

FLEYDO ENGLISH SCHOOL

Story Material

The Farm on Mulberry Road

An original mystery about an Italian-American farming family in New York who discover a Prohibition-era secret beneath their barn.

Level: B1

Skill: Reading

Duration: ~60 min

Age: Teens (11-16)

Topic: Daily Life & History

Pages: 28

The Story

Chapter I— The DeLuca Farm

If you drove north from New York City for about two hours, past the suburbs, past the strip malls, past the last commuter train station, and turned left onto a narrow road lined with sugar maples, you would eventually arrive at Mulberry Road. And at the end of Mulberry Road, surrounded by rolling green hills and overlooking the Hudson River in the distance, you would find the DeLuca farm. It was not a large farm by American standards — forty acres of mixed land, half of it **pasture**, a quarter of it vegetable fields, and the rest divided between a cherry **orchard**, a small apple grove, and the cluster of buildings where the DeLuca family had lived and worked for almost a hundred years.

Frank DeLuca was fifty-two years old, broad-shouldered, permanently sunburned, and the third generation of his family to farm this land. His grandfather, Enzo DeLuca, had bought the property in 1924 with money he had saved working in a stone quarry in the Bronx. His father, Salvatore — everyone called him Sal — had expanded it, adding the **orchard** and the dairy operation. And Frank had kept it going, though "keeping it going" had become harder every year.

The DeLuca farm was not just a farm. It was a small civilisation. Frank's wife, Maria, managed the farm shop and the accounts — the second job being considerably more stressful than the first. Their eldest son, Dominic, was twenty-three, built like a refrigerator, and handled the **livestock**: twelve Holstein dairy cows, six Nubian goats, forty laying hens, a flock of noisy geese, and a donkey named Benito who had bitten every member of the family at least once. Their daughter, Sofia, was seventeen, studying for her college applications, and helped with the vegetable fields when she was not writing essays about Jane Austen. Their youngest, Marco, was fourteen, obsessed with building things, and had recently constructed an automated **irrigation** system using recycled pipes and a smartphone app that only worked on Tuesdays.

And then there was Nonna Rosa. Frank's mother was seventy-eight years old, four feet eleven inches tall, and the undisputed ruler of the household. She cooked, she gardened, she preserved tomatoes in August, and she remembered everything — every story, every recipe, every family argument going back to 1962. When Nonna Rosa spoke, the DeLucas listened. Even Benito the donkey behaved himself around Nonna Rosa.

Chapter II— Money Trouble

The trouble began, as trouble often does, with a letter. It arrived on a Tuesday morning in September, in a white envelope with the logo of Hudson Valley Savings Bank in the corner. Maria opened it at the kitchen table while Frank was in the **barn** milking the cows. When he came in for breakfast, she was sitting very still with the letter in front of her. "We are three months behind on the **mortgage**," she said. "The bank is giving us ninety days to catch up, or they will begin foreclosure proceedings." Frank sat down heavily. The kitchen was silent except for the ticking of the clock and the distant sound of Benito braying at the geese.

The numbers were brutal. The dairy operation barely broke even — milk prices had been falling for years. The vegetable fields made money in summer but not enough to cover winter costs. The farm shop helped, but competition from supermarkets had cut their customer base in half. They owed sixty-two thousand dollars in back payments. It might as well have been six million. "We could sell some land," Maria said carefully. "The south field, maybe. A developer has been asking about it." Frank shook his head. "If we sell the south field, we lose the pasture. If we lose the pasture, we cannot keep the cows. If we lose the cows, we lose the dairy income. It is a death spiral."

Nonna Rosa, who had been listening from the doorway, walked into the kitchen and placed a cup of espresso in front of Frank. "Your grandfather bought this land with his hands," she said quietly. "He carried stones for ten years to pay for it. We are not selling. We will find another way." She turned and walked back to her garden. The conversation was over. That night, at exactly 3:17 in the morning, Frank was woken by the sound of Garibaldi crowing. Garibaldi was the farm's rooster — a magnificent, copper-feathered Rhode Island Red who was the most reliable alarm clock in the Hudson Valley. But Garibaldi always crowed at dawn, around 5:30. Never at 3:17.

Frank pulled on his boots and walked outside. The farm was bathed in moonlight. Garibaldi was standing on the fence post nearest to the old **barn** — not the new barn where the cows slept, but the original stone barn that Enzo had built in the 1920s and that nobody used any more because the roof leaked and the floor was uneven. The rooster was facing the barn and crowing with extraordinary intensity, as if trying to wake something up. Frank watched for a few minutes, shrugged, and went back to bed. He would remember this moment later, and he would think: the rooster knew. Somehow, that ridiculous bird knew.

Chapter III— The Old Barn

Garibaldi crowed at 3:17 every night for the next five nights. Always facing the old barn. Always with the same urgent intensity. On the sixth morning, Frank told Marco about it over breakfast. Marco's eyes lit up. "Maybe there is something under the barn," he said. "Animals can sense things humans cannot. Dogs find earthquakes before they happen. Maybe Garibaldi is detecting something underground." Sofia looked up from her laptop. "Or maybe the rooster is just broken." "Roosters do not break, Sofia." "Everything breaks, Marco."

Nevertheless, that afternoon, Frank and Marco walked over to the old barn to investigate. The building was a mess — cobwebs, rusted tools, stacks of rotting hay bales, and a family of raccoons living in the hayloft who were not pleased about the intrusion. The stone walls were solid, built in the old Italian way with careful craftsmanship, but the wooden floor had partially collapsed in one corner, revealing dark earth beneath. "Look at this," Marco said, kneeling beside the collapsed section. He had cleared away the broken planks and was pointing at something in the dirt. It was a metal ring, attached to what appeared to be an iron door set into the ground.

Frank stared at it. He had been coming to this barn his entire life. He had played here as a child, stored hay here as a teenager, avoided it as an adult because the roof leaked. He had never known there was anything beneath the floor. "It is a **cellar**," Marco said, already

pulling at the ring. The door was heavy and stiff with age, but it moved. A rush of cold, damp air rose from below, carrying a smell that Frank recognised but could not immediately place — something earthy and sharp, like old wood and fermented fruit. Stone steps led down into darkness. Marco was already reaching for his phone's torch. "We should probably get the others," Frank said. "We should probably go down right now," Marco replied, and began descending before Frank could stop him.

The **cellar** was larger than Frank had expected — roughly the same footprint as the barn above, with a vaulted stone ceiling and packed earth floor. But it was what the cellar contained that made both of them stand in stunned silence. Along every wall, from floor to ceiling, were wooden racks. And on the racks, covered in decades of dust, were bottles. Hundreds of them. Glass bottles of different sizes, some with handwritten labels, some without. And in the centre of the room, like an altar, stood a large copper still — the kind used to distil spirits. "Dad," Marco whispered. "Is this what I think it is?"

Chapter IV— Enzo's Secret

They called a family meeting. All seven DeLucas gathered around the kitchen table — Frank, Maria, Dominic, Sofia, Marco, Nonna Rosa, and Uncle Gianni, Frank's older brother, who drove over from his house in Rhinebeck when he heard the news. Frank described the cellar, the bottles, the copper still. Marco showed photographs on his phone. There was a long silence. Then everyone looked at Nonna Rosa. She was sitting very still, her hands folded in her lap, with an expression that was difficult to read. "You knew," Frank said. It was not a question. "I knew," Nonna Rosa said.

The story came out slowly, like water from an old tap. Enzo DeLuca had arrived in America in 1919, one year before **Prohibition** began. He had come from a village in Campania where every family made its own wine and grappa. When the American government banned alcohol in 1920, Enzo saw an opportunity. He bought the farm in 1924 not just because the land was good — though it was — but because the property sat on a rocky hillside with natural caves and stone foundations that were perfect for building a hidden cellar.

For thirteen years, from 1920 to 1933, Enzo had operated a secret distillery beneath the barn, producing grappa, limoncello, and fruit brandy from the farm's own cherries, apples, and plums. He sold to restaurants in Manhattan, to families in the Italian community, and — according to Nonna Rosa — to at least one very famous jazz club in Harlem. He was never caught. When Prohibition ended in 1933, he simply sealed the cellar, covered the entrance with new floorboards, and never spoke of it again. "He was not ashamed," Nonna Rosa said. "He was proud. He fed his family, he paid for this land, and he made beautiful grappa. But he was also practical. Some secrets are better kept quiet."

"But why did nobody ever open the cellar?" Sofia asked. "I mean, Prohibition ended ninety years ago. Why keep it hidden?" Nonna Rosa smiled. "Your grandfather Sal knew about it. He and Enzo sealed it together. Sal told me about it when we married, but he said his father's wish was to leave it alone — that it was history, and history should be respected." She paused. "I think Enzo also worried that there might be legal complications, even decades

later. He was always cautious." "Well," Frank said, looking at the photographs on Marco's phone, "the secret is out now. The question is: what do we do with it?"

Chapter V— The Tunnels

Marco, predictably, was not satisfied with just the cellar. The following day, armed with proper torches, hard hats borrowed from Uncle Gianni's construction business, and strict instructions from Maria to "not die down there," Frank, Marco, and Dominic returned to explore further. What they found was astonishing. At the back of the cellar, behind the racks of bottles, was a low stone archway leading to a tunnel — hand-cut through the bedrock, wide enough for one person carrying a crate, and extending at least fifty metres to the east.

"The tunnel goes towards the river," Marco said, checking his compass app. "Enzo built an escape route. If the police ever raided the barn, he could move the product through the tunnel and load it onto a boat on the Hudson." Dominic whistled. "Great-Grandpa was basically a criminal mastermind." "He was a farmer who made grappa," Frank corrected. "There is a difference." "Is there, though?" Sofia asked from the cellar entrance, where she was photographing everything with a proper camera. The tunnel ended at a second cellar — smaller, dug into the riverbank, with a collapsed wooden door that had once opened onto the water. Inside were more bottles, wooden crates stamped with dates from the 1920s, and — wrapped carefully in oilcloth — a leather journal.

The journal was Enzo's. Written in a mixture of Italian and English, it documented everything: recipes for grappa and limoncello, records of sales and customers, descriptions of the tunnel construction, and personal entries about life on the farm. One entry, dated March 1926, described the birth of Sal: "My son was born this morning. Maria and the baby are well. I held him in the **orchard** and showed him the cherry trees. One day this will all be his." Another, from December 1932 — one year before Prohibition ended — read: "The work is almost done. I have hidden something for the future. If anyone finds this journal, look beneath the third stone from the left in the river cellar. What I have left is not gold. It is better than gold."

Naturally, Marco immediately began counting stones. The third stone from the left in the river cellar wall was slightly looser than the others. Behind it, wrapped in oilcloth inside a tin box, was an envelope. Inside the envelope were three items: a handwritten letter in Italian, a photograph of Enzo standing in the **orchard** holding baby Sal, and the original property **deed** for the farm — dated 1924, signed by Enzo DeLuca, proving that the family owned the land outright, without any conditions or restrictions. Marco held up the letter. "Anyone here read Italian?" Everyone looked at Nonna Rosa.

Chapter VI— The Letter

Nonna Rosa put on her reading glasses and translated the letter aloud at the kitchen table that evening. The entire family was there, including Uncle Gianni's wife, Aunt Lucia, and their two adult children, who had driven over when they heard about the tunnels. Even Benito the donkey was standing at the kitchen window, as if listening. The letter was dated January 1933 — one month before Prohibition would end.

"To my family, to whoever reads this," Nonna Rosa began, her voice steady but soft. "I am writing this because a man should leave something behind that explains who he was. I came to America with nothing. I carried stones and dug ditches and saved every dollar until I could buy this land. When the government made it illegal to make wine and grappa — the drinks my family had made for five hundred years — I did not stop. I built what you have found beneath this barn. I am not sorry. A man who cannot feed his family has no honour. Everything I did, I did for this farm and for you."

Nonna Rosa continued reading: "The treasure I have left is not the bottles or the still. Those are just things. The treasure is the land. This farm is the best thing I ever did. The soil is good, the water is clean, the trees give fruit, and there is room for children to grow. Do not sell it. Do not give it up. No matter how hard things become, remember that land is the only thing that lasts. Banks fail. Money loses its value. Jobs disappear. But land remains. Take care of it, and it will take care of you. With love and respect, Enzo DeLuca, January 1933."

The kitchen was silent. Maria was crying quietly. Sofia was recording everything on her phone. Dominic was staring at the table with his jaw set. Marco was already thinking about structural engineering problems in the tunnel. Frank looked at his mother. "He wrote that ninety years ago," he said. "And we almost lost the farm this month." Nonna Rosa folded the letter carefully and placed it on the table. "Almost," she said. "But we did not. And now we will not. Because your grandfather did not just leave us a letter. He left us a way to save the farm. We just need to be smart about it."

Chapter VII— The Plan

The plan came together over the following weeks, with contributions from every member of the family. Sofia, who had been studying American history for her college applications, contacted the Hudson Valley Historical Society and invited them to inspect the cellar and tunnels. Their response was enthusiastic: the DeLuca **cellar** was one of the most complete and well-**preservation** Prohibition-era distillery operations ever found in New York State. The hand-cut tunnel, the copper still, the bottles with their original labels — every **artifact** was intact, exactly as Enzo had left it.

Marco researched the bottles and discovered that aged Prohibition-era spirits were highly collectible. A professional **appraisal** valued the collection at over forty thousand dollars — enough to cover two-thirds of their mortgage debt. But selling the entire collection felt wrong. Frank decided to sell half and keep the rest as part of a permanent exhibition. Uncle Gianni, who ran a small construction company, offered to **renovation** the old barn and reinforce the tunnel at cost.

Sofia wrote a proposal for a heritage tourism programme: guided tours of the restored cellar and tunnel, tastings of modern craft spirits made using Enzo's original recipes (produced legally, this time, by a local distillery they partnered with), and a farm shop selling DeLuca produce alongside **heirloom** products inspired by the family's history. Dominic designed the tour route. Maria created the business plan. Nonna Rosa insisted on one condition: "The tour must tell the whole story. Not just the exciting parts. The hard work, the fear, the sacrifice. People should understand what it cost."

A journalist from the New York Times heard about the discovery through the Historical Society and published a feature article. The story went national. Within a week, Frank had received inquiries from a documentary production company, two book publishers, and a television network. The farm's social media accounts, managed by Sofia, gained twelve thousand followers in ten days. People were fascinated — not just by the Prohibition angle, but by the family story: three generations of DeLucas, working the same land, keeping secrets, keeping faith.

Chapter VIII— The Animals Know

Throughout all of this, the farm continued. That was the thing about farming — the animals did not care about your financial problems or your historical discoveries. The cows needed milking at five o'clock every morning. The goats needed feeding. The chickens needed their coop cleaned. Benito the donkey needed to express his opinions about everything, loudly and frequently. "The animals keep us honest," Maria said one morning, as she and Dominic walked the **pasture** checking on the cows. "When everything else is chaotic, the routine of caring for them keeps you grounded."

The goats, as always, caused the most entertainment. Nonna Rosa's six Nubian goats — named after Italian opera characters: Aida, Carmen, Tosca, Mimi, Violetta, and Figaro — had a talent for escaping any enclosure ever built. Marco had constructed increasingly elaborate fencing systems, each of which the goats defeated within forty-eight hours. Carmen, the ringleader, could open gate latches with her teeth. Figaro had learned to stand on Aida's back to reach the top of the fence. It was, Marco admitted, genuinely impressive engineering.

And then there was Garibaldi. After the cellar was opened, the rooster stopped crowing at 3:17 AM. He returned to his normal dawn schedule, as if his job was done. "He was trying to tell us," Marco insisted. "He could hear something — vibrations, maybe, or air currents from the tunnel. Animals are more sensitive than we think." Sofia rolled her eyes. "Or he had a temporary sleep disorder and it was a coincidence." "Nothing is a coincidence on this farm," Nonna Rosa said from her garden chair, and nobody argued with her because nobody ever argued with Nonna Rosa.

The farm cats — there were seven of them, all descended from a single orange tabby that Grandpa Sal had found in the barn in 1985 — had claimed the cellar as their new territory. They slept on the bottle racks, chased mice through the tunnel, and regarded the visiting historians with the serene indifference that only cats can achieve. The documentary crew, when they arrived to film, spent an unreasonable amount of time filming the cats. "People love farm cats," the director explained. "They are excellent content." Dominic, watching a cat named Pavarotti knock a priceless Prohibition-era bottle off a shelf, was less convinced.

Chapter IX— Seasons

The discovery of the cellar had brought attention and opportunity, but it had not changed the fundamental rhythm of the farm. Spring meant planting: tomatoes, courgettes, peppers, aubergines, beans, lettuce, herbs. Frank and Dominic worked the fields while Maria managed the seedlings in the greenhouse. Marco built a new **compost** system that turned kitchen

scraps and animal waste into rich, dark fertiliser. Nonna Rosa planted her own garden — basil, parsley, oregano, chilli peppers — and refused all offers of help. "I have been growing basil since before you were born," she told Marco. "I do not need an app."

Summer was the busiest time: the farm shop opened six days a week, selling fresh vegetables, eggs, goat cheese, cherry jam, and Maria's famous apple cider. Sofia ran the social media accounts, posting photographs of the farm, recipes using DeLuca produce, and updates on the barn **renovation**. Her posts were warm, funny, and authentic — a quality that attracted followers who were tired of polished, corporate food marketing.

Autumn was **harvest** time. The apple grove produced three tonnes of fruit. The cherry orchard, planted by Grandpa Sal fifty years ago, gave its best yield in a decade. The vegetable fields delivered crates of tomatoes, squash, and pumpkins that filled the barn with colour and fragrance. The entire family worked together, from dawn until dark, picking, sorting, washing, packing. Even Nonna Rosa, at seventy-eight, stood at the sorting table for hours, separating tomatoes by size with the precision of a surgeon.

Winter was for planning, repairing, and resting — though on a farm, "resting" mostly meant doing the same work in colder weather. Frank spent the dark evenings at the kitchen table with Maria, going over the accounts. The numbers were improving. The heritage tours had launched in October and were fully booked through December. The documentary rights had brought an advance payment. The sale of selected Prohibition bottles had raised enough to clear the mortgage arrears. For the first time in two years, the DeLuca farm was breaking even. "Breaking even is not winning," Maria said. "Breaking even is surviving," Frank replied. "On a farm, surviving is winning."

Chapter X— The Visitor

In November, a man in an expensive overcoat arrived at the farm. His name was Richard Hale, and he represented a property development company called Hudson Horizons. He had a proposal: Hudson Horizons wanted to buy the DeLuca farm — the entire forty acres — for 2.4 million dollars. They planned to build a luxury residential community called "Heritage Estates" on the site. "You would be very comfortable," Hale said, sipping the coffee Maria had politely offered. "You could buy a house in town, invest the rest, retire early." He smiled the way people smile when they think money solves everything.

Frank looked at Maria. Maria looked at Frank. "No," they said simultaneously. Hale blinked. "I should mention that this offer is significantly above market value. Properties of this type typically sell for—" "We are not selling," Frank said. Hale tried another approach. "The historical site — the cellar, the tunnels — they could be incorporated into the development as a heritage feature. A museum, perhaps, or a themed restaurant. Very tasteful." "No," Nonna Rosa said from the doorway, and her voice carried a weight that made the temperature in the room drop by several degrees. Hale left twenty minutes later, his coffee untouched and his proposal unsigned.

"Two point four million dollars," Sofia said that evening, as the family sat around the table. "That is a lot of money." "It is a lot of money," Frank agreed. "But it is not enough." "Not enough?" Dominic raised an eyebrow. "Not enough to replace what this farm is. Not

enough to replace the cherry trees Grandpa Sal planted. Not enough to replace the stone walls Enzo built. Not enough to replace Sunday dinners in this kitchen, or the sound of the geese in the morning, or the smell of tomatoes drying on the porch." He looked around the table. "Some things do not have a price because they are not for sale."

Marco, who had been unusually quiet, looked up from his phone. "I have been running the numbers," he said. "If the heritage tours continue growing at the current rate, and if we expand the farm shop to include online sales and deliveries, and if we add the new partnership with the distillery, and if Sofia's social media keeps building our brand..." He paused. "We will not be rich. But we will be okay. The farm will survive." Nonna Rosa nodded. "That is all Enzo ever wanted. That the farm survives. That the family stays." She reached across the table and squeezed Frank's hand. "We stay."

Chapter XI— A Year Later

A year after Marco found the iron ring in the barn floor, the DeLuca farm was a different place — and exactly the same place. The differences were visible: the old barn had been beautifully restored, its stone walls repointed and its roof replaced, with a new entrance leading down to the cellar museum. The tunnel had been reinforced and lit with soft lighting. Display cases held Enzo's journal, photographs, original bottles, and the copper still, polished to a warm glow. Guided tours ran three times a day, Thursday to Sunday, and were booked solid for months ahead.

The farm shop had expanded into a timber-framed building designed by Marco, with a cafe area where visitors could try Maria's cooking. Nonna Rosa's tomato sauce — made from her own recipe using farm-grown tomatoes — was now sold in glass jars with a label that featured Enzo's photograph. It was, by local consensus, the best tomato sauce in the Hudson Valley. Possibly in New York State. Definitely in the known universe, according to Nonna Rosa.

But the things that mattered most had not changed. The cows were milked at five o'clock every morning. The goats still escaped every fence Marco built. Benito the donkey still brayed at the geese and bit anyone who came too close. Garibaldi the rooster still crowed at dawn — and only at dawn — from his favourite fence post. The cherry trees still bloomed in April, the vegetable fields still needed weeding in June, and the **harvest** still brought the whole family together in autumn.

Dominic had taken over management of the **livestock** and the dairy operation, bringing in two new cows and experimenting with artisan cheese production. Sofia, who had been accepted to Columbia University to study journalism, continued to manage the farm's online presence from her dormitory — posting stories that blended family history with modern farming life. Marco had been offered an engineering apprenticeship but had decided to defer for a year to work on the farm full-time. "Buildings are just buildings," he told his parents. "But a farm is alive. I want to learn how to keep it alive before I learn anything else."

Chapter XII— Sunday Dinner

On a warm Sunday evening in September, one year to the week after the bank's letter had arrived, the DeLuca family gathered for dinner. The kitchen table — a huge oak piece that Grandpa Sal had built by hand in 1971 — was extended to its full length, with extra chairs borrowed from the neighbours. Frank and Maria sat at one end. Nonna Rosa sat at the other. Between them were Dominic, Sofia (home for the weekend), Marco, Uncle Gianni, Aunt Lucia, their children, and three neighbours who had been coming to Sunday dinner at the DeLuca farm for so long that nobody could remember when they started.

The food covered every surface. Nonna Rosa's tomato sauce over fresh pasta. Roasted vegetables from the farm. Goat cheese salad with cherry vinaigrette. Fresh bread from the bakery in town, still warm. And for dessert, cherry crostata made with fruit from the trees that Grandpa Sal had planted half a century ago. Everything on the table, except the bread, had come from the DeLuca farm or from within a five-mile radius. There was not a single ingredient that had travelled more than thirty minutes to reach this table.

Frank stood up to speak. He was not a man who enjoyed speeches — he preferred to let his work talk for him — but Maria had insisted. "A year ago," he said, "I thought we were going to lose this farm. I lay awake at night trying to figure out how to tell my mother that the land her father-in-law had bought with his bare hands was going to be taken by a bank." He paused. "Then a rooster started crowing at 3:17 in the morning, my youngest son found a door under a barn floor, and everything changed."

He looked around the table — at the faces he loved, at the food they had grown together, at the kitchen where four generations of DeLucas had cooked, argued, celebrated, and survived. "Enzo wrote in his letter that the treasure was the land. He was almost right. The treasure is not just the land. It is the people who work it. It is this table, these faces, this food. It is Sunday dinners and Monday mornings and every difficult, beautiful day in between." He raised his glass. "To Enzo. To the farm. To the DeLucas. And to Garibaldi, the smartest rooster in New York." Everyone laughed. Everyone drank. Outside, in the warm September evening, Garibaldi crowed once — just once, as if acknowledging the toast — and the goats immediately escaped their pen.

Chapter XIII— Epilogue

Five years after the discovery of the cellar, the DeLuca farm was thriving. The heritage tourism programme attracted fifteen thousand visitors a year. The farm shop had become a destination in its own right, featured in food magazines and travel guides. The distillery partnership produced a small-batch grappa using Enzo's original recipe — legally, this time — that won three regional awards and sold out every season. The documentary, "The Farm on Mulberry Road," had been shown on public television and had inspired a wave of interest in small-farm preservation across the Hudson Valley.

Dominic ran the dairy and the livestock. Sofia, now a journalist in the city, wrote a weekly column about food, family, and farming. Marco had finished his engineering degree and returned to the farm, where he was designing a new **irrigation** system that he claimed would reduce water usage by thirty percent. Maria managed the business, the accounts, and

the family with equal efficiency. Frank still woke at five every morning, milked the cows, walked the fields, and talked to the cherry trees — a habit he had picked up from his father and had no intention of stopping.

Nonna Rosa, at eighty-three, still ruled the kitchen. Her tomato sauce was now shipped to all fifty states. She had reluctantly agreed to let Marco film her making it, on the condition that "the camera does not see my bad side, and nobody asks me to explain measurements. I cook by feel. Always have. Always will." The video had six million views on the internet. Nonna Rosa was unimpressed. "Six million people watched me cook tomatoes. In my day, we just cooked the tomatoes. We did not need an audience."

Garibaldi the rooster died peacefully in his sleep in the third year, at the grand old age of nine. He was buried beneath the cherry trees, near the spot where Enzo had once held baby Sal and promised him that one day, all of this would be his. Marco built a small wooden marker that read: GARIBALDI — THE ROOSTER WHO FOUND THE TREASURE. Benito the donkey, now elderly and slightly less aggressive, stood at the grave for a long time. Nobody knew what he was thinking, but Nonna Rosa said he was paying his respects. Nobody argued. On the DeLuca farm, even the animals were family.

Key Vocabulary

Term	Definition
Harvest	The process of gathering crops from the fields when they are ready
Livestock	Farm animals kept for use or profit, such as cows, chickens, and goats
Orchard	An area of land where fruit trees are grown
Irrigation	A system of supplying water to crops through pipes or channels
Barn	A large farm building used for storing grain or housing animals
Pasture	Land covered with grass where animals graze
Compost	Decayed organic material used to improve soil quality
Heirloom	Something valuable passed down through generations of a family
Mortgage	A legal agreement to borrow money to buy property
Inheritance	Money, property, or possessions received from someone who has died
Trespass	To enter someone's land or property without permission
Deed	An official legal document proving ownership of land or property
Cellar	An underground room beneath a building, often used for storage
Prohibition	The period (1920-1933) when alcohol was illegal in the United States
Renovation	The process of repairing and improving a building
Census	An official count of the population and their characteristics
Artifact	An object made by humans, especially one of historical interest
Appraisal	A professional assessment of the value of something
Preservation	The act of keeping something in its original state
Legacy	Something meaningful left behind for future generations

Comprehension Quiz

1. Where is the DeLuca farm located?

- A) In the centre of New York City
- B) In the Hudson Valley, upstate New York
- C) In California's wine country
- D) On Long Island near the beach

2. What was the family's main financial problem?

- A) They had too many animals to feed
- B) They were behind on their mortgage payments and the bank threatened to take the farm
- C) They wanted to buy a bigger farm
- D) They owed money to their neighbours

3. What did Rooster Garibaldi do every night at exactly 3:17 AM?

- A) He escaped from his coop and ran away
- B) He crowed loudly while facing the old barn
- C) He attacked the other chickens
- D) He sat quietly on the fence

4. What did Frank find beneath the barn floor?

- A) A buried treasure chest full of gold
- B) A hidden cellar with Prohibition-era equipment and tunnels
- C) An underground river
- D) A collection of old farming tools

5. What had Great-Grandpa Enzo been doing during Prohibition?

- A) Growing illegal crops
- B) Running a secret distillery making grappa and hiding bottles in tunnels
- C) Hiding criminals from the police
- D) Mining for minerals under the farm

6. Why was the discovery historically significant?

- A) It proved that aliens had visited the farm
- B) It was a perfectly preserved Prohibition-era operation with tunnels and artifacts
- C) It contained ancient Native American pottery
- D) It held documents about the American Revolution

7. How did the family solve their financial problems?

- A) They sold the entire farm to a developer
- B) Through the heritage tourism programme, preserved artifact sales, and documentary rights
- C) Frank got a job in New York City
- D) They won the lottery

8. What role did Nonna Rosa play in the story?

- A) She wanted to sell the farm immediately
- B) She knew family secrets and helped connect the past to the present
- C) She was the villain who caused the problems
- D) She had no involvement in the story

9. What was the 'treasure' that Enzo's letter mentioned?

- A) A chest of gold coins
- B) The farm itself, the family, and the life they had built on the land
- C) A secret bank account
- D) A valuable painting hidden in the walls

10. What is the main message of the story?

- A) That farming is easy and always profitable
- B) That family, heritage, and working the land together are the real treasures in life
- C) That old buildings should always be demolished
- D) That secrets should never be shared

Answer Key

#	Ans	Question
1	B	Where is the DeLuca farm located?
2	B	What was the family's main financial problem?
3	B	What did Rooster Garibaldi do every night at exactly 3:17 AM?
4	B	What did Frank find beneath the barn floor?
5	B	What had Great-Grandpa Enzo been doing during Prohibition?
6	B	Why was the discovery historically significant?
7	B	How did the family solve their financial problems?
8	B	What role did Nonna Rosa play in the story?
9	B	What was the 'treasure' that Enzo's letter mentioned?
10	B	What is the main message of the story?

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