

Even after so many years when she speaks of her father, her eyes fill with tears. He took his life when my mother was an 11 year old girl. He had just returned from the East African Campaign for which he had volunteered. With his death the family lost the only source of income and had to go and live by relatives who had been living in the city since years.

In my mother's stories the time she spent in the mountains of the Apennine ridge has a fairytale flavor, belonging more to a dream than reality; snowy landscapes, mythical figures like the 'wild' uncle who cuts a whole fir to make a Christmas tree. He often disappeared for weeks in the woods without food accompanied by his beloved dog. Or the seven tame hawks that returned far fewer over the years decimated by poachers. Then the sulfur factory, the gullies where my mother played with her childhood friends.

My grandfather built little cages with some blade of grass in which he locked up crickets, in the evening he told a story to my mother when the story ended, he opened the little cell and the cricket flew away.