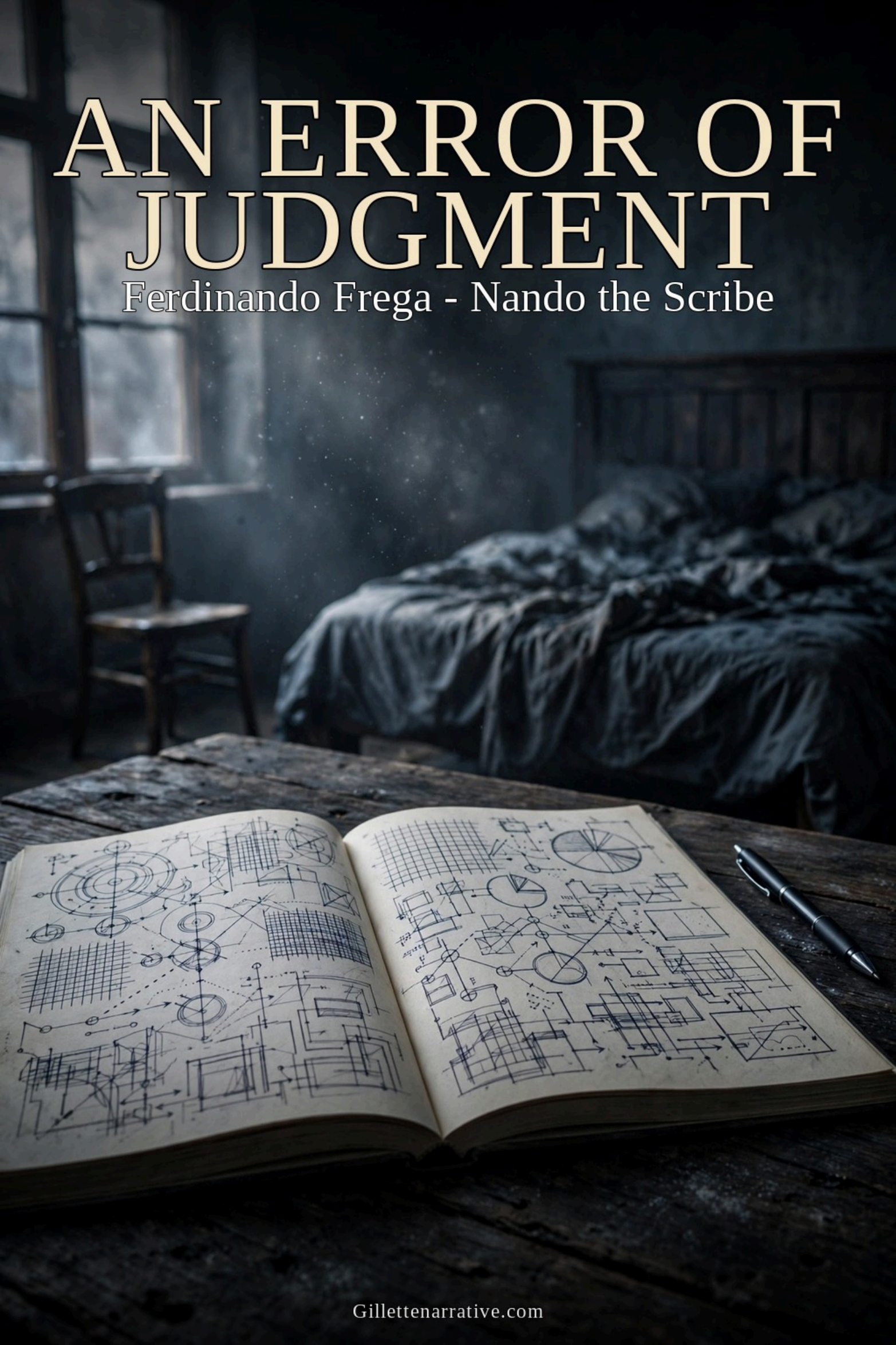

AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT
Ferdinando Frega - Nando the Scribe
Gillettenarrative.com

AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT

When a man reaches sixty-one and finds himself truly alone, he no longer lives among his memories. He lives among his mistakes.

Memories are harmless. They cannot hurt you anymore. Mistakes are different. Mistakes wake up before you do. They sit at the edge of the bed waiting for your eyes to open. They are loyal companions of age because they are the only things you cannot renegotiate.

That August morning, I found myself thinking about the old Southern Italian institution known as the shotgun wedding.

In the villages of the 1940s and 1950s, two young people would fall in love with the recklessness reserved for the young. They desired each other, trusted each other, and never considered consequences. Then consequences arrived anyway. Sometimes one child. Sometimes two. Sometimes three.

The families looked at reality and chose a practical solution.

Not because they were enlightened.

Not because they were romantic.

Because scandal was more expensive than marriage.

The two lovers would be pushed toward the altar, baptized into responsibility, and released into society carrying children, obligations, and a future they had not planned but now had to build.

When the families opposed the relationship, there was another solution.

The *fuitina*.

The escape.

Two young people disappearing together to announce that consent had become irrelevant.

The message was simple:

We belong to each other. Catch up when you can.

Eventually everyone returned. Families always do. Parents forgive them because they love their children. Grandparents forgive because grandchildren overthrow every previous law of the heart.

But that morning I was not thinking about young couples.

I was thinking about myself.

For years, my private exercise had become the accounting of errors.

Wrong decisions.

Wrong silence.

Wrong loyalty.

Wrong expectations.

And unlike those young lovers, there was no repair marriage waiting for me. No village priest. No family council. No social formula capable of correcting the arithmetic.

I realized then that my own *fuitina* had lasted forty years.

Sixty-five countries.

Four decades.

A solitary escape across continents.

The question was no longer whether I had run away.

The question was:

What exactly had I run away from?

On 14 August 2026, the answer finally arrived.

Knowing what happened was not enough.

Understanding why it happened became essential.

The difference between wisdom and suffering is often no more than a missing explanation.

And suddenly it became clear.

It had not been betrayal.

It had not been conspiracy.

It had not even been destiny.

It had been an error of judgment.

A magnificent, expensive, lifelong error of judgment.

I could not correct it.

I could not appeal it.

I could not negotiate with the supreme authority responsible for the outcome.

My destiny.

The Chief Executive Officer of every consequence I have ever faced.

And for the first time, I stopped arguing with him.

Ferdinando Frega