
CAFÉ LUMIÈRE CINÉMA
CHAPMAN

A REASON TO TELL YOU NO

The right not to explain oneself.

FERDINANDO FREGA

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INTRODUCTION

The right not to explain oneself.

Injustice is not a concept. It is an experience.

It does not live in the codes, but in the corridors of hospitals, in the silences of families, in the reports that no one reads.

It is the face of someone who has lost everything but has never stopped looking for a reason to stay standing.

In this book, I have collected my causes. The real ones. The ones that changed me.

These are not courtroom stories. They are snippets of life.

Every story is a process. Every process is a question.

And every question has only one answer:

a reason to tell you no.

Saying “no” is an act of freedom.

It is the moment you stop justifying yourself and start existing.

It is the gesture that separates those who suffer from those who choose.

And I chose. I chose to tell.

Because the truth, when it is not heard, must be written.

Welcome to my court.

There are no robes. There are no convictions.

Just stories. And a voice no longer afraid to be itself.

EPILOGUE

When the journey has already begun, but you do not yet know where it will take you.

I did not author this book for those seeking answers. I wrote it for those who have learned to live with questions. For those who have understood that justice is not a formula, but a wound. That the courtroom is not always a physical place, but often one's own conscience. That "no" is not a refusal, but a boundary.

Every because you read about is true. Every word has been spoken. Every silence has been lived. You will not find heroes or executioners. You will find men and women who have endured the system, family, love, illness, loneliness. You will find me. And you will find yourself too.

This book does not end with a verdict. It ends with a pact. One between those who lived and those who chose to tell the story.

BOOK PARTITION

Every story needs an order. But the order is not always what we expect.

This book does not read like a manual, nor does it flip through like a diary. It is a mosaic of experiences, causes, reflections, wounds, and rebirth. For this reason, I chose to divide it into thematic sections, not to simplify, but to provide the reader with a map. A map that does not guide but accompanies. Each section is a passage. Each passage is a threshold. And each threshold is a reason. A reason to say no. Or to say yes.

Part I – The System and the Masks

Where justice is power, the law is strategy, and the court is theater.

Part II – The Defendant and Guilt

Where the individual becomes the target, and guilt is not always a choice.

Part III – The Process and the Paradox

Where truth is measured in minutes, and justice is lost in the details.

Part IV – Prison and Redemption

Where punishment becomes reflection, and the cell becomes a mirror.

Part V – The Exit and the Return

Where freedom is a conquest, and returning is a new condemnation.

Part VI – The Voices and the Shadows

Where stories become confessions, and shadows speak louder than words.

Part VII – The Ten Mini Crime Stories

Where crime is story, and story is mirror.

Extra Part—The Silent Truths

This section collects stories and reflections that do not fit neatly into the logic of the system, prison, or trial. These are more personal, intimate, and sometimes philosophical voices, speaking of shame, choice, love, loneliness, and human need to be seen and understood.

Conclusion

The section just concluded offered an in-depth look at key themes, paving the way for new reflections and developments. Through the concepts explored, the characters outlined, and the ideas presented, the reader was guided on a journey of understanding and discovery. This section represents an essential piece in the work's architecture, setting the stage for what follows and leaving room for questions, emotions, and insights that enrich the overall reading experience.

PROLOGUE TO THE STORIES

The Voice That Started It All

The courtroom is a theater. But there is no applause. Only sentences. The masks are togas; the jokes are articles of law.

I did not choose to enter. They pushed me. And since that day, every story I have heard has left a scar.

This book was born from there. From that scratch that never heals.

Because behind every file there is a life. And behind every life, a reason to say no.

Justice as Law and Power

Parliament, as the institution that promulgates laws, is the story's primary protagonist. Here, the gap between theory and practice is explored: the law, written in the Constitution, states that Parliament is the legislator par excellence, but the reality is much more complex. The system of decree-laws issued by the government introduces a gray area where ordinary law is subject to emergency situations, transforming an exceptional act into a permanent norm. Parliament becomes a forum for debate where interests, power, and competences intertwine, but also a critique of how the law can be "manipulated" to serve political ends and never truly resolve problems but rather serve merely as an opportunistic strategy.

Judiciary and the Paradox

Judiciary is the body that translates the law into practice, yet it often operates within a system where judges' immunity and protection shield them from the direct consequences of their mistakes. A magistrate must confront the humanity of their work: the responsibility of issuing sentences that shape a person's life, but also their social and professional advancement. The pursuit of career advancement, the pursuit of a more prestigious position, the interplay of

internal balances within the Judiciary—these are topics that are not explored, highlighting how justice is never neutral, but influenced by personal and structural interests—never the full interests of the people, but only those of a select few.

The Flying Desk

Thematic Identity: The institutional absurdity and the power of logic Narrative Genre: Surreal judicial comedy with final redemption Setting: High school, Italy, 1980s

Story in detail

The protagonist is a lazy, but not stupid, student. He attends accounting school, more out of duty than passion. Every morning, his classmates drag him to class with smiles and caresses, and he gives in, like a teenager who cannot say no to beauty.

One day, he receives an urgent summons: the principal, the vice principal, the secretary, the clerk, and even a school board official is waiting for him in the office. They accuse him of a grotesque crime: tying up and throwing a desk out the window, interrupting a public function. The proposed punishment is surreal: suspension from all schools in Italy for three years.

But the protagonist, calmly and lucidly, asks just one question: "What's the exact day this supposedly happened?" They answer: "November 23rd." He opens his diary: it is Sunday. Silence. They correct themselves: " November 13th." He checks: Thursday. The diary says: "At home with the flu."

Nothing else is needed. The accusatory framework collapses. The father, initially skeptical, is persuaded to consult a lawyer. A lawsuit for damages is filed. A week later, the principal and his entourage show up at the house, apologize, and propose an amicable solution.

The protagonist returns to school. The measure is revoked. His grades multiply mysteriously: from 2s and 3s to all eights. No algorithm, just scholastic magic.

Theft Simulation

Thematic Identity: Justice contaminated by emotion and personal ties Narrative Genre: Judicial noir with elements of destiny and irony of power Setting: Italy, age 28.

Story in detail

The protagonist is newlywed, immersed in the happiness that only the beginning of a new life can bring. But the next morning, his car was missing. A theft? A mistake? A void. He reports the incident to his wife, follows the formalities, and relies on bureaucracy. But seven days later, the police found the car three hundred meters from his home, abandoned in a secluded lot. Unusable.

So far, so normal. But fate has other plans. The discovery report brings him before an investigating officer, who bombards him with questions. He is the husband of one of her exes. Jealous. Vindictive. And she charges him with fake theft. The protagonist finds himself in court, surrounded by suspicion and prejudice. Even his lawyer seems convinced of his guilt.

But here is the twist: the judge is a former schoolmate of his, in love with him in his youth. The trial turns into a silent duel between past and present, between emotion and law. The prosecutor requests a two-year prison sentence. The judge retires, reflects, returns, and pronounces: "Acquitted for not having committed the crime."

A verdict is born not from evidence, but from memory. Justice, here, is a minefield of emotions, vendettas, and memories.

The Lightning Trial

Thematic Identity: Quick justice and the power of the word
Narrative genre: Court drama with oratorical redemption
Setting: Court of Lucca, age 46.

Story in detail

The protagonist enters the Lucca courthouse with his longtime lawyer. The atmosphere is tense, not because of the crime: because of the rush. The judge, in a brisk tone, announces: "This isn't Reggio Calabria, where a case takes five years. We have very few here, and we have to close them quickly, so we can go on vacation."

A trial reduced to formalities. But the protagonist asks to speak. And he does. With a firm gaze and a confident voice, he begins a spontaneous speech that lasts 40 minutes. It is not just a defense: it is a lesson in ethics, entrepreneurship, and humanity. The prosecutor interrupts him: "Why didn't you choose another path, avoiding ending up here?" The answer is clear: "Doing business means thinking about the families who depend on us. It means never choosing

solutions that could harm them. This is the principle of the true entrepreneur. Not of the conqueror."

The prosecutor requests a three-year prison sentence. The judge retires. When he returns, he delivers a verdict that is also a compliment: "Acquitted for not having committed the crime. You acted well. I congratulate you on your spirit and your respectful actions toward humanity."

The lightning process transforms into a process of consciousness. The word here is not just a tool of defense: it is a weapon of truth.

VAT Evasion (Part I & II)

Thematic Identity: Betrayed Trust and Automatic Justice

Narrative genre: Grotesque procedural with systemic reflection

Setting: Italy, age 50

Story in detail

The protagonist is an entrepreneur in the electronics sector. Customers pay in cash, and banks block payments. The accountant, an ambiguous figure, reassures: "Everything's under control."

Then came the cold shower: VAT evasion of €850,000. In court, the accountant spoke of a computer virus that generated a "digital pizza." The judge quipped: "Bring me this pizza, so we can see if it's worth the evaded amount."

The case is closed due to the statute of limitations. The Revenue Agency attempts recovery, but the plaintiff disputes the deadline. The request is canceled.

A year later, same story: added charges for €635,000. Same accountant, same plan. The judge attaches the previous documents and closes the case due to the statute of limitations.

There is no plea, no analysis. Just a signature, a stamp, an archive.

“Justice is not a trial. It is a form. And when the form is already filled out, you are just the signature at the bottom of the page.”

False Invoicing

Thematic Identity: Documentary truth versus judicial ambiguity

Narrative genre: Procedural with ethical tension and professional redemption

Setting: Italy, age 50

Story in detail

The protagonist is an experienced and independent business consultant. He collaborates with a company embroiled in a fraudulent bankruptcy investigation. Without ever having handled accounting or internal flows, he finds himself caught in a tax carousel that does not belong to him.

Summoned to court, he asks to speak. He does so with surgical precision: he explains his expertise, demonstrates

the traceability of the flows, attaches documents, evidence, and extracts. The documents speak loudly.

The prosecutor, despite everything, requests an eight-month prison sentence. But the judge withdraws, reflects, and returns with a sentence that is also a lesson:

“Acquitted for not having committed the crime.”

In a world where words bend, cards stay straight. But who decides what is false? Who has the power to turn a bill into a crime? And who has the courage to say it is not?

Unconventional Marketing Strategy

Thematic Identity: Innovation as a Crime and the Judgment of the Invisible

Narrative genre: Judicial satire with elements of the grotesque and economic reflection

Setting: Italy, age 52, COVID-19 period

Story in detail

During the pandemic, the protagonist advises an electronics company to invest in a product in high domestic demand: talking vibrators imported from China and sold in Eastern Europe. The success is immediate, but the Italian justice system is not ready for this "unconventional strategy."

Accused of tax fraud, he is questioned: “Did you see them? Did you touch them?”

He replies: “I analyze markets, not products.”

The trial becomes a theater. The Finance Police demands tributes. The protagonist responds with irony.

The judge insists: “Guilty or innocent?”

He: "Guilty of not knowing the consumers. Innocent of any crime."

"In Italy, innovation is suspect. And those who think too far ahead end up on trial. Not for what they've done, but for what they've imagined."

The Lawyer Between Truth and Defense

The lawyer is a bridge between the accused and the law. It explores the ethics of the profession, the difficulty of maintaining emotional distance from the cases being handled, and the role the lawyer plays in crafting a narrative of a subject who is not only a technician but also a storyteller, capable of constructing reality through the selection of information and the defense of a case. However, they can never guarantee a certain victory, and this fragility can emerge in a story in which the lawyer finds himself defending a losing cause yet never losing hope of doing the right thing. This could create an interesting contrast with the pragmatic approach of other actors, distributing responsibilities to individuals like the magistrate or the police officer.

Interrogation by the Financial Police

Thematic Identity: Communication as a weapon and the power of social disarm Narrative genre: Brilliant comedy with psychological and theatrical subtext Setting: Reggio Calabria, age 58.

Story in detail

The protagonist receives an informal phone call from the Guardia di Finanza. No official summons, no accusations: just a "meeting for clarification." But as soon as he enters the room, he finds himself faced with eight officers, including an officer. A proper interrogation, disguised as an interview.

He does not flinch. He is not a defendant, but a communicator. A professor of social communication, even if no one knows it. And he begins his show. He answers all the questions with precision, irony, and provocation. He tells absurd stories, jokes, and anecdotes. He turns the interrogation into a talk show.

The finance officers get irritated, then curious, then give up. The atmosphere breaks. We move into the confidential phase. The marshals talk about their women, their experiences in Asia, the differences between Asian and South American women. The protagonist listens, smiles, and responds with a joke: "I read an Asian manual that explains how women manage Italian finance officers on vacation." Laughter. Applause. End of the interrogation.

At the end of the report, they ask him: “What do you say, Mr. Frega?” And he: “That I love you all… if you don’t arrest me.”

They escort him to the door. He was not questioned: he was celebrated.

In Interim

Thematic Identity: From defendant to accuser: law as a weapon of redemption Narrative genre: Judicial epic with a strategic and vengeful tone Setting: Italy, age 60.

Story in detail

After years of trials, hearings, verdicts, and legal fees exceeding €42,000, the protagonist decides the time for defense is over. He is no longer the defendant. Now he is the prosecution. Not out of revenge, but out of principle. For his children. For the law. Because those who have suffered must also know how to strike back.

Three roads open before him:

Personal justice: too instinctive.

Abandonment: too unfair.

Criminal justice: the only viable option.

Without a degree, with a straight A in Italian, he personally writes the prosecution's arguments, briefs, and charges. His lawyers follow him, but he is the driving force. He does not seek prison for the accused. He wants to strip him. Reduce him to a baby in diapers, like in the Pampers commercial. He wants the damage he suffered acknowledged, compensated, and repaid. Not for himself, but for his children. It is a matter of principle, not revenge.

The protagonist knows that everyone wants to know what he is doing, but he will not say anything.

“Roman armies deliberated only after knowing the enemy. I know mine. And my sheep no longer follow any lion.”

The case is ongoing. The civil suit will be devastating. The compensation will be a surprise.

"Victory isn't about winning. It is about filing a civil suit and making people pay the price. Everything will go with my children. It's just a matter of time."

The Mafioso and the Invisible System

The mafioso is a character who exists outside the radar of formal justice yet is essential to understanding how the legal system relates to organized crime. He is seen from an almost "philosophical" perspective, as someone who, despite being a criminal, has his own "logic" that opposes that of traditional justice. His invisibility, his ability to manipulate the system and conceal his involvement, could be portrayed in a way that highlights the corruption and impotence of a system that seems incapable of stopping him. The mafioso could be seen not only as a criminal, but as a figure who has learned to play by the rules of power, circumventing institutions with intelligence and cunning.

The Defendant and the Burden of Guilt

The accused is often portrayed as a victim of the system, but they are individuals trying to reconcile with their past. The accused's psychology, their loneliness, fear, and desire for redemption are some aspects driven by necessity, a deep need for survival or belonging. Others, however, are men and women who have made bad decisions, but are aware of the consequences. Mitigating factors, such as altered mental state or premeditation, could be explored as nuances that call into question the individual's morality, creating a more complex reflection on the concepts of justice and guilt.

Driving Without a License

Thematic Identity: Hereditary guilt and the paradox of responsibility Narrative genre: Judicial realism with an ironic and reflective tone Setting: Italy, age 16.

Story in detail

The protagonist receives a 125cc motorcycle from his father as a gift. He is young and inexperienced, but he believes he is legally compliant thanks to his "permesso rosa" (legal permit). His logic is simple: if the passenger is not responsible for the driver, then the father should not be responsible for his son. But justice does not work that way.

A traffic police officer, Nando, stops him and reports him. In court, the boy is acquitted for good faith and rational behavior. But the twist comes soon after: the father is convicted of reckless custody. And the one who pays, surreally, is the grandfather, who has the same name as his grandson. A hall of mirrors, where responsibility is passed down like an inheritance, and the true culprit becomes invisible.

The story ends with a bitter reflection: even when you are acquitted, the system always finds a way to make you pay. And often, the ones who pay are not the ones who made the mistake, but the ones who are easiest to target.

The Crime of Not Trying

Thematic Identity: The social condemnation of virtue and the paradox of fidelity Narrative Genre: Moral comedy with existential subtext Setting: Italy, age 36.

Story in detail

The protagonist is a supplier, a man of his word, who meets Gabriele, a former Upim employee turned successful entrepreneur, and Marilena, his secretary and lover. Their professional relationship develops into friendship, and then into something more subtle: trust intimacy.

One day, Marilena calls him into tears. She is having a tough time with Gabriele and takes refuge in his arms. But it is not a cry for help: it is a test. She tells him that all the men she has ever turned to have tried. All except him. And this, for her, is a rare gesture. But also, suspicious.

She takes him to her home, and introduces him to her mother and sister, both widows. Then she leaves him alone with them. And then the incredible happens: the two women attack him lustfully, as if it were a family ritual. He resists, asking only how their husbands died. The answer is blunt: "My heart couldn't take it... in bed."

Marilena returns. The two women remain unperturbed. For them, it is a familiar game. But for him, it is not. He runs away. A comical, yet tragic, escape. The price? He loses her friendship. Not for having betrayed her, but for not having done so.

Social condemnation is immediate. He did not give in, and that makes him guilty. Guilty of being different, of not playing the game. His crime is loyalty. His verdict is isolation.

Embezzlement

Thematic Identity: Family as a court and blood as a weapon Narrative Genre: Family drama with philosophical subtext and silent revenge Setting: Italy, age 60

Story in detail

The protagonist is accused by his brother, a blood relative, of embezzling his deceased sister's assets. Three accusations in three months, all unfounded. The accusation stems not from justice, but from envy. The brother cannot stand the protagonist's silence, discretion, and ability to act quietly. He describes him as an American Indian who takes what he needs and disappears into the reservation.

This time, justice is clear-eyed. It files everything away. There is no evidence, no clues. Only animosity and theories. The protagonist has no closets, no skeletons: he has lived 40 years traveling the world, without accumulating, without hiding. His brother, frustrated, tries to dig into his past. He finds a book: The Good Family. He buys it, convinced it will expose him. But he does not know it is signed with a pseudonym. Copyright is universal, not local. He cannot touch it.

The protagonist does not respond. He does not defend himself. He lets the silence speak. And that silence makes you tremble. Because, when you cannot contest the crime, you try to recover what was stolen. But here, there is nothing to recover. Only dignity.

The story ends with a sharp reflection:

“When you have nothing left to hide, you have nothing left to lose. And whoever accuses you is left alone with his voice. Empty.”

Prison as the Last Passage

Prison is the penultimate stage of justice, but it is also a place where redemption collides with reality. How does a person change when they enter prison? How do they cope with their time of punishment, and what identity emerges from this experience? By telling the stories of inmates, describing their internal struggles but also their hopes for rehabilitation, prison is also a place where social and cultural inequalities emerge forcefully, prompting a reflection on the system of punishment and rehabilitation.

Too Much Sex, Too Little Love

Thematic Identity: The body as a contract, love as an illusion, justice as a spectacle Narrative Genre: Balkan tragicomedy with political and social subtext Setting: Romania, age 42.

Story in detail

Raluca is a brilliant, dominant lawyer with an unusual passion: describing her exes in detail. The protagonist, from Calabria, enters her life like an outsized lover, a professional lovemaker who works not by the hour, but by intensity. For six months, the relationship is a whirlwind of passion, an exercise in performance and dedication.

Then comes the dramatic turn of events: Raluca takes him to court. The accusation is as surreal as it is precise—that he has not lived up to his initial standards. The judge is Floriana, Raluca's close friend, ready to convict him even for defamation. The trial turns into a farce, a stage where sex becomes the object of legal scrutiny.

But the scene changes when the wife of the Romanian vice president enters the courtroom, accompanied by generals and officials. Floriana freezes. The protagonist, a close friend of the minister, suddenly becomes untouchable. The trial is overturned. The crime becomes slander. Floriana is removed. The presiding judge issues the verdict: "Acquitted for not having committed the crime."

The protagonist, after three intense months with the minister, realizes that love in the spotlight is no longer love. The media pursues him, turning him into a character. And he, with clarity, decides to leave. Not out of fear, but out of self-respect. Because dying in the Balkans was not his destiny.

Trust and Reconciliation with Society

Social services placement represents the last step, but it is often seen as a kind of "end of the line." The defendant may feel scared for life, even after leaving the criminal justice system. The stigma of "convicted" is difficult to shed, and social services placement is a step that often fails to lead to true reintegration into society. You could explore the character's internal conflict, torn between the desire for freedom and the burden of the past, as he confronts the social invisibility that his criminal past entails.

Fraud and Scam

Thematic Identity: Truth as a spectacle and the court as a stage

Narrative genre: Theatrical courtroom drama with an oratorical climax

Setting: Italy, age 56

Story in detail

The protagonist enters the courtroom for the fifth time, summoned for the same proceeding. He knows it is time to risk everything. The wait is long, the nerves palpable, but his confidence remains intact.

When he is finally called, he takes his place next to the judge with the usual oath. But something is different: the room fills up. From ten people, it grows to one hundred and twenty. The police are forced to block the entrances. The defendant has become an attraction.

He climbs onto the bench and begins his speech. It is not just a defense: it is a lesson. An oratorical symphony that blends law, ethics, economics, and humanity. The judge listens, the audience follows, and the female prosecutor finds herself being questioned by him. An unprecedented event.

The question is simple, yet devastating:

“What is the difference between a trader and an entrepreneur?”

The prosecutor does not know how to answer. And the protagonist, with elegance and precision, constructs a definition that is also a declaration of identity.

The prosecutor, taken aback, reduces the sentence from three years to eight months with mitigating circumstances. The judge retires. When he returns, the courtroom is silent.

“Acquitted for not having committed the crime.”

Applause erupts. It is no longer a courtroom: it is the premiere of La Scala. Everyone is looking for Carmelo, my lawyer.

"The truth isn't just a fact. It is an act. And when you perform it in front of everyone, it becomes history. And when you tell the story, you are no longer the accused. You're the author."

Spiritual Pact

Thematic Identity: The contract with life and divine justice

Narrative genre: Autobiographical mystical vision with a poetic and transcendent tone

Setting: Lisbon, Portugal, age 60

Story in detail

The protagonist is traveling to Lisbon, a city that welcomes him as a spiritual return. He walks through the colorful streets, watches the Brazilian women dance as they stroll, and feels like he is at the gates of paradise. He enters a hidden church, small, silent. Inside, three figures await him: God the Father, Jesus on the cross, and a black Madonna.

There is no one there. Just him and them.

An internal dialogue begins, a simple and profound request:

- Live to be ninety-two

- Stay healthy

- Maintain mental clarity until your last breath

The pact is composed of a spiritual contract:

- Accepting solitude as the price of eternity

- Purify your body and mind

- Overcoming hereditary dementia by changing yourself before others

The protagonist accepts. He sings with his soul.

A scent of flowers fills the church, even though there are no flowers. Time stands still. The clock strikes 10:00. When he leaves, the bell tower strikes 10:00. Twelve hours passed in an instant. No hunger. No thirst. Just confirmation.

“The pact is sealed. Life is renewed. And when you sign with your soul, you do not need witnesses. You already have God as your notary.”

The Return Home

You're happy, you've finally managed to go home, see your children, have your own bathroom, watch TV as late as you want... and then there's your wife watching you from afar, with a look that says it all without saying anything. She smiles at you with that sweetness that only a person can have after spending years hearing you say, "When you get back to prison, you know I have to feed you soup?" And then, like a raging river, she blurts out: "Do you know how many sacrifices I've had to make all these years to commit a stupid crime like yours? For so little money that it was not even enough for two months!"

And while you, silent, try to find a corner to hide, she does not stop. "And let's not talk about your friends, eh? The ones who abandoned you as soon as prison slammed the door in your face!" And she does not stop, repeatedly, like a

broken record, nonstop. Then, overcome by a surge of relief, you leave the house and run to the police.

The Marshal, a man accustomed to solving problems, looks at you with an expression somewhere between worried and curious: "What do you want, sir?" And you timidly reply: "Well, take me back to prison, please... at least my wife isn't there."

The Refund

Initially, there was a pleasant feeling in knowing that someone would return money they had improperly withheld, without any plausible justification. It is well known that large corporations, especially those under public law, take refuge from what the state permits, ignoring individual circumstances.

The communication arrived in my email, terse and without details: the amount and the date of the transfer. A festive atmosphere immediately settled in the family. Some asked for a new perfume, others for a watch: everything seemed perfect. The atmosphere was fantastic.

But I, sitting in my corner, was thinking, as I always do. I could not figure out the reason for the refund. Despite my curiosity, my mind could not find the reason.

A few days later, a call center operator called me. After conducting the usual checks, they informed me that the refund had come from ENEL, for a 2003 supply to the old family home. When I asked for the amount, the operator became confident and advised me to sit down to avoid any repercussions. They confirmed that it was €0.19, revalued, for a total of €2.50.

I said goodbye, thanking him, but did not say anything to those present. I just said we would have to wait for accreditation before we could properly celebrate.

Meanwhile, I had a plane to catch to Paris, a business trip scheduled, and phone calls with family kept focusing on the reimbursement amount.

A few days passed, and finally the check arrived. But the silence that followed was complete: no one spoke about it; no one made any comment.

When I got home, everyone was there, ready to argue. My reaction was inevitable, but I put the money on the table, along with the cash check, and said I had collected it personally to avoid taxes and reporting.

It was just a refund, but the mood was already set for a party. I would never let a disappointment ruin what had become a great celebration. I would never let something so insignificant ruin the party everyone had been waiting for.

The Scales and Balance

It was a gray morning when I found myself in my city's courthouse. I had an important meeting to attend, a case that had long troubled me. It was no trivial dispute, but a matter that would change the course of my life. I was there, before Judge Gabriele, a man known for his wisdom, but also for the severity of his decisions. The room was cold, and the air seemed thick with tension. There was nowhere to hide, no way to escape. I, and the man I was about to face, were there to be judged.

They call me Nando. I am not a man distinguished by wealth or power. I live in a world that many would call ordinary, but for me it is a life full of values. Today, however, I felt as if everything was hanging in the balance. And those scales, familiar to everyone in the courtroom, did nothing but make me uneasy. They were always there, at the judge's desk, a symbol of justice, but also of fairness. Those scales had seen a thousand decisions, a thousand cases. And today they would weigh my actions.

Beside me was Filippo, an elegant, well-dressed man, a successful merchant, but with a reputation for being unscrupulous in getting what he wants. We were having a dispute, a dispute over a sum of money that was owed to me, but which he refused to acknowledge. His attitude was that of someone who had always had everything easy, and who thought everything could be resolved with a smile and a handshake.

"Bring the scales," the judge said, without looking up from his notes. The assistant carefully carried them and placed them on the desk. The scales, which had seemed so inanimate, now seemed to have become the beating heart of our dispute. The judge looked at us both and then spoke: "These scales will decide not only by what you hold in your hands, but also by what is in your heart. Every action weighs its value; every word weighs its truth."

Philip stepped forward first. He picked up an envelope full of bills and placed it on one side of the scale. "Here's my proof," he said, with a superior smile. "I worked hard for this, and I think my investment deserves recognition."

I approached, but I had nothing to put on the scales. I had no money to show for it, no material wealth to impress. I am not a man who lives to accumulate possessions. But I had something more important: my words and my honesty. "I have no money to put on this scale," I said. "But I can say that what I ask is fair not only for me, but for anyone who is honest."

The judge said nothing. He looked at the scales intently. A long silence filled the room. Then the scales began to move. The plates rose, each one higher than the next. Philip's dropped rapidly, while mine remained almost suspended. There were no visible weights, but something was happening. The scales, which looked so much like metal, were telling the truth.

Philip looked at the scales, then at the judge, and finally at me. "This isn't possible!" he exclaimed. "I've worked for all this, I've made sacrifices!"

Judge Gabriel slowly looked up. "Your actions, Philip, are guided by what you have, not what you are. But your riches are no measure of a man's worth. Your decision to ignore what is right has led you to weigh the world through the eyes of self-interest."

I felt relieved, but not happy. The scales had spoken, but the weight of that decision did not feel like a victory. Filippo, unfortunately, never fully understood. The judge continued: "Nando, you have nothing visible to put on the scales, but your truth has been weighed. And that's the only thing that matters."

In the end, the case was resolved, and Philip had to recognize what was due to me. But the lesson I learned from that day went beyond the simple question of money. The scale, like justice, is not a simple instrument that measures what is seen; it measures what is hidden in the heart and intentions of those who appear before it.

As I left the courthouse, I looked at the scales once more. I realized that, despite their inanimate appearance, they had the power to reveal the truth, to highlight the balance between who we are and what we do. In that moment, I understood that there is no justice without balance, and that every decision we make carries much more weight than we could imagine.

The Guilt

I often wonder how I got here. How did I not realize what I was losing? The day I married you, my eyes were lined with raw ham. Or you cast a spell on me that made me believe everything was perfect, that love was eternal, and that we would never have to face reality. I fell in love with you, but I do not even know how it happened. I do not think there was a specific reason, just that, at a certain point, I could not live without you anymore, and I thought love was enough.

But as often happens, love alone is not enough. We have reached the point where the words left unsaid have weighed more than the ones we wanted to say. And now, here, with my head full of regret and my heart filled with guilt I cannot shake, I wonder if I could have done anything to prevent all this.

A scene comes to mind, an image that has haunted me for days. Imagine being in prison, among a thousand inmates. Each has a story, a reason for being there. A lawyer questions them all, one by one. And all of them, without exception, are innocent. None of them feel guilty. But they are in the wrong place at the right time, and circumstances have brought them to that cell.

Yet, when you commit a crime, a car accident, or a mistake, guilt is an inescapable judgment. Justice does not look at intentions; it looks at facts. And, in a certain sense, I feel like those prisoners. I did not mean to hurt you. I did not want to betray the trust you had placed in me. And yet, here I am, carrying a guilt that seems to weigh more than it deserves.

Guilt is never easy. When you think you have done everything you could, that you have given it your all, there comes a time when you realize you have not done enough. A mistake that seemed insignificant, a silence you thought was harmless, turns into a chasm between us.

Think about this: every time you make a mistake, a wrong decision, or something irreparable, guilt grows. It is not just a mental burden; it is a mark that marks you and never leaves. Jurisprudence knows this well: guilt is not expressed only with physical punishment, but with a condemning judgment. And sometimes, we carry the weight of that condemnation for our entire lives, even without true justice.

In our case, the effect of guilt is clear. It is the inability to recover, the difficulty of taking a step back. Yet, when I think of all the times I have acted without thinking, when I

have chosen the effortless way out or remained silent instead of speaking, I wonder if it is time to face reality.

What if all this were our process of redemption? What if the guilt I carry inside me was the starting point for understanding how much I need to change? I do not want to keep hiding behind excuses, behind "it wasn't that serious." I want to admit I was wrong, because only then can I find the way to make amends.

I remember the words you told me when I still thought everything was under control: "Loving someone isn't enough to make things work." And you were right. I always thought love was a force that could save everything, that could solve every problem. But that is not the case. Love is powerful, but it is only one part of a relationship. It also takes commitment, sincerity, and the courage to admit when you are wrong.

I wish I could tell you that I can change, that I can be the person you deserve. But I do not even know if it is too late. My guilt is like a garment I can no longer take off, that sticks to me and makes me unable to breathe.

Yet, despite everything, I do not want to give up. I want to find the strength to apologize, to tell you I am sorry for remaining silent when I should have spoken, for acting when I should have stopped. I want you to know that I never meant to hurt you, that my guilt is not condemnation, but a lesson that is changing me, that is pushing me to rethink who I am.

The road to redemption is long, I know. There is no guarantee we will be able to recover what we have lost. But

I want to try, even if I do not know if there will be a successful conclusion, even if I do not know if I will ever be enough. I want to at least try to understand what it means to be truly responsible for our actions, not only before the law, but before those we love.

I wonder if you, like me, are trying to come to terms with guilt. If you, too, are trying to figure out how to write a wrong we did not mean to make, but which arrived anyway, like a sudden storm. And just as in the legal process, guilt is never a definitive sentence. It is just a passage, a phase we can overcome, if we are truly willing to face it and do what is necessary to redeem ourselves.

And one day, we could forgive each other.

Forgiveness

Sometimes I wonder if forgiveness is possible. Not only for others, but also for ourselves. How many times have we felt incapable of forgiveness, convinced that the pain someone caused us was too great to be forgotten, or at least put aside? Yet, forgiveness is the key that opens the door to inner peace, the one we have always sought, even if we do not always know how to find it.

I am sitting here, thoughtful, in a corner of my apartment, looking at the things I have accumulated over time. Every object, every photo, every memory has its meaning, but I know that the true burden is not tied to the objects. It is tied to what I cannot forget. Sometimes memory is a burden, not a blessing. It is hard to accept that some people have hurt us, that others have disappointed us. But through all of this,

the question that torments me is: can I truly forgive? And can I forgive myself?

I remember that day, years ago, when everything changed. The argument with you, the harsh words I said, the actions I could not control. It is easy to fall into the trap of anger, but that same anger can burn you inside, leaving you empty. Afterward, there is only a painful silence and the knowledge that there is nothing left to say. Yet, deep inside me, there was a desire to resolve everything, to find a way out. But shame and pride had taken over. For months, we avoided each other, unable to admit that we were both victims of our own intransigence.

Forgiveness does not come instantly. It is a process. It is a painful step, but a necessary one. And at first, you do not even realize you are taking it. It is not like a sudden epiphany, but rather a slow release from the negative emotions that imprison you. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, it does not mean that what was done had no consequences. Forgiveness is a choice, an act of will. It is recognizing that, if we do not let go, we remain prisoners of what hurt us.

When I looked in the mirror, I saw a different person. I saw someone who had learned to forgive herself, to free herself from the burden of her mistakes. It was not easy. I had to face my fear, my sense of helplessness, and accept that I was human, that we all are. Perfection is a lie, but the possibility of growth is a truth that can only be found when we stop judging ourselves too harshly.

I have learned that forgiveness is not just an act of compassion toward others, but a gift we give primarily to

ourselves. It is how we heal the wounds we carry. Every time we forgive, every time we let go of anger, we take a step toward freedom. And freedom is what allows us to live unburdened, to walk with our heads held high, unafraid of what we have been, but with the awareness of what we can become.

Forgiveness is the most powerful act we can perform. Because when we forgive, we not only heal ourselves, but we allow others to heal, to evolve, to leave the past behind. Forgiveness is not an act of weakness, as many might think, but a demonstration of strength. It is the strength to move forward, despite the scars, to rebuild, to not remain prisoners of what we cannot change.

And what really matters is that, after all, forgiveness allows us to be better, not only for others, but for ourselves. And when we forgive ourselves, a new chapter begins, a new possibility of love and hope.

Equality

I often wonder what it really means to be equal. Because the word equality sounds so perfect, so right, but when we try to put it into practice, everything gets complicated. Every time we compare ourselves to others, we end up creating differences, drawing conclusions based on what we see and how we feel, not on who we really are. We are all marked by different experiences, by stories that make us unique, yet, at our deepest core, we should be equal.

We are taught that we are all equal, but then we find ourselves judging who has more money, who is more successful, who lives in a bigger house, who speaks with a

different accent. Differences become our yardstick. Equality becomes an empty word, an ideal far from attainable, because we forget that equality is not a matter of owning the same things or doing the same things. It is a matter of human value.

When I think of equality, I cannot help but see the image of a person suffering, of someone excluded because of their skin color, their gender, their social status. Inequality manifests itself in the faces of those who are ignored, those who are treated as if they are of no value. Yet, every human being deserves the same respect, the same dignity. The fight for equality is not about achieving formal parity, but about affirming that every individual has the right to live with the same level of respect, opportunity, and freedom.

I have always wondered: why is it so difficult to accept equality, when it seems the most natural thing in the world? And the answer, painful as it may be, is that the fear of diversity is deeply rooted in us. We fear the unknown, those who are different, those who do not fit our expectations. But it is precisely in diversity that humanity's true richness lies. Differences, far from being an obstacle, are an opportunity to gain experience, to learn. Only by accepting diversity can we build a truly equal society.

However, equality cannot be just a fight for rights. It must be a daily choice, a commitment to treat every person with equal consideration, to overcome the mental barriers that separate us. We cannot say we are equal if we are not willing to see others as equals. Equality is not an external battle, but an internal one. It is the recognition that, despite

our differences, we are all human beings who deserve the same opportunity to be heard, to be seen.

Every time we see someone treated unfairly, every time we fall into hasty judgments or stereotypes, we betray that promise of equality. Yet, change is possible. It is not easy, it is not quick, but it is possible. It begins with every single action; with every small step we take to break down the walls of fear and prejudice. Equality is not a finish line, but a journey.

So, when I think about what it means to be equal, I do not just see the absence of differences, but the presence of mutual respect. Equality is not something imposed, but something born of awareness, of the desire to be better, to do better, to be more human. And if each of us could see ourselves in the eyes of the other, we would understand that equality is already within us, ready to be experienced.

Equality is not a condition we must conquer, but a truth we must rediscover every day.

The Sentence

The sentence that condemns us is not always the one handed down by a judge. Sometimes it is a silent verdict, born within us. It is the voice that tells us we are not enough, that we are destined to fail, that we do not deserve to be happy. A sentence we simply inflict on ourselves, while the world around us seems oblivious to our burden. True condemnation is not always external, but rather what we accept as truth, what we commit to living as destiny.

Every day we are subjected to judgments. Some arrive clearly, like a mistake that marks us, a failure that laid us

bare. Others are more subtle, barely perceptible, but no less painful. They nestle in unspoken words, forgotten gestures, unfulfilled expectations. The judgment we inflict on ourselves or that others impose on us becomes the invisible thread that binds us, making us believe there is no way out.

But what happens when a sentence arrives and we accept it as final? We begin to believe that we cannot change, that our path is marked, that our history is written in advance. We sit on the ruins of our disappointments, thinking there is nothing we can do. Yet, the true sentence is never the one that condemns us, but the one we choose to accept as the final truth. Every sentence brings with it a possibility of redemption, a chance to rewrite our destiny.

Every sentence we receive is a chance to rise again, to grow, to reinvent ourselves. Conviction, if accepted as a lesson, can become an opportunity to evolve, to learn from our wounds and not let them overwhelm us. We are free to decide how to deal with what happens to us, to choose whether to become prisoners of circumstances or to transform them into springboards for a new life.

Life is not a series of sentences we cannot escape. It is a sequence of decisions, choices we can make whenever we are faced with an uncomfortable truth. Every mistake, every failure, every pain that feels like a condemnation is also an opportunity for growth, for transformation. The sentence is never final, unless we decide to stop, to give up. But if we choose to move forward, to learn, and to forgive, then the sentence becomes the first step toward a new freedom.

The order

Order is something society imposes on us from an early age; a sort of universal principle that helps us live in a chaotic world. We learn to put away toys, to respect schedules, to follow a sequence of steps. Yet, as often happens, things that seem simple can conceal unexpected complexity.

But what happens when order isn't just a behavior but becomes a psychological necessity, a form of control over everything around us? What initially serves as a tool to make us feel more secure becomes a trap. Obsession with order can make us lose touch with reality. And when chaos, inevitable in life, enters our space, we collapse. The fear of losing ourselves, of not being able to keep everything under control, feels like an oppressive burden.

But order also has another side, one that offers us a sense of stability, one that helps us feel there is meaning in what we do. A world without order is a world where every action is uncertain, where relationships are complicated by misunderstandings, and every step forward feels like a leap into the unknown. Yet, it is precisely in that leap into the unknown that our true freedom can be born. When we are no longer slaves to order, when we accept disorder as part of our existence, then we can finally find a more authentic form of balance.

Life is not about rules. It is about unpredictable moments that surprise us and push us to grow. When we learn to live without the fear of chaos, when we accept that perfect order is nothing more than an illusion, then we can discover a new form of harmony. Freedom, in fact, is not found in

rigidity, but in the ability to adapt and embrace the imperfections that define our existence.

The Witness

Witnessing an event entails a responsibility we are often unwilling to acknowledge. A witness is a figure at the heart of a story, unable to profoundly influence it, but with the power to pass it on, to give it shape and direction. Yet, that responsibility is painful. Seeing something we cannot change, something that overwhelms us, that shakes us, can be a burden difficult to bear.

When we witness something significant, affecting the lives of others or even our own, we feel as if the weight of that truth weighs on us. It is not enough to see we must understand, interpret, decide whether to share that truth with the world or protect it. But when the truth is too big, too complex, how can we embrace it without becoming trapped in its immensity?

A witness is never a neutral figure. Even if they try to recount what they saw as objectively as possible, their perception is always filtered by their emotions, their personal history, their prejudices. No witness can be completely impartial, because the truth they tell is, in part, a construct of their mind. Yet, it is precisely this testimony that can change the course of events, which can lead to justice or, sometimes, ruin.

Testifying is not only an act of memory, but also an act of courage. It means risking one's integrity, facing the consequences of what one knows and says, and confronting one's own fears and contradictions. How many times does a

witness choose to remain silent, for fear of retaliation, for fear of not being believed? But in silence, truth loses its power. Testifying is the step toward liberation, not only for those who listen, but also for those who tell.

Revenge

Revenge is an instinctive reaction, born from the wound, from the wrong suffering. It is the desire to restore balance through punishment, to retaliate in kind, to ensure that those who have hurt us experience the same pain. But revenge is never the answer. It is a spiral that drags us ever further down, making us complicit in the evil we seek to eliminate.

At first, revenge may seem like a form of justice. We feel strong, as if we've finally regained control over the situation. But the true effect of revenge is its power to consume us. Every act of revenge brings us a little closer to the point where we become indistinguishable from the person who harmed us. Revenge merely perpetuates suffering; it does not resolve it. It leaves us with a sense of emptiness, frustration, and incompleteness.

The moment we decide to seek revenge; we stop looking forward. We remain stuck in the past, trapped in the pain that struck us. Revenge binds us to our enemy; it does not free us. It makes us like him, forces us to live in his shadow, to carry a burden that is not ours.

True strength lies in forgiveness, not revenge. Forgiveness is an act of freedom. It does not mean forgetting or justifying what was done to us but deciding not to let hatred and resentment define our lives. Forgiveness is not easy; it is a long journey, requiring courage and humility. But it is

only through forgiveness that we can free ourselves from the grip of resentment and look to the future with hope.

Revenge imprisons us in the past, while forgiveness opens us to the future. When we decide not to be consumed by resentment, when we choose not to respond to evil with evil, then we can truly heal. Revenge is a fire that burns without a trace, while forgiveness is a flame that illuminates and warms, allowing us to rebuild what has been destroyed.

Despair

The day was gray; the sky covered with thick clouds that crushed the city under an unbearable weight. I was walking aimlessly, my feet dragging, heavy as stones. Every step felt like an act of survival, but I was not truly alive. I was just body moving, hopeless, with no will to move forward.

I asked myself, "Why do I keep living like this?" Every morning, I woke with the same feeling of emptiness pervading me, a feeling that seemed to grow with every moment. I had no dreams or plans anymore. Everything I had done, every step, every sacrifice, seemed to have amounted to nothing. The faces of others had become blurred, their smiles empty masks. I had no connection with them. I was alone.

As I walked down the deserted street, I noticed a figure in the distance. An elderly man, with a worn coat and eyes full of wisdom. He approached me with a slow but determined step. "Don't walk alone, my son," he said. "Despair may seem infinite, but it is never the last word."

That sentence shook me. It stopped me. I was not alone, and maybe there was still something to discover, even if I could

not see it. My journey was not over. I had a choice: stay trapped in the darkness or try to find another path. The weight of despair still weighed on my heart, but that sentence, that encounter, made me realize that there was a way out. I turned and began walking again, no longer directionless, but with the hope of finding one.

The False

No one ever told me that living a life of lies would be so tiring. Since I was a child, I had been taught that the truth was too difficult to face, too painful. So, I began to wear a mask, day after day. To avoid hurt, to avoid suffering, to appear normal.

At first, it was easy. A smile here, a little lie there. But soon, the lies piled on top of each other, like bricks in a fragile tower. I told myself stories about who I was, what I did, how I felt. Every time I spoke, I said less than I thought, and more than what others wanted to hear.

But the mask was weighing on me. I was increasingly tired of lying, increasingly worried that someone might discover the truth. Then something happened. A chance encounter. An old friend I had not seen in years. He looked me in the eyes and said, "You're not what you seem. I don't know you anymore."

His words hit me like an electric shock. It was true, I was not who I seemed. I was getting lost in lies, and I was forgetting who I really was. The truth now seemed so distant, but his presence reminded me of something important: there is no way to truly live without being honest with yourself. I knew I could not continue hiding behind

falsehood. I had to face who I really was, the person I had tried to forget.

The identity

When I looked in the mirror, I could not see myself. There was a figure staring back at me, but it did not belong to me. That face, those expressions, were not mine. I no longer knew who I was. I had been lost for years, living the life others had chosen for me. My identity was no longer mine but had been defined by the dreams and expectations of others.

I have always tried to fit in, to be what others wanted me to be. The perfect daughter, the brilliant student, the girl with a smile on her face. But every time I took on those roles, I felt further from myself. I could no longer hear my own voice or recognize my essence. Every step I took took me further from the person I wanted to be.

One day, while walking in the park, I came across an elderly woman painting a picture. I watched her for a while, then approached. "Why do you paint?" I asked.

“Because painting is a way for me to discover who I am,” she replied, without looking up from her work.

Those words made me think. Painting, creating, expressing myself: everything I had always been afraid to do for fear of not being perfect. But that was exactly what I was missing: the courage to be imperfect, the courage to be myself. I decided it was time to start over, to take back control of my identity. I would no longer live for others, but for myself. My identity would no longer be defined by what others expected me, but by who I chose to be.

Suffering

Every day felt the same. I woke up feeling heavy, as if I had been dragging my pain through the night. The suffering no longer had a defined form; it was not physical or mental pain, but a shadow that followed me everywhere. I wondered if I would ever be able to wake up and feel light, like someone no longer defined by their suffering.

The truth is that I had gotten used to it. Suffering had become a part of me, a habit I wore without thinking. I had grown up with the idea that life was made of sacrifices, of moments of pain that had to be endured to grow. But when you reach the point where you no longer know where pain ends and life begins, you begin to lose hope.

One day, after weeks of endless suffering, a chance encounter made me reflect. An old man approached me as I was walking in the park. He did not speak immediately, but he looked at me with a gaze that seemed to read deep into my heart. "You are not your pain," he finally said. "You are who you choose to be despite the pain."

Those words struck me. I had never thought of suffering as something I could overcome, as something that did not completely define me. Suffering was not the end, but a transitional moment. It was the moment when I had to choose to get up, to not let it overwhelm me. It was then that I realized that, even though the suffering was still with me, it was not my identity. I was much more than what I was experiencing.

The Disturbance

The disturbance crept into every corner of my mind, like an intruder who did not ask permission. I could not escape it, could not find a quiet corner where I could breathe. Every thought was infected by that sense of chaos, as if my brain were a battlefield, where thoughts and emotions clashed relentlessly.

I did not know how it had started. It had always been there, silently, and over time it had become a burdensome presence. Every day was a struggle to concentrate, to not let the disorder take control. My mind was a place where I could no longer recognize anything stable, nothing I could trust.

The frustration grew. I tried to appear normal to others, but inside me there was a storm I could not stop. Day after day, the disturbance seemed to grow, invading every thought, every word I uttered. I felt out of control, as if I had become a stranger to myself.

Then one day, while walking in the park, I ran into a friend I had not seen in years. He looked at me with sincere eyes, without judgment. "You need help, don't you?" he asked.

I did not respond immediately, but his words made me think. In that moment, I realized I did not have to face the disorder alone. It was not a battle I could win by hiding. I needed to ask for help, to face my condition with courage and without shame. It was not the disorder that defined me, but how I chose to face it. I decided I would start speaking out, seeking support. The journey might be long, but I was no longer willing to walk it alone.

The Unspoken Words

My brother Luca has always been special. As a child, people admired his indomitable spirit and resilience. As he grew older, however, his neurological disability became more apparent, making communication difficult. Words often escape him, yet his eyes reveal a truth others may miss. He does not speak, but within him is a world longing to be understood.

My family and I were forced to learn to communicate in diverse ways. Every day, we tried to understand his signals, his gestures, his expressions. Yet, there was always that feeling of inadequacy, that fear that, despite all the love we could give him, we would never utterly understand him. I saw my mother groaning under the weight of her suffering, but also under the weight of the pain of not being able to "save" Luca. It was a never-ending struggle. The pain was not visible like a scar, but it was there, hidden in the unspoken words, in the misunderstood gestures, in the looks that desperately searched for meaning.

His difficulties worsened during his visits to the doctors. Every time we searched for answers, we felt increasingly alone, increasingly helpless. The diagnoses were never definitive. Every specialist Luca saw seemed to add more questions than answers. Yet, my family continued to fight, even as the weight of that pain, that uncertainty, crushed us.

What hurt me most was the inability to express our pain. Sometimes, in moments of solitude, when no one could see us, my father and I would take refuge in silent tears. But we did not say it. We never said it because we had no right to.

Luca was our beacon, our hope. But inside us, the pain grew. The fear of never being able to give Luca the life he deserved slowly devoured us.

The Fragility of a Smile

When life hits us, it often does not warn us. You wake up one morning, and everything you know disappears. My aunt Lucia was an incredible woman, full of energy, with a smile that lit up any room. She was the matriarch of our family, always ready to help, to support anyone in need. But then, suddenly, something changed. Her mind began to crumble, like a sandcastle slowly crumbling, piece by piece.

The diagnosis was hard to accept senile dementia. A disease that strips away not only memory, but also a person's identity. Aunt Lucia could no longer remember who we were, who she was. Sometimes, I found myself looking at her and wondering if the smile I saw on her face was still truly hers. Or if it was just a facade, a form of coping to avoid facing the emptiness that was forming inside her.

The pain was not just physical, but psychological. Every visit I made to Aunt Lucia was a challenge. I looked at her and wondered how much longer I had before she disappeared completely. Gone was that laugh, that vitality that had always struck me. Only a shadow of what she had been. Every time I approached her, I felt as if I were trying to grasp something that was slipping from my grasp. Her answers were confusing, fragmented. But every now and then, there was a look of recognition. And that smile, that same smile that had always made me feel loved, would reappear.

Then, one day, my mother called me and told me the time had come. Aunt Lucia was gone. And it was not just her physical death that struck me, but the realization that illness had taken her away long ago. Death was not just a final act, but a long, painful separation from the person we had known.

But despite everything, what I learned from Aunt Lucia, even in her dementia, is that life is fragile. That, sometimes, pain is the only way to deeply appreciate what we have. Her smile, which once seemed so natural to me, taught me that behind every suffering there is always a reason to move forward, to smile once more.

The Invisible Prison

In a corner of my life, where everything seemed under control, I began to feel a burden I could not define. My ordinary existence became a battlefield for a war no one could see. Every day, my mind betrayed me, as if an invisible prison held me captive. Fear, anxiety, anger—all feelings that slipped under my skin without warning—became my constant companions. Mental health is an often-misunderstood concept, and I was one of the many who suffered from it without being able to express it.

There was no way to share my pain. How could I explain that the fear of leaving home, the feeling of never being enough, was slowly consuming me? I began to isolate myself, seeking refuge in a world of solitude. But the more I closed myself in, the more unbearable the prison became. Yet, on the outside, everyone thought I was "normal," that I was just going through a rough patch. But how could I explain to them that my own body no longer belonged to

me? My mind was betraying me, and I felt helpless. The real prison was within me, and no matter how hard I tried to escape, there was no escape.

Solitude became my refuge, but also my condemnation. I felt the desperation growing, but the silence of my mind screamed much louder. I never imagined that the prison I was building for myself would become so difficult to break down. Yet, with time, I understood that, even in suffering, there is an incredible strength that pushes us to seek help, to talk about it, even when it seems impossible.

A Love Lost in the Shadows

I do not think I can fully describe the pain I felt when I lost my partner. His death was not just a physical separation, but a profound fracture that changed every aspect of my life. It was as if a piece of me had disappeared, as if the very air I breathed had been taken away with him. I could no longer understand who I was without him. His absence was like an indelible stain that I could never erase.

The pain of a lost love has no logic. There is no gradual process; it is a wave that suddenly overwhelms you. Every object, every place we had shared, became a witness to a time that no longer existed. I could not look without seeing his figure, yet when I turned around, I knew there was no one there. The house we had built together now seemed empty, unlivable, a prison of memories.

I often wondered if I would ever find a way out of the pain. The answer was not easy to find. Every step I took felt empty, as if I were walking in a world that no longer belonged to me. The suffering, after all, was a bond that still

connected me to him, but separated me from the rest of the world. Yet, deep down, I knew I had to find the courage to let go. Not to forget him, but to live again.

The Meeting

When my mind calmed, my heart began to speak. It was then that I realized a truth I had always ignored: I was afraid to face my true self. I had always tried to mask my insecurities, my fears, my bad choices. But at that moment, looking at myself in the mirror, I realized I could no longer escape. I could no longer ignore who I truly was. Accepting myself, with all my frailties and failures, became the key to healing. It was not easy, but I understood that only by facing my weaknesses could I find true strength. The encounter with my true self was not an escape, but a reconciliation with the person I had always been but had never had the courage to see.

The Initial Journey

With this new awareness, I decided to leave. I did not have a specific destination, but I had to move. The journey, at first, seemed like an escape from everything I had known, but I soon realized that was not the case. Every step took me farther, but at the same time brought me closer to myself. Discovering unfamiliar places, new people, and new stories helped me reflect on my life and my journey. Every encounter, every difficulty taught me something new. And in those moments, I understood that the journey was not just a physical movement, but an inner quest. And the destination was not a place, but a transformation.

The Dark of the Path

However, not everything was easy. The path I had undertaken was full of obstacles. At times, I felt like I could not move forward. The fatigue, the disappointments, the moments of loneliness made me think I had taken the wrong path. The temptation to give up grew every day. Yet, despite it all, something inside me continued to push me. I knew that the darkness I saw before me was nothing but an opportunity for growth. And so, I learned to embrace challenges as part of the journey. The fear of failure transformed into determination. And when I thought it was too much, I realized I had already overcome so much. Every step into the darkness made me stronger.

The Final Light

When I finally reached the end of my journey, I looked back and realized how much I had changed. The light I was seeking was not the end, but a revelation. The light was on every step I had taken, in every difficulty I had faced. The true light was not the destination, but the journey itself. In every dark corner, I had found a piece of myself I had not known, and in every experience, I had found a lesson. Now I knew I was no longer the same. And that was the beauty of the journey: it is never about where you arrive, but what you become along the way. Each step had brought me closer to the latest version of myself. And, gratefully, I felt that the true destination had already been reached.

The Last Breath

When the time came to face my father's death, I realized that life never truly prepares us. No matter how much we prepare for the loss of someone we love, we are never ready

for that separation. I stood by his side as his breathing slowed, became more labored. Every breath he took felt like a promise, one of those promises you never want to break.

The pain I felt in that moment was immense. Not only for the loss, but for the fact that, in a certain sense, death marked the end of everything we had built together. I felt helpless, incapable of doing anything to ease his suffering. Yet, in that absolute silence, in the fragility of his last breath, I understood that pain is not always something we should fear. Sometimes, pain is just the flipside of love, a love that never ends.

When my father took his last breath, I felt no relief. It was as if part of me had gone with him. But, in the end, the only thing I was left with was an incredible sense of peace, as if I had finally found the strength to accept that life is a cycle, and that every ending brings a new beginning.

TEN MINI CRIME STORIES

The Phantom Hand

Behind the nickname "The Phantom Hand" lies Leonardo, an extraordinary art thief known for his precision and ability to remain unnoticed. His reputation precedes him, but his next heist could define him forever. The target is "The Soul of Fire," a priceless painting housed in the Museum of Modern Civilization, renowned for its innovative security systems. What begins as a flawless theft turns into a nightmare when Leonardo discovers that the painting contains an encrypted map leading to secret technology capable of destabilizing the entire world. Between daring

escapes, double-crosses, and mounting pressure from those pursuing him, Leonardo must choose between his code of honor and the opportunity to rewrite his life.

The Game

Marco Sandri was one of the most renowned private investigators in the country, but a case gone wrong destroyed his career and his life. Taking refuge in a remote village, he lives in solitude until a mysterious woman named Elena contacts him with a simple assignment: tracking down a hacker who stole sensitive information from a drug cartel. Marco accepts, but soon discovers that the hacker is his son, Alessandro, whom he thought he had lost forever. Torn between his desire to protect his son and the need to complete the job, Marco must confront ruthless criminals, painful memories, and a truth that will change him forever.

The Queen

Maria is a legend among street racers. Known as "The Queen," she has built her reputation by defeating dangerous rivals and upholding a code of honor in a world without rules. But when a new driver, known only as "Shadow," begins challenging her not only on the track but also on her own turf, Maria finds herself in a critical situation. With her team infiltrated by a traitor and a final race that could put her life at risk, Maria must push herself to the limit. Amid roaring engines, betrayal, and adrenaline, this is the story of a woman fighting to maintain her reign and uncover who is trying to destroy her from within.

The Last Lie

Giulio Ferri has always known how to bend the law to his advantage. A charismatic and manipulative lawyer, he built his career defending unscrupulous criminals. But when he agrees to participate in the theft of an experimental drug from a hospital, everything changes. Giulio discovers that the drug could cure millions of people, but his client intends to destroy it to protect his own business interests. Trapped in a spiral of deceit and remorse, Giulio must decide whether to sacrifice his life for redemption or continue living in the shadow of his past.

The Port

Anna never imagined she had become the face of the resistance against a criminal organization. Kidnapped by a gang of human traffickers, she manages to escape, but her nightmare is far from over. With criminals relentlessly pursuing her and a corrupt system covering up their activities, Anna finds unexpected allies in a group of local fishermen. Together, they devise a bold plan to dismantle the organization. Through courageous actions and sacrifices, this is the story of a woman who finds the strength to fight not only for herself, but for all the victims trapped in a world of horror.

The Keeper

Luca works as a night watchman in an elegant building in the heart of the city. Every night, he watches unseen, silent witness to the secrets and lives of the residents. When he discovers that one of them is using the building as a front for drug trafficking and prostitution, his life changes. Armed only with determination and a deep sense of justice,

Luca decides to investigate on his own, risking everything to expose the truth. But when his enemies discover his intentions, the game becomes lethal.

The Mask

Gabriele Ricci is one of the most powerful and respected politicians in the country, but behind his impeccable facade lies a criminal past that would bring everything to ruin. When a journalist uncovers compromising evidence, Gabriele uses all his influence to silence him. However, the journalist has a secret ally and a plan to reveal the truth. Through plots, blackmail, and twists, this story explores the price of power and the courage needed to face it.

The Labyrinth

Sofia is a brilliant con artist who thrives on strategy and cunning. Every night she shows up at a luxury casino, winning huge sums without ever arousing suspicion. But the owner, a ruthless man with criminal ties, begins to suspect her. As her past emerges and the danger increases, Sofia plots a final coup: to expose the owner and destroy his empire. Tensions rise as every move becomes a matter of life and death.

The Traitor

When Luca betrays his mafia clan to cooperate with justice, he becomes a hunted man. Taking refuge in a remote town, he discovers that the past cannot be erased. With a prize on his head, he is forced to trust Chiara, a young lawyer who believes in his redemption. Together, they must face threats, deception, and danger, in a race against time to survive and dismantle the organization.

Traces of Blood

In a peaceful village, a series of murders uncover dark secrets. Young detective Lorenzo investigates but soon discovers that the community's most respected figures are implicated. Amid corruption, fear, and pressure, Lorenzo must confront not only the case, but also his own uncertainties. Will he uncover the truth and bring justice, or will he succumb to the shadows that threaten to engulf him?

EXTRA PARTITION

THE SILENT TRUTHS

In these pages you will find no sentences, no cells, no masks. Instead, you will find the quiet heartbeat of those who lived, made mistakes, loved, and remained silent. The stories that follow do not ask for judgment, but to be listened to. They are the truths that make no noise but remain.

We are pathetic.

“We're pathetic.” He said it with a crooked smile, while fixing his crumpled tie.

We were in the courtroom, awaiting a sentence we already knew. The judge was not looking at us. The prosecutor ignored us.

We were pitiful. Not for what we had done. But for what we no longer were.

A man cried silently. A woman clutched a photograph. No one saw them. No one heard them.

Justice has no time for punishment. But we do.

And at that moment, it was the only thing that made us human.

The Shame

Shame is like a dress you cannot take off. It squeezes you, suffocates you, and accompanies you everywhere.

I remember that day. I had stolen it. Little, almost nothing. But when my mother looked at me, she said nothing.

The silence was worse than any scream.

Since then, every time I enter the courtroom, I feel that dress on me. And even though the law has forgiven me, I have not.

The Choice

They told me, “You can speak or remain silent.”

To speak meant to betray. To remain silent meant losing everything.

I looked at my son. His eyes were full of questions.

I chose to speak.

And since that day, I have not slept well.

What would you have done?

Love Me Again

The cup was still there, on the table. The unread message on the phone.

She was gone, but her traces were everywhere.

“Love me again,” I wrote to her.

But love does not respond to messages.

It remains in gestures, in memories, in voids.

And I have lived in that void ever since.

The Concern

The phone rang. Three times. Then silence.

It was him. I knew it.

But I did not call back.

Worry is not a scream. It is a whisper that stays with you.

And that night, I slept with that whisper beside me.

As if it were a breath that did not want to go away.

The Cry

She was crying. But she did not make a sound.

His face was motionless, only his eyes spoke.

Next to him, a mother was laughing with her son.

The contrast was fierce.

Pain needs no words.

Sometimes, just one look is enough to tell everything.

The Echo of Solitude

“Are you there?” No answer.

Loneliness is an echo. It repeats the same questions, hoping someone will answer.

I spoke to the wall, to the ceiling, to the sky.

Then I stopped.

But the echo continues.

And every now and then, I hear a voice.

It is mine.

The Passage

Prison is not just a place. It is a passage.

Like a bridge that you do not know if it can hold.

You enter it with anger; you leave it with silence.

Some cross it. Others stay there.

I left something there.

And every time I think about it, I wonder if I lost it or if I found it.

Courage

It was not when I faced the judge.

It was when I apologized to my son.

He was six years old.

He looked at me, did not say anything.

But he hugged me.

And in that gesture, there was more courage than I had ever had.

The Mind

"Shut up."

I was telling myself.

But the mind is not silent.

He talks, he shouts, he gets confused.

He told me I was guilty. Then innocent. Then nothing.

He was like a drunken judge.

Eventually, I stopped listening to her.

And I started writing.

POSTSCRIPT OF THE SOUL

When everything has been said, there remains what cannot be said.

If you have come this far, you have not just read a book. You have lived a lifetime. You have walked among the causes, the wounds, the rebirths. You have listened to the silence of those who could not speak, and the cry of those who chose.

This is not an epilogue. It is a breath. A breath that does not ask for judgment, but for listening. A breath that does not seek forgiveness but understanding.

Because true justice is not found in codes. It is found in detail. In gestures no one sees. In "nos" no one understands. In "yeses" no one dares say.

And if this book has left you with something, even just a doubt, then it has already done its job. Because doubt is the first step toward the truth.

— Sean Veran

Introductory Synopsis

A REASON TO SAY NO is an autobiographical and narrative journey into the depths of justice, guilt, redemption, and identity. Sean Veran, the protagonist and author, recounts his legal and human experiences with wit and clarity, transforming each case into an existential tale.

From flying desks to talking vibrators, from quick trials to spiritual bargaining, the book explores the boundary between truth and fiction, between law and conscience, between survival and dignity. It is a work that seeks not to explain, but to bear witness. A book for those who have lived, for those who have resisted, for those who have chosen not to justify themselves.

Arriving Home

After years in prison, returning home is like entering a place you do not recognize. Hot coffee tastes like freedom, but also like suspicion. The private bathroom is a luxury, but also a refuge.

She is there. My wife. She looks at me like you look at a man who's cheated but still loves you.

He speaks to me with his eyes. He lists every sacrifice, every humiliation, every silence.

I look for a corner. She will not give it to me.

I am running away. I am going to the police. I will ask them to come back inside.

Because sometimes, freedom is just another kind of sentence. And the real-life sentence is the one that awaits you at home.

A Credit

"You got a refund!" The email was cheery. The family was even more so.

Perfumes, watches, dreams. But I remembered nothing.

It was a €2.50 refund. Revalued since 2003.

I did not say anything. I took a train to Paris.

When I returned, everyone was waiting for me. I placed the check on the table.

Nobody spoke.

Because it was not the amount that mattered. It was the right to celebrate. Even when there is nothing to celebrate.

Because dignity, sometimes, is worth more than any amount of money.

The Signature

The judge looked at me. "Do you want to sign?"

It was a plea bargain. A shortcut. A surrender.

I looked at the pen. It was blue. Cheap.

I thought about everything I had said, written, and experienced.

Then I signed.

Not because I was guilty. But because I was tired.

Justice is not always a choice. Sometimes it is just an autograph.

And that signature, today, has become this book.

The Father's Room

There is no light in the room, only the sound of the spoon against the cup. He sits, still, as if waiting for something that will not come. His son enters, not to speak, but to listen to the silence. On the table lies an unsent letter. His father pushes it toward him. "Read it, if you want. But don't answer." The son takes it, opens it, reads it. It is a list of reasons not to return. But each sentence is a gesture of love. In the end, the son says nothing. He leaves. And closes the door slowly, like a wound healing.

Children in the Vineyard

At dawn, two children ran between the rows. They do not know they are playing on memory. Behind them, two men are sewing a dress. One is blind, the other has lost his voice. Each stitch is an unspoken word. Each thread is a broken promise. The children laugh, chase each other, hide. One of them finds an empty bottle with a piece of paper inside: *"I didn't say no to hurt you. I said no to set you free."* The

child does not understand. But he keeps it with him. And when he grows up, he will use it to write his first book.

The Woman Who Doesn't Look in the Mirror.

She lives in a house without mirrors. Every morning, she gets dressed in the dark, every evening she showers without looking at herself. She says her reflection lies. One day she receives a letter: it is from someone who loved her without ever seeing her. *"I imagined you every day, and every day you were different. I loved you for what I could not possess."* She reads it, burns it, forgets it. But at night she dreams of a face that is not hers. And when she wakes, she finds a small mirror under her pillow. She turns it over. It is empty. Finally, she can look at herself.

COMMENTS

About the tone: Your style is direct, ironic, and cutting. But beneath the surface lies a tenderness that is not shown, but rather sensed. Every "no" you utter is a caress disguised as a slap.

On the structure: The thematic division is a masterstroke. It is not just order: it is rhythm. Each section has a different flow, as if the reader were changing rooms, lighting, and temperatures.

On the voice: Sean Veran is not just a name. He is a literary character, a witness, a narrator who does not ask for empathy, but respect. And he gets it.

CONCLUSION

I have told stories. Some true, some possible. All necessary.

I spoke of justice, guilt, prison, love, shame. But I spoke of voices that I have not heard.

Because the system judges but does not listen. And those who live within that system are often speechless.

This book is not a denunciation. It is not even a defense.

It is an attempt. To say no.

No to indifference. No to simplification. No to convenient narratives.

Every story is a fragment. Every fragment is a wound.

And every wound, if listened to, can become a voice.

If you have made it this far, you might have heard something.

And if you heard, then it was not in vain.

REFLECTIONS

On "no": Your "no" is never sterile. It is fertile. It is the seed from which awareness grows. It is the boundary that protects, not the one that excludes.

On time: Your causes span decades, but they do not age. Because time, in this book, is not chronological. It is emotional. And emotions do not expire.

About the reader: Those who read this book are not spectators. They become civil parties. Not to judge, but to understand. And to recognize themselves.

THANKS

To those who accused me: they taught me how to defend myself. To those who defended me: they taught me how to speak up. To those who abandoned me: they taught me how to walk alone. To those who believed me: they taught me to never stop speaking.

To my children, who is the reason I said "no" when everyone wanted a "yes." To those who read these pages with an open heart. To those who understand that justice is not a place, but a choice.

And to myself, for not giving up. For turning the wound into a word. And the word into freedom.