

A close-up photograph of a child's legs from the waist down, walking through a grassy field. The child is wearing a dark dress with colorful polka dots and white socks. They are wearing yellow Hunter boots on the left leg and pink Hunter boots on the right leg. The background is a soft-focus green field under bright, warm light.

**Leo, Ceci and the magical yes flowers.  
The fairy tale of Kindness.**

*Text by* Stefano Denti

*Photos by* Michela Magnani

**GentleBooklets**



## **#7. Leo, Ceci and the magical yes flowers.**

The fairy tale of Kindness.

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**GentleBooklets** It is a series of long-form articles written by different authors. The booklets, designed for a quick read, feature texts and images. We have kindly asked to the authors to comment on the term “kindness.” Authors and photographers have donated their work. The motivations behind the project are the same as those of Gentletude, the desire to spread awareness about the need for “kindness” in our society, a society too focused on personal success to remember the basics of everyday living and respect for the environment that hosts us. Our decision to present these ideas in a series of publications is due to the awareness that, in order to stimulate people to think about these issues, it is necessary to present some concrete examples. In this case, the examples will be provided in the texts written by the authors.



Hello little reader.

Welcome into a colorful world full of lovely smells, where you will find a number of adventures to share with your new friends:

The blond Leo Strongy and the beautiful Ceci Dancer. Leo Strongy is so so blond and runs at lightning speed. He eats tons of fruit and vegetables and his muscles are strong already!

Ceci Dancer has dark bob hair and dances and sings all day long. She is kind and funny, and nimble as a kitten.

They are brother and sister and they live in a big beautiful orange house!

There are two soft couches to hop on, a red carpet to play onto and a grey and yellow blackboard to write and draw.

In Leo and Ceci's house there is also a yard filled with colorful toys and sweet scented flowers.

But the two super kids don't always stay at home and play. Neither they spend all of their time idling in the garden.

They are two curious children and they love to hang around the fields and paths of their village, to meet people and invent new games.

And so, as you might have understood, the adventures of Leo and Ceci are innumerable – and I can guarantee that they are all fascinating and happy ending.

Are you curious and adventure loving too?

Let's read them together then!

A long time ago, in a late winter day, when it was already a little warm and the snow had started melting, Leo Strongy was wandering in the park when he saw a beautiful merry-go-round painted in red and yellow. The grass was still a little wet, but Leo Strongy was wearing his super boots and he was looking forward to seeing from close that gorgeous merry-go-round. It was one of those amazing merry-go-rounds with many ladders to climb and – on the very top – a tower looking like that of an enchanted castle.

Leo Strongy loves castles, he loves to climb and he loves colors. Thus, this was the perfect carousel for him.

“I want to climb on it too!” – he said, running happily towards his new destination.

But when he came closer to the yellow little ladder, something unexpected happened.

“No you can't!” – a naughty voice stopped him – “This carousel is mine!”

An older boy was sitting on top of the ladder of the merry-go-round, and he stopped everybody else from climbing onto it.

He was wearing a coal black jacket and one of those weird caps that cover your face almost entirely. Other children were trying to climb on the carousel too,



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but the arrogant boy stretched his stinking feet and blocked the way to everybody.

And he stopped before nothing!

Can you imagine? A little blond boy even burst into tears, but Rascal Ray – for this was his name – didn't care a bit, laughed in his face and started making fun of him: how rude!

A blue-eyed girl got so angry that after a while told him in a fury:

“Rascal Ray, you are a moron!”

But even insults wouldn't move him from up there. Instead, Ray answered with much more vulgar offenses that for sure I will not report here!

Leo Strongy, then, got really angry.

He usually was so good and so kind... but that naughty boy made him hit the roof!

And so, he did something one should never do: he grabbed the ladder, gritted his teeth like an angry lion and started shaking the whole carousel.

Badabing badaboom bang and then again bang badabing badaboom... the carousel wobbled and tilted from one side to the other.

Leo Strongy shook it so hard that, for a moment, it seemed that it was about to crash to the ground.

And in fact the other children moved a little further.

But Rascal Ray didn't jump off the carousel.

He remained on top of the ladder and, for sure,

he got a little scared. But in the end he remained where he was and didn't climb down the stairs.

And after a while Leo Strongy was tired of making such efforts for nothing.

"This carousel is mine! Nobody can come on it!" – Rascal Ray said, amused.

In that very moment a beautiful little girl arrived, with pink hair bobbles and two cute braids.

She danced around and vaulted joyfully right towards the yellow and red merry-go-round.

With a last leap she arrived on the first step of the yellow ladder and from there she handed over a beautiful white flower to the bad-mannered boy.

It was Ceci Dancer, who asked him sweetly:

"Will you let us come up too, please?"

The naughty boy, on top of the stairway, was so delighted that he became beet-red and almost fell to the ground.

The other kids laughed, amused: now he was the one being made fun of, and he didn't like at all this turn of events.

With a big leap, thus, he came down the carousel with a threatening air, angry eyes and his fists clenched in anger.

But, a moment later, he looked around and understood two things.

The first is that being made fun of does not feel

good.

The second is that the other children were not actually making fun of him, but were just laughing because they were amused.

Rascal Ray finally relaxed and, after a moment of embarrassment, burst out laughing. He laughed together with them.

So went the story and, in turns, everybody went on the gorgeous red and yellow merry-go-round.

And Rascal Ray from that day on was always kind to everybody.

It was a fresh spring morning and Ceci Dancer was dancing with her little friends in the schoolyard.

Soon there would be the school recital and they should dance right at the end of the show.

They were all very happy and were doing their best: it needed to be a perfect ballet!

But Ceci Dancer didn't manage to perform the final pirouette. The one which spun and spun and spun with a beautiful curtsy at the end.

Sarah Songster and she just couldn't do it.

"It's so easy!" – said Laura Whodances – "How come you cannot do it?"

Ceci Dancer tried again, but that pirouette really didn't want to come out good.

Laura Whodances laughed with the other girls.

Ceci stumbled and they laughed.

And the more Ceci stumbled and Sarah fell, the more they showed all their talent with repeated twirls, gloating haughtily.

“Don’t laugh!” – sobbed Ceci.

“Stop it!” – cried Sarah.

But it was useless.

If possible, they laughed even louder. In that minute Leo Strongy arrived from the path, where he was riding his brand new red bike.

He saw what was happening and remembered Ceci’s help with the merry-go-round: he decided that this time he would be the one to help her.

“I’ll take care of this!” – he said, determined, and parked his bike.

He came closer to the group and started clapping his little hands very loudly.

He clapped a lot and a lot, till he had everybody’s attention.

Then, he said kindly to Laura Whodances:

“Laura, I must sincerely congratulate you!”

Laura gloated and smiled, doing one more pirouette.

“Since you are so good” – continued Leo giving her a little white flower – “Why don’t you show Ceci and

Sarah how to perform a good pirouette?”

Laura Whodances felt important. She felt that she had a task to carry out.

“This way you will perform a perfect ballet!” – Leo incited them.

Laura smiled to the charming boy and offered her hand to Ceci and Sarah.

“Come my friends!” – she said, smiling – “I will teach you the pirouette!”

And so Laura and her friends taught Ceci and Sarah to perform the magnificent final pirouette. And oh, what laughter when even Laura fell right in the middle of her twirls!

When they had finally learnt it, they performed a gorgeous ballet for Leo Strongy. A perfect ballet!

And in the school recital, such a great ballet had never been seen before!

In a sunny afternoon, at the beginning of the summer – when it’s hot, but not too hot – Jade Painter was flying her new, blue and orange kite.

It was so big and shiny, and it flew so high in the blue sky, that Callum Coal could see it from his own house.

It was so beautiful that Callum Coal ran out right away.

“I want to play with it too!” – he said, running towards Jade’s yard.

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The kite was twirling in the wind and Jade was laughing and having a lot of fun, when suddenly somebody blocked her, scaring her a little as well. It was Callum Coal, who pulled the spool out of her hands.

“Hey, what are you doing?” – Jade asked, angrily.

“Now I play!” – Callum said arrogantly.

“No it’s mine!” – retorted Jade, even angrier.

“No it’s mine!” – echoed Callum, even more arrogant.

The two kids started fighting, pulling the poor kite from one side to another.

And pull this way, haul that way, and shout a little, and cry some more... somebody finally heard this unpleasant noise.

It was Leo and Ceci, who looked over the hedge of their large garden to see what was happening. As they saw the scene, they opened the nice wooden gate and ran into the yard.

“Wait, don’t pull!” – Leo said to Jade.

“Yes, but the kite is mine...” – she replied.

“I know, but this way you are not going to solve anything” – smiled Leo, handing her a little white flower. Jade smiled back and let the kite go, and Callum Coal fell on the ground with a loud thud. “OUCH!” – he grumbled, slowly getting back on his feet.

The children laughed of his harmless stumble, and



Callum Coal got really angry!

Soon he noticed that the kite was in his hands and laughed with satisfaction.

“HA HA HA, now it’s only mine!” – he shouted, haughtily.

“No, the kite is hers” – Ceci replied, handing him a little white flower – “But if you want we can play all together!”

Callum Coal puckered his lips up and pouted for a while, meditating on the situation.

“It’s more fun playing all together than alone!” – Leo told him.

“And it’s surely more fun playing all together than fighting!” – Ceci added.

At this point, Callum Coal took Ceci’s little white flower and accepted the suggestion, apologizing to Jade.

Jade accepted his apologies with a big smile and for the whole afternoon the four children ran after the blue and orange kite, having a lot of fun all together.

And Callum Coal became a very good boy, who, from that day on, learnt to share his toys with all his friends.

At the end of the summer, when school had already started, Leo Strongy and Ceci Dancer met in the

schoolyard to eat their snacks together and saw a big strong boy walking around with empty hands. It was Nolan Notsoquiet, and he was very hungry. He was very hungry and had nothing to eat. He had forgotten his snack at home, gee!

Nolan Notsoquiet was wandering in the schoolyard with his belly mumbling... And walk around here, run there, he finally saw Bella Beauty, sitting in a corner and enjoying a nice big slice of apricot jam cake!

Delicious!

He approached arrogantly and threatened her, mean:

“I’m hungry! Give me your cake!” – he growled.

“No!” – Bella replied, angrily.

Nolan Notsoquiet started rubbing his hands, then clutched his fists and threatened her again:

“I want that cake and I want it now!”

Bella Beauty burst into tears and Nolan made fun of her.

Leo and Ceci ran to help her.

“What are you doing Nolan?” – Leo scolded him.

“Look how she is crying!” – Nolan laughed.

“Don’t be arrogant!” – told him Ceci, very seriously – “That’s not how you behave!”

“How would you feel if we started making fun of you because you’ve forgotten your snack at home?”

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– Leo asked.

Nolan thought about it for a while... Actually, he wouldn't be so happy.

“But I'm hungry!” – he justified himself sadly.

“You just need to ask gently!” – explained Ceci, handing him a little white and sweet scented flower.

Nolan took it and then asked Bella, stuttering:

“May I have some of your cake, please?”

“Sure!” – smiled Bella, giving him a big portion of it.

And so the four children finished their snacks all together, laughing and joking until they went back to their classrooms.

And the next day Nolan Notsoquiet brought Bella some fine apple cake! Delicious!

On an autumn morning, when it's still warm but the leaves are already turning yellow, Leo Strongy and Ceci Dancer were taking a walk and enjoying their delicious ice-creams.

Leo had taken Cream and Strawberries. Ceci Cream and Chocolate. YUM! How tasty!

There was also another boy, who had bought a giant ice-cream cone with a thousand flavors.

His name was Benjamin but, instead of enjoying his ice-cream, he was crying. Why was he crying? Benjamin was surrounded by some older boys.

The bigger of them, Kyle Kayo, had stolen his ice-cream and laughed naughtily.

Little Benjamin was alone against them all, and couldn't get free from those terrible bullies!

One pushed him around, another pulled his jacket...

"Stop it!" – he cried – "Let me go!"

But the more scared he got, the more they enjoyed making fun of him.

Leo Strongy at that point stepped up, serious.

"Give him back his ice-cream and apologize!" – he intimidated Kyle Kayo, showing his muscles.

Kyle turned, glanced at him surly and was about to run towards him, frightful and angry.

But Ceci Dancer, in the meanwhile, had tied Kyle's shoelaces and he fell to the ground so heavily that a bunch of dead leaves flew away.

And when he tried to get up, he slipped on the ice-cream which had fallen on the sidewalk, and fell again.

His own friends couldn't keep it. The situation was far too comical, and they all burst out laughing, making fun of him.

Kyle Kayo got so flared up that you could see smoke venting from his ears... And the angrier he got, the more everybody else laughed out loud, included little Benjamin.

"You will pay for this! I'll make sure of that!" – he shouted angrily.

But what could he do?

His friends were now laughing of him... He was alone against everybody, just like little Benjamin a few minutes earlier.

Too many children were around him. He wished he could jostle them all, bully and angry as he was...

But they were too many!

“Do you understand what it feels like to be made fun of, now?” – Leo Strongy finally asked, helping him to get up.

“It’s not funny to be a bully!” – Ceci Dancer scolded him, while handing him a little white flower – “Especially if it’s many against one!”

“I am so sorry Benjamin!” finally said Kyle Kayo, cleaning up his clothes from the sticky mixture of ice-cream and dead leaves – “I have understood how unpleasant it is to be roughed up and made fun of!”

Little Benjamin smiled and proposed:

“Why don’t we discuss this before a big ice-cream cone?”

And so everybody went to the ice-cream shop and enjoyed a huge cone with mixed flavors, and can you believe it? Benjamin’s cone was offered precisely by Kyle Kayo!

On an early winter afternoon, when the air was rather cold and a few solitary snowflakes were pi-

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oneering towards the green fields, some children rang Leo and Ceci's doorbell.

There were Sarah Songster, Jade Painter, Bella beauty and little Benjamin.

There were also many other children, and even Rascal Ray, Laura Whodances, Callum Coal, Nolan Notsoquiet, and Kyle Kayo.

"Hi Ceci and Leo!" – they said all together – "We've come to ask whether you can give us some Yes Flowers from your garden, before winter comes!"

"What are the Yes Flowers?" – Ceci and Leo asked.

"Those little white flowers that you give out and make everybody listen to you!" – Callum Coal said.

"That's how we call them" – Rascal Ray continued – the Magical Yes Flowers!"

Ceci and Leo understood what they were talking about and explained them that the seeds of those flowers, which looked like daisies, had been given to them by the Old Wise Man of the Enchanted Hill, and that if they wanted to plant those seeds, they should go and ask him personally.

The Enchanted Hill was a tiny hill right behind Leo and Ceci's beautiful orange house. The two siblings used to go there often and everything was very familiar to them.

"We will show you the way!" – Leo Strongy proposed, smiling – "Follow me!"



And so the group of children took the green path which went deep into the woods, winding among the thick old trees until it came to a bright green clearing and continued up on a hill full of dazzling colored flowers.

“There it is! The house of the Old Wise Man!” – Ceci said, pointing with her finger at a small wooden house – “There you can find the Magical Yes Flowers!” They went across a small wooden gate, painted in green. It was half open already and it squeaked softly when Ceci opened it completely.

After a few steps, they faced a wonderful door painted in all the colors of the rainbow and Leo Strongy knocked loudly, to make sure he would be heard by the old man.

They waited some minutes, but nothing happened. BOOM! BOOM! He knocked the loudest he could. At that point, they heard somebody grumbling and some footsteps coming closer to the door.

“Hey, hey, calm down Leo!” – said a voice on the other side of the rainbow – “This way you are going to knock my door down!” The door creaked and squeaked, and finally opened slowly.

“I’ve heard somebody knocking!” – smiled the Old Wise Man – “I’m not deaf at all... It’s only my legs, which by these days go slower than any snail!”

Then he burst out laughing happily, followed by all

the children... Even those who, in the first place, were a little scared of that tall, white-bearded man. Hadn't it been for his clothes, which were blue instead of red, he could be Santa Claus, with his white beard and round belly!

But somebody still had some doubts.

"Are you sure that we can trust him?" – asked Sarah Songster – "They said that one should never talk to strangers!"

"But he is no stranger!" – explained Leo Strongy and Ceci Dancer with one voice – "He is our grandpa!"

Got it? He was their grandpa! Everybody then laughed with relief and they all went into the house to have a snack.

Then they asked the old man whether he could give each of them a handful of the seeds of the Magical Yes Flowers, and the old man's reaction was weird indeed.

Leo and Ceci's grandpa, in fact, burst out laughing. A long, amused laughter which seemed never-ending. The children were very surprised, Leo and Ceci included, and looked forward to an explanation.

After some minutes of laughter and loud oinks – so loud that the little guests couldn't help but laugh along – the old man finally explained:

"There are no Magical Yes Flowers!" – he said – "All

that I've given you are some very common daisies!"

The kids couldn't believe him... It was impossible!

"But grandpa, when I hand somebody one of those little white flowers, people calm down and listen to me!" – Ceci Dancer said – "They must be magical!"

Her grandfather smiled and took a small posy of daisies, then it showed it to everybody.

"Can you see?" – he said – "These are nothing but daisies!"

"I don't believe you!" – Leo strongly argued – "Their power is far too big for some very simple daisies!"

The Old Wise Man then showed them the little plastic bag containing the seeds, which he had bought in the supermarket.

"See?" – he told Leo, shaking it to make the last few seeds come out – "They are so little magical that I've bought them in the supermarket!"

"But then... Where does all the magic come from?" – asked Laura Whodances, speaking everybody's mind.

"Yes" – Ceci added – "How could we convince all those arrogant kids to listen to us?"

"You had told us that by giving these flowers everybody would listen to us – and so it was!" – Leo explained.

"No, my darling!" – his grandpa said – "I have told you to be kind and polite, and maybe to give a flow-

er as well...”

The old man understood that the children needed an explanation, and so told them that the act of giving a flower was only an extra, to go along with kind and polite words.

That’s because kindness and politeness help us to grow up, to feel good and it’s always better to unwind the problems and find a solution than to fight, and shout, and yell like crazy monkeys.

“So... The flowers aren’t magical at all!” – acknowledged the children, a little disappointed.

“No, there is no magic in the flowers” – the Old Wise Man confirmed – “But there is an even bigger magic!”

“Even bigger?” – everybody was dazzled.

“Yes” – the old man smiled – “It’s an even bigger power and it lies within you all!”

The children gloated and asked what it was.

“You all are masters of it and you all can use it” – the old man concluded – “It’s the magic of KINDNESS!”



## **AUTHOR**

### **Stefano Denti, writer**

Stefano Denti was born in Reggio Emilia in 1973.

Between 2000 and 2011 he had 6 publications made by Editrice Montedit and in 2012 he made his debut at national level by publishing the humorous essay “Il Plurale di Cacao - Corso intensivo di maleducazione e cattive maniere” with Aliberti (deAgostini group). This essay became a sort of cult and allowed him to go on tour in Italy to make presentations, even in radio and television programs. In March 2013 The Cherry Editions published his fantasy novel “Dominus Inferi”, inspired to J.R.R. Tolkien’s stories but set in the Matilde di Canossa castles. In July 2013 Imprimum (RCS group) published his last essay “Galateo della Crisi”, the “unofficial” sequel of “Il Plurale di Cacao”.

All his publications are dedicated to his wife Lorena and to his son Leonardo.

## PHOTOGRAPHER

### **Michela Magnani**

Michela was born in 1976 in a small village next to Pavia. When she was 19, after graduating from high school in foreign languages, she moved to Milan where she attended the University for Interpreters and Translators. Then she graduated in foreign literature at the IULM University and she thought she had found her way. She received her first SLR camera in 2008. When she had it in her hands, she was sure to have found her true way. No matter how long it will take, and how much effort: the decision to become a photographer was taken. She studied every book about photography, every tutorial found on the internet and american photography forums. In 2010 her professional brand, Michela Magnani Photography, officialy born. In 2011, she became a partner of the National Association of Professional Photographers - Tau Visual. In 2012, she was rapporteur at a IED Conference in collaboration with the National Association of Professional Photographers and she received four prestigious awards in the category Portrait in FIOF contest.

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## **GENTLETUDE**

Gentletude is a neologism composed of the words “gentilezza”(gentleness/kindness) and “attitudine” (attitude). It pursues the aims for a better world without violence, arrogance and rudeness. A world where caring and paying attention to others, common sense and balanced competitiveness are the most important things. The production provided by the association was completely free, based on the Commons Creative Criteria. Gentletude in Italy is a non-profit organization (NPO), and in Switzerland is a non-profit association.

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the flowers.”

“But there is an even  
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“Yes, it’s an even bigger power  
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“You all are masters of it and  
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It’s the magic of  
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