

JULIE CHEVALIER

portrait

clutching his armani manbag hadrian flees roma.
maimed & mournful gypsies, on the steps of temples
not yet constructed, beg him for small change & changes.
african refugees try to sell him sun helmets, umbrellas,
selfie-sticks. he condescends to buy a rose.
past the city gate, the chariot grumbles thirty k up the autostrada
to his villa near tivoli he stretches his legs, picks wild asparagus
& carries the rose through cyclamen-stained olive groves
checking the shadows behind each tree trunk and column,
along the canal, past the fish pond where turtles swim in pairs.
his favourite servant (the boy's cheekbones
too blunt, his chin a little sharp)
swings open the bridge to a moated island with three-key security.
one key for the villa, one for the bar fridge,
one for the safe within the fridge where he places
roman coins, passport, iPhone & a small likeness.

Julie Chevalier writes arty poems and flashy fiction in Sydney. *Permission to Lie*, a short story collection, was published by Spineless Wonders. Collections of short fiction she has co-edited include *Cracking the Spine: ten Australian short stories and how they were written*.

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