

YELLOW FLAG

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AMERIGO MOZZARELLA

My name is Amerigo, I have pale skin, and I don't like the sun.

Since it's summer, my family is convinced that I really need to get some color and breathe sea air.

Therefore, they want me to come to Uncle Beardy Mousse's warehouse every morning. He's a sea dog who travels from April to October on his boat *Sweet Siren*, taking tourists all around the world.

«If you don't want to go to the beach, then you can spend some time at the warehouse», my dad told me.

«That way, you'll still be at the seaside, and while you're there, you can take a look at all your uncle's stuff», my mum said.

And so here I am... as guardian of the odds and ends that Beardy Mousse has collected from half the planet.

From November to March, my uncle returns to dry land. He often comes here to organize his new finds and spend time among memories of storms, treasures, and his logbook.

He never leaves it unattended on the boat, but he takes it with him and enriches it with receipts from places at the bottom of the sea, photos of fish never seen before, thoughts written on deep starry nights... when the hull of the boat is grazed by some giant creature or the ghosts of pirates stop to rest among the sails.

The warehouse could easily become a museum of nautical art and terrifying marine wonders. I feel at home here. I have a sofa made of ropes and fenders and a small fridge full of orangeade, lemonade and juices, which is absolutely necessary in this heat so that I don't dry out like a stockfish.

There is also a record player and old vinyl records that keep me company with songs I now know by heart... *Il mare d'inverno, Onda su onda, Un'estate al mare, Gente di mare*... I know them all! My favourite is *Maracaibo*.

And then there are books of legends and adventure stories.

A THIEF AT THE WAREHOUSE!

Something is wrong at the warehouse this morning.

I arrived early; the beach was still untouched and silky, no one had walked on it.

The first footprints were mine.

I reached the warehouse and opened the sliding door upwards.

I left it halfway open so that the sun wouldn't come in, otherwise I would get burnt. But I immediately noticed that a touch of colour was missing, the colour that usually welcomes me into this chaos. My uncle has several buoys, but the red ones are gone. What's the point of stealing only some of them, only the red ones? The blue, white and yellow ones are still there.

«But where are the red buoys? A thief has been in! It must be!» I find myself saying out loud.

After racking my brains for a while and talking to myself about the missing red buoys, I hear a voice behind me. «It must be a collector of red objects!» exclaims Eric, who has just arrived.

Eric likes order and precision; he is a Virgo, which is why I call him Eric Perfectionist. I invite him to sit in the shade because he lives in a house on the cliff. To get here, he has to climb down a staircase carved into the rock and walk along a narrow path through the sand dunes. He practically arrives cooked to perfection!

«You're early today», I greet him.

«From where I was, I noticed more movement than usual down here...»

«Then you must have seen the thief!»

«Who knows...» Eric reflects.

«It's full of tourists now, many of them have their boats moored right here», I explain disconsolately.

We sit with our legs dangling over the pier in front of us.

Our bodies are shaded by the warehouse, only our feet are kissed by the sun, but we keep them in the water.

The water is clear with a sandy bottom, and I almost feel like diving in.

But it reflects the blinding glare of the sun. Who knows what damage it would do to my delicate body. I can almost feel the stinging heat.

I turn to Eric. He is calm, leaning over the pier and letting himself go, sliding into the sea.

He calls out to me: «The water is beautiful today, come on, jump in!»

«Maybe later», I reply.

I know I'm missing out on something and Eric tries to encourage me.

He twirls in the water like a dolphin, he's a good swimmer. But he's a friend, because he doesn't tease me, he leaves me alone.

I met him a few days ago when he popped into the warehouse and said to me: «I can see you from my bedroom on the cliff. I was wondering why you always wear a sun hat and dark glasses, have sun cream smeared from the tip of your nose to your toes, and look so gloomy!»

«Why don't you mind your own business? What do you want?» I replied.

«You hide away like a hermit crab and don't come out until sunset. What do you do all day?»

«I try not to get roasted... and what are you doing perched on the cliff? Spying on people?»

«How touchy you are, as well as very pale. I'll call you Amerigo Mozzarella», he chuckled.

Long story short, we became friends, we spend every day together and today we have the case of the missing red buoys to solve.