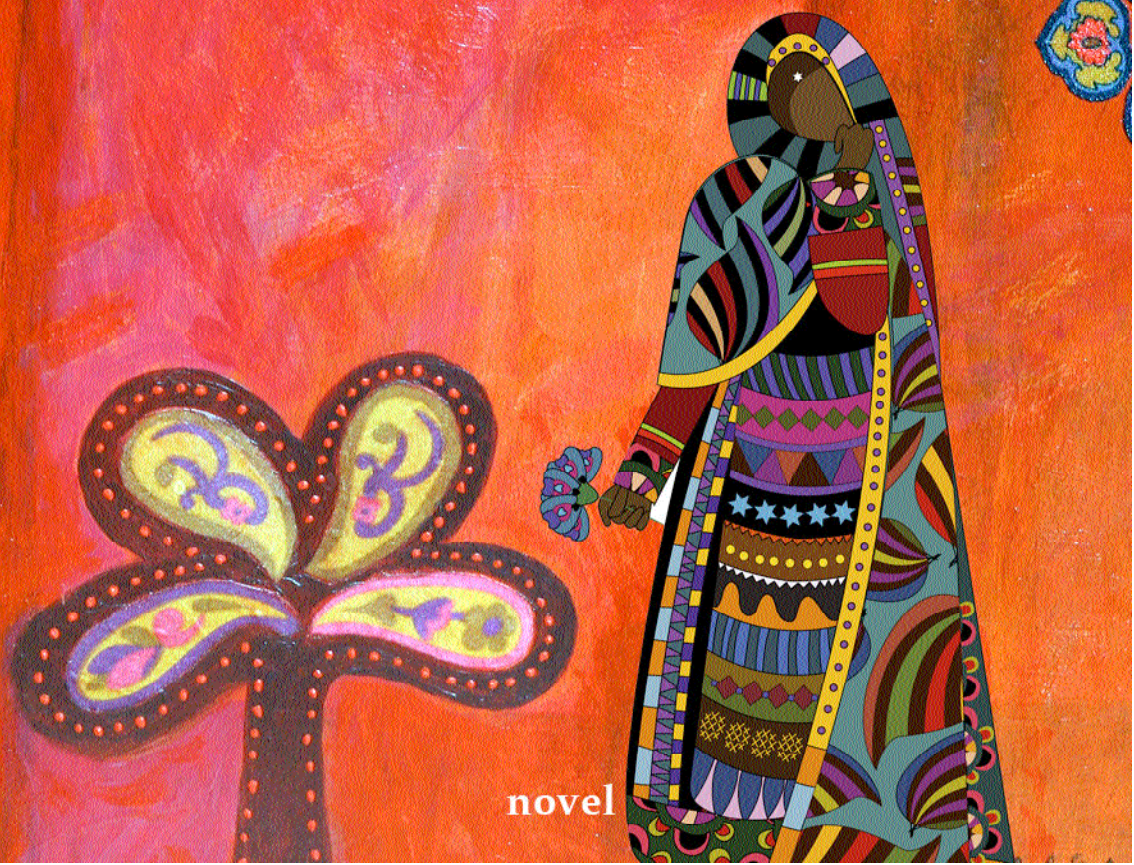


THE NUN WHO PAWNED HER FERRARI

Rowland Rose



novel

The Nun Who Pawned Her Ferrari
(a spiritual tale)

Rowland Rose

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CHAPTER 1

The revelation

Irma Wallace was a middle-aged woman. Though she had never been pretty, she had always had a special gleam in her eyes, in her expression, which made her particularly attractive. However, little by little, after years of sacrifice and hard work, that gleam had vanished.

Her number was two. She was born on February second. She had two lovers in her life. One, when she was young and full of hope. Another, the swine who got her pregnant before her twentieth birthday and whom she married, only to see him disappear after a few months, leaving her with two children: the twins Andy and Julian.

Julian was the second-born, but right from the start it was obvious that he would be the alpha child. He screamed constantly, demanding more insistently than Andy, who was perhaps stunned into silence by the ruckus his brother raised, though calmed by his mother's presence and, obviously, the sustenance she provided. From the beginning Julian meant to displace all rivals; in this case, his own brother.

Irma had to quit college and get a job to feed her sons. The only job she could find was cleaning offices. She worked in two office buildings. Eight hours in each. Sixteen hours a day. New York, New York.

The years went by. Her youth vanished, as did her two sons. Gradually their visits home to mom became less frequent. In Andy's case it was because he lived too far away, a good enough excuse not to go see her. Finally, they stopped calling.

As a small child Julian quickly demonstrated an egotistical character, which only sharpened through the years. He promptly became a well-known lawyer. He squandered his money, but he failed to remember his mother, not even on his own birthday. For him, his mother did not exist.

Irma went into debt to finance her children's education, and years after they received their degrees and landed steady jobs, she continued working to pay the loans.

That day, while working on the twelfth floor, she sensed pressure in her chest, the air could not reach her lungs; she felt as if she were drowning. The vibrations of the vacuum cleaner and the electromagnetic field it provoked were producing an intensely uncomfortable sensation in her, which kept growing until she released the long tube of the vacuum and rested against the wall.

Irma Wallace had had enough. She had reached the limits of her tolerance to stress. For some time she had been ingesting pills of all shapes and colors, which didn't help except to increase the profits of the pharmaceutical companies, while their effects on her served only to mask the real causes of her depression, her anguish, the confusing pain.

If she was somewhat overweight it wasn't because she ate too much, but due to the junk food she consumed in a hurry between jobs. In fact, as a young woman her figure had been slim and muscular, but so many ham-

burgers of dubious meats, buns, fats and sugars, had molded a new shape onto her punished body.

Now, suddenly, inside that sick building, surrounded by synthetic materials, centralized air conditioning systems, impoverished and unhealthy air, static electricity and the bad vibrations of stress and insane competitiveness that impregnated the place, Irma Wallace overstepped her limit.

One of the security guards passed by without even looking at her. For years now Irma had noticed that, slowly, she had become invisible. Nobody was aware of her presence anymore. On the street, no one looked at her. In fact, even at bus stops, or at the supermarket, people often stepped in front of her and cut her off because they failed to notice her. Irma Wallace was practically nonexistent.

An hour later the maintenance manager arrived in a foul mood. "Irma, damn it, why haven't you finished on this floor?" When he saw her sitting on the floor, with her head turned to one side, he tried to make her stand up, but could not. The junk food, the exhaustion and the accumulated stress had taken their toll. Finally, the man called security. Another hour later an ambulance carried Irma Wallace, cleaning lady, to the hospital.

Her problem was evident. She suffered from overall weakness. "Premature aging," said the doctor. There was no solution. The fatigue, tension, dizzy spells, pain... had all become chronic. Well, perhaps there was some kind of treatment, but it would be too expensive and her insurance would not cover it. They would only keep giving her pills to palliate the anguish and the pain, to mummify her, rather than to cure her.

The choices the health industry offered left Irma with the option of continuing to waste away, drugged and infirm, until her eventual death.

Days later she left the hospital. Her sons had been contacted, but neither had come. Andy lived over a thousand miles away, hounded by a tyrannical wife. "Andy has always been somewhat insignificant," Irma thought. She felt that perhaps part of the fault had been hers, because she'd been unable to dedicate much time to him during his childhood; and part of the fault was also Julian's, with his dominant and twisted temperament, who had molded Andy's character to his own liking. When Andy married, Irma understood that he was fleeing one tyranny only to fall into another.

Julian, however, was a hardened lawyer: energetic, enterprising and entirely lacking in scruples. A winner, indeed. Each of his high-powered suits cost three thousand dollars, an amount that represented, for Irma, nearly two months of hard work.

He'd spread the false idea that his grandfather had been an outstanding senator and his father a reputed judge. But the truth was that nobody knew who his paternal grandfather had been, and that his father had been a quarrelsome and chauvinist alcoholic. In the family fable of his own creation, a working-class mother with little glamour was unacceptable. So for many years, Irma had had no news of the son she nevertheless loved, and she was not surprised when he failed to show up at the hospital. He was not interested in seeing her.

Julian himself had suffered a mild heart attack, perhaps even milder than the one that provoked Irma's loss of consciousness, but because he was so egocentric and,

despite his imposing presence, easily frightened, he left his job and fled, after selling all of his possessions... and his Ferrari. Well, the story of the Ferrari is a bit different. In truth, after calculating the taxes he'd owe if he sold everything, he realized that this option wasn't in his interest. Besides, Julian always liked to keep an ace up his sleeve. Haggard and cowardly but not stupid, he took the cash and disappeared.

Two months after Irma suffered the fainting spell, Julian appeared at her house wearing a brightly colored tunic. At first Irma imagined happily that her son had come to see her, but she quickly realized that the only thing he wanted, once again, was something from her. He recounted grandiloquently how he had sold his belongings, although he confessed there was something that he could not dispose of without losing a lot of money; so he proposed to put his most prized possession, his car, in her name, "because I can't trust anyone." He said he had read a lot of self-help and New Age books, had been to India, and had found meaning in his life. He had found his true self thanks to the wise men he'd met during his trip. Irma watched him in silence. "Poor dear," she thought, "what a simple man he is." Suddenly she understood him: "He's like a chicken with its head cut off; many people live this way, running from one place to another, changing one set of things for another, ignorant and lost, tripping over everything in front of them without recognizing any of it." This was a revelation for Irma.

Julian authored a bestseller that contained everything the supposedly wise men had revealed to him, adorned with fancy but ultimately empty words and

phrases. Julian was going off on another trip and left the Ferrari in a garage in downtown New York. He had her sign the appropriate documents and departed.