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Iride fell Down the well

A DIVE INTO PHILOSOPHY

MIMebù 

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Illustrated by Valeria De Caterini

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To Chiara, Viola and Giulio,
lights out of the Cave

1

WHO DO YOU TURN TO WHEN YOU HAVE BIZARRE QUESTIONS?

This is the story of Iride, a strange story, a bit like all stories.

Iride was a cheerful and carefree eight-year-old girl who liked to sleep late on Sundays, then wake up and have a nice breakfast of milk and doughnuts.

On one particular Sunday, however, things were different.

She left home early, so much so that her mother was impressed, as it was Sunday. “Where are you going at this hour?” she asked.

“For a walk”, Iride answered, not knowing

exactly where she was going to.

It must have been about a month earlier, maybe even longer, that she had had that dream. Who would have expected it to be repeated almost every night, ever richer in detail?

At first there was just her, surrounded by an immense milky-coloured space, without contours, silent and motionless. Then, in the following nights, something new had appeared each time: a tree, some clouds, pieces of grass, a small animal running here and there, watching her curiously.

Finally, one night, when all around the milky-coloured space had become a splendid wood of a thousand colours and infinite scents, the little girl heard herself called by a sweet, velvety, feminine voice: “ Iride, what are you waiting for? There is someone waiting for you outside who, if you want, can help you answer your questions”.

Iride had woken up with a startled excite-

ment.

How does she know about my questions? she had asked herself, pinching herself to make sure she had come out of her sleep.

For some time now, Iride had been thinking of bizarre questions to which she had no answers.

Who do you turn to when you have bizarre questions? A judge? But you only talk to a judge when you have problems with the law, and Iride didn't think that asking bizarre questions was a problem for the law... Or so she thought, because she hadn't yet heard the story of S... But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

So, if not the judge, who else can you talk to for answers? The parish priest, perhaps? Sometimes, however, the parish priest considered Iride's questions too strange, and told her that you can't always find an answer to everything.

Could one ask her mother, then? It's just that my mother, since her father was gone, was always so busy that, poor thing, she would never have

time to answer some bizarre question. What would she answer, for example, to the question: “Where do the hours go once they’ve passed?”. Or, another bizarre question that had been on Iride’s mind for the last few days: “Why do we sometimes seem to know things that no one has ever taught us?”. What might her mother have answered, as she prepared lunch or took her big brother to basketball?

No, Iride thought, you need a person who does just that in life: answer questions. Such a person will have all the time I need for my questions! But, she wondered immediately afterwards, would such a person exist?

The only way to know was to find that person, so that if they existed, they would certainly answer! But how to find them? Where to look?

Just when she was about to lose all hope, Iride had started to have those dreams and, the night before that rather peculiar Sunday, she had had her last, decisive dream: she was still there, surrounded by flowers and caressed by the wind,

when she had heard that voice again. This time, however, it seemed to come from an imposing cherry tree.

This time, however, it seemed to come from an imposing cherry tree. “Come closer, Iride, I am here”, the female voice had said, as soft as the sound of a violin.

The little girl had approached the tree, poked her head out and finally saw her. There she was, sitting on a huge boulder, next to which a beautiful broom was growing.

“Hello, little Iride”, a woman who looked both very young and very old had said to her. She had long pink hair with turquoise stripes and wore a dress in the colours of the rainbow, which went down to her bare feet.

“Who are you?” asked Iride, a little intimidated by this kind of vision, but at the same time reassured by the woman’s tender smile. She felt like she had known her for a long time.

“It is not important who I am, but what you are looking for, Iride,” the woman had replied

and, having climbed down from the boulder, she had approached the girl, leaned over and whispered in her ear: “The time has come to find the answers, walk the path”.

As soon as the woman had finished speak-



ing, Iride woke up suddenly and sat up in bed, sweating with emotion.

“At last I understand!” she had exclaimed under her breath: “That’s where I have to go, to find the rock with the broom!”

Iride knew that wood well, called Bosco delle Pecore: it started right in front of her house, which was on the edge of town. And she also knew that boulder: the third cherry tree after the river, where the girl went in summer to cool off from the heat and to read the books her mother gave her.

So that Sunday morning, under the astonished eyes of her mother and the sleepy gaze of her brother, Iride left the house, crossed the road and walked into the Bosco delle Pecore.

It was a clear day in early spring, not too hot, but already with a beautiful sun high in the sky, eager to illuminate what would, until then, be the most important day in Iride’s life.

2

CAN ONE BE HAPPY AND SAD AT THE SAME TIME?

There she was, sitting on the boulder next to the broom, waiting for almost half an hour, but there was no sign of the person with the answers. She had her question book in one hand (she had written down at least fifteen) and a cheese sandwich in the other (her mother might not even know where Iride was going, as long as she had a snack with her).

Who knows what this person will be like, Iride wondered as she waited. If they know so many answers, they must certainly be very old. Damn, she thought, but if they are very old, will they

remember all the answers?

“Good, you’re still here! I’m glad, because patience is a very important virtue for someone with as many questions as you.”

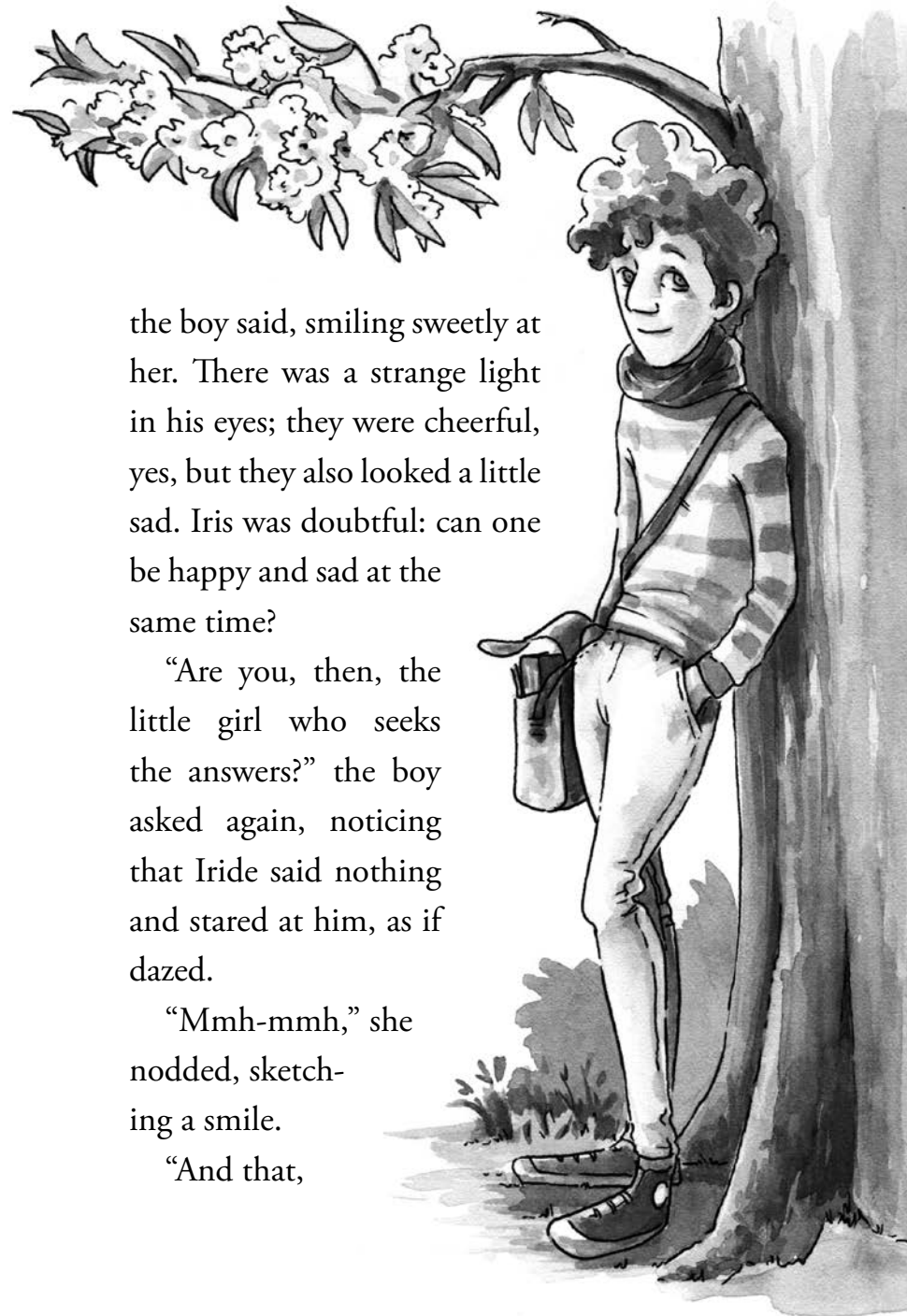
Iride leapt to her feet, startled by the voice that had come suddenly behind her. She turned, still a little upset, and saw him, saw at last the person who knew all the answers. He was not old, in fact, he looked quite young, younger than her mother certainly. He was very tall, with brown hair, two green eyes, a funny nose and... a really big head! *Of course*, Iride told herself, *to contain all those answers.*

The boy was leaning against the cherry tree, carrying a bag over his shoulder, from which several books were poking out.

Will he have all the answers there? the girl wondered. *Do I have to read them all?*

“Hello,” Iride greeted, not quite sure how to act now that she had finally met the person she had been waiting for so long.

“You must be the one with a lot of questions,”



the boy said, smiling sweetly at her. There was a strange light in his eyes; they were cheerful, yes, but they also looked a little sad. Iride was doubtful: can one be happy and sad at the same time?

“Are you, then, the little girl who seeks the answers?” the boy asked again, noticing that Iride said nothing and stared at him, as if dazed.

“Mmh-mmh,” she nodded, sketching a smile.

“And that,

that must be the notebook where you wrote down some of your questions.”

“Yes,” Iris replied, admiring the boy’s powers of observation. “What’s your name?” she then asked, surprised that she hadn’t done so immediately. It was the first question she usually asked people she didn’t know, especially if they were older. But this was a conversation quite different from the others.

“My name is Giaime,” the boy replied, and sat down on the boulder with the broom, right next to Iride.

“You... you’re the one who knows all the answers?” iris questioned him, just to make sure she had met the right person.

“Well, I do know some answers, but, you see, I must confess right away that I always have more questions than answers,” said Giaime, frowning, as if he feared Iride’s reaction.

“You too?!” exclaimed Iride almost screaming, her mouth wide open in surprise. “Damn, this is a big problem then...”

She wasn’t disappointed, because Giaime seemed nice, but she was both sorry and happy to have found another person with as many questions as her. She felt a little cheerful and a little sad....

But then, she reflected at that moment, one can be happy and sad at the same time!

“Now,” she said thoughtfully, looking at Giaime, “we must find someone else who knows the answers.”

“What’s that?” asked Jime, pointing to the wrapped bundle her mother had given to Iris.

“This? Oh, it’s a cheese sandwich.”

“I love cheese!” declared Giaime. Now his eyes were definitely cheerful.

“Do you want some?” offered Iride, amazed at how could someone be hungry at a time like that, when they had just realized that neither of them had the answers they were looking for.

“Gladly, thank you!” Giaime bit into a piece of sandwich, then added, “You see, Iride, one thinks better on a full stomach.”