

SAVING MADONNA by Kate Bristow

EXCERPT

Marco looked beyond his home to a small wood that stretched out from the rear of the property down to the narrow white road snaking through the valley toward the distant hilltop town of Peglio. His home was called Ca'Boschetto (House of the Copse) because of these trees, and Marco knew it would soon be time for his father and uncle to gather their friends and bloodhounds for the annual truffle hunt. Their small wood was known far and wide as a fruitful location for the illusive and highly sought-after fungi, and the truffle hunt was one of the highlights of the season.

Beyond the wood, a patchwork of fields that had been parched brown after the harvest in the heat of August was beginning to turn into shades of green from recent rain. Marco spotted a couple of deer making the most of the fresh grass. Something else caught his eye as it glinted in the distance. Marco lifted his hands to his brow to deflect the glare of the autumnal sun. Whatever was flashing in the sunlight was moving toward their farm. The ox-drawn carts that often made this journey on the back road couldn't move that quickly. He squinted. Something was not right.

"Luca! Luca! I can see a car coming. Look at the road!"

His older brother turned away from the flock and walked over to where Marco was standing. Luca stared at the distant vehicle for a minute and his face darkened. "Marco, Gianni, run down to the house and tell Papà that there might be Germans coming. Move!"