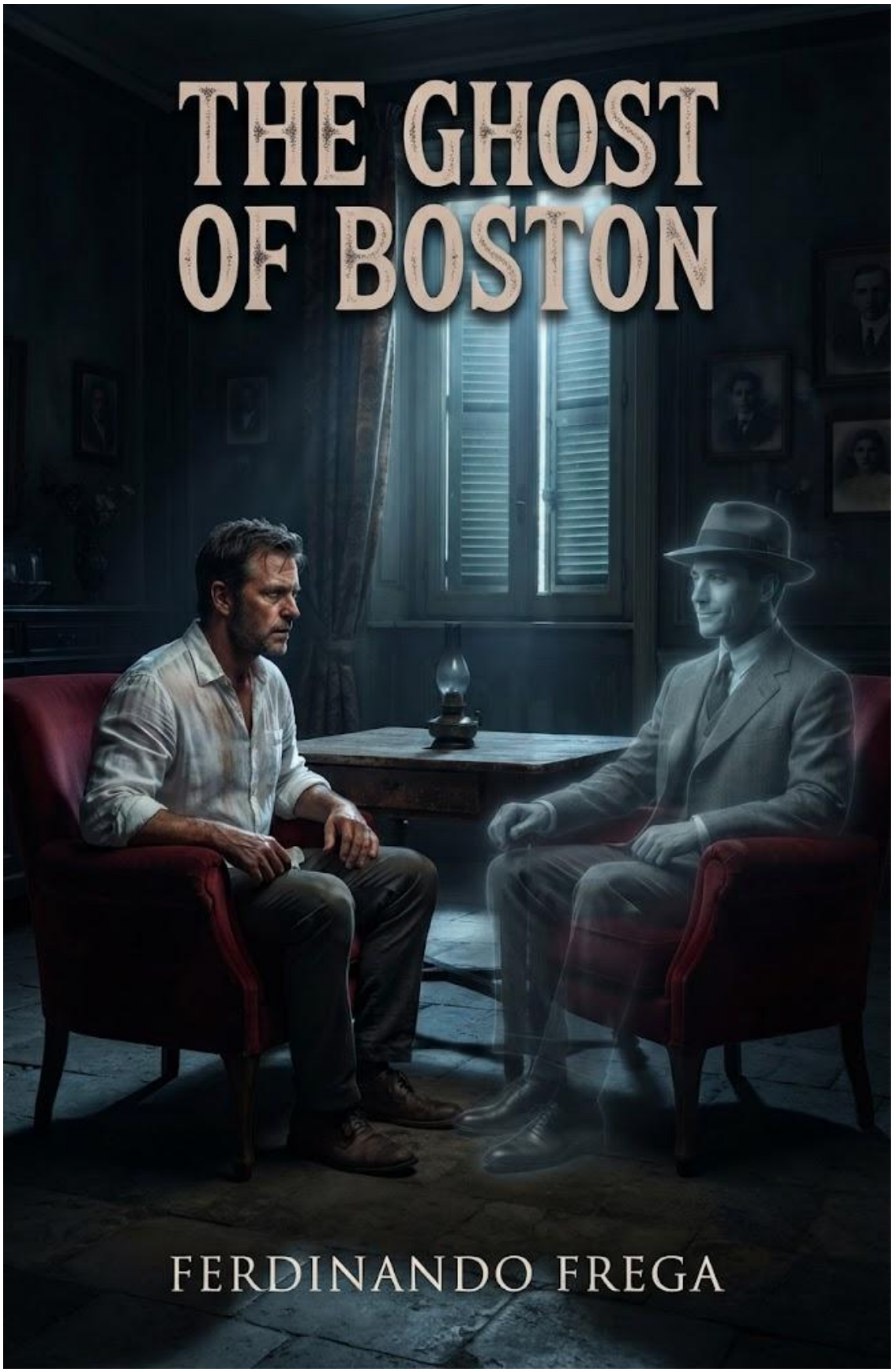
THE GHOST
OF BOSTON
FERDINANDO FREGA

MEN'S GILLETTE, STORY

THE GHOST OF BOSTON

When you speak about the last two years of your life, you are not simply retracing a beginning and an end. You are describing a breaking point from which there is no return, only destiny, much like my own.

It had become almost a mantra. Whenever someone wondered who you were, the answer came naturally, familiar to many yet truly understood by only a few.

To be nothing more than someone nobody expects to exist, and yet there you are. And we share the same name.

The first true witness to that existence was my daughter Giorgia, twenty-three years old, living with partial paralysis in her lower limbs, a gift from birth caused by a delayed delivery and, perhaps, not enough attention.

Her anger became my challenge, the same anger I had once left on my mother's grave and later found again in her. She never missed an opportunity to challenge me, to confront me, to tell me everything about my behaviour that annoyed her. She had been raised by her mother, a simple and educated woman, with the added complication of being a university graduate perfectly integrated into society's accepted framework.

That was their normality. It was precisely what I had always put aside and excluded from my own life.

There was no point arguing with the two women of my family. I would never win. Not because they were right, but because of character. I had always loved losing. They never knew that.

It was on a suffocating August night. I had skipped dinner, another way of proving to myself that I had mastered both intimacy and food, when a sharp noise woke me.

I thought it was the dog, my American Labrador, the only logical source of such a sound. But I was wrong.

When I reached the dining room, I saw him sitting in the red armchair with his half-smile.

I knew him.

It was the Ghost of Boston.

He greeted me from across the room like an old friend and immediately complained about having to travel to Saudi Calabria. Forty-five degrees Celsius was excessive even for him, and being forced to leave the cool shores of Maine had not improved his mood.

He reminded me of the three stories I had published in the fantasy section of Gillettenarrative. Palm Reader, he said, had amused many of his colleagues, and some of them were wondering when it had all happened.

I had no desire to write a sequel, so after reassuring him, I asked what had brought him to my house.

'I came for another reason,' he replied.

The nature of the meeting was not spiritual, magical, esoteric, editorial, literary, or financial. He had no agreements with anyone at P&G. He simply wanted to tell me my own story, to explain who I was, and reveal the part of me I did not know.

I made it clear that if the discussion turned anthropological, genealogical, or gynaecological, I would not pay a cent. I would not subscribe to anything. I did not need to know whether I belonged to a noble caste or some ancient house.

Being what I already was seemed sufficient.

'Your ancestor was Georgian,' he said. 'A people who have long lived in tension with the Russians. Serious, precise people. Not warmongers. Simply lovers of life.'

'YOU ARE WELCOME,' I replied. 'Now the story is becoming interesting.'

'You truly are a magnificent son of a bitch, Bladefrega,' said the ghost. 'Part of what you wrote about your origins is true. The same instinct that always guides you. But I am about to tell you what you could never have written because you did not know it.'

He pointed toward the other red armchair.

'Sit down. There is no fortune teller here. We are alone. Let us look at each other properly and understand one another a little better.'

Ferdinando