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# Cercando La grande bellezza

By Unknown

Travel is useful,  
it exercises the imagination.  
All the rest  
is disappointment and fatigue.  
Our journey is entirely imaginary.  
That is its strength.  
It goes from life to death.  
People, animals, cities, things,  
all are imagined.  
It's a novel,  
just a fictitious narrative.  
Littr says so, and he's never wrong.  
And besides, anyone can do as much.  
You just have to close your eyes.  
It's on the other side of life.  
Louis-Ferdinand Cline  
Journey to the End of the Night  
Fire!  
You're a real pain in the ass!  
Enough!  
They even have cocktails  
with cherries. Remember?  
Hey, jerks!  
I'll screw you!  
I'll screw you!  
Have you seen Ermanno?  
- I'll screw you! Now!  
- Get lost!  
What the hell are you doing?  
My phone's been stolen!  
I'm starring in two TV dramas...  
I'm playing a Pope in one,  
and a junkie on the road to recovery  
in the other.  
Impressive!  
No theatre work?  
I'm supposed to do  
Shakespeare with Pietro, but...  
it has to be at least  
three hours long,  
be an ambitious project,  
and no more small cities!  
I'm trying to write a piece  
for theatre, and the concept is...

- What about you?  
- I might give up acting.  
In this shitty country there are  
never any good female roles.  
I'll write my first novel,  
a Proust-style piece.  
Really?  
Proust is my favourite writer!  
Along with Ammaniti...  
What a coincidence.  
Who is that woman?  
Don't you recognise her?  
It's Lorena.  
Who?  
An ex TV showgirl, now in  
full physical and mental decline.  
Never seen her! But then  
I've never had a television.  
Viola, I know you don't have one.  
You tell me all the time.  
- What does she do now?  
- Nothing, of course.  
Happy birthday, Jep!  
Happy birthday, Rome!  
La Colita!  
To this question, as kids,  
my friends always gave  
the same answer...  
"pussy".  
Whereas I answered...  
"the smell of old  
people's houses".  
The question was:  
"What do you like most, really,  
in life?"  
I was destined for sensibility.  
I was destined to become a writer.  
I was destined to become  
Jep Gambardella.  
You paid no attention  
to me tonight!  
Romano, don't start moaning,  
we're not an item.  
- You liked that guy?

- I like everyone and no one.

But I wonder why you're always  
with me when it's no one's turn.

- Will you take me to the airport?

- Sure. What time are you leaving?

- In three hours.

- Three hours?

Then I should crash on your sofa...

Go home, I need to pack  
and I don't want anyone around.

- But I live miles away.

**- See you at 8:**

Goodnight.

Guys?

Guys?

Children!

Run along!

Catellani?

The best, of course.

Did Catellani the tailor  
make your suit?

There was no doubt  
about Malagna's shady intentions.

The girl should be rescued  
at any cost, without loss of time.

Sir, you drank!

Just enough to forget  
my birthday.

- You want infusion?

- Heavens, no!

- I got you a present.

- How sweet!

This is a lucky charm  
from my country.

Good thing it's lucky,  
because it's pretty ugly.

Keep it on your bedside  
and stop complaining!

I will! And thanks.

Wake me up at 15:00, you rascal.

You're funny when you call me that!

I don't love you!

Brilliant!

Did you enjoy the performance?  
Parts of it.  
That violent head-butt  
made me understand many things.  
- Let's start from the beginning.  
- Or the end?  
You know, Talia Concept  
loves to provoke.  
Don't bother, there are more  
important things than provoking me.  
And this habit of speaking  
in the third person is unbearable.  
What are you reading?  
I don't need to read, I live  
on vibrations, extra-sensory ones.  
Extra-sensoriality aside,  
what do you mean by vibrations?  
The poetry of vibrations cannot  
be described  
with the vulgarity of words.  
Well, try at least.  
I'm an artist,  
I don't need to explain jack shit.

**So I'll write:**

but she doesn't know what they are."  
I'm starting to dislike  
this interview,  
I sense conflictuality in you.  
- Conflictuality as a vibration?  
- As a pain in the ass.  
Let's talk about my mom's  
abusive boyfriend.  
No! I want to know  
what a vibration is.  
It's my radar to intercept  
the world.  
Your radar... meaning?  
You're a pain in the ass.  
We got off to a bad start...  
Talia Concept wants to be  
interviewed by your paper,  
it has many readers.  
But you're biased.

Write about how she has sex  
with her fianc 11 times a day,  
he's a talented conceptual artist,  
he covers basketballs with confetti!  
He's sensational!

Talia Concept is talking about  
things that are meaningless to me.

All I've heard  
is unpublishable fluff.

You can't charm me  
with things like:

"I'm an artist,  
I don't need to explain".

Our paper has a core  
of cultured readers  
that don't want to be taken  
for fools. I work for that core.  
So let me talk about my eventful,  
difficult but necessary  
journey as an artist!

Necessary for who?

For heaven's sake, madam,  
what is a vibration?

- I don't know.

- You don't know.

You are an obsessive jerk!

I'll tell your editor to send me  
a journalist of a higher stature.

A piece of advice:

when you speak to my editor,  
go easy on the stature business.

She's a dwarf, you know.

Jep, this interview is a hoot!

Maybe, but don't send me

to interview someone

who head-butts walls again.

- You know what the trick is?

- Foam rubber.

Amateur dramatics isn't dead.

Did you get offended

about the stature comment?

Don't be silly!

That's the funniest bit!

I'm a dwarf, it's no secret.

It's the first and last thing  
everyone says about me.  
You're a spectacular woman, Dadina.  
You've had the career you deserve.  
But you haven't had the career  
you deserve.  
Maybe I don't have much to say...  
Bullshit, you're lazy.  
You never leave Rome.  
Go to Giglio to do that report  
on the Concordia  
I've asked you to do 50 times.  
Re-heated rice is always tastier  
than freshly cooked rice.  
The old is better than the new.  
Plans tonight, chrie?  
As the great De Blasi,  
my predecessor, said:  
"Tonight I'll do two things,  
eat soup and have a shag."  
Two things that contradict  
each other.  
That's what I'd say too,  
and she'd reply, in a serious tone:  
"No, Dadina, they don't,  
because they're both hot."  
There's a publishing house  
in Ancona, it's not that small,  
they want an interview book  
about you.  
Another interview book?  
We're obsessed with interviews!  
Can't you hear them?  
"As I always say"... to who?  
Forget it!  
And honestly,  
who'll buy a book called:  
"Visions and revisions.  
Jep Gambardella's Galaxy"?  
It's a serious title!  
Unfortunately in this country,  
in order to be taken seriously,  
you have to take yourself seriously.  
I only wrote one novel, 40 years ago.

Impossible to find too...  
Bullshit, "The Human Apparatus"  
was a masterpiece!  
It even won the... what was it?  
- The Bancarella prize.  
- Shit, the Bancarella prize!  
You're very kind, but forget it...  
it'd be too pompous.  
I can't, you'll put me  
in an awkward position.  
I've agreed and I've even accepted  
an advance...  
- How much?  
- 1,500 euros.  
Give it back,  
I'll give you 1,500 euros.  
By the way,  
I spoke to the theatre people.  
They'll give you three nights  
but you pay for the lights.  
Who cares about that!  
Jep, this is great news.  
It's really great news.  
Thank you!  
Are you still up?  
It's time to go to bed.  
That's Viola Bartoli,  
Bartoli's widow.  
The guy who was killed,  
the actual Bartoli.  
Viola has a 50 metre yacht  
that belonged to Himmler, the Nazi.  
You know what I call Viola?  
- No, what?  
- "To-good-to-poo".  
- I don't understand.  
- Because she's pernickety.  
Usually pernickety people don't poo.  
When I introduced Trumeau  
to my family, my father said:  
"Miss, before marrying my son,  
have you ever seen him poo?"  
- How gross!  
- It's not as bad as you think.

Actually, my wife and I are the only couple in Italy who are in love.

Orietta, watch out for Lello.

Yes, I know.

He's the world's greatest salesman, he cons everyone.

In no time he'll get you to spend every penny

on whatever he's selling.

You always flatter me.

Just because I express myself well doesn't mean I'm always working!

- What do you do?

- I sell toys.

Not just in a shop,

he's a wholesaler on a global scale, he even sells to the Chinese!

What about him?

Don't you know him? Sebastiano Paf, perhaps Italy's greatest poet.

**He wrote:**

down with reminiscence."

He's on the Dukan Diet, so Dadina won't leave him.

Is he with her?

- He is, but she...

- Like at high school.

Why doesn't he ever talk?

Because he listens.

- Stop sniffing up with your nose?

- Bugger off.

Jep's found a theatre for me.

Do you want the lead role?

I'm no longer an actress,

I'm a writer now.

Maybe...

Maybe I'll direct a film.

- Viola, darling!

- Help me, I'm worried about my son.

- What can I do?

- Why don't you talk to him?

You always say you're good with strangers...

That's the problem, I'm too good.  
- Is he seeing a therapist?  
- Yes, but he wants to stop going.  
Take him to a psychiatrist, they're

**pragmatic:**

That stuff makes him feel worse.  
Relax, he's always been odd,  
he is what he is.

By the way, have you tried  
this rascal's endive quiche?  
It's the first time she's made it  
and it's better than my mom's,  
please, you must try some!

You changed your hair colour.  
I feel Pirandello-esque lately...

- Great jazz, no?

- Not really.

The Ethiopian jazz scene is the only  
interesting one today.

I'm from Milan, to be honest...

I find Romans...

unbearable!

The best people in Rome  
are the tourists.

Take Italy...

What are we famous for overseas?

Fashion and pizza.

A country of weavers and grocers.

How can someone who sells toys,

bringing joy to the world,

be such a pessimist

and a defeatist? You're dark.

- Dark?

- Yes.

I heard Gisella Montanelli

went to loans sharks

to pay her hairdressing debts.

Jep says I'm dark!

Gisella's really sunk that low?

Rome is the only city in the world

where Marxism has truly existed.

You can't excel over others

for more than a week,

you're immediately brought back  
to mediocrity.  
Rome is pure collectivism.  
Pure collectivism.  
Stefania, what utter nonsense!  
Do you know that Flaubert wanted  
to write a book about nothing?  
If he'd met you, we'd have had  
a great book, what a shame!  
You're a misogynist.  
It's not all about you, I'm not  
a misogynist, I'm a misanthropist.  
When hate's involved,  
one must aim high.  
You're a dark man.  
I'm a transparent person,  
without a doubt!  
Lello!  
Aren't you stopping tonight?  
Mom!  
When I see you I blush!  
Andrea...  
- You're crazy.  
- No, mom, I'm not crazy!  
I've got problems.  
"As the light flashed,  
love sat down in the corner.  
Shy and distracted as it was.  
This is why  
we could tolerate life no longer."  
Gosh,  
no one's quoted me for years!  
I read your book as a teenager,  
I've never forgotten the end.  
Stop right there, you're stroking  
my ego in a dangerous way.  
You must've been deeply in love  
when you wrote it.  
Moravia made the same comment,  
more or less.  
Even though he worded it  
a bit better.  
I once saw Piazza Navona  
covered in snow.

Really? What was it like?  
White!  
When I come to Rome I live there.  
Deep in the outskirts...  
What job you do?  
Me? I'm rich.  
Great job.  
You didn't enjoy it.  
I know I'm not very good.  
Why do you say that?  
Plus it's so sad being good,  
you risk becoming deft.  
It didn't seem like you cared much.  
You're very beautiful, Orietta,  
very, very, very beautiful.  
I take photos, you know.  
Of myself.  
At all times of the day,  
to get to know myself.  
- With the self-timer,  
with my phone... - Interesting.  
My Facebook friends say  
I take great photos.  
I bet there are some of you naked...  
- A few.  
- I knew it!  
Do you want to see them?  
- Of course.  
- I'll get my computer.  
The most important thing I discovered  
a few days after turning 65  
is that I can't waste any more time  
doing things I don't want to do.  
When I came to Rome,  
at the age of 26,  
I fell pretty swiftly,  
almost without realizing it,  
into what might be defined  
as the whirlpool of the high life.  
But I didn't just want to live  
the high life.  
Sacconi should be in charge.  
Antonini's a fucking pain  
in the ass!

I wanted to be  
the king of the high life.  
And I succeeded.  
I didn't just want  
to go to parties.  
I wanted to have  
the power to make them a failure.  
Gambardella?  
Sorry for showing up like this,  
without warning...  
I'm Alfredo Marti.  
Nice to meet you, I'm Jep,  
but my house is this one.  
I don't want to bother you.  
How can I help you?  
I'm Elisa De Santis' husband.  
Did you have children?  
No.  
I couldn't.  
But I could.  
I could.  
I'm sorry.  
Forgive me.  
She could too.  
Elisa died.  
Yesterday.  
Alfredo, if you need anything,  
you know where I live.  
Don't leave me alone, please.  
Don't leave me.  
We were married for 35 years...  
but Elisa always loved you.  
What are you saying?  
Elisa and I went out together  
when we were kids.  
She left me, I think,  
it was so long ago I don't remember.  
Yes, she left you.  
On September 8th, 1970.  
Exactly...  
You're distraught now,  
that's normal.  
I'm not distraught.  
Elisa only ever loved one man.

- You.  
- How can you say that?  
I never saw Elisa again,  
you were together for a lifetime!  
I found a diary of hers,  
with a lock.  
And I broke the lock off.  
I write for a living, believe me...  
when you write, you give life  
to fantasies, imagination, lies...  
I was only a good companion.  
That's all she wrote about me.  
35 years together...  
and I'm mentioned in two lines  
as a good companion.  
Here, Alfredo.  
What'll you do now?  
What I've always done.  
I'll live in adoration of her.  
What's he doing?  
Stop!  
Jep!  
Well done!  
He made it!  
- Have you seen my daughter?  
- Your daughter? No.  
Francesca!  
Who are you?  
Who am I?  
- I am...  
- No, you're nobody.  
Nobody?  
But I...  
Francesca, where on earth are you?  
I've been looking for you  
for over an hour!  
- Are you sad, sir?  
- No.  
Sir is strange.  
I don't like that,  
I prefer you to be sad.  
- Are you going to bed?  
- Last night I went to bed at 22:30.  
Now I don't know what to do.

Morning is an unknown object to me.

Unknown.

Sir can help me clean  
the house then.

- Sir can't, sir feels strange.

- Sir is a rascal.

"Is there a new nation struggling  
within the walls of the city?  
From the crevices of that soil  
a feverish vapour ascends like smoke  
and works like a magic philtre  
in the blood of some men  
producing a form of heroic madness  
unlike any other."

What do you think? Shit,  
it's powerful, don't you think?

Why the hell do an adaptation  
of D'Annunzio for the stage?

D'Annunzio has always been  
paradigmatic...

You think that certain  
intellectual feats give you dignity,  
and that others are better than you,  
but you're wrong!

Try and write something of your own,  
like...

a feeling, or sorrow...

I've known you ages  
but you've never been here.

Don't get big-headed, you've got  
a room in a student flat...

Are you going out with that  
gloomy girl you're always with?

I wish!

I've tried it on 7,000 times.

I've never even had a kiss,  
not one!

- She's a bitch.

- No, she's not.

- She's complicated.

- She's a bitch.

Trust me, you're too kind.

I can tell her type from a mile off,  
I don't even need to meet them.

- What are you doing with that hat?
- My morning exercise.
- That's exercise?
- Yes!

Do you know how many women  
you've been with?

No, I'm rubbish at maths.

I've always been good at maths.

It's six, I introduced you to them.

Seven.

- Seven?

- Seven.

- When did number seven happen?

- Last summer.

A friend of my sister's back home  
when I went to see my folks.

She runs a shop...

- She's nice.

- That means she's a dog.

What about you and Orietta?

- Who's Orietta?

- Don't you know?

She was at your house...

A real beauty.

At my age, a beauty isn't enough.

I might take up writing again.

That's great news!

Has something happened?

Why?

You want to write again after all  
these years, something's happened.

Something always happens in Rome.

Nothing's happened.

What are you looking at?

Come here.

They met at university

10 days ago.

They haven't stopped kissing  
for 10 days.

This generation of youths  
horrifies me.

Supported by this state for years,  
when they realise they're smart,  
they go study or work in America

or London,  
forgetting about the support.

They have no civil vocation.

As a young girl,  
in the occupied arts department,  
I oozed civil vocation.

- Is that so?

- Yes, why?

- Come off it...

- What do you know?

In those years you were in Naples  
being a loafer with posh girls  
and writing your only novelette.

I didn't notice that history  
was being made.

Novelette? It was a masterpiece  
of Italian literature!

I confirm that Jep and civil  
vocation never got along,  
he was lazy and the other  
hyperactive.

Romano, stop sucking up to your  
idol, you're pathetic!

"The Human Apparatus"  
was a narrow-minded, frivolous book  
and pretentious too, like its title.  
Jep knows that.

- That's why he stopped there.

- Sorry, what about you then?

I tried changing things  
with literature.

I wrote 11 novels, and a book about  
the Party's official history.

You're forgetting your contribution  
to that reality show...

"Girl Farm".

Television can be  
a very formative experience!  
I always go when I'm invited.

I get my hands dirty,  
I try things...

I don't spend my life being a snob.

Are you saying that a socially  
committed writer is advantaged,

and safeguarded,  
compared to a novelist  
who deals with, how can I say...  
with feelings?  
Of course she is!  
The cause someone commits  
their life to isn't secondary.  
Like creating a family,  
dedicating oneself with sacrifice  
to raising one's children day  
after day.  
Eusebio and I have four children,  
we plan the future together.  
I work hard  
to be both a mother and a woman,  
but at the end of the day I feel  
I've done something important.  
So if we don't have children  
we should contemplate  
the idea of suicide?  
- I don't mean you, of course.  
- She means me.  
Dadina, I admire you greatly.  
You're a badass.  
Do you use "badass"  
in any of your 11 novels?  
Yes, I do, I try to be modern.  
- Modernity is badass.  
- De gustibus.  
What great conviction!  
Should I envy you or be repelled?  
Yes, I have convictions.  
I'm 53...  
- You'd never know.  
- Never.  
I'm 53, I've suffered,  
I bounced back,  
and learned lots about life.  
Well, I can see you have nothing  
to say, at last.  
I was drinking...  
As we care about you,  
we don't want to embarrass you.  
You know, all this boastful talk,

all this serious ostentatiousness,  
all this ego...  
These harsh damning judgments  
of yours  
hide a certain fragility,  
a feeling of inadequacy  
and above all a series of untruths.  
We care about you, we know you.  
We also know our untruths  
and for this, unlike you,  
we end up talking about nonsense,  
about trivial matters,  
because we don't want  
to revel in our pettiness.  
What untruths  
are you talking about?  
Everything I said is true,  
it's what I am, what I believe in.  
Please, I'm a gentleman.  
Don't destroy my only certainty.  
Tell me exactly what my lies are  
and what my fragility is!  
I'm a woman with balls, tell me!  
"Woman with balls" would be too much  
for any gentleman.  
All right, Stefania,  
you asked for it. In random order:  
Your civil vocation during  
your student days went unnoticed.  
But another vocation of yours  
is remembered by many,  
the one practiced by you then,  
in the university toilets.  
You wrote about the Party because  
you were its leader's mistress.  
And your 11 novels,  
published by a small publishing  
house subsidized by the Party,  
reviewed by minor Party-affiliated  
newspapers,  
are insignificant,  
everyone says so.  
I'm not saying my novelette  
was any better,

I agree with you there.  
Your relationship with Eusebio...  
What relationship? Eusebio  
loves Giordano, everyone knows.  
He has for years.  
They lunch every day  
at Arnaldo's, under the coat rack,  
like sweethearts under an oak tree.  
You all know but turn a blind eye.  
Your dedication to your children,  
with all the sacrifices entailed...  
You work all week in TV,  
you go out every night,  
even on Mondays, when popper  
dealers don't even venture out.  
You're never with your children,  
not even on the  
long holidays you take.  
And plus you have a butler,  
a waiter,  
a cook, a chauffeur  
who drives the kids to school,  
three babysitters, so...  
how and when exactly  
do you make any sacrifices?  
These are the untruths and fragility  
I'm talking about.  
Stefania, mother and woman.  
You're 53, with a life in tatters,  
like the rest of us.  
Instead of acting superior  
and treating us with contempt,  
you should look at us  
with affection.  
We're all on the brink of despair,  
all we can do  
is look each other in the face,  
keep each other company,  
joke a little...  
Don't you agree?  
Son of a bitch!  
Egidio, old chap!  
Bastard!  
I haven't seen you in 30 years!

- I need to talk to you.  
- Later! I'm busy, can't you see?  
- Is this still your place?  
- Luckily not, I sold it.  
I'm still the manager though.  
You're famous! You're always  
in the gossip rags.  
You're at all the VIP parties,  
always with a girl!  
You never come here...  
Get lost, will you?  
We're having a serious talk!  
- Are you married?  
- Married, divorced.  
- I've got a daughter, Ramona.  
- Did you have to call her Ramona?  
You artists are all the same!  
I tell you I have a daughter  
and you complain about her name!  
What's wrong with "Ramona"?  
Nothing, it's a name that implies  
ambitions...  
There's my daughter, you see?  
She makes me so mad,  
I've told her a million times!  
You're too old for this!  
Now these hot young Polish girls  
rule the scene.  
They're experts at turning tricks.  
She's 42 and she wants to be  
a sophisticated stripper.  
But the world's no longer  
sophisticated. Right, Jep?  
I know, only you and I are.  
That's right, goddammit!  
But she wants to keep doing  
this job, for the money.  
I don't know why  
she always needs money  
and what she fucking  
does with it.  
- For drugs? - I wish,  
we'd have a common interest.  
She doesn't even drink beer.

I don't know what she spends  
her money on, she's always broke.

- Do I seem like a loser?

- No, why?

Because I can hear myself talk,  
I sound like a loser.

I'm nearly 70 and I have to work  
till 6 in the morning every day.

I swapped cocaine for heroin  
15 years ago.

What an asshole!

A heroin junkie at 50!

Could I be more of a loser?

But I'm not important,  
it's her I worry about, I love her.

And I'm no loser there,

I'm a father.

And like all fathers, I'm worried.

What'll she do in a few years?

She can't be a stripper at 50!

- Why don't you fix her up?

- Me?

Don't you know any rich guys  
who want a beautiful wife?

We could change her name,  
that's no problem.

You'd do me a big favour.

- I'm a writer, not a pimp.

- Sorry, I was a bit vulgar.

Daddy's little girl, this is  
my good friend, Jep Gambardella.

I'll leave you to it,

I need the toilet.

Be right back!

- Hi, I'm Jep.

- Ramona.

- If you want a girl, get a Pole.

- Are you kidding?

Who wants a girl?

Not me.

I really am an old friend  
of your father's.

- Dad has no friends.

- He used to.

When I came to Rome, I'd wait for  
my friends to leave to come here.  
Your father was a nice guy.  
He taught me loads of things,

**such as:**

How useful!

He asked me to find you a husband.

He's obsessed.

I'm not looking for a husband.

Well, you should be.

- A family's a beautiful thing.

- I know.

But I'm not cut out

for beautiful things.

What's wrong?

- I feel old.

- You're no spring chicken.

One.

- How are you?

- Very well.

Just got back from India,

I had amazing dysentery.

Come to my divorce party,

I'll have burlesque dancers there.

Of course.

What present would you like?

**One big wish:**

in the Middle East to end.

- I'll do my best.

- Two

700 euros.

Thank you.

Tell me, darling.

Perhaps...

I was thinking, my mouth...

I'm scared, I've never

done it before, professor.

Don't call me professor.

Call me "my friend" or "my love".

We all need love.

What star sign are you,

deeply intense lady?

- Aquarius.

- I knew it!

Want to go back 30 years, to when  
it rained at the end of August?

- Done.

- That's 700 euros.

Three.

- You've been to see Casagrande!

- No, I don't even know him.

You betrayed me, darling!

We're undergoing a journey,  
and you've interrupted it.

This is the last time.

Go, go.

Bye then.

- Full price.

- Five.

1,200 euros.

- How's your mom?

- She's fine, thank you.

- Seven.

- 700 euros.

Have you filled out, darling?

You're always in my heart.

700 euros.

- As handsome as ever.

- Ten.

- You're my pride.

- Thanks.

Eleven.

Professor, I'm here about  
my hyperthyroidism.

Where does this undesired  
perspiration happen?

On my hands.

- Pray for me, sister.

- You don't need my prayers.

You don't know how much of my income  
I must surrender to the tax man.

Go, sister, go.

That's 700, sister.

Fourteen.

- Spying on me?

- No, I was going to knock.

- When?
- When you were more relaxed.
- What brings you here?
- Nothing, I'm just curious.
- I told you what I think.
- I've no hidden agenda.

Do you think every guy  
who comes near you wants sex?  
Perhaps they just want to talk,  
driven by simple  
and harmless curiosity.

- That's never happened to me.
- It has now.

Wouldn't armbands be more  
comfortable?

Yes, but they irritate my armpits.

Any plans for lunch?

I'm going to my mum's with my dad.

So where's the dog?

What dog?

People buy houses like this  
so they can have dogs.

I had a Labrador, but 9 years ago  
he got fed up and left me.

Labradors are dumb.

And Cooker Spaniels are dumb too.

Hi, Jep.

Hi, Antonello.

- You know Venditti?
- I know everyone.

It must be very satisfying  
knowing so many people!

- You're guaranteed to be unhappy.
- Have people let you down?

I've let them down.

Andrea! Are you with your mom?

- She's parking.
- How are you?

Not well.

Proust says that death  
may come to us this afternoon.

Proust is scary.

Not tomorrow, not in a year,  
but this afternoon.

But it's evening already  
so it'd be tomorrow afternoon.

**Turgenev said:**

noticing me."

Don't take these writers  
so seriously!

Who should I take seriously then?

Nothing, apart from the menu,  
of course.

Things are too complicated to be  
understood by one individual.

Just because you don't understand  
doesn't mean nobody can.

- Your reply?

My reply?

- Jep!

- Hello, Viola.

- Good evening.

- Viola.

Darling, why don't you  
get a table for us?

How did you find him?

- He's better.

- Good, very good.

He's much better, I'm so happy!

- Dinner on Thursday?

- Of course!

On Thursday I'm inexplicably free.

Did you hear about Valentina Lemme?

She's dating her personal trainer.

Really? It doesn't show.

- I invited her anyway.

- Are you sure?

She's nasty, you know.

She's like the devil!

Really? You think so?

I see her at yoga twice a week.

- You'll come?

- Of course.

- See you Thursday.

- Okay.

Goodbye.

Watch that table carefully, but

don't let them notice you looking.  
Waiter? Champagne, please.  
Cristal.  
You can't imagine  
how much one learns  
by living alongside  
a cluster of religious institutes.  
So that was your first time?  
Yes, he didn't think he'd been good,  
too quick, he said.  
So, out of anger or to let off  
steam, I'm not sure which,  
he got a football  
and played with it furiously!  
And you?  
I didn't enjoy making love with him,  
but seeing him with a football  
was an unforgettable thing!  
He became really good,  
he played on the national team.  
Your dad said you spend everything  
you earn.  
What on? You can tell me.  
Maybe one day. But why didn't you  
write another book?  
Because I went out too much  
at night.  
Rome makes you waste a lot of time.  
It's distracting.  
Writing requires focus and peace.  
That's not much of an answer.  
You have plenty of peace here,  
it's like being in the country.  
I wrote in short spurts.  
I was a sprint-style writer.  
I told you about my first time...  
but you've told me nothing.  
It's your turn now.  
On an island... one summer.  
I was...  
18, she was 20.  
At the lighthouse, at night.  
I went to kiss her,  
she turned away.

I was disappointed.  
But then she turned to look at me.  
She brushed me with her lips...  
she smelled of flowers.  
I didn't move,  
I wasn't able to move.  
Then she took a step back...  
and said...  
She took a step back.  
And said...  
I'm going home, it's late.  
Want to come to a party  
tomorrow night?  
Outstanding!  
Did you want us to die tonight?  
You won't believe it,  
but I love knife throwers.  
A true likeness,  
especially the hips.  
A masterpiece, Geronimo.  
It'll look great on the mantelpiece.  
God bless you, Jep!  
This is Ramona.  
What a unique and marvelous  
creature.  
- Is he taking the piss?  
- It's hard to know.  
I was being honest.  
I'm just sorry you missed  
Geronimo D.  
- What a tragedy!  
- Come in, make yourselves at home.  
- Who is that asshole?  
- Lillo De Gregorio.  
The greatest modern art collector  
in this debauched country.  
- What's Jep's floozy friend wearing?  
- I don't know.  
Jep's proving to be  
a disappointment.  
- Good evening, countess.  
- Hello, you're looking well.  
I wish I could say that same  
about the count. Hello, ladies!

Are you stupid?

You're distracting my artist.

Dad, we're having fun.

Carmelina, come and do some work.

Mom, I want to play here.

- Has this human being gone mad?

- We'll sort it out.

- I'm not coming, I'm staying here.

- You don't mean that.

Europe's greatest gallery owners  
are outside.

If you show them what you can do  
then ours will be a happy family.

But I'm already happy,

I want to be a vet one day.

Get to bed, you two!

My kids are going to bed.

Come.

I'll go to bed too.

I'm a kid too.

She blushes and says:

"Forgive me, I didn't know  
you loved me so much.

My ignorance is obscene."

He looks at her, reassuringly,

**and says:**

"Let me defend our love".

How's that for the start  
of the second act?

You've written a pile of shit.

That girl was crying.

Nonsense!

That girl earns millions!

Excuse me a moment.

- Hi, Stefano.

- Hi.

- The catering's gone downhill.

- Rome's gone downhill.

Steeplly downhill!

Do you have the case with you?

- I always do.

- You up for it?

See that?

Stefano has the keys to Rome's  
most beautiful buildings.

Is he a doorman?

No, he's not a doorman.

He's friends with princesses.

Are you ready?

Come with me.

Good evening, Princesses.

Good evening.

How come you have all these keys?

Because...

I'm a trustworthy person.

Did you see? It looked huge,  
but it's tiny.

Stay still, I'll take a photo of you.

Don't move.

That's no good.

Laugh.

Got it?

Yes, that's good.

Many think that a funeral,  
is a fortuitous event,  
without any rules.

That's not true.

A funeral is a high-society event  
par excellence.

You must never forget  
that at a funeral  
you are appearing on stage.

Nice.

Nice, but try the other one.

You must patiently wait  
for the relatives to disperse.

Once you are sure  
that all the guests are seated...  
only at that point, may you offer  
your condolences to the family.

In this way, everyone will see you.

You take the mourner's hands,  
and rest yours on their arms.

You whisper something to them,  
a comforting phrase,  
said with authority.

**For example:**

"In the days to come,  
when you feel the void,  
I want you to know  
that you can always count on me."  
The public will ask...  
"What's Jep Gambardella saying?"  
This is definitely the right dress.  
You're allowed to retire  
to a corner by yourself,  
as if contemplating your sorrow.  
However, another matter  
must be approached with shrewdness.  
The chosen place needs  
to be isolated  
but clearly visible  
to the public.  
Besides, a performance is good when  
it is devoid of any superfluity.  
So, the fundamental rule:  
one must never cry at a funeral.  
You must never steal the show  
from the family's sorrow.  
That is forbidden.  
Because it is immoral.  
Viola.  
In the days to come,  
when you feel the void,  
you can always count on me.  
Now I ask Andrea's friends  
to come forward,  
so that the coffin  
may be carried outside.  
Your back!  
It was nice not making love.  
It was nice loving each other.  
I'd forgotten what loving someone  
was about, I'd forgotten that.  
I spend all my money to cure myself.  
Your breakfast.  
Come on, I'm taking you to see  
a sea monster today.  
Your breakfast.  
Five more minutes.

Can you see the sea?  
Where?  
On the ceiling.  
Yes, I can see it.  
Who's going to look after you now?  
I'm sorry about your daughter.  
My condolences.  
I spent all my summers  
making plans for September.  
Not any longer.  
Now I spend the summer  
remembering the good intentions  
which vanished.  
In part because of laziness,  
in part because of carelessness.  
What's wrong  
with feeling nostalgic?  
It's the only distraction left  
for those  
who've no faith  
in the future!  
Without rain...  
August is coming to an end  
and September isn't arriving.  
And I'm so ordinary!  
But there's no need to worry.  
It's all right, it's okay.  
Bravo!  
Thank you.  
What are you doing here?  
Arturo!  
Why are you here?  
Don't you see?  
I'm rehearsing my magic show.  
This is tomorrow's special number:  
the vanishing giraffe.  
You can make this giraffe vanish?  
Of course I can make  
the giraffe vanish!  
Then make me vanish too.  
Jep, do you think that if I could  
really make people vanish  
I'd still be here at my age  
playing these circus games?

It's just a trick.  
It's just a trick!  
Romano, how did it go?  
Well, they clapped.  
I'm glad.  
- So why are you so sad?  
- I'm not sad.  
What's with the giraffe?  
For a magic show.  
I'll come and see you tomorrow.  
I'm not doing the show tomorrow.  
Why not? You said it went well.  
I'm leaving, I'm going back  
to my home town, for good.  
I won't even pack up my things,  
I'll leave it all.  
I've lived in this city  
for 40 years.  
And in the end I thought...  
the only person  
who deserved a goodbye  
was you.  
So you're leaving?  
Romano... why are you leaving?  
Rome has really disappointed me.  
Bye, Jep.  
See?  
- Want some coffee?  
- No, thanks. I know you're busy.  
I need to ask you something.  
Go ahead.  
Why did Elisa leave me?  
I don't know.  
Didn't she say anything about it  
in her diary?  
No, I don't think so.  
Would you be offended  
if I asked to read it?  
No, I wouldn't.  
In fact, I'd understand.  
But I'm afraid I can't  
let you read it.  
Why not?  
Because a few days after the

funeral, I threw it away.  
May I introduce you  
to my girlfriend?  
Hello, my name's Polina.  
Like Polina in "The Gambler"  
by Dostoyevsky.  
What are you doing tonight?  
Nothing.  
Polina's going to finish ironing...  
then we'll drink a glass  
of red wine.  
We'll watch some television  
and go to bed.  
What about you?  
I'll have a lot of drinks, but not  
so many as to become unruly.  
And then...  
when you'll be getting up  
I'll be going to bed.  
What lovely people you are!  
I love doing the train!  
I'll screw you.  
"Who am I?"  
That's how  
one of Breton's novels began.  
And of course in the book  
there's no reply.  
- Did you hear about Viola?  
- What?  
She's donating everything  
to the church.  
She works in the parish  
and is going to volunteer in Africa.  
The trains at our parties  
are the best ones in Rome!  
- You think so?  
- I do.  
They're the best because  
they go nowhere.  
- Well?  
- It's wonderful, thank you.  
Come on, it's all gone.  
Tell me why you left me, please.  
I want an explanation, please!

Go away!  
Get out! Get out!  
You see all these people?  
They can't do anything.  
But I know how to do something.  
We know how to do something.  
How sweet!  
They've been asking me for years  
why I don't write another novel.  
But look at these people.  
This Wildlife!  
This is my life  
and it's nothing.  
Flaubert wanted to write a book  
about nothing but he failed,  
so could I do it?  
It's nice.  
Thanks, rascal.  
What inspired this exhibition?  
It wasn't my idea  
to do this photo exhibition.  
It was my father's idea.  
When I was born, he starting taking  
photos of me, every day.  
One photo per day.  
He never forgot, not even once.  
From the age of 14 upwards,  
I continued.  
I photographed myself every day.  
Go ahead.  
- Cardinal!  
- Your Eminence!  
Cardinal,  
when will The Saint arrive in Rome?  
On Thursday,  
but please don't call her The Saint.  
She is a Saint but not technically.  
Tell me something,  
who is that cardinal?  
- That's Bellucci.  
- Bellucci?  
- The one in line to be...  
- Exactly.  
The papal throne awaits him.

I met him at Giada Ricci's  
carnival party.  
Rumour has it that he used to be  
Europe's best exorcist.  
- Are you pulling my leg?  
- No.  
I never joke about the devil.  
Do you know I'm very, very bored.  
We're having a great, great time.  
You cut up the duck.  
Cook it on a high flame  
for 15 minutes.  
At that point...  
Cardinal, do you remember me?  
Lello Cava.  
We met at Giada Ricci's party.  
I was dressed as an escort.  
Come, they're starting  
to serve lunch.  
I'd like you meet my writer friend,  
Jep Gambardella.  
A writer!  
This country needs writers.  
Actually I thought it was more  
in need of priests.  
Help.  
- May I ask you a question?  
- Of course, my dear man.  
Well, for some time now...  
from a spiritual point of view...  
- Skunk hunt?  
- Of course, I'll lead the way!  
I know the Tebaldi grounds well.  
Jep Gambardella, the king  
of socialites! You're losing it.  
I've been losing it for 40 years.  
It's a steady decline.  
Tell me something, Stefania.  
Have we ever slept with each other?  
Of course not!  
That's an awfully big mistake!  
We must make amends, immediately.  
Idiot.  
Thank goodness.

We still have something nice  
to do together.  
The future is marvelous, Stefania.  
To be honest, Catellani  
hasn't had many brushed fabrics  
in recent years.  
In my opinion, Rebecchi's still  
the best tailor in Rome.  
- Who are you?  
- A hard-working man.  
One who, while you play the artist  
and have fun with your friends,  
keeps this country going.  
I keep this country going,  
but many people  
haven't understood that yet.  
Imagine that, Dadina,  
Giulio Moneta was my neighbour.  
One of the world's 10 most wanted  
men and I never noticed.  
You've changed,  
you're always thinking.  
Maybe I should do what Romano did.  
I'm not fit for this life  
or this city.  
Nobody's fit for shit, dammit.  
Take it from the queen of misfits.  
Everything around me is dying.  
People who are younger than me,  
things...  
All before my eyes and I...  
And you're suffering.  
And you don't understand.  
How's the soup, Little Jep?  
The soup's good.  
Why did you call me Little Jep? No  
one's called me that for centuries.  
Because a friend,  
every now and again,  
needs to make their friend  
feel like they did as a child.  
How can I make you feel  
like a little girl?  
You don't need to, I feel

like a little girl every day!  
I've seen the world from  
their viewpoint for 60 years.  
You know Sister Maria,  
the missionary,  
the one they call the Saint?  
Yes, she's coming to Rome  
to receive some honour.  
Exactly. In all her life,  
she's only given three interviews.  
- Yours will be memorable.  
- Yeah sure, think of Giulio Moneta!  
This is different.  
She studied in Italy  
and speaks Italian.  
She read your book and loved it.  
She wants to meet you  
so I organized a dinner party  
at your house tomorrow.  
- Did I do well?  
- You did very well.  
Tomorrow I'll have the honour  
of dining with her.  
- At the Holy Father's?  
- No.  
No, at Jep Gambardella's.  
You see, the Pope even invited  
the enclosed nuns.  
Sisters, sisters, sisters!  
Sisters, sisters...  
Yes, perfect!  
Ah, the Red Cross nurses!  
Well-toned!  
Okay, great...  
What handsome young men!  
Great!  
Let's go!  
The Saint's assistant called me.  
The Saint would like Count and  
Countess Odescalchi to come too,  
as they treated her like a sister  
when she lived in Italy.  
- Do you know them? - Of course,  
but they are not in Rome.

All the nobles are in London,  
at Philip's great-niece's wedding.  
Let's call the Colonnas of Reggio.  
The nobles for hire?  
They're dead.  
Nonsense, they're immortal.  
The Saint won't even notice,  
70 years have gone by!  
This piece of furniture  
looks great...  
- Who would've thought!  
-It looks great, like a new bathroom!  
Count Colonna speaking.  
Yes, we are available.  
For tonight.  
Our rate is 250 euros per person  
for the evening.  
Plus the cost of the car hire.  
This would be somewhat  
humiliating for us...  
We are willing to be hired  
as the Colonnas of Reggio.  
But as for pretending to be  
the Odescalchis...  
I don't know...  
We were at war for two centuries.  
I feel it's immoral.  
Cut at least twelve pieces  
of rabbit!  
Set aside the kidneys, liver,  
head.  
Gently brown.  
Don't forget thyme,  
laurel leaves, rosemary...  
Then red wine, Ligurian olives...  
pine nuts.  
And after an hour,  
you have Ligurian-style rabbit!  
Sister Maria, what convent  
are you staying at?  
Actually, we're at the Hassler Hotel  
at the Spanish Steps.  
To be honest, Sister Maria  
finds it uncomfortable.

Never heard the Hassler  
described as uncomfortable!  
It's very comfortable  
but Sister Maria isn't used  
to sleeping in a bed.  
She sleeps on the floor,  
in a cardboard bed.  
Do you have any visits planned?  
Sister Maria will climb  
St John's Basilica's Scala Sancta  
on her knees.  
- Have you?  
- I'd have liked to, but...  
I have a bad knee...  
Orthopedic problems  
are unimportant,  
compared to the partial indulgence  
granted by the Scala Sancta.  
That's true! Another specialty  
of mine is lamb with...  
Does Sister Maria still help  
the sick?  
22 hours a day, every day.  
She washes them, feeds them...  
You ought to see her.  
Despite her age,  
she doesn't walk, she runs.  
Now she's tired, but that's because  
she's not with her patients.  
How old is she?  
She'll be 104 in October.  
- That's impressive.  
- I thought she was older!  
Longevity too, like all things,  
is not accidental.  
About Sister Maria's interview  
with Jep...  
Her interview?  
There must be a mix-up...  
Sister Maria hasn't given  
any interviews since 1971,  
after the reason  
for her mission in Chad,  
was misunderstood by some.

Of course, but considering  
her admiration for Jep's work...  
You told me she enjoyed  
"The Human Apparatus".  
She found it beautiful and fierce.  
Like the world of men.  
Great! There would be no risk  
of any misunderstanding,  
Sister Maria can review the text...

- No, I'm sorry.

- Don't insist.

I don't wish to raise  
any false hopes,  
there's absolutely  
no question of any interview.

Sorry, but why do  
you always answer?

Why not let Sister Maria talk?

Madam...

I took a vow of poverty.  
And you can't talk about poverty...  
you have to live it.

Such true and real words!

Powerful words!

Do you need anything, madam?

- She needs the bathroom.

- It's on the left.

The change of diet  
isn't good for her.

Sister Maria, in Mali, only eats  
40 grams of plant roots a day.

Me too sometimes, in the evening,  
as a light meal,

I have some splendid  
roots with lemon.

You clean the roots  
by scraping them with a knife  
and you cut them into small  
chunks.

Cardinal, remember when we met  
at that wedding?

You were there too...

I felt the need to ask you  
about matters close to my heart.

Matters regarding faith...  
regarding the strength  
of spirituality...  
But then you got distracted.  
You can ask me now.  
- No, I don't see the point.  
- Why?  
I'd be very disappointed to discover  
that you have no answers.  
I'm only saying  
it's a possibility...  
I think that...  
Never mind...  
I apologize for earlier.  
There is one question  
I really want to ask you.  
Are the rumors about you true?  
That you were a truly great...  
exorcist?  
Sister Maria...  
Sister Maria!  
- Sister Maria!  
- Saint...  
- Have you seen her?  
- No, she's not there.  
- Sister Maria!  
- Saint...  
Sister Maria!  
Saint!  
She's called Sister Maria.  
Sister Maria...  
Where has that bitch got to?  
Sister Maria!  
Sister Maria!  
My goodness!  
My goodness!  
Come, Elisabetta, let's go to bed.  
You go ahead, I'm going upstairs  
for a moment.  
Don't be late.  
In this room, in 1930,  
Princess Antonietta gave birth  
to her only daughter,  
Elisabetta Colonna of Reggio.

The princess died  
after giving birth.  
Young Elisabetta,  
in these opulent rooms,  
had a happy and carefree  
childhood.  
But shortly after, the financial  
hardship endured by Prince Erminio,  
forced him to sell the property.  
They're migrating west...  
but now they are resting.  
Did you know  
that I know the Christian names...  
of all of these birds?  
Why...  
did you never write another book?  
I was looking for the great beauty,  
but...  
I didn't find it.  
Do you know...  
Why...  
I only eat roots?  
No, why?  
Because roots are important.  
Now there's something  
I want to show you.  
This is how it always ends.  
With death.  
But first there was life.  
Hidden beneath the blah, blah, blah.  
It is all settled beneath  
the chitter chatter and the noise.  
Silence and sentiment.  
Emotion and fear.  
The haggard, inconstant  
flashes of beauty.  
And then the wretched squalor  
and miserable humanity.  
All buried under the cover of the  
embarrassment of being in the world.  
Beyond there is what lies beyond.  
I don't deal  
with what lies beyond.  
Therefore...

let this novel begin.

After all... it's just a trick.

Yes, it's just a trick.