

*...The evening had started off in a light and joking style, with no sign of any hidden hostility between Laura and John.*

*Laura knew that probably they would never have another occasion to spend so much time as a trio, a chance to clear up this shadowy triangle one way or another...*

*As it was getting late, instead of going out to the restaurant, they went to take a pizza home from the local pizzeria which sold excellent pizza slices, with a unique, crispy pastry, even the gluten-free choice that Laura remembered Anne preferred.*

*"This pizza is really different to what I am used to in Italy... I usually don't like pizza in some parts of Italy, as pastry is too thin and too damp with the sauce on it. This is something different, it is delicious!" commented Anne on the extremely light and crispy pizza.*

*"So where are we going tomorrow? When is diving planned?"*

*"Tomorrow we are invited for lunch by my aunt in Parzanica on top of the hill. She works part-time in a bar restaurant in the village, then we can have a walk to take some superb pictures from a panoramic place, called Belvedere. My aunt said the pathway was still under construction but we could already climb half way up and see the breathtaking view on Monte Isola and the lake."*

*"Oh that sounds great" reflected John.*

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*"What is that factory there?" asked John as they took the road left up to Parzanica on the Bergamo side of the lake.*

*"It is a concrete-industry plant which has been so much contested recently, as stone mining for years has been done by exploding bits of the hill. Already back in 1907 there was a disaster as part of the village finished in the lake due to a landslide. A few years ago an increased sliding movement was detected in the rocks linked to the explosive mining activity which got immediately banned. The suddenly accelerating landslide caused great fear of a potential mini-tsunami on the lake that would generate waves twenty feet high, should the thousands of tons of stones from the rocks collapse into the lake, flooding Iseo and neighbouring villages on the opposite side. Later on, while monitoring the situation, the subsidence almost stopped, and the public were reassured. However it is still not a stable environment even though stone mining is now stopped and not allowed by explosive methods until the mountain gets stabilised. No*

*mining in the mountains means no raw material for the concrete plant, so its future is really uncertain...”*

*“Well that sounds quite a task to stabilise a hill that has been getting detonated for decades. It was sad, in such a beautiful area full of stunning beauty on the lake to start that kind of extraction at all, even if business is business. Look at these cracks on the road, maybe these signs show that the slow slide is still on...”*

*As they arrived up at Parzanica after a fifteen-minute climb by car, Aunt Silvana was already waiting for them in the parking lot.*

*“Come here, my dear Laura, how long we have not seen each other. Life here is the same, I rarely go down the lake side, we have everything organised up here, even a helicopter for emergency cases. Our days are simple but organised and peaceful. No migrants, no criminality here. Let’s walk up to the restaurant, everything is ready.”*

*“Dear Aunt Silvana, each year you look younger and younger. These are my friends, John and Anne from Hungary.”*

*“Oh, maybe working is what keeps me in shape, you know the restaurant needs me, they hardly find any younger people willing to work here, at the end of the world as they call it. For us, it is eternal peace here, far away from cities. For the young, it is boring, so we keep on working...”*

*How nice friends you have, you must bring them up to Belvedere to see the fantastic view on the lake up there. It is a fifteen minute walk up on the hill. The pathway is still under construction, you can still arrive at the terrace, but be careful as men and animals break the fence from time to time, so it is dangerous to go right up to the edge...”*

*“Oh we will surely go up there after lunch, before it gets dark! Why are there so many houses, flats, pieces of land for sale around? Could be because of the scandal of the landslide and related fears...”*

*“Oh, it is just a business war between those who want mining to go on and those against, believe me this hill has always been moving, you can read stories about disasters even before mining started, but we always rebuild everything, you see our village is in order, and we keep going on.*

*I expect you are hungry, I prepared your table before the opening hour, so I can sit down with you too, before I start my lunchtime shift.”*

*"I can imagine you rebuilding everything, you being such hardworking and stubborn people. My dad always explained how hard life up here on the top of the hill was. Maybe you could develop tourism much more, just selling tickets for the view would maintain this small population, I am convinced..."*

*"Yes, we are starving, what did you prepare today?"*

*"John, Anne, do you like pasta? I prepared home made casoncelli, the Bergamo-style stuffed pasta, a kind of tortellini with a candy shape filled with a mix of minced beef meat and salami, sultanas, breadcrumb and grana cheese, plus spices like cinnamon. The pasta is then served with a light sauce of butter, pancetta, salvia and cheese on top. The secret is the lukewarm water when you do the pasta, and that it has to be very thin before filling, Laura don't forget that next time you cook it for your friends!*

*It is the typical plate here nowadays for the Festa della Madonna, Day of the Holy Mary in mid September but in the restaurant we always have it on our menu. I hope you will like it."*

*"Oh it sounds great, Silvana, we love pasta, much more than polenta to be honest," answered Anne...*

*The freshly made "casonsei" as they say in the dialect, was served by aunt Silvana with great care. She was proud of her own secret spiced recipe for the filling that she never shared with anyone. She said she would literally take it with her to her grave so that no one would find it. She was convinced that every cook has to be free to do the filling creatively their own way, rather than continue the same generation after generation. It was an unusual approach for an Italian cook.*

*"Taste this tasty dry red wine from our hills around Bergamo, a Valcalepio Rosso Riserva. Later I will show you a special sweet wine, Moscato di Scanzo that makes even the half-dead dance. It will accompany the dessert I chose for you, torta di Donizetti, which was from Bergamo... It is a cake with dried apricot and pineapple. The legend says that his friend Rossini's cook created it for him, since he was always lethargic from some love story and constantly needed cheering up. It became his favourite cake. Does anyone suffer from love pain here?"*

*"Everyone..." answered John with an enigmatic smile on his face.*

*"Then it will be a cure for all of you..." replied Aunt Silvana.*

*Aunt Silvana greeted them, showed the way how to climb to Belvedere then disappeared into her kingdom, the kitchen, as her usual guests started to arrive.*

*A steep asphalt road with no clear sign suggested it was the right one to climb as Aunt Silvana explained it. In fact, it seemed to be under construction, in some parts the fencing was missing, behind the bushes around them a flock of sheep was making some noise. There was no-one around.*

*At a certain point suddenly a stunning lake view opened up as they walked down towards the terrace that seemed to be a picnic area. John was heading towards the bottom edge of the rock.*

*“Let me go to that bush for a second, as there is no toilet here.” said Anne and went a little further away.*

*“Come here Laura, let us make a nice selfie and send it to Matthew! Be careful, there is a broken fence behind you...*