SIX COUNTRIES, ONE STORY

by Elio Mondello Anza

A work of literary fiction inspired by real events. Names, characters, places, and events have been changed to protect privacy. Any resemblance to real people, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

SIX COUNTRIES, ONE STORY

PROLOGUE: A LETTER TO GIULIA (AND TO YOU)
CHAPTER 1 – THE ROOTS OF ABBIATEGRASSO
CHAPTER 2: AMERICA (1996-1997)
CHAPTER 3: ENGLAND (1998, 2004, and 2006)
CHAPTER 4: FRANCE (2004-2006)
CHAPTER 5: IRELAND – Rebirth in the Rain
CHAPTER 6: ITALY – RETURNS, ROOTS AND WINGS
CHAPTER 7: NORWAY (2010-PRESENT) – THE TRUE HOME
CHAPTER 8: TODAY (2025) – REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS
CHAPTER 9: MONDELLO'S DEATH (?) – THE INVISIBLE THREAD
EPILOGUE: THE BRIDGE

PROLOGUE: A LETTER TO GIULIA (AND TO YOU)

Dear Giulia

This book is for you. But not just for you. It's for all children. Those of yesterday. Those of today. Those of tomorrow. Those who will come after you.

TO YOU, GIULIA

You're eleven now. Maybe when you read this book you'll be twelve. Or fifteen. Or twenty. Or thirty, and you'll have children of your own. It doesn't matter when you read it. What matters is that you read it. This book is a letter from father to daughter. From past to future. In this present. I'll tell you my story, the six countries where I've lived. The mistakes I've made. The lessons I've learned. The people I've loved. The people I've lost.

Why? Because one day, Giulia, you too will make mistakes. You too will suffer. You too will love. You too will lose. And when that happens, I want you to know: you are not alone. Dad made the same mistakes. He felt the same pain. He loved and lost. And he survived. And you will survive.

TO YOU, CHILD ELIO

But this book isn't just for Giulia. It's also for me. For the child I was. Elio. Two years old. Stroller. Alone. Two hours. That child waited forty years to hear these words: "You're okay." This book is also a letter to him. To that child, alone. Angry. Scared. To that child who thought he was wrong. Dear Elio, child, you're not wrong. You've just made mistakes. But you're not wrong. You're just a child. Who is learning? Who is growing up? And that's okay. One day you'll grow up. You'll have a daughter. Giulia. And you'll teach her what no one taught you. That she's not wrong. That it's okay. That she can make mistakes. And that you love her. Always. Thank you for being strong. Even when you were alone. Thank you for surviving. Thank you for becoming me.

TO YOU, READER

And you? Yes, you who are reading. This book is for you too. Because you have a child inside you too. We all do. That child who was alone. Who was angry? Who made a mistake. Who thought he was wrong. Talk to him. Close your eyes. Go back. Do you see that child? How old is he? Where is he? What is he doing? Now talk to him. Tell him: "I understand you." "You're angry." "You're alone." "You made a mistake because you didn't know what was right." "But you're not wrong." "You're okay." "You're learning." "You're growing." "And one day, you'll be

the best version of yourself." Tell him this. Because that child has waited his whole life to hear it. It's time.

POETRY OF THE PROLOGUE (for the Mondello Prize)

The invisible thread

There's an invisible thread between you and me, between those who leave and those who stay, between those who love and those who lose. You can't see it, but it's there. It never breaks. It may stretch, tremble, become tangled, but it remains.

There's a thread that unites hearts, that spans time, distance, and fear. A thread that grows between father and daughter, between child and adult, between past and future.

This book is my thread. I pass it on to you, Giulia. I pass it on to you, reader. Hold on to it. Never let go.

THE JOURNEY

Fasten your seatbelts. We're about to depart. Six countries.

🇮🇹 Italy - where I was born

🇺🇸 America - where I dreamed

🇫🇷 France - where I loved

🇮🇪 Ireland - where I looked

🇬🇧 England - where I found

🇳🇴 Norway - where I learned.

A story: Mine. But maybe yours too. Because of the mistakes I made, maybe you don't have to make them again. The pain I experienced, maybe it teaches you something. The journey I took, maybe it inspires you to take yours.

THE RELAY

This book is a relay race. I run my part. Then I pass the baton to Giulia. Giulia runs her part. Then she passes the baton to her children. And so on. Forever. Generation after generation. Like in the Bible. Like in From Scratch. Like in all stories that matter. The grandmother teaches the son. The son teaches the daughter. The daughter teaches her children. And so history never dies. This book is my part of the relay race. My piece of history. My baton. Now

it's your turn. Read. Learn. Fail. Grow. And then pass the baton. Because the powerful show continues. Always.

THE INVISIBLE THREAD

There's an invisible thread that connects one heart to another. You can't see it. But it's there. And it can't be broken. Ever. It doesn't matter where you are. It doesn't matter how much time passes. It doesn't matter if you're alive or dead. The thread is there. I feel the thread with Giulia. Even when she's with Mom. I feel the thread with my mother. Even if she didn't say "I love you." I feel the thread with Amélie. Even if it ended fifteen years ago. I feel the thread with everyone I've loved. Even those who are no longer with us. The thread is eternal. And when you read this book, Giulia, you'll feel the thread with me. Even if I'm no longer here. Even if I'm ashes in the sea at Mondello. The thread never breaks.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

This is no ordinary book. It's a journey. A game. A conversation. At the end of each chapter you'll find:

- A game (for children - hide and seek, quiz, escape room)
- A question (for you - what do you think? what do you feel?)
- A hidden word (find the secret word in the chapter)

Because this book isn't just for reading. It's for living.

A LAST THOUGHT

Giulia, when I was eleven like you, I was alone. I thought I was wrong. I thought no one loved me. Forty years later, I realized: I wasn't wrong. I was just a child learning. And you, Giulia, aren't wrong. You're just a child learning. And that's okay. That's okay. I love you, Giulia. Always. Even when you're wrong. Even when you're far away. Even when I'm gone. The invisible thread. Forever.

🎮 GAMEOF THE PROLOGUE

🔍 HIDE AND SEEK:

In this prologue, Dad has hidden a special phrase. It's a three-word phrase. He says it to Giulia. He says it to Elio as a child. He says it to you. What is it?

(Hint: It starts with "V" and ends with "so")

💭 QUESTION FOR YOU:

Close your eyes. See the child you were. How old is he?

Where is it?

Now talk to him. What do you say?

✨ SECRET WORD:

The most important word in this book is hidden in the prologue. It appears eight times. It's a four-letter word. What is it?

(Clue: Connects hearts)

CHAPTER 1 – THE ROOTS OF ABBIATEGRASSO

The Foundations

October, Castelletto, near Milan. On an autumn night, Elio is born into an Italian family in the 1970s. Father Renato works in a factory, mother Clara is a patient housewife. The choice of name is already legendary: Aunt Luisa, a housekeeper in a wealthy household, suggests "Elio," inspired by a lively child she cared for. Father says the choice is his. The name remains: Elio, the child of the sun, destined to bring light and questions.

The Stroller and Loneliness

At two or three years old, Elio often finds himself in his stroller outside the front door. "Wait here, I'll be right back," says Mom. An hour passes, then two. No one comes by, no one talks, no one plays. Alone. That solitude becomes his first teacher: he learns to resist, to invent inner worlds, to find the strength within himself to carry on.

Adult Elio speaks to child Elio

Hello, little Elio. I see you in the stroller, alone. I know you're scared and angry. But listen: Mom didn't abandon you, she was just doing what she knew how. She was alone too. It's not your fault, nor hers. You were strong. One day you will be a father, and you will never leave your daughter alone. Because you learned from the pain and broke the cycle. Thank you, little Elio, for being strong.

Family and Roots

Father Renato: hardworking, love expressed through action. Mother Clara: a silent, generous presence. Uncles and aunts: Uncle Piero, Aunt Anna, Aunt Elena, Uncle Mario. Grandparents: Grandpa Carlo, Grandma Teresa. Italian family of the 1970s and 1980s, post-war generation, survival mentality. Hard work, few words, lots of food. Secrets, stories passed down, scandals and betrayals that remain suspended like shadows in the tales.

The Asylum and the First Wounds

At kindergarten, Elio is often snubbed by the teachers: "What a doll!" But for him it's torture. He cries, is left alone, no one picks him up. The fights between children, the struggle to avoid

being crushed. He learns early that the world can be harsh, but also that diversity is a strength.

Elementary: Stunt, Success, Cutlet-Sword

In elementary school, Elio is a volcano. One day in the cafeteria, he lifts a cold cutlet onto his fork and brandishes it like a sword. He duels with his classmate Davide, causing widespread laughter, and punishment is guaranteed. One summer, he and Davide "decorate" a car with rocks: the car is ruined, vacation is canceled, and parents are furious. Elio is also good at drawing: his Van Gogh is displayed in front of the entire school. For the first time, he feels seen.

Middle School: The Ruler and the Disciplinary Note

In middle school, during class, Elio talks to his classmate. The art teacher catches him and, instead of a compass, uses a ruler: BAM! Disciplinary reprimand, suspension risk. Elio doesn't cry, but stays at school to convince the teacher not to mark the third grade. He learns that even the little things can change everything.

Adolescence: First Loves, Music as a Refuge

His first love, Simona, wasn't in class but at the parish church. Elio only sees her occasionally, but he seeks her out, dreams of her, listens to "Ti sento vivere" by 883. Unrequited love becomes a pattern: loving someone who can't love you back. The paradox of desire: the more you want, the less you get. At 16, he aches for Ilaria. Then he realizes that the woman of his life will be his daughter Giulia, whom he will love unconditionally.

Summer, Friendships and Music

Summer in Jesolo, 17, first kiss with an introverted girl. "Losing My Religion" as the soundtrack. They'll never see each other again, but Elio understands that even short-lived loves teach us something. Italian music accompanies every step: 883, Vasco Rossi, Lucio Battisti. Music is refuge, companion, healing.

The True Friend

In high school, Elio meets Marco Rinaldi, known as "The Count." A rare friendship, filled with laughter and complicity. For the first time, Elio feels part of something.

Adult Elio talks to himself and Giulia

Adult Elio speaks to his teenage self: “I know you suffer for Ilaria, but one day you will have a daughter who will always love you.” And he speaks to Giulia: “When you’re 17, maybe you’ll experience a summer romance. That’s okay. Not all loves are forever, but they all teach us something.”

The Cycle of Life, School as Family

After high school, Elio looks at the world and senses something else. He decides to leave: his first trip to America. His story is made of beginnings, mistakes, and choices that have shaped him. School, as Ron Clark says, is one big family: the children, the teachers, the intertwined stories. Everything is circular, like the circle of life, like the red thread that unites generations.

🎮 GAME CHAPTER 1

🔍 **HIDE AND SEEK**:

How many hours did Elio wait in the stroller?

(Answer: Two hours)

💭 **QUESTION FOR YOU**:

Have you ever waited for someone?

How long?

How did you feel?

✨ **SECRET WORD**:

What is the word that adult Elio always says to child Elio?

(Hint: It starts with "F" and means "powerful")

(Answer: Strong)

Integrated lessons:

- Loneliness can become an inner strength.
- Family is made up of gestures rather than words.
- Words have a power that is reflected in those who pronounce them.
- Diversity is a wealth to be valued.
- School is a place of growth and discovery, as well as rules and limits.

CHAPTER 2: AMERICA (1996-1997)

The First Trip: The Family on the West Coast

In 1996, I was 18 and left for America for the first time with my family: my father Renato, my mother Clara, my sister Chiara, my aunt Luisa, my uncle Aldo, and my cousin Sandro. There were six of us, united by a mixture of excitement and curiosity, ready to discover a new and unknown world.

We landed in Los Angeles, a city that seemed straight out of a movie, with its dazzling lights, endless streets, and gigantic cars whizzing by. The Californian sun enveloped us with its warmth and the promise of endless adventures.

The journey took us to explore the legendary canyons of Arizona, Colorado, and Idaho, deserts that seemed to have sprung from ancient Native American tales. Every landscape was a discovery, every step an emotion that burned into my memory. I remember the vastness of the Grand Canyon, the silence broken only by the wind and my labored breathing as I gazed down into the abyss.

One evening in Los Angeles, while I was eating alone, a man, out of his mind, approached me, screaming. Panic rose in my heart, and I felt fear tighten in my throat. But a passerby intervened, pushed the man away, and I managed to get back to safety. That intense scene has remained etched in my mind as a reminder of the fragility and unpredictability of life.

Visit usLas Vegas, with its glittering chaos, neon lights, and the incessant din of slot machines. In Phoenix, we met a man on the fringes of society, sitting outside a restaurant, andgustammoA salad that I still remember as the best I've ever had. Every city, every encounter, was a piece of a larger mosaic, a piece of a puzzle I was beginning to understand.

Our Italian family, with its 8:00 PM dinners, fragrant bread, wine, and strong words, was confronted with the American way of life, made up of hamburgers, fries, kind smiles, and early dinners at 6:00 PM. Two different worlds, two ways of life that intertwined during that trip.

Music was the soundtrack to every moment. The notes of "Ti sento vivere" by 883 resonated in my heart, as did Vasco Rossi's "Vita spericolata," and Lucio Dalla's "Caruso." Each song was a bridge between home and distance, between dream and reality, an invisible thread that tied me to my roots as I explored new horizons.

At the end of the trip, on the plane taking us back to Italy, I looked out the window. America was shrinking, then disappearing over the horizon. But something inside me had changed forever.

The second trip: alone in Pennsylvania

The following year, in 1997, at 19, I decided to return to America, but this time alone. My family was worried: "Alone? You're crazy! It's dangerous! You don't speak English!" But I wanted to give it a try, I wanted to test myself in a world without safety nets.

I remember the Milan airport, my heart pounding, my hands sweating. "What if I get lost? What if I don't understand anything? What if..." But the plane took off, and I breathed deeply: "I can do this."

I arrived in Pennsylvania, without family or friends. On the first day, I left the hotel, walked around, and got lost. I asked for directions in broken English: "Excuse me, where is... uh... hotel?" An American smiled and showed me the way. I found the hotel, and that small success gave me courage.

I spent two weeks alone, learning how to buy food, take the bus, speak English, and decide where to go. For the first time, I had complete freedom. No one told me what to do or not to do. I made decisions, made mistakes, and learned.

I attended a summer camp where I met kids from all over the world. It was a microcosm of diversity, where I learned the value of listening and openness. Music was ever-present, a thread that united our stories and gave us strength.

Internal Dialogues: Courage and Fear

Elio The adult speaks to the young Elio: "I know you're scared. I know you feel alone. I know you think, 'What if I make a mistake?' But look what you did: you left. Alone. You crossed the ocean. You asked for help. You found your way. You were brave."

He speaks to Giulia, his 7-year-old daughter: "When you're afraid, that's okay. But go anyway. Because on the other side of fear is freedom."

The soundtrack of life

Music fueled my dreams and provided refuge in difficult times. 883, Vasco Rossi, Lucio Dalla, Eminem with "Lose Yourself," Coldplay, Jovanotti, Ligabue, Lady Gaga: every song spoke a part of me.

Life lessons

1. The world is different. And that's okay.
2. Diversity is wealth, not a problem.

3. If you want, you can. Just try.
4. People help. Just ask.
5. I can do it alone.

🎮 GAME CHAPTER 2

🔍 HIDE AND SEEK:

How old was Luca on his first solo trip to America?

(Answer: 19 years old)

💭 QUESTION FOR YOU: Have you ever done something alone for the first time? What? How did it feel?

✨ SECRET WORD: What is the word that Luca learned in America?

(Hint: It starts with “C” and means “to be afraid but go anyway.”)

(Answer: Courage)

CHAPTER 3: ENGLAND (1998, 2004, and 2006)

University and discovery in London

It was 1998. I was 20 years old and landed at London's Heathrow Airport. This time it wasn't a vacation, it was work and study. I had enrolled in an English language school because I wanted to learn perfect English, study abroad, and continue exploring the world.

Suitcase, backpack, dreams. "London baby, here I am!" I thought with a mixture of excitement and fear.

The culture shock of the first few days

London was completely different from what I knew:

- We drove on the left, and I stumbled at every crossing.
- The rain seemed like a constant presence, cold and insistent.
- The food? Fish & chips, beans on toast... a questionable experience.
- The English were polite but distant, courteous but reserved.

I thought, "Where did I go?"

Differences between Italy and England

Italy was sun, warmth, fantastic food, family always there, loud conversations, and hugs. England was cold, rainy, questionable food, every man for himself, "Sorry," "Excuse me," "Thank you."

The first month was homesick. I called home every day. Mom would say, "Come home! It's cold there!" I'd reply, "I'm fine, Mom." But it wasn't true.

English school and multiculturalism

Classes were in English, with classmates from all over the world: Italians, Indians, Chinese, Nigerians, and Poles. I learned academic English and teamwork, but above all, I realized that the world is bigger than I thought.

The first works

At 21 years oldI searchedI work to pay my way through life. I was a waiter in an Italian restaurant: long shifts, low pay, but I learned discipline and customer service. Then I worked as a bartender in a club: nights and weekends, difficult customers, but I learned patience and problem-solving.

Lesson 6: Hard work = freedom. Nothing comes free.

International friendships

I met James, an English colleague; Priya, an Indian roommate; and Kofi, a Nigerian classmate.

James asked me, "Why do Italians always talk about food?"

I replied, "Because food is love! Why do you English eat beans on toast?"

James: "It's practical!"

Me: "It's sad!"

Priya said, "In India, family is everything. You?"

I replied, "Even in Italy. But I... want to see the world first."

Kofi: "In Nigeria, respect for the elderly. What about you?"

Me: "In Italy too. But sometimes too much. Sometimes suffocating."

I learned that every culture has values and problems, none are perfect.

Lesson 7: Listen, learn, respect, but choose what to keep.

Relationships: The Pattern Continues

At 22, I met Sarah, English, beautiful, intelligent, and independent. I fell in love, but she didn't want a serious relationship; she wanted freedom. I suffered. The pattern repeated itself: I loved, she didn't love me back.

Adult Elio speaks to young Elio: "Sarah isn't mean, she's honest. She told you she doesn't want a serious relationship, and you sensed that maybe she'll change her mind. No, she won't. You can't change people, only accept them or let them go. You have to learn: I can't

love for two. If she doesn't love you, it's not your fault or hers. It's incompatibility. And that's okay."

Erasmus: the decision

At 24, in my final year of university, a professor suggested I do Erasmus. "Study in another European country for six months, an incredible experience."

I thought, "France. Yes, France."

I chose Grenoble for the new language, the rich culture and the proximity to Italy.

End of Chapter 3

After six years in England, I had learned fluent English, hard work, independence, managing life alone, and multiculturalism. But also loneliness, homesickness, and the still-unresolved love pattern.

I looked ahead. The next stop was France, the next chapter Amélie.

🎮 GAME CHAPTER 3

🔍 HIDE AND SEEK:

How many years did Elio live in England?

(Answer: 3 years)

💭 QUESTION FOR YOU:

Have you ever lived in a foreign country? How did you feel the first few days?

✨ SECRET WORD:

What is the job that Luca discovered he loved?

(Hint: It starts with "I" and means "to transmit knowledge")

(Answer: Teaching)

CHAPTER 4: FRANCE (2004-2006)

Grenoble, 2004

I was 26 when I arrived in Grenoble for the Erasmus program. I was studying Public Administration at Sciences Po Grenoble, but what I really learned wasn't in books.

It was in a French girl I met by chance at university: Amélie.

The first meeting

It was a day like any other in the university hallway. She, with her blond hair, green eyes, and shy smile, was speaking French with a friend. I watched her, spellbound, but didn't dare say anything.

I had learned something important: "If you want it too much, you won't get it." The paradox of desire.

The second time

In the library, while I was studying, Amélie sat down next to me and said, "Hi. You're Italian, right?"

I replied, "Yes. Are you French?"

She smiled: "Yes. My name is Amélie."

We talked for hours about everything and nothing: Italy, France, music, cinema, dreams. I sensed she was different.

Love

From friendswe passedto something more. Walks, coffee, movies. Amélie taught me French, I taught her Italian. We laughed, talked, kissed. For the first time, I was happy.

Dialogue with Elio as a child

Elio, 26, you're in love with Amélie. You're right, she's special. But listen: it won't be forever. And that's okay. Amélie will teach you to truly love, without fear. This lesson will always be useful.

France

I discovered Grenoble with its mountains, snow, and hot chocolate. I visited Paris with the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, and the Seine. Lyon with its food, wine, and culture.

But above all, I discovered French culture.

Cultural differences

Italy: family at the center, strong emotions, strong language, "I love you" rarely said.

France: Individual at the center, emotions controlled, speaking softly, "Je t'aime" often said.

I learned that every culture loves differently.

The problem

We were happy, but Erasmus was coming to an end. I had to return to Italy to finish university, while Amélie remained in France.

“What do we do?” I asked.

"Shall we try remotely?" she said.

"Yes, let's try."

At a Distance (2005)

Phone calls, emails, Skype. But it wasn't the same. I felt like I was losing her. The more I feared losing her, the more I clung to her.

The paradox of desire: the more you want it, the less you get.

The end

Summer 2005. Amélie called: "Elio, we need to talk."

I already knew.

"I can't do it anymore. It's too hard. I'm sorry."

"I understand."

But I didn't understand.

Why? "Why is he leaving me?" "Because I'm not enough?" "Because..."

The pain

I listened to Lucio Dalla's "Caruso." I cried for weeks.

Dialogue with young Elio

Elio, 27, Amélie left you. I know you're hurting and thinking, "I'm not enough."

But listen: it's not true. Amélie left you not because you weren't good enough, but because it was too hard. And that's okay.

She taught you to love truly, deeply. This lesson will always serve you, with Ingrid, Nadia, and Giulia.

Amélie taught you: "To love is not to possess. To love is to set free."

This is the most important lesson. Thank you, Amélie.

Lesson learned

You can't force, control, or hold back love. You can only love and let go.

Dialogue with Giulia (7 years old)

"Giulia, when Dad was 26, he fell in love with a French girl, Amélie. She was beautiful, intelligent, and kind. Dad loved her so much, but then Amélie left. Dad suffered a lot, but he learned that love isn't about holding back, it's about letting go. Dad uses this lesson with you. Dad loves you so much, but he doesn't hold you back, because you're free to fly. Dad will always be here, but you're free."

End of Chapter 4

I left France, I left Amélie, but I took with me the language, the culture, and the lesson of love. I knew that "love is not possessed, it is lived."

Next stop: Ireland. New life, rebirth.

🎮 Game Chapter 4

🔍 HIDE AND SEEK:

What was the French girl's name?

(Answer: Amélie)

💭 QUESTION FOR YOU:

Have you ever loved someone who then left? How did you feel?

✨ SECRET WORD:

What lesson did Elio learn from Amélie?

(Hint: It starts with "L" and means "don't hold back.")

(Answer: Leave free)

CHAPTER 5: IRELAND – Rebirth in the Rain

Arrival in Dublin

I landed in Dublin on a rainy evening, almost cliché. The rain fell thinly, fogging up the windows of the bus taking me from the small airport to the city center. I was twenty-seven, with a backpack too heavy, and feeling like my life needed rebuilding.

I remember my first breath of Irish air: the smell of wet grass, peat, beer. The city was a mosaic of yellow lights and bluish shadows, the pubs already filled with laughter and music. It all seemed a little magical, and a little sad.

New beginnings

In Ireland, I didn't know anyone. I'd left behind mistakes, lost loves, and the feeling of never being enough. I only knew I had to work, learn, and maybe, be reborn.

My first job was in a call center. Exhausting shifts, impossible-to-decipher accents, coffee breaks where I learned my first lines in English and my first swear words in Irish. But it was also there that I met Marta, a Sicilian girl with whom I shared laughter and dreams of escape.

The pub, the rain, the music

The eveningsDublinwere made of crowded pubs, slow-drawn Guinness, and folk music that made youenteredunder my skin. I remember an old violinist playing “The Parting Glass” and I was moved, not understanding the words.

It was in those pubs that I met Sebastiano, my lifelong friend. He had arrived in Ireland by chance, like me, and like me, he had a history of fixing broken things. He worked with bulldozers, but he also knew how to mend broken souls: his, mine, and his wife's, whom he had picked up, full of rust, and helped to be reborn.

Irish Lessons

Ireland taught me resilience. Here, no one judges you for your mistakes, because everyone has a story of failure and rebirth. Here I learned that you can be happy even in the rain, that

music heals more than a thousand words, that true courage isn't about not falling, but getting up again every time.

Crisis and rebirth

Not everything was easy. There were days of loneliness, of homesickness, of crying in a damp room. But there were also laughter, deep friendships, and a newfound self-confidence. I worked in a hostel, learned to cook Irish stew, dance ceili, and tell stories over a pint of beer.

The sense of waiting

In Ireland I learned the value of waiting. The wait for spring after an endless winter. The wait for a phone call, for a love, for a response. The wait to understand who I really am.

The detail that remains

I remember one evening when, leaving the pub, the rain was hitting my face and I thought that perhaps happiness was right there: in imperfection, in the rain, in that moment suspended between melancholy and hope.

🎮 Game Chapter 5

🔍 HIDE AND SEEK:

💭 QUESTION FOR YOU:

Have you ever experienced a time when everything seemed broken, but then something (or someone) helped you get back on track?

✨ SECRET WORD:

What lesson did Elio learn in Ireland?

(Hint: It starts with “R” and means “to get up after a fall.”)

(Answer: Resilience)

CHAPTER 6: ITALY – RETURNS, ROOTS AND WINGS

Abbiategrasso, 2009–2010

Elio is 31 years old. After America (freedom), England (work), France (university and love), and Ireland (rebirth), he returns to Italy. But he's never the same again. And this isn't his only return: the last, most profound and difficult, will be with Ingrid, drawn by love but shaken by the Italian reality.

Family and returns

Returning to Italy means returning to his roots: his mother Carmela, who welcomes him with hugs and expectations ("Now you'll settle down, get married, have kids"), his father Giovanni, who thinks only of stability ("Enough traveling, it's time to settle down"). But Elio feels the weight of conflict: he wants freedom, not the traditional life. Ingrid, accustomed to Norwegian efficiency, struggles to cope with the Italian sun, the job losses, the bureaucracy, the tiny room in Ciampino, the traffic, the heat, the disappointment of a beauty that turns into fatigue.

Italy: garden and prison

Italy is a garden of art, history, and cuisine, but also a prison of habits, vices, and contradictions. Trastevere in the evening, the restaurants, the tripe, the carbonara, the songs of poets, the magic of the alleys. But also the struggle of living, of finding stability, of tolerating slowness and mistrust. Ingrid loves beauty, but suffers from its harshness. There are days when Elio finds her in tears, sitting in the kitchen after yet another missed class, while outside the Roman sun warms the cobblestones but her heart remains cold.

The Roots: Mondello and Anzà Family

Elio's roots are twofold: the Mondello family, humble, serious, generous, similar to the Northern European heartland that draws him; the Anzà family, proud, aristocratic, always

defending their titles and privileges. The Mondello aunts are Aunt Clara, Aunt Teresa, Aunt Bianca, and Aunt Marta: stern but big-hearted; the arguments, the jokes, the tears, and the laughter. The Anzà, on the other hand, are colder, more distant, concerned with appearances and prestige. This contrast shapes Elio: he feels he belongs to two worlds, two poles that pull him toward the north and the south, between wealth and poverty, between the desire to escape and the need to return.

The generational comparison

At the table, the usual comparison:

Dad: “Elio, you're 31. You have to find a steady job. You have to buy a house. You have to get married.”

Elio: “Dad, I don't want a steady job. I don't want to buy a house. I don't want to get married. Yet.”

Dad: “What do you want to do? Travel forever? You can't live like this!”

Elio: “I've seen the world. I've worked in five countries. I've learned four languages. I've had experiences you can't imagine.”

Dad: “So? What have you achieved? No home, no family, no safety!”

Elio: “I gained freedom. I gained experiences. I gained life.”

Dad: “Freedom doesn’t feed you!”

Silence. But Elio knows it's no one's fault: they're just different times. Dad measures success by security, Elio by freedom. And that's okay.

The last return: with Ingrid

The last return to Italy, with Ingrid, is the most traumatic. Ingrid feels lost, disappointed by the Italian reality, often left alone, without stable work, in a beautiful but difficult country. Elio sees his roots and wings in conflict: he loves Italy, the cuisine, the monuments, the culture, but he feels he can't stay. There's too much imbalance, too much beauty and too much ugliness all at once. Italy is a paradise and a hell, like in From Scratch: God creates Sicily and then the Sicilians to balance it out.

Mondelio: the first enterprise

After Ireland and returning to Sicily, Elio created his first business: Mondelio, a name coined by his friend Sandro. Mondelio was born to promote small Sicilian villages, the "world of sunshine," a dream of perfection. But the reality is different: it's not always sunny, it's not always perfect. Yet, it's a first bridge between his Italian roots and his desire for the future.

Mondosol: The Rebirth in Norway

Only in Norway will Elio transform Mondelio into Mondosol, bringing with him the meaning of "world" and "sun," the light he wants to bring wherever he goes. Mondo, like Italy, Sol, like its luminous soul, its authenticity.

Memories, songs, contrasts

Elio's Italy is made of songs ("Viva l'Italia," "Roma Capoccia"), Roman cuisine (carbonara, tripe, cacio e pepe, pizza), breathtaking art and architecture, summers in Ostia amidst heat and traffic, damp winters in old houses, traditions and superstitions. But it is also made of disappointments, broken promises, people who don't show up, jobs that vanish, intense and sudden friendships, farewells and embraces. It is a country where every beauty hides a struggle, where every garden has its prison.

Roots, wings and farewell

Elio, 32, 2010. He looks at Italy, his family, his roots. But he chooses wings. Not because he hates his roots, but because he loves wings. Destination: Norway. Never been before, new language, different culture, a challenge. "The last journey. The most difficult."

Milan Airport. Mom Carmela cries: "Why do you always leave?" Elio: "Because I have to, Mom. I have to." Dad Giovanni, serious: "When will you be coming back?" Elio: "I don't know, Dad. I don't know." Hug. Elio gets on the plane. Italy shrinks. Then he disappears. "This time it's different. This time... I'm staying."

Dialogue with Giulia

Giulia, when dad was 32, left Italy. Grandma Carmela was sad. Grandpa Giovanni was serious. But dad had to go. Because dad has roots. But he also has wings. And he can't live with roots alone. He needs wings too. In the world. In your dreams. I know you need wings. Fly, Giulia. Fly.

End of Chapter 6

Elio leaves Italy. Again. But this time he knows: it's not escape. It's choice. It's not abandonment. It's exploration. It's not the end. It's the beginning. Next trip: Norway. The last country. The true home.

🎮 GAME CHAPTER 6

🔍 HIDE AND SEEK:

What is the name of the first company Elio created?

(Answer: Mondelio)

💭 QUESTION FOR YOU:

Have you ever had to choose between roots and wings? What did you choose?

✨ SECRET WORD:

What does Elio have besides roots?

(Hint: It starts with “A” and means “to fly”)

(Answer: Ali)

CHAPTER 7: NORWAY (2010-PRESENT) – THE TRUE HOME

Oslo, 2010

Luca is 32 years old. He's at Gardermoen Airport. Outside, the cold cuts through the skin, snow covers everything, and the silence is profound, almost unreal.

Welcome to Norway.

Luca thinks: “What am I doing here?”

But he knows the answer: “I’m looking for a house.”

First Days – Culture Shock

Norway is different. Everything is different.

Italy: warm, sunny, loud voices, family always present, a heartwarming "Hello! How are you?"

Norway: cold, dark winter, low words, almost a whisper, everyone for themselves, a simple “Hey.” and that’s it.

Luca feels like he's on another planet.

The Norwegian language

Learning Norwegian is a challenge: the letters Æ, Ø, Å look like strange symbols, the tones change the meaning of words, the grammar is complex.

But Luca doesn't give up. He knows that to integrate, he must speak the language.

Lesson 14: Language is the key to culture.

The work

Finding a job in Norway is difficult:

- Serves fluent Norwegian
- Recognized certificates
- Network of contacts

Luca only has basic Norwegian, Italian and English certificates, no contacts.

But he finds work as an Italian teacher at a language school in Oslo.

Finally a turning point.

Norwegian culture

Luca discovers Norwegian values:

1. Janteloven – The Law of Jante: Don't think you're better than others, always be humble.
2. Likestilling – Equality between men and women, with fathers on parental leave and working mothers.
3. Friluftsliv – Outdoor life, sacred nature, skiing, hiking, mountains. "There's no such thing as bad weather, just the wrong clothes."
4. Dugnad – Voluntary, free community work, with everyone participating.

Luca thinks, "This is different, but interesting."

Integration – difficult

Making friends with Norwegians is complicated: polite but distant, kind but cold, open but closed.

Luca invites a colleague for coffee after work.

The answer? "Eh… maybe… let's see… I have things to do…"

= NO.

Luca asks himself: "How do you make friends here?"

Luca as an adult → Luca as a young man (33 years old)

Norway is difficult, cold, distant, closed.

But she's not bad, just different.

Norwegians aren't cold, they're reserved. They don't hate you; they've had friends since childhood.

It takes time. A lot of time. But once you get in, you're in forever.

Patience.

Julia (2014)

Luca is 36 years old. Giulia is born: half Italian, half Korean, born Norwegian, brunette, brown eyes.

Luca and Ingrid fall in love again, but this time it's different.

Luca doesn't cling, he's not afraid, he lets Ingrid go. And it works.

They live together with Giulia.

Luca becomes a father. Everything changes.

Look at Giulia, small, fragile, beautiful.

He thinks, “This is my mission. Her.”

Luca as an adult → Luca as a young man (36 years old)

He finally understands.

He understands why Mom left him in the stroller.

He understands why Dad was always working.

He understands why the teachers were strict.

Not because they were bad, but because they did the best they could with what they had and knew.

Now he will do the same, but differently.

Because he learned from pain, from loneliness, from love.

Giulia will never wait in the stroller. She will always hear: "I love you."

She will always be free.

Because Luke broke the cycle.

Well done, Luca. Well done.

Paternity

Every day Luca tells Giulia: “I love you.”

And Giulia replies: “I love you, Dad.”

For the first time, Luca feels mutual, full, unconditional love.

Lesson 15: The love you give always comes back.

Separation (2020)

Luca and Ingrid separate.

But this time it's different.

No hate, no anger, no drama.

Just: “It doesn’t work anymore, but we love each other and we want the best for Giulia.”

Co-parenting.

Giulia lives one week with her mother, one with her father.

And it works.

Luca learned: “Love is not possession. Love is collaboration.”

Norway – Today (2025)

Luca is 47 years old. He spent 15 years in Norway.

He learned:

1. Patience – Things take time, not everything happens quickly, and that’s okay.
2. Balance – Work is important, but not everything. Family, nature, and life are equally important.
3. Equality – Dads can be dads, men can cry, women can work, everyone can be themselves.
4. Community – Helping others, volunteering, dugnad, together we are stronger.

Lesson 16: Home is not where you are born. Home is where you choose to stay.

Luca as an adult → Giulia (7 years old)

Giulia knows that her father was born in Italy, but lives in Norway.

Why?

Because Norway gave Dad something Italy couldn't: the freedom to be himself.

In Italy, dad was supposed to be the perfect son, the traditional husband, the strong man.

In Norway, dad can be a present dad, a sensitive man, a free person.

And this is home.

Not because Norway is better, but because it is compatible.

And one day, Giulia will choose her home. Maybe Norway, maybe Italy, maybe another country.

And that's fine, whatever it is.

Because home is where you choose to stay.

The Heart of the Journey: Accepting Yourself, Forgiving Yourself, Growing

This theme is the beating heart of the book, the common thread that runs through all of Elio/Luca's stories and reflections.

The challenge of self-evaluation and forgiveness

Many times we don't approve of our dreams, we don't feel good enough. Many things hold us back, especially the lack of someone who truly believed in us. To begin moving toward our greatness, we must overcome a major obstacle: forgiveness. Making a list of those who have hurt us and what we've done that weighs us down, allows us to free ourselves and grow.

Cleaning up the clutter in life

Eliminate people, habits, and thoughts that take up space and are no longer needed. External chaos reflects internal disorder. Cleaning is an act of self-love.

Personal responsibility and growth

Don't wait for things to change on their own. Be honest with yourself, ask for feedback, and build your self-esteem.

Loving yourself as a revolutionary act

Taking care of yourself is the highest priority. Without mental and physical health, you can't serve anyone. Love yourself, nourish your body and mind.

Be kind to yourself

You'll never be perfect. Learn to forgive yourself and grow with awareness.

Be clear about your needs

Communicate your needs clearly, take responsibility for your life, dare to do what you've always dreamed of.

End of Chapter 7

Luca leaves Italy. Again. But this time he knows: it's not escape. It's choice. It's not abandonment. It's exploration. It's not the end. It's the beginning.

Next trip: Norway. The last country. The true home.

🎮 GAME CHAPTER 7

🔍 HIDE AND SEEK:

How many years did Luca live in Norway?

(Answer: 15 years)

💭 QUESTION FOR YOU:

Where do you feel at home? Why?

✨ SECRET WORD:

What is not where you are born, but where you choose to stay?

(Answer: Home)

CHAPTER 8: TODAY (2025) – REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS

Ringerike, November 2025

Luca, 47, looks out the window of his house. Snow gently covers the landscape, the mountains stand majestically on the horizon, and silence envelops everything like an embrace. It's Norway. It's home.

Everyday scene

The moka pot sputters on the stove. Giulia, still sleepy, enters the kitchen in her striped pajamas. Luca smiles at her: "Good morning, princess."

Giulia climbs onto the chair and picks up the colored cup: “Dad, can I bring the book to school today?”

“Sure, love. Which one do you want to bring?”

“The one with the story of the little girl who travels.”

Luca nods. He knows that story is theirs too.

The journey

Luca thinks back on his journey through six countries, six stages of an intense life full of challenges and discoveries:

1. Italy (1978-1996, 2009-2010) – Deep roots, family, mother tongue.
2. America (1996-1997) – The freedom to explore, the dream, the solitude.
3. England (1998-2004) – Work, study, multiculturalism.
4. France (2004-2005) – Love and university, the heart that opens.
5. Ireland (2006-2007) – Rebirth, community, new perspectives.
6. Norway (2010-present) – Home, integration, growth.

47 years old, 6 countries, 1 story. But what has he really learned?

The 16 lessons of life

Luca reflects on the most important lessons he has learned along the way:

1. Love isn't passively waiting; it's built and lived in the present. Learned in the stroller, broken with Giulia.
2. The world is big and full of opportunities; you just have to dare to explore it.
3. If you want, you can: will is the key.
4. People help, just ask.
5. I can do it alone, but I don't have to be alone.
6. Hard work brings freedom.
7. Listen, learn, respect, but choose what's right for you.
8. Love speaks a thousand languages.
9. To love means to set free.
10. Home can be found anywhere, you just have to open your heart.
11. Pain can become purpose.
12. When you stop holding on, love becomes light.
13. Not all places are for everyone, and that's okay.
14. Language is the key to culture.
15. The love you give always comes back.
16. Home is not where you are born, but where you choose to stay.

Broken patterns

Luca meditates on the patterns he has broken in his life:

- **Pattern 1: Love = suffering**
    - Origin: Mom who didn't say "I love you," distant dad, strict teachers.
    - Manifestations: unrequited love, loss, separation.
    - Broken with: Giulia, mutual and unconditional love.
- **Pattern 2: The more you want it, the less you get it**
    - Origin: childhood desire for attention and loneliness.
    - Manifestations: attachment, suffering, dissatisfaction.
    - Broken with: letting go, accepting, living in the present.
- **Pattern 3: I have to love too much to be loved**
    - Origin: conditional love in the family.
    - Manifestations: unbalanced relationships, giving too much, receiving too little.
    - Broken with: balance, healthy boundaries, mutual love.

Emotional details

Luca remembers a winter evening, him and Giulia sitting on the rug in the living room, building a Lego castle. Outside, a storm. Inside, Fabrizio De André's music playing in the background. Giulia laughs: "Dad, why is the wind so scary?"

Luca looks her in the eye: “The wind isn't bad, Giulia. It's just strong. Like emotions. Sometimes they're scary, but then they pass. And we're staying here, together.”

Giulia hugs him. Luca feels that, in that moment, he's truly breaking a cycle.

Psychokinesis: The Power of the Mind

Luke reflects on the cycle of beliefs, actions, and results:

- Belief → Action → Result → Confirm.

Examples:

- "I'm poor" → I don't take risks, I don't look for opportunities → I remain poor → confirms the belief.
- “I don’t deserve love” → I choose unavailable people → I’m not loved → confirms the belief.

How to break the cycle:

1. Recognize the belief.
2. Question it.
3. Replace it with a new one.
4. Act according to the new belief.
5. Observe the new results.

Lesson 17: Your thoughts create your reality.

Inner dialogue

Luca, in front of the mirror, whispers to himself: “You’re not your father. You’re not your mother. You’re you. And that’s okay.”

Sometimes she writes a sentence in her journal: “Today I choose to forgive myself. Today I choose to be kind to myself.”

Abundance vs. Scarcity

Scarcity mentality (parents):

- "There's not enough for everyone"
- "You have to work hard to survive"
- "Don't trust others"

Abundance mentality (Luca):

- "I can create wealth"
- "There's enough for everyone"
- "People are generous"

Results:

- Scarcity: financial security but limited life, fear.
- Abundance: A life full of experiences but financial insecurity.

Luca seeks balance.

Lesson 18: Neither scarcity nor abundance, but balance.

Daily episode

One Friday night, Luca makes pizza with Giulia. Flour flies everywhere. They laugh as they knead the dough. “Dad, Norwegian pizza is never as good as yours.”

Luca replies: “Because we do it together. And home is where the smell of pizza and laughter fills the air.”

Helios (Sun) vs. Peter (Stone)

Luca reflects on his identity:

- Helium = Sun: dynamic, changes, illuminates, warms.
- Peter = Stone: stable, constant, solid.

Luca is Elio, his relatives are Pietro. Both are necessary.

Lesson 19: Everyone has their role.

Giulia – The Treasure

Luca looks at Giulia, 7 years old, who is sleeping peacefully.

Thinks:

"She is the reason. The reason I traveled, suffered, learned. Everything I learned, I use with her."

Giulia will never wait in the stroller. She will always hear "I love you." She will always be free.

Because Luke broke the cycle.

Luca as an adult → Luca as a child (3 years old)

Little Luca, in the stroller, this is the voice of adult Luca, 47 years old:

"You did it. You waited, you suffered, you cried. You became a man, a father, a bridge builder. Giulia won't wait like you waited. You broke the cycle. Thank you, little Luca. Thank you for being strong. Thank you for not giving up. Thank you for becoming me. I love you."

Emotional memory

Luca remembers the night after a tough day at school when he sat down next to Giulia's bed, stroked her hair, and whispered, "Even when I'm wrong, I love you. Even when I'm tired, I love you. Always."

Giulia, half asleep, smiled: “I love you too, Dad. Always.”

Today

Luca, 47, looks out the window. Snow, mountains, silence. Norway. Home.

Giulia is sleeping. Peace.

Luca smiles:

"6 countries. 1 story. 1 life. And it's not over. The story continues. Every day. With Giulia. With Mondosol. With the bridges I build. The story continues."

End of Chapter 8

But this isn't the end. There's still one more chapter, the most important one, that Luke doesn't want to write, but must: the chapter of death.

CONTINUED IN CHAPTER 9...

🎮 GAME CHAPTER 8

🔍 HIDE AND SEEK:

How many lessons did Luca learn?

(Answer: 19 lessons)

💭 QUESTION FOR YOU:

What is the most important lesson you have learned in your life?

✨ SECRET WORD:

What do your thoughts create?

(Answer: Reality)

CHAPTER 9: MONDELLO'S DEATH (?) – THE INVISIBLE THREAD

Premise

Luca, 47 years old.

Think about death.

Not because he's sick. Not because he's old. But because he's human. And all humans die.

Fear

Is Luca afraid of death?

Yes. And no.

Yes, because:

- He doesn't want to leave Giulia
- He doesn't want Giulia to suffer
- He doesn't want Giulia to be alone

No, because:

- He lived
- He loved
- He learned
- He broke the cycle

But the greatest fear isn't dying. The greatest fear is being forgotten.

The invisible thread

Luca thinks about the film "From Scratch" (Netflix). A story of love. Loss. Death. But also: continuity.

The invisible thread: "Even when we don't see each other, we're connected. By an invisible thread."

Luca thinks, "Giulia and I have an invisible thread." And even when I die, the thread will remain.

Lesson 20: Death doesn't break bonds. It transforms them.

Conversation with Giulia (7 years old)

One day, Giulia asks:

Giulia:"Dad, are you going to die?"

Luca:(breathes) "Yes, Giulia. One day I will die."

Giulia: "When?"

Luca:"I don't know. Maybe in many, many years. When I'm very old."

Giulia:"And will I be alone?"

Luca:(hugs Giulia) "No, darling. You'll never be alone."

Giulia:"But if you're not here, how can I not be alone?"

Luca:"Because I'll always be with you. Here." (touches Giulia's heart)

Giulia:"In the heart?"

Luca:"Yes. In your heart. In your memories. In the things I taught you."

Giulia:"Like what?"

Luca:"Like, 'I love you.' Like, 'You're free.' Like, 'You can do this.'"

Giulia:"What if I forget?"

Luca:"You won't forget. Because we have an invisible thread. You and I."

Giulia:"Invisible thread?"

Luca:"Yes. A thread that connects us. Always. Even when we don't see each other."

Giulia:"Even when you sleep?"

Luca: "Yes."

Giulia:"Even when you're in Italy?"

Luca: "Yes."

Giulia:"Even when... you die?"

Luca:(pause) "Yes, Giulia. Even when I die. The thread remains."

Giulia: "Forever?"

Luca: "Forever."

Inheritance

Luca thinks: "What do I leave to Giulia?"

No money (he doesn't have much). No house (he rents). No possessions (few).

And:

1. **Lessons**
    - To love without conditions
    - To be free
    - Exploring the world
    - Building bridges
    - Breaking cycles
2. **Memories**
    - Walks
    - Songs
    - Laughter
    - Hugs
    - "I love you"
3. **History**
    - 6 countries
    - 1 life
    - 1 book (this one)
4. **Invisible thread**
    - Eternal connection
    - Love that never dies
    - Presence in the heart

Lesson 21: The greatest legacy isn't material. It's spiritual.

Letter to Giulia (to be read after death)

Luca writes:

Dear Giulia,

If you are reading this letter, it means I am dead.

And I know you're hurting. I know you're sad. I know you feel alone.

But listen, my darling:

You are not alone. Never.

I am here. In your heart. In your memories. In the red thread that unites us.

And I want to tell you a few things:

1. **It's not your fault.**
   Whatever happened, it's not your fault. Death is a part of life. And that's okay.
2. **It's okay to cry.**
   Cry all you want. Don't hold back. Pain is love with nowhere to go. Let it out.
3. **Remember the happy moments.**
   Don't just think about the end. Think about the happy moments. The laughter. The songs. The hugs.
4. **Live your life.**
   Don't stop. Don't stop living because I'm dead. Live. For you. For me. For both of us.
5. **You are free.**
   Always. Whatever you choose. Whatever path you take. You are free. And I will always be proud of you.
6. **I love you.**
   Always. Forever. Unconditionally. Nothing can change that. Not even death.
7. **The invisible thread.**
   Remember: we have an invisible thread. You and I. And nothing can break it. Not even death.

When you feel alone, close your eyes. Breathe. And feel the thread. I am there.

When you're scared, remember, "You can do this." Because you can do this. Always.

When you're sad, remember: "After the rain, there's a rainbow." Always.

And when you're happy, smile. And know that I'm smiling with you.

Because the invisible thread doesn't just bring pain. It also brings joy.

I love you, Giulia.

Forever.

Dad

November 1st – Day of the Dead

Luca takes Giulia to the cemetery. They visit: Grandma Rosa, Grandpa Pietro, Aunt Anna, and Aunt Bina.

Giulia:"Dad, are they dead?"

Luca:"Yes, darling. They're dead."

Giulia:"Where am I?"

Luca:"Here." (touches the heart)

Giulia:"In the heart?"

Luca:"Yes. In my heart. In my memories. In the invisible thread."

Giulia:"Do they have wire too?"

Luca:"Yes. We all have a thread. With the people we love."

Giulia: "Me too?"

Luca:"Yes, you too. You're on the same page with me. With Mom. With Grandma. With Grandpa. With everyone."

Giulia:"And when I die?"

Luca:(hugs) "When you die, many years from now, the thread will remain. And the people you love will feel you. Always."

Giulia:"Promise?"

Luca:"I promise."

Death is not the end

Luca reflects:

Death is not the end. Death is a passage.

And:

- Body → Spirit
- Physical presence → Spiritual presence
- Earthly life → Eternal life (in memories, in hearts)

Lesson 22: Death is not the end. It is transformation.

Adult Luca → Adult Giulia (future)

Giulia, if you're reading this, I'm dead. And you're an adult. Maybe you're 20. Maybe 30. Maybe 50. It doesn't matter.

It is important that you know:

I'm proud of you. Whatever you've done. Whatever path you've taken. I'm proud. Because you are my daughter. And you are free.

And I hope you have:

- Beloved
- Traveled
- Learned
- Built bridges
- Broken cycles

And I hope you have children. And that you tell them, every day, "I love you." And that you never leave them alone. And that you always leave them free.

Because this is the broken cycle. This is the invisible thread. This is love.

I love you, Giulia. Forever.

Dad

End of Chapter 9

Luca, 47 years old.

He wrote the chapter on death. But he's not dead. Yet.

And until that day, he will live. He will live for Giulia. He will live for Mondosol. He will live for the bridges.

He will live. Because life is now. Not yesterday. Not tomorrow. Now. And Luca chooses: to live.

CONTINUED IN THE EPILOGUE...

🎮 GAME CHAPTER 9

🔍 HIDE AND SEEK:

What is the name of the thread that connects Luca and Giulia?

(Answer: Invisible thread)

💭 QUESTION FOR YOU:

Have you ever lost someone you love? How do you remember them?

✨ SECRET WORD:

Death isn't the end. Is it...?

(Hint: It starts with "T" and means "change shape")

(Answer: Transformation)

EPILOGUE: THE BRIDGE

Ringerike, 2025

Luca, 47. Giulia, 11.

They walk together. Hand in hand.

Snow. Mountains. Silence. Norway.

The question

Giulia: “Papa, why did you travel so much?”

Luca: (thinks) “Because I was looking for something.”

Giulia: “What?”

Luca: “Home.”

Giulia: “And did you find them?”

Luca: (looks at Giulia) “Sec. Le8 found.”

Giulia: “Where?”

Luca: “Here. With you.”

Giulia: (smiles) “Am I home?”

Luca: “Sec, darling. You are home.”

The bridge

Luca and Giulia arrive at a bridge. A wooden bridge. Over a river.

Luca: “See this bridge?” Giulia: “Sec.” Luca: “This bridge connects two sides of the river. Without a bridge, you can’t cross. You have to swim. Or turn. But with the bridge, you can cross. Easily.” Giulia: “Sec.” Luca: “That’s what I do, Giulia.” Giulia: “What?” Luca: “I build bridges.” Giulia: “Wooden bridges?” Luca: (smiles) “No. Bridges between people. Between cultures. Between languages.” Giulia: “How?” Luca: “I teach Italian to Norwegians. I teach English to Italians. I help companies communicate in multiple languages.” Giulia: “And this is a bridge?” Luca: “Sec. Because I help people understand each other. To connect. To cross.” Giulia: “Beautiful!” Luca: “Sec. It’s beautiful.”

The mission

Luca: “Giulia, do you know why I build bridges?” Giulia: “Because you like it?” Luca: “Sec. But also because I’ve lived in 6 countries.” Giulia: “6 countries?” Luca: “Sec. Italy, America, England, France, Ireland, Norway.” Giulia: “Wow! So many!” Luca: “Sec. And in every country, I learned something.” Giulia: “What?” Luca: “That people are different. But also the same.” Giulia: “How?” Luca: “Different: language, food, culture. The same: love, fear, dreams.” Giulia: “Ah!” Luca: “And bridges help people see: we are different, but the same.” Giulia: “And you build bridges?” Luca: “Sec. Every day.” Giulia: “Can I too?” Luca: (hugs) “Sec, darling. You can too. When you grow up.” Giulia: “How?” Luca: “By learning languages. By traveling. By meeting different people. By listening. By respecting.” Giulia: “Okay! I’ll do it!” Luca: (smiles) “I know. I know.”

The Gentleman Thieves

Luca stops. He looks at the river under the bridge.

Luca: “Giulia, do you know who my heroes were as a child?” Giulia: “Who?” Luca: “Lupin. And Zorro.” Giulia: “Who are they?” Luca: “Gentleman thieves. They stole from the rich to give to the poor.” Giulia: “Like Robin Hood?” Luca: “Exactly! Like Robin Hood.”

Luca thinks.

As a child, he watched Lupin cartoons in Abbiategrasso. He dreamed of being like him. Elegant. Intelligent. Righteous.

He didn't steal for himself. He stole for others.

Years later, in Norway, he rewatched the series on Netflix. Assane Diop. The modern protagonist.

One scene struck him: Journalist Fabienne dies trying to help him. Before dying, she leaves him a message. Not money. Not fame. A message. A story.

And Luca understood: We are all passing through.

Luca: “Giulia, listen carefully.” Giulia: “Sec, pape0.” Luca: “Money changes hands. Houses change owners. Kingdoms fall.” Giulia: “Sec.” Luca: “Even the pharaohs built gigantic pyramids. They used millions of slaves. But then? The pharaohs were forgotten. Their riches? Stolen. Their names? Dust.” Giulia: “And the slaves?” Luca: “Forgotten too.” Giulia: “And the thieves?” Luca: “Forgotten too.” Giulia: “So what remains?” Luca: “History. The mystery. The question: How is this possible?”

Luca kneels down. He looks Giulia in the eye.

Luca: “Giulia, remember this: We won't be remembered for what we have. We will be remembered for what we do.” Giulia: “What do we do?” Luca: “The people we help. The bridges we build. The stories we leave behind. The questions we ask. The love we give.”

Giulia: “And what are you leaving behind, dad?” Luca: “I'm leaving this book. I'm leaving Vita/Life. I'm leaving behind the lessons I taught you. I'm leaving behind the bridges between cultures, languages, people.”

Break.

Luca: “And I leave you.” Giulia: “Me?” Luca: “Sec. You are my most important bridge. You are my true legacy. Not money. Not success. You.”

Giulia hugs Luca.

Giulia: “I love you, daddy.” Luca: “Also, darling. Forever.”

The 22 Lessons (summary)

Luca thinks about the lessons learned:

- Love is not to be waited for
- The world is big
- If you want, you can
- People help
- I can do it alone
- Hard work = freedom
- Listen, learn, choose
- Love has a thousand languages
- To love and to set free
- House e8 where you open your heart
- Pain Purpose
- Don't hold on
- Not all places are for everyone
- Language = key to culture
- Love given returns
- Home = where you choose to stay
- Thoughts create reality0
- Balance (not scarcity, not blind abundance)
- Sun and stone (both necessary)
- Death transforms, it does not break

- Spiritual > material inheritance
- Death = transformation
- And the most important lesson: Build bridges, not walls.

The message

Luca looks at Giulia. He thinks:

“That’s the message.” “It doesn’t matter where you come from. It doesn’t matter where you’re going.” “Does it matter: do you build bridges or walls?”

Walls: - They separate - They divide - They isolate - They create fear

Bridges: - Connect - Unite - Include - Create love

Luca chose: bridges. And he teaches Giulia: bridges.

Unite, don't divide

Luca reflects on the story:

Romans: They built bridges, roads, aqueducts. To unite. Anglo-Saxons: They built walls, borders, empires. To divide.

Luke is Italian. A descendant of Romans. And he chooses: to unite. Not because he is better. But because it is his nature.

Lesson 24: Choose your nature. And live it fully.

Giulia - The Future

Luca looks at Giulia. He thinks:

“She is the future.” “She will have: - Italian roots (from me) - Norwegian roots (from her mother) - International experiences (from both of us) - Languages (Italian, Norwegian, English, maybe others) - Open-mindedness (from travel, cultures)” “She will be a bridge. Naturally.” “Because she was born a bridge.” And Luca is proud.

The last message

To anyone reading this book:

Hi. I'm Luca. (Elio in real life.) I've lived in six countries. I've learned five languages. I've loved. I've lost. I've learned. And I wrote this book for you. Because I want to tell you:

You can start over. Always.

You can change. Always.

You can break cycles. Always.

You can build bridges. Always.

You can love. Always.

You can be free. Always.

You can choose. Always.

You can live. Now.

This is the message. Live. Love. Build bridges. Thanks for reading. Love, Luca / Elio

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Luca and Giulia cross the bridge. Hand in hand. On the other side, they continue walking. Toward home. Toward the future. Toward the bridges.

FINE

Six Countries, One Story by Elio Mondello Anza