

Violet and Joseph are 7-year-old twins with light brown hair, born under the sign of Aquarius. Giuseppe is a chubby little boy, taller than his sister, with a mild and silent character who likes to sleep and eat a lot, he is particularly fond of sweets and candies; Viola, on the other hand, is a bit more lively and always cheerful, she loves books, she started reading before the other children and devours one book after another under a cascade of curls.

Summer has just started and, like every year, the twins go to visit their grandparents in their parents' home country.

The two siblings love going there because the landscape is full of many different kinds of trees, blue waters and green meadows where they go on picnics and woodland walks with their mum and dad.

Moreover, when Joseph and Viola meet people in the village on the street, they are always kind and smiling to them or give them something as a present, while their grandmother always prepares lots of delicious things to eat for their arrival.

One morning at the end of June, the Maglini twins loaded their suitcases into the big grey car and set off with their parents for the holiday they had been looking forward to all year.

THE LITTLE TOWN

In the small village of almost 1,000 inhabitants, life is quiet; the air is clean, the sun shines on the rolling hills and the only sounds you can hear are the birds singing along the tree-lined avenue at the entrance to the town.

A few steps further on, in the middle of a valley, there is an artificial lake fed by smaller tributaries that surround the village, creating picturesque corners. In the village of the grandparents, everyone knows each other, they went to the same school together and were invited to each other's weddings; every occasion is good to get together to eat and celebrate. The village is very famous for the important events held in honour of the patron saint at the end of July when the merry-go-rounds arrive and some bands play folk music; the streets are filled with lights, chatter and people

from nearby places. The village's landmark is an old church right in the middle of the village, which was built even before the houses were built, and where the elderly parish priest married their parents, grandparents and even great-grandparents. The steps of the church are a reference point for the village's youngsters, who gather together even on the hottest afternoons to enjoy the cool shade at the foot of the large oak tree with its thick branches overlooking the building. Near the church there is a spring where women once went to wash their clothes, and this has been the summer 'swimming pool' for many children who unwillingly fell into it, as happened to Viola and Giuseppe more than once.

GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE

The grandparents' house is reached along a dirt road just outside the village centre.

In front of the house there is a huge terrace where the twins always play in the shade of a large parasol. In front of the house, all around the perimeter, there is a garden full of vegetables: fresh salad, tomatoes, potatoes and strawberries. During the summer Viola and Giuseppe and their grandparents harvest the vegetables and the result is always a beautiful, colourful basket.

Next to the vegetable garden is a large field of sunflowers, the grandmother's favourite flower, and she has told her grandchildren on several occasions that they are in love with the sun and turn with the Earth so that they can always look it in the face.

Behind the house is the rose garden, which Granddad looks after very carefully. He has roses of all colours: pink, yellow, white and some red. Granddad is also an animal lover and there are all kinds of animals. Next to the large farmhouse he has built a small, colourful farm; Inside there is a henhouse where the chickens lay their eggs and sometimes you can see a little yellow speck wandering around the courtyard; these are the chicks that the twins love to stroke because they are as soft as their stuffed animals. There is also a rooster that wakes everyone up every morning with his "Chicchirichì", three pink piglets always dirty with mud, a cow from which they get the milk that the children like so much and even a horse and its pony, a gift from one of Grandpa's friends. Granddad has also

built a birdhouse above each tree for the birds to rest in at night. On the hill opposite the farm, a gentleman in a straw hat leads the sheep to graze, led by two very large white dogs that Fly always keeps away from. Fly is his grandparents' little dog, a short and long brown half-breed with two very funny ears, one always up and one dangling downwards. Now an old man, he likes to take a nap under the apple tree, but he is often woken up by Blacky, the town's stray kitten, all black with yellow eyes, who wants to play with him and so they start chasing each other, making all the fruit fall to the ground. Most of the time Fly plays chasing his own tail convinced that it is the cat behind him that is bothering him, it is hilarious and the children always laugh watching him bark at the air. Giuseppe fears him a little and always caresses him with a certain diffidence while Viola often likes to annoy him but he still fills her little face with kisses. When it's evening and it's too cold outside to go out, the twins curl up on the sofa watching a cartoon while Fly lies on top of them ready to take all the cuddles. Fly is very jealous of the two children and would like to have them all to himself. Whenever he sees them hugging their mum or dad, he starts to fuss and bark, but calms down as soon as one of them gives him attention. One night Fly heard noises in the vegetable garden and started barking loudly, waking up the whole house, so the grandparents discovered a family of wild boars with their little boars and were able to save all the vegetables and flowers they were about to destroy.

THE AUNTS

One morning Violet decides to wake Joseph up jumping around his bed: “Wakie wakie! We’re going to the playground!”

Joseph, who is the goodness but also the calm person, crinkles his eyes and with a sleepy voice replies: "Just five more minutes..." Meanwhile, from downstairs comes a good smell of chocolate doughnuts, blackberry pie and biscuits, grandmother's specialty, in the shape of stars and hearts that the two children like so much.

In the kitchen Viola finds her mum and dad reading the newspaper in front of a steaming cup of coffee and as soon as they see her they exclaim "Good morning!" with a big smile; Giuseppe lets himself be cradled in his mum's arms and Viola in his dad's who gives her a kiss, she likes to feel his beard pinching her cheek.

The doorbell rings! It's Aunt Mag and Aunt Cate! They arrived early this morning just in time for breakfast. After getting dressed and brushing their teeth, the children run down the stairs, taking their parents' recommendations with them.

As soon as they see the aunts they jump into each other's arms and amidst the shouts of joy, kisses and hugs they notice that in addition to the suitcases there are also lots of presents!"

Let's go to the gardens!" exclaims Joseph, "yes, let's go, let's go!" impatiently jumps his sister.

So the aunts, after saying goodbye to the rest of the family and having a quick coffee, set off down the road holding the hands of their two nephews.

It's a beautiful sunny day, the air is mild and the sky is blue with a few white patches of clouds that look like cotton wool.

TO THE GARDENS

In the centre of the village are the public gardens full of flowerbeds and in the middle a fountain surrounded by four benches where ladies with big hats are always sitting. On the other side of the park is the colourful play

area: towers and ladders, two red swings, a double yellow and green slide, two rocking horses, rings and a rope for climbing.

Giuseppe lets himself be rocked by the swing, he really likes to get to the top and have the feeling of emptiness in his belly; Viola, on the other hand, likes to go back and forth on the slide, only in reverse so she always ends up upside down.

They play for a while together with other children they have met and then Joseph gets hungry, which is not exactly a surprise!

So they decide to go to the bakery across the street to get something to eat because the aunts are also feeling a bit peckish.

In a little wooden house by the side of the road there is a small bakery where they sell lots of delicacies that the children like to eat as a snack, taking care not to fill up too much, otherwise they wouldn't be able to finish their grandmother's very rich lunch and they don't want her to be disappointed. They eat their favourite pizzette, round and full of tomato, careful not to get dirty, and walk towards the heart of the medieval village. They sit on a little wall and tell their aunts about the horse riding trip they took the day before with their mum and dad. They had a great time riding through the woods followed by their grandfather and grandmother looking for Fly who had gone for a ride and got lost. "Do you remember the time we saw a deer?" said Viola.

"Bambi!" exclaims Aunt Cate and Giuseppe adds, "yes! We looked at each other for a moment" and Viola resumes "we wanted to caress him but then he ran away".

And Joseph adds sorrowfully, "we saw him go..."

So the aunts decide to take them for a walk in the woods that afternoon to look for him, and the children rejoice, exclaiming, "You are the best aunts in the world!" Cate and Mag look at each other proudly and give them a big kiss.

FISHING WITH GRANDPA

The next morning, Grandpa wakes the two children up early - it's time to go fishing!

Grandfather is a gentle and patient person and for this reason he prefers sport fishing more than any other activity. Every year, driven by the desire

to pass on his passion to his grandchildren, he takes them with him to the shore of the lake near the village.

Surprisingly, he finds them ready to go and together they walk along the path made of stones and leaves. After about fifteen minutes they reach the little beach leading to the lake.

Viola sits on a colourful towel being caressed by the gentle wind and kissed by the sun, holding one of her favourite books.

"Grandpa" asks Giuseppe, "but is the fish Grandma cooks the one we catch? Then Grandpa explains with the wisdom of his years that the fish his grandmother buys at the market have already died of natural causes and that 'real fishermen', as he calls them, use the Catch & Release technique so that the fish don't stay out of the water too long.

Giuseppe listens interestedly to his grandfather talk about 'preserving fish fauna' and 'respecting the ecology of the waters' between puffs of his pipe. Even Viola, who was absorbed in her reading a moment before, looks up and listens in admiration.

The grandfather lets the child try more than once until Joseph feels the line pull, but as soon as he reels it in, a pile of muddy, sticky leaves appears. Joseph does not understand why the fish seem to be uncooperative so he simply observes.

The water calms him down, he pulls out a lollipop and, with his legs dangling, watches his grandfather cast his line and wait while he takes another big puff from his pipe.

"The true fisherman," explains the grandfather who considers himself to be in this category, "is respectful of the laws that govern his discipline and of nature itself."

For the grandfather, it is more important to pass on to his grandchildren the beauty of the fishing environment than the quantity of the catch.

Granddad decides to have a few throwing contests to keep them entertained, then lunchtime arrives and together they return home surrounded by the scent and colours of nature.

THE NIGHT OF SAN LORENZO

It is 10 of August, the day of San Lorenzo. Giuseppe and Viola have just finished dinner. They are sitting on the porch in their grandparents' garden and hope they will be lucky enough to see a shooting star.

The night of San Lorenzo is famous for shooting stars, and those are the best days to look at the sky because you can see a lot of them.

"Do you know that if you make a wish, it comes true? If you ask, heaven always hears you. It happened to me!" says Aunty Mag sitting next to the children on the rocking chair.

"We also have to put our own spin on it," explains the father.

"You have to really want it to make it happen," adds the mother.

So the two children, each in their own hearts, express a great desire.

They are all absorbed with their noses in the air, admiring the shining sky, when suddenly they hear a loud bang and the sky is filled with a thousand green and blue, golden and red lights... it's fireworks!

Fly immediately gets up from his seat and starts barking left and right without understanding what is going on, the children jump to their feet ecstatically at the sight of the fireworks display before their eyes and join in with the 'ooh' and 'look at that' or 'nice one!' of the family members, there are even some heart-shaped ones!

Then, just as the attraction began, it ended with three bangs one after the other, Giuseppe covered his ears while Viola started to dance around the porch followed closely by Fly and everyone burst into thunderous applause.

THE LAKE

The next morning, the children set off with their aunts and some of their friends to the lake, which is at the end of a long, pebble-strewn road. At the end of the road is a large green and blue lake surrounded by trees, in the middle of which a beautiful white swan is swimming.

The children scream with surprise and delight at the sight of the animal and run along the lake to greet it.

There is also a family of cute little ducks that march across the surface in single file, occasionally sticking their heads under the water in a very funny way.

Lunchtime at last! The guys, Viola and Giuseppe sit on the benches next to the beach and enjoy the spectacular view.

The twins settle down among the aunts, each with his napkin embroidered by his mother hanging from his neck. The preparations for the barbecue begin, the meat is put on the fire and a tablecloth is laid out and everyone

is ready with plates in hand and their stomachs growling.

THE CASTLE

One day, after waking up from their afternoon sleep, the twins decide to go for a walk along the Romanesque bridge leading to the gates of a castle or what remains of it.

For them, the castle is a collection of ancient, ghostly ruins with a very interesting history. Their grandfather knows all the details by heart and every time they drive past he starts telling them the legend of the old medieval castle and all those who lived inside: courtesans, knights, kings and princesses.

When they arrive at the beginning of what used to be the drawbridge, the two children make a bet: whoever arrives last at the end of the bridge will have to enter the castle first.

3,2,1... go!

They run at breakneck speed until they find themselves in the middle of the large field before the castle.

Viola arrives a few seconds earlier, even though she has played the smart-ass and left a little earlier, and when her brother points this out they agree to go into the ruins together.

"Mum wouldn't be very happy" Giuseppe remarks in a whisper, Viola looks at him indecisively for a moment and then says "we'll just stay a few minutes, just to have a look around".

They take each other by the hand and walk into the field between the ears of corn. After a while, they find themselves in the middle of sharp, dusty stones, uncultivated weeds and rubbish. They go round and round, but the castle seems to have been left to its own devices, not scary at all, just very dirty!

Disappointed, the children turn back and play with the butterflies on the way home.

THE VILLAGE FESTIVAL

In the meantime, the aunts have left for their holidays and the village has arrived at the rides for the patron saint's day.

One evening, Viola and Giuseppe, accompanied by their parents, meet in the central square to play with their friends, moving from one merry-go-round to another. Viola likes the inflatable rides where you can jump and

plunge headlong into a lake of coloured balls, while Giuseppe prefers the quieter rides, the revolving ones such as the horse and cars.

There is good music being played by a local band accompanied by a solo accordion and the children watch their mum and dad twirl to the beat of one of their favourite songs.

They are accomplished dancers and their ballroom repertoire extends from the mazurka and polka to the waltz.

The children pirouette together, one on top of daddy's shoes and the other with mummy.

After getting tired enough, they all decide to go for an ice cream. While they are sitting outside the ice cream parlour waiting with their feet dangling from chairs too big for them, their dad takes out his Polaroid camera to take a nice picture.

"I want to take it!" says Viola, followed by Giuseppe's echo, "no, I want to take it!" and they go on like this for a while until their father intervenes, "be good and get close together, I'll take the picture!"

Having said that, Giuseppe strikes a pose, flashing one of his best shy smiles, while Viola turns towards him just in time to give him a bad tongue, but as soon as she sees her mother coming out of the shop holding two huge ice-creams, her face lights up and FLASH!

It comes out a beautiful picture!

RAIN OF A THOUSAND COLOURS

It's a rainy afternoon, summer is coming to an end and Viola and Giuseppe in the company of Fly stare disconsolately at the grey landscape outside the window, the summer rain falling accompanied by the rumble of thunder and lightning that illuminates the streets of the village.

The rain falls slowly, subtly and suddenly a myriad of colours appear, reflecting on the window and lighting up the room like a kaleidoscope.

It's the rainbow!

The invisible raindrops thus take on all colours: green, blue, yellow and red.

Joseph then exclaims "I'd like to ride that rainbow!" while his face lights up, Viola also seems to be daydreaming and says "I'd like to fly in the sky to play with the clouds".

In the meantime, Fly has raised both ears as if he too was playing with them. They are silent for a while, both of them lost in the colours, when a voice from the kitchen wakes them up: "Snack time, kids!" Grandma calls them.

Viola and Giuseppe wake up as if from a dream, the sadness of rain and bad weather replaced by the smell of fruit juices and chocolate muffins. The first to rush into the kitchen is Fly followed by Giuseppe, who turns to call his sister who still has her face stuck to the window and is admiring the landscape taking shape under the arch of so many colours.

"Aren't you coming?" he asks her and she reluctantly leaves her world, gets up and jumps up to join him.

Their mother arrives and sees them absorbed in their thoughts and asks why, so they decide together to make a beautiful drawing representing their wishes.

Later that evening the children put on a show for everyone.

THE LAST EVENING OF SUMMER

The last evening of the holidays has arrived, albeit too quickly, and the next day the Maglini family will be leaving for their hectic city life.

The twins therefore decide to camp with their tent in the garden.

After a succulent dinner of mixed fried food (from pumpkin flowers to chips) prepared by the older children, daddy lights a fire next to the tent and starts reading a nice story to Joseph and Viola.

The tale tells of a forest and a boy who befriends a family of wolves. In the

meantime, they listen to every word, tucked into a huge sleeping bag with their little heads sticking out, admiring the moonlit sky.

The story soon ends, the air has cooled and the children have fallen into a deep sleep. So Mum and Dad pick them up gently and carry them to their bedroom and, after dressing them for the night, tuck them in.

They switch off the light, watch the children smile and walk through the door a little happier. And so, warmly tucked under their blankets and each hugging his favourite soft toy, Viola and Giuseppe relive every moment of that wonderful summer in their dreams.