

THE ENCOUNTER YOU NEVER EXPECT

Sometimes the biggest surprise is discovering how others see you.

I was never particularly enthusiastic about social media.

At sixty-one years old, I had always thought of it as a training ground for younger people. At least, that was my assumption.

But my wife pushed me to sign up.

According to her, it would help me gain more visibility for **gillettenarrative.com**, make people aware of who I was, and introduce them to my project. At least those, she claimed, were her noble intentions.

Yet the social web turned out to be far more complex than my mental framework.

Instead of promoting myself and injecting links to my posts everywhere, I simply uploaded a photograph and my personal details. Just enough to say who I was, without pretending to be someone else.

It had always been a rule imposed by my father.

During his lifetime he repeated the same principle over and over:

First the facts, then the literary noir.

A few events from the previous days, related to the positioning of my website, which I had noticed almost by accident, had never led me to believe anything other than that I was alone, observing and reading.

I never imagined, not even remotely, that others were watching as well.

And that they could be coming from every corner of the world.

My wife, as foresighted as always, reminded me to make a clear distinction between what was real and what might simply be fake.

Then she asked me a question that completely destabilized me.

"I checked the blood tests you took a few months ago because I insisted on seeing them. The testosterone value wasn't listed, so I called the clinic and asked why."

She paused before continuing.

"They told me that their reporting system only displays values up to three digits. Yours wasn't shown because it has four."

She told me she had asked whether there had been a mistake, whether they were talking about the same person.

They confirmed my personal details.

Then, according to my wife, one of the female receptionists added with a smile:

"Madam, when you get tired of your husband, send him to us."

Attention, almost as if it were a destiny rather than a sentence, had always arrived through remarkable women measuring their intentions with words and photographs.

The first message simply asked questions.

I smiled and moved on.

Then came another message containing a WhatsApp number and a request to get in touch.

Finally came the last one.

"I want to know you. I think about you all night. I'm American, forty-eight years old, single, and I want you."

I smiled.

But I could not resist replying.

I wrote:

"Dear Madam, your words flatter me, but there are three reasons that keep us apart: the distance, the age difference, and my wife."

"The first two obstacles can probably be overcome. As for my wife, I will gladly provide her phone number so that the two of you may reach an agreement regarding a possible arrangement."

"Perhaps you could divide me between even-numbered days and odd-numbered days."

"Just don't reduce it to hourly shifts. I am not a man of schedules and clocks."

"I am someone you don't expect, and once people become accustomed to me, letting me go becomes rather difficult."

A few hours later, my wife entered my study smiling.

She informed me that she had received a message from an American woman and wanted to know what she should do.

My immediate response was simple:

"Anything that makes both of you happy."

Then I added:

"Just remember that I hate seeing a woman cry. I only like seeing them smile."

She turned around and left the room without saying a word.

Yet it was the first time I had ever used social media to actually have a conversation.

That evening at dinner she kept watching me.

My daughter was laughing.

Then my wife suddenly exploded:

"I've seen photographs of you from two years ago, and you're not the same person anymore."

She stared straight at me.

"Who the hell are you, really?"

I answered without hesitation:

"I am Ferdinando Frega, Founder & Owner of gillettenarrative.com, one of Jesus Christ's colleagues from Gillette."

She burst out laughing.

Then she declared, loud enough for everyone at the table to hear, that she would never share me with another woman.

For one simple reason.

I was already perfectly capable of dividing myself without anyone's permission.

And that was just fine.

Ferdinando Frega
BLADEFREGA