

A Christmas Confusion

Judith Harris (December 16, 2014)



'Twas the notte before Natale, and all through the piazzas Lets' get into the Christmas spirit with this poem. Something different from Italy! Not a macchina was stirring, not even the usual pazzas. The calze were hung by the camino with care In hopes that Babbo Natale soon would be there.

ROME -- 'Twas the notte before Natale,

and all through the piazzas

Not a macchina was stirring, not even the usual pazzas.

The calze were hung by the camino with care

In hopes that Babbo Natale soon would be there.

I bambini were nestled tutto snug in their lettini



While visions of panettone danced in their testolini.

Papa' in his berettino and I in my sciallino

Had just settled down to a long winter's pisolino.

When out on the terrazza there rose a baraonda,

I ran to the finestra, yanked up the seranda.

It seemed clearly a case for the portiere

Or maybe even a Carabiniere—

The Luna on the breast of the new-fallen pioggia

Gave the scintello of acqua to the whole alloggio.

When, macche', to my wondering occhi did appal, O'

'Twas a mini carrozza and an ancient cavallo,

Driven by a piccola vecchietta so brutta and malsana

I knew in a momento it must be La Befana.

And then in a twinkling I heard from the attico

Sounds of prancing and pawing, it was all quite gotico.

As I drew in my testa and was turning around,

Into the salone came La Befana with a bound.

She was vestita in stracci from testa to scarpina,

In an outfit that was quite terrifically sporchina.

She carried a saccone flung on her back,

And looked like a ladro who'd just filled his pack.

She walked a bit zoppa and carried a scopa—

Her figura was scarna, with no trace of pancia—

Honestly, I expected she'd ask for a mancia.

Her zigomi were all hollow, just like a crow's.

Under the crook of her naso, arched like some bows,



Was her buffa little bocca, the color ciliegia.
She was magra like a spilla, a right triste old strega,
And I tremavo for the silver on show in the bagghega.

When suddenly she spied on the Christmas table
The avanzi from cena, the best we were able.
There was anguilla in salsina, and pasta al ragu',
Vino from Frascati (quasi genuina),
There were biscotti and Baci Perugina.
Setting down her pacco, she filled un piattino,
And swiftly knocked down a good bicchierino.
Then, speaking not a parola she went straight to her lavori,
Filling our calzini with wondrous regalini.

Then laying a dittino aside of her nasino,
She turned with a sorriso that riempiva all our cuori—
With an allegro saluto out the finestra she volava...
She sprang to her carrozza, to her cavallo gave a fischio,
And via they all zoomed quite heedless of rischio,
And I heard her cantare ere she volava out of vista,

“Buona notte a tutti, and to all buona Festa!”

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