GILLETTE SERIES NARRATIVE

GILLETTE BLADE AND THE PENCIL



Ferdinando Frega

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FRAGMENTS OF A WRITING THAT CUTS

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INTRODUCTION

Writing, for me, has always been a physical act. Not an exercise in style, but a gesture that involves the body, time, and matter. I have never believed in perfect novels, polished verses, texts that seem carved in marble. I believed in the tremor of the hand, in the graphite that snaps, in the page that folds, tears, gets dirty. I believe in writing that breathes, that makes mistakes, that corrects itself.

This book was born from there. It is not a complete work, but an exercise in attention. It is not a declaration, but a question that repeats itself: what remains of what we write, when we accept that it can disappear?

Handwriting means accepting the fragility of the mark. It means recognizing that every word can be erased, but that every gesture leaves a trace. It means writing without knowing if you will be read, without seeking confirmation, without expecting answers. It means writing so as not to forget, but also to remember that nothing is final.

The pencil does not impose — it suggests. It does not fix — it accompanies. It is the tool of those who search, not those who declare. Of those who listen, not those who shout.

This book is an invitation to slow down. To return to the page, the mark, the silence. To write as one walks: with uncertain steps, but present.

ARCHITECTURE OF THE BOOK

This book unfolds in three movements, like an interrupted symphony. Each section is a tempo, a breath, a variation on the theme of fragile writing. There is no progression, but oscillation. There is no conclusion, but suspension.

Part I — The Blunt Pencil. Fragments, aphorisms, notes of survival. Thoughts that scratch the page, that ask for no permission. Like the tip of a worn pencil: imperfect, but still capable of leaving a mark.

Part II — Light Strokes. Observations on daily life, on time, on memory. Words that graze — that do not cut but accompany. Like lines barely traced, that remain on the page without imposing themselves.

Part III — Erasures. Reflections on failure, on identity, on writing itself. Words that deny themselves, that withdraw, that let go. Like cancelled marks that continue to vibrate beneath the surface.

Epilogue — The Blade. The point of arrival. Where the pencil meets its destiny.

PART I · THE BLUNT PENCIL

THE SCRATCH THAT REMEMBERS

It was not a word. It was a scratch on a rock, carved with a bone. Hands without grammar, but with urgency. I did not want to explain. I wanted to resist time. Writing was born this way: as memory that scratches stone.

THE TABLET THAT PRAYED

In the Nile delta, a man bent over the mud traced eyes, serpents, birds. Every mark was a god. Every word, a supplication. Writing was a bridge toward the invisible. A way of asking, even when no one answers.

THE WALL THAT LOVED

Pompeii, before the silence. A soldier carves "Livia loves Marco" on a wall. It was not poetry. It was urgency. Writing is also this: leaving love carved before the world goes dark.

IN CALABRIA

A woman sewed letters onto a cloth. She did not know how to write, but every stitch was a word. Every thread, a sentence. Writing is also

inventing languages when no one has taught you any.

THE STAFF THAT COUNTS

A shepherd carved marks on his staff: one for each day spent away, one for each dream under the rain. The staff was a diary. Writing is walking with words, even when you have no paper.

THE SALT THAT EVAPORATES

In Sardinia, a woman wrote with salt on a warm stone. The words vanished, but she kept going. Writing is speaking, even if nothing remains. The gesture is what counts, not its duration.

THE PENCIL THAT RESISTS

My grandfather wrote with a short, worn pencil. Every page was used, every word weighed. He wrote little. But every sentence was a life. Writing is economy of gesture. Of the heart. Of the voice.

PART II · LIGHT STROKES

THE SCHOOL OF CRACKS

I never had a school. I had many, but no one ever truly had me. I entered nursery school the way you enter a drawer: placed inside, closed, arranged. The teachers spoke; I listened. But I did not understand. Then, at five years old, something lit up. A thought. The first one. Not an emotion, but a form. A beginning.

At six, Catholic boarding school. Nuns, silences, grades. I gave my teacher a piece of candy, hoping sweetness could buy understanding. It did not work. The grade was merciless. My protest was naive, but real: Teacher, don't you remember the candy?

From there, the cracks began. Promoted every year, but always with doubt: was it merit or favour? School was not my home. It was a place where you survive.

In secondary school, chaos. Tired teachers, random oral exams, improvised strikes. One teacher saw me as a target. I organized an escape. The school shut down as a precaution. The promotion came anyway.

Third year of middle school at my grandparents' house. Cold house, silent meals, rigid discipline. But there, in the cold, I found rhythm. I passed with a good grade. Nobody expected it. Not even me.

High school in the North. Then the South. One year repeated, an advantage that did not last. Third year, the failure. Rome welcomed me to a private school. I completed two years in one. I was already working. Time was a currency I did not have.

At the state exam, I failed. Not for ignorance, but for a sentence too true spoken to the president. A year later, with my wife beside me, I passed. Certified accountant. A victory? Perhaps. But it was not enough.

My real school came after. In bars, in corridors, in silences. A doctor taught me to think. Thirty-one years of Freemasonry taught me to doubt. Women have taught me to change.

Today I write. Not to teach. But to remember that the real school has no grades. It has scars. It has choices. It has open eyes.

THE HAND THAT DOES NOT STOP

That night the pain was everywhere. In my back, in my hands, in my eyes. But the pencil was there, small, worn, like a bone that does not break. I wrote bent over, forehead on the table. Every word was an act of resistance. My hand trembled but did not stop. Writing was not a gesture. It was a cry. A way of saying: I am still here. The body could not manage. But the hand kept going. And in that crooked, dirty page full of erasures, there was all my survival.

THE BONE OF THE WIND

He was one hundred and twenty years old. His skin was thin as paper, his eyes deep as wells. He belonged to a tribe in northern Pakistan, where time is not measured in clocks, but in seasons, in silences, in calluses under the feet.

I met him by chance, in a village that seemed suspended between stone and sky. They told me he spoke little, but that he listened to everything. I sat beside him, under a tree that gave no shade but gave company.

We talked for almost two hours. He told me about his women, his illnesses, his food, his youth. I was curious that he still had all his teeth. I asked him what secret he kept. He smiled, slipped his hand into his tunic, and pulled out a small sharp bone. This one — he said. He passed it between his teeth the way a craftsman passes a file over wood. It was his toothbrush. It was his ritual.

When I left, I had received a lesson. Not about health. Not about hygiene. But about a wisdom that is not written in books. The kind that is sharpened every day, like a bone against the wind.

Since then, every time I feel too young to understand, or too old to learn, I think of him. His smile. His silence. His way of being in the world without wanting to explain it.

BREAD AND LISTENING

In a great city always in a hurry, two men lived who had never spoken to each other. The first was Edoardo, a well-known entrepreneur, always elegant, always late. The second was Angelo, a

beggar who sat at the corner of the same street every day, with the gentle gaze of someone who has learned to live without haste.

Edoardo passed every morning with a decisive step, eyes fixed on the next deal. He did not see Angelo. Or rather, he saw him the way you see red traffic lights: a momentary obstacle. If he is there, it is his own fault, he thought. Life is a matter of choice.

Then what no one foresees happened: a bad investment, a collapse, a friend who betrays. In a few months Edoardo lost everything. He found himself on the street. Not by choice, but by destiny.

One evening Angelo approached. He asked nothing. He offered a piece of bread. Here. Tomorrow we will share better. Edoardo looked at him, incredulous. Why do you do this? Because I know what it means to be hungry. And because not everyone who ends up at the bottom chooses to be there.

Those words, simple as they were, took root inside him. More than a thousand leadership conferences.

With time, Edoardo found a small job. Then another. Slowly, with effort and humility, he rebuilt his life. But he never went back to what he had been before. He opened a shelter, not to feel good about himself, but to give back. Angelo was there every day. Not as a guest, but as a guide.

Edoardo and Angelo were no longer the rich man and the beggar. They were two men who had saved each other. One by offering bread. The other by offering listening.

PART III · ERASURES

THE PENCIL THAT REMEMBERS

I handwrite. Not because I want to erase it. But because I want to remember that I could. Every mark is fragile. Every word, provisional. Once, as a boy, I wrote a letter to my father. I did not send it. I folded it into four and put it under my pillow. Every evening, I reread it, the way you reread a wound. Then one day I erased it. Not with an eraser. With life.

Today, when I write, I do not look for perfection. I look for the tremor. I look for the point at which the word breaks but remains. The pencil is not a tool. It is a threshold. Between what can be said and what must remain.

Handwriting means accepting that every sentence may disappear. But also that, in its disappearing, it may say something true. And that, sometimes, what is erased is precisely what is remembered best.

THE VOID THAT SPEAKS

I erased so much that I pierced the page. I tried to write around the hole. Then inside it. In the end, I understood that the void said more about me than all the words. The hole was not a mistake. It was a

confession. Writing around the void is the most honest way of telling oneself. It is letting silence say what the voice does not dare.

THE GESTURE THAT REMAINS

I do not remember all the words I have written. But I remember the gesture. The hand that bends. The back that aches. The breath that stops so as not to disturb the thought.

Once, in a hospital, I saw a woman writing on a paper napkin. Her hands were trembling. She was writing for her daughter, who could not speak. Every letter was an attempt to remain.

I did not read the message. But I saw the gesture. And I understood that writing is not communication. It is presence. Since then, I have stopped looking for the right words. I look for the necessary ones. Those that do not shine but hold.

WRITING IS A GENTLE CRIME

There are sentences that should not be written. Because they hurt. Because they are ruined. Because they open doors no one wanted to walk through. And yet, here they are. Written. Signed. Kept.

Not out of vanity. Not out of revenge. But out of necessity.

Writing is a gentle crime. It leaves no blood, but it leaves traces. It does not destroy walls, but it cracks silences. Every word that should not have been written is a confession. An act of courage. Or of weakness. Or of desperation.

But it is true. And that is enough.

Those who write do not seek forgiveness. They seek space. They seek air. They seek a place where thought can exist without asking permission.

THE WIND INSIDE

Once I asked him: why do you write?

He answered: because if I do not, the wind inside splits me open.

I did not understand at first. Then one night I woke with my heart beating hard. I took a page. I wrote a sentence. It was not beautiful. It was not useful. But it calmed me.

Since then, I have understood that writing is not a creative act. It is a respiratory act. Like expelling something that cannot stay inside. The wind inside cannot be seen. But if you do not let it out, it consumes you.

EPILOGUE · THE BLADE

When the pencil ends, something else begins.

For eighteen years I worked for a company that made blades. Not knives. Not weapons. Razor blades. Gillette.

At first, I thought it was just a job. An American company, large, efficient, global. You entered in the morning, left in the evening. In between, the system.

Then I understood it was not like that. I understood that a blade is not an object. It is philosophy. It is the point at which matter meets skin. At which metal decides how much to remove and how much to leave. At which precision is not a technical virtue: it is an ethic.

The pencil scratches the page. The blade grazes the skin. Both leave a mark. Both are consumed in use. Both require a steady hand and a clear intention.

It took me years to understand that writing and working with blades were the same thing. Not metaphorically. Structurally. Both gestures ask: how much do you remove? How much do you leave? Where do you stop?

The pencil goes blunt. The blade wears down. But the moment they touch — the page, the skin — is absolute. They admit no

hesitation.

This book is handwritten. But it is thought with the blade.