

Cristina Marsi

Francesca Carabelli

# ADELINA TESTAFINA

e il mistero  
della vice nonna scomparsa



**TERRE** DI MEZZO  
EDITORE

Qui Vivono  
Le GAZZE

Palazzo di  
TERESA  
TORCINASSO

CONDOMINIO

Fontana

Palazzo di  
ADELINA

Cortile del  
CONDOMINIO

Via dei Salici

Campo  
di GIRASOLI

Negozietto

Giardino  
SELVAGGIO

Cancello  
ARRUGGINITO

Campo di ORTICHE

Capanno

ORTICHE





Fiume

Via dei Salici

Caffetteria  
"Buio Pesto"

Bosco



*Al mio papà, ai suoi sorrisi,  
che porto sempre con me.*

C.M.

*Ad Anna, Marisa, Gabriella e Rita,  
e alla loro magia.*

F.C.



Cristina Marsi

Francesca Carabelli



# ADELINA TESTAFINA

e il mistero  
della vice nonna scomparsa



**TERRE** DI MEZZO  
EDITORE



# 1

## Whatever Happened To Mafalda?

Opening my eyes, I spring out of bed. I'm full of energy on summer mornings like today, when I don't have to go to school and can do whatever I want.

I wash my face with warm water, dissolving the last dreams stuck to my eyelashes, then choose my clothes for the day and head to the kitchen. A note on the fridge says: 'Good morning, Adelina! You'll find breakfast waiting outside...' At the table on the balcony, I dunk slices of milk bread in my tea. I like dangling my bare feet amongst the geraniums and the leaves of the trees in

the courtyard that grow all the way up here.

It's so hot that Mum and Dad left the windows open before leaving the house. Sometimes our building reminds me of a giant with lots of eyes and ears. I smell squeezed lemon, crushed mint leaves and curry wafting up from downstairs. I bet Ma-





ham is cooking aubergines. I can hear oil sizzling in a frying pan, and Maham talking and laughing with a friend.

Pigeons are pecking at the building's hat, the roof tiles chiming like a pianola. The neighbours are awake – I can hear keys turning in locks, feet scurrying up and down the stairs and people yawning.

Carlo whizzes by on his fully loaded bike. I want a bike too, but my parents say it's better to wait a bit. Meanwhile, I take long walks. Who knows how far I could go on a bike! They promise to buy me one someday, but who knows when...

Passing by my balcony, Carlo flashes his usual obnoxious grin and says: "Hi, walk girl!"

"Hi, bike boy!" I shout after him as he speeds away.

My tummy keeps growling, like a bear in

a cave. I wonder if my almost grandmother Mafalda has already baked something yummy. When Mum and Dad are so busy with work, I'm allowed to visit Mafalda for as long as I like. She's a retired pastry chef who lives in the flat upstairs with her cat Chip.

Chip is a sweet friend, but he can be a savage beast if necessary. If I open the building door, I bet... yep! There you are! Chip jumps into my arms and licks my chin, as if it were a meatball. At this point, we usually go exploring; we wander around in search of new places, together or on our own, but never really losing sight of one another. But Chip seems restless this morning; he rubs against my knees, whimpering like a frightened kitten, then hops onto the steps and looks up. As if he wanted me to go upstairs.

“What’s going on? Does Mafalda want to talk to me?” I ask.





The door to her flat is open. I tiptoe inside and peek into the kitchen. There's a pot of goulash bubbling on the stove. I look for my almost grandmother in rooms full of curious objects. I always ask her loads of questions – “What's this? What's that?” – and Mafalda explains how things used to work: the old cassette player, the old telephone, the old VCR... and time flies! But something's definitely wrong today.

Aside from the goulash bubbling on the stove, the house is eerily quiet. And it's not normal for Mafalda to leave a pot on the stove, or the door open!

“Of course it's not normal! Wake up!” meows Chip impatiently.

A draught of cold air envelops my legs. Whatever happened to Mafalda?



# 2

## A Trail of Cinnamon

**I** call out her name and check every room: inside the closets, behind the curtains, in the trunks, even under the bed. But Mafalda's nowhere to be found.

"I told you!" Chip meows nervously

Back in the kitchen, I turn off the burner. The table is strewn with bowls, wooden spoons, bags of sugar and walnuts, eggs and chocolate ready to be turned into pastries. But there's no sign of the secret recipe book Mafalda always keeps nearby. It's a huge volume with some pages as thick as cardboard and others thin as tissue paper. A jumble of

notes scribbled by hand and stuck together with adhesive tape. It contains all the recipes Mafalda has ever made in her life.

“What could have happened to my almost grandmother? And where’s her priceless book? Help me, Chip! Come on, let’s think!”

I tousle my hair and exhale deeply to help myself think as we set off to find the missing woman. Chip moves cautiously at my feet; he doesn’t want to step on any clues, move anything with his tail or sniff anything too delicate.

Hey! What a loooooong trail of cinnamon on the floor!

“It’s about time you noticed!” meows Chip.

Two footprints are visible in the sweet-smelling, brownish dust, which has clearly been stepped on.



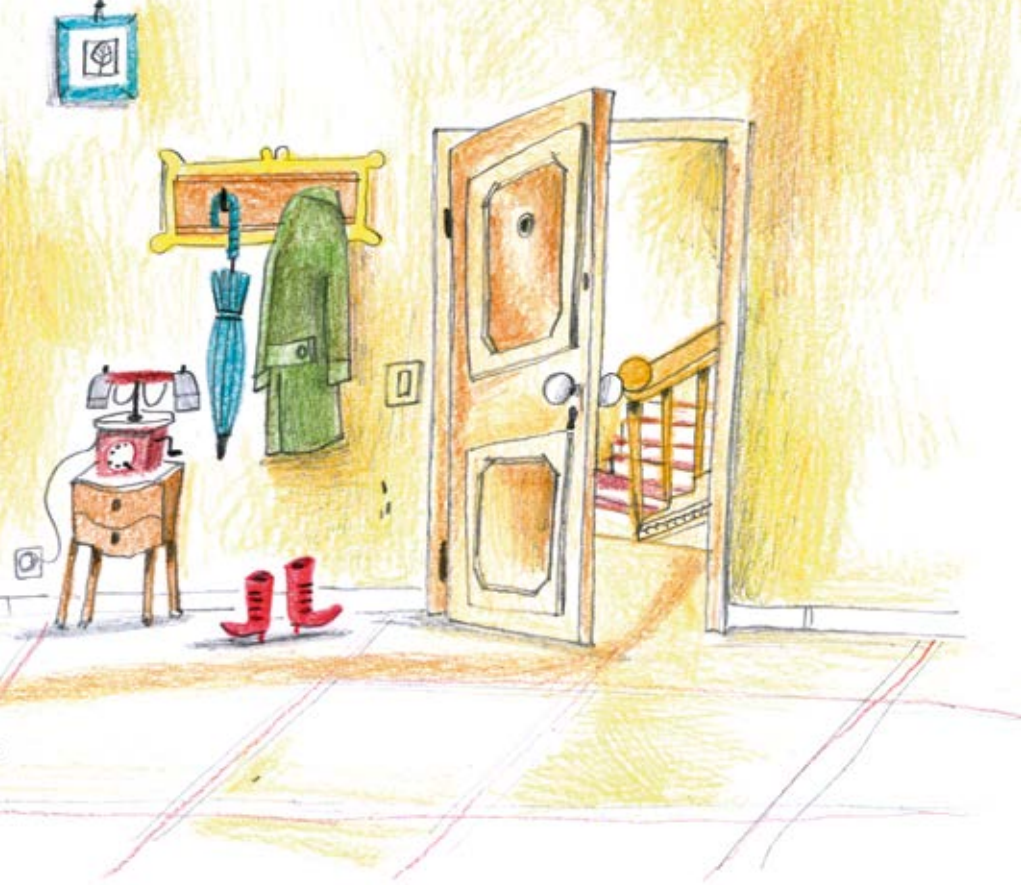
I recognise one of them: the unmistakable, intricate sole of one of Mafalda's slippers. The other footprint is a mystery. It's neither large nor small, but definitely unusual. "I should carry around a sketch to help me recognise it," I tell myself, looking for a pen and some paper.





The streak of cinnamon goes all the way to the stairs. “She left the house in her slippers, so she might have been kidnapped. Or maybe she followed someone who snatched her secret recipe book...” I mutter.

Sniffing around, Chip lifts his head and stares out the door. “Of course, my friend,



you're right! We have to follow the cinnamon scent!"

Unsure which direction to take, Chip makes a flying leap, twisting dangerously in the air to land on a door handle! The door opens with a crash and Chip sneaks into Vivian Floppyface's bathroom. She's com-



pletely immersed in white bubbles. “What are you doing? Get out of there!” I call after him.

I hear water splashing and bubbles bursting. Vivian peeps out, wrapped in a towel and dripping in cinnamon-scented foam... “Adelina, why did this cat jump into my bathtub? Please take him away!” she says.

“Have you by any chance seen Mafalda?” I ask, feeling bad about Chip’s nosiness. “She’s disappeared, and we’re following a lead.”

“No, dear, I haven’t seen her. I’m the only one here, and I’m trying to relax!” answers Vivian Floppyface. Chip stays behind to lick her hand – he wants to be sure that the neighbour hasn’t touched Mafalda recently. Then he performs another one of his dangerous flying leaps onto the door handle.

“Stop being so reckless, Chip!” I scold him. “Come on, let’s go investigate somewhere else.”



# 3

## Herbal Tea and Shoes

**F**or a second, it seems like Chip can't smell any other cinnamon-scented trail in the building, until he suddenly rushes up to the attic. Sara Sizzleskin is sunbathing on the terrace nestled amongst the chimneys, slathered in a spiced sunscreen. We tiptoe towards her like real investigators.

“Have you seen Mafalda?” I ask loudly, half hidden amongst the leaves of an oleander.

Startled, Sara jumps to her feet. “How rude!”

She shades her eyes with her hand. “I haven't seen any trace of Mafalda. Go play

somewhere else instead of scaring people!”

So we retrace our steps with no further questions.

The trail sprinkled with cinnamon leads all the way to the building entrance. We follow it to a little shop that sells plants, shoes, chairs, tea, notebooks, candles, bracelets...







Rushing by on his bike, Carlo slows down to make fun of us as usual: “On foot as usual, eh? Watch out for blisters! Or maybe you’ve already got some, eh, Adelina? Big ugly red blisters on your heels!”

“You’d better watch out for blisters on your tongue, with all the rubbish you talk!” I retort, already halfway through the shop door.

A bell over the door rings. “Good morning, I’m looking for Mrs Mafalda, has she been here?” I ask, looking around.

The shop owner, busy filling some adorable jars with herbal tea blends, frowns at

me and shrugs awkwardly in the dress that can barely hold in her stocky frame. “I don’t know who you’re talking about, dear child,” she says serenely.

“Oh, come on, you must know her! She lives around here! She has kind eyes, bright as sweets, and big hands that make the tiniest marzipan roses in the world, and meringues as tall as the Leaning Tower of Pisa...” I describe my almost grandmother proudly.

“She hasn’t been here,” repeats the shop owner. When she goes back behind the counter, I glance quickly at the soles of her sandals. Unfortunately, they don’t have the peculiar pattern I’m searching for.

“Do you recognise this footprint?” I ask, showing her the drawing I made. “It would be so kind of you to let me investigate; I need help finding my almost grandmother.”





“Dear child,” sighs the woman, her hand on her heart. “Do you know how many shoes there are on these shelves?”

I make a face. “We just want to take a look around. It could be a question of life or death, of disappearance or reappearance!”

Chip stretches himself out amongst some plants, licking his paws. He knows he’s in for a long wait. The shop owner sighs again. “It’ll take forever, but if it really means so much to you...” Kneeling down, she grabs a pair of shoes from the shelf that takes up a whole wall. I sit down with my legs crossed – straighter and better than Mum when she does yoga – and place the drawing of the

footprint on the floor next to me. We open every single box, comparing dozens of soles to the drawing.

I find a pair of sandals covered in large rubber spiders in one of the boxes. “These are fit for a witch!” I marvel.






“Dear child, all sorts of people shop here.”

“Even witches?”


“Who knows, my dear? I sure don’t ask if they’re witches or not!” she laughs, rubbing her face with her hand.

I look at her, puzzled that she’s not able to tell if a customer is a witch or not. After all, she’s a mature woman of the world who meets loads of people every day; she’s obviously smart. Imagining all the customers

who cross the threshold of the little shop, I  
wonder who the next one to enter might be.  
Who knows if I'd recognise a witch if I saw  
one...



**È una splendida giornata d'estate  
e Adelina non vede l'ora  
di correre dalla vice nonna Mafalda,  
pasticciera Sopraffina.  
Ma quando arriva a casa sua,  
non la trova da nessuna parte.  
Ed è sparito anche il prezioso libro  
delle ricette segrete!**



**Accompagnata dal gatto Bricco,  
la bimba si tuffa nelle indagini,  
e un indizio dopo l'altro si mette  
sulle tracce delle golosissime  
"fate tremende"...**

terre.it

ISBN 978-88-6189-675-8



9 788861 896758

12,000 EURO