

Cara Befana,

Usually in a letter I would ask how you're feeling, but there's no need to in this case, because I already know.

Befana mia, il dolore di questo anno è stato inimmaginabile, un incubo!

Who would've thought that our happy and bright country could be so rainy and grey in the midst of a pandemic. I think about it almost everyday, you know? Not only did we lose more than half a million souls, we lost our beautiful smiles. The smiles that would make our eyes so bright they could be mistaken for stars. We lost our laugh, the loud ones that could be heard across the street and make our filled stomachs ache. The dancing and singing at the beaches, as our feet sweep away the sand and struggles. The cold drinks and mouth watering food that are made from the sweet hearts of our Nonnas.

Italy has always been my gateway from reality. A fun and loveable place where I can be myself. I currently live in Canada and most times, I do see myself as being an outsider, but I always remember with pride who I am and where I come from. When I tell people I'm Italian, they jump with joy and excitement as everyone has so much respect for us. However, now it's more like: "I'm so sorry, I hope everything is okay at home."

I'm extremely grateful to have a family that is safe in our little city. I know, however, millions of people that have lost a loved one. Grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, even children. It's been a very difficult year having to watch the number of deaths rising everyday. At one point, it got so devastating that we completely forgot they weren't

just numbers, but they were humans that once lived and breathed among us.

Befana, you have such a big impact on the Italian culture! You bring happiness and excitement. I think we need a lot of that this year. Your arrival is what every child looks forward to after Christmas; to look inside our stocking on the night of January 6th to see what gift and delicious sweets you have left us. No one sees you, hears you or has even met you. However, we know that you bring joy and smiles into homes. Oh how we need that this year! I remember when I was a little, I admired the apartment lights as they lit up the dark night of Barletta as I couldn't wait to get home to see what you brought me!

Guardavo il cielo sperando di trovarti però eri troppo veloce e furba con la tua scopa magica!

There's a lot of people suffering this year, Befana. The purpose of this letter wasn't to make you upset or waste your time or to tell you things you already know. It's to politely ask you if you could bring a few extra gifts and candy to the poor children, that sadly won't be receiving much this Christmas. The pandemic has impacted so many families this year, and the poor have only gotten poorer and those who were already sad, more sad. It will truly bring hope and love into their lives to know that no matter what, you will remember them. I know we can count on you Befana.

Non puoi fare scomparire il virus, pero' puoi portare il tuo spirito gioioso nelle case italiane.

Children all around the world would love to learn your history and stories and they would be inspired by your courage and act of kindness.

To finally end this letter, never forget that:

*La Befana vien di notte con le scarpe tutte rotte con il cappello alla
romana, VIVA VIVA LA BEFANA!*

T.V.B.

Federica d'Amato

