

GILLETTE BURGUNDY — ACT 3

Burgundy — France
ACT 3 — The Last Harvest

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 3 — THE LAST HARVEST

With Sabine beside me, the future no longer felt distant.

It had become a place.

I looked across the vineyards and imagined new seasons. I thought about my children, their children, and whatever might remain when I no longer had the strength to ride through the estate. For many years I had chased work.

Responsibilities.

Challenges.

Results.

I had crossed countries, built businesses, known victories and defeats.

Yet serenity seemed to have chosen that corner of Burgundy and the woman time had unexpectedly returned to me.

Sabine walked beside me among the vines.

We spoke little.

After a certain age you discover that silence often tells the truth more clearly than words. The days flowed with a simplicity I could barely remember ever knowing.

Wine matured slowly in its barrels.

The vineyards followed their seasons.

The horses ran freely across the fields.

My children visited more often.

And for the first time in many years, I looked at my life without feeling the need to change anything.

And the wine?

Well, the Romans had already answered that.

In vino veritas.

In wine there is truth.

Masks fall.

Lies weaken.

Even buried feelings eventually find the courage to speak.

That was how I imagined my new life.

Burgundy.

The vineyards.

The horses.

Sabine.

My children nearby.

Myself riding through the rows, checking the pruning, studying how the sunlight touched the vines.

Everything finally seemed where it belonged.

And I had reached ninety-one years of age.

Ninety-one.

An age at which a man believes he has seen enough to be surprised by nothing.

I was wrong.

Because I never expected to hear another car coming up the long driveway of the estate. Another car.

Another woman.

Another young man.

The vehicle slowed and stopped a few metres from us.

I looked at Sabine.

I looked at the car.

I looked at the young man stepping out.

For a brief moment, I had the absurd feeling that life was repeating a scene I had already lived.
The woman closed the door and remained still, studying the house.

Then she looked at me.

She carried the expression of someone who had not arrived there by chance.

The expression of someone who had spent years searching.

I felt Sabine stiffen beside me.

I could not move either.

The woman took a few steps forward.

The young man stayed close.

She observed me carefully.

Too carefully.

As if searching for confirmation.

As if trying to recover something she had heard about all her life.

Finally, she smiled.

A gentle smile.

Almost melancholy.

Then she asked a single question.

“Are you Ferdinando Frega?”

I did not answer immediately.

Fear does not always come from what we do not know.

Sometimes it comes from what we might recognize.

Burgundy stood silent around us.

The vineyards breathed beneath the fading light.

Nobody spoke.

Not Sabine.

Not the young man.

Not me.

Because in that moment I understood something ninety-one years had failed to teach me. Life rarely closes its unfinished accounts.

It keeps them.

Protects them.

Allows them to mature slowly, like wine resting in a barrel.

Then, just when we believe the story is ending, it opens a door we thought had been sealed forever.

A memory.

A question.

A regret.

A woman.

Perhaps a son.

Perhaps an old love.

Or perhaps a truth that needed an entire lifetime to reach us.

I stood motionless.

With Sabine beside me.

With that woman in front of me.

With two young men belonging to different stories—or perhaps to the same one.

And for the first time, I felt no urgency to know the answer.

Because I understood that destiny had not come to close the book.

It had come to add another page.

And perhaps, on that evening in the heart of Burgundy, the most important chapter of all was just beginning.

Ferdinando