

*Comedy set in mediterranean Island and Italy.*

*The unrecognized talent of making people laugh. Miki wants to be a comedian. Andrea, a German girl, loves the island's nature.*

## MIKI SMAI

Miki (22) lives on Tremiti Island, in the midst of an astonishing unspoilt nature. During the winter, only a hundred people live there. A dark blue sea surrounds the island.

Miki is chubby, has dark hair and expressive eyes. We see him swimming alone in a small natural bay that's bordered by trees and rocks. As he swims he impersonates different characters that he constantly invents. He plays around with different voices, laughs and is clearly enjoying himself.

Miki has one extraordinary talent: he's a funny guy and he knows how to make people laugh. When he's around, everyone's in hysterics. He's been working in his parents' little hotel since he was a child. When all the celebrities and tourists come to the island, he entertains them. He is aware of his special gift and his only dream is to be a comedian.

Summer on Tremiti Island is bliss. Miki is popular with everyone on the island, including the celebrities who'd visit. One summer, he meets Lucio Dalla who takes him under his wing. Lucio Dalla takes Miki to his recording studio and shows him his professional hide-away in a forest that until now, everyone on the island had thought was a legend. They become friends and Lucio Dalla gives Miki a present: a fingerless concert glove covered in sequins. Miki is aware that Lucio Dalla recognises his talent.

But winter comes and with it, solitude. Few people remain on the island, left to deal with the many problems that still fester there. Miki always has the same thought going around his head: I want to leave this place, leave these sad and lonely winters.

One of these winters, Miki leaves to have an audition for regional TV in Puglia. He's cast a minor role in a trashy sitcom. He stays with his cousin in Bari but the sitcom is being shot in Lecce and so Miki travels 150km every day to get there. It's meant to be a comedy but the other actors really aren't funny. Miki is clearly the most talented one there but doesn't have a big enough role to make his talent known. After every take he asks his cousin 'How was my line? Was I funny? Did it make you laugh?'. His first real experience in the television world is a disaster. He makes many contacts but is still on the outskirts of the group, despite clearly being the best. He returns to the island. After all, summer and guaranteed work is on its way.

That summer, he falls in love with a German girl who's holidaying on the island: Andrea. She's tall with large light blue eyes and prominent cheekbones, very white skin and lacking in energy. Andrea is ditsy and passionate about nature. Incredibly, she returns Miki's love: a dream comes true. Andrea doesn't fall for him because he's chubby or funny but because she simply finds him sensitive. She loves his dark eyes. She associates him with the unspoilt nature of this spot they find themselves in. When summer is over, she has to leave to continue her studies in Milan.

Miki travels back and forth to Milan to visit her. On these lonely trips he writes, rehearses and plays with his characters. He meets lots of people along the way and everyone he meets finds him amusing.

That same year, Miki starts working in Naples. A relative finds him a job presenting shows at the Neo-Melodic Neapolitan Music Festivals. These are enormous events, packed full with people from Naples, where the main stars are the singers. He's paid with dirty money and the deal is that in exchange for this job, he also has to take some boxes back with him to the island. Miki doesn't know what's inside these boxes. He's provided with a car and drives the boxes to the port with his rubber dinghy on the car roof. He unloads the boxes into the dinghy and off he speeds to the island. He's in full oilskins with his hood up, driving his dinghy alone. He's in the middle of a storm; the rain lashes his face and what does Miki do? He starts rehearsing his characters, practicing his lines and laughing out loud, whilst he bobs up and down on the turbulent waves in the dark of the night.

But one day, the boxes run out and so too does his luck; he loses his job and returns to the island.

Year after year, on his return, his friends ask him 'So Miki, when are you gonna be famous? When will you be starring in Big Brother?' 'Yeah guys, this is my year, just you wait and see'. He believes wholeheartedly that this will happen.

Time goes by. Andrea spends summer on the island. Amongst the celebrities this year is Fiorello, who tries to stay inconspicuous. He assists at one of Miki's little shows at the hotel and is impressed. Even Fiorello, who presents the Saturday night show on Rai Uno tells him how good he is: 'You're awesome. You should be in television. You should be a comedian'. Miki is more fired up than ever.

After the summer he decides to move to Andrea in Milan. He starts knocking on doors of private television companies, theatres and agents and does

countless auditions. But, as always, they are only ever minor roles. Everybody likes him but no one gives him a major role. It never really takes off for him.

Miki is now 35 and is working as a studio assistant in some Mediaset show. He wears enormous headphones and waves his arms about: his task is to control the audience's clapping. He also acts in the mini advertising scenes that are broadcast during the show breaks.

Andrea wants to move to the island for good. Miki stays in Milan: he wants to take one last shot at making it big.

With the sequined fingerless concert glove in his pocket, he leaves to look for Lucio Dalla in Bologna. Miki knows that he is the only one who can help him. When he arrives in Bologna discovers that Lucio Dalla has died just the day before. Piazza Grande is full of people, but Miki lost his hope.

Miki follows Andrea back to the island to resume his islander life. During the day, he spends time with her. They are close to completely taking over the little family hotel.

Late at night he gets tipsy and wanders around with his only ex primary school classmate (his class was composed of only two children).

At 40, he's entertaining his fellow islanders and tourists. One night, when one of them leaves, a tourist calls out loudly: "Ciao Miki-Smile". Miki's friend only understands the Italian sound Smai: from now on this will be his nickname.

Afterwards they go to the tiny village's bar to find a man who's a myth on the island. He's an old former scuba champion who also worked as an actor in photo-stories and cinema. Miki lives through the tales of the champion, a life that could have been his own. He smokes and drinks away this thought.

Miki is nevertheless happy now. He lives with Andrea at one with nature. Their 'house' is in the pine forest on the edge of the village: a camper van grown into the ground. The mailbox waiting for some TV job offers is a former boat's air-cushion, cut through the middle...

Birds chirp, Miki and Andrea are naked: they make love in clear water. Afterwards, she goes to lie on the smooth rocks.

Miki stays in the water: once again, he starts his show. For the pure pleasure of making himself laugh.

He doesn't need other people.

*Drama/Animation set in Puglia sea-forest.*

*From a natural hole in the middle of a gigantic tree, Robertino (10), also named Nutella, imagines the surrounding ancient olive trees to be friendly cartoon-monsters. At night some of these trees, owned by Federico (90), walk away.*

## **MY TREE**

Robertino is 10 years old: they call him Nutella. He lives in Fasano, near the hill-forest that ends close to the sea. He's very thin, the shortest of the classroom: he has no friends. He has an older sister, Rosy (18) engaged in an old Italian way ("within the family") to Claudio (23). They live on the edge of the little town: just close to the countryside.

There he has his only friend: Federico, who's 90 years old. Federico is a "massaro" who owns a piece of land not far from Robertino's bedroom window: it's full of ancient olive trees. When his parents fight Robertino runs there and hides in a big cavity inside a gigantic olive tree.

He's created a cradle for himself, a little "room" inside his tree where he keeps his toys, puppets and nik naks. It is here he escapes to spend time in his own, safe world. From this hole, at night, he can see some 'friendly monsters' outside: he watches and imagines them from the silhouettes of the olive trees. We see them through his eyes as nice, two dimensional cartoon characters.

Robertino shares a strange and silent friendship with Federico. This man was a hard worker and never stopped: you can understand this just by watching the wrinkles on his skin. He is harsh, peevish and he too is alone: his sons live in the north of Italy.

“Nutella” always visits Federico and by watching the old man at work, learns how to take care of the land: planting, seeding... in short loving and caring for nature.

But as time passes by, Nutella's friendly monsters become fewer and fewer. Robertino doesn't understand why...

One day, after a big fight between his parents, Robertino crawls out his window and runs to his alcove. He falls asleep there.

In the middle of the night a noise wakes him up: he sees one of his favourite friends 'walking away': it's Frankenstein. Where is he walking to? Robertino sees some guys near a big truck. The gigantic tree is lowered slowly downwards. They are stealing and putting “him” on a lorry ready to drive away.

Among the thieves Nutella sees Claudio! Robertino hides inside and just after they drive away he runs back home.

From now on he will have to keep a big secret - something that could have terrible consequences. The old man is also asking himself what's happening: his olive-trees are becoming ever fewer. He is upset and shows Robertino his old hunting shotgun. Robertino is now afraid that he could shoot Claudio, but he has to keep the secret from his sister, his family, and especially Claudio.

Nutella falls more and more into his imagination to avoid his responsibility: he wants to forget reality and pretends more than ever to believe in his monsters' story. He would like to give Federico his Monsters-trees back. So he tells the old man that he knows where they are: they should leave **to** take them back. Federico is ill, but he wants to follow his little friend Nutella for something that maybe could be his last adventure.

They drive a tractor, going slow through little countryside roads, among trees and green nature. They descend from the forest down to the sea.

The family is in suspense: the missing boy start to be looked for by police.

Meanwhile Nutella and Federico are still close to the sea. It is indeed a very short journey, a few kilometers, that for the 2 travellers seems like such a big adventure.

They stop: Federico now talks. He shows Nutella how to live and survive by the secrets of nature. They sleep in a cave. Federico is very ill. He's about to die.

Nutella wants to help him. Robertino wants to give him a moment of happiness before his death.

So he now tells him the whole story of the cartoon monsters who walked away. Federico pretends to believe him. Yet he knows Nutella is doing this just to make him feel better. The eyes of the old man show a new feeling on his face: he's not alone anymore. And Federico wants to make Robertino happy, make him feel useful... it's a mutual exchange that makes both of them feel better.

Robertino now walks alone towards the town. The far police lamps flash brightly among the trees and nature. The way home..

*Drama set in Puglia's saline landscape.*

*Between '91-2001, Alice lives in a metaphorical cage: a kiosk selling newspapers bought by her father and she waits for change in Italy. Her little town suffocates her.*

*Based on a true story*

## MAZINGA

We find ourselves in Margherita di Savoia, a typical little southern Italian town. One thing, however, makes this place stand out from all the rest: its fantastic backdrop of vast salt flats, expanses of water and a white glaring light.

We stay with Alice from when she's 23 until when she's 33: exactly ten years of "imprisonment". Her cage is a newsstand bought by her father: he would like to give her a secure job, but he didn't realise that he in fact bought her a ticket to "prison". This is the story of a constant oppression perceived as normal, along with the silence of a family and the hollow noise of the Italian media during the years 1991- 2001.

Alice is a slave of this situation. Giacomo, her father, is a strong, well-regarded and traditional man. His wife Laura, a submissive woman, is an unknowing accomplice.

Every morning at dawn, Alice passes through the salt flats with an old mens' bicycle on her way to work: we see her silhouette reflected in the surrounding landscape. Managing the newspaper kiosk alone is alienating. She has no chance to get out at night and live like her friends; there is neither great gain, nor much time for herself. Alice has no opportunity to love or to be loved in return.

The radio still plays late 80's music and newspapers pass by Alice's eyes: headlines report on important historical events that seem far away from this little town, a town frozen in time.

One day a young German street artist comes to town. Every night, he performs in the square just in front of Alice's kiosk. She is attracted to him but the villagers look down upon him. Here people talk: there are so many rules to be respected, on top of which her father tries to control her. Flicking through the magazines, she spends her days dreaming: she becomes artist of the month, then a Russian ballerina, a highflying businesswoman or a fashion reporter.

Her best friend Sara leaves for an Erasmus year in England and hence Alice, feeling more alone now than ever, starts talking to Mazinga - a gigantic crane that towers above the mounds of salt. All the miners nickname this crane Mazinga because its similar appearance to the famous cartoon robot. Alice stops under Mazinga with her bicycle and thinks out loud: "he" listens to her; understand her desires, dreams and limits of her life...

All the characters that "perform" on the stage that is this little province come by Alice's window. Amongst these characters we have a handsome young man who travels from his nearby town to buy erotic magazines. He is nevertheless very kind. As time goes by, this Filippo makes cautious advances on Alice but she doesn't know if she can trust him, even though he is attractive.

Time goes by. The politics of the time seem to promise changes for the future that never came. Alice feels her life slipping away.

Meanwhile Sara returns from England, enthusiastic about the "real" life she experienced there - the life they had always dreamt of. Whilst Sara now has

concrete memories, Alice can still only dream. But Sara has totally changed - she has dyed red hair and the courage to dress in a completely crazy way. She is now attractive and is already dating someone – Filippo.

When Sara tells Alice who she's dating, Alice doesn't react. But internally, this news pushes her to the edge.

One normal Sunday afternoon, after a hard morning's work, Alice wears a red dress, high heels and fake breasts – and her masculine body is transformed. She puts on a blonde wig, storms out and sets out to burn down her kiosk. She walks away, leaving behind her the damn square and her kiosk ablaze.

In the last shot we hear her voice reporting on the Paris fashion week, where we now see her fulfilled, watching from a VIP seat.

# JUST LIKE THIS

(Giusto così)

awarded short film story

written with Corrado Serafino-Nettis

note: [script available](#)

Giustino is a plump 50 years "young" guy: he is lonely, tender and funny.

His virginal and sometimes angry expression hides just an infinite sweetness that is not given back by the world.

Our Giustino lives in a small town on the Apulian Murgia: he earns a living as he can.

The bell of his loved old bicycle is now broken. We are approaching the town's Saint's day: getting ready with the illuminations and the musical band reversals in the square.

One day, on an hard work day as many others in the countryside, Giustino finds out by chance an hidden treasure: 313 million of old Lira.

So, while the town "dresses-up" with colours and lights for the Saint's day, Giustino, among many adventures and picturesque characters, will manage to convert the Lire in Euro banknotes. And finally, with the big amount available, the turning point of life is just around the corner!

So the "rich child" Giustino feels free to fall in love with the funfair, although this year it's just outside of the village.

Giustino wants to buy an high and shiny carousel, so he will be able to go around with the crew of Luna Park, but... "that one is expensive and this year will be out of low". Giustino is convinced by the sinister carny to spend all the money for the crushing-machines carousel with a pull-punches as present.

But they leave Giustino there with his bicycle and his new merry-go-round: so he finds himself mocked, with the illusory conviction to travel with the joy caravan wandering through the summer time.

From now on, instead, Giustino will be for everyone the owner of the stable carousel of the village: selling some tickets for a few teenagers on Saturday nights. But he will also be the funny "Franchino", who - in some spring afternoons - lends himself to play with a child brought there by a woman.

This mishap brought him as a gift the eyes of the woman. For Giustino this is enough to (imagine) a new life.

At night, after closing the merry-go-round roller shutters down, Giustino goes home and his bicycle bell now rings again.

Dlin-Dlon!