

The Long Journey To The Fair

(excerpt)

It was early September of 1945 and the war had ended—all of it. Officially. However, for the countries on the European continent, it had come to its end a few months earlier, in late April of 1945. With the event, the time to take stock of the aftermath was at hand. The task was overwhelming. For this was a war like no other before it. The brutality and the destruction were on an unimaginable scale. A new word—Holocaust—entered the vocabulary of the world's languages, and the photos of near obliteration of entire cities sealed the memory of apocalyptic scenes on the pages of history books.

Naturally, people were jubilant. It was the end of the madness. The good had triumphed over the evil. Spirits ran high; the hopes and faith in the future rose like a phoenix from the ashes, as the saying goes. And then there was the awakening. Many of those hopes and dreams born in the euphoria of the celebration of victory ended up in disbelief and confusion. For the nature of war, by definition, is such that always ends with winners and losers. And while the peace following the end of it brings relief and calm to all for a while, in the long run, eventually, it wears thin. And the time for recycling old hopes and dreams descends slowly over minds and hearts of the disillusioned.

It was a sunny, pleasant day when Joseph Mastroianni, his wife, Sofia, and their two boys, Piero and Daniel, had disembarked the ship in the port of Halifax, in the province of Newfoundland that had brought them from the port of Genoa in sunny, beautiful Italy to the eastern shores of Canada. The trip was somewhat of a challenge with his wife getting seasick, and the children left unsupervised to run around the deck while Joseph was spending hours standing by the rails deep in thoughts, remembering the last years and the war, wondering what is to come. He would light one cigarette from another and just stare at the vast ocean.

As a typical Italian, the way the rest of us like to think of, Joseph Mastroianni was a lover rather than a warrior. Indeed, it was well-documented fact, and some interested in history know that Romans were fierce fighters and the world trembled even at the sound of their names. And, of course, at the echo of the rattle of their swords and the menace of their flying spears in countless battles. But in truth, who were the Romans? Just a bunch of people from all over the place, while the Italians: God bless Garibaldi.