ANNAMARIA GIUSTARDI
Author of "The ring child"

**1) Mrs Annamaria, you wrote the book IL BAMBINO DALL'ANELLO, what kind of story is it and who is it for?**

It’s a fable about a child with an iron ring inside of him, right beside his heart - an indestructible ring that gives him immense pain. Anyone can read it, even though the language is meant mainly for children, because fables speak to everyone. With their metaphors, magical and bizarre characters, the sometimes surreal events that happen make it possible to address tragic events that are hard to narrate with the words of reality, and to confront them with fewer fears.

**2) What made you think about writing a story for children centered around a disability?**

A while ago, Stefania Azzali, mother of Matteo and president of RING14 Association, told me she would love to have a fable about Ring 14, a fable that talks about the disease in simple words and gets the word out. “Il Bambino dall’Anello” came to me that way, without thinking about it. Like everything I write, I probably already had it in me; I had thought about it without realizing it since Stefania spoke to me about it.

**3) What’s the moral of the story? Is it a fable only about children with rare diseases?**

You can find whatever you want in what you read, either in a novel or in a fable. What’s important is to elicit emotions, raise questions and give feelings. And, if a child reads this fable, it’s nice to discuss it afterwards and ask what they think. But this is always true: We shouldn’t shelter our children from fear and pain at all costs – because they’re a part of life - instead we should accompany them to help them understand these aspects. Not only children with Ring14 have an “iron ring”: The ring can be any other disease; it can be any difficulty, anything that prevents us from having a normal and healthy life. This fable can therefore be transposed, I believe, in many ways.

**4) What kind of learning value can this project have?**

I really liked the learning project developed by the teachers of the Pezzani School in Reggio Emilia. I’m amazed by the richness of the contents that children can express in the most diverse ways, when listened to and guided well. Their words are so precise and adequate to express what they discover, even when confronted with harsh realities. And even the drawings are beautiful, rich with details and emotions. I hope this project will be taken on by other schools, and hopefully it will be a base for other projects aimed at integration and knowledge of diversity.