confirmed the lady, “The boy’s mother have told me.”

“Ok, fine”, said Zamagni, “Now we’d like to make some other questions regarding the boy.”

“What you’d like to know?”

“Anything that could be useful to our inquiries”, explained the inspector, “unfortunately, we’re groping around in the dark. Please tell us what comes to your mind for the moment.”

“Ok”, the lady began to speak, “I’ve recognized Marco Mezzogori since he was a child. His family learned very soon about the problems he had with motor development. He was able to move only the right part of the body. After some diagnostical examinations, it was found out that the boy was suffering from hemiplegia, one of the cerebral paralysis symptoms. It could be the case of a person who appears to be a tetraplegic, or not able to move either the upper limbs or the lower limbs... have you ever read the books in which Lincoln Rhyme is the protagonist?”

Zamagni nodded, while the agent Finocchi got very surprised.

“I will explain it later on”, said the inspector, and then turned to the nurse. “Go on, madam.”

“Yes, of course, I really apologize for jumping out of the main topic of our discussion. I was saying... due to a cerebral paralysis, or inability to move two limbs out of four ... usually it’s the lower limb that he’s not able to move ... or, just like the case of Marco Mezzogori, the disabled person may result with hemiplegia, when the paralysis partly affect the body, only a section of it. This boy wasn’t able to move the right part of the body. For your information, there exist some other forms of

paralysis such as the monoplegy and triplegry.”

“Hence, the boy for example needed to learn to carry out a lot of jobs and make movements with the left hand”, agent Finocchi dared to say.

The nurse nodded.

“Have you anything else to tell us?”, asked Zamagni, “For example, how were the relationships in the family? And out of the family, as far as you may know?”

“Yeah”, responded the lady, “The mother was very attached to her son, this was very obvious every time I used to go to their apartment. The son was the most important to her. Regarding his father, I don’t really know what to say to you. I’ve recognized him, yeah it’s true, but he wasn’t present most of the time I’ve spent there, because of engagements with his job or probably with shopping or something like that. I simply know that he used to go to the bar caffe in the street Repubblica in San Lazzaro of Savena, that is, the one in the very center of the city, not the bar caffe located in the intersection with...what’s the name of that street?”

“Street Jussi?”, suggested the inspector, “Is this the name of street you mean?”

“Yeah, exactly. He frequented that bar caffè, and once back home, he often went there after work. Her wife has told me.”

“Ok, that’s clear”, nodded Zamagni.

“Hence, as I was saying to you, I’ve seen the father very rarely. Although, as far as I know, one day he disappeared. Yeah, one

day.”

“The same was told to us as well”, admitted the inspector. “Have you ever recognized any other relatives or friends of the boy, who probably may have some kind of reason to hurt him?”

“I already recognize Mrs. Carla, the sister of boy’s father, who always seemed a very calm person. I saw her very often as she used to come and see her nephew two or three times a week after work. As for the rest... don’t know what to say. I think he didn’t have any friend or acquaintance in particular.”

“Many thanks for your information. I think it’s enough for now”, said the inspector, “Anyway, we kindly advise you to remain available if necessary.”

“Sure, no problem for me”, agreed the lady.

“We’d be pleased to talk to the chief of medical team that followed up the health condition of the hemiplegic boy”, added Zamagni, giving a business card to the nurse.

“Of course. I think he’s not able to help you more than I did, however, here is the telephone number of professor Salvemini. The medical team is at the hospital Sant'Orsola of Bologna”, Daniela Rossi concluded her statement and then gave to the inspector a plasticized card with all the useful contact information to get in touch with the medical team.

Both policemen thanked the nurse for taking her time and left away.

VI

Once left the apartment of Daniela Rossi, the inspector Zamagni contacted captain Luzzi on the phone to make an update on the latest interviews of the day, then informed him of their decision to go back to San Lazzaro of Savena and obtain a photo of the husband from the boy's mother, then go to that bar caffè and show the photo off, hoping to get some more information on the husband, and given the chance, they would go and have a talk with professor Mario Salvemini before returning to the Police Station.

Once the policemen made such request to Marisa Lavezzoli, she didn't find it difficult to get a photo of her husband, and then Zamagni dhe Finocchi saluted her and went to meet with the owner of bar caffè.

The bar caffè was actually managed by some Chinese people who initially failed to know the man from the photo the inspector showed, nevertheless they pointed out the fact of having the ownership of bar caffè in the recent years, while before them, the bar caffè had been owned by an Italian couple who, in turn, had decided to shut off the activity and enjoy in serenity the rest of their life.

When the inspector Zamagni asked them of the residence place of the past owners, one of Chinese gave to them a piece of paper with the names, address and the phone numbers.

“Unless they’ve changed their own address, this is what you’ve asked for”, explained the man behind the counter, “I’ve received these data from the sale contract.”

Despite his Chinese nationality, it was obvious that the person whom they’re talking to, used to live in Italy for some years as he was fluent in Italian, differently from his friends in the bar caffè.

Zamagni and Finocchi expressed their thanks to him and then went out the caffè heading towards the place indicated in the paper.

“It is nearby”, the inspector explained to agent Finocchi, “We can reach it easily on foot within a few minutes.

Aldo Marini and her spouse Giovanna Carletti lived in street Parma, within the same city, San Lazzaro of Savena, a short street parallel to street Repubblica, which was located behind the café owned by them before selling it to some Chinese people.

“May we talk to you for a little bit?”, asked Zamagni after showing the police identification card to the man who showed up in the door.

“Please”, the elderly man let them in, “What’s up?”

“We’re inquiring a case and need to show a photo to you and your wife. It’s about a person, who as far as it seems, used to visit your bar café.”

“What’s going on, Aldo?”, asked a lady, in a voice coming from the other room of the apartment.

“Please come here, Giovanna, the police need to talk to us”, was the answer of the man, and then turning to the two

policemen, he said at a lower voice: "It's my wife speaking. She used to work with me in the café."

"Hello, what's going on here?", asked the lady.

"We're looking for this person", replied Zamagni, showing the photo that Marisa Lavezzoli gave to them a short while ago, "Do you know this man?"

Both spouses stared for a moment at the person in the photo, then made a gesture of approval and the husband confirmed it.

"I remember him coming quite often to our café. He used to drink something and often played cards with other clients as well."

"What do you know about him?", the agent Finocchi asked.

"He didn't talk much to us. Only used to speak when ordering drinks."

"And what did he drink usually?", Zamagni wanted to know. "Alcohol or something else?"

"I remember that he didn't drink alcohol", responded Aldo Marini, "Sometimes coffee, or merely water or soft drinks."

"Did he look like a calm person or probably occurred that you've seen him angry sometimes?"

"A calm person, I'd say", returned the wife, "But, it comes to my mind now, that one day I didn't see him again, I recall this fact."

"We're in search for him because it seems that he disappeared years ago", the agent Finocchi underlined.

"His family thinks that something bad has happened to him

and that's the reason of asking help from the Police?", asked Mr. Marini.

"We have no idea what has happened. In every case, this is an ongoing inquiry, therefore we can't speak out about that", Zamagni explained to him, "However, you also confirm that one day you haven't seen him again, right?"

Both spouses nodded.

"To be exact, since when you don't run the bar café in street Repubblica?", asked the inspector.

"I've not a fresh memory", returned the man, "but I'd say eight or maybe ten years, at least", replied the husband.

Zamagni dhe Finocchi saluted them, expressing thanks for the time spent, then went out into the street and set off on their way to the hospital Sant'Orsola to keep talking to professor Salvemini.

"Well, who is Lincoln Rhyme?", asked Marco Finocchi while driving the car from San Lazzaro of Savena to the hospital Sant'Orsola.

"Oh, yeah, you're right", began to speak the inspector, "I promised you to explain it. Are you sure you've never heard of him? Haven't you ever watched The Bone Collector? It's a movie from several years ago."

"I remember the movie title, but never watched it", responded the agent.

"Lincoln Rhyme is a character born from the imagination of Jeffery Deaver, a writer of thriller novels who became widely known through publishing of his adventures, I believe so. He's

an expert in forensic science and solves the cases from the place in which he currently lives.”

“That’s weird”, Marco Finocchi made a comment, “He doesn’t go to see the crime scene at all?”

“It would be so hard: he suffers from tetraplegia. Fortunately, he’d managed to set up some technology systems by means of which he’s able practically to do everything simply sitting on a wheel chair. Moreover, he has established a small laboratory in the house with many examination tools that serve to resolve the cases he’s in charge.”

“But how does he get the objects that he needs to examine, if he can’t go to the crime scene?”

“He does that through an assistant. Her name is Amelia Sachs. She goes onsite to the crime scene and it’s pretty the same as if Rhyme sees it himself.”

“That’s pretty interesting. And how does she do that?”

“She goes to the crime scene and examines it along with Rhyme. She describes all remotely through the radio transmittent, cell phone or any other appliance similar to these.”

“That’s great!”, exclaimed Finocchi.

“You could read the books of Jeffery Deaver with Lincoln Rhyme in the role of protagonist”, advised Zamagni.

“I would consider it.”

“It’s time to get off the car”, said the inspector at last, “We just arrived at the hospital.”

Following the directions indicated in the business card the

nurse had given to them, both policemen reached the second floor of the hospital building, in which they asked for some guidance to find professor Salvemini.

A lady on a white sleeve said to them that the person whom they're looking for, was momentarily busy with medical check-ups, but she advised them to wait at the clinic and then get in touch as soon as he frees from the workload.

Zamagni thanked her for the politeness and along with the agent Finocchi went to sit down at one of the chairs close to the front door of clinic.

Once one patient came out, and before the doctor was about to call the other patient to enter, the inspector peeped inside from the door and, while showing the police identification card, asked if they could have a conversation together.

“Unfortunately, I have some medical check-ups already pre-scheduled and it's not possible to cancel or postpone”, Mario Salvemini explained to them, “but I promise to get back to you right away, once I'm done. It's a matter of only one hour. You can wait in the hallway or come back again after a while. It's up to you. In all cases, I won't be leaving from here.”

Zamagni thanked him and along with his colleague Finocchi went downstairs on the first floor to have a walk outside the hospital looking forward to seeing the professor later on.

Having a very short time available, Stefano Zamagni and Marco Finocchi tried to draw some conclusion based on the information gathered so far.

“It seems we haven’t so much in our hands”, the agent began to say, “anyhow, sooner or later, we need to find something really helpful, right?”

“Yeah, I hope so”, admitted the inspector, “So, until now we’ve excluded a priori only the version of robbery attempt as the petty thief has been supposed to be very well prepared, in the smallest detail, to intrude in the apartment, to deal with the boy and to rob some stuff there.”

“Perhaps we can ask the boy’s mother if any valuable item has been stolen”, proposed Finocchi.

“We can ask her to get rid of any doubts on this, but I really believe that it wouldn’t be much relevant”, Zamagni continued to say, “Or, we’ll also do that if it comes to our mind.”

The agent nodded.

“First of all, I think we should try to realize which are the other things we have to focus on”, continued Zamagni, “I wanna say that, right now, there exist two potential typologies of the murderer: relatives and friends. We should find out the motive and, once this objective is achieved, probably we can better outline the list of suspects for this murder.”

“It’s not so easy”, admitted Marco Finocchi, “anyway, let’s make a try.”

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