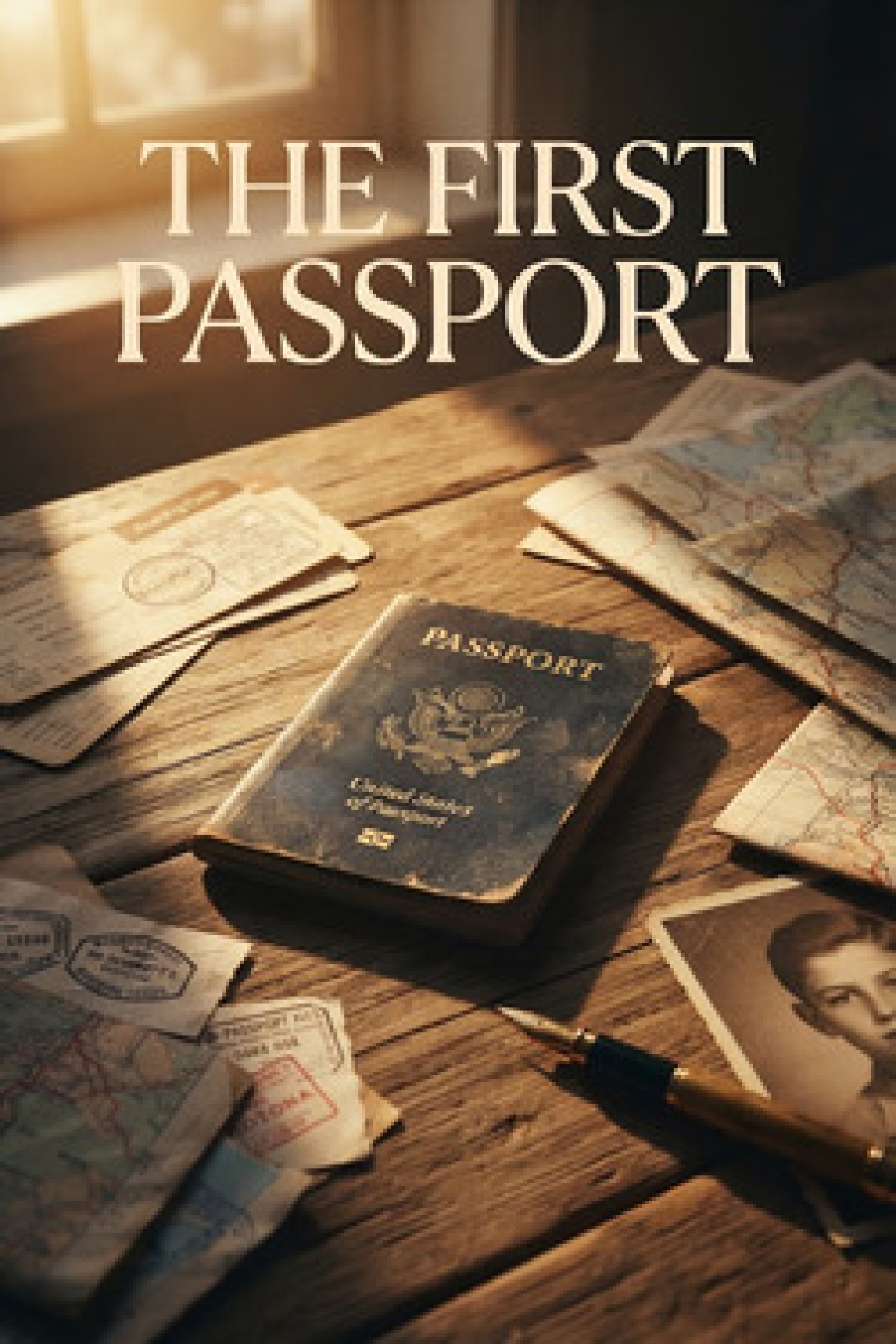

THE FIRST
PASSPORT
PASSPORT

THRESHOLD 4

The First Passport

For many years I believed I was building a career.

It was a reasonable conviction.

Every morning I got up to work.

Every week had objectives.

Every month had results.

Every year had a balance sheet.

Everything seemed to confirm the idea that the center of the story was work.

Then time arrived.

And time, as always, took it upon itself to put everything in its place.

Today, looking back, I do not remember the numbers as much as I remember the people.

I do not remember the statistics as much as I remember the conversations.

I do not remember the procedures as much as I remember the decisions.

It is a surprising discovery.

We spend a lifetime believing that value is found in structures.

Then we discover that the value was hidden in the human beings who passed through

those structures.

I entered a world that had precise rules.

Clear objectives.

High standards.

It demanded discipline.

It asked for responsibility.

It did not grant much room for shortcuts.

It was a demanding environment.

And it was good fortune.

Because discipline is a form of respect.

First of all toward oneself.

We live in an era that continually celebrates talent.

I learned to respect something different.

Constancy.

Talent can open a door.

Constancy allows you to cross the corridor.

Many brilliant people disappear.

Many ordinary people instead build extraordinary works.

The difference is rarely intelligence.

Often it is continuity.

Day after day.

Decision after decision.

Responsibility after responsibility.

It was there that I began to understand something fundamental.

An organization is never really made of buildings.

It is not made of logos.

It is not made of slogans.

It is made of behaviors repeated over time.

Every company possesses a visible culture and an invisible one.

The first appears in the brochures.

The second emerges when no one is watching.

When a problem arrives.

When a customer is dissatisfied.

When a result is missing.

When a crisis knocks at the door.

It is in that moment that you discover what truly counts.

For years I observed men and women under pressure.

Some changed completely.

Others revealed the best of themselves.

And it was in those moments that I learned.

Not from the successes.

From the reactions.

Because a person's true identity rarely emerges on easy days.

It manifests when something breaks.

When the plan fails.

When security disappears.

When only character remains.

Many of the most important lessons of my life did not come from a classroom.

They did not come from a book.

They came from daily encounters.

From colleagues.

From customers.

From people who probably never imagined they were teaching anything.

Life often works this way.

The most important teachers do not present themselves as teachers.

They simply live in front of us.

And something of them remains.

As the years passed I began to travel.

Different nations.

Different cultures.

Different languages.

At first I looked for the differences.

It was natural.

Every country seemed to possess a personality of its own.

A rhythm.

A logic.

A sensibility.

Then something happened.

I began to notice the similarities.

A father worried about his children's future.

A mother ready to sacrifice herself.

A young man eager to prove his worth.

A worker who asks for respect.

An old man who wants to be heard.

The coordinates changed.

The human being remained surprisingly similar.

It was then that I began to understand that the company was much more than a place of work.

It was a window.

It was allowing me to observe the world.

To enter realities I would otherwise never have known.

To understand that geography separates men much less than they believe.

Every journey added something.

Every encounter moved a mental boundary.

Every experience demolished a prejudice.

And without realizing it I was learning a lesson greater than work itself.

The human being comes before every system.

Always.

Strategies change.

Markets change.

Technologies change.

Generations change.

But trust remains.

Respect remains.

The word given remains.

They are currencies that never lose value.

When I think back to that period of my life, I do not consider it only a professional path.

I consider it a human apprenticeship.

A laboratory.

An informal school in which every day added a detail to the understanding of the world.

This is why today I smile when someone reduces a career to a series of roles.

Roles are temporary.

The lessons remain.

The people remain.

The transformations remain.

In the end I do not carry with me an organizational chart.

I do not carry with me a position.

I do not carry with me a title.

I carry with me hundreds of faces.

Thousands of conversations.

An incalculable quantity of lessons received from ordinary people.

And above all a certainty.

The company was important.

Very important.

It formed me.

It put me to the test.

It opened roads for me that I would never have imagined.

But it was not the finish line.

It was the starting point.

Because work built skills.

The world built awareness.

And the true story, the one that was slowly taking shape inside me, had yet to begin.