



The Perfumes of Tenute Rio Maggio: A Love Story

By Tiziana Santucci

People could close their eyes to greatness, to horror, and stop their ears against seductive melodies or words. But they couldn't escape perfume. Because perfume is the brother of breath, and it thus penetrated people and they couldn't resist it if they wanted to live. And perfume descended into them, directly to the heart and categorically distinguished sympathy from disdain, disgust from pleasure, love from hate. He who ruled odors ruled people's hearts.

-Patrick Suskind, *Perfume*

Those were other times, when I worked in a perfume store, and from morning to evening was immersed in an odorous mist of essences with exotic names, hints of spices and sandalwood that evoked distant and enchanted oriental countries. Every morning was the same. Makeup always perfect, I spent my days among gilded, opalescent and translucent labels, fluttering like a moth around a light.

Then a trip to Bali and the discovery of love changed my life. I had set out single and, coming home with Simone, who soon became my husband, I knew that things would never be the same.

In fact, shortly afterward, when Simone's father died in 1993, we had to decide what to do with the little estate that had been the old man's passion for many years. He had planted several rows of vines interspersed with fruit and olive trees, crowning fields sown with wheat, corn and beetroot.

When I sit on the veranda of the wine cellar and look at these hills planted with corn and sunflowers, with a few fruit trees here and there, I note the great contrast caused by the green of the vineyards and think back to when Simone and I first started. I recall that the more Simone looked at this land, wondering what to do with it, the more he was convinced that high quality wines could be produced here. And that's how it began.



Trusting my heart and instinct – as I'd done in marrying him at once with my characteristic enthusiasm – I decided to share that life plan of his. The shared dream fascinated me, though I was aware that it would require my total involvement. It wasn't important to us that many people had long since abandoned the land in Montegranaro to go work in the footwear industry, or that nobody around here had ever seriously tried to cultivate specialized vineyards for the production of great wines. The



challenge excited us and, following only our spirit of adventure and trusting in the strength we transmitted reciprocally, we got down to becoming vinedressers.

I sometimes have the sensation of living a fairytale where everything is magically perfumed by different aromas that originate in the special union that our vines create with land and sky, with the corn and the sunflowers surrounding them, and with their predetermined and inexorable vegetative cycle.

The result is a light and tenuous fragrance, almost imperceptible, which I try to rediscover in our wine as I sip it in those brief, reflective pauses. When those essences emerge from the glass I have the sensation that something miraculous has happened, that something infinitely great has linked our commitment with these vines and the whole has concretized spontaneously, without too much clamor or reverberation, perhaps only to satisfy my silly amazement.

The jeans and cotton T-shirts I wear now that I work these vineyards makes my years in the perfume store seem so far away, but my desire to smell things surrounding me hasn't diminished in the least. The perfumes of wine, the land and the cellar, full of grape must, or the earth and your clothes soaked by a sudden spring rainstorm, evoke a mysterious world that somehow brings to mind the old days of the fascinating scent labels.

I like to smell all the changes our wine goes through along its way, and through its evolution I can perceive its character, nature, soul and longevity. That odorous essence determines the rhythms of our time schedules and accompanies the various moments of daily life: peace and relaxation, chatting with Simone about our future plans, or convivial evenings spent with friends, maybe with barbecued T-bone steaks on the table.

They are perfumes that have enriched my life, giving it meaning and breadth. And it doesn't matter if, in order to have them, I must sweat and toil in the vineyard, or break my back as much as or more than any man. What matters is to succeed in preserving them in a bottle for as long as possible, in



the hope that they will increasingly resemble the terroir that Simone and I have built up for our family.

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