



## VINCENZO SALEMI

Interior designer - 40 years old

You were born in this house, you spent your youth here, and now you've come back to it as a married man, ever since your widowed mother found a new partner and left the apartment to you. You were happy to reunite with your childhood friend Gioele: He also brought his wife here, to the house that once belonged to his parents.

For three years you have been happily married to the woman of your life, Camilla. She's a doctor in the intensive care unit of Careggi Hospital's ER, the most important medical structure in Florence. She works shift after shift, she's constantly tired, but she never gives anything less than her best. To her, medicine is more than just a career: It's a calling, and she knows that lives depend on her performance. This often brings her to push the boundaries of exhaustion.

Sometimes you think about how simpler life would be if she was moved to a less hectic unit, but you've never dared to ask her. It's no wonder that in her daily life she's so nervous and ready to lash out. And lately she's been even more tense: The two of you have been trying to conceive to no avail, and each failed attempt breaks her heart. It hurts to see the way she looks at Ria holding little Luca in her arms. You hold a deep sense of guilt over this, because analyses have shown that the problem is mostly yours. You are terribly afraid that this might strain your relationship.

You'd love to compensate somehow, but this is no mundane task. You come from a simple family,

while she lived in a world that has little to share with the one you can offer: She was used to housemaids, to galas and luxuries and evening gowns. She never had to compromise, never had to argue about what colour to paint a fence, nor did she ever have to clean a stairwell by herself. It wasn't easy for her to give up that way of life. Sometimes she becomes anal and arrogant in ways that your neighbours have little patience for. You try to mediate, but it isn't always possible, so in the end you always side with your wife.

Gioele in particular seems to hate Camilla to death. You're distraught over it, because when you met him again you hoped that your wives would become good friends like you are, that you would all go out for dinner together and so on. Instead Gioele says that you changed because of Camilla, that you betrayed yourself for her. For one thing, he calls your church wedding unforgivable, since you were so adamant about your atheism in high school. But Camilla is a believer and Gioele just can't understand that, when you love someone and see that something is important to her, compromise is more than just a possibility: It's the only reasonable choice. He can't stand that you settled for what you used to call a "bourgeois" lifestyle when you were kids, and he just doesn't see how you could tolerate spending a weekend out of two attending weddings and christenings and communions with your extended family. But most of all, Gioele despises you for abandoning political engagement. He thinks you did it for her, but it actually happened long before you met Camilla, and for another reason entirely.

It all began in high school: You grew up on a

diet of bread and politics, with your father leading a trade union and your mother representing the Communist Party in the city council, and on your first year you'd already got yourself involved with the most militant student group you could find. You were elected class representative, and you spent a good deal of your time organising protests, pickets and sit-ins.

After your graduation, you went on to study architecture and joined the left-wing student collective. You were always a brilliant learner, but you got your degree at a snail's pace, involved as you were in politics. You were one of so many idealistic students, dead certain that you would make a difference to the world when you had no idea of what it meant to actually live in it: It's easy to pull all-nighters writing up manifestos when you don't have to go to work in the morning. Gioele is still like that, he just doesn't realise it.

Then in 2001 you went to Genoa to protest against the G8 summit, and you saw things you will never be able to forget. You were with the crowds in Alimonda Place when the brutality started. You heard gunshots, and in the subsequent commotion you found yourself fighting back. You'd never thought you'd be capable of breaking someone's nose, nor had you imagined you'd find yourself with a chipped tooth and two shattered ribs. Only late in the night did you learn that a guy around your age had died just a few

steps away from you. Your fellow students took it as a political attack and on the next day they joined the protesters, swarming the streets and slinging Molotovs around. But you didn't follow them: Overnight, everything you had believed in and fought to uphold had lost all meaning. Someone had died and you felt burdened with guilt, because you had been there, harbouring the same rage, the same bloodlust, the same blind hatred as everyone else.

The way the mass violence pulled you in, pushing you to commit atrocities you would never have thought of on your own, the cruelty with which the police assaulted a such a young crowd (but weren't many of them just as young and just as scared?), it all left you completely empty.

From that moment on, you distanced yourself from politics step by step and burned bridges with your former friends. But Gioele has no idea of any of this, you never found the time, or the will, to tell him. After all, it's no easy task, not when all he ever does is accuse you of forsaking your beliefs to marry an upper-class snob and conforming to the squalid social rites of the masses.

### During meetings

You try your hardest to keep the peace and you hate to see other people fight. However, when you are forced to take sides about anything, you always choose to stand with your wife Camilla.

## Relationships

*Luciano Avellini:* A thirty-year-old fellow, he's the building manager.

*Alice Gabbrielli:* A hippie in her thirties, she takes care of a cat colony in the courtyard.

*Vincenzo Salemi:* (Your turn to speak)

*Camilla Lanzi:* You married her three years ago and you love her now as much as you did back then. Her family is among the richest in Florence, they own three renowned hotels and they are conservative, right-leaning bigots. In spite of all this you have always accommodated them for Camilla's sake. You do realise she sometimes looks down on the rest of the world instead of trying to see other people's side of things, but you justify it because you understand what a sacrifice it was for her to follow you here. Most of all you feel guilty for being unable to give her a son, and you fear this could put a serious strain on your relationship.

*Gioele Zacchei:* He was your dearest childhood friend, you grew up together in this building. You attended the same high school and you were close in your political engagement as well. Until you enrolled in different universities and lost sight of each other. When you came back to live here, you found him married and with child; you thought that you would be able to pick up where you left off, that your wives would become friends as well. Instead Rosa and Camilla are nothing more than decent neighbours, while Gioele is openly hostile to you.

*Rosa Mistretta:* Gioele's wife, she moved here from Palermo to marry him. He told you nothing else about her.

*Giada Fadda:* A twenty-five-year-old, she's a waitress in a vegan restaurant. Her apartment is a veritable seaport, always bustling with visiting friends. She's openly lesbian and a LGBT rights activist. She has the ostentatious attitude of a militant, a flaw that has little to do with her chosen ideology and one you are far too familiar with.

*Ria Santos:* A young Dominican lady. She moved here to follow her husband, a career soldier who you rarely see around. She's a close friend of your wife, but Camilla recently stopped visiting her. You don't really know why.

*Dario Ristori:* As a kid he used to spend his summer vacations with you and Gioele, because he came to stay at his grandmother's, in the apartment he now owns. You always played together. You were still in high school when you lost all contact with him and you only saw him again once you came back to live here. Now he owns a big soap company. You try to keep your relationship cordial, but the two of you function on completely different wavelengths: You find him arid, cold, harsh. He doesn't seem to give a shit about other people, as if they didn't even exist to him. People say that in business he's as cruel as a shark, that he got rich exploiting good people.

*Attilio Daddioli:* Dario's lawyer.