

My Amoretto:
Guardian Angel . . . Italian Style
by D. C. Cowan

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.dccowanauthors.com/>

And I myself, in Rome, heard it said openly in the streets, “If there is a hell, then Rome is built on it.”

Martin Luther



Chapter 1

Nightfall darkened the streets of Rome. The air felt still and not a soul strolled along the streets of the Vatican except me. St. Peter's Cathedral peered down at me from over the rooftops. I hurried towards my hotel. After weaving through the streets, I found my hotel's sign. A taxicab stopped in front and three men in suits stepped out.

Oh no . . . Oh God no . . . don't let it be them.

When I saw Luigi's face, I froze.

Luigi grinned at me and pointed to where I stood.

I took off running.

They chased after me.

No matter how fast I ran they were always behind me in the distance.

I sprinted into a clearing. It shocked me to see the area void of people. There should be tourists everywhere. There was not a soul there to help me.

The hard bottoms of my shoes clicked and clacked against the cobblestone path. I stopped for a moment to catch my breath, but I saw them turn the corner. I just had to get away before they caught me. I dashed down the street parallel to the Tiber River.

I headed towards the Angel Bridge.

Then I saw it—the brilliant white angel wings in the distance.

I had to flee towards it. Perhaps the angel I met so long ago as a child returned.

When I approached it, the bright wings turned to stone and all my hopes crushed. How could I be so foolish to think that one of the stone statues was a real angel? Wait, what was this? I saw someone else there. Maybe he was the angel I saw. Could he be the one? Maybe he can help. Then again, maybe I was still just seeing things.

No, a man really did stand on the bridge, no, on the railing! There he was on the Angel Bridge ready to jump and there I was running for my life. How could this man give up everything when I was fighting so hard to preserve it?

The man on the railing stared down at the water with his gentle blue eyes. Once I closed in on him, I could see how solemn and forlorn his eyes appeared. I started to cry for him as well as myself. I raced up to him, sobbing and yelling at him. I felt more freedom to say as I pleased because this man could not understand me anyway.

“Hey! I’m fighting for my life here and you’re just gonna jump and end yours?”

He spun around. His eyes lit up when he saw me—infatuation glittered in them.

“Don’t look at me like that . . . I hate men! I hate my life!”

For a moment, I just wanted to escape my private hell in Rome. I climbed up on the railing beside him.

“It’s okay . . . I’ll join you!”

I held onto one of the angel statues. I leaned as far forward as I could—then I let go.

He caught me in his arms.

The three men ambled across the bridge towards us as if they took a moonlit stroll. Luigi put on leather gloves and slid his hand into his inner pocket.

The man gathered me up into his arms.

“Chiudi gli occhi . . . Fidati di me,” he said and gently shut my eyes.

I had to trust him.

I wrapped my arms around his neck.

Then—we jumped off the bridge.



Before I go on, I need to take a moment to think. I have not thought about this night in Rome in seven long years. When I lived in Rome, I often strolled down the Angel Bridge. I even remember the statue I clung to that night; the artist Cosimo Fancelli created it and I always admired it. I remember because the handsome face of the angel matched the face of the Italian man with whom I jumped over the edge. I know you wonder who that Italian man on the bridge was, and who the men that chased me were. Perhaps you wonder if I published this story posthumously and romanticized about my suicide before I really jumped off the bridge.

You may wonder these things, but *I* wonder where it all started. Why was I in Rome in the first place? What initiated my interest in the eternal city? My love of Italy, my love of angels began when I was a child. Could my father be the reason? Yes, my father stirred my interest in Italy.

I remember the first day I saw Rome. Once our plane landed, I rushed off feeling as light as a feather. We had no bulky suitcases because my father arranged to send them by mail to our apartment in Rome. I ran so fast my father and uncles had trouble keeping up. My first steps outside of the airport brought my first sight of Rome.

“Galatea! Wait for us,” my father said as he ran with my three uncles. One of my uncles lifted me up and swung me around. I cherished the moment. With my father and uncles by my side, I felt safe, loved, and shielded from all fear of studying abroad. “My amoretto,” my father said to me. “Being in my country again, it warms my heart.” He clutched his chest. “I’m a little tired from our plane ride this morning. Ah, va bene, what we do now?”

“I don’t have orientation until tomorrow. I have today free to do whatever.”

“We need to get a rental car. I want to see our apartment first; I heard from my friend Marconi that we stay in his apartment near, eh, San Giovanni.”

“Dad! I can’t wait any longer! Can we go exploring now?”

I beamed at my father until he gave in. “Va bene. We go to see the city now.”

I jumped up and down. “I’m so boosted! Ah, I’m in Italy!”

“Oh sì, bella Roma . . . I want to see the school you attend. I heard you were on the campus of the University of Roma?”

“Yep!”

“That’s my little girl! I’m, eh, so proud!”

“We can take the metro,” one of my uncles said. “Where we go first?”

“I want to see the Coliseum!”

“Colosseo, let’s a, go-go!” my uncle said.

We hopped onto metro and exited at the Colosseo metro stop. We paused beside a vendor. My uncles ordered a drink and a panino for me. “Ah!” my uncle said when he found a hat he liked. He bought a cheap baseball cap with their flag and **ITALIA** on it. “I wear with pride.”

My other uncle kept stopping to speak with tourists. He shook a man’s hand. “I’m from Italia. Nice to meet you.”

My uncle winked at me and I covered my face.

How embarrassing?

We entered the Coliseum and I flooded my camera with pictures. When we emerged from the Colosseo, there were hustlers everywhere around it—that is, men dressed as

Roman soldiers hustling the crowd for money. “Oh my God!” my uncle said. “If it’s hard out there for a pimp, it must be impossible for a Trojan to hustle.”

I doubled over with laughter. “What?”

“It is your lucky day, Galatea,” one of my uncles said. “You meet, eh, Roman soldier.”

“Looks like he really let himself go,” I said and tapped the Roman soldier’s large stomach.

The Roman soldier grinned and kissed at me.

“Gross,” I said and buried my face in my father’s shoulder.

My father snickered. “I think his days of battling for the Roman Empire are long gone.”

“With soldiers shaped like this no wonder the empire collapsed,” another uncle said.

“Una foto a tutti e cinque?” the Roman soldier said and pinched my cheek.

“You want photo?” my uncle asked me. “A picture with the fat fake Roman soldier is only five euros.”

I giggled and nodded.

We posed for the picture with the Roman soldier while another snapped it for us.

“That’s, eh, twenty-five euros,” the Trojan said and held out his hand.

“Cosa?!” my father said and started ranting in Italian while he took out his wallet.

“We thought five euro for one picture?” my uncle asked him.

“Oh no . . .” the Roman soldier grinned, showing his gold capped tooth. “It’s, eh, five for each person.”

The fat one pinched my cheek, “This one is like sugar!” He had to taste so he double kissed my cheeks.

“Ugh!” I shoved him back and my uncles nearly clobbered him.

“Ha-ha, it’s okay, it’s okay,” my father said and placed his arm around me. “Where we go now?”

“Oh . . . the Vatican! I want to go there. Is it close by?”

“Um . . . no, but it’s okay. We have all the day so, why not?” my uncle said.

My three uncles and I headed for the metro, but my father paused. “Dad?”

He did not respond. He stood still staring at his feet.

“Dad, what is it?” I shook him awake.

He shook himself out of it. “Are you sure you want to go to the Vatican?”

“Yes, I heard about an Angel Bridge near a castle. I have to go see it.”

“Today? I mean you have all semester to—”

“C’mon Dad, humor me, okay?”

“Okay . . . my little amoretto, for you.” He tapped my nose and we went to the metro.

From the Coliseum, we caught the metro out to Ottaviano to see Castel Sant’Angelo.

“Ah! The Angel Bridge!” my uncle said. “Saint Michael is there at the top of the castle, you know.” He pointed to the top of Castel Sant’Angelo.

I counted the angels across the bridge. “Hum . . . there’s ten angels.”

“No, there’s eleven,” my uncle said as he finished counting.

I counted the number of them again. “No, there’s only ten.”

“You forget one,” he said and placed his arm around me. “You are number eleven, amoretto.”

“Ha-ha, no not me. I am a diavolo, no angelo.” I pushed his arm down. “Did you all grow up in Rome?”

“We did not grow up in Rome,” another uncle said. “Your papà lived here for a little while. We all grew up in Naples.”

“Yes, but we visited your papà in Rome often, isn’t that right, Paolo?” my other uncle said and slapped my father on the shoulder. “Paolo, are you sure you are alright?”

“Sì, I am so happy to be back in Italy. Although I have seen it many times—” My father started to sob. “Sorry, it makes me cry to see it again.”

My uncle punched his shoulder. “Ah, Paolo . . . man up, my brother. We are finally back in Italia after all these years. It is a happy day, no?”

“It is, yes, so happy.” My father wiped his tears on his arm.

I gaped at him.

“I am sorry, Galatea, I know you never see your father cry. I am only human . . . I make mistakes.”

“Mistakes?”

“Nothing . . . nothing. Come my darling, let’s go on.”

We headed away from the bridge towards the Saint Peter’s Basilica. Upon turning back for one final glance at the bridge, I saw one of the angels on the ledge moving. We

were some distance away, but I saw a man in a black suit with brilliant white wings walking between two stone angels.

Am I seeing things?

After rubbing my eyes, I gazed again, but the angel vanished leaving the other ten behind.

Strange.

I shook it off for nonsense and followed my family.