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Agenzia Investigalibri

Marco Innocenti
Andrea Alemanno

pp. 80, ill. 14x18 cm.

The new series "XS" (eXtra-Small), short stories, illustrated, adventurous each title with a game related to the stories.

Investigalibri Agency

Tommy is a child with a passion for reading. He spends most of his time in the library reading, and it is here that he meets Nero Mouse, who comes out of a trapdoor under the big carpet. Nero is a mouse, but not just any mouse... is the founder of the Agency Investigalibri! Inseparable, Tommy and Nero form a fantastic couple of investigators: yes, because between the pages of the books are hidden great mysteries ... and it takes a great sense of detective to solve them! The two friends together don't just deal with the mysteries.



all by himself but in an orphanage together with many other boys.

Books and friendship, even if fantastic, are the tools Tommy adopts to grow up: he is a child who reveals to his reader friends only at the end that he told a lie, only one: he doesn't live in a big house



Marco Innocenti is a highly-regarded children's book authors. He writes novels, short stories, comics and children's books. His series "Capitan Fox" ("Captain Fox") is a bestseller translated in China, South Korea, Russia and many other countries. He won Euroclub-linus prize on 2000.

Other titles by Marco Innocenti: Nadia dei Mari Stellati - Controcorrente - Agenzia Investigalibri - Billy e i Pipistrelli.



Andrea Alemanno was born in Naples in 1984, he lived in Lecce, Taranto and Macerata. He studied fine arts at high school and at the Fine Arts Accademy of Macerata where he graduated in Theory and practice of Visual multimedial communication and Graphic Arts with a degree about the e-publishing for childrens (2009); finally he got the master of Illustrations for publishing "Ars In Fabula". His artworks are choiced in different italian contest: "Lucca Junior" 2011 and 2012, "Illustrati", "Premio Skiaffino" 2010, "We are the future" and more. In the 2013 he has been selected in the Annual of Associazione Illustratori. He worked for different publishing houses.



ALBERO DELLE MATITE

PRESENTA



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AGENZIA
INVESTIGALIBRI
DI MARCO
INNOCENTI
CON
ANDREA
ALEMANNO

DETECTIVEBOOK AGENCY

THE WINGS OF IMAGINATION



My name is Tommy Tevis, but everyone calls me "library mouse". Know what that means? A library mouse is someone who spends a ton of time with books. If it were up to me, I would always read novels, stories and comic books. The library is my happy island. This is why other kids find me a bit strange. They

are obsessed with the Playstation or play football. They call me to play sometimes, for example, when they have an odd number of players, but I have an excuse ready: I wear glasses and I don't want to risk breaking them if I get hit.

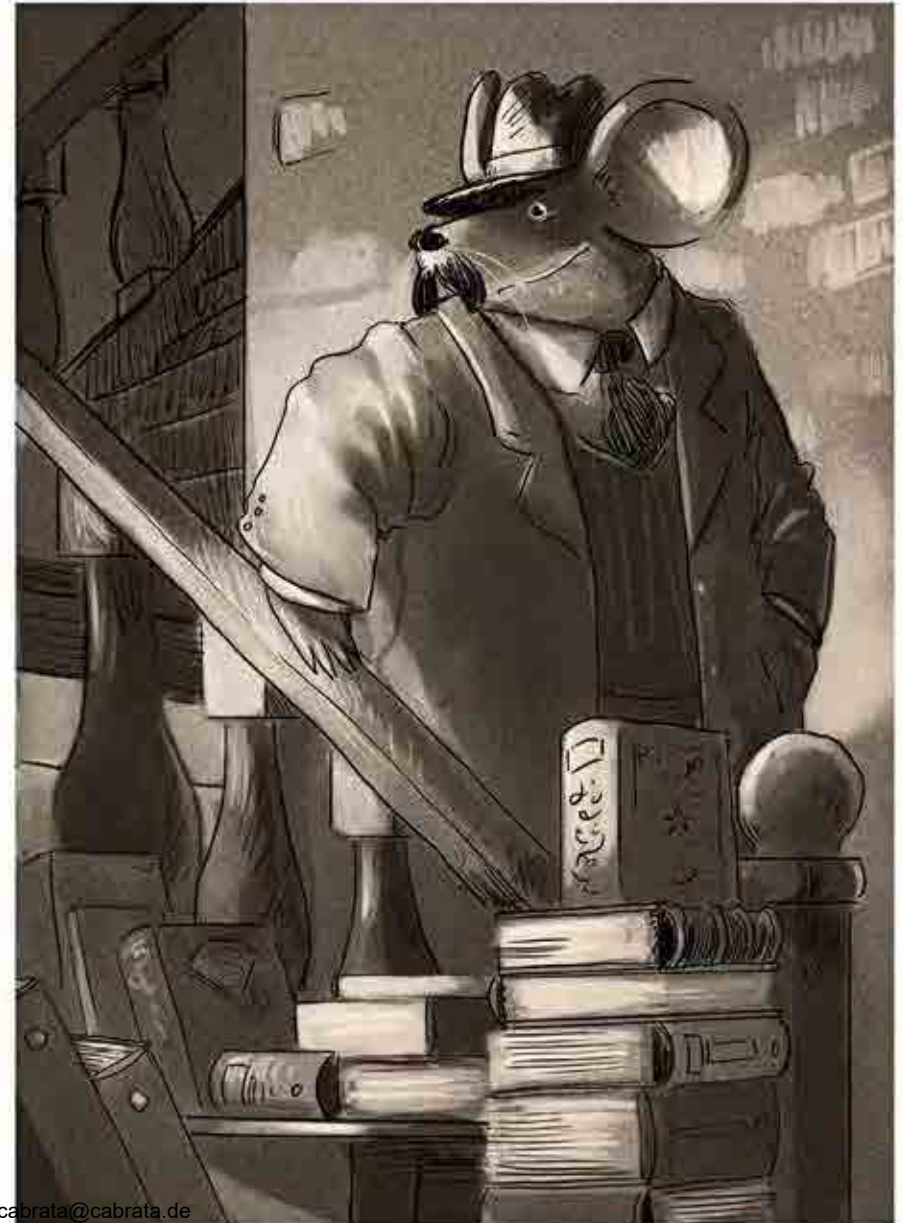
There are about ten thousand books (more or less) at my house. There's something for everyone: novels, mysteries, essays, biographies, autobiographies, diaries. Some are crammed into the wall shelves, others lay one on top of another, in columns up to the ceiling. My parents are two literature professors; two important top professors, always travelling to teach lessons in the best universities around the world. Nanny Ottavia takes care of me. Ottavia is like an old aunt to think about everything. She cooks, washes, irons, takes me to school and picks me up. In

my opinion, she's great at everything, also because the house is big. Ah, I also have a brother, but he's much older than me, he goes to university in another city and I never see him.

I confess something to you: if it weren't for books, I would certainly feel lonely. They keep me company. They make me learn, have fun, dream. Sometimes I would get the urge to hug them, if it weren't for the fact that hugging a book is not a great idea, it's better to flip through them, read them and then put them back where they belong. But do you know what the best thing is? "Library mice" really exist! Under the rug in the library at my house there's a secret trap door, connected to the basements of the city. Every day, a mouse opens the trap door and comes to read with me.

His name is Nero Mouse, he's a big, fat mouse who solves literary mysteries. We have become friends and he made me his partner in the Detectivebook Agency.
"I'll be your boss," he said, "and you'll be my assistant."
"Ok, thanks," I said.

Don't believe me? Think that talking mice only exist in comics or films? Eh, I understand you. Believing in dreams isn't easy. It takes a lot of training. First of all, you need to know how to dream with your eyes open.



Nero Mouse was seated with his paws on the desk, engrossed in the pages of One Hundred Years of Mousitude, when the telephone rang. Who dared disturb him? It could be a new client for the Detectivebook Agency, but he certainly had no intention of interrupting his reading.

"Tommy, can you answer it, please" he sighed. "I want to finish the chapter." You have to know that Nero Mouse is lazy, really lazy. When he gets comfortable in an armchair, moving him is a job. If he's reading, it's practically impossible. So I had to get up and answer the phone. I put a bookmark in the page of the book I was reading (Roald Dahl, my favorite author) and went to the phone.

"Detectivebook Agency here," I said.

"Who is speaking?"

"I'm Rattilia!" exclaimed a familiar

voice.

It was Rattilia Rattoski, the girlfriend of Nero Mouse. I'd never seen her but I'd heard her so many times on the phone that I recognized her voice in an instant.

"I bet that Nero has his nose in some book and forgot about me!" she protested.

"It's Rattilia" announced. "She's saying you have an date."

"Date?" said Nero without taking his eyes off of the book. "Me with her or she with me?"

"He's asking if it's him that has an appointment with you, or you that have an appointment with him" I communicated to Rattilia.

"What difference does it make?" shrieked Rattilia. "Tell him to hurry up!"

Nero snorted, he had to close the book at just the best part. He sprayed himself

with a few drops of perfume, put on the trench coat that protected him from the humidity of the basements and took his sailor cap. While he went slowly towards the trap door, he distractedly crashed into a column of books, which swayed threateningly. It wouldn't take much for me to be squashed under a ton of paper: the complete works of Ernest Hemingway. "You almost killed me!" I exclaimed. "Don't exaggerate, Tommy" he laughed. "Books never hurt anyone. And those of Hemingway are so nice!"

At that moment, someone knocked on the trap door with persistence.

"Come in!" urged Nero.

A mouse popped through the door with a sad air about her. The only touch of cheerfulness was her colorful, flowered cap.



"I'm looking for Detectivebook Agency," she mumbled.

"This is it. I'm Nero Mouse, the investigator who solves cases without moving a finger. And he's Tommy Tevis, my right arm, and left, too."

"My name is Pinky Ratland, writer of romance novels," said the melancholy mouse. "Help me or I'm busted."

She explained that romance novels are a literary genre: they narrate love stories full of intrigues, obstacles and adventures (but Nero Mouse knew this already, he knows everything about books). Pinky Ratland was writing a book called "The Unhappy Love Between Topelius and Squitty". She had almost finished when the protagonist, Squitty Lamour, disappeared. Escaped from her pages. "If I don't deliver the finished novel to my editor within twenty four hours, I lose

all of the money of the advance," said Pinky. "But without Squitty, how can I finish it?"

Nero Mouse scratched his belly, perplexed. I think that a case like this had never happened to him, although he had a long career in his past.

"Find Squitty, I beg you," sobbed the writer. "I can pay you half of a third of a quarter of my advance."

"How much is half of a third of a quarter?" asked Nero.

"What do I know?" she replied. "We need a calculator!"

She described Squitty to us to help us with our research, then she disappeared down the trap door. Nero escaped, too.

"If I don't rush over to Rattilia, she'll leave me! You start taking care of this case, Tommy!"

Pinky Ratland had left a copy of her manuscript. If I wanted to find out where Squitty had run off to, I had to read it. The clues were surely found in its lines. I immersed myself in reading. Pinky Ratland wasn't as good as my Roald Dahl, but she wrote well, she made me want to know how the story progressed. But, in my opinion, there was something amiss: in the middle of the novel, I already understood how it would finish. I was becoming an expert reader and I would have sworn (even if I know that you should never swear on a bet): the story between Topelius and Squitty was destined to finish badly. This is why she ran away: she didn't want to suffer for love!

I knew perfectly well that not all novels have a happy ending. There are many

beautiful stories that leave a bitter taste in the mouth when they finish. Sometimes they even make you cry (it's happened to me more than once). I understood how Squitty felt, poor thing! But there was a phrase in the book that touched me: "Unhappy lovers meet on the pier of the old port. And there, lulled by the murmur of the waves, broken hearts sigh".

There's still something that I didn't tell you, the most incredible of all. I can fly. Not always. I can most often at nightfall. I get on an illustrated volume (a beautiful book by Roald Dahl called "Going Solo" that tells the story of when he was an aviator in the Second World War) and the book unfurls its pages as if they were wings. It takes me wherever I want to go. Everywhere. Really. Nero think that it's imagination that gives me wings. And

maybe he's right.

That night, I flew over the city on my flying book and landed on the pier of the old port. There really were some broken hearts. They watched the sea and I didn't know which were sadder, them or the rusted-out boats that seemed abandoned for who knows how long.

Also at the end of the pier was Squitty, illuminated by the full moon. I approached her without knowing what to say. Luckily, she spoke first.

"I love Topelius, but I know that Pinky Ratland won't let us get married," she sighed. "In the last pages, we break up. I couldn't take it, so I chose to run away."

"Come with me," I said to her. "Nero Mouse and I will convince her to change the ending."

"Who is Nero Mouse?"

"He's the greatest detective in the city! And he's also the greatest expert on books!"

She looked at me with her big, languid eyes, and then followed me.

Pinky Ratland arrived at the Detectivebook Agency at dawn. Convincing her to change the ending was easy. On the other hand, she had no choice: she would either write a happy ending or Squitty would never return to the book.

"Ok," acquiesced Pinky, although reluctantly. "In addition to the ending, I'll also change the title. It's no longer The Unhappy Love Between Topelius and Squitty, but The Happy Love Between Topelius and Squitty."

"I don't think this writer has much imagination for titles," whispered Nero

Mouse in my ear. "Anyway, the case is solved."

A few days later, Pinky Ratland came to see us with a freshly printed copy of her book.

I immediately went to read the last page. Squitty was there, and she was kissing her Topelius.



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THE MISSING BOOKCASE



Nero Mouse had decided to close the Detectivebook Agency on Christmas Eve.

"Tommy, we haven't had a client for seven weeks," he said. "We can't stay open anymore."

"Why don't you look for some new clients, Nero?"

"No, it wears me out. And then where

would I find the time? With all these books to read..."

"But closing on Christmas is twice as depressing!" I protested.

"You're right," he sighed. "Without money I can't even buy Rattilia a gift. I hope she's not offended."

I sighed too. It was one of those megagalactic sighs. What could I do to convince him to get up and go find some clients? Nothing, not even cannon fire would move him. He was a great friend, but also a giant loafer, so lazy that he must have been born wearing bedroom slippers!

"So... we're no longer boss and assistant?" I asked with a lump in my throat.

"I guess not."

"Will we at least stay friends?"

"Yes, Tommy. Friends forever."

"And do you still come see me, here in the library?"

"You can bet on it. Every day, holidays included."

Those words choked me up, but I couldn't cry. I was a detective. We detectives are tough guys, we never break down. Have you ever seen Sherlock Holmes cry in public, or Inspector Montalbano? No. Maximum a hiccup or two, but only just.

I tried to concentrate on the book that I was reading: the origins of Spider-man, my favorite superhero. You certainly know the story, because even if you haven't read the comic book you've seen the film. There's this shy guy, geeky and wearing glasses, Peter Parker, who's an orphan and lives with his aunt and uncle. One day, Peter gets bitten by a radioactive spider, and acquires the powers of a spider, but he's

a bit confused at the beginning of the story, and instead of battling criminals, he tries to make money off of his incredible new powers. When the situation arises to stop a criminal, he doesn't do it, but then the same criminal kills his uncle Ben during a robbery. From that time, Peter feels super guilty, in addition to super powers! The story teaches that with great power comes great responsibility, and we all have some power and some responsibility... right?

I realized that even though I was reading Spider-man, a couple of tears were running down my cheeks. Maybe I wasn't as tough as I thought. I ran off to the bathroom to dry my face, while Nero Mouse remained glued to his seat. In his paws he had a copy of Love in the Time of Cheddar. It was his favorite book, I

don't know how many times he'd read it, but he knew it by heart like a poem, and never got tired of re-reading it from the beginning. He said that it was the most beautiful love story of all time, and even if Nero wasn't romantic, he was touched every time he read that book. In the bathroom, I took off my glasses (I'm nearsighted, just like Peter Parker) and looked at myself close up in the mirror. My eyes were red. (I also had ears that stick out, like always. I wore my hair long to cover them but they stuck out anyway, like two satellite dishes). I dried my tears and waited for my eyes to go back to their normal color.

When I returned to the library, a surprise awaited me that I would never have though



possible (if not, what kind of surprise would it have been?). Nero Mouse was conversing with a mouse. Maybe a new client? I wished it with all my heart. I stayed hoping in the shadow of a column of books as high as the ceiling: the complete collection of the stories and novels of William Somerset Maugham, that I had never read because they told me that I was still a bit too young (but soon I will have read them all, from the first to the last, you can bet on it!)

For once, my hopes were fulfilled.

"Tommy, good think you're here!" exclaimed Nero Mouse, all excited.

"C'mon, come out from behind there! There's a new case for the Detectivebook Agency!"

"So... we're reopening?" I asked timidly.

"Exactly."

"Partners like before?"

"Affirmative."

Hooray! My heart was dancing for joy in my chest (I think it even did a few somersaults, it was so happy)

"This here is Squiz Squittoni, in addition to being the host of the television quiz show For a handful of cheese, he's a book collector," Nero explained to me. "He has more than one hundred editions of One Hundred Years of Mousitude. Rather, he had them: they've been robbed!"

"Exactly," confirmed Squittoni, falling into a chair as if he had been hit in the head. "One evening, while I was having dinner at my house with some guests, the bookcase disappeared from the room. There was nothing left, not even a volume of One Hundred Years of Mousitude! If you find everything, I'll compensate you handsomely!"

“How handsomely?” asked Nero Mouse.
“Eh, imagine the most expensive handbag
in the world and multiply that by one
hundred thousand!”
Put that way, it didn’t seem bad, even if
it was hard to understand well...
The trap door opened and I accompanied
Squittoni home for a look-over. Maybe I
should have said look-under, considering
that he lived in the city sewers!



For being in the sewers, the home of Squiz Squittoni wasn't bad. A doorman in a cage monitored the comings and goings. How could someone have carried away the bookcase without anyone noticing?

"I didn't see anything," repeated the doorman, without raising his eyes from the crossword puzzle. Then he shot a quick glance at Squittoni.

"The cheese from Greece," he said. "Four letters, starts with F."

"Feta" said Squittoni.

"Perfect, thanks."

The doorman continued with his crossword puzzle and didn't lift his eyes again.

Squittoni mumbled something (in my opinion, he wasn't very happy with the doorman), then he showed me to his home.

"This is the studio where they stole the

bookcase and the books," he explained. "And this is the dining room where I was with friends when it happened."

I scratched my head. Not because it was itching, even if I had long hair and I hadn't washed it in three days, but because I didn't understand anything. I had to stay calm and fake having everything under control. Nero Mouse had explained to me that an investigator must show that he is always sure of himself.

"It's the trick of the job," he maintained.

"Strange that they stole the bookcase," I said with the air of someone who knows everything. "It must be heavy."

"Very heavy, I don't know how they did it!" confirmed Squittoni. "To lift it and transport it you'd need a whole team! Or magic... witchcraft!"

"Magic".

“Witchcraft”.

These two words lit the classic lightbulb in my head.

“Can you give me a list of people who frequent this house?” I asked.

Squittoni agreed, then started to rattle off a series of names. Many people in show business, singers, dancers, presenters, directors came and went from his house. Among these was a certain Abraham Cadabram. I don’t know why, but that name sounded immediately suspicious. I asked Squittoni who he was. “He’s an illusionist, a magician,” he said. “I often host him on my programs.” “Could he be upset with you? Maybe he’s angry about something!”

“Now that I think about it, yes, I didn’t invite him to my latest program! Cranky as he is, he surely won’t forget it!”

It all started to become clear. The skein

was unravelling. Abraham Cadabram wanted revenge and, the last time that he was at Squittoni’s house, he had performed one of his tricks. For an illusionist like him, making a bookcase disappear was a child’s game. Anyway, the bookcase hadn’t been stolen. He had simply rendered it invisible by a magic trick.

“Very good, Tommy. You have the stuff of a detective,” Nero Mouse congratulated me when I returned to the library and I told him about my brilliant deductions. “Thanks,” I smiled.

He closed the book he was looking at, *Chronicles of a Smoked Provolone*, a bit sadly, and telephoned Abraham Cadabram, calling him to the Detectivebook Agency. Naturally, in addition to me and Nero Mouse, Squittoni was also waiting for

him.

The two shook paws, the case was definitively solved. Squiz Squittoni invited Abraham Cadabram on the program, who in turn made the bookcase and all the books reappear in an instant with a gesture, including the precious collection of One Hundred Years of Mousitude.

Eh, you know what I say? I don't know much about the Playstation (or even football, since I never play), but as a detective, I'm ace! A magician, I'd say!

TOO MUCH LOVE FOR BOOKS



The news appeared on the front page of the Sewer Times, the paper with the highest readership of city (and country) mice. The headline was written in block lettering:

**STOLEN THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT OF
“MOUSEO AND MOUSIET”**

Nero Mouse, sprawled on his favorite armchair, read out loud:

“A clamorous discover was made at the University. The original manuscript of Mouseo and Mousiet, the masterpiece written by Sir William Cheesecake in the sixteenth century had disappeared from the department of Antique Letters. The University Rector, Baron Dr. Prof. Topaldo Sellingsmokies, has not made any statements, but it is sure that it is a robbery. Investigations are underway to unveil the guilty and recover the manuscript.”

“I didn’t know that you mice also had a university,” I observed.

“Of course we do. I, for example, have two degrees: Literature and jurisprudence,” replied Nero.

“Juris... what?”

“Jurisprudence, that is, law. You need to be a lawyer, a judge and other jobs.”

“But you’re a detective!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, after the double degree, I took a Master’s in investigation techniques. When I was a little mouse and we played cops and robbers, I was always a cop.” Nero smiled, and then corrected himself with a little laugh. “Well, almost always...”

At first I didn’t get it (but I understood later, as I will tell you).

That afternoon we had visitors.

Somebody knocked on the trap door, under the rug of the library. He was a well-dressed mouse, with big glasses, a red bow tie and a crocodile skin shoulder bag.

“I’m Gorgon Zakis, professor of

Antique Literature at the University," he introduced himself, spreading his breath that smelled strongly of cheese throughout the room. "I know that you specialize in crime books, so I thought that you give a hand, rather, a paw, with the investigation into the theft of manuscript of "Mouseo and Mousiet", which, everyone knows, has disappeared." "Certainly professor. It's no coincidence that we're called the Detectivebook Agency!" Nero Mouse responded quickly, puffing out his chest (which was already inflated, given that he was quite overweight).

"The police are already investigating," proceeded the professor with a grave tone, "but the police have too much to do with all of the delinquents that there are in the sewers, and they dedicate very little time to the theft of a book. So, I

trust in you."

The last phrase, "I trust in you", meant that he trusted in me, given that Nero Mouse has always been too lazy to investigate in person. He preferred to keep reading and left the dirty work to me. His motto was: "Why close a book, if reading it is so nice?"

I couldn't fault him, I also loved reading and I could never have imagined my life without books.

I had to concentrate on the case, wrack my brain, so I started to think in the silence of the library. The only noise came from the pages of No One Writes to the Cheesemaker, that Nero was leafing through with the blessed air of someone reading a masterpiece. I, too, would have like to enjoy a good Roald Dahl book, or by Karl Bruckner, Philip Ridley, Alyssa Brugman... but there was a case to solve!

For a while, nothing came to my mind, then I remembered an article that I had read (see how reading helps?). According to that article, more than ninety percent of thefts of art, paintings and antique books are commissioned by collectors. If that were true, it means an optimum starting point for the investigations. So, the million dollar question was: which collector could want the original manuscript of "Mouseo and Mousiet" enough to order the theft? Eh, it wasn't so difficult to find the answer. There was only one, in the entire city, so fanatic as to steal the William Cheesecake manuscript. Yes, truly him: the boss of the Detectivebook Agency, my friend Nero Mouse in person.

That night I didn't close my eyes. I rolled over and over in the bed without



finding peace. I could hardly believe it. Had Nero Mouse truly changed into a thief? And what did I have to do? Squeal on him and deliver him to justice? I didn't want to, he was, after all, my best friend.

When, in the middle of the night, I hear some noises coming from the library, I decided to spring into action. I got up, left the room and tip-toed to the door of the library. I had to be careful to not be discovered by Nero Mouse (and also to not wake Nanny Ottavia, who slept in the other room).

There he was! Nero Mouse, seated on his armchair and equipped with a pair of gloves for preventing fingerprints, was reading the original version of "Mouseo and Mousiet". His eyes sparkled with joy.

Somebody knocked quietly on the trap door. I peeked out from behind a pile of books. A mouse, thin as a breadstick and soft as canned tuna, poked his head in and entered the room. I knew him: he was Henry Topaski, a poor thief, but not a bad guy, who Nero Mouse used sometimes as an informant.

"Hello, Nero!" said Topaski. "So, are you ready to give back the manuscript?"

"Yes" sighed my detective friend. "Even if it's so beautiful that I would like to keep it forever, it's time to return it to its legitimate owner: the University. As you know, I hired you for the heist only to hold it in my paws once."

He caressed the manuscript, cuddling it, hugging it to his chest like a little boy, and kissed the cover. Then, after an enormous sigh, he passed it to Topaski.

In short, did you understand what happened? Nero Mouse had taken the manuscript, but just for a short time, with the intention of giving it back immediately. It wasn't a true robbery, or at least it wasn't so bad, I think... I breathed a sigh of relief. Nero wasn't a criminal, he was just a reader too in love with books. But my sigh was too loud, because immediately after I heard Nero's voice calling me.

"Tommy, I know you're there, come on out."

I took a timid step towards him.

"I did something I shouldn't have done" sighed Nero Mouse. "But I'll make it right immediately."

"How?" I asked.

Eh, here's how. Nero organized a scene. He called Gorgon Zakis to the library

and, in the presence of the professor, he answered an anonymous phone call. In reality it was a fake anonymous phone call: Topaski was on the other end of the line, acting his part.

"Detectivebook Agency?" said a camouflaged voice (because you never know).

"Yes" answered Nero Mouse, putting the call on speaker phone so that professor Gorgon Zakis could listen too. "Who's speaking?" (he knew perfectly well who was calling!).

"I'm the person who stole the manuscript. It's alive and well."

At this point there was an embarrassing silence.

Topaski got confused: he wasn't talking about a person but a manuscript, so "it's alive and well" didn't mean a darn thing.

“What?” pressed Nero Mouse, nervously.

“Ehm, I wanted to say...” stuttered Henry Topaski in a panic, “that it’s not damaged in any way... and I’ve decided to give it back! Since you guys of the Detectivebook Agency have been on my trail, I don’t want to keep it anymore.”

“He feels us breathing down his neck!” said Nero with a triumphal air, facing professor Gorgon Zakis.

“If you want it back” proceeded Henry, who had found hit footing again, “you’ll find it at the intersection between the sewers of district four and district eight, practically under the manhole cover one-four-eight.”

“We’re coming!” cheered Nero.

He hung up and turned towards Gorgon Zakis.

“Professor, we’re getting back the booty!”

The next day, the headline on the Sewer Times was this:

A DETECTIVEBOOK AGENCY FINDS

“MOUSEO AND MOUSIET”

“The precious manuscript of William Cheesecake” said the article “has been found in the sewers in good condition. It seems that the thief, knowing that the Detectivebook Agency was hot on his tail, decided to get rid of it before being caught.”

There was also an interview with my partner and friend, Nero Mouse. He was a celebrity by now, and couldn’t go around the sewers without being recognized and stopped for an autograph.

The University publicly praised the Detectivebook Agency and, to thank us, awarded us a package of books. We opened it. There was so much to dazzle the eyes: all of the Wonder stories, the complete series of Captain Fox and much more.

We didn't really deserve it, well, we didn't deserve it at all.

"I feel a bit guilty about all this" sighed Nero. "I'm being hailed as a hero and rewarded, while in reality, I should be punished."

"What do you think you'll do?" I asked him.

"Maybe I shouldn't accept the books," he responded. "What do you think, Tommy?" We both knew the answer. When dealing with books, Nero Mouse couldn't resist, and neither could I. In addition, they

were beautiful books, just waiting to be read, actually, they didn't even wait, they called out with a big voice.

Nero immersed himself immediately in reading Eyes of a blue mouse, while I started The Day of the Bomb.



THE WORLD OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY



“Rattìlia and I are getting married and we’re going to live in the country,” announced Nero Mouse.

We were in the library together and, when I heard those words, I nearly fell out of my chair. I set down *The Day of the Bomb* and looked long and hard at my friend.

“Does that mean that you’ll leave the

city?”

“Yes, Tommy. Rattìlia thinks that the life in the city sewers is too chaotic. And to say nothing of the pollution! Better to breathe some fresh air.”

“But then the Detectivebook Agency will close?” I asked with a lump in my throat. “And you... you won’t come to keep me company in the library anymore?”

“I’m sorry to leave too, you know? But life is like this, things change.”

I felt intensely sad.

Gggrrrr, I didn’t want to be sad.

“You’re my best friend, Nero” I said. “I don’t know what I’ll do without you.”

“You’re my best friend too. This is something that will never change. But don’t worry, you’ll get along fine and you’ll make other friends. You’ve grown since I’ve known you, Tommy, and you’re ready to leave the island.”

"What island?" I asked.

"The library" answered Nero. "Now you can face the world even without your big fat mouse friend, me!"

I reddened a bit and looked at him to understand whether he was sincere, even if I already knew, because one of the things that I always liked about him was this: his sincerity.

"Do you really think that I'm strong enough?" I asked him.

"Certainly. You've read a ton of books, that have taught you many things, and you've solved some terribly difficult cases alone."

"Well, not really alone" I blushed.

"You've always been beside me."

Nero burst out laughing.

"Come on, Tommy! You know perfectly well that the credit all goes to you. While you got busy, I stayed here, comfortable in

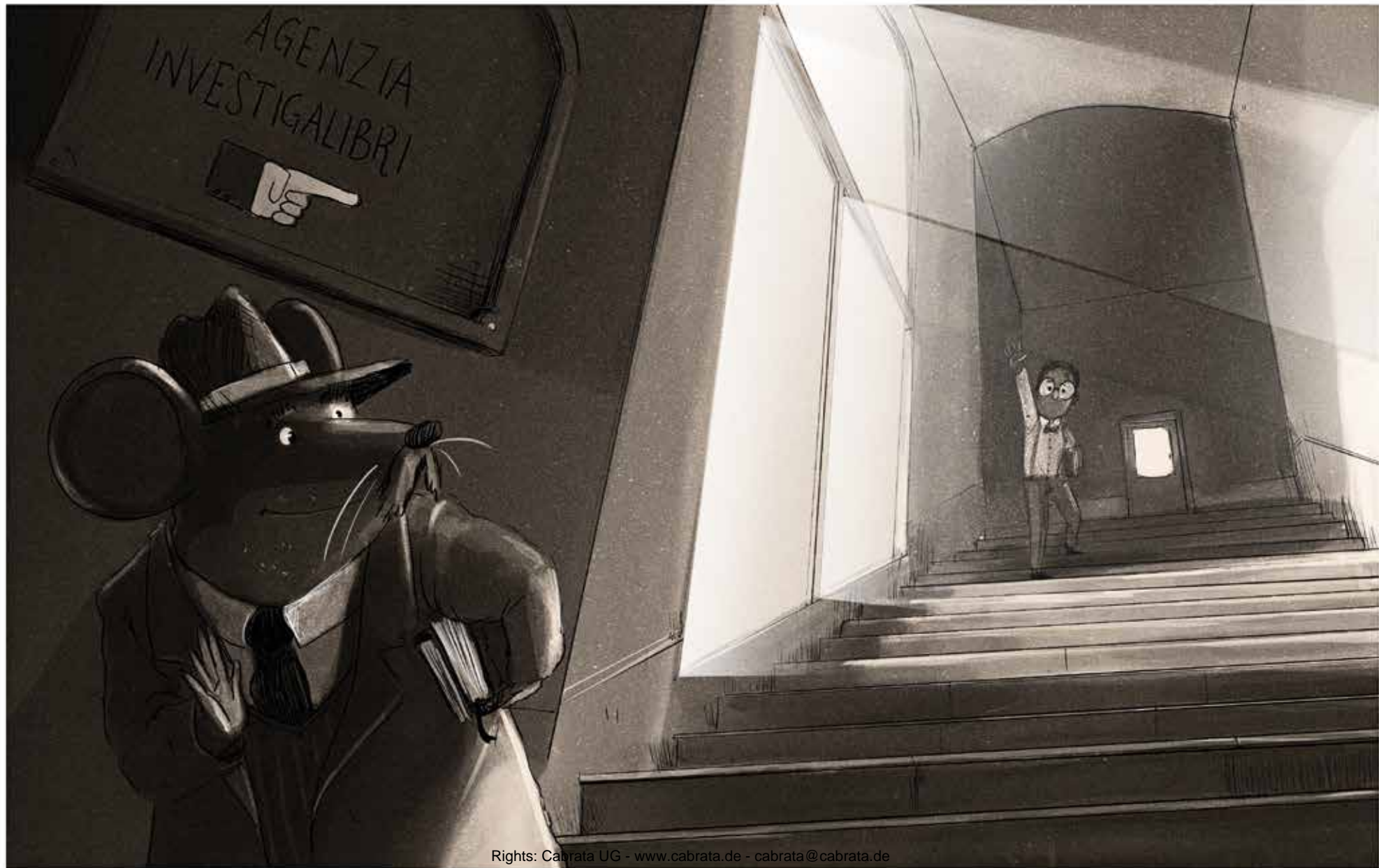
my armchair, reading Love in the Time of Cheddar!"

"Speaking of books" I asked, "what will you do in the country?"

"Rattilia and I have made an agreement" he replied. "Near where we're going to live there's a small municipal library. Once a week I can go there to re-read my favorite books, and read some new ones too, naturally."

Just at that moment I realized that Nero had come to see me with a big bundle. His things were inside. He was really leaving.

Before leaving, he said something more about the books. He said that they are like bridges, that connect the imagination to reality. Yes, I understood it like this. We hugged and, for the first time, I realized that my friend Nero Mouse was very soft, like a cushion or a stuffed animal.



At the beginning of this story, I told a lie, you know?

No, not what you think. Nero Mouse truly exists, and the Detectivebook Agency, the mythic agency able to solve the most mysterious cases, existed too.

The lie regards my parents.

I don't have a mother or a father, and maybe that's why I like Spider-man so much and I model myself on Peter Parker. Only I don't have an aunt like aunt May! Nothing: I don't have a brother, I don't have a big house and I don't have a nanny who takes care of me, because Nanny Ottavia doesn't really exist. My parents have been gone for many years and, not having any relatives, they put me in an orphanage.

In the orphanage I live with kids of all ages, smaller and bigger than me. In the morning we go to school, in the afternoon we do homework and we have a bit of free

time. Other kids play Playstation, or football in the large courtyard, but me, I slip into the library, because luckily, the orphanage has a large library with well-stocked section of books for kids, from A of Fabrizio Altieri to W of Robert Westall, and I read until dinner, and after dinner, until it's time to brush my teeth and go to bed.

I don't like going to bed very much, because I don't have my own room (there are five other boys) and because I hate the dark.

I only like the night when I flew on the wings of my book, or when I went down into the sewers to investigate on behalf of Nero Mouse, but now the Detectivebook Agency was closed and my friend Nero left.

Nero Mouse... just saying his name brings me nostalgia that you can't imagine!

By now he must already be in his new house in the country, together with his Rattilia. They'll get married, have lots of little mice and live happily ever after. Shouldn't a perfect story finish like this? When I read a book that I like, I always root for a character. Usually it's the main character, but it could also be another. The important thing is that the book have at least one character who appeals to me. Nero Mouse has always appealed to me, I loved him from the first instant. And you, friend reader? Do you root for me?

So, if you root for me, I'll tell you one more thing before I finish this story. Today, after school and homework, I didn't go to read in the library. My friend Nero Mouse is gone, and I didn't want to stay alone. So you know what I did, for

the first time in my life? I took the book that I'm reading (Flamingoes in Orbit, a collection of stories by Philip Ridley, one more beautiful than the other) and I went to read in the courtyard.

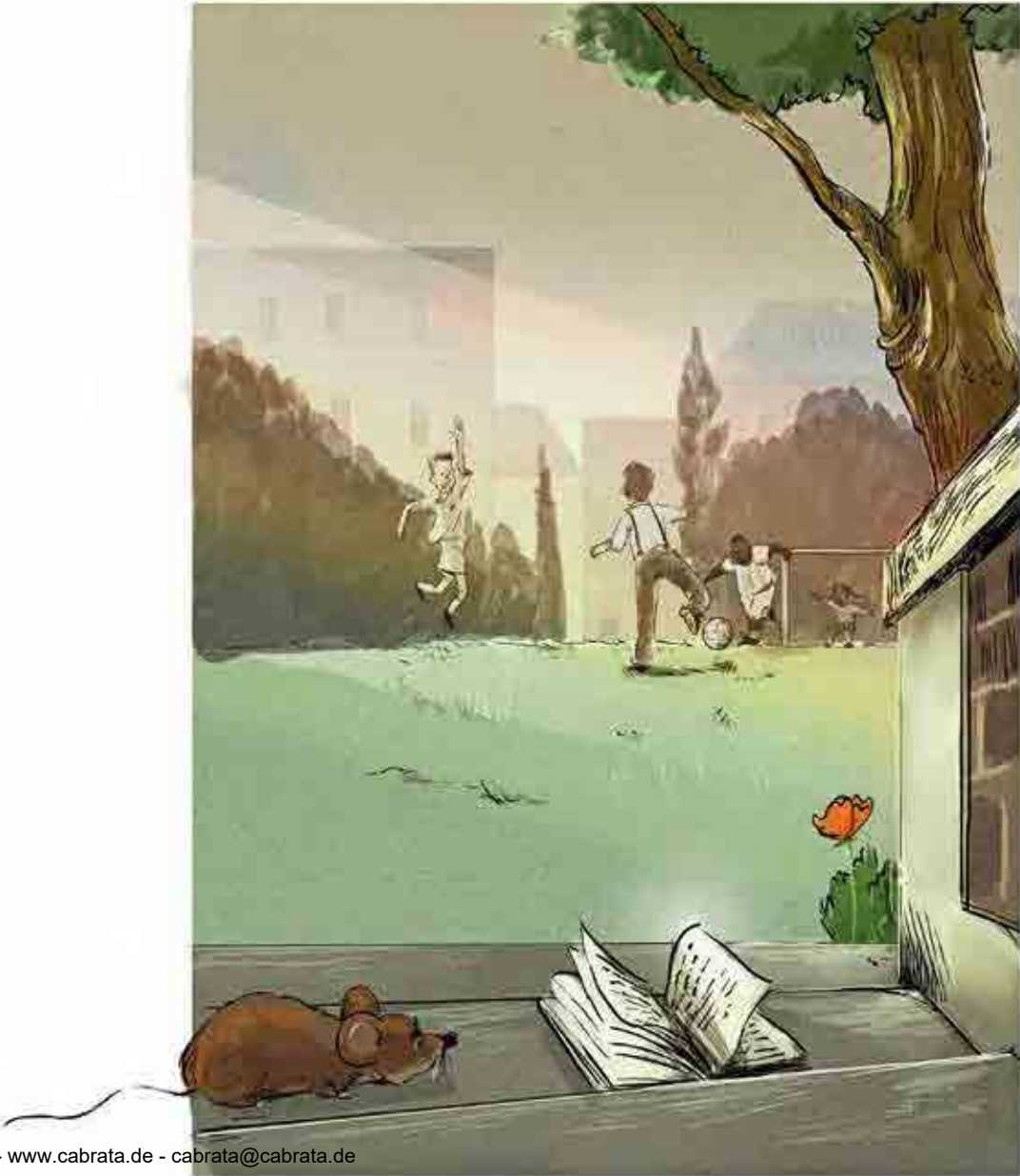
The sky was blue, not even a cloud, and I started reading in the sunshine. I'm not saying that the library isn't beautiful, please: how could it be bad? It's full of wonderful books to discover! But I assure you that going out in the courtyard, sitting on a step and reading in the open air is something even more wonderful.

And then... and then, something happened.

"Come play with us, Tommy?"

I raised my head. They called me. Really, me, Tommy Tevis, the one always closed in the library. But the most surprising thing is that I wanted to play, so I put down the book and I ran into the middle of the field

and I called "ball!"



GIRLS AND BOYS, YOU KNOW WHAT?

Well here's what: I didn't fall in love with reading thanks to a book. I fell in love with a comic book. I was eight.

I remember that day as if it were yesterday. It was summer. At the newsstand under my house I spotted a comic book with a wonderful cover, where a man in tights faced a monstrous green being. It was the number 131 of Spider-Man. Title: "A gentleman named Hulk". After Spider-Man, I also discovered the Fantastic Four and all the other super-heroes from Marvel. It was a wonderful world and I was a curious child who always wanted to meet new heroes and stories.

My dream was to become a cartoonist and my idol was the main draftsman of Spider-Man, John Romita. So, I started writing and drawing my stories. I invented the Green Man, a super-hero who had tights all green, in fact, and shot light rays from his hands. Meanwhile, I fell in love with Peter Parker's girlfriend, blonde Gwen Stacy. When Gwen died, during a dramatic battle between Spidey and Goblin, it was a real trauma for me.

In those years, at least here in Italy, so-called children's literature almost did not exist. There were only the great classics of the past - Verne, Salgari and something from Jack London - plus, of course, Gianni Rodari. Comics represented an almost obligatory choice for a child. Today,

those approaching reading have much more choice. In addition to comics, there are many authors and many novels written especially for boys and girls, boys and girls. In short, there is a much larger entrance door to the world of books.

... and there is also the Investigalibri Agency!

I know: today there are many things that were not there when I was eight. The chat on the smartphone, millions of videos on Youtube and a huge amount of channels with cartoons and TV series. Despite this, a book continues to remain something unique, because by reading it we can come into contact, really and deeply, with those who wrote it, with its heart and mind. In a word: we can make friends. A friendship destined to

last and change us forever.

Walter Tevis, the unforgettable author of masterpieces such as *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and *Lo Spaccone*, wrote: "I feel free and strong. If I hadn't been a book reader, I couldn't have felt that way. Whatever happens, I thank God for knowing how to read and to have really touched the minds of other men".

Girls and boys, good readings.

Marco Innocenti



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THE STORY OF THE 4 DETECTIVES

SHERLOCK HOLMES

Sherlock Holmes is one of the most famous private investigators of literature. Its creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, dedicated 4 novels and 56 stories to him. The first book of the cycle is "A study in red" (1887), in which Dr. Watson also appears, an inseparable shoulder of Sherlock Holmes.

MISS MARPLE

Miss Marple is perhaps the most famous detective of fiction. His creator is also a woman: the English crime writer Agatha Christie. Miss Marple has "benign and kind blue eyes", loves to prepare desserts, drink tea with her friends and solve the most mysterious cases.

HERCULE POIROT

Hercule Poirot is a former Belgian police officer who became a private investigator in England. Just like Miss Marple, he was born from the fantasy of Agatha Christie, who describes him calm, reflective and endowed with an infallible "nose", thanks to which he manages to solve the most intricate cases.

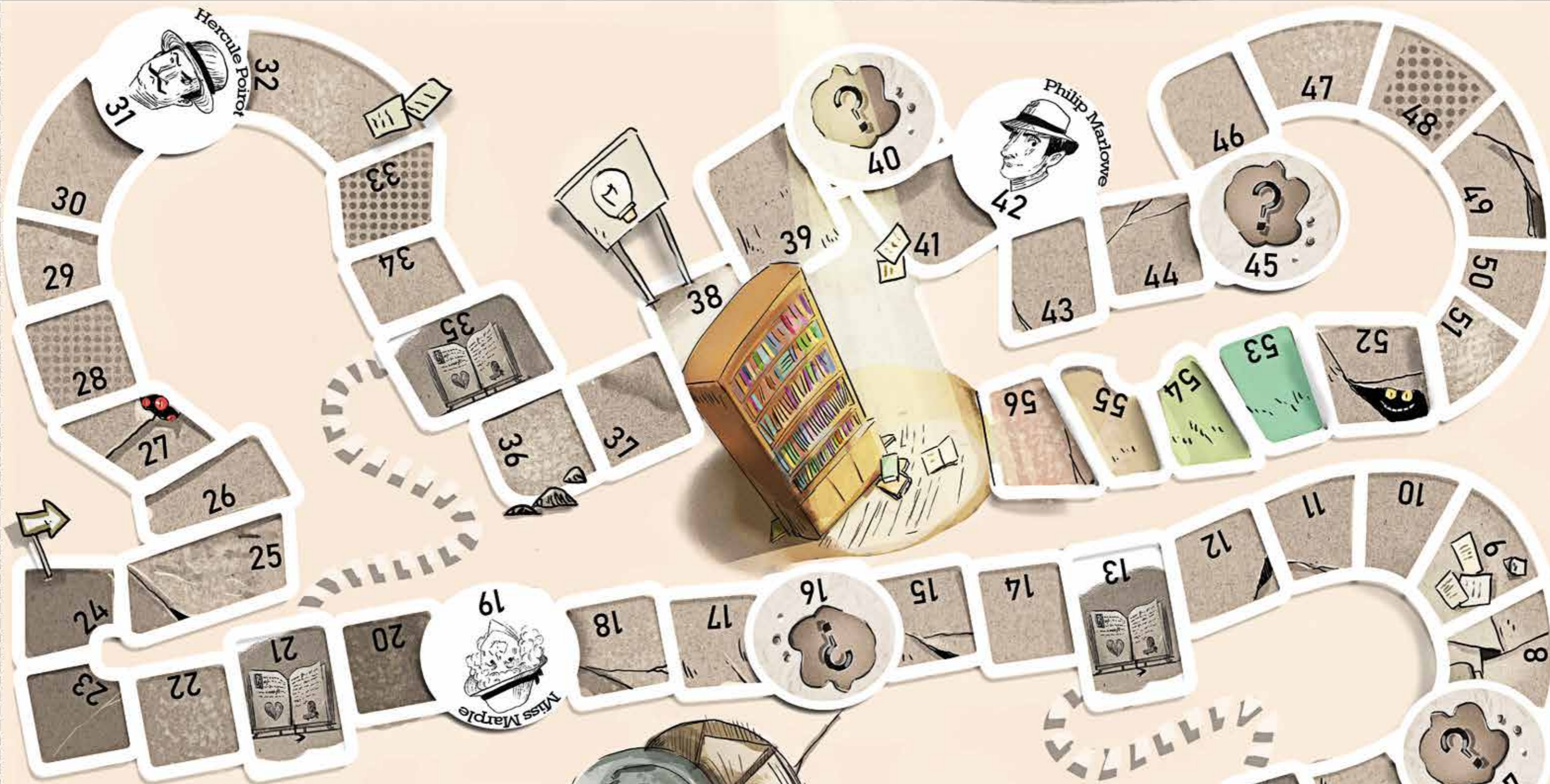
PHILIP MARLOWE

The adventures of the investigator Philip Marlowe are set in Los Angeles in 1930. His first novel, "The Great Sleep", is considered among the most beautiful yellows ever. Marlowe is a tough guy, a loner and does not agree much with the police. Its author is Raymond Chandler.

GAME PAWNS INVESTIGALIBRI



TAKE THE PEDINS AND HAVE FUN!



INVESTIGALIBRI

Numero di partecipanti: da 2 a 4
 Materiali: 1 dado, una pedina per giocatore (pag 70)
 Vince chi raggiunge per primo l'ultima casella, quella della Grande Libreria!

Come si gioca? Semplice!

Ogni giocatore posiziona la pedina sulla casella n.1. Pronti, inizia l'investigagio! A turno si tira il dado e si avanza del numero di caselle corrispondente al numero uscito sul dado.

In un'indagine ci vuole "fiuto": se capiti in una delle quattro caselle dei grandi detective (leggi la loro storia a pag 71), hai diritto a lanciare un'altra volta il dado. Stai andando forte! Ma si possono incontrare anche delle difficoltà: occhio alle caselle con il punto interrogativo, se ci arrivi hai tante domande senza risposta e... dovrai stare fermo un turno senza lanciare il dado! E poi ci sono i libri! Grazie al loro aiuto potrai prendere delle scorciatoie per raggiungere più in fretta la Grande Libreria... Iniziamo a giocare?