

GILLETTE BURGUNDY — ACT 2

Burgundy — France
ACT 2 — The Return of Sabine

Stories are never the same, because the moments in which they meet are never the same. Places change. Seasons change. People change. And when women cross their paths, prediction loses all value.

I told this story some time ago. Today I want to tell it again with greater intensity, almost as a conversation with myself—a call from memory, a voice that keeps knocking on the door of time, reminding me not only of what has been, but perhaps of what might still be.

ACT 2 — THE RETURN OF SABINE

My first days were spent reorganizing the estate.

Some employees wanted to negotiate.

Others wanted to explain how things had always been done.

A few believed tradition itself was an argument.

I listened.

Then I decided.

I had no intention of renegotiating salaries, privileges, or old habits. Those who wished to stay were welcome. Those who wished to leave received a handshake and a smile.

Without resentment.

I had learned long ago that certain habits rarely change.

They are replaced.

So I began building a new team.

Responsible people.

People who did not need supervision every hour of the day.

My philosophy was simple:

do not command.

Create responsibility.

The weeks passed slowly, measured by the rhythm of the vineyards and the wind moving across the Burgundy hills.

I thought I had finally found a peace I was no longer looking for.

Then one afternoon an Italian car appeared at the entrance of the estate.

From a distance, I watched a woman and a young man step out.

They were looking for someone.

They spoke animatedly with one of the workers, who understood not a single word of Italian. They kept repeating a name.

My name.

I approached on horseback.

And time stopped.

It was Sabine.

She did not need to speak.

She did not need to introduce herself.

Some faces remain engraved in memory more deeply than photographs.

You recognize them instantly.

Even after decades.

For a moment, I became young again.

Not the young man in old pictures.

Not the young man in official documents.

The young man of dreams.

Of mistakes.

Of unfinished promises.

My heart began beating with a force I believed long gone.

I climbed down from the horse, pretending calm.

She smiled.

The same smile.

The same light in her eyes.

Time had added elegance, not distance.

Beside her stood a young man she introduced as her nephew.

I studied him carefully.

There was something unsettling in the resemblance.

The same eyes.

The same expression.

The same stubborn gentleness.

Sabine looked at me the way someone looks at a person who never truly left their life.

There was no embarrassment.

No explanations.

Only the quiet weight of everything we had never lived.

We walked between the vines.

We spoke about the past the way one speaks about an old house still occupied by memories. I asked how she had managed to find me.

She laughed.

A laugh I remembered perfectly.

“Your fault.”

“Mine?”

“Yes. You always wrote everything down. What you couldn’t tell people directly, you told the world through your books. I followed your words for years. Every page left another clue. Sooner or later I knew I would find you.”

I remained silent.

Because she was right.

And in that moment I understood something.

She had not arrived by accident.

And perhaps neither had I.

Sometimes life takes decades to finish a sentence interrupted long ago.

Ferdinando