

'Lerici, beautiful dot on the shores of the Mediterranean sea, your ancient streets hold thousands of tales in an unspecified timeframe, engulfed in a haze of mystery.

*Place of poets, art and endless cerulean dreams.
Solemn safekeeper of my most precious memories.*

*Oh, breathless I watch the serenity linger embedded in layers of sunset hues while I dance on your flares of flaming dusk.
And when darkness cloaks, freedom reflects in whispers of the wind where spirits of light soar to connect souls dispersed.
Let me burn in your coolness and reside in the abyss of your heart.'*

*Coverphoto: Roany Romano Lee.
Lerici, La Spezia, Italy 2025*

Dancing on Southern Sunflares.

Personal diary of a wild soul.

Fearlessly mastering the art of solitude to conserve
my savage self.

By Lucia V. Celaeno.

My pen name is a reflection of my inner soul, my strength, my weaknesses and the losses innermost. I'm made of simple things like love, (com)passion and unconditional trust, precious traits that brought me damage and scars beyond, pieces of hurt that are now the pearls in my crown.

Lucia is my birth name of bright and light.

V. stands for Vilanova, my beloved mom. Within her name resides my dad, her one and only. Together forever they remain my spiritual aura of positivity.

Celaeno is one of the seven daughters of the mythical giant Atlas, carrying the world on his shoulders. She is part of the Pleiades, the fabulous eternal starcluster. *'The Dark One'* is her nickname, admirable, courageous and tender-hearted, yet also severe and rancorous. As a faithful lover of Poseidon, god of the planet's waters whose rage can cause flooding and earthquakes in seconds, she rises from the waves as a spectral beauty in vulture form, spreading her wings to soar on nature's breath.

I feel blessed with her temper, flowing through my bloodstream, providing me with the perfect emotional balance because after all that happened to me, I still stand with faith.

One can be engulfed by flaming desire or burning revenge. I feel like an ember, sparkling, floating, dancing on the orange-red lava trail of Southern sunflares, paving rainbows on my path.

For Aslan.

My North Star, brightening the night skies.

My love, my soulmate, my everlasting aura.

God spun you from fluffy clouds of silk
Delicate flakes of fresh fallen snow
Dark chocolate, coffee and honey-sweet milk
Playful roguish moon-rays
And a swoosh of windswept seawaves.

He gifted you the heartbeat of Earth
Velvet green meadows whispering lush
A pinch of heavenly rain, o' soulful worth
Rainbow cascades and wild rivers
To assure the soul of an angel.

Your every wag, my truest.
My dream, my healing, my balance.

My heart is devoted to the secret padlock only your soul can
open.

Aslan, my Bernese Mountain dog.

Forever immortal within me.

May your joyful barks never fade when eternal dusk falls.

Moored to sunset shores.

The worst pain ever...

In the first week of September 2023 my dog passed away.
The worst loss that I ever experienced in my whole life.

Fate robbed me from a marvellous soul, charismatic, loving and full of energy, breaking his magnificent paw-stream.
An invisible and destructive power devoured his handsome male pride and dignity in a devastating fast pace.
Helpless, handcuffed and heartbroken I watched the suffering extinguish the sparks in his dark-brown eyes, silencing his barks, erasing the spontaneous lively somersaults whilst juggling mud and weakening his infinite muscle strength as if grabbed by a poisonous riptide. Illness crept through his body like a monstrous vulture of dark and sinister tales. Little currents of hope kept streaming while I sought the best of comfort to relieve his agony.
Speechlessly stunned by his courage and his endless efforts to hide the pain attacks, caused by prowling paralysis, I will always remember that tomorrow is not promised.

The garden was his personal space with various wild herbs, luscious ferns, a small pond with waterlilies and a small jungle-paradise of bamboo. So in his last hours he rested there while three butterflies in their best, most colourful attire waited to escort him to the peaceful summerland. They fluttered and tumbled around him, ignoring all honey-scented flowers, staying close until I took him inside for his last voyage. These little winged angels often returned, for several weeks, circling over the spot where he spent his last moments.

With our eyes closed and in a last warm embrace his heartbeat slowed as we walked up the lighted path where the arch of the rainbow bridge appeared through rain and sunshine, blurring my vision, as I absorbed the essence of more than eleven years together.

For over six months I camped on the threshold of time, scattered and almost touched by an irreversible depression, trying to find that secret rewind-switch.
A spiritual escape from reality until I realised the savageness of destiny. Guilt kept nibbling little holes in my conscience sometimes, unbalancing my emotions, mooring on the shores of nightmares. Until someone whispered that he was now a guiding star, watching over me from far.

As I glared down at the numerous hairs still glued to my clothes, I knelt near my beloved soulmate while the vague aroma of wild flowers and roses whirled around me as I covered his body with the various blooming pieces, adding a bottle of water, his favourite biscuits and his little brown bear, all forever marked by tears.

His tiny maroon teddy bear, marked by his affection with hair and mud, his special communication gear.

Its sweetness and solace will forever be with him. It would tell if he were in pain, longing for attention or feeling uncomfortable. It never failed to reflect his feelings. I miss its fluffy fabric, sewn many times but it belongs with him to play with on endless pastures..

A flare in the flow of nothingness drifts to the surface, tugging and dragging me to drown in pine.

Yet, love means to cherish and respect but also to let go, thus accepting that awful, feared moment.

For ten days a candle stood burning night and day, to stay connected, to feel his presence, to hear his soothing barks, scattering thunderous sparks, and sense the swooshing of his wagging, fluffy tail.

Fate does not barter but thanks to this flame, I know now that miracles do happen and he never really left.

The day after his departure, in the middle of the garden, under the weeping bamboo branches his dark outlinings appeared, a flocculent shade resting where I had scattered roses in various soft colours next to his water bottles (I still cherish some of the petals and garden leaves that hold some of his hairs).

In silence I walked near.

His pain had gone.

He moored to sunset shores.

Forever my shadow and anchor he will be, in life and on each page of this book.

I still visit 'our' bench sometimes, standing in the green grass in front of the rainbow bridge to watch the gloaming, side by side...

Calming rainfall and silent whispers of Autumn will forever remain our secret connection.

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I provided all existing characters with fictional names, unless mentioned otherwise.

Quotes are all night-shaped impulses, my own dream-scribbles penned half asleep and deciphered the next morning.

Memories perhaps, from places unsaid, down deep.

A diary revealing the struggle and the escape to my personal liberation.

Each line is written with ink from my heart, some passages are written in Italian, the language that will always rule my inner soul.

Sketches are all published with courtesy of Jan Vooijs, illustrator from Hoorn, Netherlands. Each drawing was custommade on my request.

I am deeply grateful for the fabulous photographs of Castello di San Giorgio majestically overlooking Il golfo di Lerici, other precious corners, alleys and facades and the pigeon captured against the sunset glow near the seashore of this beloved place. All images are used with the exclusive permission of Roany Romano Lee (Rocco).

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All other photographs are mine.

The amazing two drawings of the elves in Call of the Himalayas are from an anonymous artist who prefers to remain unknown. Courtesy is given.

Tenzin M. Samdup is a fictional character whom I created in 2021. If you want to know more about him you can find him in my first book: Mystic Sunrise over Nepal, Wild Cascade of Dreams, also available through Brave New Books.

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I love nature, unspoiled and rough, mountains, rivers, endless forests,
oceans and seas with its mysterious depths, beaches with streaks of salt,
shells and rubbery seaweeds, unpredictable skies with clouds forming
spectacular images, and the changing of seasons under moon and stars.

My heart feels ancient but grateful and wise as I write that I passed
through the changes of two centuries, from a black and white
television-set to satellites and mobile phones, increasing global and
universal pollution.

Cars, planes and trains in continuous development and the inevitable fuel
crises due to wars and incapable management of world leaders.
The suffering of wars, endless sadness for those who breathe.

I saw skylines change in rapid pace from infinite green meadows, woods
and a few lighthouses to concrete blocks rising high.

Plastics in all forms are suffocating and ruining the beauty of wildlife,
cargo and cruise-ships as large as villages dominate and block the most
incredible views for the pleasure of mankind...

I suppose simplicity and respect never existed, only in nature...
The raw and wild, nothing can compare.



Aslan.

The rush.

Time is an incomprehensible and miraculous thing.
It rushes by when you wish you could put breaks on it, to slow it down...
Sometimes it whirls around you in teasing slowmotion, while you hope it would speed it up.
Perhaps the key is learning to live it but often we forget to appreciate its value.

Yet, unexpectedly, we are touched by certain thoughtlines:
The memory of a smile, a kiss from bygone times, a lover's sigh, a mesmerising sunrise on the beach, a dog's drool in your lap, fragments of people and just those few minutes that nurture hope, in between a thousand things that change your day...
Some important, some useless.
Some great, some small.

Everything deserves a place in your heart, even that grain of sand.
And even if, sometimes, it's just you who seems to feel and understand,
Go with the flow of love, life and respect.
And remember the scents of each precious moment.

Always keep in mind, tomorrow is another day of new opportunities.

Just breathe, sometimes even rainfall on concrete hides that ecstatic smell of feeling good.

And above all, take the time to listen to silence, read someone's eyes, caress without touching...
Let's be sensitive people.
Not just meaningless individuals.

Words inspired by Roany Romano Lee (Rocco) 2025



Cercando la tua ombra (In search of your shadow).

Destiny's compass.

Sono quella farfalla svolazzante che sfiora la tua ombra per rubare un soffio della fragranza d'allora...(per non dimenticare), crogiolandomi nel tempo per riabbracciare i momenti persi quarant'anni fa.
Momenti che mi hanno causato un cuore sbriciolato, una vita parzialmente insignificante e un pezzo d'anima inzuppata dal dolore, vedendo un futuro spezzato davanti a me.

Per te che eri, che sei e che sarai...

Perennemente il sole che sorge...
Ogni tramonto incantevole che promette una notte piena di speranze...
I mari infiniti che non smettono mai di frangere sulla riva...
Un ruscello offuscato da mille bollicine effervescenti...
La terra, il sole e la luna...
Il silenzio e il fracasso di una imminente burrasca...
Roma, Milano, Siracusa e l'alba zafferano al mare della Puglia...
I Campi Flegrei, capricciosamente in dormiveglia...
Le Cinque Terre e il sapore della Toscana...
Un sorriso nell'ombra del buio...
La passione con un pizzicotto di veleno...
Dei laghi profondi e delle montagne lontane...
Le colline della Basilicata...
Un riflesso dell'arcobaleno...
Milioni di anni e dieci secondi...
Frutta proibita, deliziosa e profumata...
Il Scirocco dal Sud che fa festa nei tuoi occhi...
L'azzurro del cielo che ogni tanto viene abbracciato dalle nuvole...
Il benessere quietante...
L'attrazione che confonde le strade che cerco di seguire...
Generoso in quantità di stelle cadenti...
La fiamma immortale che scorre nel mio sangue...
La pioggia improvvisa che mi fa crescere l'anima...
Il profumo dell'autunno e tutte le altre stagioni che seguono...
La serenità di una foresta verde smerigliata...
E una cascata spumeggiando che porta via con sé tutto il dolore del passato...

Tutto quanto e sempre di più... Soltanto tu.

*Written with passionate fluid straight from my heart to combine words
from the depths of my soul for my one and only. A soulmate still whirling
in unknown places.*

*This poem is not written for you who left me from one moment to another.
Wrapping me in estrangement and pushing me in a pitch-dark void of
broken trust.*

*It's for you who stayed by my side, in spirit and loyalty.
Embracing my soul with endearment and respect.*

*Perhaps I already found you all those years ago...
I just didn't realise by ignorance or fear of getting lost in time.*

The ultimate dream scenario.

A forty year timelapse, a short introduction.

Many people with a romantic mindset are ecstatic about stories of meeting that special first love after decades.

It sounds like an impossible dream scenario, especially after dramatically losing contact due to personal choices. But it happens...

I know all about it...

I remember the last embrace, the last kiss and mutual promises, not knowing that destiny would decide otherwise and we would never see each other again... until I started contemplating, doubting, wishing and hoping...

So I personally dredged up the past seeking for answers to understand what and when all went so horribly wrong. Successfully I found what I was looking for but unfortunately I also discovered that too much ecstatic enthusiasm can cause irreversible damage. *'The past'* is that specific and delicate time zone in language grammar but can become dangerous when revived in actual life to regain personal wishes, hopes and dreams.

Moronicallly, I jumped into the gap of four decades to begin with, entering the life of a seasoned man and an unexpected letdown in human form. Like a pigeon I sought and collected all crumbs that I found on my path, pulverized pieces of my past, some moldy and rancid, others forever fresh and aromatic.

Salvatore, the wild Sicilian gypsy, whose ravishing black curls always danced in front of his eyes hiding the dragonfire within from view, had gone silver and lavishly nurtured himself a protruding belly. The years had sketched my handsome trailblazer with the merciless ravages of time.

We would meet in a treasured golden summer haze of July 2024 in Switzerland where we had met all those years ago...

I needed the satisfaction of unravelling the bundle of mishaps, loss and disappointments we both had experienced. Unfortunate events that smashed apart our dreams of a future together.

Instead it revealed more than I ever sought for when the veil of mystery slowly fell, adding a dash of doubts about friendship, the weight of honesty and the importance of promises.

Sidenote nr. 1: Salvatore appears only on one inch of my life's timeline and I am grateful the small measure of access never had the opportunity to extend to more. Meeting him (in a time zone of 10 days) and dealing with the ruptured trust afterwards was the final straw to evaluate all misfortune I had met throughout my entire life.

It resulted in a diary, a pouch of memories, trusted to paper, unfolding the first three decades of my life.

Sidenote nr. 2: This complete volume is dedicated to my dog, Aslan, who unconditionally remained by my side after his passing. He is my guardian angel and protective aura to guide and indicate the right choices throughout my days on earth until God grants us his blessing to be reunited again.

Sidenote nr. 3: An adventurous trail awaits those who accept my invitation to read about the struggle of emotions from my first steps and awareness of life to losses of loved ones, to mistrust, death and deep wells of lies and manipulation that damaged my self-confidence. The entire contents of my heart and soul are entrusted to these pages. More than once I considered ending my life in the embrace of the sea. Shocking but true. Yet, unexpected miracles out of nowhere reversed the storm in my soul.

Sidenote nr. 4: The fantasy stories are my spiritual pain relief, written to understand and digest the negative waves that often tried to crush me. Each line reflects my emotions, revengeful thoughtlines, fears, sacrifice, love and hope for the good.

'La vita è splendida e terrificante. Fin dalla mia infanzia la trasognata percezione che il tempo sta per scadere mi ha perseguito dovunque. La paura di perdere quella sensazione di sentirmi esistere ha scatenato sbadataggine dentro di me, causando lo sfratto di ogni premura.'

Walking to the right exit of EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg.

Left, right or backwards...

On the day of departure to Switzerland the weather announced a strange omen of misfortune, a creeping warning, from deep within the abyss of my intuition, starting with the taxi ride to Schiphol International that brought the first havoc. Instead of a luxurious car with additional air conditioning and a reassuring and helpful driver, I had to put up with an unclean vehicle and a thoroughly incapable madman behind the wheel. Not to mention the temperature inside the car. The warmth was comparable to the heatwave outside while the smell of fuel, unwashed skin, fermented food left-overs and accumulated dust intensified by the minute. His official taxi-sign lay partly rusted and dirty on the backseat next to me because the man had decided to bring along his wife, who sat on the front seat next to him, just for the fun of it, how professional can one become...

My nerves started to feast on my fingertips (an odd side-issue that haunts me since I was young, as if all ten ends are hurtfully stuck in the kitchen drawer) and I already felt the first trickles of sweat descending everywhere.

The moment I arrived at the airport, the sticky sensation of sweat increased as I tried to estimate and unravel a shitstorm of total confusion. My last flight from Schiphol was in 1986 when the airport had much smaller dimensions. Slightly shocked by the expansion through the years I felt terribly small and insignificant.

Thousands of unseen faces were hustling with their luggages while my driver lacked the courtesy to drop me off at the specifically requested departure hall 3. Instead he indicated vaguely with a waverly gesture to some entrance where a group of people stood gathered. The jarring thumb of my suitcase-wheels over cracks and hurdles on the uneven pavement vibrated through each limb of my body while my sight grew slightly dim and the pores of my skin continued to work overtime.

My thoughts drifted to the image of a bottle of bath foam that Salvatore had bought for me with vanilla-champagne fragrance so I could relax after my travels. Aback, I hate vanilla. He just never listened. I love wild white roses, sea-salt, resin and train-tracks-tar. In the meantime, I promised myself to rinse my wrists as soon as possible with cold water to

cool down but airport toilets and hygiene do not speak the same language so I had to postpone the desired cleanse.

As I reached the spot indicated by my uncourteous taxi driver I entered the first hallway looking at numerous endless corridors, escalators, announcement boards, people running and jumping, followed by their rattling wheeled luggage. The air was filled with whiffs of coffee, sandwiches, tax-free liquor and perfumes, scattered laughter, whispers of affection in hidden corners and kids throwing tantrums near the luggage drop-offs.

A capricious little girl lay face-down on the ground screaming her head off while tearing her two long, curly pony-tails askew out of anger as she sees her beloved suitcase with a unicorn image vanish into the darkness, following the trail to the hold.

Sounds of clattering plates and cups being gathered somewhere in a far corner of the lounge echoed through the waiting area melting into the dramatic cries of the little girl who refuses to move on. Sobbing and stammering she continued her plea "I want my suitcase back!"

"My lady." An impressive man in uniform addressed the girl who suddenly struggled with embarrassment. "Would you accompany me to my plane, with your parents' permission ofcourse? I will personally attend to your suitcase and fly you all safely to Greece." As the parents sigh in relief the pilot gives them an encouraging smile while their daughter looks at the pilot in admirance. "Come, let's dry your tears and lift up those long tails. He puts his cap on her head and together they vanish in the mass of travellers followed by two reassured, untroubled people.

Around me, feverish words of anger and poise resulted in quarrels. Passengers felt frustrated and lack of trust in the airlines were increasing. Harsh discussions heating the atmosphere now and then, caused by sudden unfortunate delays and last-minute cancellations.

Gleefully, I observed the colourful scenery while trying to rest on the stretchy belt of a retractable barrier that was supposed to separate two areas, convinced I could peacefully eat my home-made cheese sandwich. Too late I noticed that the poles were not permanently fixed in their sockets resulting in the sudden collapse of the complete barrier. Fortunately, I only lost balance... it could have been worse... Oh, my brave, always betraying me.

In the meantime, notifications on my cell-phone inform me that my flight *K7K5HR2* got rescheduled by the budget airline Easy-Jet. Four times in a

row it announced delays up to three and a half hours. Slightly shocked by the continuous time adjustments, we still departed exactly on time according to the originally planned schedule, at 18.45 but my inner prospects remained irreversibly disrupted for the rest of my trip.

Dosing my mixed excitement carefully, I passed by the customs officers and X-ray arches where the complete contents of my hand luggage got thrown into trays to get checked, from my wallet to my tooth-brush. They even removed it from its protective case, throwing it carelessly back. Pockets were turned inside-out and I noticed that even one forgotten dime or even a piece of candy could cause immediate disruption.

I had even followed the ridiculous prescribed plastic 1 l. bag filled with 10 x 100 ml. flasks. A strict rule from the corona times that the authorities never reversed back to normal.

So I was dismayed when my long sport socks and jeans styled jogging pants with narrow ankle cuffs caused upheaval because my bare skin wasn't visible and not so easy to uncover.

A rush of nerves crept onto me as I finally left the security zone with my pants askew and slouching socks. Even my brand new t-shirt hung with a crooked slipshod out of my jeans as if it was just some ordinary rag.

I absolutely didn't feel any shame, I just felt more like a criminal.

Of course, I wasn't the only one but it felt more like being ripped off from one's privacy and pressured abuse of authority with totally unnecessary checks.

The moment I noticed my plane, being prepared for departure, there was no turning back and I would have to face the gap of forty years that separated me and my lost boyfriend. My hesitancy caused me to stumble clumsily onto the second step of the metal staircase leading to the cabin door, almost crashing into the backpack of the passenger in front of me who gave me an indignant look before I could even say sorry.

Once inside, the muffled sound of the howling engines made the plane tremble as if a million screws were loosening grip. God forbid.

Through the small window a heat distortion above the wing outside started undulating into whirls and curly moves, just before take-off.

Seemingly weightless the plane, with more than three-hundred passengers aboard, soared smoothly into the blue while the flight attendants kept bumping into each other on the path between the hundreds of passengers sitting slumped, straight or half-asleep already. Next to me a girl sits hunched (apparently to relieve nausea).

It's unbelievably hard to feel comfortable being appointed to a middle seat. I felt like a cheese sandwich in a toaster, burning because the roasting level wasn't set to medium.

Personal space felt cramped both left, right and in front. Even breathing normally is a challenge as the level of oxygen in the direct surroundings seems to be dropping within seconds when the engines are turned off for a moment.

With each single movement you hit another one's elbow on the sides or you risk a neck distortion by reaching for your underseat hand luggage in front of your feet while folding your nose against the backrest in front of you.

Some of the cabin crew members seem overworked, tired and react impatient and insolent.

Others keep their faces in a charmingly straight smile while rushing back and forward to check the luggage lockers overhead that seem to dangerously unlatch themselves from time to time.

This is the reality of price fighting airlines packing the plane like canned sardines.

The demonstration for safety during the flight was provided in three languages but each spoken word sounds muffled, as if the flight attendant is eating the microphone whilst standing in a dank cave. She's gabbling the crucial indications which keep drowning in the flow of chatting passengers, simultaneously trying to keep the attention of everyone.

My effort to follow the mandatory becomes impossible as it floats meaningless through the cabin air. I haven't got the faintest idea where the oxygen masks and life-vests are located. Now a life-vest could be a crucial item if we should slide into the river Rhine because there's no sea on the route and I don't expect our capable captain to take a detour above the North Sea just for the fun of it. My only remaining fear was the predicted weather conditions of severe thunderstorms near and around Basel...

Heavy rainfall, roadblocks by flooding and falling rocks in some regions had reached my ears through international news flashes. Withal, putting a fully stuffed plane safely on the ground during a severe electrical discharge isn't for the fainthearted.

After an hour we approached EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg, delightfully situated in Saint-Louis, France.

A resourceful, cute international hub combining services for Germany, Switzerland and France. IATA: BSL-MLH.

Lingua franca: French.



Before my departure I read some very bad reviews about the ground personnel of this ever so attractive place provided with a brasserie, coffee-corner, money-exchange, ATMs and the necessary restrooms. The elegantly dressed employees probably know perfectly well how to speak German or English. They're just too arrogant and most of them lack the courtesy to even try.

So, to evade problems, I stored some lines in my head, with the exact pronunciation, in case of luggage loss, or if I took the wrong exit, which is technically impossible.

I recited them in silence during the short flight, hoping I wouldn't need them.

"Excusez-moi." ("Excuse me.")

"Où est le tapis à bagages pour les passagers d'Amsterdam?" ("Where can I find the conveyor belt for the passengers from Amsterdam?")

"Où sont les toilettes?" ("Where are the restrooms?")

"J'ai pris la mauvaise sortie." ("I took the wrong exit.")

"J'ai perdu mes bagages." ("I lost my luggage.")

"Pourriez-vous m'aider, s'il vous plaît?" ("Could you help me, please?")

Outside clouds formed a threatening indigo layer making the descent a spectacular moment. Bolts of lightning split across the sky meanwhile heavy rain darkened the magnificent landscape, hiding it from view. The Swiss summer shivered beneath an errant storm as the landing gear gently touched the tarmac. While people around started moving around scavenging for their belongings I struggled to unlock the buckle of my seatbelt.

By now my nervous system started testing the edges between fainting and forced composure. Most passengers had already left the plane while I was still fastened in my seat 17 B.

The girl who sat next to me is waiting patiently for me to stand up.

Noticing my stupid struggle she calmly says, "Just flip the buckle!" I gave her a relieved, thankful look as I freed myself from the safety utensil.

The plane looked drenched to its metallic skeleton while I descended the stairs and a last drizzle of rain gave me its good luck blessing.

Approximately a hundred metres ahead of me the waiting-lounges of the airport were visible, similar to a miniature Lego structure completely

made out of glass. I had the sensation of looking at an enormous transparent maze. The flight-control tower stood in the middle of its rooftop like some futuristic chimney. Shadows of people seemed to be duplicated by the mirroring effect of it all.

Once inside, the '*maze*' seems to magically expand and offer endless corridors with moving walkways, sliding doors of glass, waiting rooms, tax-free shops and finally the conveyor belt, completely empty. A punch of panic gives my stomach an obnoxious blow. But, all of a sudden, I spot my zebra striped suitcase, still wobbling on the moving belt, guarded by an officer in a far corner of the empty space. I wave with a gesture of appreciation and pick it up. Feeling awkward, I stroll and notice indeed two exits. On the right one enters France. The other one leads to Switzerland. My heart is racing causing slight symptoms of vertigo. I wish I could vanish through some wall and be absorbed into nothingness to wake up in my bed, far from here.

To make matters worse my phone refused its usual accurate service. The only message that appeared on the screen is a warm welcome to France while the incoming call from my date declined continuously and he is probably wondering if I actually departed from Amsterdam as the plane is marked as landed on the announcement boards. He must have seen all the passengers from my arrival passing through the Swiss portal.

Peculiar enough, a burning lump in my stomach slowly starts to paralyse me and the excitement to meet each other after four decades starts to fade. I walk on a thousand blisters, numb and probably wobbling as suddenly someone calls out my name. "Lucy, what an entrance arriving as last, why didn't you answer my call? Did you hurt yourself, you're walking awkwardly. How are you? Are you hungry, do you need a drink? How come you're as white as a sheet? Are you sick like Michael Jackson?"

The raw, rasping squeals of his voice resembled the thunderstorm that I had just left behind.

My spine seemed to undergo the goosebump reaction that is usually caused by nails sliding over a blackboard, meanwhile each single vertebra started to shrink to dissolve into nothingness as I tried to stand straight. For a moment I stand speechless trying to process the avalanche of excessive inquiries...

I forge a heartily smile on my face as I am greeted with a firm hug and kisses by this complete stranger.

Still awestricken, I watch this man dressed in jeans, a sweatshirt of an iconic Italian designer label and sneakers with careless wiggling loose laces, grabbing my suitcase while marching to the exit. His agile slender neck had shortened and blended into a minor rigid hunch on his back and the supple movements of decades ago seemed to have reached a limited range.

Halfway through a crowded aisle he halts abruptly, buying me a bottle of mineral water as he finally enables me to answer at least one of his questions. I just stated that I was thirsty to stop his hasted walk for a few seconds.

With a heavy heart I follow his footsteps to the parking lot, silently and still bewildered, wondering... who on earth is this aged, slightly limping person breathing heavily and panting as if the moist air is hurting his lungs?

Certainly, ageing brings all kinds of discomforts. He already told me he lost his perfectly trained figure to a blown-up belly. No more handful of black curls, just a short grey cut.

Who cares, true love shouldn't judge appearance...

Yet, does this give him the rude permission to judge my bodily flaws instantly?

I often walk unevenly when tiredness, stress or explosive nerves are trying to take over. Tripping over my own feet, disorientation and crashing into others are the cause of many insecurities.

But to give this more importance than seeing each other feels rather offhand. My spontaneous attitude sinks immediately below sea level but I'm still absolutely curious about him. I always seek the difficult parts of life, discordant and taking risks. Otherwise, why even contact someone from the past?

Outside, the scent of damp asphalt from the previous heavy rainfall fills my nostrils as the slippery pavement causes the soles of my sneakers to squeal. The echoing sound renews my energy and returns my faith in the unexpected miracles of life. Even the storm-churned skies are regaining their calmth.

As I sought this situation myself I refuse to go back and give up.

Be cool, I think, encouraging myself.

At least, I feel the caress of the Swiss air touch my face as the thunderstorm is retreating behind the mist-wrapped mountains.

My phone now gives me a warm welcome in Switzerland with additional discount offers from Swisscom to upgrade the internet reach. Grouchy