“They turned me down again… They say it ain’t the same anymore… The flair is gone… What is wrong with me? “He murmured to himself, sprawled disheveled on his rocking chair, with wine in one hand and cigar in another.

“It seems like ages I created anything worthwhile. Everything I create is rejected. The paintings are too dark? But I used the brightest of all colours. They say that the life is missing. But I have put my life into them. What is wrong then?” he asked his lifeless paintings and unfinished works hanging in the room.

Aimlessly, he stared across the room towards the sully easel, then to and fro between his once called master pieces and the now rejected trash. With a glum expression he stood up and went out into the verandah.

Cool breeze brought back distant memories, the first time he had come here.

“Rivela a me, oh Venezia!” (Reveal unto me, oh Venice!) He wept.

Fate or destiny, whatever it was that had brought him here, into the floating city of Venice, he still was not sure. New city brought him fortune, favor of nobles, fame, prosperity, the beautiful woman he had loved and what not. He was heralded as a new age artist, a painter with *the golden touch*. The [doge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doge_of_Venice) himself offered him patronage, what else could have any painter asked for? Not many men have ever had such a steep ascent to fame. His depictions of love, of life, religion, aristocracy, royalty, intimacy never failed to mesmerize. Each detail, every curve and every notch were carefully crafted. He blew life into mere artwork, retouched it with tender care and gave a soul to each one of his creations. His paintings needed no words to explain, and often people fell short of words in praising them.

And today, after having seen the pinnacle of his success, he stood alone, in the verandah of his lavish manor facing the glorious city, searching his creativity in whiffs of tobacco smoke and deliriums of wine. “What changed?” he wondered, as his eyes grazed the nightscape of the city. A moonless night, a sleeping city, canals lit with oil lamps, navy ships patrolling the sea in the distance, aroma of the climbers and midnight blossoms mixed with the cool breeze, sculpted draperies faintly visible in the halo of torches. But nothing seemed to have changed. Only that it did not inspire him anymore. About five years ago, he left his homeland village in France in search of favor and a place where his talent would be recognized. He had heard of Venice as a paradise for artists and had been naturally lured towards it. He found flavor, and taste for his work. There had been no turning back, not until now.

“*il pennello, e non sigari dovrebbero ornare le mani di un artista, mio signore!*” (The brush, and not cigars should adorn an artist’s hands, My lord!” a concerned voice seemed to echo from the back of his head.

In his torrent of old memories, he did not notice his wife coming and standing beside him. Surprised, he said “*Le mie scuse, non ho sentito arrivare la mia signora*” (My apologies, I did not hear you arrive my lady)” Is it not too late for you to be awake?”

“My husband is troubled, how could I have slept, love” with this she took away his glass of wine and cigar. He did not resist. “What troubles you?” she asked as she rejoined him on the railing of the verandah.

“They rejected my work yet again” he said with a broken heart. “They say it’s lifeless. It’s a frustrating experience for me.” he said dejectedly as he crumbled against the railing.

“Relax my lord, maybe you should visit the valley for a change. Take a holiday” she tried to soothe him, slightly pressing on his shoulders. “Maybe, you have grown weary of this place and the routine, you are forcing yourself too hard. It’s painful to see you in distress. Take a breather*. Vai tranquillo da qualche parte*. (Go to somewhere quieter.)”

“Come lei suggerisce, la mia signora! (As you suggest, my lady). I will leave after speaking to The Doge.”

To be continued...

(non compos mentis)

I have it in mind, but it will take a bit more time.

The painter who once gave a new form to painting, was now shrouded by low confidence and a temporary phase which me might call [A Painter’s Block.](http://aestheticblasphemy.blogspot.com/2010/08/painters-block.html) On his wife’s suggestion, he decides to leave Venice for a while, to distress his mind. Sometimes, peace of mind is really hard to find and the situation makes us so helpless that we start believing that it is the end. The Story continues...

As he started for the harbour, people greeted him. “signore saluto!” A face renowned to all and sundry. For inquisitive tourists and visitors, “He is The Painter with Golden Touch, egli è un mago, an art magician”, they replied promptly. No wonder, he was the darling of people. He rose from amongst them, and had not changed with wealth and fortune.

“How can I face these people when I have become so worthless, I wish I could be nobody again” he groaned, overwhelmed with the respect they gave him.

“Stop degradante te (stop degrading yourself), it is not going to help. You are in this high place because you strived hard for it, not because they helped you.” His wife interjected, trying to revive him. “Look at them, they are hungry for new art. The art that you have, the hunger that you have satiated. They need you back, just like old times.”

He sighed, “Io lo desiderano di essere come un tempo.” (I so wish to be like old days)

“Everything is going to be just fine. You just need to relax, and loosen up your mind. The Painter with the Golden Touch shall revive himself again, Io credo in te (I believe in you.)” She encouraged. He returned the patting with a faint smile.

“I wish you accompanied me on this journey, il mio amore (my love)” said he.

“Sono sempre con te, la mia vita (Am always with you, my life). But I shall only be a hindrance in your communion with art. I believe in you. Bene, mio signore” she bid him goodbye with a fervent kiss.

The ship left for the mainland. He locked himself up in his room, never climbed up to the deck, nor talked to anyone. On arriving, his dress had changed. “I wish I could be nobody again, no one should know me here” he thought that clothes could transform him into nobody. The old clothes that he wore when he had first left the mainland when leaving for Venice. No signs of wealth and prosperity. He hired a wagon for his journey to the valley. A young man was steering the horses.

“salute male eh? (Bad health)” asked the young man from the window.

“Sì, un po ' (Yeah, a bit!) Why do you ask?” inquired he.

“You are going to the valley, it’s a resort to all of the sick sailors from the bay.”

“Well, I lived here some time ago.”

“Oh, why don’t you climb up out here? You’ll start feeling good right on! Sentite il vento in faccia (Feel the wind in your face.)”

Something broke. It made no sound, but it shook him. Might have been a bump in the road that might have caused it. “Sure, but then I might also want to steer” he teased.

“We could definitely do something about that.” The young man grinned back. And he slowed down the wagon. Just when he was handing over the leash to the Painter, he became a bit reluctant.

“Cosa succeed? (What’s the matter) Do you want to turn back on your offer?” the painter sensed his reluctance.

He passed on the leash, and just when it first struck the horse’s back he said, a bit surprised “You... are not a sailor after all?”

Picking up pace, the painter asked “What? I mean, no, I am not, but why would you say so?”

“You have sculpted hands, you are not meant to be a peasant. Che cosa fate ? (What do you do?)” he reasoned.

Hesitantly, he replied “lo... Ho usato per essere un pittore (I used to be a painter.)”

“What do you mean by ‘Used to be’, what about now?” he questioned back.

“I cannot paint anymore!” oh how easily he had said it. Maybe he was distracted by the wind hitting his face, but he was not thinking about it anymore. He did not even notice it.

“What is that supposed to mean? Both your arms seem to be in single pieces, your hands are in good shape too.” He said mockingly.

“Well it’s more than hands to paintings. It is about ideas. It is about expression. Ho perso questa espressione (I lost that expression). Tell me, what do you think of expression?” He said it, oh so casually.

Distracted, he was for sure. From Venice till the moment he had climbed up into the wagon, he had only been engrossed with it. He was worried about some lost artefact, which he once possessed. He had locked himself down so that no one would come and add to the turbulence in his ocean of feelings again, what happened now? He was not paying any attention to his misery at all. His life was now running with the gallop of the horses he was steering.

“Sire, do you see the dust rising as you steer the horses? Do you know when it rises and when it doesn’t?”

“It rises when something stirs It. (?)” he attempted to answer, but it seemed like he was asking rather than answering.

“Yes, the faster the horses gallop, more the dust rises. If they just walk leisurely, nothing happens. Dust never rises more than the height of their hoofs. And when I steer them this way, it is my expression. è la mia espressione.”

“What do you mean by that?” he asked.

“The faster I make them run, the higher the dust plume, the longer it takes to settle and so are the signs that I passed that way. It would be like, I had been there. Fame longer than ordinary, a remembrance, momentary though. Here, allow me to show you.” He took the leash and slowed the wagon to dead slow. “See? No dust, unnoticeable, just another goat among the crowd. And now...”he speeded the wagon “the dust rises again. This is my expression.”

“Interesting, but you would never know of what you left behind. What is the use?” he said, looking back at a group who were taken aback by the abruptness of the wagon. Bewildered, they seemed.

“Che importa? I am supposed to move forward, not to look back. If I were to worry about what I have left behind and constantly look back, how would I notice the curves and the road ahead? How do I see the beauty around in front of me if my head is always turned to the road I already treaded?”

The painter shook again, harder this time. His eyes opened in awe, “Infatti! (Indeed!)”

He did not talk for the rest of the journey, but was smiling all the way long. When he alighted, he bowed with gratitude and said “thank you brother, you saved me today!”

*“Love,*

*I had failed to feel the wind, feel the waters, and feel the warmth of sunshine. But now I do, thanks to a young man here. You said that the old times will return, but now I am sure they never will, for good. Inspiration, I have found is everywhere, my fear of being rejected denied it from coming to me. But, it’s a new morning, and the sun has never been so bright in Venice as it is here. Wine never has tasted this better and my easel portrays the sun it overshadows today, like a looking glass. Io sono felice. Tornerò presto. (I am happy, I will be back soon)”*

A new painting adorned the center wall of the Doge’s palace when he returned back to Venice. He painted sunshine that day, ornate with golden rays, falling on the face of a little girl as she tried to catch the dew falling from fresh tender grass blades onto her face, her hands clasped around the blade. The wind curled dandelions around her. On its frame he wrote the famous words once said “And on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (Matthew 16:18)”

*Wine never has tasted this better and my easel portrays the sun it overshadows today, like a looking glass. Io sono felice. Tornerò presto. Read complete story at http://aestheticblasphemy.blogspot.com*