

ATTILIO DADDIOLI

Attorney at law - 28 years old

You went to law school because you've always believed in the high values of Constitution and in the idea of Justice. You wanted to protect the innocent, maybe even become a judge... Instead you ended up handling petty disputes between neighbours. You're the fifth wheel on a wagon full of vultures who only choose clients based on the weight of their wallets. Sometimes, when you lie on your bed after a long day at work, you feel empty, robbed of your time and your potential.

But what can you do? There are too many aspiring attorneys and too little work to spare. You should count yourself lucky: You're still shy of thirty and you're one of the few in your university class to already have a stable job. Yet you can't help but despise your boss (a real shark!) and your studio's clients (bad people: ruthless businessmen, insurance companies, supermarkets and so on).

Dario Ristori's company has been partnered with your firm since before your recruitment and you've been assigned to his "domestic" affairs. You double-check his payments, you go over meeting minutes for him (he's distrustful and he always has something to complain about), you attend residents' council meetings with him (or in his stead). And that's all well

and good... The problem is Dario Ristori is truly an abominable man: He'd deserve lapidation by the hands of his neighbours!

One day he doesn't approve of the colour someone chose for their fence, the next he wants the sidewalk repaired because the root of a tree somewhat warped the asphalt, then he demands a cleaning company to be hired for the stairwell and the courtyard... All without even realising that some people in the building also have to live off their monthly paycheck, with no money to waste trying to turn a mediocre building into a luxury estate.

Working for him fills you with shame, but you have no choice. And so, although you're deeply sorry that Zacchei and his wife will need to fork over money they don't have to have the balconies repainted, you're forced to look for legal loopholes to strong-arm them into accepting the renovations in spite of the majority being dead set against them. Most of all you hated having to send Alice Gabbrielli an eviction notice: She's known Ristori her whole life and he didn't even bother to do it in person. You feel disliked and unwelcome, but you like these people. Gioele Zacchei is a real idealist, Giada Fadda is so confident that sometimes you believe she'll actually shake the world free of its prejudices. And then there's Ria. Ria. Ria.

You can't get her out of your head.

You noticed her ever since she first attended a meeting, when they introduced

her as the wife of Giovanni Sarno, a guy you'd seen maybe twice, since he's always away on business trips. She was beautiful, with her amber skin and perfect body. But you did your best not to stare: Everyone would have noticed your eyes wandering over her curves!

She came to the following meetings alone, trying to get across her husband's instructions as clearly as she could even though she struggled to make herself understood in her broken Italian. She was uncomfortable in her role as a delegate. She got better with time, learning the language at an admirable speed, and she started exchanging pleasantries with you. You learnt that she was born in Santo Domingo, that her husband is a career soldier and that she often feels out of place.

Once she came to a meeting on the verge of tears: Some jerk had rear-ended her, then refused to give her his insurance information, and she was too upset to remember calling the police. You found it endearing, and you offered to handle her case. In the end you got her insurance to pay for the accident and Ria was so thankful that she invited you to dinner. You knew you should have said no, you knew she'd been fighting with her husband over his business leaves, you knew she felt lonely... But she was attractive and you were single.

You were together for a few months (ninety-seven days, you counted), but it was enough for you to fall in love with her. She told you a lot about herself. About the misery she was forced to live in for much of her youth, about her love for the family she left in Santo Domingo, and most of all a secret she had never confessed to her husband: She had a baby at thirteen, and her

mother raised it as her own. Even now, the child thinks Ria is his older sister. She's heartbroken over leaving him there, but living here allows her to send money home to pay for his education.

Ria showed you a facet of reality you'd only ever seen on TV, forcing you to face truths people often find it easier to ignore. You admire her a lot, and your bond was so deep and intimate that you began to hope she would leave her husband for you. But when he came home for Christmas, she left you out of the blue, as if it had always been obvious that things would end that way. As if your affair was something completely meaningless.

All this happened a year and a half ago, and ever since then she has always avoided you. You were crushed in the beginning, and just when things seemed to be looking up, her son Luca was born. As soon as you discovered Ria was pregnant, you were plagued by doubt: The child looks nothing like his father. Maybe he looks nothing like you, either, but the date of conception coincides with the tail-end of your relationship and you can't get the thought out of your head. You wish you could talk things over with her, but she won't even answer your phone calls.

As if it wasn't enough, the law firm has stuck you with a tough nut to crack. Word is going around that Dario Ristori's company is in dire straits and, since your protégé hasn't said anything on the matter, your boss is very worried: The firm has extremely close ties to the company. So he asked you to investigate your client's finances, so that his troubles won't bring you down with him.

One thing is certain, these meetings are beginning to take their toll on your emotional stability.

During meetings

You support your client's positions, even when they're indefensible. It bothers you, but work is work.

Whenever you can, you always look for a chance to meet Ria's gaze.

Relationships

Luciano Avellini: He doesn't remember you. But you remember him perfectly well, and when you saw him here for the first time you wondered what the hell had gone so wrong. He was the most brilliant student in your entire course: Every teacher, even the most feared, loved him; he left you slack-jawed during group projects; he never got a mark below a perfect 30/30. You expected him to become a judge, or a brilliant criminal lawyer. And here he is, a building manager! Sometimes, when you see him so down, you really want to ask him what happened.

Alice Gabbrielli: The resident crazy cat lady and Ristori's tenant, you were forced to send her an eviction notice because he wants to sell the apartment she was renting. Perhaps the firm's suspicions are true and this sudden urge to sell demonstrates Ristori's need for money.

Vincenzo Salemi: An interior designer in his forties.

Camilla Lanzi: A doctor working in the intensive care unit, and Salemi's wife.

Gioele Zacchei: An illustrator for a publishing house with obvious money problems. Still, he's an idealist, and you appreciate that.

Rosa Mistretta: Gioele Zacchei's wife, an employee in a travel agency.

Giada Fadda: An obnoxious, lively twenty-something. She's openly lesbian. She stands up for her beliefs and she's engaged in civil rights activism. You like her.

Ria Santos: She's the same age as you, a beautiful Dominican woman. Maybe she only slept with you because she felt lonely, but she also made a friend and confidant out of you. You fell in love and, even though she left you to save her marriage, the birth of her son Luca coincides with the tail-end of your relationship. You can't get this nagging thought out of your head, and now that her husband has accepted a temporary relocation halfway across Italy, you're trying to find a chance to talk to her. But she's become cold, even hostile.

Dario Ristori: Your client. A forty-something businessman and the majority shareholder of Ne.Cos., a very long-lived Florentine soap manufacturer. He can't begin to put himself other people's shoes, and you're forced to be an asshole on his behalf. Recently, your firm has begun suspecting his financial standing: You've been asked to make light of the issue.

Attilio Daddioli: (Your turn to speak)