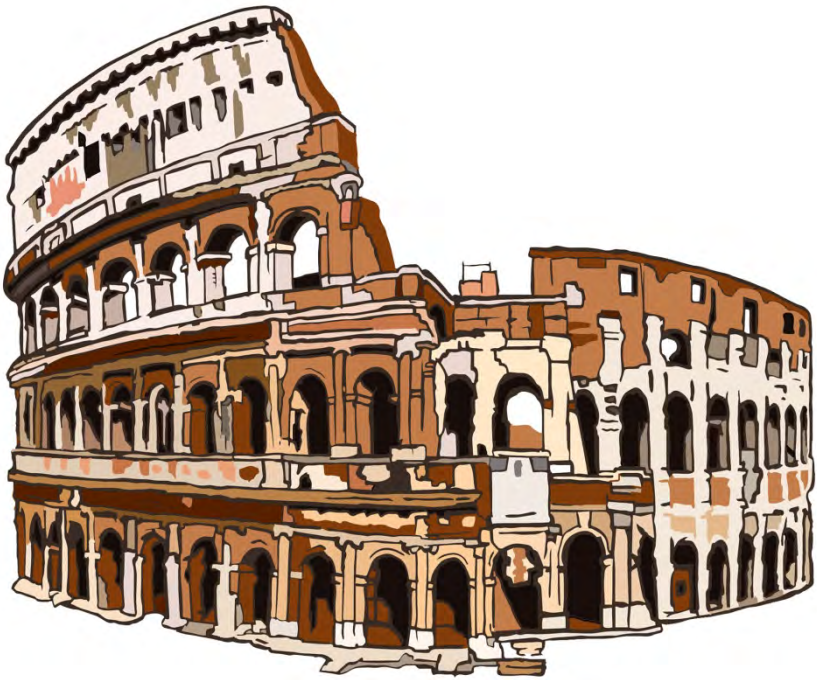


Max and Voltaire

Voyage to the Eternal City



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The Max and Voltaire Series™ Book Three



CHAPTER ONE

GETTING THERE

“**W**e’re almost there,” says *Madame* Rosemarie. “We’ll overnight in Padua (pronounced **pahd**-ooh-ah) and leave for Rome tomorrow. It was very kind of *Signora* Carina to invite us to stay with her. Summer is almost over, but the weather is still very pleasant in Rome. I’m sure you’ll enjoy spending time with Spaggetino and Midnight.”

Max and Voltaire stir in the back seat of the car. Max stretches and whispers to Voltaire, “Another adventure begins!”



Max and Voltaire met two cats, Spaggetino and Midnight, during a recent trip to the south of France. The owner of these two cats, *Signora* Carina, lives in Rome and invited *Madame* Rosemarie, her cat, Max, and her dog, Voltaire, for a visit.



Max and Voltaire live with *Madame* Rosemarie in Ferney-Voltaire, a small town in France, near Switzerland. Even though she already had three cats, *Madame* Rosemarie adopted Max from a local bakery when she learned that his owners could no longer keep him. Voltaire used to live next door. When his owner decided to give him up for adoption, she asked *Madame* Rosemarie if she would like to give him a home. *Madame* Rosemarie never had a dog before. She wasn't sure how he would get along with her four cats. It was a difficult

decision, but she decided to welcome Voltaire into her home. Over time, Voltaire and his cat pals learned how to relate to each other and became good friends.

While *Madame* Rosemarie was visiting a friend in Nice (pronounced **niece**) in the south of France about three months ago, she met *Signora* Carina under unusual circumstances. The *Signora's* cat, Spaggetino, was kidnapped. Thanks to Max and Voltaire, he was reunited with the *Signora*. During that same trip, Max, Voltaire, and Spaggetino rescued a kitten in distress, Midnight, who *Signora* Carina later adopted.

Madame Rosemarie checks into a small hotel in Padua. Many hotels in Italy are pet-friendly. After a short rest, *Madame* Rosemarie goes down to the hotel lobby and asks the desk clerk for information about the city.

“Padua is one of the oldest cities in Italy,” the young woman tells her. “We have many churches here. There’s also a beautiful square called the Prato delle Valle (pronounced **pra**-tow del-lay **va**-lay). It’s the largest square in Europe. It has a big grassy area and a statue-lined canal. Many people go there to walk or to just relax. Padua is also home to the second oldest university in Europe, the

University of Padua, founded in 1222. Galileo (pronounced **ga-lee-lay-oh**), a famous scientist, taught at the university between 1592 and 1610. He made many of his important discoveries here.”



Madame Rosemarie thanks the young lady for the information. She turns to Max and Voltaire who are standing near her. “Let’s visit Padua,” says *Madame* Rosemarie.

Madame Rosemarie, Max, and Voltaire stroll down the narrow cobblestone streets in the historic center, make their way to the Prato delle Valle, and then head over to the oldest university building in Padua, called the Bo Palace, built in the 15th century. The university area is full of stores, outdoor markets, and students. *Madame* Rosemarie finds a bench, sits down, and starts to read her Italy guidebook. Max and Voltaire sit down near her. A tour group arrives. Max and Voltaire slowly walk to one side of the group, trying to remain inconspicuous so that they can listen to the tour leader.

“I don’t think anyone would mind if we stand here,” says Max.

“We’ll be on our best behavior and just blend in,” adds Voltaire.

“When Galileo was a young man, he became interested in science,” says the tour guide. “In those days, experiments were not used to test ideas. But Galileo wanted to test his ideas so that he could observe them in the real world. In fact,

this was a new idea to people and laid the foundation for the scientific method. Let me give you an example. Back then, people believed that if you dropped two items of different weights, but the same size and shape, the heavier item would land first. Galileo decided to test this assumption. He went to the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, a town in Italy where he was living at the time, and dropped two balls of the same size and shape but different weights. They landed at the same time! This upset some people because it challenged the traditional way of thinking.”

“Poor Galileo,” says Max. “I don’t understand why people were upset with him. He was just a curious guy.”

The guide, a petite and vivacious young lady, with dark hair and a warm smile, continues her story about the life and times of Galileo.

“Although Galileo didn’t invent the telescope, he made improvements on the existing technology and was the first astronomer to use his telescope to observe the heavens,” says the tour leader. “Using his telescope, he was able to prove that the Earth and other planets revolved around the sun, not the other way around, as was believed at that time. Once again, Galileo disturbed some people. This

time, the Catholic Church became very angry and arrested him. Instead of living in prison, however, the Church allowed him to live at home under house arrest.”

“I feel sorry for Galileo,” says Voltaire. “He seems to have gotten himself into lots of trouble. But, it was nice of the Church to let him stay at home.”

“Albert Einstein, who received the 1921 *Nobel Prize in Physics*, and whose achievements revolutionized physics, called Galileo, the ‘Father of Modern Science,’” says the guide. “Many of Galileo’s experiments contributed to the advancement of science. It took years, but eventually the Catholic Church recognized Galileo’s important contributions and regretted the way it had treated him.”

“I’m glad this story has a happy ending,” says Voltaire.

Madame Rosemarie gets up and sees Max and Voltaire standing near the tour group. She walks over to join them.

“We have a long drive tomorrow,” says *Madame* Rosemarie. “Stopping here was a bit of a detour, but I’ve always wanted to see Padua. Let’s get some dinner and go to bed early.”

The next morning after breakfast they all get into the car and head for Rome. Max and Voltaire settle down in the back seat and soon fall asleep.

After a few hours of driving, *Madame* Rosemarie stops the car to get some gas. Max and Voltaire wake up. *Madame* Rosemarie takes them for a short walk and gives them some water to drink.

“We’re very close to Bologna (pronounced boh-loan-yah),” says *Madame* Rosemarie. “The guidebook says that Bologna is considered the food capital of Italy. Let’s stop for some lunch.”

They arrive in Bologna. It’s a warm, summerlike day. *Madame* Rosemarie parks the car near the center of town, and they walk toward the large city square, called the Piazza Maggiore (pronounced pee-ah-zah ma-jaw-ray). They pass many warm colored orange and red buildings.

“What a lovely old town,” remarks *Madame* Rosemarie. “Let’s find a place to eat. After lunch, we can take a short walk and do a bit of sightseeing.”

Madame Rosemarie crisscrosses the backstreets of the Piazza Maggiore, passes fruit and vegetable stands, and finds a small restaurant with a terrace facing old buildings with porticoes and small shops. A waiter with a friendly smile shows *Madame*

Rosemarie and her furry pals to a table and brings her a menu. Max and Voltaire sit down on the floor near *Madame* Rosemarie. A young man is sitting alone at a nearby table.

“May I pet your dog?” he asks.



“Yes,” replies *Madame* Rosemarie. “He’s very well-behaved and a graduate of dog obedience school.”

I’m glad I went to school, thinks Voltaire.

“My name is Marco,” says the young man. “I study at the University of Bologna. I have a dog, too. She lives with my parents in Rome. Her name is Bella. She has a white coat just like your dog has.”



Madame Rosemarie introduces herself, Max, and Voltaire.

“Please join me for lunch,” says Marco.

“Thank you,” replies *Madame* Rosemarie.

Marco calls the waiter and he moves both tables together.

“What are you studying?” asks *Madame* Rosemarie.

“I’m studying art,” replies Marco. “I want to be a painter. Some say that Leonardo da Vinci (pronounced lay-oh-**narh**-doh dah-**veen**-chee) painted the famous *Mona Lisa* portrait here in Bologna.”

“I thought he painted the *Mona Lisa* in Florence,”

replies *Madame* Rosemarie. “I can still remember the first time I saw the painting in Paris at the Louvre Museum. It’s a small painting and measures only 30 by 21 inches. I thought it would be much larger. I was fascinated by her facial expressions. From one angle, she looked peaceful and serene. From another angle, the smile seemed different, somewhat mysterious.”

“Leonardo da Vinci was a great painter, and although he is best known for his work as a painter, he was also an inventor, scientist, mathematician, engineer, writer and musician,” states Marco. “The official version is that he painted the *Mona Lisa* in Florence where he lived a long time ago, but he didn’t finish the painting there. He carried it around with him for many years. Before he went to France with the painting, he lived in Bologna. So perhaps he worked on the painting here. Some people in Bologna would like to think so. I hope to become a great painter one day.”

“I wish you much success,” says *Madame* Rosemarie.

I wish they would stop talking about painting, thinks Voltaire. *I’m getting hungry.*

“I see many young people walking around,” says *Madame* Rosemarie.

“Bologna is a university town,” says Marco. “The University of Bologna is the oldest in Europe. There are about 100,000 students living here. After lunch, I would be pleased to show you around the town.”

“That’s very kind of you,” responds *Madame* Rosemarie. “I guess we should order. Perhaps you can make some suggestions. I would like to taste a typical dish from this area.”

Yes, that’s a good idea, thinks Voltaire. *Let’s eat.*

“Many delicious foods originate in Bologna,” says Marco. “For example, tortellini (pronounced tohr-tay-**lee**-nee), lasagna (pronounced lah-**zah**-nyah), Bolognese (pronounced boh-loh-**nay**-zee) sauce for pasta, an Italian sausage called mortadella (pronounced mohr-tah-**dell**-ah) and balsamic vinegar. Perhaps you would like to order some pasta with Bolognese sauce. The sauce is made with pork and veal. For dessert, I suggest some mascarpone (pronounced mahs-kahr-**poh**-nay), a very creamy and sweet dessert cheese.”

“That sounds very good,” replies *Madame* Rosemarie.

“Many restaurants here will even cook something for Max and Voltaire,” says Marco.

Madame Rosemarie and Marco order lunch.

Madame Rosemarie orders chicken for Max and Voltaire.

The waiter brings their food. He serves *Madame* Rosemarie and Marco, and then Max and Voltaire. *Madame* Rosemarie inspects the dishes prepared for Max and Voltaire.

“This looks yummy,” says *Madame* Rosemarie. “I see that the chef has diced the chicken into small pieces and added some bits of ham and bacon. This is a real treat.”

Oh, boy! thinks Voltaire when the food arrives. *This smells good.*

Madame Rosemarie tastes the thick pasta and Bolognese sauce. “This is heavenly,” declares *Madame* Rosemarie.

“The base of a good Bolognese sauce is a mix of aromatic and flavorful vegetables, such as celery, onions, and carrots, fried in olive oil and butter,” explains Marco. “Then, chunks of veal and pork are thrown into the vegetable mix to brown. A little milk or cream is added and stirred before pouring in some white wine. After cooking, this creates a rich broth. Then, tomato paste and stock are added, followed by a little butter and salt. The sauce is stirred and simmered gently until the meats become soft and fall apart. I also like to top off the sauce

with freshly grated parmesan cheese, but others prefer the natural flavor of the sauce.”

“You must be a good cook,” says *Madame* Rosemarie.

“I like to eat,” answers Marco. “I’ve learned how to prepare some of my favorite dishes.”

Madame Rosemarie looks at Max and Voltaire and their empty plates.

“I see that you’ve enjoyed the food,” says *Madame* Rosemarie. “I should get that chicken recipe from the chef.”

Mmmm, almost as good as croissants! thinks Max.

“The lunch was outstanding,” says *Madame* Rosemarie.

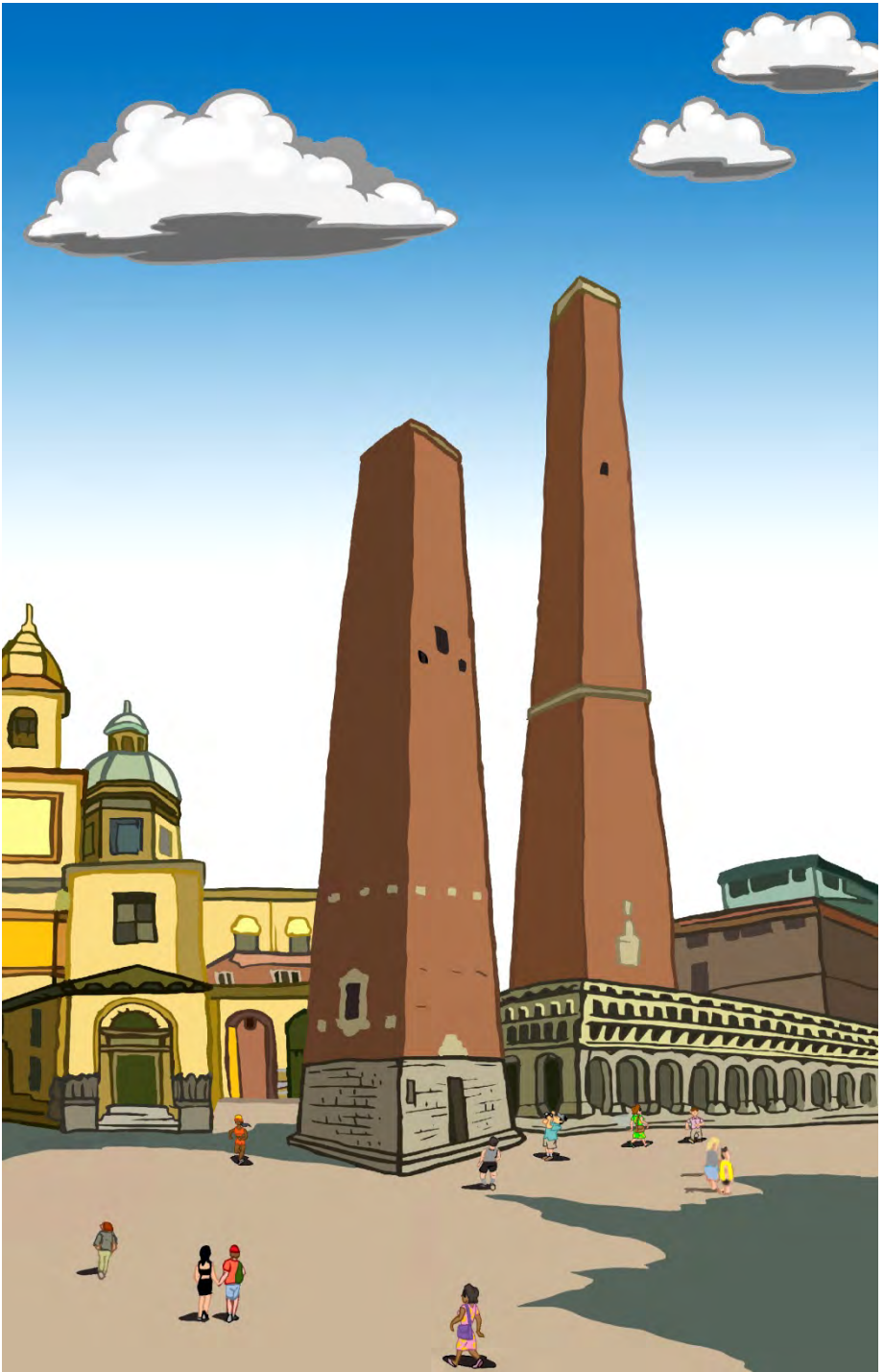
“I’m glad you enjoyed it,” replies Marco.

“If you like, we can go for a walk, and I can point out several landmarks,” says Marco.

“A walk sounds wonderful,” says *Madame* Rosemarie. “Especially after the meal we just ate!”

“Here in Bologna, we have two leaning towers,” says Marco. “In Pisa, there is only the one.”

They pass many covered walkways that seem to go on and on.



“There are more than 40 miles of porticoed walkways in Bologna,” says Marco. “Over there is Bologna’s greatest church, the Basilica San Petronio (pronounced bah-**zee**-lee-kah san pet-**roh**-nee-oh). “It was originally intended to be larger than Saint Peter’s in Rome. In 1561, about 169 years after building had started, Pope Pius IV stopped construction. Until this day, the Church remains unfinished.”

I wonder if this inspired the phrase “unfinished business,” thinks Max.

“I know you don’t have much time to spend in Bologna and that you’re anxious to get to Rome,” says Marco. “Before you go, you must taste some Italian ice cream. We call it *gelato*.”

Marco takes them to a nearby *gelateria* (pronounced jay-lot-tay-**ree**-ah) where they serve homemade Italian ice cream. They see a long line of people waiting to buy *gelato*. After about fifteen minutes, they reach the counter.

“I’ve never seen so many flavors of ice cream,” says Madame Rosemarie. “It’ll be very hard to choose.”

“Chocolate is my favorite,” says Marco.

“I’ll have a small scoop of chocolate *gelato*,” says

Madame Rosemarie.

She also orders two tiny scoops of vanilla *gelato* for Max and Voltaire.



Madame Rosemarie, Marco, Max and Voltaire walk over to a bench. *Madame* Rosemarie places the *gelato* into two paper cups and sets them down on the sidewalk near the bench.

“I’ve never tasted anything like this before,” says Max. “This tastes like sweet milk.”

“It tastes very good,” says Voltaire. “I love Italian food.”

After Max and Voltaire finish their *gelato*, they stroll over to a nearby bench and hop up.

“I’ll count to three and then we jump,” says Voltaire.

Madame Rosemarie and Marco are eating their *gelato* and chatting. She turns her head and sees Max and Voltaire jumping on and off a bench.

I wonder what they’re up to, thinks *Madame* Rosemarie.

“I think we’re doing something wrong,” says Voltaire. “According to Galileo, we should be landing at the same time.”

“For the experiment to work, we should be the same size and shape,” says Max. “But, this is fun. I like to jump up and down.”

“Oh well,” says Voltaire. “Maybe I wasn’t cut out to be a scientist.”

Madame Rosemarie calls Max and Voltaire. “It’s time to go,” she says.

“Thank you, Marco, for showing us around Bologna,” says *Madame* Rosemarie.

“I hope you have a lovely time in Rome,” replies Marco. “Goodbye, Max. Goodbye, Voltaire.”

When they get into the car, *Madame* Rosemarie says, “I’m glad we stopped in Bologna. It’s such a charming city. And what luck meeting Marco! He’s really sweet. I wish we had time to visit a few more

places. Florence is not that far from here. But *Signora* Carina is expecting us for dinner.”

I’m looking forward to seeing Spaggetino and Midnight again, thinks Max.

After a few hours of driving, they finally reach the outskirts of Rome.

“We’re almost there,” announces *Madame* Rosemarie. “*Signora* Carina’s house is on an ancient road paved with cobblestones called the *Appian Way*. The guidebook says this was one of the world’s most important roads in ancient Rome.”

Max and Voltaire are sitting in the back seat of the car looking out the window.

“I wonder what we’ll eat in Rome,” whispers Voltaire. “So far, we’ve learned a lot and eaten very well.”

“Travel is full of surprises,” replies Max. “I’m looking forward to our visit.”

“This is the house,” points out *Madame* Rosemarie.

The house is enclosed by a stone fence. Set back from the fence is a large, old stone building, surrounded by umbrella pine trees and carefully trimmed evergreen shrubs with white flowers.

Madame Rosemarie gets out of the car, walks

over to the massive wrought iron gate, finds the bell, and rings it. As the gate starts to open, *Signora* Carina, Spaggetino, and Midnight appear at the front door of the house.

“*Ciao, Madame* Rosemarie, Max, and Voltaire,” calls out *Signora* Carina. “I’m so happy to see you! I hope you had a good trip.”

Spaggetino and Midnight run over to Max and Voltaire, and they all rub noses.

