

GEK TESSARO

VOGLIO



ANCH'IO







*a Filippo e Francesco*

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# VOGLIO ANCH'IO



**TERRE** DI MEZZO  
EDITORE







## POMPEO TIBURZIO

After hatching his egg, the little bird struck up such an upright and virile pose that all his mother could do was name him Pompeo Tiburzio.

When he was just a few days old, he was captivated by the sight of a flock of storks in flight and asked his mother: “What’s that?”

“Storks”, she replied.

“Nice! Me, too”, decided the little crow.



His mother could do nothing to dissuade him. Tiburzio, who was not discouraged in the least by being as thin as a rail and having a negligible wingspan, became committed to working out. And although the difference between Tiburzio and storks continued to be blatantly obvious, one must admit that he was undeniably in good shape for a crow.

So one fine day he made his appearance at the stork gathering, where more than one-hundred storks showed up and all of them were over one metre in height. Pompeo had to make quite an effort before they finally noticed him. But when they discovered the reason for his presence, they all burst out laughing. Pompeo certainly had no intention of losing heart. “Time will tell”, he murmured, as he was allowed to stay with them. He got down to studying geography ‘round the clock as it was a fundamental subject for storks. He persistently waited for an opportunity. And the opportunity arose – rightly so.











## THE TASK

A baby was about to be born just one block away. Even a little bird of his size could have handled the delivery. Pompeo was small, black and with no neck to speak of – but he was about to become a stork to all intents and purposes. He delicately gathered up the bundle (so much larger than himself) and, his little eyes brimming over with joy, he took off.

It took him less than a week to reach the address in question, but there was no expectant mother in 75, Via Venezia in Perugia. All that stood there was a hardware shop. And, to top it all off, it was closed for the holidays.

The little bird was bewildered and the misunderstanding soon dawned upon him. The child would have come into the world in 75, Via Perugia in Venice and not in 75, Via Venezia in Perugia.

Although he still had not studied northern Italy very well, it did not take him long in realizing that he would have never been able to reach Venice in time.











He was already on his way back in a downcast and dejected state when he remembered that he was a stork. So, without thinking twice, he turned around and spread his little wings into the direction of Bologna. But he actually was not able to go a long way – only about two-hundred metres. And at that speed the child would have most probably grown up into an adult before delivery, he would not have been able to spit out his baby food and (last but not least) could never have been forced into going to bed early at night.

So, gathering up all the strength he could, he perched himself up on a branch. Looking down, he caught sight of a mercenary leader (a certain Sigismondo Bernardino della Cialda) riding along the road.

## SIGISMONDO

“Sir! Sir!” he shouted.

The knight brought his horse to a halt, put down his spear and lifted the visor of his helmet.

“I cannot see you. Where are you?” he shouted in turn.

“I’m right here, sitting on a branch”, replied Tiburzio.

“For God’s sake, I had mistaken you for a companion in distress.” “In fact, that’s right. I’m a companion, I’m in distress and I need your help.”

“I’m very sorry”, said Sigismondo, “but I’m quite busy at the moment. I’m off to slay a dragon and save a princess whom I will most probably fall in love with. Hence I shall be marrying her and this will make her present suitor, Baron Bortolameazzi, fly into a rage. So he will challenge me to a duel, which will inevitably lead me into measuring up with him in combat. I will be victorious and, at that point, the Baron’s friends (who are all quite touchy...”







“Yes, yes, I understand your predicament. But I need your help right here and now. I must deliver this baby to his mother and it’s impossible to do so on my own.”

“So therefore you’re a stork, aren’t you?” Sigismondo asked rather doubtfully.

“Exactly!” confirmed Pompeo while trying his best to stretch out his neck a little.

The knight thought it over and then, resorting to his sense of responsibility, he made his decision: “It can be done, but first I have to take care of this dragon-slaying issue. You and the infant can come along with me, of course”.

It didn’t take Tiburzio weeks to make up his mind, considering that it was worth his while in any case, so he climbed onto the horse’s back.







## DRAGONS AND PRINCESSES

To tell the truth, the dragon-slaying issue did not drag on for a very long time. It regarded an elderly six-eyed dragon that was half blind. Whereas a lot of patience was required for the princess matter. As he had predicted, Sigismondo fell madly in love with her – to the point of not being able to ride his horse and be helpful in any way.

Tiburzio managed to tolerate this situation until the wedding was celebrated and rice had been thrown on the couple. But when he sensed that the fatal duel with Baron Bortolameazzi was around the corner, he realized it was getting late and voiced his discontent to the knight.



Sigismondo was terribly annoyed as he knew people would think he had run away in fear – and these faults are difficult to erase.

But, at the same time, he was beginning to tire of life at court; and he was especially tired of broccoli and rice, his wife's favourite dish, so he saddled his horse and rode off towards Veneto along with his friends.

They rode and rode and rode across plains, hills, mountains, humps and bumps.

“There's the sea, finally”, Sigismondo proudly affirmed.



## THE DOUBT

So they rode and rode and rode, again riding across plains, hills, humps and bumps. And night-time was upon them.

“The sun setting into the sea is a sight to see!” exclaimed Sigismondo.

“It’s beautiful”, confirmed Pompeo. “But I’m getting some doubts.”

“Doubts are at the very foundation of life. Doubts are essential, woe to those who lack any doubts”, recited Sigismondo.

“Why is the sea there?” shouted Pompeo.





“Why? Because the sea is freedom, the sea is never where you would have it, the sea is revolution, the sea...”

“But since the sea is on the side of the setting sun”, Tiburzio interrupted him, “that means that we’re on the wrong side, on the wrong shore, on the wrong sea, hence we’re going in the wrong direction”.





The knight brought his horse to a halt, lifted his visor and observed the giant orange disc that was shivering before him with a look of astonishment upon his face.

“It’s just one of those things”, he began. “An incident that cannot be defined pleasant, but one that is not lacking some interest and productive positive aspects.”



“And may I ask what would they be?” Pompeo shouted in despair.

“The absolute impossibility of committing further mistakes, my dear friend. All we need do is turn our horse around and there you go! We can only be headed in the right direction.”

“Yes, all well and good, but we’ve lost a whole lot of time and we’ll never be able to make it.”

“Woe to those who give up over such a trifle”, Sigismondo scolded. “Yet I cannot deny that we are tallying up some tardiness.”

They had just taken a few steps forward when they were overcome by a bulky and very fast vehicle.

“What was that?” asked Pompeo.

“A tractor”, replied Sigismondo self-assuredly.

“I didn’t know tractors were so speedy.”

“They usually aren’t, but this one obviously was.” And in so saying, Sigismondo galloped away in a chase. They soon caught up with the tractor, probably due to the fact that the strange vehicle had come to a stop in the meanwhile.

“The tractor was going too fast and eventually broke down in pieces”, decided Sigismondo.





# THE ELEPHANT AND THE LION

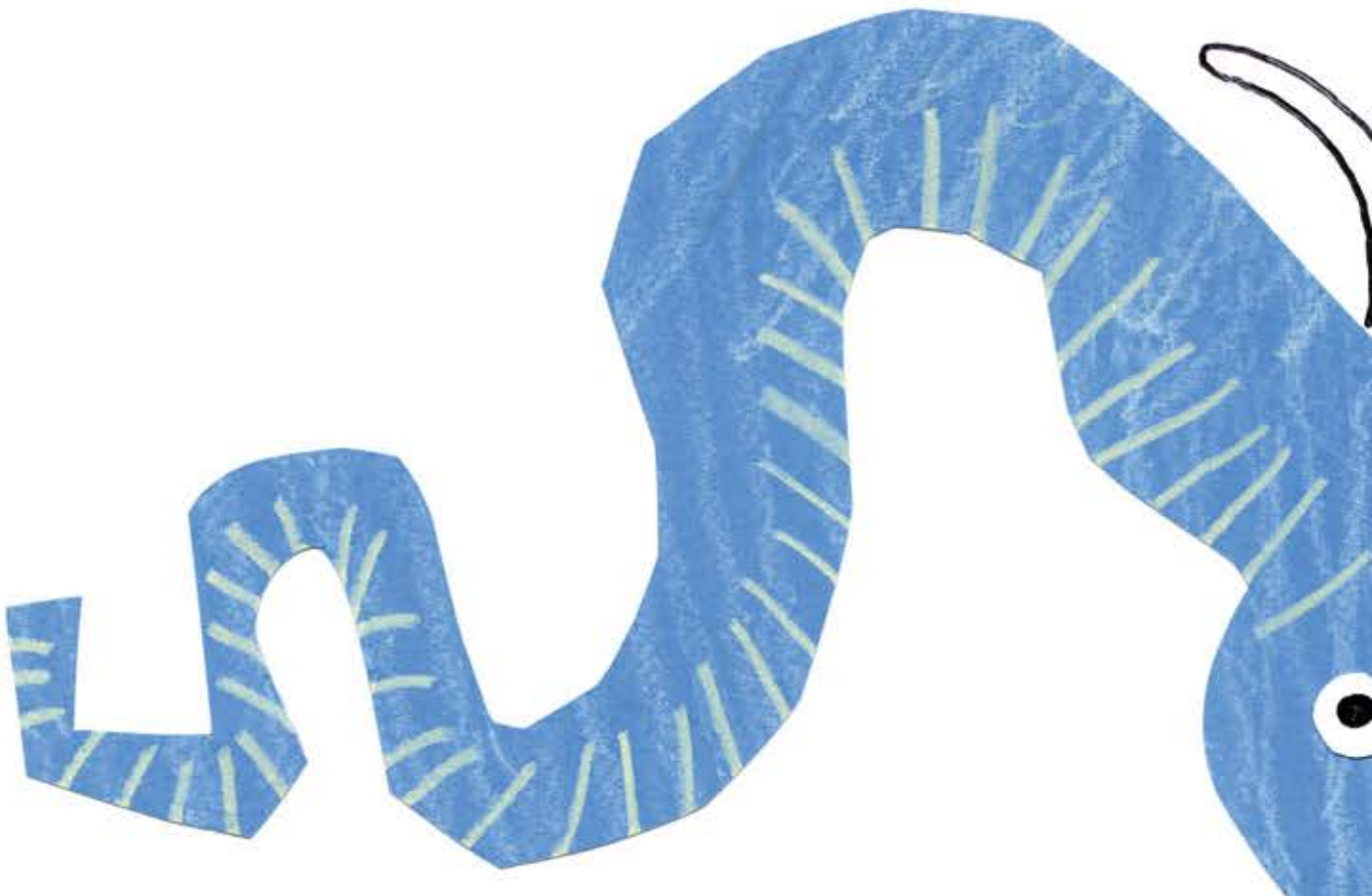
“It isn’t a tractor”, said Pompeo. “It’s an elephant and a lion.”

“Perhaps, but it’s the same colour as a tractor”, said Sigismondo who was obviously piqued.

The elephant and the lion were overturned, upside-down.

“That stupid ant crossed the road”, the elephant moaned. “So I had to hit on the brakes to avoid running it over.”

“You’re the stupid one, speeding along like that”, replied the ant. But no one heard it since, even when they shout, ants can hardly be heard.











“In any case, I believe we should surrender as the hunters have caught up with us”, said the lion as he got back on his feet.

“Nothing doing”, said the elephant as he fearlessly came face-to-face with Sigismondo. “We are not surrendering.”

“We aren’t hunters”, interrupted Pompeo, who felt insulted.

“No, we aren’t”, confirmed Sigismondo. “I’ve never been a hunter.”

“We’ve escaped from the zoo and have mistaken you for the zookeepers who were chasing us.”

“Not at all”, said the Knight. “We are a good lot, sure we are.”

“You are very fast”, commented Pompeo in interest.

“Nothing can get you running like the thought of being locked up in a cage”, explained the lion. “We know of a very large wood in the Abruzzo National Park. We’d like to take up our hiding there. And later on, with a bit of luck, we plan to set sail towards Africa.”

“Fine!” Sigismondo decided. “I will take care of the zookeepers while you take on Pompeo with the baby and accompany them to this Park. That will get them much closer to Venice.”

And so Pompeo climbed onto the lion with his bundle, the lion climbed onto the elephant and they all sped off.

The zookeepers soon came into the picture. You could tell they were the zookeepers because of the cap bearing the word “Zoo” on their heads.

“Have you seen a lion and an elephant?” they breathlessly asked Sigismondo.

“No. But I saw a nun together with a large refrigerator running in that direction.”

“Curses, they’re under disguise.” And the zookeepers rushed off into the direction that Sigismondo pointed to. Which naturally was the wrong direction.









## THE FLAMINGO

The elephant and the lion, who had already gone quite a distance, were informed of Pompeo's mission and the lion said: "Hey! I've always liked children!".

Pompeo gave him a worried look.

"I meant to say that I'm fond of them", the lion corrected himself. And so, without further incidents, they reached the Park.

"It's beautiful", said the lion.

"It's truly magnificent, it seems like home", added the elephant.

"I totally agree", said Pompeo. "But I have a mission to accomplish and I'm still so very far away."

"You might catch a train", suggested the lion. "They make lots of noise, but advance at great speed."

"Is the station far away?" asked Pompeo.

"Yes and we cannot take you there. We're rather bulky and cannot disguise ourselves as luggage", said the elephant.

"And you know what people are like. They see a lion and begin to call for help! Help! A lion! Then everyone starts running, crying – pure chaos."

There was a flamingo, half-hidden in a shrub close by. Upon catching sight of the lion, the flamingo was so frightened that its neck stretched out and stiffened in terror.





“Somebody left a pink umbrella behind”, said the elephant.

“That isn’t an umbrella”, said the lion. “It’s a friend of ours and he’ll be helping Pompeo reach the train station.”

No sooner was that said and done, that he picked up the poor flamingo by the neck and softened it out with a couple of yanks. When the flamingo almost returned to his normal state, he “volunteered” to accompany Pompeo to the train station. He liked going for a spin to the station at that time of day. His exact words were: “I’ve got an urgent need to go for a spin at the train station. Don’t you think that stations are simply enchanting in this time of year?” And, once he picked up Pompeo and the child, the flamingo took off.

In a matter of close to four hours, they were already inside the Roseto degli Abruzzi train station.

“Is there a train to Venice from here?” they asked the man at the ticket-window. “No, but there’s one that goes to Torrette in Fano.”

“What time will it be leaving?”

“It leaves whenever you wish and it stops whenever you stop.” Noticing their surprise, the ticket clerk explained: “It’s a very special train, unique in Europe and perhaps in the rest of the world”.





## THE TRAIN

The train was exactly as he had described it – it stretched out from Roseto degli Abruzzi to Torrette in Fano and it stood still on the railway tracks. You could get on at any station and walk inside until you came to the station of your choice. You could relax in its armchairs and read a book. You could run through it, if you were in a hurry. A luxury.

“Its advantages escape me”, said Pompeo in voicing his doubts.

“That’s because you have a very small head”, the ticket clerk commented in reprimand. “No pollution, zero energy consumption, zero accidents and, first and foremost, there’s no risk of headwinds.”

There wasn’t enough time to mull over the issue. So the flamingo made up his mind. He remembered the lion and said: “I’m bored with life in the woods. All of that greenery, all those leaves, leaves and more leaves. Let’s catch the train together. I fly very quickly”.

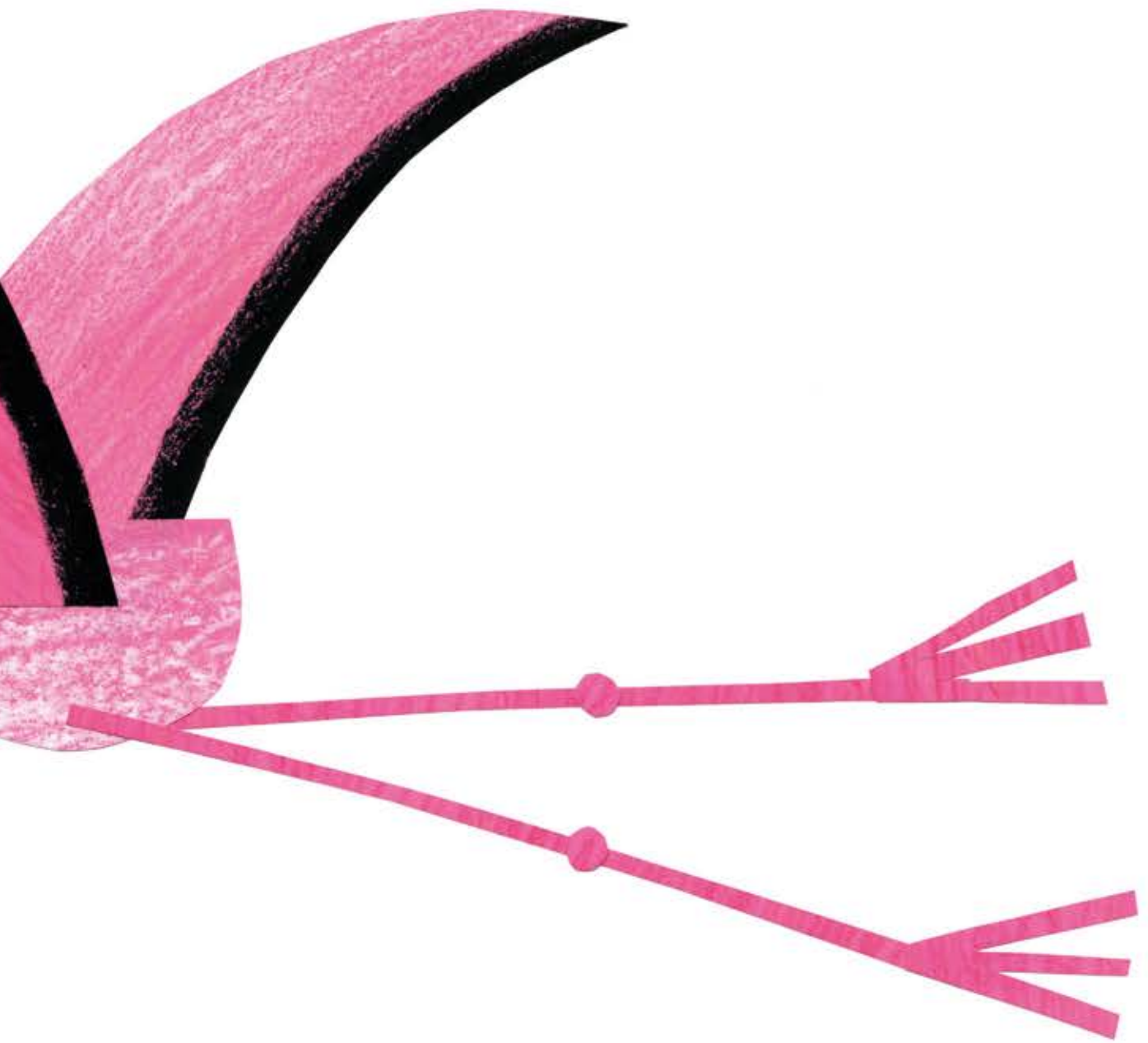
It was true. The flamingo was an expert from the aeronautical standpoint. They reached Torrette in Fano in just a matter of a few hours. The train was actually very comfortable, yet the flamingo was quite tired upon their arrival. He plunked down into the last armchair of the last carriage and said: “I’m not budging from this seat”.

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Pompeo had enough time to study their next route during the train trip; a map hanging inside the carriage illustrated the distance between Torrette in Fano to Venice as being just a few centimetres.

So he greeted and thanked the flamingo, believing that they had practically arrived at their destination.



But once he left the station, Pompeo discovered that even apparently innocent maps can be liars. Venice was still very far away.

He used all of his might to reach the closest beach, then sat out in the sunshine as he waited to come up with a good idea.



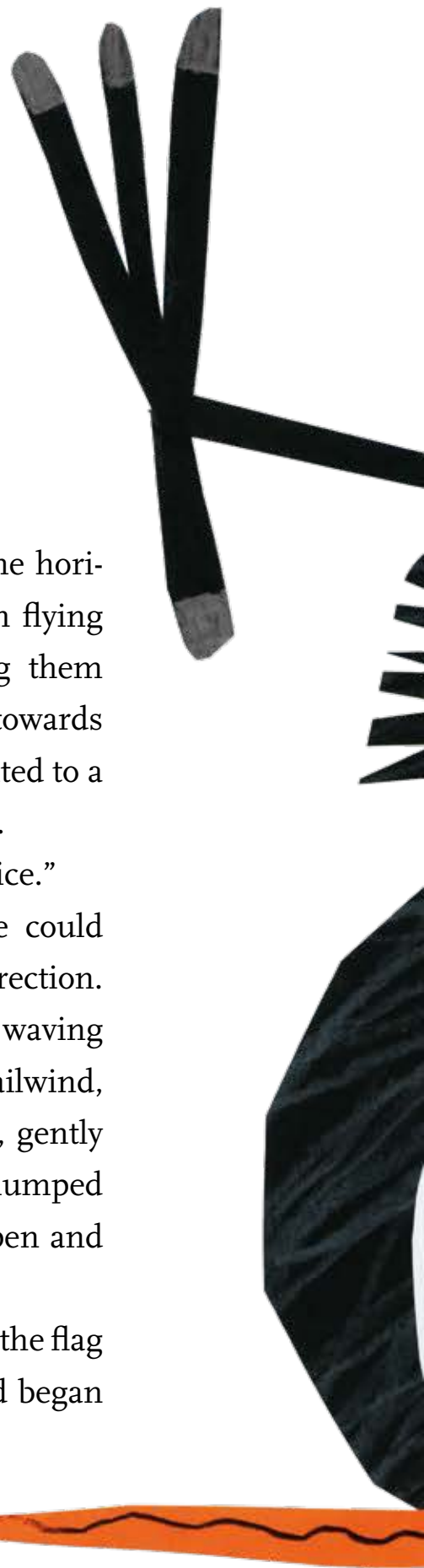
## THE PIRATES

Large ships were slowly sailing across the horizon. That was the solution! Tiburzio began flying over the heads of the sunbathers, asking them whether they knew of a ship setting sail towards Venice. At a certain point, an old sailor pointed to a large vessel that was half a mile from shore.

“That’s the ship that will take you to Venice.”

Pompeo gathered up all the energy he could muster and began frantically flying in that direction. The sunbathers encouraged him on while waving their caps in the air. With the help of some tailwind, the small crow managed to reach the ship, gently laid down his precious bundle and then slumped down on deck with his little wings wide open and his belly up in the air.

As he was catching his breath, he noticed the flag that was flying from the tallest flagpole and began to shake all over. It was a pirate flag.









He was frightened to death but, being out of breath as he was, he was not at all able to utter “Woe is me”. In fact, he didn’t.

As one can easily imagine, in addition to being very ugly, the pirates certainly did not seem to harbour any sort of good intentions towards Pompeo. Some wanted to fry the crow in a pan, whereas others were willing to eat the bird raw.

“Just one minute”, shouted the ship’s captain whose name was Gaetano and wore the customary black patch over his left eye, hushing everyone to silence. “Are we or are we not marauders?”

“We are!” replied his men as one.

“And are we or are we not brigands, criminals and scoundrels?”

“We are!” shouted his men. “And that’s how we like it.”

“Yet we cannot deny”, continued Gaetano, “that we can also be good husbands and loving fathers”.

“Loving!” underlined his troops.

“And so”, concluded the captain, “you must agree that we cannot behave any differently even on this occasion. It’s our duty to help this stork carry out its delivery”.

“Carry out its delivery!” shouted the terrible pirates as one as they suddenly turned into as many fathers who missed their little ones so.

## REACHING DESTINATION

They soon reached the lagoon.

They had Tiburzio climb up the mainmast and from there he could read the names of all the streets in Venice. They lost more time until they finally understood that the streets in Venice were called “calle” and then finally singled out calle Perugia.

Unfortunately it was impossible for ships to sail in the city of Venice and so the pirates had to widen a few canals and tear down a few bridges. They had quite a few arguments with the odd insolent citizen of Venice, but the pirates eventually reached their destination. With a fluttering of wings worthy of the most expert stork, Tiburzio lifted up his precious bundle and delivered it to street number 75.

















“Delivery has been anything but easy”, the doctor said to the woman holding her baby in her arms, “but you may rest assured. Your child is as strong as a dragon and his eyes seem as clever as a pirate’s”.

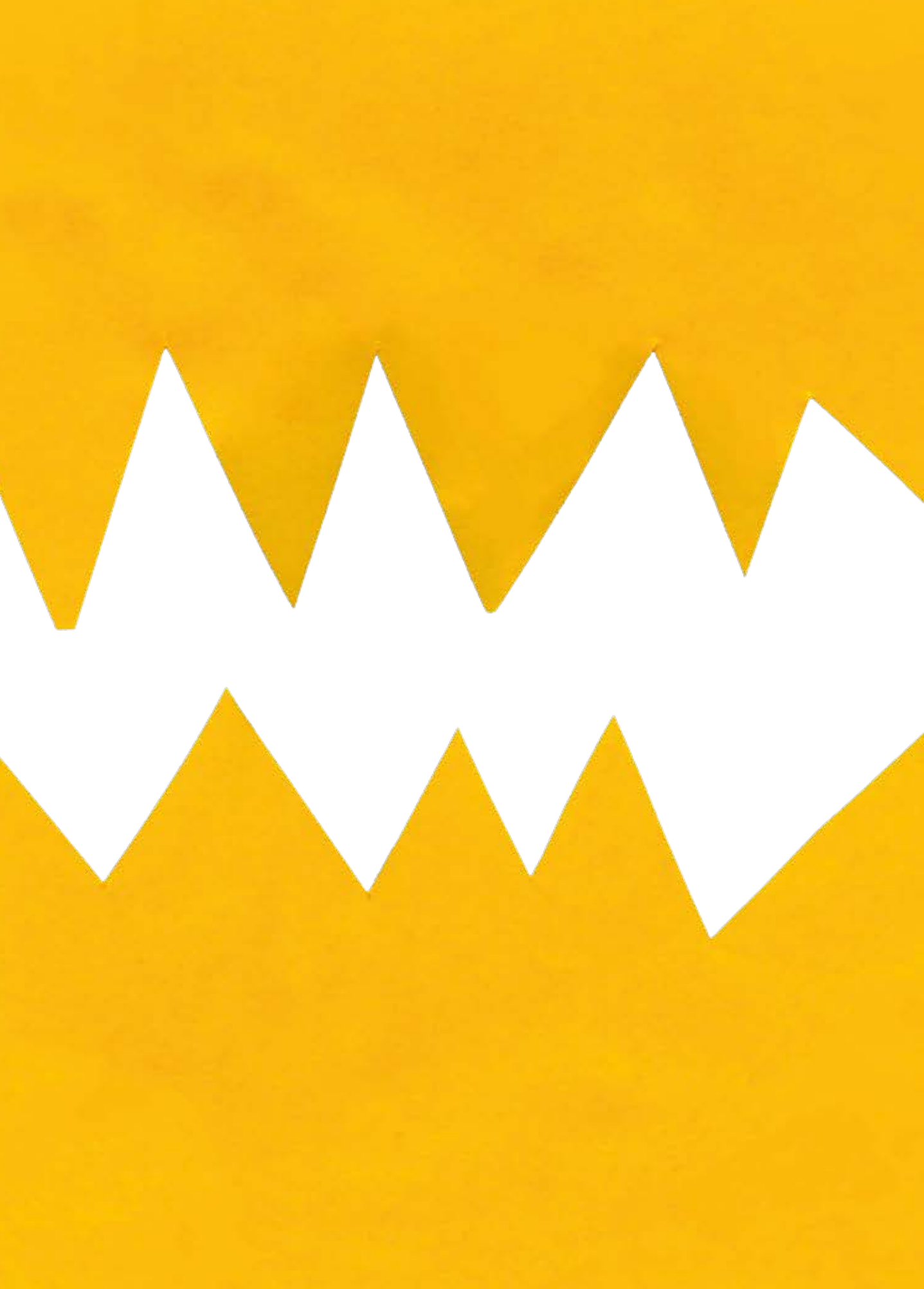
“And he’s kicking like a young colt”, said the father sitting next to her.

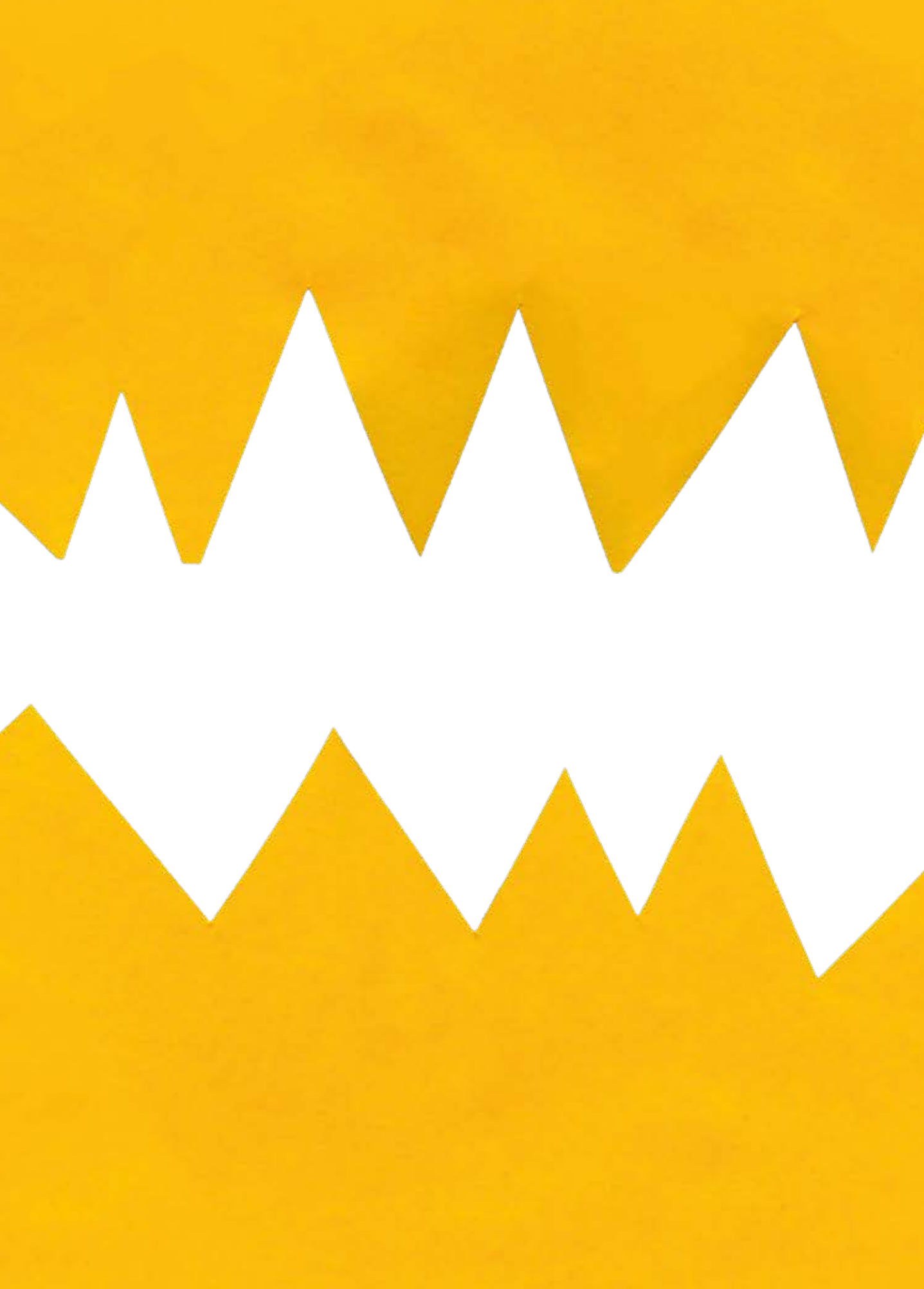
In the meanwhile Pompeo, perched on the window ledge, seemed satisfied with the positive outcome of his work.

The bell tower of St. Mark’s Basilica stood out motionless, majestic and pervaded by a sense of peaceful serenity in those clear blue skies.

“What’s that?” he asked.

“The bell tower”, came the reply. “Beautiful. Me, too.”







Pompeo Tiburzio è una cornacchietta piccola piccola con un sogno grande, esagerato: vuole diventare una cicogna professionista. Così si mette in viaggio, ma incontra subito degli ostacoli imprevisti. Per fortuna una serie di bizzarri personaggi - un cavaliere di ventura, un leone e un elefante scappati dallo zoo, un fenicottero, una ciurma di pirati dal cuore tenero - lo aiuteranno nell'impresa. Ma i sogni di Pompeo non finiscono qui.



Gek Tessaro è un autore e illustratore tradotto in diversi Paesi. Tra i suoi titoli: *Foto di gruppo* (Lapis), *I bestiolini* (Franco Cosimo Panini) e *Il cuore di Chisciotte* (Carthusia). Nel 2010 ha ricevuto il Premio Andersen come “Miglior autore completo”.

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