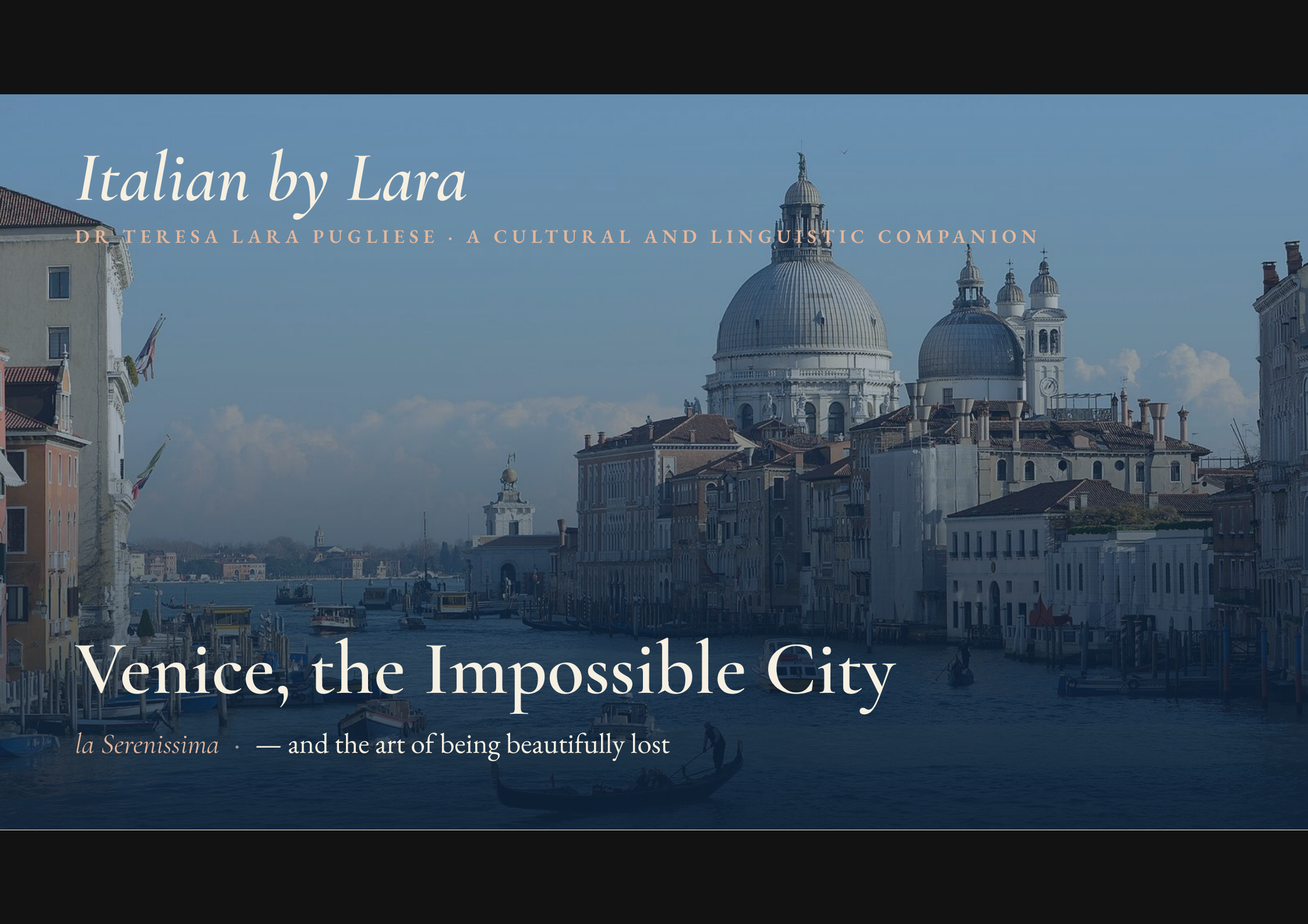




# *Italian by Lara*

DR TERESA LARA PUGLIESE · A CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPANION

## *Venice, the Impossible City*

*la Serenissima* · — and the art of being beautifully lost

BENTORNATI — FOR THE LAST TIME

# One Nation Remains

-  The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies — *visited*
-  The Papal States — *visited*
-  The Grand Duchy of Tuscany — *visited*
-  Today — Venezia, glowing on the water

The strangest of the seven. The one that, by every law of geography, economics and common sense, **should never have existed at all.**



TYPE A NUMBER IN THE CHAT — YEARS!

A city with no land, no farms,  
no stone, no fresh water.  
How long could it survive?

No forests. No fields. Only mud and salt water.

THE ANSWER — AND OUR LAST MYSTERY

# The Longest-Lived Republic in History

I, IOO

years as an independent republic

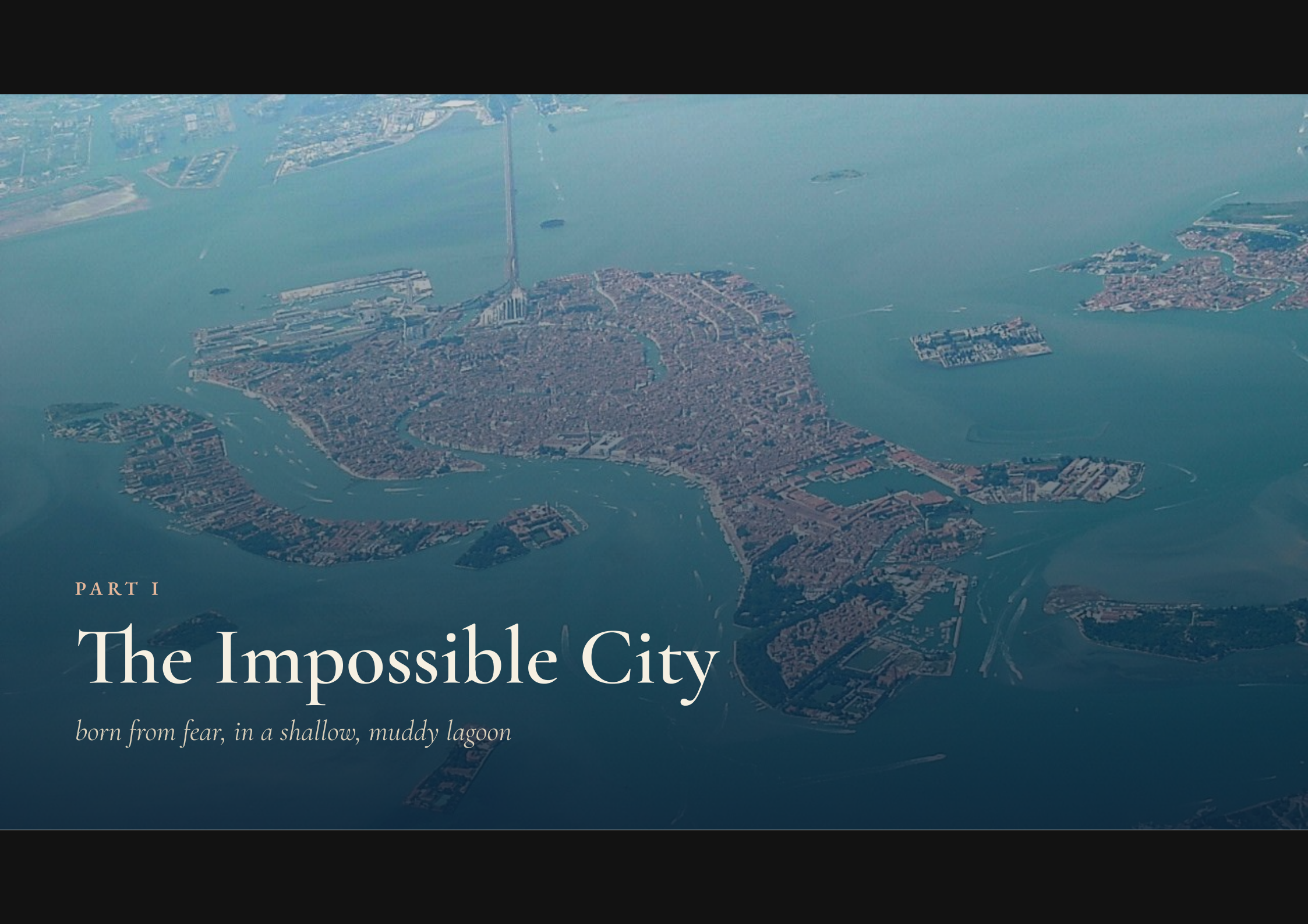
Eleven centuries of self-government on the water. **America, for comparison: two and a half — and counting.**

*How does a swamp with no resources become the most successful state in European history?*

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The answer will involve **white gold** and **stolen horses**, a state run like a secret service, an orchestra of orphan girls, the invention of the paperback and the quarantine — and, at the very end, *a little word I have been hiding from you for four weeks.*

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PART I

# The Impossible City

*born from fear, in a shallow, muddy lagoon*

IT BEGINS WITH FEAR — ROME FALLS, 476

# They Ran Where Horsemen Cannot Follow

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## The invaders

waves of them after the empire fell — Attila the Hun among the most terrifying

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## The refuge

a shallow, muddy lagoon — miserable little islands of reeds and sand

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## The twist

it was meant to be temporary — it became **the most beautiful permanent address on Earth**

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THE ENGINEERING MIRACLE YOU WILL FLOAT ON

# A City Standing on an Upside-Down Forest

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## Millions of piles

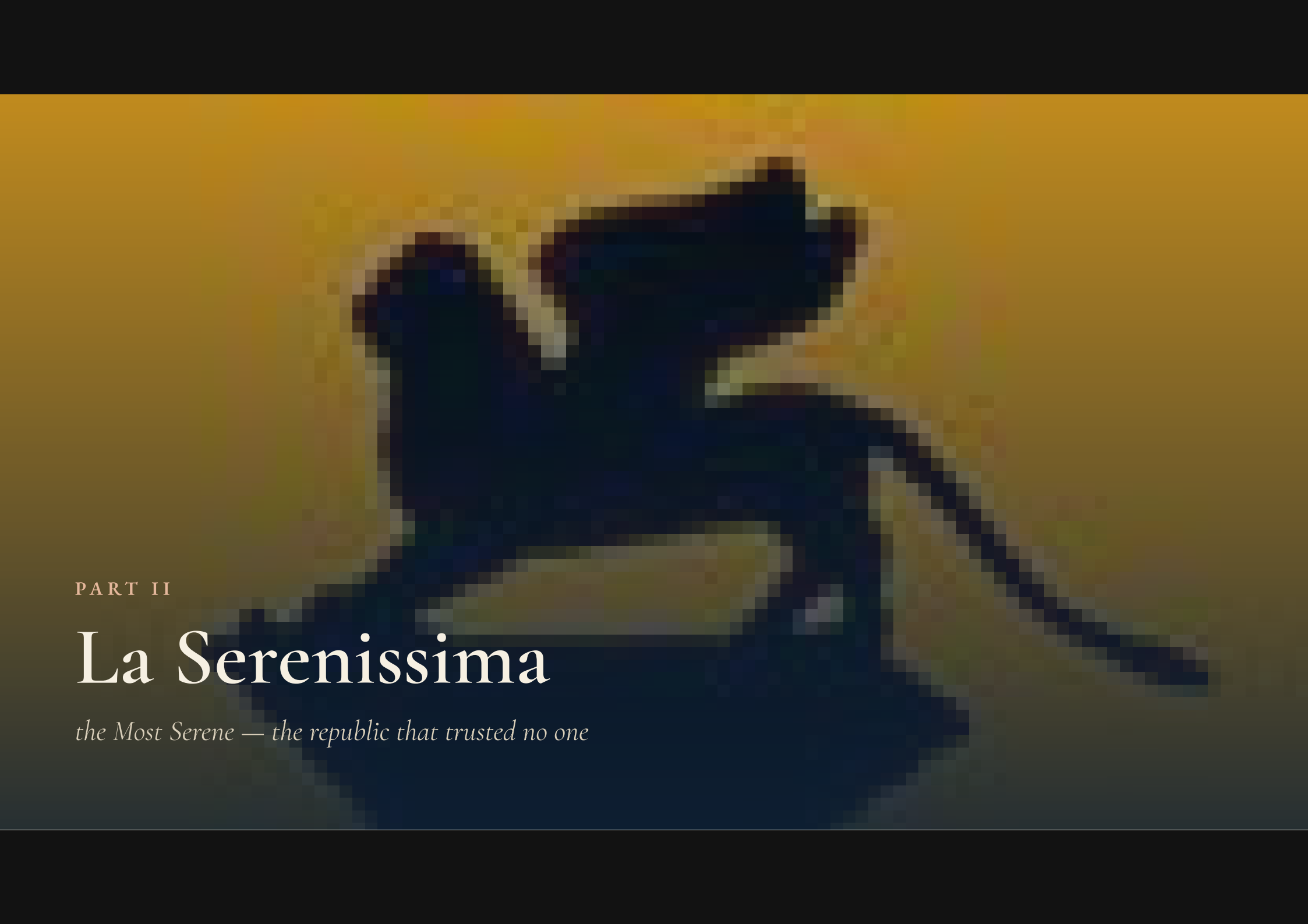
whole forests of oak and larch, shipped over and  
hammered through the mud to the clay beneath

## Wood that hardens

underwater, with no oxygen, wood does not rot  
— over centuries it petrifies, almost to stone

## Fifteen centuries

glide down the Grand Canal and remember what  
is underneath you — the trees are still holding



PART II

# La Serenissima

*the Most Serene — the republic that trusted no one*

THE FIRST MONEY — AND YOU ARE ALREADY EXPERTS IN IT

# White Gold

In a world without refrigerators, salt was not seasoning — **it was survival**. The lagoon's shallow pans made it almost by themselves: the one thing the mud actually produced.

Venice's first fleets carried salt up the rivers of Italy — and came back with **grain, timber, iron, money**.

*The most refined city in history was founded on humble crystals of salt.*

## REMEMBER TUSCANY?

While Florence **refused to buy** salt — and changed its bread forever — Venice **got rich selling it**.

*Two of our nations, one grain of salt. History loves a good seasoning.*

WHILE ALL OF EUROPE KNELT TO KINGS...

# The Republic That Trusted No One

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## No king — ever

the old Roman oath — *never again a king* — kept alive on the water for eleven centuries

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## Read the book

the winged lion's book **open** = **peace**; carved **closed** = a fighting mood — a state publishing its temper in stone

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## The Doge

elected for life — but wrapped in more checks and balances than any modern president

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Electing a Doge took **ten rounds of voting and random draws** — committees chosen by lot, electing committees, drawing lots for other committees — *uncorruptible because it was unpredictable*.

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VENETIAN WORD N° 1 — THE LITTLE BALL IN THE URN

*ballotta*

*the little ball, drawn blind* → **ballot**

Every time you cast a ballot, you are speaking Venetian — and it will not be the last time today.

The background image shows four large bronze statues of horses, known as the Horses of Saint Mark, displayed in a museum. The horses are arranged in a row, facing right. They are made of dark bronze and have a weathered appearance. Each horse is standing on a small, square stone pedestal. The background is a dark, arched structure, possibly a tunnel or a large hall. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the horses' forms against the dark background.

1204 · THE FOURTH CRUSADE

# A Blind Doge in His Nineties — and Stolen Horses

Enrico Dandolo, **over ninety and completely blind**, leaping ashore under the walls of Byzantium with the banner of Saint Mark. The city fell — and Venice shipped home the loot of an empire.

*The four bronze horses of San Marco are not decoration.  
They are a receipt.*

Venice did not just trade with empires — on one memorable occasion, it ate one.

VENETIAN WORD N° 2 · A SHIP A DAY

# The Arsenale — Henry Ford, Five Centuries Early

16,000 workers, standardized parts, moving assembly — the hull floated down the canal, gaining rigging, weapons, supplies at each station.

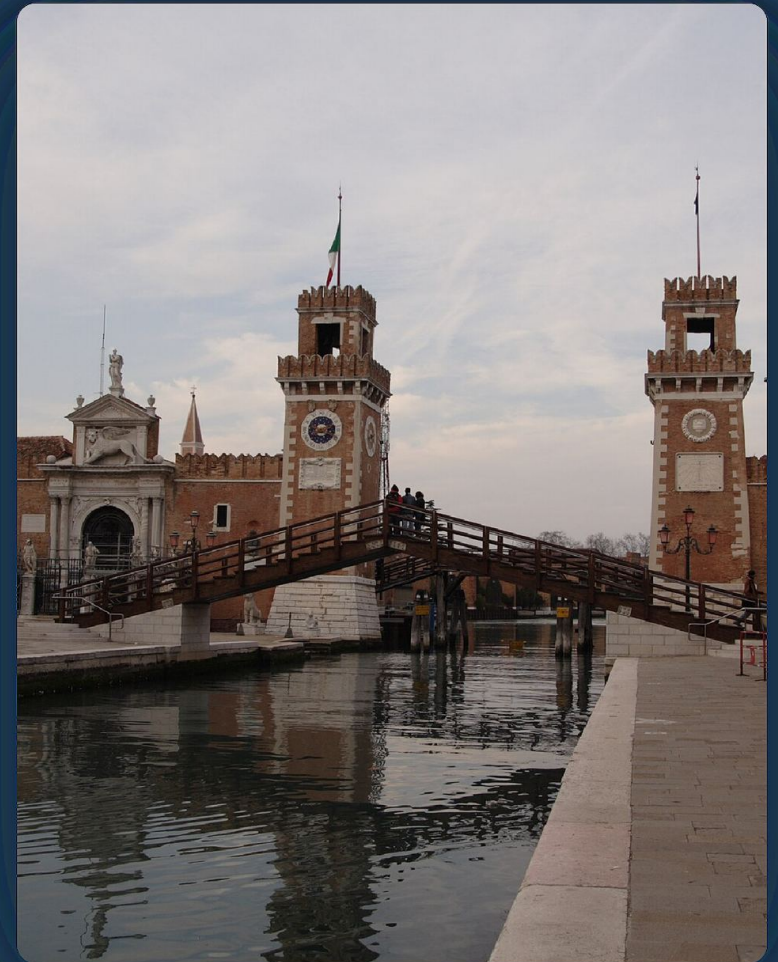
At full speed: **a warship a day**. Once, to impress a visiting king, they assembled a ship in his dinner.

Dante saw the boiling black pitch — and put it straight into his *Inferno*.

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*dar as-sina'a* house of manufacture → arsenal

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VENETIAN WORDS N° 3 & 4 — THE ONES THE WHOLE PLANET KNOWS

## Forty Days, and an Old Foundry

*quaranta* → *la quarantena*

Suspicious ships waited **forty days** at an outlying island — *forty*, the number you learned at the Tuscan market. A public-health invention of the 1300s; in 2020 the entire planet lived inside this Venetian word.

*geto* → *ghetto*

In 1516 the republic confined its Jewish community to the island of an old foundry — a *geto*. The island's name became the world's word — the heaviest export on today's list.

*Ballot, arsenal, quarantine, ghetto...* you see the pattern. **You have been speaking Venetian your whole life.**



PART III

# The Church of Gold

*a stolen saint, and a Bible of light*

828 • IT BEGAN WITH A HEIST

## Two Merchants Steal a Saint

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### The theft

the body of Saint Mark the Evangelist, lifted from its shrine in Alexandria

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### The trick

relics hidden in **barrels of pork** — no customs inspector would touch them. It worked.

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### The tomb

not a cathedral at all — **the Doge's private chapel**, built over a stolen evangelist

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Hence the winged lion — Mark's ancient symbol. *Only Venice would found its holiest site on its cleverest theft — and spend eight centuries decorating it.*

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LA CHIESA D'ORO — THE CHURCH OF GOLD

# Two Acres of Gold — and Every Inch a Library

8,000+ m<sup>2</sup> of mosaics — Noah, Moses, the life of Christ, the stealing of Mark himself — the whole sacred story, scene by scene.

For a population that could not read, this was **publishing**: a book in gold, on a ceiling. The illiterate sailor of 1100 stood where you will stand — *and read*.



PART IV

# The Stage of Europe

*books, glass, music — and the painters of light*

BY 1500, THE PRINTING CAPITAL OF THE PLANET

# Aldus Manutius — Two Ideas in Your Home Right Now

## The *italic*

a slanted, elegant, space-saving typeface cut in his workshop — the world named it after Italy itself. **Every time you italicize a word, you are using Venetian handwriting.**

## The paperback

books were furniture, chained to desks. Aldus asked the most Venetian question imaginable: *what if a book could travel?* The ancestor of the book on your nightstand — and the one you'll read on the plane to Italy.

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Gutenberg met Dante's language; Pinocchio taught a nation to read — **and the object they all traveled in is Venetian:** a city built on water, exporting portable worlds.

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EVERY FURNACE MOVED TO ONE ISLAND

## ano — Gilded s for Men of Fire

protect the wooden city from fire. In truth — **to lock the secrets on one island.**

ian mirror cost more than a Titian painting, more than a small palace. Its makers:  
h privileges, married into nobility — and **forbidden, on pain of death, ever to**

n King wanted his Hall of Mirrors, France **smuggled glassmakers out** — men  
ns for a pension. Walk Versailles today: you are walking past Venetian secrets, sold

The background image is a photograph of the interior of the La Fenice opera house in Venice. It shows multiple tiers of ornate balconies with intricate carvings and painted decorations. The balconies are filled with rows of red upholstered seats. The lighting is warm and focused on the architectural details. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and elegance.

1637 · THE FIRST PUBLIC OPERA HOUSE ON EARTH

# Sell Tickets — and an Orchestra of Orphan Girls

Opera had been a private toy for princes. Venice, a republic of merchants, had a better idea: **anyone with the price of admission**. Concert halls, theaters, the modern life of the arts — that idea is Venetian.

At the Pietà orphanage, the violin teacher was a red-haired priest: **Antonio Vivaldi**. Kings crossed Europe to hear his orphan girls play the *Four Seasons* — written for them that very week.

*La Fenice — the Phoenix: burned twice, risen twice.*

CARNEVALE — A SEASON OF GLORIOUS ANONYMITY

# Behind the Mask, Everyone Is Equal

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## The white mask

a servant could talk to a senator and no one knew  
— Europe's most rigid society, off duty for a  
season

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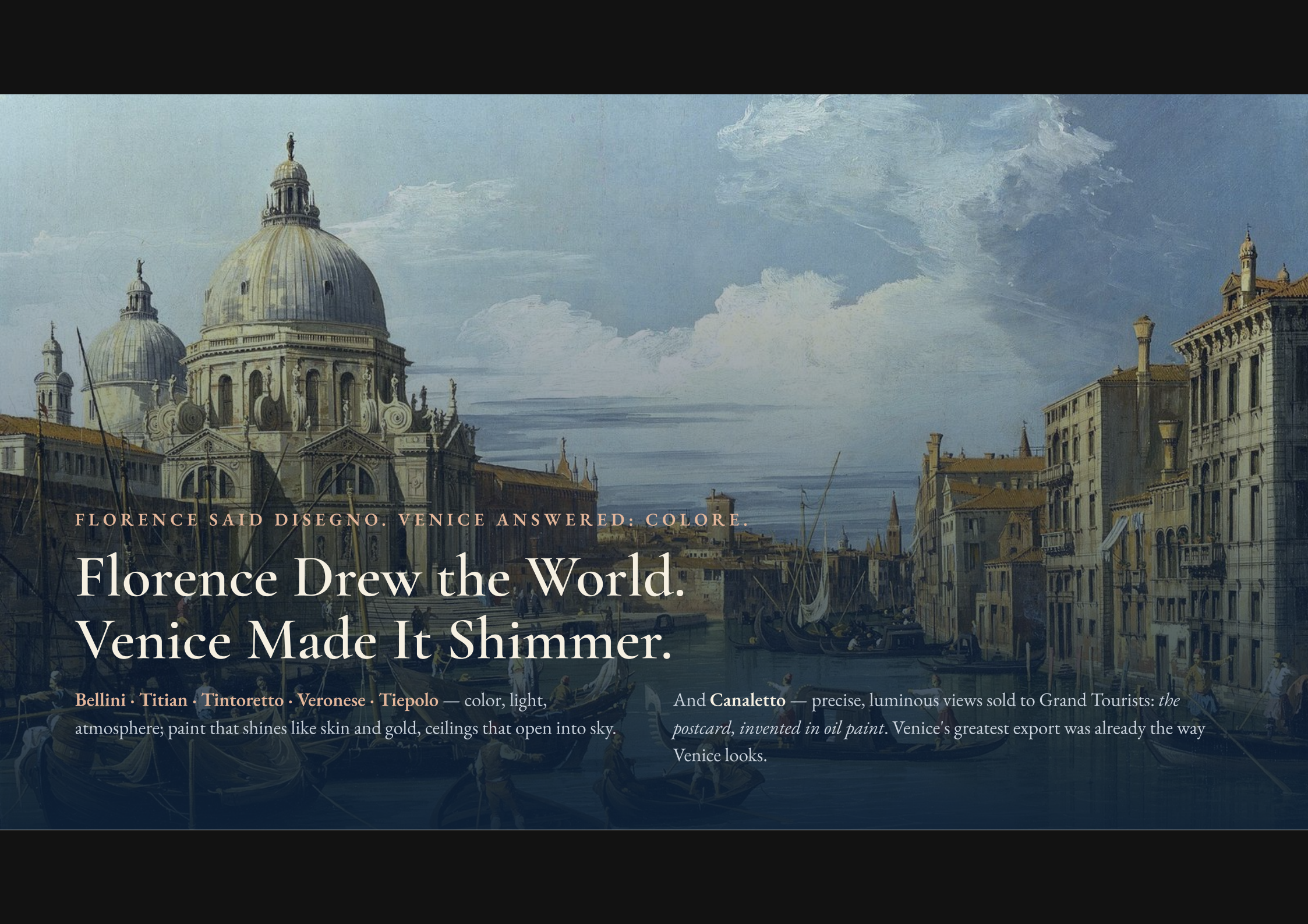
## Commedia dell'arte

Harlequin, Pantalone, Colombina — the clever  
servant, the greedy old man, the young lovers: **alive**  
**in every sitcom**

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## Carlo Goldoni

took the masks off — over a hundred plays, still  
performed tonight, somewhere in Italy



FLORENCE SAID DISEGNO. VENICE ANSWERED: COLORE.

# Florence Drew the World. Venice Made It Shimmer.

**Bellini · Titian · Tintoretto · Veronese · Tiepolo** — color, light, atmosphere; paint that shines like skin and gold, ceilings that open into sky.

And **Canaletto** — precise, luminous views sold to Grand Tourists: *the postcard, invented in oil paint*. Venice's greatest export was already the way Venice looks.

THE VENETIAN WHOSE WORK YOU SAW THIS WEEK



thing outside the Veneto. His buildings traveled the Venetian way: *as a book*.

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VENETIAN WORD N° 5 · THE LONGEST PARTY IN EUROPE

# The Golden Sunset

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## *casino*

the "little house" of pleasures — yes, that word is Venetian too

## Casanova

out through the lead roof of the Doge's palace, a gondola to breakfast — even the jailbreak had style

## 1797

Napoleon ends the republic without a battle. The last Doge, handing off his cap: *"I won't be needing this anymore."*

FROM REPUBLIC, TO PROVINCE, TO ITALY

## 1866 — Four Years Before Rome

# 1866

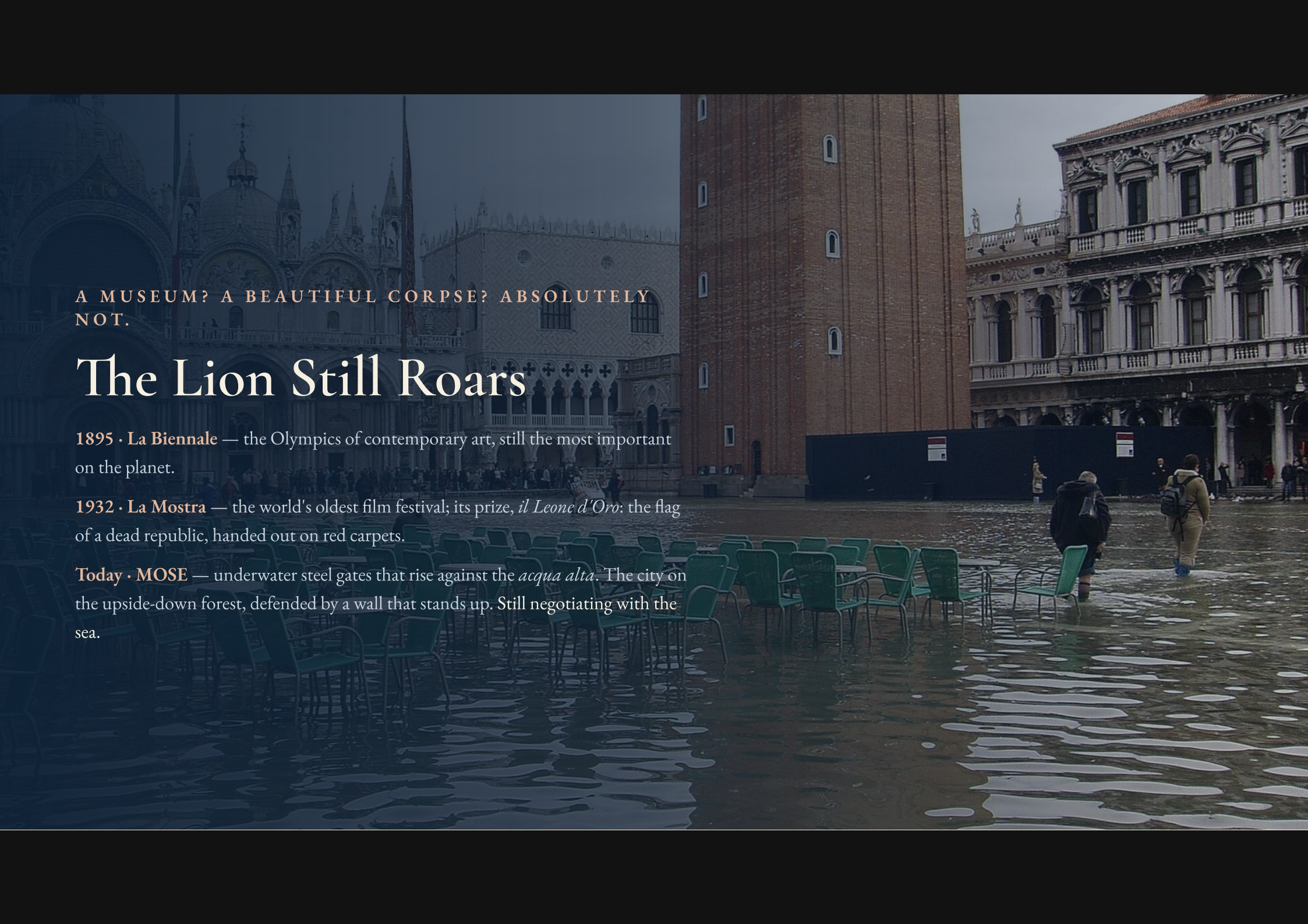
Venice joins the Kingdom of Italy

Napoleon handed her to **Austria** — the proud republic, a province on our 1858 map.

*Remember the Austrians: in a few minutes, you will literally taste them.*

Venice was Italian **while the Pope still reigned**; Rome arrived in 1870 — and the seven nations were finally one.

*There is no date left that can surprise you.*



A MUSEUM? A BEAUTIFUL CORPSE? ABSOLUTELY NOT.

# The Lion Still Roars

**1895 • La Biennale** — the Olympics of contemporary art, still the most important on the planet.

**1932 • La Mostra** — the world's oldest film festival; its prize, *il Leone d'Oro*: the flag of a dead republic, handed out on red carpets.

**Today • MOSE** — underwater steel gates that rise against the *acqua alta*. The city on the upside-down forest, defended by a wall that stands up. Still negotiating with the sea.

WHERE VENICE ACTUALLY EATS — STANDING UP, LIKE A MERCHANT



## Little Bites

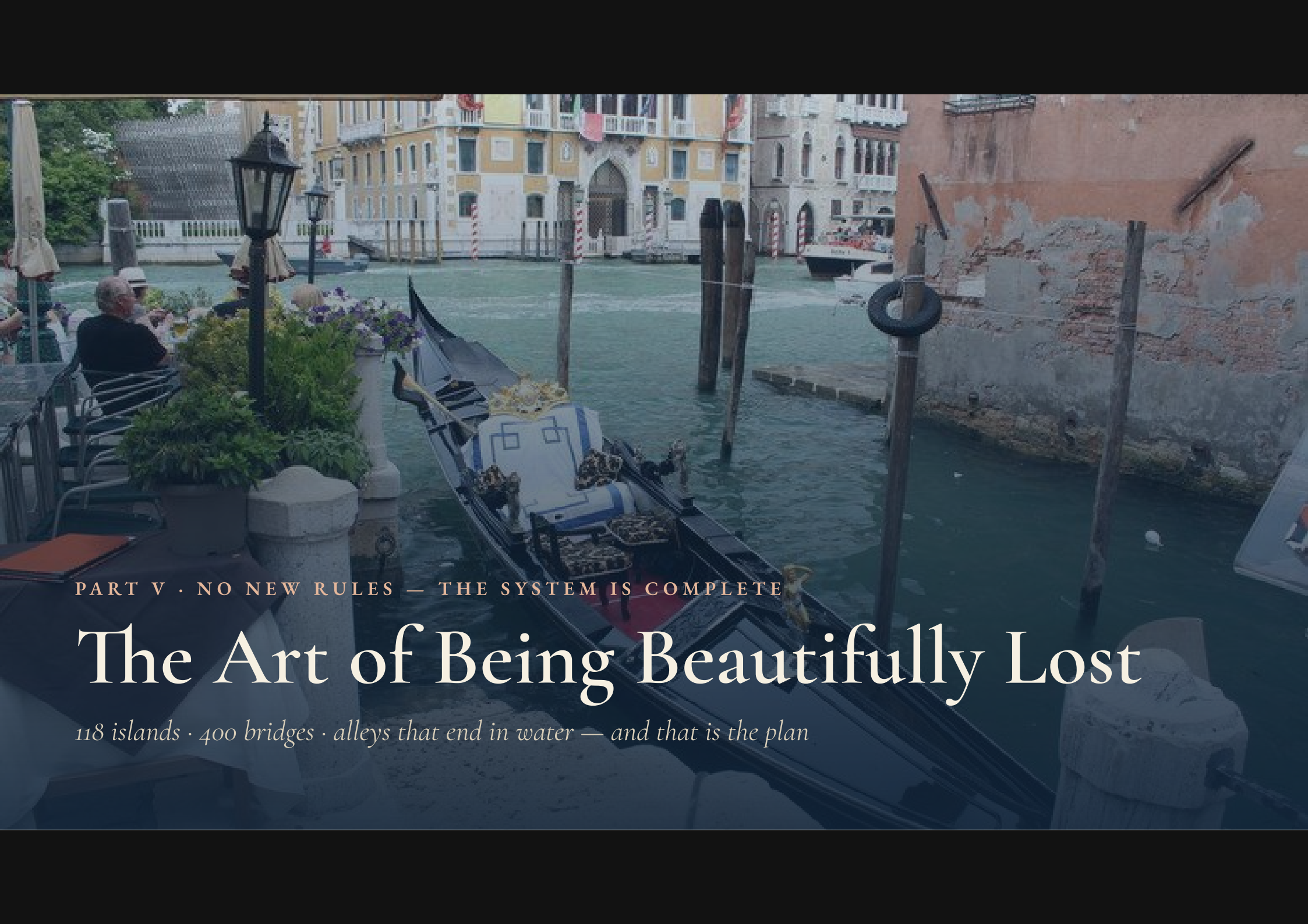
*bra*

of wine — the sellers of San Marco followed the campanile's shadow around the piazza  
wine cool. *Andar per ombre* — going for shadows.

*tz* from German — spritzen, "to spray"

oldiers watered the wine; Venice upgraded the water to sparkling wine and bitter orange  
**ned the occupiers' drink into the aperitivo of all Italy.** Always with cicchetti: the  
from our first lesson, still standing.

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PART V · NO NEW RULES — THE SYSTEM IS COMPLETE

# The Art of Being Beautifully Lost

*118 islands · 400 bridges · alleys that end in water — and that is the plan*

TWO WORDS UNLOCK EVERY STREET IN ITALY

## *Scusi, dov'è...?* — Excuse Me, Where Is...?

*la stazione*

the station

*la chiesa*

the church — in Venice, there is always a church

*il museo*

the museum

*l'albergo*

the hotel — what every lost traveler is really looking for

*la farmacia*

the pharmacy — look for the glowing green cross

*il bagno*

**the champion — the most requested location in the history of tourism**

NOW — SURVIVING THE ANSWER

# Ninety Percent of Every Answer



*a destra*

to the right



*a sinistra*

to the left



*sempre dritto*

straight on — Venice's favorite joke: nothing is  
straight for thirty meters

---

*È vicino* — it's near   *È lontano* — it's far   *È a cinque minuti a piedi* — five minutes on foot, the answer you want

THE MOST ITALIAN DIRECTION OF ALL — NAVIGATE BY LANDMARKS

# *Vada verso il campanile.*

— go toward the bell tower

Lost in any Italian town? **Look up. Find the tallest tower. Walk toward it** — the piazza, the life of the town, is at its feet. And inside the word, an old friend: *campanilismo* — the tower you navigate by is the tower Italians belong to.

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## *Non può sbagliare!*

"you can't go wrong!" — always said, rarely true, always a gift of optimism

## *Che gentile!*

"how kind!" — two words that turn a stranger into a friend

## *Mi sono perso. / persa.*

"I'm lost" — say it with a smile, and someone will probably walk you there. Helping the lost is a Venetian sport.

THE WORD I HAVE BEEN HIDING FOR FOUR WEEKS — IT COULD ONLY BE TAUGHT  
HERE

*ciao*

*s-ciavo vostro* → *s-ciao* → *ciao* · "I am at your service" — the courtesy of Venetian merchants

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Ciao lives entirely in the world of *tu* — friends, family, the people who have become yours. To the waiter and the kind stranger  
it stays *buongiorno, arrivederci*. **It is not a beginner's word. It is a word you earn — and you have earned it.**

EVERYTHING YOU NOW OWN — FOUR LESSONS, ONE LANGUAGE

# The Full Circle

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## Read

any Italian word, on rules alone  
— vowels to GLI

## Introduce

yourself, your story — even  
your age

## Order

from the banco to il conto

## Shop

kilos, prices, cosa mi consiglia

---

## Get lost

and find your way home by the  
bell tower — as of today

---

Not phrasebook Italian — **a traveler's working language, yours for life.**

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MICS OFF, VOICES ON — OUR RITUAL, ONE FINAL TIME

# Ripetiamo!

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ROUND 1      *Scusi, dov'è la stazione? · ...il bagno? · ...la chiesa? · ...l'albergo?*

---

ROUND 2      *a destra! · a sinistra! · sempre dritto! · è vicino · è lontano · a cinque minuti a piedi* — with gestures!

---

ROUND 3      *Vada verso il campanile! · Non può sbagliare! · Che gentile! · Mi sono perso / persa*

---

ROUND 4      *ombra · cicchetti · bacaro · spritz · gondola* — Venice on the tongue

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THE PACT, PROVEN — FOUR WORDS YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN. READ THEM COLD.

# Words From the Map You Will Hold

*Cannaregio*

double N · soft G before I — every rule in one street name

*Fondamenta*

pure vowels, every one pronounced

*Zattere*

double T — you hear it now

*vaporetto*

the water bus — double T, and your ticket to everywhere

Words you had never seen — read correctly, on rules alone. **The pact is complete.**



THE THEATER — ONE LAST EVENING IN VENICE, IN FOUR ACTS

# Adesso in Scena!

*il bacaro · il caffè · beautifully lost · l'ultima conversazione*

## ACT I *Al bacaro — the shadow and the little bites*

---

OSTE *Buonasera! Prego?*

YOU *Buonasera! Un'ombra di rosso, per favore.*

OSTE *Ecco a lei! E un cicchetto? — and a little bite?*

YOU *Sì, grazie! Cosa mi consiglia?*

OSTE *Questo — buonissimo!*

YOU *Perfetto! ... Che buono!*

OSTE *Cin cin!*

YOU *Cin cin!*

*Variants: uno spritz, per favore · un'ombra di bianco — and cosa mi consiglia works its magic.*

## ACT II *Il caffè — where it all began*

---

*same ritual as Naples, week one — count the words you now own*

CAMERIERE

*Buonasera! Prego?*

YOU

*Buonasera! Vorrei un caffè, per favore. Al banco.*

CAMERIERE

*Certo! Ecco a lei il caffè.*

YOU

*Grazie mille! ... Buonissimo.*

CAMERIERE

*Prego! Altro? — anything else?*

YOU

*Basta così, grazie. Quant'è?*

CAMERIERE

*Un caffè — uno e cinquanta.*

YOU

*Pago con la carta. Grazie, e arrivederci!*

CAMERIERE

*Arrivederci — e buona serata!*

*Week one, this dialogue had eight unknown words. Today: zero. That distance is the course.*

## ACT III *Mi sono perso! — beautifully lost*

---

YOU *Scusi! Mi sono perso. Dov'è l'albergo Corte Antica?*

PASSANTE *Ah! Sempre dritto, e a sinistra.* — straight on, and to the left

YOU *È lontano?*

PASSANTE *No, è vicino! A cinque minuti a piedi. Vada verso il campanile!*

YOU *Grazie mille! Che gentile!*

PASSANTE *Prego! Non può sbagliare!* — you can't go wrong!

*Variants: dov'è la stazione · il museo · il bagno (the brave one gets the biggest laugh). Vary the answers — they must listen, and they can.*

## ACT IV · THE GRAND FINALE *L'ultima conversazione — and the first ciao*

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AMICA *Allora — le piace l'Italia?* — so, do you like Italy?

YOU *Mi piace molto! È bellissima.*

AMICA *E adesso parla italiano!* — and now you speak Italian!

YOU *Un po'! Ho una brava maestra.*

AMICA *Torna in Italia?* — will you come back?

YOU *Sì! Mi piace molto l'Italia. È... casa.*

AMICA *Che bello! Allora non è un addio. Buon viaggio, amico mio.* — then it's not a goodbye (or: amica mia)

YOU *Grazie mille... Ciao!*

AMICA *Ciao! Ciao!*

*Every phrase of the course, in one goodbye — and the last word is the one you earned today.*

THE HIDDEN TRAP, REVEALED — WHY I NEVER TAUGHT YOU "LA PIAZZA"

# The City With One Piazza



*la piazza* — there is exactly one: Piazza San Marco. Say "la piazza" and everyone knows which. It belongs to the lion.



*il campo* — every other square, hundreds of them. Campo means **a field**: grass, a well, sometimes cows, in front of the church. The stone came later; the name never left.

*Nothing in Italy ever disappears — not even the fields under the stone.*

# Ciao!

Four lessons. Four nations. Twenty-eight centuries.

The promise is kept — screenshot this slide.

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**Dr Teresa Lara Pugliese**

*Write for your goodbye gift — the travel companion PDF, South to Venice. I answer everyone personally.*

AND IF YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH THE  
LANGUAGE — THAT DOOR STAYS OPEN

MY WEBSITE

*[www.italianbylara.com](http://www.italianbylara.com)*

MY EMAIL

[contact@italianbylara.com](mailto:contact@italianbylara.com)