

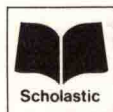
# Big Anthony and the Magic Ring

STORY AND PICTURES BY  
Tomie de Paola

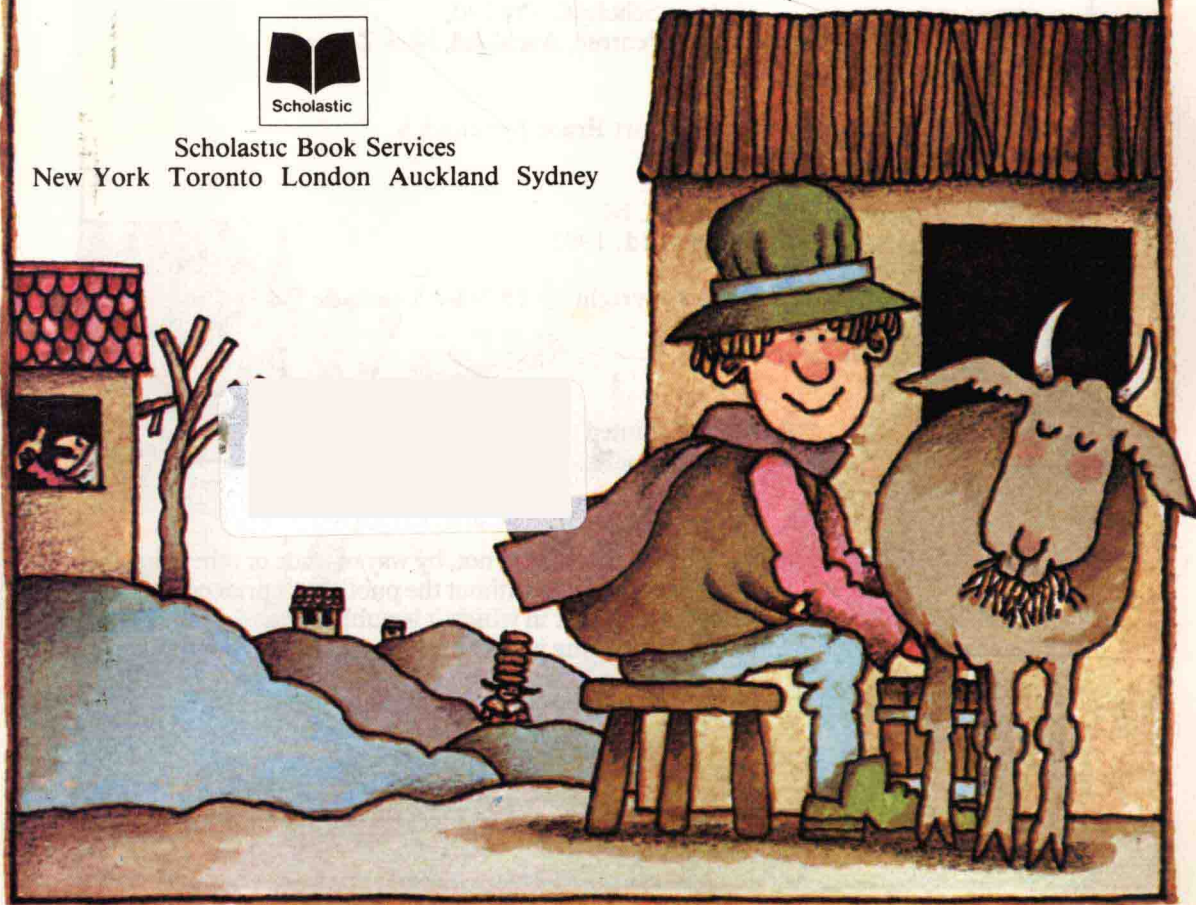


# Big Anthony and the Magic Ring

STORY AND PICTURES BY Tomie de Paola



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For Paola Risposio who  
introduced me to Bambolona

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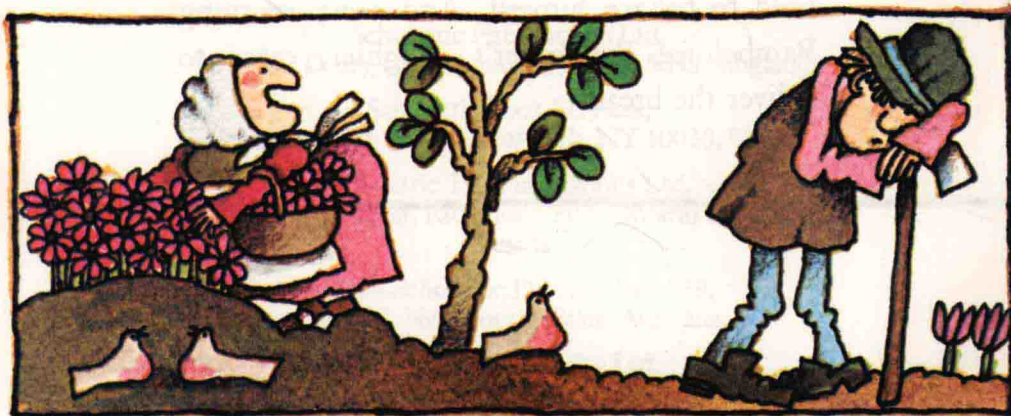
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Wintertime was very quiet in the little town in Calabria where Strega Nona (Grandma Witch) and her helper Big Anthony lived. People came to Strega Nona to help them solve their troubles. Big Anthony did his chores and tried to behave himself. And every morning Bambolona, the baker's daughter, came to deliver the bread.



One day the sun began to shine a little brighter, the birds began to sing a little sweeter, and the flowers began to bloom everywhere. Spring had come, and Big Anthony began to drag his feet.



“Anthony,” said Strega Nona, “whatever is the matter? You’re sleeping late. Your chores are half done, and every time I look at you, you’re gazing into space and sighing.”

“Oh, Strega Nona, I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” said Big Anthony. “Everything in my head is fuzzy.”

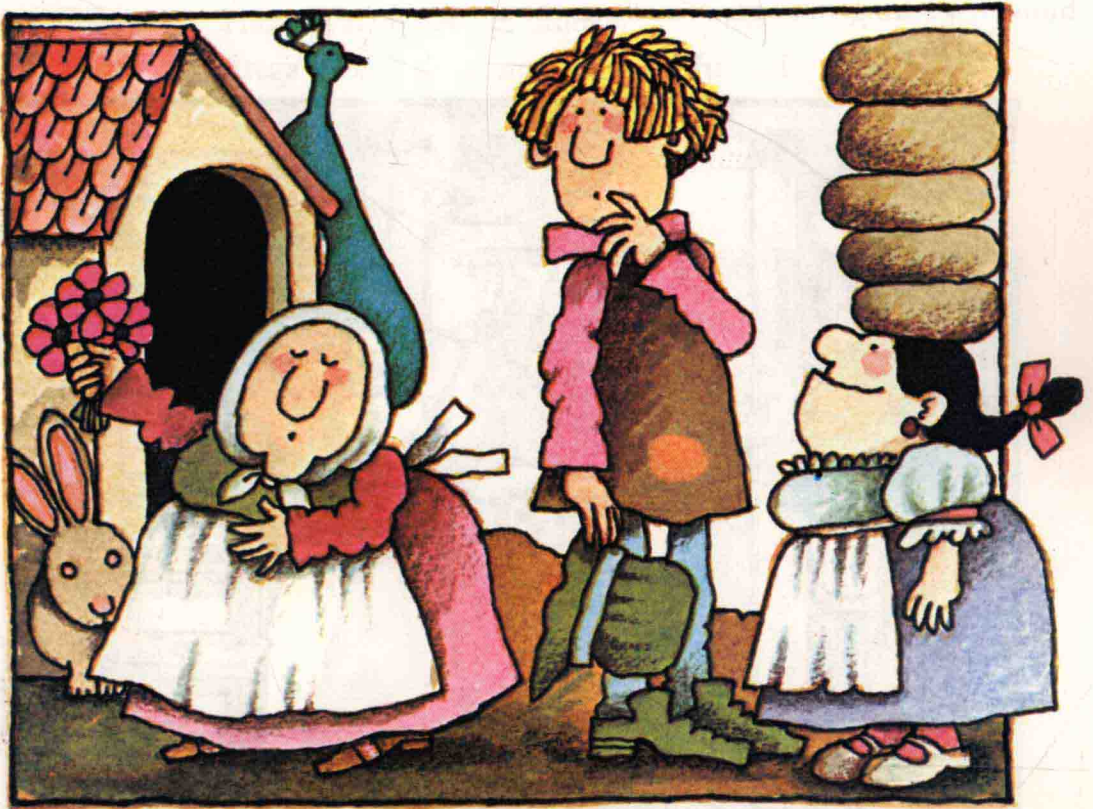




"I think you have spring fever," said Strega Nona. "What you need is a little Night Life. Why don't you go to the village dance tonight? It would perk you up."

Big Anthony sighed again. "The village seems so far away," he said. "And anyway, who would dance with *me*?"

"Bambolona, the baker's daughter, would," said Strega Nona. "Why don't you ask her when she brings the bread?"



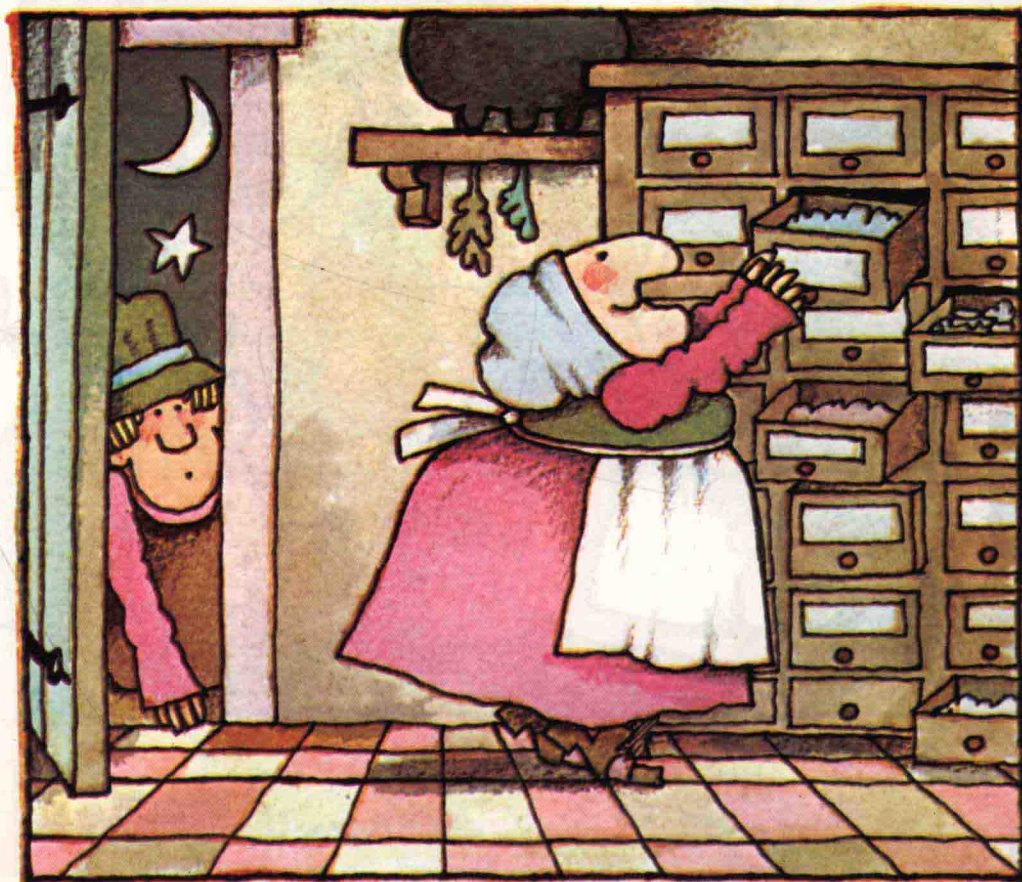
"Who?" asked Big Anthony (for in truth he had never noticed her).

When supper was finished and Strega Nona was straightening up her cupboard, she suddenly stopped and said to herself, "Ummm. A little Night Life. That's not a bad idea. It's been quite a while since *I* went to the village and danced the tarantella."

Then she began to bang the little drawers open and shut, looking into each of them.

The noise startled Big Anthony, who was sitting just outside gazing at the moon.

"What is Strega Nona doing?" he asked himself, peeking through a crack in the door.







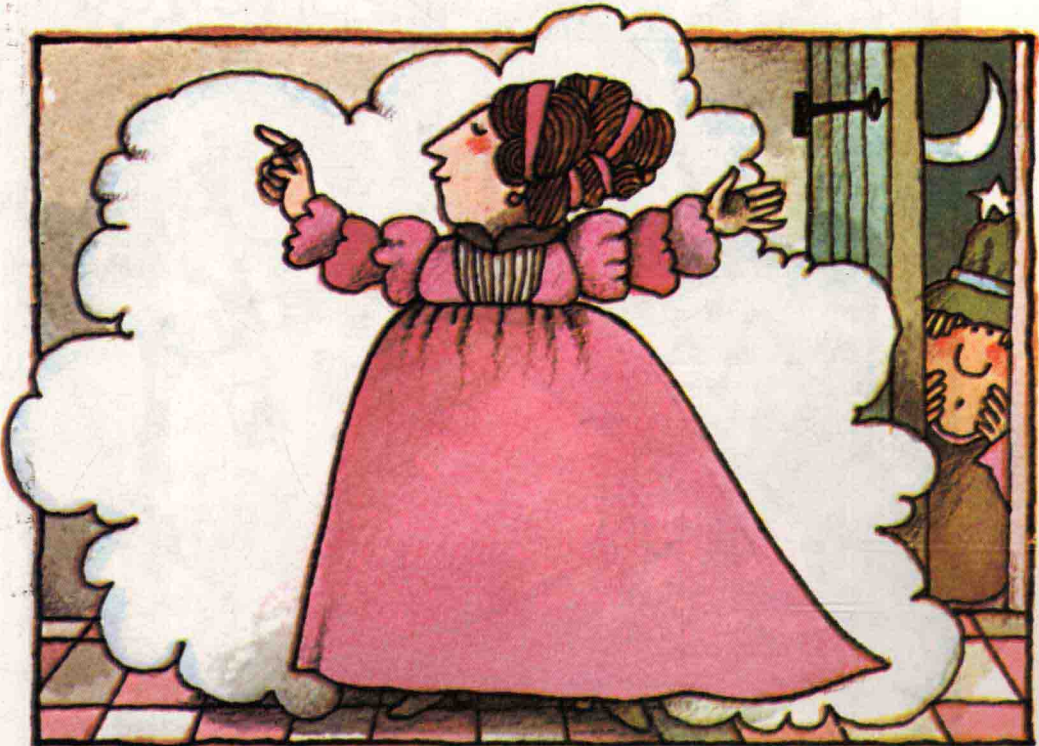
"Aha, here it is," said Strega Nona, holding up a tiny golden ring. "I haven't used this in years."

She slipped the ring on the first finger of her right hand and then began to sing:

"O little band, my golden ring,  
Listen to the song I sing.  
Make me look as I do not,  
And to the village dance I'll trot."

There was a puff of smoke, and instead of Strega Nona, there stood a beautiful lady, in elegant clothes!

Big Anthony could hardly believe his eyes.





Secretly, Big Anthony followed the beautiful lady all the way to the village square . . .



and there he watched her dance the tarantella  
all night long.







When the dance was over, Big Anthony followed her back to Strega Nona's house.

There the lady sang:

"O shiny band, my golden ring,  
Again the little song I sing.

The dance is done, the moon does wane.

Turn me back to me again."

Then she slipped the ring off her finger.



With a puff of smoke, there was Strega Nona!

"Oh," whispered Big Anthony, "if only I could get that ring. I would be the handsomest man in all of Calabria, and all the village ladies would want to dance with me."

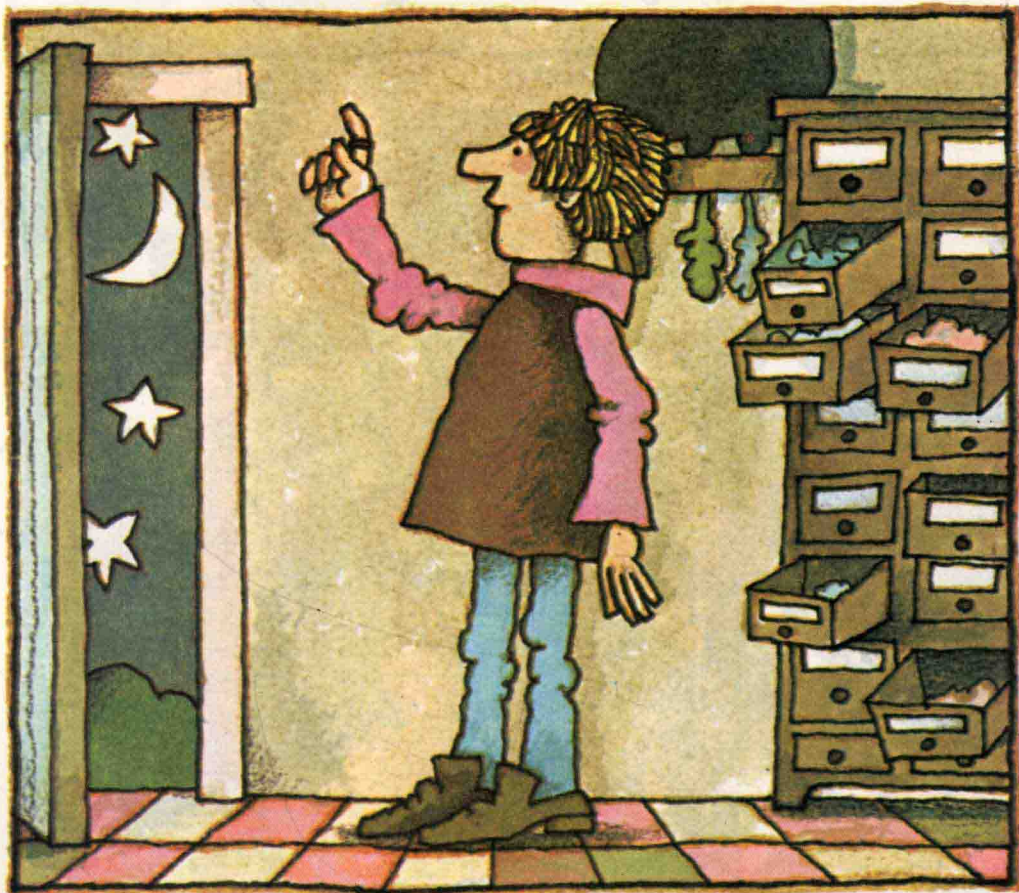
Big Anthony decided to wait for his chance—  
which came the very next morning, after Bam-  
bolona brought the bread.



“Anthony, I must go and visit my godchildren,”  
said Strega Nona, “now that it’s Eastertide. Be  
a good *ragazzo*, stay out of trouble, do your  
chores, and don’t drag your feet.”  
“Sì, yes, Strega Nona,” said Big Anthony.



All day long Big Anthony waited. Finally, when the sun went down, he ran inside and rummaged through the drawers of Strega Nona's magic cupboard until he found the tiny golden ring.



He pushed it on the first finger of his right hand as far as it would go. Then he sang;  
"O little band, my golden ring,  
Listen to the song I sing.  
Make me look as I do not  
And to the village dance I'll trot."

There was a puff of smoke. Big Anthony rushed to the mirror and looked. The face looking back at him was certainly not his own. There stood a *Handsome* Big Anthony in elegant clothes.



“Aha,” shouted Handsome Big Anthony, “and now for a little Night Life!”



When he strolled into the village, everyone was dancing the tarantella in the middle of the square.



In a second, Handsome Big Anthony was surrounded by all the ladies there—young and old, fat and thin, pretty and not so pretty. They had never seen such a *handsome* man in all their lives.

“Come dance with me,” each of them cried, pulling at his arms.







Round and round they went, dancing the tarantella.

