

GILLETTE BURGUNDY — ACT 1

Burgundy — France
ACT 1 — The Farmhouse of a Second Life

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 1 — THE FARMHOUSE OF A SECOND LIFE

Twenty years earlier, I had left for Burgundy, in the heart of France, with the intention of purchasing an old farmhouse.

It was a land of wine, cheese, and that understated elegance the French guard like an inheritance. I already knew the local real estate agent handling the deal. He had presented the property as a rare opportunity, and the terms were attractive enough to make me curious.

I have never been a bargain hunter. Bargains are human inventions. Real opportunities belong to providence.

The area was far from major commercial routes. Visitors arrived mainly during the August and September harvest seasons or for the local festivals celebrating new wines. The rest of the year, silence ruled the hills and the fields.

The farmhouse was in excellent condition. It needed some maintenance, a few structural adjustments, and a proper office on the ground floor. Nothing particularly demanding.

The agent, however, seemed in a hurry.

A storm was approaching, he explained, and suggested we inspect the estate quickly on horseback.

Twelve hectares.

Vineyards stretching to the horizon.

Red wines.

White wines.

Champagne.

A small lake to the west.

Rows of acacia trees.

Existing contracts for grape sales.

As we rode through the property, I asked why the owners were selling.

His answer was simple and devastating.

“My wife has cancer. I don’t want her spending her remaining years tied to this estate. I want to take her around the world while we still can.”

I said nothing.

Back at the stables, I noticed eight magnificent young Arabian horses.

I asked for the price of the whole property.

The farmhouse.

The land.

The vineyards.

The stables.

The horses.

The man hesitated.

He seemed almost afraid to say it.

Then he did.

“Six hundred and fifty thousand euros.”

I thought about it for a few seconds.

The following day we met the notary.

I paid in full.

No mortgage.

No bank.

No financing.

I became the owner of an estate in Burgundy.

A winegrower.

A farmer.

Even a countryman.

And smiling to myself, I thought that everyone who had claimed I wrote like a dog had finally found the perfect profession for me.

Ferdinando