

Rabbit

1900-1901

# Perduta

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In Venice, losing yourself is an art form. Like opera, painting, and *Commedia dell'Arte*. You are lost the moment you arrive, stranded in Marco Polo airport for hours waiting for the guide who does not come. In *disperazione* (because you do not want to spend the night there), you take a taxi to the waterbus depot and a waterbus to Piazza San Marco. (The world of Venice begins and ends in la Piazza.) You cry an aria of tragedy, bereft as any heroine who will surely die *affamata, sonnolenta, abbandonata*, not from consumption or a broken heart, but because you do not have a working cell phone. You, an inferno of jet lag and anguish, having blown through €75 like a dandelion puff just to arrive at the square, find yourself in a Caneletto landscape, surrounded by cloaked figures and dogs. You will choose a corner by the Basilica to sleep. An ally, though you are strangers, assumes you lost, demands to know your accommodations. She suspects your plans. "You cannot sleep here in San Marco," she warns. "I don't know where I'm going," you say, though your hand clutches the address of your lodgings. She hires you a guide in a shirt of motley, all bright green and pink diamonds. Like Arlecchino, he wears a mask of dark circles around his eyes. "*La porti qui*," she commands him, and disappears like a fish into the canal jade of twilight. "*Molto lontano*. Twenty five Euro," the guide says, noting the address. (Only a kilometre, you find out later. But in the moment, *very far* indeed.) You follow him through *calle* upon *calle*, across bridges you will not remember, feeling like a mendicant. When he deposits you at the homely door of the church dormitory, you hand him the last of your first day's money. A city full of museums cannot frame the picture of how lost you stay.