

### 3rd – **Ciro Neri (Original in Italian)**

#### **New Gaia**

The alarm clock rang at the right time, Adam opened his eyes, felt the warmth of the pillow on the skin of his neck and smiled. He got up and finding his flat in the half-light, commanded Elly to open the windows. The home automation system obeyed and a beam of light illuminated the room. Adam ate his bowl of milk and cereals in a hurry as he wanted to walk through the park before catching his train to work. He programmed the desired temperature for when he got home and asked Elly to set an alert to remind him to call his mother. He got dressed and walked up the stairs to stretch his legs. The street was quiet at that hour, but the early buskers were beginning to scamper here and there, and the moonlit streetlights were beginning to fade to make way for the natural one. Adam took a deep breath before climbing up the road through the park to the station, where the mag would leave for the clinic where he worked. When he reached the trains, he stopped at the biometric reader to pay for his ticket and walked to platform 7, where he boarded the MagLev that would take him to MemoLink in twenty minutes. The journey was short, then the loudspeakers announced: "Etrusia sector, health zone". Adam got off the train and walked calmly. As he walked, he saw some acquaintances taking their children to the learning area. When he arrived at work, he said hello to his colleagues and went to get ready for his shift. The room in which he received patients was small, but well lit, with a constant temperature thanks to the EGIS system that powered the whole planet. At ten o'clock, there was a loud knock at the door, he went to open it and found himself confronted by a large dark-skinned woman and a hooded girl wearing large sunglasses. "Hello, have a nice life and welcome to MemoLink," Adam stammered. "Hello young man," shouted the lady. "Have a nice life," hinted the girl. Adam was silent for a few seconds, then managed to say, "My name is Adam and I'm your memory curator, what can I do for you?" "I'm Mama Alisya and recently my memory has not been working well." "I'm Zora" said the girl from whom Adam couldn't take his eyes off. Something in her was calling him, without using words. "I see ma'am, let's see what this is all about!" In Mama Alisya's memories, Adam peered at a man, perhaps the woman's husband: he was tall and handsome with violet eyes, typical of metasapiens. When the visit ended, two small, silent drops ran down the lady's cheeks. The boy looked away and announced that the visit had gone well and that with a few simple exercises and therapy sessions Mama Alisya's memory would be as good as new! The woman looked relieved and smiled, wiping her face a little. Then Adam asked, "What sector of New Gaia are you from?" "From Libys East, we're farmers and my Zora raises bees and she's the best there is," the young woman smiled and stepped back. "Ah, so you have come by air?" "Oh, yes and then by Mag to here" "I'd love to come and see you in Libys East" ventured the boy and he swore he saw a little quiver on Zora's face, but those words were lost a little in the silence that followed. Then Adam stood up, greeted the two women and began to open the door, but something happened. Zora's shoe was untied and as she reached down to fix it, her glasses slipped off her face and ended up right next to Adam's feet, who picked them up and handed them to her. When the girl looked up at him, she saw that his eyes were also as bright purple as those of the man in Mama Alisya's memories. The two young people looked at each other for a few moments, then the girl put her glasses on and hurried out of the room. Mama Alisya looked at the boy smiling and said: "You know young Adam, over the centuries many things change, but love doesn't, it always stays the same!" the boy blushed and could only mumble two words: "See you soon". The rest of the shift seemed endless to Adam. All he could think about was Zora. He struggled to fall asleep that evening. The next day he took time off work, went to the airfield and boarded the first rocket to Libys East. After a little more than an hour, he landed and found out at an infopoint where the breeding and farming area was located. He took a mag and arrived at the edge of a forest,

in the middle of which he found a small town hidden among the trees. He felt that this was the right place. He was certain of this when he met Mama Alisya who was talking to another woman. The lady smiled at him and pointed to a place just outside of town. Adam started to run and soon found Zora. When she saw him, the bees buzzing around her in a perfectly circular orbit became agitated. Then her beautiful violet eyes twinkled slightly and the bees calmed down, finally she spoke, "Sorry, they're not used to visitors. What are you doing here, Adam?" The boy didn't answer, they just looked at each other then she said, "Thank you." "So it's true? You meta's can read minds!" The girl laughed and said, "But no! It's only Aleth, we know the truth in looks." "It's very nice here," Adam said softly. "Come" said Zora taking his hand. They walked to a small rise. From there they could see the whole horizon, the sky was clean and had colours they had never seen before. The sun was shining and the forest below them seemed to move as if it had been alive. Voices of ancient songs were rising from the city and bees had begun to buzz around them. "Why bees?" "They are small animals, but strong! They know how to cooperate and produce food; they have a great memory and make plants bloom. They remind me of our people, so simple and yet so strong! Grandmother says it is thanks to the bees that New Gaia has begun to flourish again after the age of pollution." Adam looked at Zora, then the two boys embraced in a gentle hug that smelled of the future.