

## A sublime afternoon

di Beatrice Fabbri

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The little terrace was fully decorated: a little table, a wooden chair, the perfume of blossoming jasmine in the corner were more than a sign that spring was there to awaken her from winter's lethargy. Vera was not sure of anything anymore, but one thing was clear to her: she wouldn't have settled for anything less she had deserved from now on. She was still in bed yawning and caressing her cat, making faces while looking at the window open and refreshing the air. Her queen size bed was comfy and full of books of any kind. Sleeping with books? Why not? She had the sensation that after closing a book books plots, characters would have shaped her dreams and nightmares. Was this true? Who knows, but then, their silent presence was a healing presence. Reading has always meant living more than one life at a time. At least for her. Books and real life: so weird.

It took some time to get out of bed, brushing her teeth, feeding the cat with a bowl of milk, making breakfast and most of all drinking her large cup of coffee. Why?

She opened her black notebook and wrote some lines:

Thursday, May 14: awake and thrilled to bits! Thursday, day sacred to Jupiter. So what?

Then, she closed the notebook and served herself some more coffee. She, then, realized she

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was having her breakfast at 2:00 p.m. It was like plunging into the calm sea of her thoughts, caressing softly the skin of her feelings without hurrying, taking the time to put each piece into the puzzle. If only that was possible.

The thrill of what happened the day before was there with her with all its lights and shadows.

She reopened the notebook and wrote:

Am I under the influence of my desires? If so, I'm lost, they are driving me to the unknown. Am I subdued ?

She shut the notebook and brushed all the questions aside. After tidying up the kitchen, she laid down on the couch and closed her eyes. Curtain opened:

Wednesday, May 13. Ultimately a calque of dies Mercurii "day of Mercury".

Hello Vera, today I will delight you with Fate, trust me and walk downtown as scheduled for that literary promenade. I won't play any tricks on you, but if I ever do, again, don't be scared, nothing bad could happen to you. I will make you wonder and wander and this is enough. Mercurius introduced himself making faces, winged and ready to smooth, caress, awaken her from nonsense, what else?

Late noon. The city was under a warm sun, the sky was blue and without clouds and Vera was ready for a new adventure. She always reminded herself of beautiful lines from an Audre Lorde's poem: "Some women wait for something to change and nothing does change so they change themselves". These words have always sounded like a mantra to her when struggling about making plans. She put on a white silky shirt and a pair of blue skinny jeans, some drops of her gardenia scent and comfortable shoes. Being dressed up than too casual was taking care of herself.

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Half an hour later, she arrived to the meeting point. There were already some people acquainted with literary tours and Vera felt at ease with all. She, then recognized him in the middle of the crowd and turned her face in the opposite direction. Just one glimpse. She knew she was able to overcome her shyness. The crowd helped her to focus on. It would have been a funny late noon wandering downtown the city, whispered Mercurius in her little ear.

The literary walk started softly and step by step, Vera was intrigued by what the guide, a journalist badly dressed had to tell about adventurous foreign women living in the city, political plots and little historical facts related to nineteenth century. While all were walking, some of us got lost and we reunited later to the entire crew. We took the time to rest a little while on the church steps. A woman started to talk to me about something hilarious dealing with snobbish English women in town and I laughed. He, suddenly, came out of the crowd, came to me to say hello. Nice to see you again, he told me. I smiled and that was all. The tour ended in a noisy street not too far from one of the most beautiful churches in town. The guide spent the last few minutes talking about the epistolary work by a young journalist in search of fame, in love with a married woman who was also a fantastic socialite. He didn't give many details about her but left all to the audience's imagination. Everyone wanted to read the book and asked for the title. What was good was the aperitivo after...Vera was hungry but not as much as she expected, she was thirsty. She talked to the woman next to her and became acquainted with her. She found she was funny and smart behind her shabby façade. Just before leaving for the aperitivo, she turned her head, while he was saying goodbye to everyone. It was in that moment he called her and asked to come closer. Why? She thought, but then she came closer, not too much. Then, he leaned up and kissed her softly on the cheek. She kissed him on a cheek too. She felt suddenly his beard tickling her skin. She caressed briefly his face and smiled. Then she stepped back. The scene suddenly started running slow and then fast.

See, Vera, this was a delicate kiss for a fair maiden from a gallant knight, whispered Mercurius in her ear. She started laughing loud. There were casualties and this was one of this: being kissed on the cheek by someone I didn't know well. Did he want to show me his affection? Or what ? why me? She was not in the mood to make any hypothesis. So said, she joined the crew and walked to the bar.

He had disappeared while riding his bike. May be, he watched her walking away, may be not. Nothing stays the same. A circle within a circle, the shape of an instant. The geometry of space and time and the simple and yet incomprehensible rule of physics. Finding the instant center and move within. Each occasional strange event would have taken a gift, a sign on purpose.

The aperitivo time was spent in good conversation, tasty appetizers and a full glass of sparkling

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prosecco. When her time came, she walked back home. She would have done one more extra nice thing for herself: casting a spell on Mercurius.

Her heart was a secret garden and Mercurius didn't know this, no matter how sublime could have been the entire afternoon.