

'nuff trains

It was the last of seven trains I'd taken that day, all of them with Trenitalia except the first. I'd boarded that train in Menton, the first Italian city geographically in France when traveling west along the Ligurian coast. I was up at a sunless hour I'd avoid for the rest of my week off. Something to note before making a fatal seven-train attempt through Italy in one day, is that you'll likely not be where you intended to be at the time you intended to be there. Traveling a happy traveler is knowing that before boarding the first of those seven trains. Italy is filled with consolations for disaster, and even if you miss all but the first train, the one that, really, left from France, you'll end up in a quaint Italian place home to someone you met years ago, who lied for your sake and told you they were from a larger adjacent city. In this town/village/place, you'll end up on the train platform, no doubt visibly in disarray, wide-eyed and weary watching, you've convinced yourself, the most breathtaking sunset to have graced the world that day.

I was lucky when I arrived in Verona in time for sunset; I was where I intended to be exactly when I intended to be there. Where I was going was further along the Adige, which you can imagine I pronounced wrong when I read it off the front of a newspaper the following morning in my destination place. It was a town with village undertones and village rhythms during colder months when tourists flocked for the larger adjacent cities. When I arrived in Verona, I was mostly desire. I considered staying because I'd read somewhere that love in that city can make you do foolish things, but I wasn't about to tempt the worst of fate by sabotaging the good luck I'd fallen on. I was lucky that day, wide-eyed and staring directly at where the sun had been moments before, as my train prepared to pull out of the station.

This was on a night after I found out that the Adige was the name of the newspaper because it was also the name of the river in this town, the same one that ran through Verona. I hadn't kissed a stranger or done anything entirely plausible like that, but I was sat across from someone who knew exactly the gravity of my desire from a different time in our lives. I was eating "strangolapreti" in a cavern-turned-restaurant the evening after quiz night. I could tell there had been passion emptied out in this room recently, the floor sticking to my feet. The night before, beers were toppled and patrons were strangled by other patrons in spontaneous demonstrations of cathartic anguish. I imagined the strangling after my friend told me what "strangolapreti" meant, and this cave's clientele seemed exactly the type to strangle the priest-turned-quizmaster in this town-village after answering wrong to the question: What is the second longest river in Italy? It was a northern take on gnocchi, made with stale bread. Nothing about the energy in this place was small potatoes. The last time catastrophe swept through it was wartime and the locals still found enough flour to create a consolation for disaster good enough to eat by the river.