THE PHONE CALL THAT DIDN'T MATTER



FERDINANDO FREGA

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That day I wasn't waiting for anything.

Which is, come to think of it, the ideal condition for receiving everything.

The phone rang. Unknown number. I hesitated, the way one hesitates before every unknown number: will it be an electricity offer or destiny? It is almost always the electricity.

I answered.

A normal conversation. No historic announcement. No revelation. No sentence destined for the books. No violins in the background, no solemn voice saying: "Ferdinando, write down the time." Destiny, evidently, has no press office.

We talked for a few minutes. Two pleasantries, a question, a vague answer, a "we'll be in touch." The kind of "we'll be in touch" that usually means "never," and that this time, for once, actually meant it.

When the call was over, I went on with my day. I did other things. I met other people. I thought about something else: a deadline, a coffee, probably where I had left my glasses. If someone had asked me what the most important moment of that week had been, I would not have mentioned that phone call. I would have talked about a meeting I do not remember today, and that at the time seemed essential to me.

Years later I changed my mind.

Because from that conversation came an encounter.

From that encounter, a proposal.

From that proposal, a choice.

From that choice, another city.

From that city, a different life.

Five steps, and not one with a sign saying “warning, turning point.” Not even an arrow on the asphalt.

Turning points rarely introduce themselves as turning points. They arrive disguised as details, with the air of someone just stopping by to ask for directions. That is why almost nobody recognizes them as they pass: they are too busy looking at the things that seem important, the ones with an agenda and a buffet.

History loves events.

Life prefers consequences.

And consequences, like creditors, always arrive later, but they remember you perfectly well.

Ferdinando