

Eva Colombo, *Our gold*, fifth chapter: *Poplars and lightning*

It was long ago, towards the end of July, as it is now. We were sitting under the poplars by the side of the river Po and I pointed out to you that some leaves were already turned yellow. Westwards, clouds which looked like a muddy sea were about to swallow the sun that at sunset was shining with more intensity as if it wouldn't be forgotten. Poplars yellowed leaves were sparkling as the wind grew stronger and it was tearing off some of them that were like sparkles against the ash of the clouds, that were like sparkles of the sun which wouldn't give up. And I told you that according to the Greeks the Po's poplars were the sisters of the sun who shed amber tears for their drowned brother and I grasped a sparkling leaf that was whirling because of the wind. It was about to fall into the river and I saved it, my hand was like an amber drop which would preserve that sparkling leaf as an amulet. You didn't understand so I reminded you of the title of that Led Zeppelin's song, *Carouselambra*. To me it meant exactly this: preserving a whirling sparkle of life into an artwork's crystal in order to have the chance of grasping it as an amulet when everything around you seems dark and dead. Then there was a lightning and the wind stopped because the sky was holding its breath awaiting the thunder. It seemed to me that the chilly light of the lightning would have turned the poplars into marble columns and I told you that it was as a 1974 Paul Delvaux painting, *Dialogue*. Two girls - brunette and blonde - are sitting among Grecian marble columns as if they are awaiting, between a leaden sky and an enigmatically calm sea. And I sang softly the first lines of *Carouselambra*:

<< Sisters of the way – side bide their time in quiet peace / Await their place within the ring of calm / Still stand to turn in seconds of release / Await the call they know may never come >>

And I was that brunette who resembles me, seated among those columns by the side of a river sucked dry by the shade and into her huge dark eyes

the warm light of sunset is still sparkling. She is waiting for the call of thunder to set the time in motion again, for the rain to bring the river back to life, for the river to show her how to reach the sea where she will find again her shipwrecked treasure and she will see the rising sun again. You took me by the hand laughing and you told me to come away from there because I was not a Delvaux painting nor a Led Zeppelin's song but a frail human being under the threat of a summer storm. And I let you take me away from the poplars, the river and the storm. But I didn't allow you to take the sparkling leaf away from me. It was long ago... I still have it, as an amulet. And I really don't care you probably would laugh knowing that whenever I look at this leaf I still cherish a hope for Autumn to turn everything into gold.