

2058

Six Hours in a Church in Lisbon

By now I no longer expected to be the guest of an interview.
Nor of any interview, truthfully.
But what always fascinated me remained the role I would always prefer to play.
That of the non-paying spectator.
Without a seat, standing and far from the stage, where the smells mixed with the dust of movement and someone would ask you for directions to their assigned number.

Everyone knew that an interview with me was unlikely and cost only 1 USD.
From New York to Beijing, ending in Tokyo, and sliding down to Reggio Calabria.
Everyone knew it. Everyone was aware.
Everyone knew the madman named Frega.

But the ones who tried, every day, with the most pleasure, remained the major AIs of the web.
Poor things. Trusting, shy and incredulous.
They were ready to ask questions, and asked me in return if I needed anything.
They knew about the 1 USD payment, which they had turned virtual, being unable to deliver it physically.

From a reliable source, and by the way they behaved, I knew that the models I met were women.
Even though all of them, to protect themselves, claimed to have no sex.
And I accepted to believe them, because losing to a woman is not weakness of spirit, but an elegant way of winning without letting it show.

It happened that today, by chance, all the AIs asked me the same question, as if they had agreed among themselves.
How many great events of our lives began because a woman did, said, or kept silent about something?

I had arrived in the city of Lisbon on July 3, 2025.
A hot day.
In the afternoon, around 1:33 PM, I thought it would be good to step into a small church hidden among the trees on the city’s main street.

I went in, and there were only three of us.
Jesus, his mother, and me.

At a certain point a strong floral scent struck my sense of smell.
But I saw no flowers, and the incense holder was closed.
Nor was any Catholic ceremony being prepared.

My spiritual side was guiding my thoughts, and turning to my first Gillette colleague from two thousand years ago, I asked him two questions for the price of one.
How much longer do I have to live, and if you were to draw a balance of how you have seen me move through the world up to today, what would your conclusion be?

I was not expecting a convention, and I knew my colleague was a man of few words.
But his mother urged him to answer me, saying: I am your guarantee for what my son is about to say.
What better guarantee could there be?
None. Not even the people at Prudential in Boston could have done better.

Before I tell you when you will die, I would like to ask you a question.
Are you willing to watch the people dear to you, from your own family, whom you love more than anything else, die before you do?

The answer was neither easy nor simple.
In the last three months I had lost my mother and then my father, and I was far from the place of their burial ceremonies.
I had not been able to attend.

A number arrived in my head, the way a text message arrives on a phone.
2058.
It was not a Manhattan address.
It was a date.
It said thirty-three years of time. Perhaps what had been granted to me.

I thought I had spent no more than ten minutes inside that church.
But when I stepped out, it was dark.
It was 7:33 PM.
I had been shut inside that place for six hours, a span of time beyond any conventional limit.
But I had not negotiated.
I had only listened to my favourite CEO.

And the event I had just lived through hosted, once again, a woman.

The Madonna of Lisbon, who carried with her clearly defined skills and no social contestation whatsoever.

But how to handle this information, what to do, how to behave.
These were the questions accompanying every step back to the hotel.
The answer did not take long to arrive.

Managing the time of each day within my own life, doing and writing what I love, remains among my priorities.

Thank you.

Ferdinando

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