

HOTEL GRAN DUCA DI YORK

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GOLDEN BOOK HOTELS

Roberta  
Minghetti  
Do it all  
over again





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*Thanks to the work of Mauro Gabba, the association’s president, GBH has promoted the **Eureka!** Literary Competition and chosen the best entries for several seasons now. It affirms its commitment to support new non-professional writers in this way.*

*We enthusiastically share with you Roberta Minghetti’s story, Do it all over again, which also came out of this project.*

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*Today's new technologies and the introduction of the **e-book** mean that this idea, which was conceived for printed paper, now has additional possibilities. As a result, **Golden Book Hotels** and we are now taking a modern approach in which writing, pictures and videos will combine to take us down new roads which will present us with fascinating new developments that we can only glimpse presently.*

*We are certain that this new approach will allow us to share with our guests and all those who appreciate good writing the genuine enthusiasm for literature of these authors, who we are happy to continue to support.*

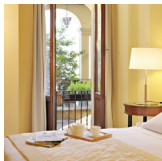
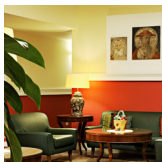
*Happy reading!*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rob Basso'.

Gran Duca di York **Gallery >>**



# Hotel Gran Duca di York Milano



[www.ducadiyork.com](http://www.ducadiyork.com)

## Roberta Minghetti

(1969)



She was born in Ravenna, where she lives. She has dedicated her studies and her work to her two passions: microbiology and communication. She is a copywriter and does consulting in the advertising field. Often lost in the pages of a book, she enjoys writing short stories with the sea and succulent plants for company.

**E U R E K A !**

**GOLDEN BOOK HOTELS**



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## Do it all over again

*200 grams dark chocolate*

*4 eggs*

*175 grams butter*

*200 grams sugar*

*1 envelope vanilla*

*1 spoon potato flour*

Making a chocolate cake relaxes me, the smell substitutes the air and sticks to the skin like summer sun.

It's almost one in the morning when I wrap the now-cold cake in layers of tinfoil and plastic bags. On the floor of the living room is an open suitcase with a small space waiting to receive the precious package. I close the suitcase and go to bed. We're leaving tomorrow.

**4.00PM**

The train's slow progress has always relaxed Angelo. I feel it as he sleeps with his head lightly resting on my

shoulder; I turn to gaze out of the window; everything speeds by - trees, roads, people waiting, railway crossings, fields.

When I was small, my brother and I invented a game to pass the time during car journeys. We pretended to take mental photographs of the scenery, and the one who remembered most details was the winner. Once we argued for hours about the colour of a lady's bicycle, but in the end I won by convincing him that it was red with a mauve saddle and basket. Now I look out and try to play by myself, but I'm no longer as quick and precise and what I get is just a succession of visual perceptions, a mixture of lights and colours like a parade of Impressionist paintings.

I smile thinking of home. I wonder if Sofia and Marco are still angry. My children were not very happy with the idea of this journey "at our age" and "in our condition".

*"Our age"*: that's what all young people always call old age, and I like this definition. I like it because it means having grown old with someone at my side and that the time has finally come to experience new places and destinations put off for too long.

*"Our condition"*: Angelo's sight is no longer a sense to



Milan's Main Station  
(1931)

be relied on, but thanks to that, the other four senses have become incomparable in helping me appreciate smells, tastes, noises and textures that I would never have noticed on my own, and anyway my eyes have been enough for both of us for years now. Certainly my daughter is also referring to the gap of sixty-seven seconds between me and the rest of the world – that’s the delay with which I’ve been able to hear sounds since I was born. It’s never been a problem for Angelo to count to sixty-seven before getting my answer though, and not even strangers take much notice of this strangeness of mine, especially now I have the excuse of age.

The train noisily begins to slow down and the seat shakes me about – we’re entering the tunnel that will take us to the platforms in **Milan’s main station**.



We’ve arrived.

I gently move Angelo’s head from my shoulder and support it with my hand until he wakes up. The other passengers begin to crowd into the corridor, dragging bulky luggage. They aggressively push past each other, risking losing their balance to gain a place further up the queue to get off.

We wait.

We wait for the train to stop moving and allow us to

stand steadily on our feet to reach up for our suitcase. I take my bag, and with my arm through Angelo's, walk along platform 8.

Our suitcase runs proudly on its wheels as if it had been waiting for this parade for ages, and it offers no resistance when expert hands place it in the boot of a taxi and we are asked in a hurriedly polite tone.

"Good evening, where can I take you?"

"Good evening, **Hotel Gran Duca di York** in Via Moneta, please".

## 6.10PM

Before going in, I linger for a few moments on the pavement; the façade before me is elegant and discreetly illuminated. I greet the hotel with an understanding nod, as if we knew each other, and taking a deep breath I take Angelo by the arm and enter the lobby like a princess invited to the palace. The room they give us in reception is on the second floor. As soon as we reach it, I throw myself on the bed, wrinkling the beige eider-down that had been elegantly spread there like cream decorating a cake. The bed responds to this unexpected impact with a small noise that immediately draws Angelo's attention. He stops and his face takes on an



expression of amazement, as if after all these years he was still surprised by my childish games. Jokingly I tell him “Hey, what luck, my nightdress goes perfectly with this **room** – it’s small, comfortable, romantic, scented and striped!” and he gives in and laughs.

It seems a lifetime since I last came to Milan. I was about to graduate in architecture from Florence University, and I’d come to visit the Triennale di Milano with some of my fellow students and a professor. The same professor I’d continued to see also after I’d graduated, the same one who promised to bring me here again for a special visit, just the two of us, as soon as I’d found a job, as soon as our first child was old enough to be left with her grandparents, as soon as the second child had started nursery school full time, or as soon as...as soon as. In the end I stopped waiting and I decided the the right time had come. I bought myself a striped nightdress, I persuaded my daughter to help me book a nice hotel right in the centre of Milan on the internet, I packed a suitcase for two and I added my chocolate cake.

Now Professor Angelo and I are on a mattress of sleep in an 18th century building, at the centre of a cobweb of artistic sites, suspended in time.



Superior Room

8.00AM

As I sleep I hear noises; I try to blend them with the others in my dream, I'd like to amalgamate real sounds with those in my mind and carry on sleeping, but inexorably I slip into wakefulness. Without opening my eyes I try to pinpoint the noise that is waking me - it's water running in the shower, Angelo must be up already. In a moment he'll come out of the bathroom and begin urging me to get up; I don't like waking up in a hurry, especially without him beside me. Our different ways of waking have often been the cause of morning bad-temper, but for years now I just let myself be wakened by his noise and put my infallible mental relaxation method into practice - repeating my mantra of ingredients from memory:

*200 grams dark chocolate*

*4 eggs*

*175 grams butter*

*200 grams sugar*

*1 envelope vanilla*

*1 spoon potato flour*

And then the desire to see him come out of the bathroom to wish him good morning always gets the bet-

ter of the need for sleep and silence.

“Good morning Mr. Mole”.

“Good morning my young lady...” he leans over the bed and gives me a kiss, “and today too, you’re even more beautiful than yesterday.”

“Oh Mr. M., your eyes are my saving grace”.

On the ground floor, the breakfast room welcomes us with a delicious buffet loaded with tasty sweet things and colourful vitamins, while the walls greet us with elegance, holding scepters of light. We seat ourselves at a table and cover it with fruit, bread, butter, jam, coffee and orange juice. I bite avidly into my morning energy seated comfortably on a white chair that affectionately hugs my back, and smile at the thought that today Angelo, precise person that he is, will have to entrust himself to my sketchy ability to work out maps and itineraries. Now he’s looking at me and soon he’ll ask me a question:

“So, my young lady, what have you planned for our tour of Milan?”

1, 2, 3,...64, 65, 66, 67.

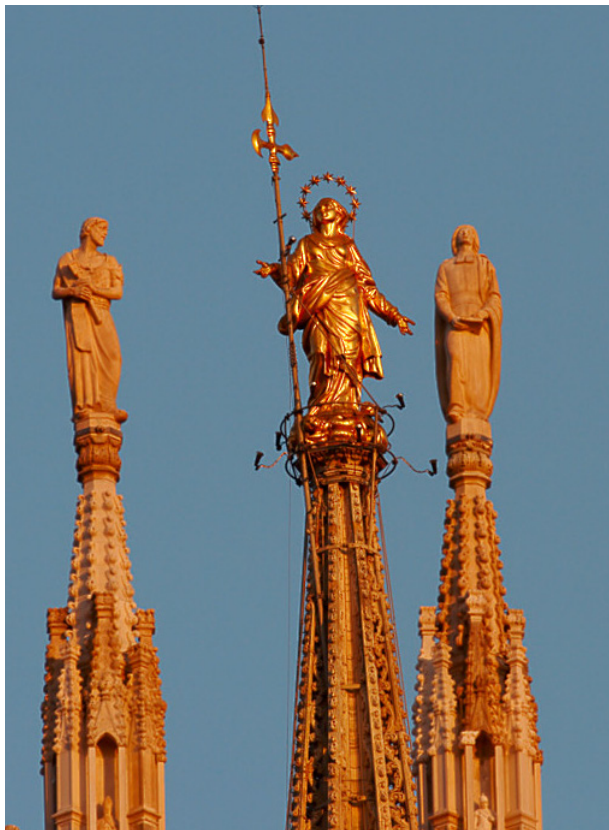
Punctually, after a wait of sixty-seven seconds, I reply, “I’ve worked out a detailed route, all you have to do is leave the hotel, take me by the arm and let yourself be guided”.

He plays along and gives me a satisfied smile.

Our walk soon brings us to Piazza Duomo; our gentle pace giving us plenty of time to admire the sharply pointed Cathedral, while my gaze flies up to the tallest spire to greet the **statue of the Virgin Mary**.



We savour Corso Vittorio Emanuele at a slow pace, breathing in the atmosphere. Angelo smells the odour of the colours used by the painters seated along the avenue. If he listens hard enough he can distinguish between the dialects spoken by the people passing by, he picks up the sound of pushchair wheels, the hiss of the shops' automatic doors as they open and close. I take his hand and stop to stare at our reflection in the windows of a department store; he's tall, broad shouldered and slightly stooped, the lenses of his glasses bouncing flashes of light off the store window. My skin is fresh and serene, my large eyes as shiny and dark as my hair and my raincoat hugs my waist saucily. For a moment I let go of Angelo's hand and the image changes - my skin shows the ravages of time, my coat falls distractedly over angular hips, the bones stand out clearly on the hand clutching my bag and my smile is framed by thin lips in a face crowned by wiry, grey hair. I urgently clutch my Mr. Mole's arm;



"La Madunina" ~ Duomo of Milan

he smells of softness and strength, of the living room couch and of dreams started in an embrace. Before setting off again, I hold him tightly and once again see the reflection of a girl clinging to her art teacher.

We make the journey back, from Piazza San Babila to Piazza Duomo, on the underground red line to conserve our energy and be on form for the surprise I've planned for Mr. M. - the Goya exhibition at Palazzo Reale.

Angelo doesn't need sight to admire the colours that illuminate the rooms. He closes his eyes and listens to the masterpieces, breathing in their magic like a chef who can appreciate the harmony of doses and flavours just by walking into a kitchen eyes closed and inhaling. "Thank you my young lady", he whispers in my ear.

1, 2, 3,...64, 65, 66, 67.

"You're welcome, professor".

**7.15PM**

I'm keeping something very special in our second-floor room where Angelo is now resting, but it's not yet time to go and get it. Like Mary in Burnett's "Secret Garden", I sit in the hotel loggia, a lovely flower-filled corner where I can leaf through my album of memo-

ries in peace, up-dating it with all the day's emotions. It is almost dinner time when I decide to go and wake Angelo.

"Good evening, Mr. M., did you have a good rest? Why don't you go and wait for me downstairs, there's a **little green sitting room** near the lifts; I'll be down right away".



He gets up and leaves the room and I calculate the time needed for him to get downstairs and settle himself comfortably on the green couch to his right - my entrance must be perfect.

After about ten minutes I take the cake I'd brought in the suitcase out of the mini-bar and leave.

The lift deposits me on the ground floor; I approach the couch, cross in front of Angelo, and placing a flaming brown cake on the round table before him, sing "Happy birthday Mr. M., happy birthday to you".

From the couch opposite I enjoy his astonished expression, as if after so many years he was still surprised by my childish games.

Without a word, he bends over the candle formed by two digits full of curves and blows out the flame flickering on the number 88. I watch him as his lips begin to form a sentence:

“If we were to meet in another life and another time, would you do it all over again with me?”

While I wait for the sound of this sentence to reach me, I look over Angelo’s head and notice a fresco showing two young people looking at each other as if they were trying to keep their relationship hidden, as if they were a student and her art teacher.

I smile.

...64, 65, 66, 67.





Hotel Lobby



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# GOLDEN BOOK HOTELS

2011



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