

From the novel | Her name was Aprile

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I soon found myself in the queue at the check-in desk. It was one of those queues that you don't see in any other country of the civilized world: a mass of people slowly advancing.

The same happens at the post office: when you enter, you can ask: "Who's last in line?", after which you make sure everyone knows that your turn is after that person who is last in line. In this way, you can go for a cup of coffee and when you get back your turn will still be after the same person who was last in line when you left.

In another pseudo-queue next to mine, a tall girl with titian red hair was standing with her back to me. She was in the company of three men: one tall, balding, aged about forty, one a little older with the belly of someone who eats too many arancini and a third, who was young, thin and badly dressed.

They were not far away from me and I could clearly see a scar on the left cheek of the boy who, from his facial features, looked foreign.

When the girl turned round, I saw her delicate face, white like porcelain and dotted with cute freckles.

Her shining eyes met mine. She had the face of a child: rosy cheeks and a touch of lip-gloss that enhanced the perfect shape of her mouth.

She was not wearing any jewellery. There was nothing showy about her, apart from her red hair.

She was wearing a cream-coloured linen dress and comfortable, low-heeled leather sandals.

She stared at me for a few seconds and then looked at my flight destination on the display. I did the same with hers: Tirana.

I would have liked to change the destination on my plane ticket and leave with her. She was the woman of my life, I was sure of it and she too had recognized me: I was her man.

“Tirana, Albania. Why not? It definitely rains less there than in London.” I was engrossed in my thoughts, when I saw her coming towards me.

She walked straight past me, giving me a last glance and greeting me with a “bye” before leaving the airport.

Should I chase her like I had done with Greta? Should I miss my flight to run after the unknown?

So far, all the women of my life had turned out to be part of somebody else's life.

No, it would be best to dedicate myself to my career, at least for the time being. I'd done enough running after two smooth legs.

After the boarding formalities, I went to the airport bar to get a cup of coffee.

I saw the three men who were bound for Tirana sitting at a small table. The older two were talking among themselves, while the boy with the scar looked at me with lifeless eyes. I went up to them.

«Excuse me. I saw you at check-in with a girl and I think she's a friend of mine, but I didn't get a chance to stop her. Could you tell me her name?» My adventures with Greta had left me with a fervent imagination.

The two men looked at each other and one asked confirmation from the other: «Macallan?»

«No, it's MacCutcheon or MacGregor.»

«Or perhaps MacPowell.» They laughed.

Their knowledge of brands of whisky was surprising. The boy with the scar chimed in: «McNamara.»

«That's right! Clever Ajax.»

«Jax», he corrected them.

«Yes, whatever, Jak.»

Remembering names was apparently not their strongpoint.