

## **Book I: My Brilliant Friend**

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### **Prologue - Eliminating all the traces**

Rino, Lila's older brother, called Elena and talked about Lina, Rino's mother, getting worse. Lina was 66 years old, and she told Elena about disappearing without a trace three decades ago. Elena called Rino again and asked him to look for Lina. He could not find her any trace of her even in the photographs.

### **Childhood - The story of Don Achille**

Lila and Elena were playing together in their childhood. Lila always waited for her when they are going up stairs. She was afraid of Don Achille. They had their own dolls and talked to their dolls about their days and all sorts. One day, they exchanged the dolls for a while and Lila let Elena's dolls fall in the grate.

They went to school together. Even though Elena had no conviction of any sort, Lila had absolute determination. They had a rough childhood, their friends died of all sorts of things, croup, tetanus, typhus, gas, war, lathe, rubble, work, bombardment, bomb, tuberculosis, infection. One day a gang headed by a boy named "Enzo" attacked them with stones as they were smarter than them. Lila was steady and threw back a sharp stone handed by Elena. It hit and bled Enzo. When she was about to hit another one, Elena stopped her. Then, Lila was hit in the forehead and lost her consciousness.

Elena was afraid of Don Achille. He disliked a carpenter named "Signor Peluso", who lost all his money in gambling. He was publicly criticized for the loss. One day, he beat the carpenter near a tree, severely injuring him.

Their childhood was filled with women and neighbors fighting each other constantly. One remarkable fight was between two women, one was trying to steal the husband of another. This fight unfortunately ended with one's head hitting the floor like a watermelon. Another incident was the rift between a schoolteacher and Lila. Lila had made her injured, and one day Lila was asked to read and write on a blackboard in front of his mother. She did it well and the teacher asked who taught you how to read and write; she replied, "Me."

Elena's mother was abusive to her. Her father, a porter, did not make enough money and so, they quarreled often. Before the school, her father said to her if she was not one of the best at school, she might have to work. These works and her mother's abusive nature scared her. At school, the best students are allowed to sit next to the teacher as a reward. Elena was always sitting at that chair, but lately, Lila was invited at that chair more than her.

Lila got better and better at school. One day the principal held a competition where the duel between Lila and Enzo, the repeater got all attention. At first, they seemed to be equal which surprised the principal. But then, Lila woke up and defeated Enzo. That was when the gang of boys started shooting rocks at them. After Lila being hit in the head by Enzo, Rino, her adorned older brother, came next day and beat Enzo. The feuds ended that day.

She showed her black scar to everyone. From that day on, Lila and Elena met quite often and played with their dolls named "Tina and Nu". That is when Lila dropped the dolls into the gratings. Elena held back her despair so as not to lose Lila. They went into the cellar to fetch the dolls back. It was dark and Elena saw a gas mask and cried out in horror. They could not find their dolls as they were fetched by Don Achille.

Elena fell sick of the imagination of the treatment of Don Achille on her dolls. She was grieving. One day she received a declaration of love by Nina. He asked if she agreed to marry her when they grow old. She declined. Then, the family of Nino moved to another neighborhood and their moving was a spectacular one with flying objects and loud screams.

No one even declared their love on Lila. But Enzo once gave her a gift. The teachers and the principal wanted Lila and Elena to take the Elementary Diploma test as well as admission test for middle school, so they invited the families. Elena's mother went and at first was against it. But her father was in favor, so she got a chance to take the test and extra lessons. But the family of Lila was against it, and even the principal could not persuade them. But Lila was going to take it anyway, as she knew how to go beyond the limit without suffering from the consequences.

One day Lila dragged along Elena to Don Achille to ask back their dolls. Don Achille was bewildered about taking their dolls, so he gave them some money to buy dolls as a gift from him. They bought a book named "Little Women" instead. They read it, guarded it, and read it again and again. Rino was also protective of his sister and always argued with the parents about the schooling of Lila. Lila also wanted to make his bother, the wealthiest in the nation. She wrote a ten-page novel named "The Blue Fairy." Elena persuaded her to show the pages to the teacher, but unfortunately, the teacher thought it was a waste of study time.

One day Lila and Elena went to an adventure out of their neighborhood to the sea. After a few hours, the sun was nearly out, and Lila held back and run back to their neighborhood under heavy rain and thunder. Elena wanted to see the sea, but she got beaten for the little adventure and no one in Lila's house noticed it.

Elena took the final exam as well as the admission test, she passed both with ten, the highest, higher than Lila, who took only the final exam. From that moment, Lila became attached to another friend called "Carmela". They three got together. Elena reminded and teased that Lila will not be able to middle school because she did not take the admission test. Lila was angry and vented her anger towards her family. It took a toll on her father and one day, he threw her out of the window and broke her arm. Another incident happened, Don Achille was murdered in his house, and Carmela's father was suspected of the crime, and they took him away. It was one of the scariest incidents of their life.

### **Adolescence - The Story of the Shoes**

Lila had a sensation called dissolving margins. She only recounted at the age of 36. She felt like that when she was thrown out of the window.

Elena and Gigliola, and Alfonso, the son of Don Achille, were the ones who got the middle school. They performed badly, Gigliola had to retake some classes and Elena passed with only sixes. The teacher summoned her mother and told her that Elena did not fail because of her. At home, her mother and father discussed, fought, and her father decided to keep her at school because she passed while her friend had to retake classes.

Lila and Carmela got together more often. Though Rino led her go to school, she did not go, and instead focused on labor of making and polishing shoes. They got older and started to mensurate, except for Lila. They got fatter under their chest. One day a boy asked Elena if her breast is real or not, as he put some bet. Elena led him see that it was a real thing and took the money. Carmela had a crush on Alfonso, the daughter of the murder is having a crush on a son of the murdered. Lila became more focused on labor. Lila and Elena rarely saw each other.

Lila began absorbed with making shoes. The boys are getting more attracted to Elena's breast. Her mother bought a bra for her. Alfonso asked her to be his girlfriend repeatedly, but she declined. Lila gave some advice and now, all the girls are asking more advice about love from Lila. Everything that was not related to Lila like school, Latin became more and more meaningless to Elena.

Elena did bad in an exam and had to retake the Latin exam, while others passed. Her father was talking of not continuing her study due to expenses. Elena cried all day and night, but her mother told her coldly if she can manage to pass, she can continue. Lila knew about it and asked a favor to Elena to meet with her daily with a book of Latin. Lila already knew a lot about Latin after all, she was borrowing books from Library using their family's cards. Lila also taught the easy way to translate Latin. When she took the exam again, she did a lot well.

She had a great time at school and passed the middle school with all nine except in Latin, eight. She did not need any assistance from Lila. The neighborhood was expanding and the grocery by the Solaras bloomed, and they became the richest. Lila knew about it and asked her father to open one. But he only wanted to make shoes. Lila then made plans with Rino to open a shoe factory. After getting middle school diploma, Elena assisted her mother at home. One day, she got an invite by Master Oliver to the library. She won the fifth for reading and lending books from the library. Of course, the first four were from Lila's family. The master asked Elena her grades and was impressed her obtaining nine in Latin. The Master said she will talk to her family again. Pasquale, the son of the murderer, had a talk with Elena on her way home.

Next day the master asked her parents to get Elena into the high school, and they did not dare to contradict her. Her father asked Elena not to go out with Pasquale alone. Someone in their neighborhood published a book, it encouraged Elena. As promised, she went to meet him furtively and they two went to Lila's shoes shop. Pasquale was looking at Lila, then, Elena realized that it was Lila whom Pasquale was aiming. Lila was becoming more girly. She told Elena that she got her first period.

One day when Elena was wearing her mother's bracelet, the boys approached them and teased her bracelet. One of the boys touched Elena and instantly, Lila put out her knife and hold him down with it at his neck. She also cut him, and it scared the boys. They apologized Elena and left. Elena's father showed her the way to high school, the routes, the city center, the pizza places, and all to get ready for her school. When Elena recounted her little adventure to Lila, she just listened.

Lila was considering accepting the invite from Pasquale. Both Rino and Pasquale were good dancers, and one day Lila, while Rino and Elena were dancing, told her that gramophone is a Greek word, it made Elena depressed because Lila was learning Greek before she even started high school. At a party, Rino and Lila danced beautifully and all the boys were looking at her. She had become more girly with graceful breasts.

They went out to a pizzeria with Rino and a married guy told Lila how beautiful she was, Rino threw a barrage of insults at him. They also went to the naming party, where everyone dances including Lila, and Elena. The Enzo asked Lila to dance, and she accepted. Then, the Solaras came, Marcello asked Lila to dance, and they danced twice. Meanwhile they said that the son of the murderer was daring these days. Pasquale was furious and went out and threw a barrage of insults and promised to kill the Solaras. He only yielded when he saw Lila's crying.

That incident had an impression on both. After that, she talked about fascism, communism, monarchy, and republic. The first two years at high school was not good for Elena, there were few girls. One day she met Nino, a son of the poet. He looks not too well. However, things got better, and she was regarded as one of the exceptional in the school. Gino, a son of the pharmacist, asked Elena to be his girlfriend. Elena was being afraid that Lila would talk about relationships, and so she accepted. She had to recount the lessons she had learnt at the school to

Lila, and she pestered Elena if she could not answer her questions well. Then, the Christmas vacation came, she got more time with Lila, and they talked about learning English, love, and every little thing. They were happy.

Gino and Elena went for a pizza. Lila and Rino showed her a secrete shoe they are making. Even though Rino boasted the good quality, Lila was not pleased and tested it again. When it was a little damp after dipping in water, Rino vents his anger towards the Lila, showing another side.

On the New Year Eve, Rino was going to set off lots of fireworks, to show off against the Solaras. The son of Don Achille, Stefano, was also going to do the same, and so invited Lila and Elena. They found out what it was about, they went to the Stefano's at 11:30 pm on the Eve.

A lot of things happened that night, for Lila, she saw a scary side of her brother. The Solaras and the Stefano were shooting fireworks at each balcony and exchanging insults. Their mothers were shouting for the fear of the fall. It was a crazy night for the boys and the girls.

From that day on, Lila stopped working at shoes with her brother, and when Rino tried to force her, she resisted violently. He hit her and said her work was to help their mother. Lila assisted her mother at home. On Befana, the fuse between Lila and Rino exploded. From time to time, Rino tried to calm himself and be his old self again. But he hit her again, and she also kissed him as a sign to show that she was not mad at her anymore.

The school was getting harder and the rest of the classmate struggled. One day Gino laughed when Alfonso was tearing in Greek lessons. Elena broke up with him. Lila had two declarations to make to Elena. The first was she refused the proposal from Pasquale and the second was she refused the proposal from Marcello Solaras.

Elena got praises and a ten in one subject. She got all ideas worked out when she was studying with Lila, and she wanted something that was authentic to her. One day the five went out, Carmela, Lila, Rino, Pasquale, and Elena inside the city. Rino and Pasquale beat a guy who teased the girls. But they came back with a pack and hit the boys with sticks, while the girls were just leaving. Thanks to the Solaras, who came out with an iron bar, they got saved.

The Solaras had a liking for Rino, and they began a frequent visitor to the shoe shop. Later, they became close with Fernando and came home for dinner. A commotion happened when Fernando asked Lila to show the shoes to Marcello, but she denied. Rino and her father hurled insults to her. Then, Rino talked Lila out of it, by saying that Murcello would buy it and sell it in a commercial way. Her father modified the shoe and showed it to Murcello. He asked for the hand of his daughter.

Her whole family was forcing her to consent to the marriage. Elena was supporting Lila in her fight against the proposal. But she was caught up in her thing. She was to go to a journey by sea with a cousin of her teacher. Elena's mother accompanied her to the wharf. It was nice to live by

the sea. Nelly, the teacher's cousin, said that a boy from a respectable family was to join them soon.

He was no other than Nino, who once declared his love for Elena. She wrote to Lila about him and everything that was happening. She was expecting him, but he was three days late to avoid his father. When he arrived, as prophesied by her sister, he showed no emotion. Elena made every effort to get a chance to be near him and talk to him. He said to her that he remembers his declaration of love towards her. One day when he was asked to walk along by Elena, he chose to walk with his sister instead. Elena felt dejected and walked and wept alone at the shore. Then, she saw the shadow of Nino, and they kissed. He said that he was leaving.

Nino left, and it saddened Elena. She found a book of his and took it as hers, touched and kissed it. His father Donato arrived, the whole family took great care of Elena, and she enjoyed being with them. On her birthday, she received a letter from Lila. Lila wrote about the TV set of the Solaras and the anger of Rino and Marcello towards her for the proposal. It was so well-written and well-expressed that it made her feel a fraud. Elena wanted to go back and felt guilty of enjoying here while her friend was needing her. She was awake at night, then, Danato, Nino's father, came to her bed, kissed her, caressed her, and touched her, and asked her to stay. She felt pleasure yet disgust towards him. She wrote two lines and left at the same night.

She went out with Lila, and everything seemed gray. Lila talked about the frequent visit and anger of Marcello. Then, Stefano came with a car, and as promised by Lila, he took them a drive. Lila asked him to buy the shoes. So, they stopped at his shoe's shop, and Lila tried the shoe on him. Stefano took the drawings and said he would be back with the answer. He told Lila that he is a businessman, and he is not doing it to just buy her out.

Three days later, he came back and bought the shoes, and the drawings as promised. He even invested money and a place beside their shop for a new workshop to make more of those shoes. They tore down the apparition and reorganized the shop. Then, Stefano asked Fernando for her daughter's hand. Fernando agreed only if she consented. Lila entered and said she would marry him. And she would also tell Marcello about the decision as well.

One night she called out Marcello and told him coldly that she was in love with Stefano and if he tried to harm him, he must try it out on her first. He was not dared to do so. Elena went back to school and got closer to Alfonso, who passed the supple classes. She saw Nino once, but the thought of his father still haunted her. So, she kept her distance from him. She had to make a new glass, but it did not fit well. Lila helped her out by repairing with Stefano's money. Lila became more and more detached from books and tried to distance from those questions of Elena's like who the Holy Spirit is. She said it was the devil who created the world and made us poor. She became more and more beautiful, and Elena felt uglier.

Stefano's family did not like her at first, especially his sister. She wanted to out-beauty Lila. But everyone including her family knew that Lila was the most beautiful. She looked more like a

princess. Elena and other friends did not think Metro and hanging out with her at usual dirty places will suit her. Camella and others were spreading gossip that she was a whore and using Stefano for money. The worst came from Marcello. He told everyone that she gave him a blowjob when he had come her home every night. Lila knew about those rumors and asked Stefano to ignore them. They went to the movies in their convertible, making us feel like we need to grow out of our old skin. The shoe shop had a signboard that read "Crucello", but things were slow. Orders were changed from Fernando, Rino, and then from Stefano. They could not make those shoes fantasied by Lila yet.

When the false rumors arrived at the ears of Pasquale, Enzo, and Antonio, they decided to beat the Solaras and their cars. Next day, the Solaras were limping with their car destroyed. They said it was ten guys who beat them. Lila announced her wedding date, which was March 12th. It made Elena sad because Lila was transcending beyond her. But when she took the exam, she got all ten and was greatly praised by her teachers. Alfonso made a great gesture to congratulate her. She then got a job to take three girls to the Sea. She was happy as she got good grades, and a chance to go back to the beach. When guessing her right mood, Alfonso proposed her, and she said yes, even though she loved someone else.

Elena's new job with three children and a boyfriend began. She took them to the beach in the morning and met with Antonio in the evening. First, they kissed, and then they tried something like touching each other's private areas. But she did not love him. She was preparing to leave him and set a date to leave him after Lila's wedding. Nino's father appeared again in her life; he said that he would die if she did not love him back. When she said, she had a boyfriend, he said he would wait forever. Next day, Elena took Antonio with her. Nino's father had assisted Antonio and his mother in the past, and he thanked him for that. But he led an anger burst and told him not to come near her. Lila and Stefano were busy preparing for their wedding. They had a small tension about their new home and the honeymoon. Stefano put a deadline on Fernando and Rino to make the shoes before Christmas. Elena asked Lila if they are doing anything beyond kissing. She replied they only kissed and were waiting for the marriage.

Lila and her mother-in-law and sister-in-law were fighting incessantly. Stefano moved his family out of the management of grocery by hiring Ada. To alleviate the matter, Lila asked Elena to accompany her to buy her wedding dress with her-in-laws. Elena was a great assistance. She uses clever words to persuade the family of Stefano's and Lila to buy the dress. They liked Elena and called her to accompany them wherever they went with Lila. Elena's school started again, and she performed great except in chemistry. One day, she fought with a teacher from Theology and became an instant hero to everyone inside and outside of school. Nino saw it and asked her to write a paragraph in a small journal they are publishing. He warned the consequences. Elena wrote a few pages and showed it to Lila, and she fixed it.

Next day, she gave those texts in Lila's handwriting to Nino, who said that it was true that she can write better than him. Nino took the paper. He wanted to follow Elena, but she told him she

had a boyfriend. Even though she did not love Alfonso, she decided to bring him to Lila's wedding. The Crucello shoes were ready, and they went there to watch them. They were beautiful and looks very nice, but Stefano were angry because Fernando and Rino made some modifications. Finally, he gave in. None of the shoes was sold during the Christmas. One incident happened; Stefano decided the father Solaras to the speech master in the wedding. Lila was furious, went home, and shut herself. Everyone including came to reconcile. None succeeded. Finally, Elena came and told her that they have no place in her future, and it was only Marcello who harmed her. She listened to Elena, and only let Stefano kiss her cheek when he apologized. The thing that scared her was that Stefano did not really love her, because when her action was about to bring some chaos to the business, he decided to go against her. But he promised that Marcello will not set foot at the wedding.

The wedding started at 12th March. Before the ceremony started, Elena assisted Lila to get dressed. It was the first time she saw Lila naked and wondered her beauty before it was mired by Stefano. The ceremony started, and everyone wore their best suits. She stayed near Antonio but did not allow him to speak to her. Then, she saw Nino. Antonio pushed her into the car for the next part of the ceremony at a restaurant. Elena's mother noticed that she was being around with the son of a crazy mother. She forced Elena to sit beside her. But Elena forced herself out when she saw Nino coming. Despite Antonio being there, she went straight to the place where Nino was sitting.

Antonio came up to her, but she put him away by saying her mother was watching. Then, Nino and Elena had a great talk about literature and change. Then, Antonio came up to Elena and asked her to dance. Elena refused but Nino gave some space for them to dance. Elena went back to Nino and continued their conversation. Then, she learnt that the journal did not publish her piece. She was disappointed. The wedding was having some chaos as some poor relatives were giving poor wine and experienced delays in serving. Then, the Marcello came. Lila saw him, and was furious when she saw that Marcello was wearing the pair she put every effort with Rino to make.

## **Book II: The Story of a New Name**

### **Youth**

Lila gave Elena a box that contains eight notebooks that she had written everything after the elementary school including leaves, her wedding night, her toil about making a shoe, and her hatred towards the Marcello. Every line was written with care and good punctuations except for a few.

When she saw Marcello wearing the shoes the Stefano swore to keep them forever, she burst out of the room. After half an hour, she came back along with Stefano, she gave foods serving to the guests leaving the Solaras and Rino. Elena asked Antonio to get out together. Antonio first refused and gave out a barrage of words about him being used by her. Then, he agreed to go out together.

They kissed and pleased each other. Elena wanted things to go further as she expected Lila might be doing the same. But Antonio wanted to do it in the right way and backed down. When Elena came back, her mother hit her, and she declared she won't be going to school anymore. But she pretended to do so for several days. She wandered the streets of Naples. She learnt that Rino and Pinnucia was having an engagement party, and Lila did not invite her. Then she saw her one day. She recounted her wedding night, as exactly as in her notebooks.

The wedding night was an awful one, she learnt that Stefano arranged things with the Solaras and her family to save the invested money. On their honeymoon, Lila was mad, and Stefano tried to amuse her. Then, in their suite, he hit her and tried to subdue her so that he could touch her and have her. Lila hated Stefano, his surname, and everything related to him.

When they arrived back from their honeymoon, Stefano asked his father-in-law and his brother-in-law to explain about the shoes. Lila hated it and told Elena about it. Elena avoided schools but when she saw Alfonso and Nino's sister, Marisa. She changed her mind and went back to school with fake signature of her mother. At that evening, she told Antonio that she will marry him after she finishes school.

Study became hard for Elena, and she struggled. She even received bad marks. One day Lila invited Elena to study at her apartment and left her alone in a room to study. It assisted Elena. Antonio became so much attached to Elena, and he said he did not want to serve in an Army because he did not want to leave her poor mother alone. But in fact, he dared not leave Elena. When Elena found out from Lila, Stefano paid money to get an exempt from military, she did not report back to her worried boyfriend. Lila was spending more money than ever, and her shoes were getting displayed all over the city.

Elena saw Nino one day, and he asked her to read a note from him. She was busy with final exams and other homework, so when she gave it back to him, he was not satisfied. Nino got a new girlfriend, who was younger than Elena. The whole incident of exchanging notes was captured by Antonio. He was mad and accused of Elena about accusing him. She made up and explained it. She knew that Antonio will be more afraid of her.

Then, a letter came, and he was to serve in the Army with Enzo. Elena discussed the issues with Lila, who made a bold move to go to the Solaras. When she entered their bar with Elena, Marcello and Michele came out and talked to Lila. Elena there realized that Lila was a woman who knew how to talk to men and knew them well. Finally, Marcello said that he will find out some way for Antonio.

Antonio was angry that Elena had gone to the Solaras and asked for him. He said that he would never beg for anything from the Solaras. Then, he said he was leaving her because she did not care for his feelings. Stefano was also angry with Lila that she had gone to her former wooer. He also asked Elena to accompany him to go to the dress maker who were displaying Lila's wedding photograph.

On the way, Stefano poured his hearts out about Lila forcing him to suffer and asked Elena to ally Lila. At the shop, the dress makers were unhappy to give the photographs back. She also mentioned that people were asking if the woman in the photo an actress or a princess was.

Elena passed the school but with average grades. As a result, she did not get the scholarship, so, her mother was furious. Elena did not tell Lila about the talk between her and Stefano. Elena wanted to find Nino, but she only saw his new girlfriend. Antonio was also avoiding her.

Rino and Pinu kissed in front of Lila and Elena. Lila, even though they did not talk very often, knew that Elena was performing poorly at school. So, she struck a deal that Stefano will give his permission to display her picture. If she wins, Elena must pass with near perfect scores onwards. If she loses, she will enroll herself in a private institution and get the diploma along with her.

Elena got the same job for the Summer. She went to visit to Maestro but found that she had fainted. The weather was not kind this year. Additionally, Antonio's mother, Melina, got fainted too. Lila and Stefano saw the plight of an old widow with their wrinkles.

Lila started going out with her old friends, Pasquale and Enzo and Ada, again without Stefano. She even went out with Antonio without telling Elena. He was to leave in September for Army. Lila lost the bet as Stefano did not give the permission to display her pictures to the Solaras. Elena urged her to study again as per agreement. Lila was touching her body as if she was sacred by the plights of other old women.

Elena took the girls to the Sea Garden as usual. Then, she saw Lila accompanied by Antonio, Marisa, and Alfonso. Marisa told Elena that her brother, Nino, had gone to England after he graduated. Elena asked Lila to do the same after they finished their study together, reminding Lila that she lost the bet. Lila responded that she was pregnant. Lila threw up a lot and always said "emptiness inside".

She was managing the grocery and handing out money to her friends including Elena and others in their times of needs. One day Lila, after some argument with Stefano, came out to the Sea again. She said that Stefano had allowed to display her photo and was the winner of the bet. She reminded Elena that she had to pass with high marks. Then, the girls got hurt under Lila's watch. But the stationer did not seem to be angry. But they told Elena that she did not need to go with them anymore because they had too much swimming. Lila did not know anything about it. She was busy with the new opening of the grocery. She put every effort to make the life of Stefano miserable. She handed out free foods to those who came to the opening, treating Stefano like her servant. They had an argument, but he did not hit her.

One day Lila called Elena that she had a solution. She, Elena, and Stefano, went to the opening of Michele's and convinced Stefano that she wanted to display the picture in her own way. He agreed. She dismantled the whole picture. Everyone was dumbfounded. It was horrible. When Stefano asked Elena what she thought of it. Elena replied to it can attract attention. Stefano agreed and Lila further added some color to it.

Painting has been a great escape from others for Lila and Elena. They painted forgetting about everything. Then, comes the grand opening of Piazza dei Martiri. Everyone came including the Solara. She tried to put a face and go out with Michele Solara ignoring Stefano. When everyone left, and she entered the room with a face that drained of life. She immediately went into the bathroom. After some time, she came back. She said that she had some blood. Her pregnancy lasted only ten weeks.

After that event, her mother-in-law, Maria, became more affectionate towards Lila. Even though her sister-in-law and Stefano argued that she did not want the children, Maria replied it was only the act of God. Lila became managing the grocery with much efficiency.

Elena went back to school and did well. But she needed books to study. Thanks to Alfonso not being able to keep secret, Lila knew about it, and called Lenu to her, asked if she remembered her lost in bet, and handed out the new book package. It moved Elena as well as her mother. In addition to that, her professor gave her newspaper to read.

One day she found out that the painting created by her and Lila got praised in one newspaper. She rushed to Lila, but Lila said that it was an act of businessmen and showed her one clip where the painting was criticized. Stefano and Solaras used this opportunity and advertised it for more.

All their shops were prospering. The grocery was well-managed by Lila, and the shoe shops were handled by Pinnucia, and Gigioloa. The shoes designed by Lila appeared in wealthy magazine and everywhere. It made them greedier. The Solaras, and the Caraccia met one day to discuss business, but Lila did not come. Everyone was expecting for Lila to design a new shoe for business. She did not want too as usual. Then, an accident happened. Her picture caught fire, due to Gigioloa. Everyone came pressuring on her to design more shoes. Elena went to see Lila, and Lila told her that she was unhappy and asked her to stay near her and never leave her.

Finally, Lila gave in, she asked Rino to design the shoes for them. He agreed, and worked hard, and showed Lila the new shoes. They were beautiful, then Lila realized that they have unbreakable bond. Stefano was furious because Lila gave their bedroom to Rino and his sister.

The wedding was a rush one. Elena was engaged in the exams. After the exam, a professor asked Elena to join a party at his home. Elena agreed but was afraid. She told Lila, and Lila asked Elena if she could come along. She persuaded Stefano. They went to the party. The professor family was excited to see Elena. There, she saw Nino and the girl he was dancing with. She was "Nadia", the fine daughter of Professor Galiani.

Everyone was focusing on the Elena. They complimented how she wrote, especially Nadia. She was an admirer of her. They talked about the world, peace, hunger, technical capacity and so on. Everyone asked the opinion of Elena. She had a great time, dancing, talking, and not pretending. It was miraculous. Then, she remembered Lila. Lila was being ignored by them. She thought that everyone would be attracted to her like in the neighborhood. But she was wrong, everyone was focusing on Elena. Lila called Stefano to pick them up. When in the car, she told Stefano and Elena how these so-called academics argued and talked. She was wounding Elena. Stefano even had to say that Lila was joking, to ease the wounds. Later from her notebooks, she realized how much she hated that night.

After that night, Elena stopped seeing Lila and going to the grocery. She did great at school, passing with all A and two A plus. But she did not tell Lila. After the school, she worked at a shop. One day, she saw Armado, who was planning to study Medicine. Then, Nino and Nadia came. Nino brought a journal that contains an article by him and invited her to give her review. She felt great and regarded them as her confidence. He even invited her to Ischio and Forgio on her holiday.

Elena did not want to go to Rino's wedding. It was a small reception, much to the disappointment of Rino and his wife. Stefano did not give her a new house either. The half of the neighborhood were not invited. Everything was usual, except when Lila threw a glass of wine to a wife of metal merchant for bad mouthing.

It was evident that Lila felt distressed, which was later confirmed by her father, who came to dance with Elena just to ask her to talk to Lila. Elena did not have enough courage to talk to Lila yet. She was working in a dead-end bookshop. One day she learnt that Lila's whole family was asking her to go to OBGYN, and she was to convince her. Elena talked to Lila, and they went to the doctor, who recommended that Lila needs strengthening to bear a child as she was still very young. So, Stefano and Rino decided that they will go to the seaside to strengthen her. They asked Elena to follow but she refused politely. One day Nino came to her shop, and they discussed about a book. Then, he kissed her. Next day, Elena came to Lila and told her that she will come if they are going to Ischia. So, Lila, Stefano, Nunzia, Rino, Pinnucia, and Elena went there.

For her disappointment, Elena could not find Nino there. So, one day, she went to Nella, to ask about her relatives including Nino. There, Lila and Pinnu realized that she came here for Nino. But Elena defended it with everything. Nella told them that Nino is coming. Next day they saw Nino and his family including his father along the shore. Nino treated coldly towards Elena and gave her his address. Then, Stefano and Rino came from the city and went out with their wives. They saw Nino and discussed about a model who is a friend of Nino's. Elena felt sad that she was not there to talk with Nino. At noon, she went to Nino's address. Nino greeted in a friendly way, and they talked about politics and other academic stuff. Then, Nino grabbed her hand and

took her to show the beautiful scenes. They saw Rino and Stefano with their wives on the motorbike. They greeted and left. Nino asked why Lila married a moron like Stefano.

Nino introduced his friend Bruno to Elena, and they said they would come along in swimming. Bruno was friendly and quite the opposite of Nino. Lila and especially Pina found him more agreeable than Nino. Nino and Elena spent most of their time discussing and talking about politics, classes, and workers. Sometimes, Lila put some meek yet clever disagreements during their exchange. Lila asked Elena to give her some books, she was started reading again, after three or four years. Even though Elena and Pina taught Lina how to swim, she can now swim better than them. They enjoyed the week with Bruno and Nino. The weekends come back along with their husbands. Elena was glad that she will have more time with Nino alone.

Before the husbands arrived, Elena, Lila, and Nino met on the beach. Lila started a conversation about a novel with Nino, which upset Elena, as Nino, who do not usually like that kind of literature, was asking to borrow that book. Elena lent him and he promised that he will finish it overnight. He also mentioned that he would not come on the weekends as the family of Bruno were arriving. Pina was also in a bad mood. When Rino came, she did not come out and greet him, which made Rino angry. Nunzia said that it was due to her pregnancy. Lila was also missing a book, then she found out that Lila took it without asking her.

Pina asked Rino to stay for the weeks, but he declines citing for work. Elena did not go to Barano. Lila showed that she could swim to Stefano. Then, they left. Next morning, Nino came alone and gave a noisy kiss to Elena. Pina was dull since Bruno did not come in the morning. The mood revived again when he arrived at noon. They played silly games together on the sand. Lila, Nino, and Elena talked about books, and Lila was giving many comments related to Hiroshima, citing dropping an atomic bomb was a crime of pride. Nino used Elena as a way out in those times, when he did not have anything to respond back to Lila. Elena did not mind that Lila was taking her books without telling her.

Things became sourer between Lila and Pina, who were having many attacks of nerves due to her pregnancy. Nino invited Elena to come climbing with him on Saturday. Lila, Nino, and Elena went swimming. But Lila and Nino continued swimming ahead beyond their usual line of return. Elena stopped and went back to the shore, and worried that Lila would drown. But both returned safely. Pina left early, was mad and packing to go back home. Then, Stefano and Rino came back. Rino and Pina argued when he learnt that she was ready to leave. Lila came to me that night, confessing me that Nino tried to kiss her, even though she resisted. Elena cried all night when Lila left. She had many thoughts including going back home and meeting him as promised. When she woke up, she went to the meeting.

When they met, they chose to rent a boat instead of climbing mountain due to heat. They swam and finally Nino confessed that he kissed Lila. Then, he asked many things about Lila, and why she did marry a guy like Stefano. The whole day and the whole conversation were about Lila. Elena felt angry at first, but then it eased. But when she came back, the anger re-ignited again.

She wanted to say that her mother needed her back home. But it was Lila who needed her. Pina had come back with Rino as she pushed too hard that if she stayed here, she would die along with the child.

Later that day, Lila came to Elena, and they talked. Lila told her that Pina was leaving because she was afraid of her emotions towards Bruno, but Bruno, on the other hand, was having feelings on you. Next day, Lila and Nino walked ahead, and Bruno and Elena started talking. They invited them to meet at an evening. Lila agreed as she had to phone her husband. Nunzia said she would come as well. Nino and Lila went phoning, but it was taking longer. When Elena searched them, she saw them kissing tightly together in a garden. From that day on, they started holding hand together on the beach, which worries Elena. And Lila went to the phone booth for a brief call with Stefano every night. One day before Stefano arrived, Friday, they had a serious quarrel. It was when Nino received a love letter from Nadia. She forced Nino to tear the letter into pieces in front of her and write that he was leaving her. But when he said he would do so if she agreed to leave Stefano. It was when Lila started insulting Nino for even suggesting that.

At that night, Lila confessed everything, her feeling and desire towards Nino, and how she wanted him to kiss and caress her. She then decided that she will leave on Sunday with her husband. On Saturday, Elena went to meet Nella since they were leaving soon. She wanted to meet Nino at any cost. Instead, she found his father, who told her to take care of her beauty. But she cut short and said goodbye to Nella. Then, she saw Nino, who asked her to give a letter to Lila. They walked for a while, and he mentioned that he was finding a job.

When she came back, Stefano was mad at Elena as Lila was saying she would leave for another place. They asked her to talk Lila out of it. Elena found Lila at her usual place with usual disorder. She handed the letter from Nino; it says that he was leaving Nadia. Stefano left and promised that he would stay longer next time. As soon as he left, Lila mailed the letter. Bruno was making more advances, but Elena shook it down, as a stark deterrence to Lila. One night, they went to Bruno's house, and Lila and Nino disappeared again. When they came back, Lila asked Elena to assist her in her plan to stay two days alone with Nino citing the invitation from Nella.

They persuaded Nunzia after some talks. Nino and Lila, as soon as they met, fly away to the sea, taking a long swim. Then, Elena was greeted by Gigiloa and Michele Solaras. They were having a day out at sea. Michele wanted to talk to Lila about the new shoe design. Elena went out to sea to warn Lila. But it was late, Michele saw that Lila and Nino were holding hand, though Lila immediately withdrew it. They talked about an hour and left. Michele did not like Nino for his father's article. Lila and Nino stayed together, and Elena went on to Nella.

She lied that there was no room left for her as there were many guests. Nella welcomed her and her former teacher told her that she was smarter than Lila, on other hand, Lila knew how to wound someone. She was right, Lila had something that Elena did not have, she won't settle it until she gets what she desired, her mad passion. Elena left the house on tiptoe to enjoy the

moon. Then, she heard the voice of Donata, Nino's father, who was following her as Nella was worried that she was not in the room. Then, the two made out, and Elena lost her virginity. She was enjoying it, and Donata knew how to please her, unlike Antonio.

When Elena woke up, she felt happy, and went back home with Nino and Lila. Nunzia seemed relaxed when she saw Lila and Elena home. Elena did not read the notebooks later, instead of reading pages of sexual pleasure, she read pages of love between Lila and Nino. Nino had saved Lila from the abyss of death by bringing joy and love. Later, Stefano arrived with no luggage. Lila forced a smile, and it was Nunzia who noticed something was off. Then, Stefano asked if it is true that Lila and Nino were holding hands and swimming together. When Lila tried to evade the answers, he forced her into the room and locked it. Then she replied that she had a great time having sex and sharing love with Nino, Stefano stopped and turned back into normal self.

The next day, they all went back to their home. Lila and Stefano went on like nothing happened. Elena decided to cut Lila out of her life. She went back to bookshop and worked at there as usual. She avoided Lila and stopped thinking about Nino. Even when the professor, the mother of Nadia, asked her about Nino, she said that she had no information. Nino had been a vagrant after the holiday, and did not take any exam. Lila was pushing something new. She was striving to work in the city, and forcing her sister-in-law, Pina, to work at the grocery. Besides, Marcello Solaras had produced a new shoe with their name with the original design of the shoes created by Lila. It sold out quick and was a strong competitor to the Crucello shoes. Everyone worried that it will put them in a bad position. Elena told Pina that Lila lost interest in the shoes for a long time.

Elena gave in and went to Marisa to ask about Nino. She said that Nino had return to himself and started taking exams but changed his interest to Novels and Arts. Elena also went to see Antonio, who were back from the Army and dismissed by his employers for being mad. Then, he decided to take the job from the Solaras, which made Elena, Pasquale, and others mad. She did not go to see him anymore. She only saw a glimpse of Lila at a funeral.

Elena studied hard and got 'A' average in graduation exam. At there, a professor gave her a precise advice about a college in Pisa where one gets to learn for free if one passes the exam. She even gave her information sheet and so on. Elena started guiding wealthy children and earned a lot. She gave fifty thousand lire to his mother and asked the family to allow her to leave Naples to take the exam at Pisa. She did terrible at the entrance exam but somehow, she managed to pass and got to study without any money.

It had been year since Elena and Lila talked, and the news of Lenu getting in the Normale was spreading across the whole neighborhood. Everyone congratulated her. She decided to go and meet Lila at her shop in the city. Lila quickly embraced her, and Elena also found out that Lila was pregnant with Nino for two months and Nino was at the shop with her at that time. Lila told Lenu that she cut her off as it would be trouble for Lenu to continue in their deception. Lila told her that she decided to leave Stefano and had saved some money secretly.

Elena's first year at the Normale was somehow difficult, but she got more appreciated and more accepted later. She met a guy named Franco, who was a communist. They went to Paris to attend a communist conference. Later, he failed an exam and had to leave the school. They wrote to each other for some time, but later, she heard no news of him.

There was nothing much happened to Elena during the year between 1963 and 1965. But much is happening to Lila. Elena learnt about it all later from her notebooks. After Lila left Ischia, she only wanted Nino and felt lost without him. One day Nino came to the grocery drunk, Lila secretly put him into his room and made love. From that day on, Lila and Nino spent some time together secretly. Lila wanted Nino to study again, and she too was reading again at night.

She made a good effort in the shop in the city, and as a result, many customers were coming. She also made it a secret heaven for her and Nino. When she learnt about her pregnancy, she decided to leave Stefano. And told about her leaving in one afternoon. Stefano at first blew at her, but she holds out a knife and told him that she will kill him like someone did to his father, Don Achille. He was bewildered and went back to sleep. Lila confessed everything to Stefano, but he slept without hearing anything.

Lila had left him. Stefano woke up and went on his day as usual pretending that Lila was at the shop. However, she did not come to the shop. A few days later, Nunzia got worried about her daughter and came to Stefano to ask whereabouts. Then, he cried and told that Lila had left him. The two families started looking for her, then they got a conclusion that Lila was with Elena and mailed a letter to Lenu. But Lenu did not answer back.

Lila, as soon as she left home, went to her destination, that she rented and paid for three months in advance. Nino and Lila spent their life happily going out to movies and debates. But it lasted only for twenty-three days. Nino felt that Lila was making too many problems, and he did not want to miss out on his studies and graduation. Nino, during one fight, said Lila to go back to selling grocery. Lila told him to get out. He left and did not come back.

Nino wanted to go back to her but did not have the strength to do so. On one hand, he wanted her, on the other hand, he wanted to study alone again like Elena. He decided to go and see Bruno and ask some money to leave. Before he got to Bruno, he changed his mind and went back to Lila. However, on the stairs, he was beaten up and forced to leave Lila. It was none other than Antoni, who saw them leaving the cinema. He followed them and studied their move. He did not report back the beating to anyone. But Enzo found out that Antonio knew the address, he went for Lila and told her to come back to Stefano, and if he beat Lila, he would kill him. After some thoughts, Lila agreed. Stefano welcomed her back warmly.

Lila told him that she was pregnant, but it was not his. Stefano burst out laughing and believed what is convenient for him. Lila stopped going out and meeting no one except his mother and mother-in-law, Maria. Elena and Lila never met during those times. But they had a brief

encounter, where Elena touched her belly and asked about the affairs and what happened. They both talked in short sentences.

Enzo had left Carmen and Carmen was mad at Lila for getting away with everything. Enzo got an engineering diploma on his own. Elena had a sort of boyfriend named Franco, who was rich and bought things for her. She went away for holiday in his apartment. Elena became a figure in her neighborhood, while Lila, after her birth of a son named "Rino", lost her figure. But she became more of the best mother.

Stefano was angry that Lila was more of a mother than a wife. He concealed his anger for a while. Lila was only thinking about how to train her son, Rinuccia. She went to park, and there, she met Maestro Olivero. The master asked her about a book in her hand. Lila replied frankly but the conversation did not go well. Lila also took care of Rino's son as well, however, Pina did not like anything related to her son and Lila and her husband. So, Rino came to Lila's house, watching their sons playing together.

One day, Stefano got angry about Rino and Lila being together for some time. He told Rino to get out. Rino threw insults at him that had been concealed for a long time. Stefano threw him out like an object. From then on, Stefano came home later. Michele told Lila to marry him and leave everything behind. He even revealed that Stefano was having an affair with Ada. Lila did not mind a bit. She said that she was sick of people like him.

Lila confronted Stefano for having an affair with Ada. However, he denied it blatantly, which was unexpected by Lila. For then on, he even went on holiday with Ada, and making more restriction on Lila. Pasquale was the second one who confronted Stefano for having an affair with his girlfriend. Pasquale and Carmen were heart-broken because of Enzo and Ada. Stefano paid Pasquale some money to keep him out of troubling him. At first, Pasquale threw them away, then picked them up, and told him that he was worse than his father. Rino was the third one to confront him indirectly via Pinnucia. Stefano told Pina to kill and leave him.

Elena came back for a visit for Easter. She hoped that something would prevent her from coming back. She was prettier and looked smarter than Lila, and she did not want it to change back like in the old days. She was invited by Lila for a lunch, and Ada, Pasquale, and others came to see her and talk to her about their concerns and issues. Lila brought little Rino when she met Elena. He could read and eat by himself. Lila told her that she wanted to leave Stefano before he killed her and her son, and asked Elena to go tell Enzo that she tried but could not make it.

Additionally, she gave her eight notebooks and ask her not to use it. Elena relayed the same words to Enzo before he left. Reading those notebooks drained Elena's energy and confidence, and she was afraid that she would be out of Normale. So, one day she threw them into Arno.

Reading the books from Lila had an impact on Elena, even after she threw them away. The last year of her study at Normale felt dull, everyone knew the names of the publishers and other great authors like their relatives, unlike Elena. Her stay with Franco had made a reputation of easy girl

around the neighborhood. One day a group of boys made a joke about her. They laughed. One boy followed her and told that he was sorry that he could not stop his friends from doing so. Next day, Elena sat next to her. He introduced his father, the professor, and his family. They discussed politics and literature like an easy issue. Elena was afraid at first to talk among them. Then, she talked about American, war crimes, and Hiroshima, and so on. She talked and talked as in that moment; she was only herself. The professor greeted his friends, professors, along the way.

She went out with Pietro and had a great time. They are working on a study together and it will be published. She wanted to call and tell Lila but did not. She fell sick due to a flu and could not go back to Naples. Things were heating up in the neighborhood. Antonio was leaving Italy for Germany, and he only went to see Enzo before he went. Ada was getting more anxious about not getting married. She told Stefano to get Lila out of the house. Stefano agreed but did not do anything when he came back home. One day Ada was pregnant, and she kept the news to herself. Then, she went to the Lila's house and told her everything. Lila only responded that she looked like her mad mother. It infuriated Ada. Then Ada started cleaning the house. Lila went out with her child to control herself.

Next day, Stefano found out that Ada went to his house. So, he beat her. But Ada kept going to his house, and Stefano also learnt that Ada was pregnant with him. The Solaras were also pressuring him to choose one to quiet down the scandals. Stefano told Lila that he had bought a house in Voremo, but Lila remembered that it was the place where Michelle Solaras had asked her to take there. So, Lila phone Enzo and left with him. This time she said she would never come back.

Elena was working hard on her thesis. The professors also invited her to teach after she graduated. She was having a great time with Pietro. He introduced her to his family. Then the graduation came. She did not invite anyone. Pietro came to congratulate her with an engagement diamond ring. She accepted and gave him a manuscript of her feelings as a third person on the beach as a gift.

Elena's return to Naples was a dull one, her mother asked who the fiancé is, having seen the ring on her finger. She told her that he was a professor with a book to be published soon. They wrote each other, and he replied longer notes and saying that he had read her notes. She went to visit Pina who looked thinner and horrible. But to her surprise, Ada seemed more content in her situation in the house that Lila used to live.

Lila and Enzo were living together but Lila, since the start, told Enzo that she had no intention of sleeping with him, and Enzo also did not mind that. He did not want anything to disturb their friendship. Enzo did not earn much; they barely make enough to meet their ends. Rinnucia was growing each day. Lila seemed not to worry about their life. Stefano came to visit Rina one day. But Lila kept telling him that he was not his son.

Lila told Enzo the encounter with Stefano. He did not comment anything. He worked all day and provided Lila with anything she asked for. One day Lila saw Bruno and asked for a job. He gave a note and asked her to go see that man, who will give her job.

Elena called Peitro and learnt that her mother had also read her notes and loved it. So, they gave it to a publisher, who was also very fond of it and wanted to publish it. They even prepared a contract with some money. Elena was over the moon, and everything she and Lila had hoped during their childhood were coming into reality, except only for her. She signed the contract. Her mother boasted that she was rich and about to publish a book and marry a professor. She went back to Pisa and talked with Peitro about the book. He said that it would be better if she could modify something when the main character had lost her virginity. It upset her. When she came back her home, she re-read "Blue Fairy" by Lila and the notebooks given to her. She realized that they were the source of warmth for her novel.

She had the strong urge to meet Lila and went on a journey to Giovanni. It was hectic along the way. When she arrived at the destination, she only saw the maid who was nursing Rina. She told her that Lila was working at a Salami factory in Savacco. So, she continued her way to the factory, and after a long search, she meets Lila. They talked for a few minutes, and Lila warmly congratulated her for having a book published. When Elena mentioned that Lila's book, "Blue Fairy", was the source of the book, Lila did not even remember that name and book. She even threw it in the fire when Elena left. Lila was studying with Enzo about programming language, which Elena had no idea. Elena came to Lila to tell what she had won and what Lila had lost, instead, she found what she was losing.

Elena came back to Pisa and found that no one in the neighborhood was reading her book. However, the book was a success. So, her mother-in-law, Adele, hosted a book event, where Elena met a man with beard who was praising her novel as modernizing. She remembered him by his voice, he was Nino.

### **Book III: Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay**

#### **Middle Time**

It was 2005, when Elena met Lila before she disappeared. They were both old and cranky, and Lila was living at her family home with her son, Rina. Then, they saw Gigiola, ex-wife of Michele, dead near a school. Lila asked Elena to promise not to write about anyone in her neighborhood, especially her. Elena promised and said that she could protect herself. Lila replied, "Not from Me". Those three words were her last words to me.

Nino interrupted Elena's book event by having a heated discussion with a well-known professor, who later went out of the event. Elena found it nice to talk with Nino after a long time. She

planned to talk all night about what books to read and so on. Nino told her about his time with Lila and mentioned that he cut ties with his father's. Adele invited Nino for the celebration. Then, Pietro came as a surprise to the celebration, which shattered Elena's desire to talk with Nino all night. She had never mentioned about Nino to him before. Pietro was promoted as a tenured professor at the Florence.

Elena and Pietro had a talk after the celebration. She said she dislike Florence and when he asked to meet her parents, she said "No". He replied if she still wants to marry him. Elena placed her hand in his and said that she wants to marry him and have a life together, even though she wanted to sleep with Nino at that night (she did not say the last part to him). Elena talked to her parents about the coming wedding. Her mother was furious because Pietro wanted to marry her at the city hall, not at the church, and there were going to be no reception.

Elena went out early and prepared the paperwork to install the telephone at her family house. She enjoyed the morning with the smell of fried pizza and the paper at a bookshop. Then she saw a picture of her in a paper with a headline that criticized harshly about her book. It hurt her a lot, even though everyone was calling her to console her including Pietro. She ended their call coldly. However, Pietro told her to buy another paper next day as it had good praises about her book. It sure did praise a lot, and cheered Elena. From that day on, the sales on her book skyrocketed. There were many reviews on her book, most are good. She was treated well in her neighborhood, but most found her book a bit obscene for their children including Ada.

The book was selling better and better. Adele told her that she would be rich soon. Elena left home not for Paris but for Milan for book events. She was bombarded with questions concerning the part on beach. However, she handled them well, and many praised her. Adele invited her close friend, Torranato, on one event. After some drink, he tried to embrace and kiss Elena in an elevator. Elena did not let him do so. She was scared that a close friend of her mother-in-law-to-be was behaving like that. She wanted the opinion of Lila on her book but they both know that when Lila burnt the book in the bonfire, everything about her childhood was over. At one event, Elena met her former boyfriend at Pisa, Franco.

Franco was a different man; he was neither generous nor kind to Elena anymore. They talked about things happening in Paris. He did not graduate. When Elena asked him if there is other thing he has to do, he simply replied "Revolution". Mariko was there as well. Elena had a great joy keeping the baby quiet in her arm, thinking about marriage with pregnancy. They were discussing about her book. When she asked Franco about her book, he said it was good but lacked depth. And it was not the time to write novel due to the revolution. She could sleep well that night. Besides, Jaun, a friend of Franco, entered her bed and asked to sleep next to her. She turned him out and was furious that it was her book that is giving them such notion as I as a free woman.

Then, she heard the baby wailing. She could not sleep, so she knocked the door. Salivia answered harshly but opened the door. She was crying as she could not calm the baby down. Elena put the

baby in her arm and the baby fell asleep in a short time. Salivia then wailed about her life, the father who had abandoned her. She had loved him. His name was Nino Sorranato. Elena realized that Nino was not afraid of his father but just could not dare to admit that he was becoming like his father.

When she arrived home, her mother confronted her again for not marrying at a church. Pietro arrived soon. She picked him up at the station. He was more anxious than she was. His mother confronted him as well. He explained that even though he did not believe in God, he believes his love for Elena and show them an antique ring from his grand-grand-mother. It settled the issue. The kids loved him due to his nature of gentleman.

Before he left Naples, he invited the whole family of Elena to eat out at a nice restaurant. Elena's father unusually took a role of tour guide and showed him around. They had a great time together, Elena's mother having too much drink. She said to Elena that she was fortunate to have that poor guy, and she does not deserve that.

Pietro tried to rent a house with poor condition. However, his mother, Adele, as usual, pulled some strings and got them a nice rent. She did not forget about her family; she installed telephone and television. She even got a driving license. Then one day, she heard Pasquale calling her down. He said that Lila was not feeling well. They drove together to where Lila was living.

Lila asked Elena to promise her that she would take care of Rinuccia if something happened to her. She promised. Lila knew everything about Elena, and they shared their feelings and stories all night. After Lila threw the book into the bonfire, she had a hard time at work. They kept teasing at her, especially the men. She reported those incidents at Bruno, but he did not pay much attention. But he talked to her as often at work, so the men stopped teasing him.

One day Bruno called her to a room at the factory. Then he told her that he and Pina had made love during her pregnancy. Before she could make any comment, he harassed her. She hit him and yelled at him, finally he let her go. She did not talk about those teasing, and Bruno's attack to Enzo. At home, all they do is learning programming language between 0 and 1, and drawing diagrams.

Then she saw Pasquale with Enzo as he came along to Lila's home. They talked about politics and working class, but Lila rarely said anything. Finally, he gave some information about Lila's family. Things were not doing great at home. All was destroyed by the Solaras due to Lila's actions. One day he invited Nunzida to Lila's. They embraced for some time, then her mother both entreated and threatened her to make things clear with Stefano. She replied that she did not want to see her anymore.

One day Pasquale invited her to a union meeting, where she met Nadia, the ex-girlfriend of Nino. Lila talked how horrible the conditions of working class especially the women by highlighting her factory. All who attended the meeting loved her and wanted her to come back again. But she

said she was too tired after work. Enzo and Pasquale were both horrified by the condition of her work. At home Enzo asked if she was treated like that, she replied that they did not dare to do that to me.

When she went to work, she found out that Nadia had written a leaflet that includes her words about the factory as well. The guard at the factory was accusing Lila of spreading those lines. Bruno also called her to ask if it was she. She simply denied that she, a mother of a child, would never do that. On her way out, the guard found a sausage in her pocket. Lila laughed. She was tired more than ever and woke up with a fever. A group of people was placing placards and shouting at the factory as a protest. One of the boys asked Lila to join them. She simply refused out of tiredness. Not later, a car drove by, and a group of fascists came out and hit them. One of the boys who got hit was Gino. Lila went to assist him.

After that incident, there were two factions in the factory: a small one who wanted Lila to talk with Bruno for more wage demands and a majority who hated her. She tried to talk to Bruno, but he had not been at the factory for weeks. So, she decided to pay a visit to Nadia's house. Nadia was out, so she met and talked with Professor Galini. The professor liked the way she talked in a frank manner. When Nadia arrived, Pasquale was with them as well. Lila threw a tirade for their inconsideration. However, Nadia handled them so well and replied if Lila was fired, she could live here with her son. Nadia was not joking. Lila did not know what to say, so she left with Pasquale.

She got mad at Pasquale for mixing with those people. But he was calm during their way back. Lila invited him to the apartment with Enzo. Pasquale asked Lila to continue fighting for resistance for little Rino. When she arrived back at the factory, fascists were already there, but no students. Gino, the pharmacist's son, was there as well. She tried to hurt Lila, but Endo arrived in time and the big fight began. She told them that it was Bruno who called the fascists. So, she gathered all the evidence and copies of how terrible the workers were being treated in the factory. Pasquale set a meeting with Capone, and she shared the document with him.

Lila was planning with Armado and Nadia. She showed the draft of demands with Nadia, they liked it much. However, Lila looked sick, so Armado checked her conditions and found out that her menstruation was late, and her liver was large. Additionally, he wanted her to check that up with cardiologists. Lila had a plan to meet with Bruno.

Lila had the urge to cuddle with someone to warm her up and cast away her nightmare symptoms. So, she asked Enzo to allow her to sleep with him. He hesitated first but cuddled her till she slept. When Lila woke up, she went straight to the factory. Upon entering Bruno's room, she found Michele was also there. He teased her with what was happening in the neighborhood such as Rino is a clerk at the supermarket opened by Michele. And the supermarket is outperforming the grocery by Stefano. Lila tried to hit him with ashtray, but he stopped her. Lila put the list of demands in front of Bruno and left.

When Edo asked Lila what happened in there, she did not say anything. Then the secretary of Bruno came and called Lila back. Bruno asked the things in the list, and Lila warned him that if he did not provide them, the inspector will come down to the factory. Bruno got mad and said that they had been bribing that inspector for a long time. And he said her to go out. Lila replied that she quit from the job. Bruno who might have made a promise to Michele not to fire her, called Lila back but she closed the door at him.

Elena did not interrupt when Lila was confessing those things, only a few times. Lila was on a fever. She confessed that she had no pleasure in having sex and being pregnant. She had a final confession of the night; she wanted to go back to the neighborhood. Elena dissuaded her on that decision. Lila asked Elena to remember her promise to take care of little Rino if something happened to her.

Elena got married in May 1969. At first, she was busy with her building and new house at Florence. But she could not leave Lila in that state, so she asked her husband to assist Lila. She also went to her every day, watching her and making her things organized. Enzo understood right away but some effort was needed to persuade Pasquale. Lila gave her collected documents and notes to Elena and asked her to write an article about it. Elena discussed it with her mother-in-law, Adele, who gave the phone number of an editor. He said sixty lines would be great for an article of that issue. Elena also called Bruno and demanded him to pay her money that he owed back. After drafting and revising it many times, Elena discussed it with Lila.

Since Bruno did not reply anything, she called her one more time saying that she would publish the article. Bruno called two minutes later with a threat instead of compensation. So, Elena gave the draft to the editor who typed it instantly knowing it would gain readers. Elena persuaded Lila to go through both cardiac and neurological examination. They were all good except the fact that she was burning out, she needed rest. She also asked contraceptive pills, and the doctor provided the pills for both.

Publishing the article was delayed but for a few days. Finally, it came out in the national news with a big headline. Bruno called Elena and played the role of victims saying that he was inherited a place with evil practices, but he is going to fix everything from then on. He paid the money owed to Lila. Elena was invited alone by Michele and Gigiola's wedding and Alfonso and Marisa's wedding. She went the first wedding, and then went on to meet Gigiola's house to meet with Michele. But he was not there. Gigiola confessed her sorrow and many facts that Michele loved Lila, not her.

When Elena came back Lila's apartment, she talked to Enzo that Lila had desire to return to the neighborhood. He had no objection whatsoever. Elena also learnt that Alfonso was a queer and got pregnant with Marisa due to favor for Michele. Lila and Elena and little Rino roamed around the neighborhood, and they talked to Fernando, Melina, and Stefano. Melina mentioned that Stefano's daughter is identical to the little Rina. They then went on to Professor Gallini. Nadia and Pasquale talked with them. Pasquale put a blame on Elena for resolving the issue

superficially by publishing an article. It did not even resolve. Bruno paid some money to those who do not report back to inspector.

Then, Lila and Elena met with Professor Gallini. She reminded that Elena did not invite Lila for her wedding. Lila jokingly said that Elena was ashamed of her. Lila was making bad remarks about Elena during the whole conversation with professor. However, as soon as they left the house, it was Lila who told Elena not to take heed of any opinions from those people.

Elena's wedding was an insignificant one in her mind. She had a small ceremony. Lila was not there. Elena had a small argument with Pietro before the wedding about the pills. He did not think it is a good idea. After a wedding night with unsatisfied sex, Elena got pregnant. She phoned Lila about that. Lila mentioned that it was not good to be a pregnant woman. On the contrary, Elena won another prize and got a little more money. She phoned Lila to tell her about it. She said that we only narrate our life as it suits us.

Elena became a mother of a daughter named "Dede". She was facing more and more difficulties in nurturing Dede. Her husband, Pietro, was not assisting her in any way. She could not write anything meaningful for months. She could not sleep well. However, her husband was doing usual work, ignoring the wails and cries of the babies. Elena had one call with Lila during that time. Adele came to assist Elena on request. She did assist her in many ways. However, Pietro argued a lot with his mother, Adele. One night, he asked her to leave. Elena struggled but did make it.

Dedee finally calmed down. She slept regularly and stopped wailing. Pietro was a dull professor at the university, so no one invited him and his family to anything. Elena had a talk with Pietro, and they decided to use condoms and hire Celia for Dedee. However, things did not improve for Elena, she hated making love with Pietro. So, she started flirting with other people. One was a lecturer of Greek. They kissed and Dedee knew what was happening, but Elena threatened her not to report that back to Pietro. When he tried to make love with her, Elena said no and went home back with guilt. At that night, she made love with Pietro without any condom. She became pregnant again.

Adele suggested abortion but instead, Elena phoned her mother to come here but she refused harshly. But her sister called again and told Elena that her mother is coming. Pietro picked her up, which made her feel proud. She arranged all the things like a spirit. Elena handed her out a set of rules like what to do and not to do.

Elena had no excuse to ignore about writing the book, but she felt she was lacking something. She started phoning Lila again. Lila talked about computers and Enzo being a smart kid. Enzo got hired in a computer company with a great pay. Then, she heard that a comrade of them was beaten to death. The city was like the neighborhood when they were young. After talking about their childhood, they both figured who killed Don Achille out. It was the mother of Marcello and Michele.

After the talks with Lila, she had the desire to write again. She finished the second book about 200 pages before her second daughter was born. She sent the draft to her mother-in-law. It was met with bad comments soaked in honey. Pietro was upset as she did not give it to him to read first. Finally, she sent the draft to Lila for honest review. Meanwhile, she gave birth to her second daughter. Her mother wanted the daughter to name after her like Elena gave the first daughter after Adele. But Elena refused since it was a horrible name. So, her mother left citing the cholera outbreaks in Naples. Finally, Lila called. At first, she said it was good, but then gave her frank comments, saying that both of her books were bad, and it resembled nothing to Elena. Then, Lila wept. It surprised Elena, but finally, Lila calmed down.

After the call, Elena called Adele and thanked her for her frank comments. Then, she hid the book in a drawer. She immersed herself in daily chores. After firing Ceila on the departure of Elena's mother, Elena did not think about getting a new one. Instead, she focused herself on house, children, and husband. Pietro became thinner while she gained fatter due to taking pill. She was afraid of another pregnancy. Pietro started taking sleeping pills, but his attitude was still the same. He did not care about what Elena was thinking or saying. One day his sister, Mariosa came to visit him. She brought news and ideas to Elena. Elena started reading books about women and their conditions. It made her wonder who she was and what she was.

Pietro did not like the feminine talk between Mariosa and Elena. So, one day when Elena was talking to Marios on phone, he shouted that he wanted dinner. Elena was mad, and suddenly Pietro slapped her in front of Dede.

Things in Italy were getting more political and rumors about coups were spreading like wildfire. Out of blue, Pasquale and Nadia came to visit Elena. They made themselves at home which made Pietro angry. Pasquale and Nadia seemed to be in love and so close. After two months, Elena learnt that Pasquale was wanted for the murder of Gino. And everyone suspected that it was he who set fire on the Solara's headquarter and fascists headquarter.

Lila, one day, called Elena and asked her if she could take care of Gennaro while she was going to beach. Elena resisted first, citing that she had agreed only if Lila were sick. But she gave in. Enzo dropped him off. Pietro and Enzo talked for some hours, Enzo being the main speaker, lecturing Pietro about punch holes and computers. Finally, Enzo privately told Elena that they both got a good paid job at IBM, and the crazy job offers from Michele for Lila. He wanted so bad but got angry at IBM for hiring both. But he could do nothing. Rumors like his mother being the one who killed Don Achille was spreading the whole neighborhood. Michele got pregnant to Marisa, a wife of Alfonso, who is a homosexual.

Elena, then, went to a beach as a relaxation with Pietro, Elsa, Dede, and Gennaro. She wanted a great time but instead, she was forced to shout at Deede and Rino for playing too much. The two kids became more and more attached. It worried Elena. One day, Pietro showed Elena a news that Bruno was shot dead at his face by three people. Elena immediately called Lila, but she received a cold reply from Lila that she did not care. Elena suspected that they were Lila,

Pasquale, and Nadia who killed Gino and Bruno. After their vacation, Enzo picked little Rino up from Elena.

Elena received another call from Lila saying that she got a job as a head of technology of a system 3 which was rented by Michele. Elena was stunned and said that she thought that Lila would refuse such a job. Then, Lila told if Elena did not know what her sister, Elisa, was doing these days, and hung up. She called her mother and learnt that Elisa was engaged to Marcello Solaras for a year. The whole of family of Elena and Pietro came down to the neighborhood for the news. She came straight to her house and found that Elisa had been living in an apartment with Marcell for two months. The whole neighborhood seemed in ruin. When she arrived at her sister's apartment, they hugged so tight, and when she told her sister that she opposed to the engagement, her sister rattled on about good things of Marcello. Finally, Elena gave in. When she was about to leave, her sister told her that the whole family is coming for dinner.

Everyone arrived including Michele, Marcello, their mother, and Pietro. Finally, Lila entered along with her son and Enzo. She overshadowed her in every aspect. Michele, and everyone around praised her for her new role. Elena felt disgust that she was sitting next to Marcello's mother, the culprit of the murder of Don Achille, and the loan shark.

Elisa knew that Lila was overshadowing Elena, and so she gave Elena a present from Antonio, who was from German. It was a book of Elena's in German. It pleased Elena very well, and everyone around the table looked it enthusiastically. After the dinner, Elena berated Pietro for letting other pack their suitcases and everything and said that she would not trust his mother as the publisher have not said anything of her book in other countries. The next day they were escorted to the Lila's factory, Elena did not understand it much. Then she learnt that Nino was married and came back to Naples.

When she arrived back home, she called Adele and her publisher and learnt that Adele did not know about the translation either. Finally, they learnt that her books were sold in Spain and France as well. She put those fresh cuts, translated book into the shelf. Pietro had an incident at his university, a student of his pointed a gun at him before an exam. He pressed charges but Elena argued him to drop the charges. Lila did not call during those times, neither did Elena call Lila. Her sister-in-law, Mariosa, believed that Elena's marriage was a mistake. One day Pietro brought Nino as his guest for lunch. He talked about her sisters and so on but did not talk about his wife.

Nino invited Pietro and Elena for a dinner since he did not want Elena to cook for him. Elena brought her daughters and found encouragement to write again. She wrote after the dinner and waited for the call from Nino, but he did not call. The call was late for a week. Nino said he was bringing his wife and son to the restaurant. Elena thought of not going there but she could not resist. She tried every dress and worried that they would not suit her.

Because of all that, they arrived late. Contrary to Elena's expectation, Nino's wife, Eleonora was not well-looking and even though she was studying law, she talked like an uneducated. Nino asked about her writing. She gave a draft to him furtively. After a few days, Nino called and said it was a great book. Elena also gave the draft to Mariso. Adele was upset because she did not send the draft to her as well. Elena sent the draft to Adele later. Nino came visiting Elena's home and the relation between Pietro and him got sour one day.

It happened when Nino was staying at Elena's home. Nino kept saying things that hurt Pietro for many times. Nino mentioned episodes of the fight between Elena and the priest, and out of nowhere, he attacked Pietro. Additionally, police were coming to Pietro to ask him about Nadia and Pasquale by showing him the pictures. Elena asked Nino not to make Pietro mad. Then, one night, Elena laid naked beside Nino in his room without the knowledge of Pietro.

They made love for the first time. From that moment on, they wanted to see each other more. They called each other and made promises what not to do with their spouses. Pietro and Eleonor did not know about the infidelity of their spouses. One day, they met again at the beach while children were playing with Pietro. They made love till evening. Elena thought of leaving Pietro and how to manage the children without him.

Pietro became suspicious of Elena on the vacation. So, one day, Elena phoned Nino and asked him to tell their spouse the truth and go on a trip together. Nino talked for some minutes about how his spouse made his life easier. Elena hangs up and cried all day on vacation. Elena told Pietro about her affair with Nino but leaving the part where they made love. She tried to resist calling Nino those days. But one day she phoned him, it was Elenora, Nino's spouse, who answered the call. She berated Elena for breaking their lives. Then, Nino called back. He decided to live with Elena, and he was planning to go on a trip with Elena. So, Elena told her daughters, as forced by Pietro, that she and Pietro were breaking up, but she would take the girls.

Pietro began losing his mind, he started singing and talking nonsense all day about his childhood. It made Elena angry. Most of all, he told the children that Elena was leaving them. Elena calmed them down but packed a suitcase for the trip with Nino. She waited his call. Finally, she received a call. It was from Lila. Lila told her that Manuela Solaras was killed, she was the mother of Marcello and Michele Solaras. When Elena told her that she was leaving Pietro for Nino, Lila told her not to do so as Nino will suck the blood out of her. Elena hangs up. Then, Nino called. Finally, they boarded a plane together.

## **Maturity**

During the stay at Montpellier, Elena had a great time with Nino. He attended the conference while they slept together at night and ate breakfast together every morning. Elena found a

separated women with her son of seven, she invited Elena for the drive back to Paris. Elena called Pietro one time, and it was awful. He said that the children and his mother do not want her to come back.

After her trip back from Paris, Elena went back to her children. They greeted her warmly, tagging along her. Pietro had moved out of the house for the period when Elena was staying at home. Adele talked to Elena not to break up the marriage but to no avail. Elena got a list of phone calls when she was away, Lila's name appeared at least four times. Then, Nino and Elena went for another trip. Then, she learnt that Lila called Nino and told him about the son of hers was not his origin, and she wanted to see both. Elena was jealous of the call, but Nino asked Elena to put a full stop with Pietro as he himself was getting a lawyer for the separation.

Nino and Elena saw Lila for the first time after a long time. Lila addressed directly to Elena, but she replied scantily. Finally, Nino intervened with some knowledgeable questions. Lila invited them back to Pizza De Maria to meet with Enzo and little Rina. At first, Elena refused but finally, she gave in when she learnt that Antonio was back from Germany. It is when past and present collides for Elena. She talked to her old friends and neighbors; Antonio warned her not to get together with Nino.

When Elena came back home, she told Pietro that she wanted a divorce. He resisted it and tried to hurt himself, finally breaking his arm. Adele took care of the children during those times. When Elena went back with Nino for a trip near Christmas, Adele took the children to her house. Besides, Pietro notified the situation to Elena's mother. She came during Christmas, praising Pietro and throwing insults at Elena. When Elena told her that she loved someone else, not Pietro, she tried to hit her, but Elena shoved her away.

It was a time of tense situations for Elena. She started writing again and published second book in France. The editors were coming to her for more articles. She had a great time with Nino even though they did not have much time. Then, Nino confessed to throwing away her articles about a fight with a religious teacher because it was so good, and he was jealous of her. Instead of being mad at her, Elena welcomes the feeling that she was not only loved but also esteemed.

The in-laws were making things hard for Elena as well. They said that they would take the children under their care. Elena refused first, but then she gave in. She went to a trip to Germany with Nino, where they got stopped by Police several times due to having an Italian plate. Whenever they were at the police station, Elena anxiously looked for the photos of Pasquale and Nadia, but they weren't there.

Elena and Nino forgot about their surroundings, instead they focused on their lives together. The political situation in Italy was getting hotter. One day when Elena was meeting with Carmen, she mentioned that Lila was coming with some news. Lila finally came, and divulged the news that Nino was still living with Elenora. After the talk, Elena quarreled with Nino, and he confessed everything. Elena said it was over between them.

Elena found Pietro in a hospital. Instead of being dejected, he looked cheerful, he was with a student of his, Dorian. Adele brought the children to the hospitals. Pietro agreed to resettle as he wanted to be with Dorian. Elena argued with Adele to take the children back, they threw insults at each other. Finally, Elena said something she should not have said to her.

Elena brought the children to Mariosa and Franco. Mariosa did not like the way Elena treated her mother, Adele. But otherwise, she was cordial. Franco was friendly with the children. But he was severely depressed. The children were roaming everywhere in the house. Nino called from time to time, and he even mentioned that he rented a house for her and her children. Elena hung up angrily. Nino came in person to tell Elena that Elenora was pregnant with seven months.

One day, when Mariosa was away, Elena found a note at the door of the Franco, saying, "Elena, please do not let the children in". When she entered, she found a body of Franco devoid of life. Elena and Nino started meeting again to edit some essays. Elena mentioned that she could not break him from her yet, will do so soon.

One day Elena with her two children came to visit the whole neighborhood as she heard that her mother was getting sick. She saw her mother cooking, who greeted her children warmly. But the tension between her and her mother became intolerable as time goes by. So, she left for her sister, Elisa. She too welcomed them but did not extend them for lunch. She too was mad at Lila for messing the families of Solaras.

Lila had established a company of her own, called "Basic Sight". It was lucrative. When they met, Lila asked if Elena was expecting a child with Nino. She replied to no. But a few days later, she got pregnant with Nino. During that time, they got invited to America by her publisher and a conference for Nino. They let the children stay at Lila's. It changed everything. Lila talked the children to favor the situation of separated life of a woman. Elena told Pietro about the pregnant, and then Nino. Nino took the news well but did not consider telling it to Elenora. Little Rino and the daughter of Elena was getting more attached.

At the fourth month of their pregnancy, Elisa gave birth to a son. She disgusted it but Elena assisted her in any way she can. Then, her mother got sick severely, which made the two of them more attached to each other. Her mother revealed that she never considered other children as a true child, only Elena was a true child to her. It moved Elena. Then, she requested Elena, to ask Lila to give work for other children of hers as she considered it is wrong to let Marcello control them.

Lila and Elena went to the doctor recommended by Nino. They had a great time reminiscing their childhood. They tried maternity clothes together. Elena had the urge to discuss why everyone is talking it was Lila who took down the Michele. Elena asked her, but she replied that the Solaras were bring drugs to everyone, and since Michele went crazy, Marcello got the book where they kept the lists of their business and political friends.

Then the whole neighborhood was shaken by an earthquake. It was so strong that the buildings and the things trembled with great ferocity. It scared Lila so much that it petrified her. She could not move, and only Elena pushed her out of the house and tried to stay tight in their car. The whole neighborhood was making noises while most fleeing. Elena saw a version of Lila that she had seen once when they were being shot by fireworks. Lila confessed her fear and why she used men to protect those fear.

Everyone was fine. Lila went back to work. Elena saw Nino only after a few days. He sought refuge in one of the in-laws of Elenora. It angered Elena, and she stayed away from him for some time. One day, Elena saw Michele at Lila's office. He lost his usual demeanor, and pattered. He was gray and looked detached. Alfonso was there either. He said that he was separating with Marisa. Marisa was having an affair with Stefano. Lila met Elena first. She mentioned that Elena should not interfere with the Solaras as things are getting more serious. Lila phoned Elena's mother saying that she would take care of her sons.

Elena gave birth to a daughter named "Imma", after some quarrels with Nino. Nino wanted her to be baptized though he does not believe in religion. Elena did not want it. Lila brought her mother to Elena to look at the children. Then, she fainted. Nino and Lila brought her to the clinic while Elena stayed at home to take care of Imma. Marcello came to move her out of the clinic and put her at the private clinic. They argued. But finally, he put her at a private clinic.

The private clinic became a place of meeting with old neighborhoods. Alfonso had some troubles with Marcello. Elisa was still singing the praises of Marcello for bringing her mother to the private clinic with the best physician. After three weeks later, Lila gave birth to a daughter named "Nunzia" after her mother. Lila and Elena talked more often to discuss the well-beings of their children. Elena visited her mother quite often and felt the hug and physical touch more meaningful to her. She felt that she was really her favorite child. Then, she fell into coma and death.

Elena had a hard time accepting her mother's death. She appeared everywhere. Elena was paid in a large sum as a half for her coming new book. But she was nowhere starting that book. The editor did not push her but one day he arranged a meeting with Elena. He gave an ultimatum of getting the books ready at the Fall of 1982. She reluctantly agreed.

To write her book and give her more time, Nino hired a maid named Salivana. She took care of everything. But one day Elena found them having sex together. She ran away with her daughters to Lila. Lila advised her to leave him. Elena realized that Nino was like his father, whom he hated so much.

Lila asked Antonio to comfort Elena with a list. He came with a list of Nino's infidelity with whom and at what time. Nino tried to call Elena. She replied to him to go away. Elena was cash poor, and Nino stopped paying for the rent. So, she needed to look for a new one. Lila offered an apartment above her with little or no rent. Her deadline was close, so she sent the old book, the

one turned down by Adele. Much to her surprise, the editor loved it and found it extraordinary. He paid the remaining half.

Elena decided to move back to the old neighborhood for her writing. She brought her three daughters as well. The friendship with Pietro was getting better. Lil had been a great source of her reading. Lila did what she thought is best. Antonio was always hanging around Lila, doing what she asked, out of personal respect. The situation at neighborhood was getting tense. Michele was returning to her old self. The Solaras beat the hell out of Alfonso. Enzo was mad but Lila stopped him before he could retaliate. Lila asked Elena to change the neighborhood together.

The publisher called Elena and told her that a photographer was coming to promote her books. She expected the photographer, but he did not come. After a few weeks, she came. She took the pictures of the whole neighborhood, and the pictures of Elena along with Tina and others. The article came out in panorama only after a week later, when her book was published. Michele and Marcello stopped her and asked why she wrote such a bad thing about her neighborhood.

Elena was invited to a lot of places for her books. She left the care of Imma with Lila, who took care of them so well. Adele and Nino even called Elena to congratulate her. But a lawsuit came, from Carmen with the lawyers from the Solaras. Lila said she will take care of them. Elena's publisher even wrote an article about an author being muzzled by the local disputes.

Elena got supportive letters from other writers. She even won a prize with some fund. But she never felt joy like she always did. Lila was keeping Elena out of her usual things. Lila even fired his brother Rino because she found needle marks on her son, little Rino. One day they found Alfonso beaten to death and dumped in the sea. Michele and Marcello even came to Basic Sight to see Lila. Something unexpected happened, Michele punched Lila in the face. They had to convince Enzo that it was due to the fall. She recovered quickly. Then she asked Elena to write an article about the Solaras by giving her two red books with the initials, "M. S". They both shut together and wrote the article on the computer, and printed, and sent it to the editor.

The editor said it won't put the Solaras into jail. Elena told Lila everything. Lila, without asking Elena's permission, signaled the editor to publish the article. The article brought fame and more recognition for Elena along with threats and anxieties. Her whole family cut her off as a result. Only Marcello was polite to her. Elena was seeing Imma being bullied and teased by her elder sisters and Tina.

Elena called Nino many times, but he did not answer. Her wife answered one time that he had left the city. Nino called back a few days later, Elena asked him to visit Imma every month. He did show up with presents and a luxurious car. He did a great show with Imma, and then talk to Lila. Then, an incident happened. Tina suddenly disappeared. Nobody could not locate her. Some said she was hit by a truck while chasing a blue ballon.

## **Book IV: Old Age, The Story of Bad Blood**

Elena moved out of Naples while everyone believed that it was reviving. She wrote and published another book called "Friendship" based on Gigiola. She had promised Lila that she would never write anything about her, but she did write it. It was well-received by the audience. Lila had not answered her call since then.

Elena lived at the apartment above Lila's for ten years even after the loss of Lila's daughter. The Solaras assisted the search, but Lila did not believe that Tina was struck by a truck, she believed that Tina was taken away. Lila never cried for the loss. Enzo was mad at the Solaras. The majority of neighborhood believed that Tina was dead while there were a few majorities including Elena who believe that Tina was still alive.

The episode made Lila closer to Imma, whom she talked about her feelings. Imma reported those words back to Elena and her sisters. It made a bad impression on Lila as a bad mother who did not cry nor care for her daughter. Besides, little Rino was shooting up again with his uncle Rino. Stefano got a heart attack which crushed him. Lila searched little Rino with Stefano who were living with Marisa. They found him with his uncle. The apartment below became an inferno when the little Rino arrived back.

One day they found Rino dead in an unused car. Pina grieved for a few days as necessary, then she made herself useful at Lila's by cooking and cleaning. Lila was getting worse both mentally and physically. She cried at everyone. Only Elena and Enzo kept her calm. She did not accept both possibilities that Tina was dead and alive. They were unbearable to her.

Lila was having problems with menstruation. She was bleeding every day. One day the pain and the blood loss were so bad that they had to admit her to the hospital. She was diagnosed with fibro adenomatous uterus; the doctor took it out. While she was in the hospital, the two Solaras brothers were gunned down by an unknown man or men. They were dead. Criminal activities, unknown to Lila and Elena, were attributed to the Solaras, her published articles shown nothing closer to such activities.

Lila lost interest in Basic Sight and Enzo. She wandered around the city, doing nothing. She also asked Elena to move out of Naples to achieve more. Elena did move out of Naples soon. Meanwhile Dedee and Rino were tagging along more often. But Elena stopped the two from seeing each other. Lila came and asked if her son was not good enough for her. Deede loved Rino since her childhood. Nino got elected but Elena did not vote for him. Pietro was also separating with Dorian and moving to the United States. But he never failed to provide for her children.

When the children finished talking with Pietro, Elena talked to Pietro alone. He mentioned the plan to Deede to elope with Rino after her final exam words by words. They talked for a long time since their divorce. Elena slept with Pietro for the last time. In the morning, she heard from

the radio that Pasquale had been arrested. Elena did not want him to die like his father in prison, so she called Nino, who is a member of parliament.

It was hard to set up a date with Nino for meeting. Finally, Elena was able to meet with Nino along with her daughter at the parliament. Nino did take care of Pasquale. He told information that no newspapers had ever reported about Pasquale, like Nadia had confessed that every murder including Gino, Bruno, and the Solaras' were carried out by Pasquale. Elena told him that they were lies, and Nino asked her to say Lila to take care as Nadia had hated her.

When Elena went to Lila to warn about Nadia, she received some news from Lila that Rino had been run out of her house. Elena, so afraid of her daughter leaving with Rino, rushed to her home, but found Deedee lying on bed crying. Rino had left with Elsa, and Elsa took all the money and jewels and left a note. She was a fifteen-year-old minor. Elena and Enzo looked for them in the Bologna but found no trace. Then they received a call from Deedee.

Deedee told Elena that she was leaving with her father to the United States for study as she could not live under the same roof with Elsa. Elsa also called her saying that she was at Adele's house. They found both Rino and Elsa. Elena proposed that they moved back to her home. Lila protested first but gave in. But Rino was treated like a servant by Elsa. Lila and Enzo called Rino and disciplined him and ordered him to move back to Lila's house. But Elena intervened and Rino got to stay at Elena's house.

Rino thanked her for saving him, but Elena stopped him. Lila and Enzo were getting more and more heated on the issues of Rino. One day, the police came and arrested Enzo, as Nadia had mentioned his name a few times. It took Lila a lot of money and two years to get closer to Enzo for support. He was released as there were no concrete evidence.

Even Nino did not have any intel about the charges against Enzo. Lila and Enzo sold the Basic Sight for hundreds of millions of lire. Enzo left most of the money for Lila. Guido Ariota was also publishing a book that criticizes the corruption of the systems. Rino and Elsa also fell out after five months as Elsa found a new attraction for the professor.

Elena called Mariosa and Adele to show her concern about Guido Ariota for his legal battles. Then she also saw Nino on TV in the lists of corrupted politicians. Imma was greatly upset. But Lila showed her the history of Italy, summing up that sometimes, something terrible is needed for the beautiful things to happen. Lila also told Imma that Nino will go back to parliament again. Nino, as usual, was able to get out of the legal issues.

Lila was reading again. Tina was gone, Enzo was gone, and the Solaras were also gone. She spent most of her time reading and conversing with Imma. Elena was also leaving the city again for the Turin, taking Imma with her. Before she left, Elena spent more time with Lila, reading books and studying in a way that she does best.

Elena left Turin in 1998. Before she left, she had a farewell with Lila. Lila said one thing that she had hold for a long time. She had believed that it was because of the photo that depicted Tina as a daughter of Elena had caused the Tina's disappearance. Elena was stunned but it was just a possibility. Elena left Turin and kept writing and calling Lila, talking more on the dead. After the year 2000, the idea of completely disappearing without no trace like the delete button from the computer took hold of Lila.

Elena became a grandmother after one of her daughters gave birth to a girl named Hamid. Deedee and Elsa visited her often from the United States with their husbands and boyfriends. Depression was also taking hold of Elena as well. Lila was spending more time on the computer, according to Rino. Elena asked her if she had written anything, and if she will let her read it. Lila said she had written anything as she had no desire to survive. Writing is for someone who has some reason to survive.

Stefano died of another heart attack and Gigiola was found dead. Elena kept writing but her usual Adour was lost. Lately, she did not have any weigh on the publishers. Then she broke the agreement between Lila by writing about them for a book named "Friendship", it was one of the best books that Elena had ever written. But Lila made her hate it. She did not reply any email or any way to discuss the book, even not answering her phones. The answers from Rino were also vague.

## **Epilogue**

### **Restitution**

Police questioned Rino for a few times and showed him the bodies of nameless dead old women. They were nowhere like Lila's. Elena had a successful book launch and named it as one of her best. Elena hoped that Lila would show up. But it did not happen. Elena attended the funerals of her father and the mother of Nino. She had hoped that Lila would appear soon. She visited Pasquale who had passed high school diploma and was attending astronomy. She asked who killed the Solaras and who took Tina and if Lila would reunite with Tina again. She got vague answers. One day when she arrived back her building, she found a package with no name. She opened it. It contained the two dolls that they had never found when they had looked at the Don Achille's. They reek of old mold and ugly. Real life is like that they did not sound or look like in books. Elena resorted that she would not find Lila anymore

Summary Written by Thura Htoo,

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