
THE PALM READER
GILLETTE FOREVER
DEFINITIVE EDITION

THE PALM READER



FRAME

My children watched me from a distance. They were smiling, but none of the three came closer. They whispered with their mother, and inside those whispers I could hear it: *Mom, who the hell is our father?*

Not in the biological sense. In the sense of whether they had inherited that madness the brand called capability and society called insanity — because it couldn't be filed anywhere.

I had gone back to my New York to see some friends. That same evening we flew to Boston, my mother's home.

On Main Street the usual restaurant was waiting: lobster and linguine. Two Sicilian brothers, their accent a mix of Palermo and Massachusetts. It felt like *Once Upon a Time in America* — except this time I was the one writing the soundtrack, with my own jokes.

One of the two asked to meet me the next day, late morning. I didn't understand what he wanted. I found him at the pier around noon. He grabbed my arm: “Frega, what's your relationship with MAGIC?”

“Depends. The editorial kind, I can explain. The sales kind, I can invent. The rest, I wouldn't know.”

“No, no. I'm talking about witches and fortune tellers. The Indians of India were the first. Then the African santerías. All of them fighting evil with rituals.”

He was well informed. I played dumb. He pressed on: “I want to take you to a friend of mine, to have your cards read.”

“The notary's cards I left at home. Poker I've given up.”

He burst out laughing: “Not those cards. Tarot.”

“Isn't tarot a variety of Sicilian orange?”

“Don't be an ass, Frega. Same son of a bitch as always. Let's go.”

Twenty minutes on foot, four blocks. We arrived.

A Portuguese woman, ninety-two years old, cigar lit. “Damn, you made it. I've been expecting you for a while now. Juliana and her Indian friend were here yesterday morning. They're furious. Caught up in the mess you're stirring up with that damn gillettenarrative.com. You can't be bought. You can't be sold. You can't be spent.”

I was laughing like a madman. It felt like a dream. My friend gave me a pinch: “This isn't Hollywood. This is Main Street.”

She began the reading. Told me not to cross my legs. To be serious. At a certain point, a voice arrived — a spirit, an echo from the other side:

“Frega, is it true, what you wrote in volume 15 of the Gillette saga?”

I burst out laughing. The palm reader, disheartened: “Magic isn't what's needed here. Tarot isn't what's needed. Only prayers are needed.”

Welcome. Ferdinando