

Summertime, Part II

David Lean, Dir. (1955)

Signora Fiorini says, “Buona sera” and she is off. Jane is left alone, looking pensive and a little sad. Maybe she’s thinking about the push that might make her miracle happen. We hear in the background the theme song of the film: “Summertime in Venice.”

Jane’s bravado has abandoned her. She stands alone, tears in her eyes. She looks around her. And then she leaves.

As Jane walks through the city on her way to dinner, we again hear the musical theme: “Summertime in Venice.” Emerging from an alley, she encounters the street urchin who had greeted her at the pensione.

She looks up at a church.

The little boy asks, “Are you looking for something, lady?”

The boy tries to sell her things.

She says, “Why don’t you just run along home?”

“Home?” he says, “I’ve got no home.”

“You mean you have no place to live?!”

She gives in. She buys some pictures from him and instructs him to buy some food with the money.

When the bells from Saint Mark's Basilica begin to chime, Jane hurries through crowded streets, movie camera in hand, to take a photo.

But in Piazza San Marco she sees Saint Mark's Basilica – the statues atop it, the steeples, the golden bell towers – and she feels the energy of the bells, the milling crowd, and the birds. For the first time, she is immobilized by their grandeur. Now she is really seduced by Venice. She doesn’t record it as an observer; she experiences it.

In the piazza, Jane takes a seat at a cafe. Everyone but her seems to be part of a couple.

Sitting, she sets her camera neatly on the small round table, within reach. Jane doesn’t seem to mind being alone. She looks content as she gazes around her and feels the energy of Venice.

But, if we pay attention, we see that someone else is on his own: a man behind her, slightly to her left, with his face hidden behind a newspaper that he’s reading.

Jane reaches for her camera. Two pretty girls, dressed up for the evening, stroll by. Jane films them. As they walk along, two young men gaze at them admiringly.

What happens next tells us a lot about Jane – although we might not be quite sure what. Still gazing at the girls, the two young men set out after them. Jane stops filming. At first she looks shocked; she doesn’t know what to think of it. Then she seems to disapprove. Does she think it’s wrong? Or is she just jealous? Or does she have some feeling that she doesn’t understand?

Apparently somewhat shaken, Jane sets her camera down and takes a sip of her wine, just as the man behind her takes a drink of his. They set their glasses down at the same time. These two people, quiet and alone in the vibrant crowd, are in a kind of synchronicity.

Jane picks up the camera again and begins filming, just as the man (Rossano Brazzi) notices her – and “Summertime in Venice” resumes. As Jane pans slowly from left to right with her camera, the synchronicity continues: the man’s gaze follows hers, ending at the famous Clock Tower.

Jane senses that someone is looking at her. She turns and is shocked to see this man staring at her.

Completely flustered, she picks up her glass to have a drink and – realizing that it’s empty – puts it down again. She grabs her handbag, takes out her sunglasses, fumbles with them, then finally manages to put them on. All the while, the man watches her with amusement.

She calls the waiter desperately several times, in English, “Waiter! Waiter!” But the waiter is oblivious and stands with his back to her. The man, still quite amused, raises his hand and snaps his fingers. He calls out, “*Cameriere!*” and points at Jane.

The waiter comes right over, “*Prego, signora?*”

“Just a minute,” she says, looking through her phrase book. She finds the word she needs: “*Il conto.*” Although she mispronounces it, the waiter understands.

“400 lire,” he says and hands her the check, which had been on her table all along.

She awkwardly hands him the money, quickly gathers up her things and hurries off. When she leaves, the man’s gaze follows her – much as the two young men had watched the girls.

Jane ends her evening sitting on some steps alone at the edge of a canal, the water flowing. Behind her, pigeons peck at crumbs on the ground.

It’s the following day and Jane has a new companion: little Mauro, the street urchin. She hands him her things to hold, while she wields her movie camera.

Jane films the statues around her.

After one last admiring glance, they head off to their next destination.

They’re finishing up a snack at a cafe in the piazza. Jane pays the waiter – expertly this time. She hands him the money, saying confidently – if somewhat incorrectly: “*Grazie tanto.*” Mauro keeps asking her for money, but she says that she already gave him some yesterday. And then Jane takes off on her own.

As Jane is walking along, something in a shop window catches her eye: a red glass goblet.

Looking at it more closely, she smiles, pleased at the idea of buying this beautiful thing in Venice. She puts on her sunglasses – for some reason – and enters the antique shop, which is filled with statuettes, mirrors, picture frames and all kinds of knick-knacks. But even in the midst of such abundance, that red goblet stands out. She pulls out her phrase book.

From above, a boy calls out, “*Buongiorno, Signorina.* What would you like?”

“*Buongiorno,*” she answers with a strong American accent. Then she adds, “Does anyone here speak English?”

“Yes,” the boy replies in English.

“I wonder if you would tell me the price of that red goblet in the window.”

“One minute, please.”

As Jane stands gazing at the goblet, the owner of the shop comes out. It’s Renato de Rossi, the man from the cafe the night before. He stands next to her, but she doesn’t look up. He doesn’t seem to recognize her.

“Good morning,” he says in English.

“Good morning,” she replies, still not looking at him. “Could you tell me the price of that red goblet.”
“For this,” the man says, picking up the item, “I ask 10,000 lire. It’s 18th century.”

Jane puts her things down: map of Venice, Italian phrase book, movie camera. Now he remembers her, but she still has not recognized him.

He hands her the glass and she admires it.

“It is very beautiful,” he says, adding, “It is a very beautiful color.” He pauses. “Perhaps you would see the color better if you took off your glasses.”

She removes her sunglasses and is stunned to see that it’s the man who had been watching her in the cafe.

Harp music plays from off-screen; Jane is suddenly disoriented.

“Are you enjoying Venice?” asks the man and adds – referring to the place where they first saw each other – “It is the heart of Venice: the Piazza San Marco.”

“Yes, I felt that.”

“Oh, you feel Venice! That’s a wonderful feeling.”

She asks if he has a second goblet to make a pair, but he says he does not.

As the world goes by outside the shop window, the man gazes at Jane with longing. The theme “Summertime in Venice” plays again.

Abruptly she asks, “How much did you say it was?”

“For you, 10,000 lire. It is genuine 18th century.”

“Wrap it up,” she demands brusquely.

“What?” he says.

“I’ll take it.”

“You’ll take it? At this price?”

“That is the price, isn’t it?”

He laughs. “Excuse me, Signorina, have you bought many things in Italy?”

“No, this is the first thing I’ve tried to buy. I came just yesterday.”

“Forgive me, Signorina, but in Italy, you must not say so quick ‘I take it.’ You must bargain.”

“Why?” she demands.

“It is part of the buying and selling.”

He offers to sell it to her for 8,700 lire, but Jane insists that it isn’t fair. He replies in that case he will give it to her for 8,700 in honor of her first purchase in Italy.

As he wraps the goblet, the man asks Jane how long she’ll be staying in Venice. She replies that she could stay forever. “Where are you staying?” he asks. “In case I find another goblet.” She tells him.

Jane is disconcerted. She doesn’t know how to handle the attentions of this man. She leaves the shop, crossing the little bridge, while Signor de Rossi gazes at her like the young men did in the Piazza San Marco.

Back at the pensione, Jane writes a letter. She reads it aloud, thoughtfully, embellishing the part about the handsome man she’s met.

When Phyl arrives, they chat for a moment. Jane suggests that they spend some time together: sightseeing or swimming, perhaps. But they’re interrupted by Eddie. He and Phyl are going out to Harry’s Bar. Jane hints that she might join them, but Phyl doesn’t invite her.

Alone again, Jane sits for a moment, thinking. She re-reads the letter that she's written to her friends, and then makes a decision.

She goes back to the cafe at the Piazza San Marco. She sits with a coffee and looks around the piazza at the couples sitting together and at the people strolling. Jane seems very much alone.

Suddenly she notices Phyl, Eddie and another couple walking across the piazza past the cafe. Jane is afraid that they'll see her alone. So she leans a chair against the table, a sign that she's expecting someone. But it wasn't necessary for her to bother; absorbed in their conversation, the group walks by without noticing her.

The song "Summer in Venice" starts again. Jane's expression brightens. Sure enough, here comes Signor de Rossi, walking through the cafe, looking for a table.

He notices her, steps over to her table and says, "Good evening." Looking thrilled to see him, she answers, "Good evening." Then he notices the chair leaned against the table; it seems that she is expecting someone. So he says, "Good evening" again and walks away.

Jane looks stricken. She tries to stammer out an explanation, but it's too late; he is gone.

People continue to pass in front of Jane and, as the camera pulls away from her, the screen fades to black.

Back at her room, Jane picks up her movie camera and heads out to the balcony. Looking around, she sees gondoliers taking a nap in their gondolas, a flower seller dozing under an umbrella at her post by the waterside. Even the cats are napping. Jane observes, but this time she doesn't shoot.

Jane has headed back out. She's wandering the streets, a little bit lost. She sets her things down and studies a map.

Suddenly Mauro appears. Apparently he's been following her. She asks him how to find the Ponte Barnaba and he knows just where it is. They set out together.

They arrive at the bridge. Jane stops and stares at the antique shop – de Rossi Antiques – where she purchased her goblet. The shop is actually her destination. She enters, speaks with the boy and comes back out. Apparently Signor de Rossi is not in.

The next scene, back at the pensione, opens with the iconic Italian film motif: the clothesline. Giovanna sings as she leans out the window and hangs the wet clothes.

Except for Giovanna's singing, everything is quiet. Everyone seems to be out.

When Jane comes downstairs, she's greeted by Signor de Rossi, who apparently has been waiting downstairs. They make small talk for a few moments and then there's an awkward pause. Jane asks, "Shall I call somebody for you?"

"Who?" he asks. "I've come to see you."

Jane doesn't know what to make of this.

After a silence, the man gestures to the sitting room, asking, "May we go in?"

"Surely," she replies. She leads the way and pauses there, unsure what to do.

The shopkeeper talks about the heat, then – to keep out the sun – he goes to close the doors that lead to the veranda. This puts Jane in a panic. Apparently she doesn't have much experience with men. She is overwhelmed

by the circumstances she finds herself in: the presence of this man, her powerful attraction to him, this foreign place.

Signor de Rossi has closed the doors. "That's better, isn't it?" he asks.

"Signor de Rossi, why did you come here to see me?"

"It is natural. You are not going to keep on buying glasses every day."

"No. But why?"

"Why? Does it matter why? You knew I would."

"I did not."

"Oh," he replies, looking down for a moment, "How can I explain?"

"Listen," he says, taking a step toward her, "Two nights ago, I am in Piazza San Marco; you're in Piazza San Marco. We look at each other. The next day, you are in my shop. We talk about glasses; we talk about Venice. But we are not speaking about them, are we? No." He shakes his head gently and continues, "So last night, I am in Piazza San Marco. Again. You are in Piazza San Marco – again."

She replies, "Half of Venice is in Piazza San Marco again."

"Half of Venice was not in my shop this afternoon or I would be a rich man."

"I wanted to buy another glass."

"That's all? There are shops all over Venice. Did you look in any of them for your glass?"

Finally, Jane says, "Signor de Rossi, I don't understand."

He takes another step closer, "Understand? Why must you understand? The most beautiful things in life are those we do not understand."

Jane turns away, goes to a chair and sits down. He sits next to her.

"Miss Hudson, you asked me why I came here to see you. Because you attract me. Why? Because you do."

"Summertime in Venice" begins to play softly in the background. "Listen," he says, "We saw each other; we liked each other." Jane turns away. He continues, "This is so nice. How can it be wrong?" He's about to touch her hand, but thinks better of it.

Finally he asks, "Would you do me the honor of seeing me this evening?" She turns back to him quickly, with desire – and suddenly at that moment, the door opens, light comes in and the McIlhenneys arrive.

They burst into the room, oblivious of having interrupted the couple and their intimate moment.

The tourists have been shopping! Jane introduces them to Signor de Rossi, who doesn't look very pleased.

But he is amused when Mrs. McIlhenny greets him saying, "It's so nice to meet Italians in Italy!"

"What did you buy?" asks Jane.

The lady replies, "Glass, glass and more glass!"

Mrs. McIlhenny wants to show them the glasses that they purchased. Jane begs her, "Please don't bother to unwrap it." Her beautiful moment with Signor de Rossi has just about been spoiled; maybe these people will leave and she can get it back again. But Mrs. McIlhenny insists.

She takes out a glass that looks exactly like the antique one that Jane purchased from Signor de Rossi's shop.

Mrs. McIlhenny says, "Isn't that exquisite?"

Jane takes the glass and looks at it. "Stunning. Oddly enough, I was looking for one just like it," she comments, looking angrily at the shopkeeper, who looks back at her confused.

Mrs. McIlhenny displays her box of six goblets. It seems that goblets like this are easy to find.

The McIlhennys finally leave and Signor de Rossi defends himself, saying that his glass is 18th century. But Jane is suspicious. They argue. He insists, “With Venetian glass, the same design is used over and over for years and years. Your goblet is 18th century. You can believe me or not.”

She stands at the window, her back to him. He approaches and says, “Now please believe me. Would you do me the honor of taking coffee with me tonight in the piazza? There’s a concert tonight.” He gently touches the edge of the towel that she has over her shoulders, then he puts his arm around her.

“It’s not very much to have coffee with me, is it? What happens after that – happens ... or does not happen.”