



UNFORGETTABLE L’ORÉAL MOMENTS

Along the road connecting Messina to Catania, he decided I should drive, and gave me my first lesson on the one thing I needed to know above everything else: how to present myself to a client.

I was dressed like a dandy, wearing a woman's French perfume, and I honestly hoped he wasn't about to drop me off on some ring road to sell myself — the first-ever "GILLETTE GIGOLO IN SICILY," unable to tell a soul about it. It would have been a truly unique experience, but it was just a cheap little ironic worry running through my head, one I chose to keep to myself.

Giorgio said he'd introduce me as Mr. Frega, shadowing him for the company, and that he'd ask the client to fire any question at me they liked, to watch me closely, because one day I'd be famous — not for the wrong reasons, only for my ability, he was sure of it. That way he'd make the client feel important, worth visiting, and we'd see what kind of reaction we'd get. Answer however you want, he said.

He wasn't stupid — he'd made the client test go down easy, but he was as curious as a small-town gossip and wanted to see for himself what I'd do, what would happen. And the truth is, neither of us really knew.

First client on the list: the RINASCENTE distribution platform in Catania. I'd been lucky enough, during my five days of Gillette training, to visit their warehouses without an appointment, and I'd understood something: it was only the strength of the Gillette name that got us seen without notice — somewhere between being arrogant and being indispensable.

The secretary came to greet us and showed us into the waiting room, and soon after the buyer came out to meet us — a tall woman, elegant, beautiful, well put together and perfumed, who greeted us both right away and asked if we wanted coffee.

Giorgio thanked her and said yes, I said no, and he was already getting ready to answer the buyer's question about who I was and what my role was.

Before he could get a word out, I beat him to it: I'm a sales apprentice, I said, but please don't mistake me for the sorcerer's apprentice.

She burst out laughing and said: what a lovely day this is turning out to be — I came in a bit down, and now everything's changed.

Giorgio had his reading glasses with him, an important-looking pen he always kept in his jacket pocket, and an A5 leather organizer with a zip closure, where he kept his order forms.

No bag, no computer, and his phone strictly turned off.

They started putting together the consumer order — that's what they called it — and I kept hearing them talk about a "PICKING" slot, trying to work out what it actually meant.

There was no actual sale that day — in large-scale retail, everything ran on a fixed annual price list, with local promotions handled through flyers managed centrally, from head office.

The whole meeting lasted twenty minutes, and before we left the woman asked: Mr. Priolo, aren't you going to invite me to lunch today, so we can get to know your sorcerer's apprentice a little better — the one who hasn't said another word?

Of course, he said — let's meet at Ognina, at the Selen restaurant, 1:30, and it would be my great pleasure to host you on behalf of my company.

Meanwhile we went down to the shop floor, to the perfumery department, to meet the woman in charge of the COROLLE cosmetics order, and when he opened his order book I was struck to see twelve pages of listings — more than 1,500 SKUs.

When they launched the slogan "BECAUSE I'M WORTH IT," it wasn't just a bold line — there's a whole philosophy inside it that still makes it timeless today: woman.

Ferdinando