

A NOVEL BASED ON THE LIFE OF
GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI

A full-length portrait of Giuseppe Garibaldi, a man with a full grey beard and mustache, wearing a red military jacket with gold buttons and a white waistcoat. He is holding a sword in his left hand and a scabbard in his right. The background is a plain, light color.

**A MAN OF ACTION
SAVING LIBERTY**

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THE
MENTORIS
PROJECT

Chapter One

CHILDHOOD IN PIEDMONT UNDER FRENCH RULE

On October 26, 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi found himself as far from his childhood home as a man could be, having traveled around the world and back again in his fifty-three years, seeking a goal no man had yet accomplished: the unification of his beloved Italy. As he stood in his tent on the battlefield, he wondered . . . were the sacrifices worth this moment?

Fastening his trademark red shirt, he thought of those who had chosen to follow his cry “Rome or Die”—young men now buried in similar shirts in hillsides far from the country farms they had left behind.

Pulling a gray poncho over his head, he thought of friends around the world who might never know that their sacrifices had contributed to this impending moment.

As his fifteen-year-old daughter, Teresita, adjusted the black scarf around his neck, he looked into her eyes and thought of the woman he had lost on the way to this dream.

“Are you thinking of Mamma?” Teresita asked.

“Of my Mamma . . .” he said, remembering. “And of yours. And you. This dream—all my dreams—have been sustained by women all my life.”

He paused. The moment was so precious that Teresita held her breath.

“I look into her eyes every time I look into yours,” he said. “This was to be our shared triumph.” How could he help but feel the presence of his beloved Anita on this of all days?

His only surviving daughter kissed him on the cheek. “This day still belongs to both of you,” she said.

“I am my beloved,” he repeated. “That’s what she said to me.”

Teresita’s fingers stopped in the middle of tying his scarf. He had never shared Anita’s last words with their children.

“Now I say it of her. Forever,” Giuseppe said, “I am my beloved.”

The words brought a smile to Teresita’s face, brightening her father’s mood as he stepped from the tent and mounted his horse, groomed so meticulously that its hide shone like a mirror. He rode off, no longer only a child of French-held Nice, no longer the failed leader of the South American rebels of Rio Grande do Sul, no longer merely a candlemaker’s apprentice in the turbulent times in the far-off United States. So much lost, yet so much gained in what still seemed so little time. He could barely believe it all himself.

At this moment, Giuseppe Garibaldi could claim himself the victor in a nearly twenty-year struggle over who should rule the now-scattered kingdoms of the once-powerful Roman Empire. It was almost impossible to believe the journey that had brought him to lead this legion, that had brought him from his birth in Piedmont to this encampment in Teano, that

had brought him to this meeting with a king . . . impossible to believe that such a journey had begun at a small wooden desk nearly fifty years ago.

“Our fate cannot be taken from us; it is a . . .” five-year-old Giuseppe faltered as he read aloud to his mother, Maria Rosa.

“Gift,” she enunciated. “Do not be afraid. Our fate cannot be taken from us; it is a gift.” It was her favorite passage in her favorite book, *La Divina Commedia*. “Signor Alighieri’s words are like music. A young gentleman is judged by how smoothly they flow off his tongue.”

“Music is easy. Language is hard,” the young boy said. “None of my friends have Italian, with one tutor, English with another and French with another.”

“You are not the other boys and they are not you.” Maria Rosa, known to friends by her middle name, Nicoletta, never gave up—on anything. Including teaching her sons to read in Italian, a language the local French neighborhood of Nice did not respect.

At twenty-nine, Nicoletta had learned not to bother with what others thought. She followed her own ideas, gleaned from a life of studying the teachings of the Catholic Church, caring for the local poor, and keeping her four rambunctious young sons in line. That responsibility she took to heart by feeding their bodies with quality homegrown vegetables, and their minds with quality homegrown Italian literature. They read from Cicero to Dante, with a little of the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley thrown in, as she was partial to his way with words—and his bent for romance.

“Let me tell you a story about living up to other people’s ideas,” she said.

Giuseppe had never been sure if her stories were meant to teach him how to live or distract him from his current desire, which right now was to stop sitting up so straight on such a hard chair and to stop reading such a difficult work as Dante. He listened intently, trying not to lose focus on his own goal in this conversation.

“There was a man walking a donkey through the countryside one day with his young son riding on top. They encountered a man who berated the father for allowing his son to ride while he walked, so the father and son switched positions with the child walking and the father riding.”

“That is smart,” Giuseppe said.

“Not according to the next man they met,” Nicoletta said. “‘Poor child!’ the man sighed. He thought it awful that the father was riding and the son was made to walk, so do you know what they did next?”

Giuseppe thought for a moment. “I would ride together.”

“Yes,” his mother answered, smiling at his quick thinking. “Together, they continued until they met yet another man who cried, ‘Oh, the poor beast! Two riding on top must be hard on such a weak creature.’”

“And the moral of the story?” Giuseppe asked.

“You must make your own decisions,” Nicoletta said. “For never will everyone agree with you. So you study three languages because I’ve decided it is right for you.”

“What if Signor Dante did not know my fate is to be a beggar,” Giuseppe teased, trying to avoid going back to work.

“Then you would have been born into the family of a beggar,

Peppino,” Nicoletta said, using the family’s nickname for him, “not into the family of a daring sea captain.”

“I miss Papà,” Giuseppe admitted. His father, Giovanni, known to friends by his middle name, Domenico, often left the family for months at a time to sail his ship, the *Santa Reparata*. On his rare nights at home, Domenico dazzled his sons with stories of his adventures at sea, from meeting pirates to speaking the exotic languages of the many ports where his ship docked.

“I miss him too,” Nicoletta said, patting her son’s head. “But that’s why, if you study harder than other boys, you will be yet more than he and take a trade that keeps you on land. Be a doctor, a lawyer, or—can you imagine the honor—a priest . . .”

To that end, she had taught all her sons in turn to read Dante Alighieri, proud that far back in the 1300s he had written his *La Divina Commedia* in Italian when most others were still using Latin as the language of the educated classes. She also taught her sons to read the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli and Cesare Borgia, learned men of the Renaissance often considered the forefathers of the idea of a united Italy. Such unification was Nicoletta’s dream before it was her son’s.

“We are Italians—Nice did not always belong to France,” she said, taking out a book of maps common in a sailor’s home and deftly turning their reading lesson into one on history. “Our small city was once part of the great Holy Roman Empire.” Giuseppe followed her finger as she traced around the whole of Italy, Sicily, Spain, and the northern coast of Africa, the entirety of the holdings of ancient Rome. Her delicate finger even encircled part of England.

“And now?” he asked eagerly.

“Now,” she said dejectedly as finger traced a smaller circle. “Now we are part of France.”

“Why?” Giuseppe asked.

“Men fight over land,” she said, wondering how much of the world’s evils one could—or should—explain to a five-year-old. “Men fight over differences, in language, in looks—”

“Why?” Giuseppe asked again, interrupting her against the rules because he was anxious to understand.

“It makes them feel *forte*. Strong,” Nicoletta said. When she saw the gleam in her little boy’s eyes, she said, “But that is not true strength.”

“Then what is?” he asked, desperate to know the secrets to making his mother, and often-absent father, proud.

“Unity is strength. Diversity within unity is strength. We are always stronger together than apart,” Nicoletta said, taking her son’s hand and walking him outside to an old oak tree in the field beyond their home. “See this oak?” Together, they looked up through the woven branches, so thick that the leaves nearly blotted out the clear blue sky.

“Trees survive for generations not by destroying life around them but, like a family, by making a place where all can live together safely.”

“Who lives in a tree?” he asked. “Not me.”

“Shhh, listen,” she said. Giuseppe tried not to move or make a sound, a grand feat for a small, fidgety boy. Soon they heard rustling and his mother pointed as a weasel crawled out of his burrow under the tree root and ran off. Next they heard a tiny trilling sound and she pointed up to a lark as it landed on a high branch. “A calandra lark,” she whispered. “To say you sing like such a bird is the greatest complement. They sing so magically, many people keep them as pets.”

“Can we keep him?” Giuseppe asked, eyes growing wider as he started forward.

“No,” Nicoletta said, pulling him back. The bird took flight. “He is free and must be allowed to go where he pleases. But—” She paused to lift a leaf, and they spotted a cricket tucked underneath. “Keeping crickets brings good luck.” Mamma carefully cupped the cricket in her hand and gestured for Giuseppe to make the same shape with his. Gently, she deposited the insect into his tiny hands.

As they walked home, Nicoletta hoped her son had learned the lesson. “Do you think you understand what real strength is, Peppino?”

“Yes, Mamma,” he answered. “It’s when everyone works together for the good of . . . everyone?”

“Good,” she said. Then, as lessons were over for the day, she reverted to her favorite occupation. “Did I ever tell you the story of the *Castagno dei Cento Cavalli* in faraway Sicily?” she asked.

“No,” Giuseppe said, slowing his normally quick pace so the story wouldn’t be interrupted by a return home and the demands of his other brothers. He cherished this time alone with his mother.

“Well, the Tree of One Hundred Horses is far, far south, in the Kingdom of Sicily, near the mouth of a giant volcano named Etna. The tree was born many years ago.”

“Before you?” Giuseppe asked, unintentionally making his mother laugh.

“Yes, before me. Before my mother and her mother, and her mother before her. Before even Jesus. Or Caesar. Once upon a time, a legion of one hundred knights were caught in a terrible thunderstorm. The rain would ruin their armor with rust. The mud from the flood would swallow their horses. But the Tree

of a Hundred Horses sheltered them all under its bountiful branches. That is strength. That is unity.”

“I will see this tree for myself someday,” Giuseppe promised as he cradled his lucky cricket. “Perhaps it’s just another wonderful story.”

“*Chi non va, non vede*,” Nicoletta said, quoting her favorite Italian proverb. “*Chi non vede, non sa*.” Never one to miss a chance for a lesson, she asked Giuseppe, “Translate that into English for me and I will tell your tutor that you are ready for another lesson.”

“If you don’t go, you won’t see,” Giuseppe translated, a skill that never failed to make his mother smile. “If you don’t see, you won’t know.”

A few years later, in the summer of 1819, on a day Nicoletta devoted to taking her sons to hone the swimming skills so necessary for a life at sea, Giuseppe had a chance to prove he had learned her lesson of strength and unity.

Nicoletta watched contentedly as Angelo, who was older by a year or so, and Michele, who was younger, ran along the pathway beside Giuseppe. The youngest, Felice, trailed behind not matter how hard he tried. The boys always raced to see who would touch water first. Today Giuseppe won, running into the waves until the water was deep enough for a dive. He disappeared into the incoming tide. The others followed shortly, as did Nicoletta after pausing to deposit their food baskets on the sand.

The shore teemed with other locals taking a break from the rising humidity, swimming, reading, and unpacking for *pranzare*, the midday meal. After some time in the water, Nicoletta

returned to her baskets and began extracting cold meats wrapped in cloth and an assortment of whole fruits and vegetables waiting to be sliced. It was enough to satisfy the appetites her sons were creating as they chased each other across the waves.

As she unfolded a towel from around some bread, a shout rang out over the waves, snapping her to attention. Nicoletta's eyes scanned the water for the source of the sound. Others on the shore did the same, but no one moved. Nicoletta picked out where Felice splashed in the nearby tide pool, immune to adult worries. Out in the sea Angelo treaded water as he listened, then she saw Michele doing the same a few yards away. She continued scanning the water for Giuseppe. One of the swimmers dove toward a woman frantically splashing and Nicoletta quickly recognized Giuseppe, arms extended over his head, cutting like a jackknife through the water.

"No!" Nicoletta shouted over the sound of the sea as she watched her twelve-year-old swim farther and farther from shore, knowing how tired he must be. Angelo and Michele had begun to follow, but fell back at the urgency in their mother's voice. Whether Giuseppe could not hear her or chose to ignore her, she didn't know, but he continued swimming to the flailing woman as others on the beach stood up to watch.

"Who is it?" one neighbor asked.

"No one recognized her when she arrived," said another as he entered the water to help, but he was already so far behind Giuseppe that Nicoletta knew he would be of no use.

Giuseppe glanced back to shore to gauge how far back he would have to swim with this woman in tow and he began to worry. What if he couldn't do it? When he saw the others were too far out, he pushed himself one more time, grabbed the young woman under the arm, and began swimming back to shore.

After what seemed an eternity, Nicoletta felt the relief of knowing he was going to make it back. When they reached the spot where they could stand and walk back through the waves, others ran out to assist the woman. A quick conversation revealed she was traveling through town and had come to the beach alone to refresh herself.

Meanwhile, Angelo, Michele, and finally Felice ran out to Giuseppe along with a host of their local friends. Angelo slapped him on the back, hitting so hard, water shot out of Giuseppe's mouth. He fell to his knees, coughing up the rest of it.

Nicoletta hugged her son tightly. "What were you thinking?" she demanded.

"I—I didn't," Giuseppe began. He spoke in pauses as the words slowly formed in his mind. "I didn't see anyone else . . . ready . . . or trying . . . so . . ."

"So you thought you'd take care of it all," Nicoletta said, not scolding so much as releasing the quiet tension that had risen in her.

"I was trying to be a tree," Giuseppe finally articulated.

"A tree?" Angelo said, confused. "Trees can't swim!"

Nicoletta laughed at the confusion their inside joke caused Angelo, but quickly quieted at the sad look that crossed his face when he felt she was showing favoritism.

"Haven't I told you the story?" Nicoletta asked her other sons.

The boys shook their heads vehemently.

"Sit down and eat your lunches," she said, "and I will tell you all a story about a tree and a hundred horsemen." The boys began eating as the young woman Giuseppe had saved approached.

"*Grazie*," she said, hesitantly placing a basket of food at Nicoletta's feet and turning to walk away.

“Join us,” Nicoletta said, introducing herself in welcome.

The woman seemed hesitant. Giuseppe rose to shake her hand, his words tumbling so fast, she could barely understand his dialect. “We are always stronger together than apart,” he said. “Stay, and my Mamma will tell you a wonderful story—of a grand tree, a thousand horses, a terrible storm, and the knights who survived.”

The young woman sat beside Nicoletta and introduced herself as Giuseppina.

“What a lovely name,” Nicoletta commented.

“It’s mine too,” said Giuseppe.

“What a coincidence. We were both named for St. Josaphat,” Giuseppina said.

Nicoletta smiled and, always turning life experiences into lessons, asked, “What is St. Josaphat the patron saint of?”

Giuseppe smiled. “Unity.”

It was a lesson Giuseppe would learn over and over in his youth.

Chapter 2

1823 – 1833

THE START OF A LIFE AT SEA

Time with his mother and brothers didn't last. Soon Giuseppe, like all young men from the newly created middle class, was sent to boarding school in Genoa, over 120 miles from his home in Nice. Nicoletta hoped he would study medicine or law, but he picked up a knack for navigation instead. A short year into his schooling, when the teachers refused to give lessons on navigation, Giuseppe and a small group of friends decided to test themselves.

One night, under cover of darkness, they commandeered a small local sailboat and headed toward Liguria, some forty miles west. They wanted to practice their seafaring skills and reenact the Battle of Actium, which they had been learning about in history class. Or perhaps that was merely the way they rationalized their actions. Naturally, fourteen-year-old Giuseppe took on the role of the famed General Octavian.

Giuseppe's best friend, Pietro Anzani, played Octavian's right-hand man, Admiral Marcus Agrippa.

During the actual Battle of Actium, in 31 BC, the 250 battleships commanded by Octavian and Agrippa overcame those under the control of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra, who famously died by double suicide when they lost. Octavian's success led to the beginning of the Roman Empire, whose influences were still felt throughout the world.

On their much smaller boat, Giuseppe and Pietro worked frantically to stay on course as a thunderstorm struck. Rising waves rocked the boat. Giuseppe gripped the wheel tight as Pietro wrestled with the sails.

"You said you knew how to steer!" Pietro shouted.

"You said you knew how to sail!" Giuseppe shouted back.

"Not in such a storm!" Pietro said, but the wind swallowed his words before they could reach Giuseppe. "You have to abandon course," Pietro said urgently. "Sail into the wind and save the ship!"

"Strike the mainsail!" Giuseppe ordered.

Pietro balked at the suggestion. "We'll be at the mercy of the waters!"

Rather than waste precious seconds explaining his plan to freeboard, Giuseppe abandoned the wheel and began using the rudder to steer. When Pietro realized they were going to make a mad run for a landing, he struck the mainsail. Even he knew a boat could not have two masters. Giuseppe fought to hold the rudder steady. In under a half an hour, they made land and scrambled out of the boat, happy to be alive.

The next day they were less happy as they were both expelled from school. Not precisely the victory Octavian and Agrippa

had enjoyed, but a solid reminder that you can't always win every game in life, yet you have to learn how to keep going.

Nicoletta and Domenico interpreted Giuseppe's adventure as proof he should follow his father into a career at sea. Two years later, Giuseppe embarked on his first long voyage from January to July of 1824 aboard the Russian ship *Costanza*. Italians crewed the ship under the leadership of Captain Angelo Pesante, a man Domenico called "the best sea captain I have ever known."

On this trip, sixteen-year-old Giuseppe saw the Black Sea for the first time. It was also the first time he saw a palace. As they sailed through the Golden Horn to enter the narrow Bosphorus Strait, Giuseppe couldn't take his eyes off the palace on the hill.

"The Turks still call it the New Palace, though 'twas built in the mid-1400s," Captain Pesante said, his eyes following Giuseppe's gaze. "To distinguish it from the Old Palace, over in Beyazıt Square. This one's been destroyed twice—by earthquake and fire—but they keep rebuilding. And over there is where their Grand Vizier meets with his council."

"How do you know so much?" Giuseppe asked. "Can you read Turkish?"

"Can't say that I can. Course, no one reads as much as you do, Garibaldi." Pesante smiled. Giuseppe had carried more books on board for the long journey than even the captain.

"I do all my work," Giuseppe started in defense.

"I know you do," Pesante said. "And it's good to have some way to pass the time on these long voyages 'sides knot-making. But don't forget, you learn as much from a life of traveling, and from all the old seamen telling tales 'bout their travels. Guess I'm one of those old ones now."

Giuseppe could sense his captain's pride in his life's work, so

he kept feeding him questions. “Is it because of all the palaces that they have named this place the Golden Horn?” he asked.

“Don’t know when men started calling this the Golden Horn—or why,” Pesante said. “Could be all the riches coming into the harbor. Could be the shape of this inlet.”

“Could it be the way this strong yellow light makes the water shine?” Giuseppe asked as they watched the sun set over the surrounding hillsides.

“You talk like a poet,” Pesante said. “But words are good when men are far from home. They remind them they have something to return to. They remind them there is something more important than even the sea. Never forget that.”

“I won’t,” promised Giuseppe.

The next year, Giuseppe joined his father’s crew on the *Santa Reparata* as they traveled the Tyrrhenian Sea, off the western coast of Italy, named for the Tyrrhenian people who may or may not have been the Etruscans of pre-Roman Italy. “Such are the mysteries of the world,” Nicoletta had said when they studied the area in preparation for his journey. “We can only know what scholars can prove, and scholars can prove only that for which they find evidence. Perhaps you will be such a scholar one day,” she had added, not yet sure she was happy with Giuseppe’s choice to be a sailor.

Giuseppe might not have been ready for such a long voyage, but Domenico didn’t want his son to miss Pope Leo XII’s celebration of the Jubilee Year of 1825. The occasion marked a time for remission of sins and universal pardon during which prisoners could be freed and debts could be forgiven by God’s

earthly representatives at the Vatican. On that trip, Giuseppe served as a regular crewman and sailed to Rome, delivering a cargo of regional wine from Nice for the citywide festivities. The trip planted the seeds of his future mission, as he fell in love with the city that had once been the capitol of the Roman world. He dreamed of helping Rome take that honored place again someday.

As they approached Civitavecchia, the port of Rome, Domenico took a moment to join his son at the bow. “Imagine,” he said, “this port has been here since Emperor Trajan built it in the second century.”

“But now it too belongs to France,” Giuseppe responded, echoing his mother.

“It has changed hands often,” Domenico said. “After the Saracens nearly sacked the whole settlement, Pope Leo VII had a new city built farther up the hill.”

“Such a line of Italian history. He was Leo VII, and over a thousand years later we are celebrating with Leo XII . . . at a port claimed by France.” Giuseppe couldn’t help but ask, “Why can’t Italy be whole again?”

“The world changes constantly. I have often left the port of one country and returned to find it belonged to another,” Domenico said. “Have faith in the future. I have traveled far from the home where I was born, and I imagine you and your generation will travel yet farther with all the new technology available.”

“New technology?” Giuseppe said. “But Captain Pesante says you are the only captain who still keeps an astrolabe on board.”

“There is technology and there is beauty, and not always do the two meet,” Domenico said as they walked into the captain’s

quarters. He picked up the astrolabe that sat on his table amid more modern navigational equipment, including a telescope and a pendulum clock. “My father gave this to me. Papà told me that if the great writer Geoffrey Chaucer thought it was so important for his son to understand the astrolabe that he wrote a treatise on the star taker, then it was important for me—and for the sons I would have someday—to understand.”

“All Mamma taught me about the astrolabe is that it was the name given to the child of Abelard and Heloise,” Giuseppe said, disappointed. “Another French story.”

“Those doomed French lovers are not the whole story of the astrolabe,” Domenico said. “While European scholars were endlessly debating theology, the Arabs in Spain possessed a knowledge of the heavens, geography, and mathematics that Europeans could only envy.” He handed the instrument to Giuseppe, who turned the astrolabe over in his hands. “Let this be a reminder that all cultures have contributed to your world, whether you know it or not.”

Though they had only a short time to spend in Rome, Giuseppe became enamored with the history and the art that covered the ancient city. They saw the Colosseum and the *Fontana de Trevi*, where Domenico enjoyed educating his son in his own fashion. “The ancient Romans mastered the waters with their aqueducts, their fountains, and their baths. For over four hundred years, this fountain served as the Baths of Agrippa. Let it be a symbol of what man can do when he works and studies.”

To honor Nicoletta, they made time to see the Protestant cemetery where the tragic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley’s ashes were buried. Giuseppe read the headstone out loud: “Nothing of him

that doth fade but doth suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange.”

Giuseppe found his favorite spot standing in front of the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius on the *Campidoglio*, or Capitoline Hill, one of the Seven Hills of Rome, between the Forum and the Campus Martius.

“He was a great warrior,” Domenico said as he and Giuseppe stood in the sun and admired the bronze work of the anonymous artist.

“But that’s not what I see, Father,” Giuseppe said. “He carries no weapons and wears no armor. To me, Aurelius is a bringer of peace rather than a military hero.”

“Excellent point,” Domenico agreed, “for this is how he saw himself and his reign.”

“How do you know that?” Giuseppe asked.

“I have read the great emperor’s *Meditations*,” Domenico said. “It has kept my mind exercised on many a long voyage. I’ll lend it to you for our return home.”

Giuseppe beamed at this chance to be looked at by his own father as an equal in intellect, if not yet in naval knowledge. Years later he would remember this trip and this city in his memoirs, as having been “dear to me beyond all things.”

If his first two voyages gave Giuseppe a love for life at sea, his next voyage nearly destroyed it. Anxious to crew a larger ship than the one owned by his father, Giuseppe signed aboard the *Cortese* with a crew of twenty which carried wine from Nice across the Black Sea. The men anticipated difficulties because they had left late and feared encountering too much ice to make the passage. Instead, one night as Giuseppe and a few other

off-duty seamen slept below deck, the sound of a boarding ax broke through the cabin door and shocked them all awake.

Several Barbary pirates flooded into the small sleeping quarters and held the men at gunpoint. As the pirate gathering all the crew's belongings crept closer to Giuseppe's mat, his eyes fell on Giuseppe's small pile of books: *The Divine Comedy* and *The Prince*, which had accompanied him on his earlier voyages, and *The Battle of Benvenuto* by Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, a new one his mother had gifted him before this journey.

The pirate ignored the books, preferring to snatch Giuseppe's dagger from beside his bed. It wasn't until the pirate grabbed the extra pair of socks next to Giuseppe's mat that Giuseppe noticed the man had no shoes and his clothes were filthy, the fabric nearly worn through.

When the man moved out of hearing distance, a nearby bunkmate whispered, "I thought all pirates were rich." This brought the echo of his mother's favorite proverb to Giuseppe's mind, "If you don't see, you won't know." As they were forced onto deck Giuseppe's eyes scanned his surroundings for a weapon, but the pirates had taken them all.

On deck they were met by a crew of other pirates staring them down from a brigantine that had lashed itself to the *Cortese* in the darkness. Some pointed muskets across the small expanse between ships, and others still wielded their crossbows, as the sea air was calm enough for their aim to be true. Many of them were coatless on this cold night.

Of all the pirate groups that stalked the Mediterranean, the Barbary pirates, named for the Berbers who inhabited the northwest shores of Africa, were the most feared. They operated from ports such as Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, which practiced state-supported piracy. By the late 1700s, they had become so

fearsome that many European nations and the nascent United States agreed to pay them an annual ransom—or tribute—to ensure trading vessels were not attacked.

The lead pirate shouted at Giuseppe's captain and the captain shouted back, but they did not understand each other. The captain spoke only Italian and French, and Giuseppe realized the pirate spoke a mixture of English and what he assumed was Arabic. Never had his mother's lessons been so important. He could now speak—and translate—six languages well. He hesitantly stepped forward. Several of their captors pointed their muskets directly at him.

"Our captain does not speak English," Giuseppe said calmly in that language.

"But you do," challenged the pirate captain, who did not hesitate to repeat his order. "Your men will load your cargo onto our ship."

Giuseppe translated for his captain, who at first refused on orders from the French government. The pirate captain laughed and said, "Americans pay tributes. The British pay tributes. France leaves you to your fate. What loyalty do you owe them?"

Giuseppe's captain tried to hold firm, but the pirate captain continued, "My crew will kill you all and do it themselves."

Giuseppe translated this ultimatum back to his captain, who reluctantly gave the order to transfer all the wine and other cargo to the pirate ship.

In a few hours, it was done. But before the pirates left, they had one more demand. "My crew spent too much time on the open sea," the pirate captain told Giuseppe.

"As have we," Giuseppe replied, wondering where this would lead as he translated to his captain.

"We take all clothes on board," the pirate captain said.

“We carried only wine and foodstuffs to trade,” Giuseppe said, not bothering to translate.

“We take all clothes,” the pirate captain repeated, gesturing for the crew of the *Cortese* to undress. Giuseppe and his fellow crewmen looked to their captain to see how to respond. They were shocked to find the captain, having understood the gesture, had begun removing his coat. Obediently, the crew followed his lead.

With all their cargo and clothing now collected, Giuseppe and the crew watched the ragged pirates transform by donning the stolen garb, mostly handmade by their mothers, sisters, and sweethearts. When the pirate ship had floated out of earshot, the naked men gathered around their captain.

“If France has abandoned us, why hasn’t the British navy stopped them?” Giuseppe asked. “They are said to be the greatest navy in Europe.”

“Those contemptible Brits,” the captain said angrily. “They realized the pirates did far more damage to their adversaries. Instead of crushing those thieves, they pay them tributes.”

Such dishonorable behavior angered all the men, but there was no time to argue. The captain turned to the crewman who had fallen asleep on watch in the crow’s nest as the pirate ship approached. Giuseppe saw the man was shivering, and not merely from being naked in the cold. He was frightened, as he should have been. They all knew the penalty for such dereliction of duty was keelhauling—dragging a man at the end of a rope beneath the hull of a ship. Most captains had stopped using this particular form of discipline—a holdover punishment from a century ago—but not on the *Cortese*, which was famous for it. The crew knew they would be made to watch to deter them from any further breach of discipline.



Surviving the pirate attack might have been enough to turn Giuseppe away from a life on the sea, but witnessing his first keelhauling confirmed it. Giuseppe and several crew members left the ship when it docked in Constantinople to pick up new cargo. Few signed on again for the return to Nice on the *Cortese*. Giuseppe was too disheartened to remain at sea, or to serve under such a captain, even long enough for the return trip home. First he and several other sailors who had fallen ill from the cold needed to recover from the journey before they could sign on to another crew and head for home, but one day in hospital changed that plan.

Several local women tended to the healing sailors, but Luisa Sauvaigo, also from Nice, caught Giuseppe's attention the first day he arrived. Exceptional for her time, Luisa had learned to read, so she came each day to read to the men from her favorite books, among them *The Divine Comedy*. She would sit in a chair surrounded by crewmen and read aloud to them—but one day, she had left her book at home.

“That’s okay, Signora Sauvaigo,” a fellow recovering crewman said, gesturing to Giuseppe. “Peppino here has his own books. He collects ’em.”

Luisa turned to Giuseppe and asked, “May I borrow one of your books to read to the others? It soothes them as they heal.”

Still weak, Giuseppe merely nodded. But when Luisa chose the book his mother had bestowed up on him, *The Battle of Benvenuto*, he perked up. “Have you read Guerrazzi?” she asked.

Taken aback, Giuseppe blurted out, “He is a strong voice for a united Italy.”

“My father supports his mission,” Luisa ventured, knowing

a woman should not present a political opinion in public, but nonetheless stimulated by their exchange. When none of their onlookers objected, she continued, “Papà even subscribes to the newspaper Guerrazzi started with Giuseppe Mazzini.”

Giuseppe’s interest sparked. He had never met a woman interested in politics besides his mother. “I have seen this newspaper, before I left. I wish I could help them in some way.”

Luisa looked into Giuseppe’s eyes and saw something within him that made her respond, “You will.”

As the two conversed, they could not know that Guerrazzi would later be imprisoned for his radical activities in the Young Italy movement; in 1833, he was held for three months at Forte Stella in Portoferraio. Afterwards, he became a powerful liberal leader. But at this time, Guerrazzi was merely the beginning of a conversation that would carry two ambitious young people into their first serious relationship.

Under Luisa’s care, Giuseppe regained his strength. Rather than go home to Nice or even return to sailing, which would require months away from Luisa at a time, Giuseppe settled in Constantinople. Luisa recommended him as a tutor for the local Timoni family, a wealthy household where she served as a nanny. For the next few years, Giuseppe divided his time between courting Luisa and tutoring the Timoni children in math and in the many languages he knew.

The two young people so far from home had much in common, but Luisa’s father did not approve of their match. He wanted only men of higher professions to court Luisa, and tutors were not well paid. Eventually, the two could only spend time together while at work. So Luisa attended balls and dinners with other young men at night, and in the daytime she and her true

love swapped thoughts on politics, philosophy, and the news of the day.

After reading all they could of Guerrazzi, they had turned to yet another new voice fighting for independence: Ciro Menotti. Alas, his words came to Giuseppe and Luisa in the form of a letter written to Menotti's wife on the eve of his execution. They heard about both the letter and the execution from a newly arrived ship's crew. Menotti had tried to free the Italian region of Modena from Austrian rule, but had been arrested and condemned to death by hanging. In an effort to send a message, Duke Francis IV held the execution on May 23, 1831, in the citadel of the very city Menotti had hoped to free. Menotti's followers made copies of the letter to inspire future insurrections. A friend in the port smuggled a copy to Giuseppe, who read it together with Luisa one day over the midday meal they were permitted to share away from their charges.

"Dearest wife," Giuseppe read. "May your virtue and your religion be with you and assist you in receiving this sheet of mine. These are the last words of your unhappy Cyrus—he will see you again in a blessed stay. Live for the children and be to them both father and mother. The last loving command that I impose on your heart is not to give in to sorrow—beat it, and think about who it is that advises you to do so."

Giuseppe continued reading, though his voice broke halfway through. As Luisa rested her chin on his shoulder, they finished reading silently and sat in contemplation, as if after a homily.

Giuseppe finally broke the silence. "Are there no heroes we can look to?" he asked.

"There is you," Luisa said sincerely. "And we'll name our first child for Menotti."

“I cannot even make your father accept me, a poor tutor,” he said. “How can you already be naming our babies?”

“He will come around,” Luisa said. “Once you are a commander, how can he deny it when you ask for my hand?”

“How could I command a regiment? And such a campaign . . . it would mean leaving you.”

“I could go with you,” Luisa said. “Wives follow their men into battle to cook and care for them. Some even share in the fight.”

“I dream of a life like that, with you and I together in the fight. But don’t we need to be married before you make such a sacrifice?” Giuseppe teasingly reminded. “Your papà still won’t let this lowly tutor onto your dance card.”

Luisa nodded sadly. They might dream of uniting Italy, but first they had to unite their own family. So, in 1832, at the age of twenty-five, Giuseppe earned his certification as a merchant navy captain. There was more money in the ferrying of cargo than there ever would be in the figuring of fractions.

Life as a sailor required Giuseppe to leave Luisa for long stretches of time, to reencounter pirates, and to once again survive. All this traveling across the countries of the Mediterranean cultivated Giuseppe’s interest in who ruled them, how, and why. He wrote countless letters to Luisa, sent via boats returning from the various ports where he docked, telling her all about what he was reading. Her letters grew less frequent, a consequence Giuseppe tried to believe came from the difficulty of locating a ship in operation. So he wrote. And wrote. And what he could not commit to paper he held in his heart for his return visits. He had joined Mazzini’s secret Young Italy movement and prepared to participate in Mazzini’s planned insurrection in his home region of Piedmont. He dreamed of taking Luisa with

him as his bride, but when he returned to Constantinople after nearly a year at sea, he found her father had married her off to a richer man. Worse yet, she had already become a mother.

“How could you allow your father to do this to us?” he begged of Luisa at their final meeting.

“I am his child,” she explained. “I had to obey.”

Heartbroken, in April 1833, Garibaldi left Constantinople on the schooner *Clorinda*, taking a shipment of oranges to Russia. If he could not be with Luisa, Giuseppe decided it was time to return to Nice and make their dream of a united Italy come true. Alone.