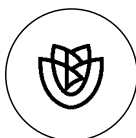
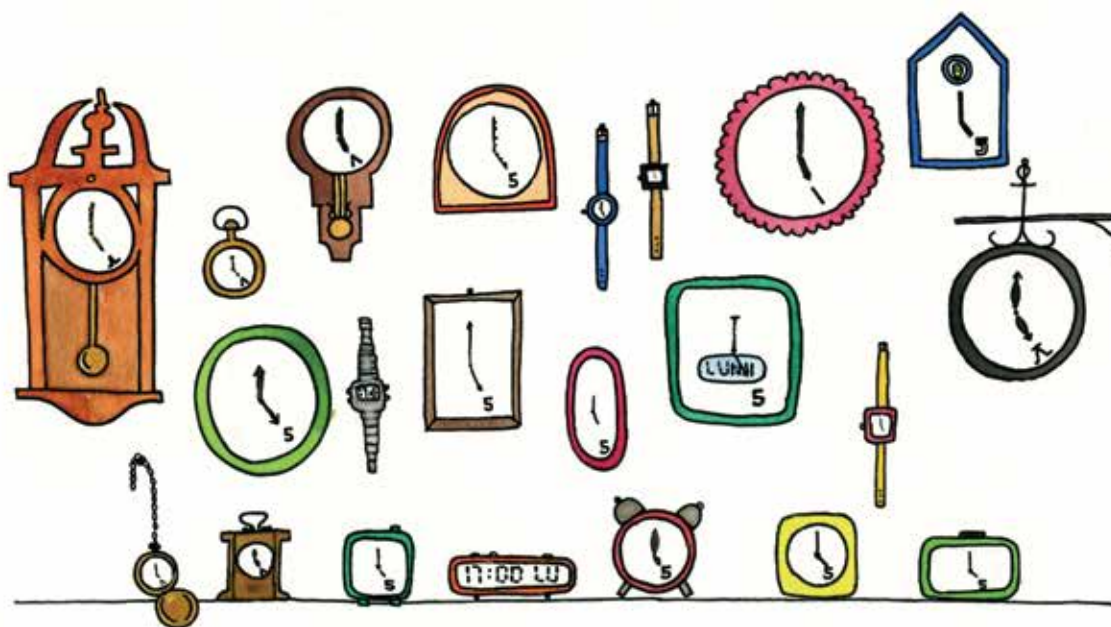


Luca Doninelli

tre casi
per l'investigatore
Wickson
Alieni

illustrazioni di Nicole Donaldson



BOMPIANI



LUCA DONINELLI
THE DETECTIVE WICKSON ALIENI

Illustration by Nicole Donaldson

translated from the Italian
by Paolo Maria Bonora

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Characters



Wickson
Allieni



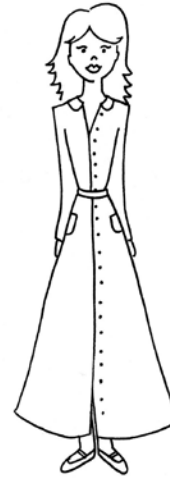
Frank
Fellikke



Milton
Bobbitt



Roger
T.L.L.



Anjelica
Russell



Lady
Diamantina



Lin
Plin Plo



Geltrudetto
Drudrén



Mrs.
Gialtruda

Introduction:
who is Wickson Alieni?

Wickson Alieni is a really one-of-a-kind type. That is why before telling you some of his adventures I would introduce him to you.

So.

What's so peculiar about Wickson Alieni?

Now I'll tell you, but listen very carefully to my answer.

Beware. The answer is:

THERE'S NOTHING PECULIAR ABOUT WICK-
SON ALIENI

Nothing. Anything. No thing.

Some of you may say: "So? What's so strange? There's nothing particular about me, too."

And here's where you're wrong: there is something particular about all of us, indeed, if only a tiny thing. It's not possible there's nothing peculiar about anybody.

One is a math genius.

One plays with trading cards like noone else.

One has a mole close to his or her belly-button.

One always smears himself with tomato sauce.

One loves watching cars passing by.

One looks like somebody else or does not look like anybody else: in any case there's something peculiar. What's peculiar about Tom is that he looks like his uncle, what's particular about Dick is that he doesn't look like anybody.

There's people who can't do almost anything: that's something particular, though.

There's nothing particular about Wickson Alieni only. Nothing, so nothing that you can't think of a nothing more nothing than that.

He's ordinary, so ordinary he is invisible.

Yes, my friends: Wickson Alieni is invisible. Not entirely invisible: but he is so ordinary nobody never sees him. Never, ever sees him. And since he works as a detective for a living, he solves a lot of difficult cases just because nobody detects him. While other people look

somewhere else he solves cases. He is a detective who cannot be detected. Weird, huh?

The London police chief, Mr. Frank Fellikke, is very happy to have someone like Wickson Alieni as an ally, someone who identifies all the criminals. This way Frank Fellikker never has to work!

And why does he never have to work?

Because he must go to the barber's.

And why must he go to the barber's?

Because he has a problem with his hair.

Well, to be more specific, chief Frank Fellikker has just one hair, and the hair has a name, too: Filippo. Chief Fellikke spends his day, all the days in a week, all the weeks in a month and all the months in a year at this barber's who has been cutting brushing washing dyeing his one hair for all his life, has never seen any other hair in his life and maybe won't ever see any other hair in his life. Or maybe he will. Who knows?

When chief Fellikke enters the barber's shop in the morning, he greets him like this:

"G'day, chief. G'day, Filippo."

We should say that Filippo the hair has a temper. Sometimes, when he gets offended, he goes away, and the chief, now completely bold, can't but plead him on his knees: "*Pleas, Filippuccio dear, come back to me,*

come back to your daddy!” And Filippo goes back, of course, or rather he crops up on the chief’s head, but not right away. He wants to have fun first and what amuses him more than anything is to see chief Felliker cry.

In short, Wickson Alieni is the most ordinary man in a world where there’s nothing ordinary. And thanks to his exceptional ordinary nature he defeats criminals.

Speaking of which: who are these criminals?

There are plenty of criminals, but two are their bosses:

- Milton Bobbitt, the mastermind, the pear-headed man.

- Roger T.L.L., the man with 364 teeth, one less than the days in a year (he’s always angry about that).

Milton and Roger steal anything and they steal it from English men and women. They therefore are England’s enemies, while Wickson Alieni is an England friend.

When Milton and Roger decide they will steal something, before getting to action they wonder: “Is the thing we’d like to steal English enough?”

Once, for example, they wanted to steal chocolate, but then they realized: “Chocolate is not English. It’s Swiss.”

So they didn’t steal it.

You may wonder: why do they act like that?

Answer is: dunno!

Another thing that’s peculiar of Wickson Alieni is that he always keeps his right. This is another reason why you can never see him: he’s always on your right. You can watch to your right as much as you like but he will be on your right even more. Righter than right. This is a mystery and there’s nothing we can do about it.

Another mystery is the wardrobe mystery. In this book I won’t tell about it but I want to talk about it now anyway. Wickson Alieni never hides in wardrobes that are there, but in those that are not. If you enter a room and in that room (say: bathroom) there’s not a wardrobe, you can be sure Wickson Alieni is in there. Not only: if in a room there’s a wardrobe, you shouldn’t say Wickson Alieni is not there. No, you should open it and peek inside: if inside the wardrobe there’s another wardrobe, then Wickson Alieni is not there; but if inside the wardrobe there is no other wardrobe, then in the wardrobe that’s not there there is Wickson Alieni.

Understood?

No?

Well, me neither.

There are other mysteries, too, but I don't want to reveal anything in advance. One could say this book is made up only with inexplicable mysteries, so many are piling up on each other.

Before starting telling stories, I want to remind you that:

- Wickson Alieni has a beautiful girlfriend, even if she has never seen him. She's English and her name is Anjelica Russell. Wickson had another girlfriend before her, a beautiful one too, a Brazilian girl name Florizilda Balança França. I tell you that just because I love writing her name, as we will never talk about her.

- The only creatures in the world who are able to see Wickson Alieni are Lin Plin Plo and Gertrudetto Drudrén. But there's a problem: Lin Plin Plo is Chinese and does not want to ever move from China because he must attend to his garden and for other two reasons I won't tell you know because I don't feel like doing it now; Gertrudetto Drudrén, on the other hand, is not a human being at all, he is a mouse (well, a filthy sewer rat). He is very smart and even if he's filthy he believes he is clean in fact: he always baths in puddles.

What else is there to say?

Oh, yes.

As you will see, all Wickson Alieni's adventures start and end in the same way. The reason is quite simple: you are about to read English stories and English people are creatures of habit.

And then there's another reason, too mysterious for me to tell you.

So mysterious even I do not know it.

THE CLOUDS THEFT

At night, in november, amidst the fog, along a poorly lit suburban road in London, you can hear some steps – tock tock tock – but there’s nobody to be seen.

Who’s there?

WICKSON ALIENI!

The evil plan of Milton Bobbitt

In a filthy tavern, in the billiard room, a meeting of the most dangerous criminals in London, headed by terrible Milton Bobbitt and notorious Roger T.L.L., the world’s most toothed man, was underway.

“R!r!r!r!” Roger T.L.L. laughed. “That dumb Wickson Alieni will never find out this place, so he can’t even imagine what a plan we planned!”

“That’s incorrect, Roger,” corrected Milton Bobbitt, who considered himself the absolute head thanks to his super pear head. “It’ me who planned it.”

“Alright, Milton,” said Roger. “You’re right. But I’m head too, just a little bit.”

“Why so?”

“Well, because it’s me who said: *Allright*. So it’s me who agreed upon it, so I’m a bit of a head.”

“Of course,” said Milton. “From now on you will have the right to say I’m right. Happy?”

“R!r!r!r!” said Roger, very happy.

“Now, guys,” Milton continued, “let’s recap.”

But right when they were about to recap the door opened and in came Wickson Alieni.

“The door!” cried one of the criminals. “There are so many drafts here!”

Wickson sat in the first row but as nobody ever detects Wickson Alieni, nobody detected him then, too. He was there, in front of everybody, sprawled on his chair, and nobody detected him. He even burped.

“Who’s that pig?” Milton cried.

“It’s me,” Wickson said.

“Ah, it’s you, ok,” said Milton, without even glancing at him.

“Ah, if Wickson could know...! R!r!r!r!” Roger L.T.T. laughed again.

“But he doesn’t know!” Milton Babbitt said.

Wickson was there, calm and happy, not a metre from them. But they didn’t detect him and therefore they didn’t see him.

“We will steal clouds from London,” Milton Bobbitt said, his eyes sparkling with joy. “We will steal them all. London will be cloudless.”

Wickson asked: “Why do you want to steal all the London clouds?”

“What a bore!” Milton said. “I keep telling you. With no clouds there’s no rain and with no rain there are no umbrellas. Right?”

“Right!” they all chanted.

“So what?” asked Wickson.

“So, my dear fool, English people won’t know what to talk about, as they, as everybody knows, talk about the weather only. And they do not go out without their umbrellas. Then we’ll see wonderful things. So,” he roared, “did you get what you have to do? You, Thinny, what d’you have to do?”

“Get by plane X in spot Y,” Thinny answered.

“Good. And what about you, Fatty?”

“Load the big machine up the plane,” Fatty said.

“What’s the big machine?” asked Wickson gently.

“Well, fool, you really don’t remember a thing,” Milton said, without looking at him. “It’s the Stealing Clouds Machine professor Corbus invented.”

“Ok,” Wickson Alieni said. Then he got up and out, nobody watching him.

“The door!” cried the two criminals. “There’s a terrible draft and nobody ever shuts it!”

**One phone only,
one chief only, one hair only**

The next morning, Wickson Alieni phoned chief Frank Fellikke. As usual, Fellikke was at the barber's to have his only hair, named Filippo, brushed.

“Be good, Filippo,” the barber was saying, “uncle is going to brush you...”

You have to understand this poor barber: all his life he had had just one customer (chief Fellikke) who had just one hair. Therefore he had brushed, cut, dyed, waxed just that one hair. In the end he had called it Filippo and believed he was its uncle. Apart from that, I think he was a good barber.

RIIIIIING! the telephone said.

You must know not every phone rings when it's Wickson Alieni calling. And do you know why? Because just phones on the right can ring – but not all those on the right: no, just those *very, very on the right indeed*. Now, it happens the barber had one of those phones.

“It’s for you, chief,” the barber said.

“Who bothers me while I’m primping?” he said.

“It’s me, you idiot,” Wickson Alieni said.

“I hope you have good news,” said chief Fellikke, who was an optimist (that’s why he stayed at the barber’s and didn’t go to work).

“Good news at all!” Wickson said. “Milton’s going to accomplish the theft of the century!”

“The national bank?”

“No.”

“The crown jewels?”

“Not even close.”

“St.Paul’s cathedral?”

“That’s nothing.”

“So what?”

“Clouds.”

“Whaaaaaat?! Do you mean wonderful London clouds? Legendary London smoke? Our beloved smog? Our amazing fog? Our cherished mist? Oh, no...”

And he started to cry.

But it lasted just a few seconds.

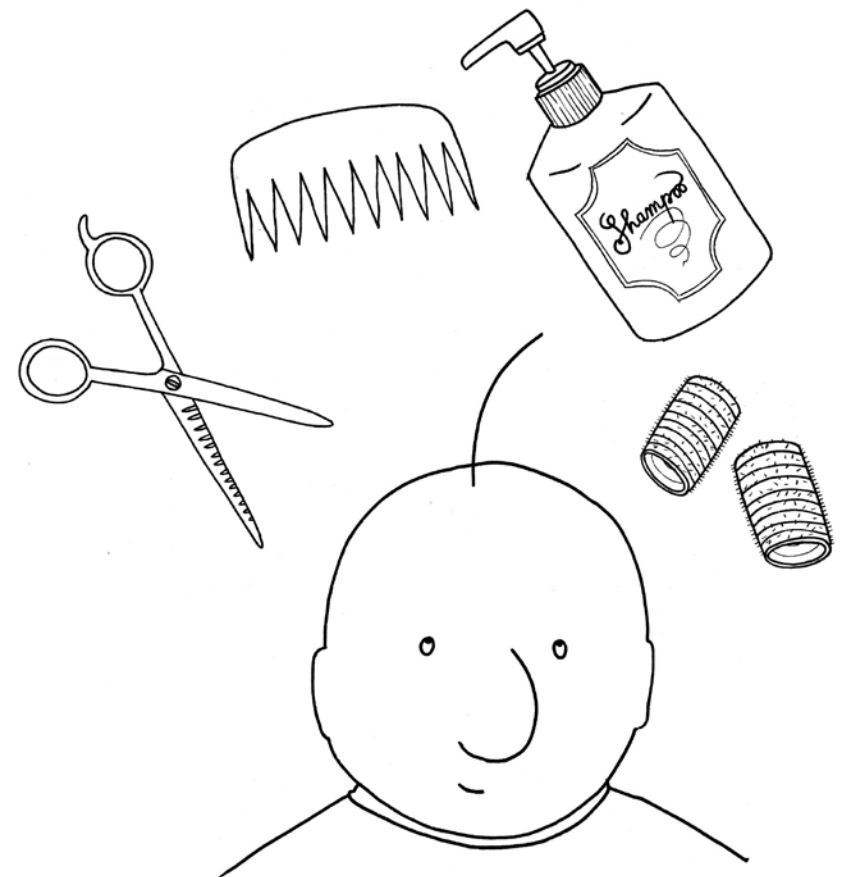
“Wickson!” the chief roared.

“What?”

“I want you to follow the case.”

“Alright,” Wickson said, and hang up.

As usual, chief Fellikke had succeeded in dumping all the dirty job on Wickson while he kept staying at the barber’s.



Luca Doninelli

The Detective Wickson Alieni

TRE CASI PER L'ISPETTORE WICKSON ALIENI

The investigations of a detective so banal as to be invisible. But...

Wickson Alieni is an ordinary detective, so ordinary that nobody sees him. This could look like a flaw, but is his greatest power: without being noticed he can solve a lot of cases, especially those involving wicked Milton Bobbitt, the pear-headed man, and Roger T.L.L., the man with 364 teeth, one for each day of the year (almost). Chief inspector Frank Fellikke, with his one and only hair, named Filippo, counts on his cunning. Who stole the clouds? the herrings? five p.m.? We don't know yet, but Wickson will find out. Maybe.

Luca Doninelli was born in 1956. After spending years in Desenzano on Lake Garda, he now lives in Milan. He published *Fa' che questa strada non finisca mai* (2014) and *Le cose semplici* (2015; Selezione Campiello Prize 2016) for Bompiani.



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