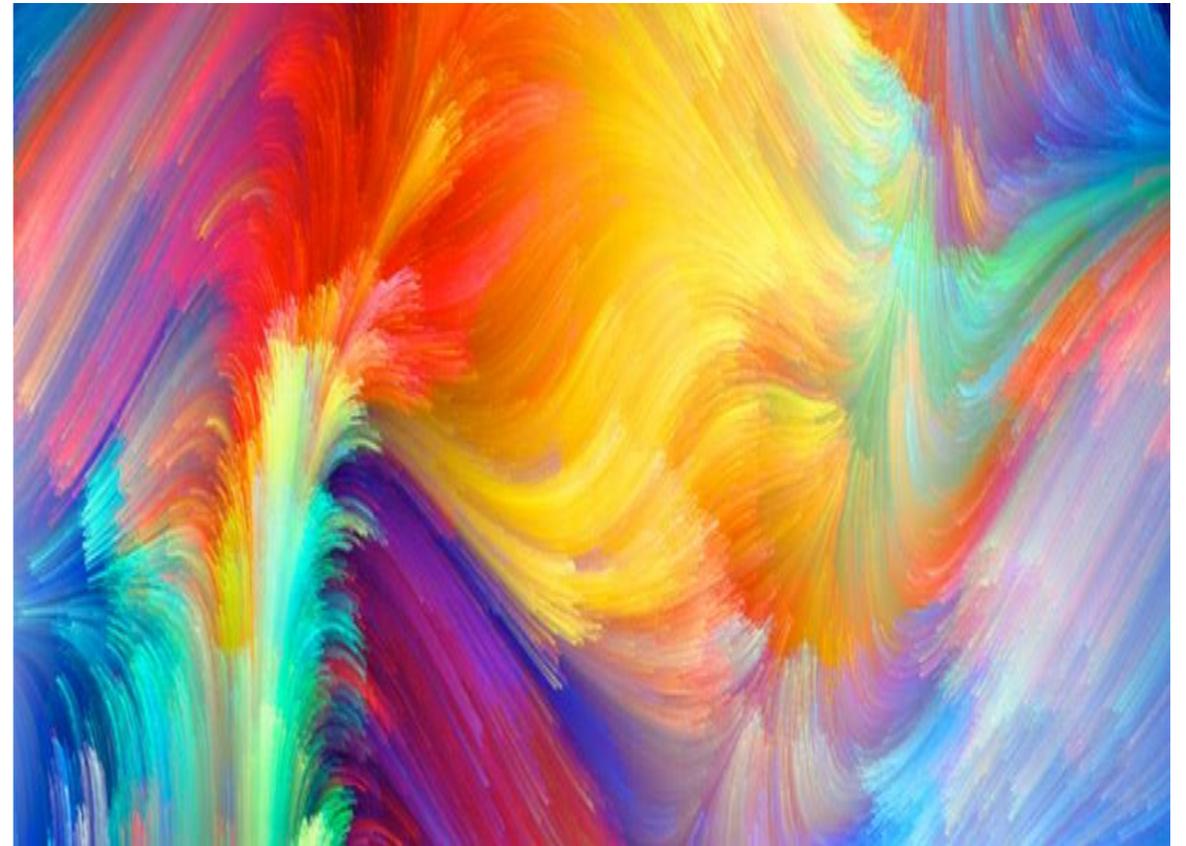


LIBERTA COLORATA:

THE STORY OF RUBY DE NIRO

By Grace Gallagher



Liberta Colorata

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Published by Saronti Ltd

Facilitated by [ATC Language schools](#)

INTRODUCTION

Liberta Colorata is a post-apocalyptic world. After an experimental atomic bomb was dropped in Italy, changing the colour of everything, people had to live underground. Liberta Colorata is Italian for 'colourful freedom', even though there is no freedom and underground is brown and grey.

As Fern and I follow the others down tunnel A, I feel a pang of nervousness. I need to get a job as a soldier for money. We need money to buy food in the dining hall. If I don't get the job, then Cherry will have to try out next year, and she'll probably get shot in the bullet dodging training.

I walked back into the apartment where Cherry and Dada were waiting. "Hey, Ruby." said Dada. "Hey" I replied. "Where's Mama?" I asked. "She's already in The Hall." replied Cherry. "Dada will do your hair and I'll do your make-up." "Where's Fern?" asked Dada. "I don't know." I responded. "She was here a second ago."

In case you're wondering, Fern isn't my sister. Her parents died from scarlet fever seven years ago, and since she's closer in age to me than anyone else here, she lives with us.

Just then, she walked in. "Sorry that took me so long. You know what Amber's like."

Yes I do. She's the most talkative person in the country.

When Fern and I had our hair and make-up finished, we all filed into The Announcement Hall to hear who the next ten tunnel A soldiers to serve the country would be. There would be two hundred and sixty soldiers in total, ten from each tunnel.

"Hello tunnel A and welcome to our annual soldier picking!" said Sir Liberta and Lady Colorata simultaneously. "This year, for the first time in decades, we have eight open spots for new soldiers! Could everyone that tried out please stand up?" Myself and the sixty-four others that tried out stood up.

"The results are now available to print on your schedule-RUBY!"

I'm running for my life. Sir Liberta's son said that if I became a soldier, he would snitch on me for stealing twenty euro. Here's the story of what happened:

We were all starving. We couldn't afford the food in the food hall. We couldn't become soldiers as Cherry and I were too young (I was ten and Cherry was nine) and Mama and Dada were too old since soldier age was twelve to eighteen. I was coming back from the bathroom when I spotted a twenty euro note on the floor. I thought no-one saw me pick it up, but I was wrong. Sir Liberta's son saw me.

"Well well well, what's that you have, De Niro?" he questioned.

"N-n-noth- I'll do anything if you don't snitch!" I blurted out.

"There's nothing I want, but if you become a soldier, I'll snitch and you'll be executed." And *that* was my biggest mistake ever.

I have to go to the lake. No-one goes there anymore, other than last week's annual water collecting, so it's safe. It's the only water we're allowed to drink, as the lake is the only thing that wasn't affected by the atomic bomb dropped 4567 years ago. Anyway, tonight I can leave a note explaining what happened, not giving away my hiding spot, and requesting a public execution. I get started.

Dear Head of Execution,

I'm requesting a public execution of the leaders' son for threatening me.

Ruby De Niro

Short and sweet. My style.

I drop it down the postbox hole and hope I don't get declined.

Even if I am, I can keep on sending until I'm accepted. I could stay here forever really...

END OF BOOK ONE

No! Editor! I never said it was finished!

It's been a few days since I ran away. I have decided I'm going back. I can't live here any longer. I keep getting attacked by foxes, and God knows what else is lurking out there. On my arrival, Mama, Dada, Cherry and Fern all run out of the apartment and give me a big hug.

"Read the soldier list!" insists Cherry. I do.

Liberta Colorata new soldiers for the year 6391

Fern Vuitton

Scarlett Gucci

Pesca Arancia

Rossa Rosa

Rosso Rosa

Marrone Grigio

Viola Giallo

And..

Ruby De Niro

THE REAL END OF BOOK ONE

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Liberta Colorata is a tale depicting the life and struggles of Ruby De Niro, a girl fighting for freedom in a post-apocalyptic world.

The first book in the series.