



Bonuses: English Story Translations

Companion Guide for Our Top-Rated Book on Amazon:
Short Stories in Italian for Intermediate Learners

Full English translations for every story in the book

By MindSmith Books

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Introduction

Welcome to your *Italian Short Stories - Complete English Translations* guide!

You've been enjoying our Italian short stories book – thanks for making us a small part of your Italian language-learning. These complete English translations are designed to be a companion for the original book, helping you unlock every detail, cultural reference, and linguistic nuance from the 15 engaging stories you've been reading.

We know that sometimes you might translations to fully digest some parts of the book, confirm your understanding, or just to satisfy your curiosity about a particular phrase. That's exactly why we created this comprehensive translation guide – **so you can learn with confidence and never feel stuck.**

Each section contains the complete English translations of the stories, plus all the comprehension questions translated as well, maintaining the same formatting and structure as your Italian book, to make it easy to refer back.

How to Use This Translation Guide

- **Read the Italian first** – always attempt to understand the story in Italian before checking the translation (in the original book!). Look up specific sentences or paragraphs rather than reading the entire English version.
- **Check your comprehension** – after reading in Italian, you can then double-check your understanding in English
- **Learn cultural context** – use the translations to understand Italian cultural references and expressions that might not be obvious
- **Review the vocabulary** – compare how Italian expressions translate into natural English

Important Note: These translations are meant to support, not replace, your Italian reading practice. The magic happens when you read in Italian first, then use these translations to confirm, clarify, and deepen your understanding.

This guide pairs perfectly with your main Italian stories book – keep them together and use this translation guide whenever you need an extra boost.

Buona lettura e buon apprendimento!

– *The MindSmith Books Team*

1. The Inherited House

Beatrice receives an **unexpected** phone call from the family **notary**. Her aunt Margherita, whom she hadn't seen in years, has left her a **villa** in Umbria as an **inheritance**. The news surprises her greatly because she had never had a **close** relationship with this aunt.

She must come to sign the documents by the end of the month, the notary explains on the phone. The **property** is located near Assisi, but the condition of the house is not optimal.

Two weeks later, Beatrice drives for three hours from Rome to the Umbrian countryside. When she arrives in front of the villa, she is speechless. The house is beautiful but completely **neglected**. The roof **tiles** are broken, the **garden** is full of **weeds**, and the **shutters** have been closed for years.

Beatrice enters the house with the keys the notary gave her. The interior is dark and dusty, but you can still see the antique furniture and paintings on the walls. There's a **stone fireplace** in the living room and a large kitchen with a wood-burning oven. Every room tells a story from the past.

While exploring the house, Beatrice finds a **box** full of **diaries** written by aunt Margherita. She begins to read them and discovers that her aunt was a woman passionate about **gardening** and cooking. In the diaries she describes family recipes and her projects to improve the property.

This house could become beautiful, Beatrice thinks as she reads. Her aunt had dreamed of transforming the villa into an **agriturismo** to host tourists who wanted to experience true Italian life. She had also created a **vegetable garden** with tomatoes, basil, and other aromatic herbs.

In the evening, Beatrice goes to the nearby village to have dinner at a trattoria. The owner, an elderly gentleman named Enzo, recognizes her immediately.

"You must be Margherita's niece!" he says with a smile. Your aunt came here often and always talked about you.

Enzo tells her that aunt Margherita was very **well-liked** in the village and that everyone hoped someone from the family would continue to live in the villa.

"That house needs love and someone to **take care of it**," says Enzo as he serves her a plate of homemade pici.

That night, Beatrice can't sleep. She thinks about her stressful job in Rome, her small apartment, and the life she is leading. The villa offers her a completely different possibility: a quieter life, surrounded by nature and her family's traditions.

The next day, Beatrice calls a local **builder** to get an **estimate** of the necessary work. The man inspects the house and explains that new tiles, fixtures, and systems are needed.

Before returning to Rome, Beatrice takes a walk in the garden. Under the weeds she still finds the **plants** that her aunt had cultivated with such effort. *Maybe I can really do this*, she thinks as she imagines the restored house, full of **guests** tasting products from the vegetable garden.

Three months later, Beatrice has made her decision. She has sold her Rome apartment and moved to Umbria. Every day she works in the garden, fixes up the house, and plans the opening of her agriturismo. In the evening she reads her aunt's diaries and finally feels at home. Aunt Margherita's dreams are becoming **reality**.

Comprehension Check

1. Why is Beatrice surprised to receive the inheritance? a) She didn't know her aunt was rich b) She didn't have a close relationship with aunt Margherita c) She thought her aunt was still alive d) She doesn't like the countryside
2. What does she find in the villa that makes her change her mind? a) Hidden money in a box b) Her aunt's diaries with her projects c) A love letter d) Antique jewelry
3. What was aunt Margherita's dream for the villa? a) To sell it to a wealthy family b) To transform it into a luxury hotel c) To create an agriturismo for tourists d) To donate it to the municipality
4. Where did Beatrice live before inheriting the house? a) In Milan b) In Florence c) In Rome d) In Naples

5. How do the village people react when they meet Beatrice? a) They are cold and distrustful b) They recognize her and are happy to see her c) They don't talk to her at all d) They ask her to sell the house immediately

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-c, 5-b

2. Sale Day

It's the first day of winter **sales** in Milan and Giulio has been in line in front of the fashion store since six in the morning. He has **saved up** for months to buy a black leather jacket that normally costs 800 euros. Today, with a 50% discount, he can finally **afford it**.

At nine o'clock sharp, the doors open and the **crowd** enters like a rushing river. Giulio runs toward the men's department, but he's not the only one with the same idea. Other customers head toward the same **shelf** where the sale jackets are **hung**.

Giulio immediately finds his jacket in size M, but when he takes it in his hand, another person also **grabs** it from the other side. It's a blonde girl with green eyes wearing a red **coat**.

"Excuse me, but I saw it first!" says Giulio with a forced smile.

"Absolutely not!" replies the girl. I was here since last night!

It's an obvious **lie**, but the girl, whose name is Sofia, doesn't **let go** of her **grip**. Both pull at the jacket, attracting the attention of other customers who stop to watch.

A sales assistant approaches to resolve the situation. "There are other similar jackets in the **stockroom**," he says diplomatically. But Giulio and Sofia want precisely that one: it's the last in their size and has a particular detail on the **collar** that makes it unique.

"Let's do this," Sofia suddenly proposes. "Whoever can answer three questions about Italian fashion **wins** the jacket." Giulio accepts the **challenge**, confident in his knowledge. He works in a boutique and studies fashion design.

Sofia asks the first question: "What year was Valentino Garavani born?"

Giulio answers correctly: "1932."

Sofia seems impressed but continues: "What is designer Miuccia Prada's real name?"

Giulio **hesitates** for a moment, then answers: "Maria Bianchi Prada."

Sofia smiles: "Wrong!"

Sofia is about to ask the third question when Giulio interrupts her: "Wait, now it's my turn to ask you questions!" He asks her who founded the Ferragamo fashion house and in which city.

Sofia answers without hesitation: "Salvatore Ferragamo, Florence." Giulio admits his **defeat**.

But when Sofia goes to the checkout to pay, she discovers that her credit card is blocked. She exceeded the monthly limit with Christmas shopping. Giulio, who witnessed the scene, approaches. "I can lend it to you," he says. Then you can pay me back whenever you want.

Sofia is surprised by the generosity of a **stranger** who until five minutes ago was her rival. "Why are you doing this?" she asks.

Giulio simply replies: "Because you know fashion better than me. You deserve that jacket. And besides, it's not often you meet someone as passionate as me."

After paying, Sofia invites Giulio for coffee at the shopping center café. They talk for hours about trends, collections, and designers. They discover they have very similar tastes and the same passion for vintage. Sofia studies fashion marketing, while Giulio dreams of opening his own atelier.

Maybe this day went better than I thought, Giulio reflects as they look at other store windows together. Sofia is wearing the jacket they both wanted so much, but now Giulio doesn't mind anymore. He has gained something more precious: a new friendship and perhaps the beginning of a professional collaboration.

Comprehension Check

1. Why does Giulio want to buy precisely that jacket? a) It's the only jacket in the store b) It costs only 50 euros c) He saved up for months and it has a special

detail d) It's a gift for his sister

2. How do they decide who can buy the jacket? a) Whoever gets to the checkout first takes it b) Sofia proposes a challenge with fashion questions c) The sales assistant decides for them d) They split it in half
3. What work does Giulio do? a) He's a sales clerk in a shoe store b) He works in a boutique and studies fashion design c) He's a fashion journalist d) He's a photographer for magazines
4. Why can't Sofia pay for the jacket? a) She forgot her wallet at home b) The jacket costs too much even on sale c) Her credit card is blocked d) The store doesn't accept credit cards
5. How does the story end between Giulio and Sofia? a) They become rivals and don't talk anymore b) Giulio gets angry and leaves c) They become friends and talk about a possible collaboration d) Sofia returns the jacket to Giulio

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-b, 4-c, 5-c

3. The Gentle Lie

Carlotta is sitting at a table in a restaurant in the center of Florence with Marco, a guy she met two weeks ago at an art **exhibition**. It's their first official date and she is very nervous. Marco seems interesting and **cultured**, and she wants to make a good impression.

While looking at the menu, Marco begins talking about his life philosophy. "I strongly believe in respect for animals," he says with conviction. "I've been vegetarian for five years and I could never be with someone who eats meat. It's a matter of fundamental values."

Carlotta feels panic rising. She loves meat: steak, ham, lamb... But she really likes Marco. Without thinking too much, she lies: "I'm vegetarian too! What an incredible coincidence!" Marco smiles happily and takes her hand.

For the rest of the dinner, Carlotta orders a salad and **pretends** to be enthusiastic when Marco talks about vegan recipes and organic products. When he suggests going together to the central market to buy fresh vegetables, she **nods** with a **forced** smile.

Days pass and the relationship with Marco is going well. They see each other often and he is increasingly affectionate. But Carlotta is suffering: she can't eat her favorite dishes and has to invent excuses to avoid restaurants she knows, where the **waiters** might reveal her true eating **habits**.

One day Marco invites her to dinner at his parents' house. "My parents are curious to meet you," he says excitedly. "Mom prepared her specialty: Florentine steak with..." Then he stops and "**Just kidding!** She made delicious eggplant parmigiana!"

Carlotta laughs nervously. Florentine steak is her absolute favorite dish, the one she orders every time she goes to the **trattoria** near her house. "What am I doing?" she thinks. "I can't keep lying forever."

The evening of the meeting with the parents, Carlotta arrives at Marco's house with a **bouquet** of flowers for his mother. The parents are **welcoming** and friendly. The mother, Mrs. Elena, hugs her as if she had known her for years. "Finally we meet the famous vegetarian Carlotta!" she says laughing.

During the aperitif, Marco's father tells funny stories from his **youth** in Florence. The conversation is pleasant and Carlotta begins to relax. Then the mother announces: "Now let's go to the kitchen for the special surprise!"

In the kitchen, on the large wooden table, there's a magnificent Florentine steak that **smells** of **rosemary** and **garlic**. "Surprise!" shouts the mother. "Marco confessed to me that you actually eat meat too! He wanted to surprise you because he knows you love this dish!"

Carlotta is speechless. Marco approaches with a **mischievous** smile. "I knew from the first day that you weren't vegetarian," he confesses. "When we ordered the salad, your eyes looked longingly at the steak at the next table. And then, my friend Sara saw you at the **butcher shop** last week!"

"But then..." **stammers** Carlotta. "I'm not vegetarian either!" Marco laughs. "I was acting too because you seemed like the type of intellectual girl who appreciates

these things. We both lied to impress each other!" Marco's parents burst into general laughter. That evening they eat the best Florentine steak of their lives.

Comprehension Check

1. Where do Carlotta and Marco meet? a) In a vegetarian restaurant b) At an art exhibition c) At the central market d) In a butcher shop
2. Why does Carlotta lie about her diet? a) She's really vegetarian but is ashamed b) She wants to impress Marco who says he's vegetarian c) Her parents told her to do it d) She has health problems
3. What does Carlotta have to do to maintain the lie? a) Buy only fresh vegetables b) Avoid restaurants she knows and pretend enthusiasm for vegan foods c) Actually become vegetarian d) Break up with Marco
4. What is the surprise that Marco's mother prepares? a) A birthday cake b) A dish of eggplant parmigiana c) A Florentine steak d) A special salad
5. How does the story end? a) Carlotta confesses but Marco gets angry b) Both discover they lied and laugh together c) Marco's parents kick Carlotta out d) Carlotta runs away from the restaurant

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-b, 4-c, 5-b

4. An Unexpected Fine

Davide gets on bus number 25 in Bologna with his mind still asleep. It's Monday morning and he has to get to the office by nine. He searches in his jacket pocket for the ticket he bought at the **tobacconist's** last night, but can't find it.

"Where did I put it?" he thinks, **rummaging** nervously through all his pockets. He only finds loose coins and the **receipt** from shopping. The bus is **crowded** and he has to make his way through the crowd of **commuters** going to work. He decides not to buy a new ticket, thinking the journey is short.

After three stops, two **ticket inspectors** in uniform get on. Davide feels his heart beating faster. The inspectors begin systematically checking passengers' tickets, starting from the front of the bus. "Documents and tickets, please!" says one of them in an authoritative voice.

Davide tries to **hide** behind an elderly lady, but it's useless. When his turn comes, he immediately confesses: "Actually, I lost the ticket I had bought. I had it, I swear!" The inspector, a man in his fifties with a mustache, looks at him skeptically.

"Do you have the rest of the ticket? The **half** that **tears off**?" asks the inspector. Davide shakes his head. "No, I **threw it away** by mistake along with the pizza box last night. It's an absurd story, I know, but it's the truth!" The other passengers begin to pay attention to the discussion.

A young girl with a university backpack intervenes: "Excuse me, but I saw him buy the ticket at the tobacconist's on Via Rizzoli last night! I was in line behind him!" Davide looks at her gratefully, but the inspector replies: "That doesn't prove anything. The ticket must be validated and kept during the entire journey."

A gentleman in a gray suit joins the debate: "Come on, it's obvious he's an honest person! Look at how he's dressed, how he speaks... He doesn't seem like the type who travels without a ticket!" This comment **triggers** a **chain reaction** among the passengers.

A woman with a red hat protests: "But what does how he's dressed have to do with it? The rules are the same for everyone! If you don't have the ticket, you pay the **fine**!" A guy with a beard **counters**: "Yes, but we also need to use common sense! It's possible he lost the ticket!"

The bus has transformed into an improvised courtroom. Some passengers defend Davide, others maintain that rules must always be respected. An elderly lady tells about when she was fined for a ticket that had **expired** by two minutes. A **retiree** explains that without inspections the transport company would **go bankrupt**.

The inspector, amused by the situation, waits for the debate to calm down. Then he says: "Listen, I appreciate your solidarity, but the regulations are clear. However, since this is the first offense and considering the **support** of fellow travelers, the fine will be 20 euros instead of 50."

Davide accepts the reduced fine and thanks the passengers who defended him. The university girl **whispers** to him: "Next time keep the ticket in a safe pocket!" Davide smiles and promises to learn the lesson. When he gets off at his stop, he greets everyone as if they were old friends.

Comprehension Check

1. Why doesn't Davide have the ticket on the bus? a) He never bought it b) He lost it after throwing it away by mistake c) He forgot it at home d) He didn't have money to buy it
2. Who intervenes first to defend Davide? a) An elderly lady b) A retiree c) A university student d) A gentleman in a gray suit
3. What happens on the bus during the inspection? a) Everyone stays quiet and watches b) Passengers start discussing and debating c) The inspector calls the police d) Davide runs away from the bus
4. How much should Davide normally pay as a fine? a) 20 euros b) 30 euros c) 40 euros d) 50 euros
5. Why does the inspector reduce the fine? a) Because it's Davide's first offense b) Because the passengers defended him c) Because he's amused by the situation d) All of the above

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-b, 4-d, 5-d

5. The Voice of the Market

Rosa holds her video camera while walking among the **market stalls** of Ballarò market in Palermo. She's a food blogger from Milan with one hundred thousand followers and is **filming** a video about historic Sicilian markets. "Hi guys!" she says addressing the camera. "Today we're exploring the authentic **flavors** of Sicily!"

The market is full of colors and scents. Vendors shout the prices of their goods in Sicilian **dialect**, mixing Italian and words Rosa doesn't recognize. She stops in front of a fresh fish stall where a robust man with a stained **apron** is cleaning **octopuses**.

"Excuse me, can I **interview you** for my channel?" Rosa asks, turning on the video camera. The man, whose name is Salvatore, smiles **shyly**. "Beautiful, what do you want to know?" he says with a strong **Palermitan** accent. Rosa begins with typical questions: how long has he been working here, what are the best fish, how does he choose his **suppliers**.

Salvatore responds politely, but Rosa feels there's something forced in his words. It's as if he's **reciting a script** prepared for tourists. While she continues the interview, a regular customer approaches and Salvatore completely changes. He speaks in broad **dialect**, jokes, tells anecdotes about the day.

Rosa turns off the video camera and waits for the customer to leave. "Why don't you also talk like that in front of the camera?" she asks. Salvatore looks at her intensely. "Because you're looking for a show, not the truth. You want me to play the picturesque Sicilian for your videos, right?"

Salvatore's words hit Rosa like a **slap**. "No, I... I want to tell the true culture of Sicily," she stammers. Salvatore laughs bitterly. "The true culture? You arrive here with the camera, ask three questions and think you understand everything. Do you know the history of this market? Do you know why I've been here every morning for thirty years?"

Rosa shakes her head, feeling small. Salvatore continues: "This market has existed for centuries. My grandfather sold fish here, my father too. I learned to recognize good fish when I was ten years old. During the war, this place **fed** the city. After the bombings, it was one of the few places to find food.

Every morning I wake up at four to go to the port to buy fish from fishermen. I know their families, their stories. I know when the sea is rough and fish **runs short**, I know when the best tuna arrives. This isn't a show, it's life. It's tradition passed down from generation to generation."

Rosa remains silent, struck by the man's words. "You have many followers," Salvatore continues. "But I have something you can't buy: respect. People here know me, they trust me. I'm not famous on the internet, but I'm important to my community."

"I'm sorry," Rosa says sincerely. "I had the wrong approach. Could you really teach me something about this market? Without a camera, just to learn?" Salvatore studies her for a moment, then nods. "Come back tomorrow morning **at dawn**. Come with me to the port and you'll see what real market life is like."

The next day, Rosa wakes up **at dawn** and meets Salvatore. They spend the day together: at the port among the fishermen, at the market observing the true dynamics of commerce, listening to the stories of elderly vendors. Rosa understands that the market isn't a show for tourists, but the **beating** heart of a thousand-year-old tradition. That evening she publishes a different video: without special effects, just the authentic voice of the market.

Comprehension Check

1. What work does Rosa do and where does she come from? a) She's a journalist from Palermo b) She's a food blogger from Milan with one hundred thousand followers c) She's a tourist who loves cooking d) She's a chef looking for new recipes
2. Why does Salvatore criticize Rosa? a) Because she doesn't speak Italian well b) Because she only wants the show, not the truth c) Because her video camera is too noisy d) Because she doesn't buy his fish
3. How long has Salvatore's family been working at the market? a) For ten years b) For thirty years c) For two generations (grandfather and father) d) For three generations (grandfather, father and him)
4. What does Salvatore propose to Rosa to make her understand real market life? a) To read a book about Palermo's history b) To come back the next day at dawn to go to the port c) To interview other vendors d) To buy fresh fish
5. How does Rosa's final video change? a) It becomes longer and more detailed b) It includes more special effects c) It becomes more authentic, without special effects d) She doesn't publish any video

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-d, 4-b, 5-c

6. The Mystery of Room 17

Anna **knocks** on the door of room 17 at the Stella hotel in Trento for the third time. She's been a **housekeeper** for fifteen years and knows that guests usually answer immediately. Mr. Mueller, a German tourist, was supposed to vacate the room by eleven, but it's already two in the afternoon.

"Mr. Mueller?" Anna calls, knocking harder. Absolute silence. She takes the master key and cautiously opens the door. The room is empty and the bed is perfectly made. On the **bedside table** there's still the gentleman's passport and on the table an open suitcase with clothes **folded** carefully.

Anna examines the room more carefully. In the bathroom, the toothbrush is still wet and there's a cup of **lukewarm** coffee on the window **sill**. It seems that Mr. Mueller went out for a short time and should return any moment. But where has he gone?

Anna goes down to the reception and speaks with Marco, the night shift receptionist. "Mr. Mueller went down this morning around seven for breakfast," says Marco, consulting the register. "He greeted normally and said he would return to get his luggage. But I haven't seen him since then."

"Did you check the security cameras?" asks Anna. Marco **shakes** his head. "The system has been broken for a week. The technician was supposed to come today but **postponed** the appointment." Anna sighs in frustration. She decides to conduct her personal **investigation**.

Anna questions the other employees. The cook, Mrs. Benedetta, tells her that Mr. Mueller ordered **scrambled** eggs and American coffee as always. "He was a very polite customer," she says. "He spoke excellent Italian and always read the local newspaper. He seemed interested in the history of the area."

The **gardener**, old Giuseppe, adds precious details: "I met him in the garden this morning. He asked me for **directions** to reach Buonconsiglio castle. I explained that there's a **path** in the woods behind the hotel that leads directly there. It's faster than the main road."

Anna follows the path in the woods. After twenty minutes of walking, she finds a wooden bench **overturned** and, a short distance away, a **notebook** open with pages scattered on the ground. She recognizes Mr. Mueller's neat handwriting. The notes talk about local legends and unsolved mysteries of the area.

"This is strange," thinks Anna. "Mr. Mueller seemed like a methodical person who would never leave his things scattered like this." She continues walking and hears voices coming from a hidden **clearing**. She approaches cautiously and sees a group of people in medieval costume.

In the middle of the group is Mr. Mueller! He's wearing a brown **cloak** and holding a **wooden sword**. He's playing the role of an ancient **knight**. Anna remains hidden behind a tree, confused and amused. She hears Mueller speaking in perfect Italian about historical battles and heroes of the past.

Suddenly Anna understands: it's a historical **reenactment**! An event organized by the municipality for tourists and history enthusiasts. Mr. Mueller hasn't mysteriously disappeared—he simply participated in this special event and lost track of time.

Anna comes out of her **hiding place** and approaches the group. Mueller recognizes her immediately and turns red with embarrassment. "Mrs. Anna! I'm so sorry! I completely forgot the checkout time! I was living a dream!"

"Don't worry," Anna smiles. "Your mystery is solved. And I learned something new about local tradition!"

Comprehension Check

1. Why is Anna worried about Mr. Mueller? a) He didn't pay the hotel bill b) He didn't vacate the room by checkout time c) He broke something in the room d) He argued with other guests
2. What does Anna find in room 17 that seems strange to her? a) The room is completely empty b) Everything is in order but Mueller isn't there, with passport and suitcase still there c) The window is broken d) There are signs of a struggle
3. Who gives Anna the most important clue to find Mueller? a) Marco the receptionist b) The cook Benedetta c) The gardener Giuseppe d) Another hotel guest
4. What is Mr. Mueller actually doing when Anna finds him? a) He got lost in the woods b) He's participating in a medieval historical reenactment c) He's

searching for hidden treasure d) He was kidnapped by strangers

5. How does Mueller feel when Anna finds him? a) Angry about being searched for b) Scared and confused c) Ashamed for having forgotten checkout d) Happy to have solved a mystery

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

7. The Strike

Matteo wakes up at seven in the morning to the sound of the alarm clock. Today he has the most important **job interview** of his life for a position at a marketing company in the center of Rome. He studied the company for weeks and prepared answers to all possible questions. But when he turns on the radio, he hears terrible news: general public transport **strike**.

No buses, no metro, no trams until 5 PM today, announces the radio journalist. Matteo feels panic rising. The interview is at ten-thirty in the **EUR area**, kilometers from his home in Trastevere. He takes his phone and desperately searches for an available taxi, but all companies are busy.

He leaves home at eight and walks quickly toward the center, hoping to find a taxi on the street. The streets are chaotic: hundreds of people walk nervously in all directions, drivers continuously honk their **horns**, and at bus stops there are groups of **angry** people discussing animatedly.

While crossing Ponte Sisto, Matteo meets an **elderly** lady with two heavy shopping bags. "Excuse me, do you know how to get to San Giovanni without public transport?" she asks him worriedly. Matteo, despite his hurry, helps her by explaining the best **route** and offering to carry one bag for part of the way.

Arriving in the center, he notices that many shops are closed in solidarity with the **strike**. The few taxis that pass are already full of passengers and ignore people trying to stop them. Matteo looks at his watch: it's nine-forty. He only has fifty minutes to travel fifteen kilometers.

He decides to try car sharing. He quickly downloads the app on his phone, but discovers that even the **shared** cars are all **booked**. In a moment of desperation, he calls the company to reschedule the **interview**, but the secretary tells him the director is leaving for a business trip right after and can't postpone.

"I won't **give up**," thinks Matteo. He starts running south, following the directions to EUR. After twenty minutes of running, he's sweaty and tired, but determined. He stops at a café to buy a bottle of water and asks the bartender if he knows alternatives to reach EUR.

The bartender, a kind middle-aged man, suggests he try Ostiense station. Some regional trains are working, he says. "And from there you can take a **replacement** bus." Matteo thanks him and runs to the station. He finds a long line of **angry** people waiting for the same train. The first train is **jam-packed** and he can't get on.

The second train arrives twenty minutes later. Matteo pushes into the **crush** and manages to get on, **squashed** between other frustrated people. During the journey, he hears continuous **complaints** about politicians, **trade unions**, and workers' rights. A lady tells about having missed an important medical appointment, a guy complains because he'll be late to university.

Arriving at his destination, Matteo looks for the **replacement** bus but discovers it has been stopped for an hour due to a **breakdown**. It's ten twenty-five. He only has five minutes to get to the interview. He starts running **desperately** through the streets of EUR, sweating in his best **suit**.

Finally he arrives at the company building at ten thirty-five, **gasping** and with his shirt **soaked** with sweat. The receptionist looks at him surprised. "Mr. Rossi is waiting for you," she says. "He's impressed that you managed to arrive despite the **strike**. This shows determination and creativity in problem-solving." Matteo smiles, tired but happy: maybe this disaster will turn into a success.

Comprehension Check

1. Why is Matteo having difficulty getting to the interview? a) He forgot the appointment b) There's a general public transport strike c) His car is broken d) He got the address wrong

2. Where does Matteo need to go for the interview? a) To the center of Rome b) To Trastevere c) To the EUR area d) To Ostiense station
3. What does the bartender suggest to Matteo? a) To call a taxi b) To try Ostiense station c) To postpone the interview d) To buy a bicycle
4. How does Matteo finally arrive at the interview? a) By taxi b) By car sharing c) Running and using regional trains d) By replacement bus
5. How does the director react to Matteo's lateness? a) He gets very angry b) He cancels the interview c) He's impressed by his determination d) He completely ignores him

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-b, 4-c, 5-c

8. An Aperitif That Lasted Too Long

Elena leaves the office at six in the evening with the intention of having a quick aperitif with colleagues. It's Friday and the weekend is about to begin. She promised her husband Luca she'd be home by eight to watch together the new film they **rented**, but a quick drink can't hurt.

At the bar in Quadrilatero Romano in Turin she finds Marco, Giulia, and Roberto already seated. The table is full of **snacks**: olives, chips, small sandwiches, and focaccia. "Finally!" shouts Giulia, raising her Spritz. "You were abandoning us for a solitary Friday evening!"

Elena orders a Negroni and **tastes** the olives. The bartender brings more snacks: tomato bruschetta, cheese cubes, and salami. "It's incredible how much food they give you here," says Elena. "In Milan for an aperitif they give you three chips if you're lucky!"

Marco starts telling a funny story about a customer who today confused their product with a **competitor's**. Everyone laughs and Roberto adds his version of the same story, even funnier. The conversation **flows** naturally between work anecdotes and jokes about bosses.

"You know what I miss about university?" says Giulia suddenly. "When we could spend hours talking about everything and nothing without worrying about the clock. Now we're always in a hurry." This reflection touches something in everyone. Marco raises his glass: "Then tonight, no hurry!"

The bartender continues to **supply** the table with new dishes: arancini, small pizzas, meatballs. "But is it normal that they keep bringing food?" asks Elena. "It's Turin!" responds Roberto. "Here the aperitif is sacred. If they stop bringing snacks, it means you need to leave!"

The conversation shifts from light topics to deeper discussions. Giulia tells about her dream of traveling to Japan, Marco confesses he's secretly taking guitar lessons, Roberto reveals he's started writing a novel. Elena realizes she's been working with these people for three years but didn't really know them.

"And you, Elena?" asks Marco. "What's something you want to do but have never **dared**?" Elena thinks for a moment. "I'd like to open a small used bookstore. I've always loved the idea of **surrounding myself** with stories." The colleagues look at her with enthusiasm and **encouragement**.

Time flies. Elena looks at the clock: it's eight-thirty! "Oh no!" she exclaims. "Luca has been waiting for me for half an hour!" She takes her phone to call him, worried. Luca answers immediately with a cheerful voice: "Love, I'm at the bar under the house with my friends! We also lost track of time. See you at ten?"

Elena laughs relieved. "You too! Yes, perfect. I love you!" She hangs up and tells the colleagues. Everyone bursts out laughing. "The Turin aperitif **strikes again!**" says Roberto. "It's a tradition that transforms 'thirty minutes' into 'all evening'!"

Giulia proposes ordering a real dinner at the bar. "If we have to stay here until ten, we might as well do it right!" The group accepts enthusiastically. They order risotto, Piedmont agnolotti, and a bottle of Barbera.

During dinner, the four **joke** about how to explain to their partners that a "quick aperitif" turned into a complete evening. "I'll say it was an important work meeting!" says Marco. "I'll say it was **compulsory** for team building!" adds Roberto.

At quarter to ten, Elena says goodbye to colleagues with sincere hugs. She feels happy and connected in a way she hasn't felt in a long time. As she walks home, she reflects on how sometimes the best evenings are the **unplanned** ones.

When she arrives home, Luca is already there with a **box** of chocolates. "I also had dinner with friends," he confesses laughing. "We're the same!" They sit on the couch and instead of watching the film, they spend an hour telling each other about their respective evenings, laughing at the coincidences. Elena understands that these spontaneous moments are what make life interesting.

Comprehension Check

1. What had Elena promised her husband Luca? a) To cook a special dinner b) To be home by eight to watch a film together c) To buy chocolates d) To meet his parents
2. What do the colleagues say about their dreams and passions? a) Giulia wants to change jobs b) Marco plays guitar, Roberto writes a novel, Giulia wants to travel c) They all want to open a store d) They don't talk about personal dreams
3. What does Elena discover when she calls her husband worried? a) Luca is angry with her b) Luca is already home waiting for her c) Luca is also at a bar with friends and lost track of time d) Luca forgot about the film
4. What do they order for dinner at the bar? a) Just more snacks b) Risotto, agnolotti, and Barbera wine c) Pizza and beer d) They don't have dinner, they leave
5. How does the evening end for Elena? a) She returns home sad and tired b) She argues with her husband c) She feels happy and connected, and laughs with Luca about the coincidences d) She decides to change jobs

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

9. The Blind Date

Giulia looks at the clock for the fifth time in ten minutes. It's eight-thirty in the evening and the restaurant in the center of Naples is full of couples dining **calmly**.

She's been waiting for half an hour for her **blind date**, organized by her cousin Francesca.

He can't be this late, thinks Giulia, nervous. The **waiter** passes by her table and smiles at her with compassion. Giulia orders another **glass** of white wine to calm her nerves.

Francesca had described Marco as a charming thirty-five-year-old man, a lawyer who works in the historic center. He has green eyes and always wears a blue **tie**, she had said. You'll **recognize** each other immediately.

Giulia observes all the men entering the restaurant. An elderly gentleman with his wife, a group of friends laughing loudly, a couple of tourists with a map in hand. No Marco with a blue tie.

At the **next** table, a man in his thirties is drinking coffee alone. He has dark hair and wears a white **shirt**. Every now and then he glances toward Giulia, but she doesn't notice because he's not wearing the blue tie.

It's nine-fifteen. Giulia decides to **give up**. She takes her cell phone to call a taxi when she hears a familiar voice behind her.

"Excuse me, are you Giulia? Francesca's cousin?"

Giulia turns and sees the man from the next table. He smiles at her embarrassed and touches his shirt.

"I'm Marco. I took off my tie because it was very hot. I was also waiting for you, but I didn't know how to approach you. I thought you were here with someone else."

Giulia **bursts out** laughing. The situation is so absurd that she can't do anything but laugh. Marco seems **relieved** and laughs with her.

"So we observed each other for an hour without recognizing each other?" says Giulia, still amused.

"Exactly. And I thought you had **stood me up**! Can I sit at your table now?"

Marco moves to Giulia's table. The waiter approaches with a **knowing** smile, as if he understood everything. The evening that seemed **ruined** transforms into a pleasant surprise.

Giulia and Marco order dinner and begin to **chat**. They discover they have many things in common: both love cinema, books, and **walks** along the sea. The conversation flows naturally.

"What a strange coincidence," says Marco while tasting the pasta with **clams**. "We were both here, both nervous, both waiting."

"Maybe it's not a coincidence," responds Giulia with a mysterious smile. "Maybe it was destiny that we meet this way."

Comprehension Check

1. Where does Giulia wait for her date? a) In a Neapolitan bar b) In a restaurant in the center of Naples c) In a pizzeria near the sea d) At cousin Francesca's house
2. How had Francesca described the man? a) Tall with blond hair and black jacket b) Young with blue eyes and beard c) Charming with green eyes and blue tie d) Elegant with mustache and hat
3. Why doesn't Giulia immediately recognize Marco? a) He's two hours late b) He took off his tie because it was hot c) She sat at the wrong table d) He's wearing sunglasses
4. How does Giulia react when she discovers the truth? a) She gets very angry b) She bursts out laughing c) She becomes shy d) She decides to leave
5. What do Giulia and Marco discover during dinner? a) That they already knew each other as children b) That they work at the same company c) That they have many things in common d) That they are distant relatives

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-b, 4-b, 5-c

10. An Unexpected Message

Pietro is sitting on the **couch** in his apartment in Genoa when his cell phone vibrates. It's Saturday evening and he's watching television after a day of work. He opens WhatsApp and reads a message from an unknown number.

"Hi Anna! Can't wait to see you tomorrow at the fish **market**. Shall we meet at ten as always? A **kiss**, Elena."

Pietro reads the message twice. Obviously it's a mistake, he's not Anna and doesn't know any Elena. His first impulse is to **delete** the message and ignore it. But something **intrigues** him.

Pietro decides to respond: "Hi Elena, I think you have the wrong number. I'm not Anna. Have a good evening!"

After a few minutes a response arrives: "Oh no! How embarrassing! I'm so sorry. Anna changed her number and I didn't know. Thanks for **warning** me!"

Pietro smiles. Elena seems like a polite person. He writes: "No problem! I hope you manage to contact Anna for tomorrow."

"Thanks! You're very kind. By the way, the fish market in Genoa is fantastic. I've been going there every Sunday with my **sister** Anna since we were **little girls**."

Pietro is **struck** by Elena's friendliness. Normally he doesn't **chat** with strangers, but this conversation **amuses** him. "Do you also live in Genoa? I've **lived** here for ten years."

"Yes! I live in the **neighborhood** of Boccadasse. And you?"

"Incredible! Me too! I live on Via del Campo since I moved here for work."

The conversation continues all evening. Elena tells him she works in a bookstore in the historic center and loves to **stroll** along the port on weekends. Pietro discovers that he also frequents that bookstore every Thursday to buy history books.

"I can't believe it!" Elena writes. "I work at Libreria Bozzi on Via del Campo. Maybe we've already met without knowing it!"

Pietro is **astonished**. It's possible they've seen each other many times without ever talking. His daily life suddenly seems full of hidden possibilities.

"What an extraordinary coincidence! Tomorrow is Thursday... Maybe we'll see each other at the bookstore?" Pietro writes, feeling braver than usual.

"I'd love to! But how will we recognize each other? We don't even know what we look like!"

"I'll bring a **Genoese** history book and a **smile**. What will you bring?"

"An infinite **curiosity** and a **desire** to **discover** if wrong messages can lead to right meetings."

Comprehension Check

1. Where does Pietro live? a) In the historic center of Genoa b) In the Boccadasse neighborhood in Genoa c) Near the port of Naples d) In an apartment in Milan
2. What kind of message does Pietro receive? a) An urgent work message b) An advertisement for a restaurant c) A message meant for Anna from Elena d) An invitation to a party
3. Where does Elena work? a) At the fish market b) In a bookstore in the historic center c) In an office near the port d) In a restaurant in Boccadasse
4. What does Pietro buy every Thursday? a) Fresh fish at the market b) History books at the bookstore c) Flowers for the apartment d) Newspapers at the newsstand
5. How do Pietro and Elena decide to recognize each other? a) They send photos on WhatsApp b) Pietro will bring a book and a smile c) They meet in front of the port d) Elena will wear a red scarf

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-b, 4-b, 5-b

11. The New Shoes

Martina walks through the streets of Verona's center with her new shoes. They're elegant and made of black **leather**, perfect for her new job at the bank. She bought them yesterday at a store in the center and they cost a lot, but she thinks they're worth it.

After ten minutes of walking, Martina feels a **sharp** pain in her feet. The shoes are **tight** and hurt her. She tries to continue, but every step is torture.

Finally she arrives at Piazza delle Erbe, the heart of the historic center. She can't walk anymore and decides to sit on a bench **next to** the fountain. She takes off her shoes and observes her **swollen** and red feet.

"Problems with new shoes?" asks a kind voice.

Martina looks up and sees an elderly gentleman with white hair and a friendly smile. He's wearing a brown coat and carrying a walking **stick**.

"Yes, unfortunately. I bought them yesterday and they're beautiful, but they're **killing** my feet," Martina responds with a **grimace** of pain.

The gentleman smiles and sits next to her. "My name is Alberto. I've lived here in Verona for seventy years and I've always loved this square. May I tell you a story?"

"This fountain you see here," Alberto continues, pointing with his stick, "was built in the **fourteenth century**. During World War II, my grandfather brought me here as a child. They hid food in secret **hiding places** around the square to help families in need."

Martina listens fascinated. She didn't imagine this square had such a rich and dramatic history.

"You see that red building?" Alberto continues. "A family of musicians lived there. Every evening they played from the balcony to **cheer up** people during difficult times. The music **filled** the entire square."

"How **wonderful!**" exclaims Martina. "I pass through here every day to go to work, but I didn't know anything about all this."

"You know, young lady, every **stone** in this city has a story to tell. You just need to stop and **listen**. I come here every **afternoon** and every time I discover something new."

Martina looks around the square with new eyes. The tourists taking photos, the children running, the elderly people playing cards at the café's **small tables**, everything seems different to her now.

"Does it still hurt?" asks Alberto, pointing to the shoes.

Martina smiles and moves her feet. The pain has almost **disappeared**. "Much less, thank you. Maybe I just needed to stop and rest. And especially to meet a special person like you."

"Remember, dear lady: sometimes the smallest problems bring us the greatest **gifts**. Like your shoes that brought you here to me!" laughs Alberto.

Comprehension Check

1. Why does Martina stop in Piazza delle Erbe? a) She wants to admire the fountain b) She has an appointment with Alberto c) Her new shoes hurt her feet too much d) She wants to take photos of tourists
2. Who was Alberto's grandfather? a) A musician who played from the balcony b) A person who hid food during the war c) The builder of the fountain in the fourteenth century d) A merchant in the square
3. How long has Alberto lived in Verona? a) Since he was a child b) For ten years like Martina c) For seventy years d) Since he retired
4. What did the musicians do during the war? a) They hid food for families b) They played from the balcony to cheer people up c) They built secret hiding places d) They sold musical instruments in the square
5. What happens to Martina's pain during the conversation? a) It gets worse and worse b) It stays the same c) It almost completely disappears d) It moves to her hands

Answers: 1-c, 2-b, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

12. A Quiet Birthday

Simone wakes up at seven in the morning in his apartment in Lecce. It's March 15th and today he **turns** forty. He looks at his cell phone but there are no birthday **wishes**. Perfect, he thinks. Nobody knows it's his birthday.

Simone has always hated birthday parties. The cakes, the candles, the **forced** gifts, the **relatives** you see once a year. This year he decided not to tell anyone and spend the day alone.

He arrives at the office with his usual calm mood. Colleagues greet him as always and he responds politely. He works at the computer, participates in **meetings**, drinks coffee at the vending **machine**. A normal day, exactly as he wanted.

Around five in the afternoon, his colleague Carla **approaches** him with a strange smile. She's carrying a white **envelope** in her hand.

"Simone, I heard today is your birthday!" says Carla enthusiastically.

Simone is **stunned**. "How... How did you know?"

"I saw your ID card by chance when it fell from your **wallet** this morning. I didn't want to be **nosy**, but... Happy birthday!"

Carla hands him the **envelope**. Inside is a handmade card with a simple phrase: "I hope you have a special day. Carla."

Simone looks at the card and feels a sudden **warmth** in his chest. It's not a noisy party or a giant cake, it's just a kind and sincere gesture.

"Thank you, Carla. Really. I don't know what to say."

"You don't have to say anything. I just wanted to let you know that someone is thinking of you today. Have a good day!"

Carla leaves and Simone remains alone with the card in his hand. He smiles for the first time that day. Maybe birthdays aren't always terrible.

At six Simone leaves the office. Instead of going directly home, he decides to stop at a **pastry shop** in the historic center of Lecce. He buys a small **pastiera**, the typical dessert from his region.

At home, Simone puts the pastiera on a plate and lights a small **candle** he finds in a drawer. He **turns off** the kitchen lights and remains in the dark with the small flame dancing.

He doesn't make a wish like children usually do. Instead he thinks about Carla's unexpected **kindness**, the sweet taste of the pastiera, the **fragrant** silence of his apartment.

He **blows out** the candle and eats a piece of pastiera. It's delicious, fresh and **fragrant** like the one his grandmother used to make when he was little. He feels a sweet nostalgia and takes his cell phone.

He writes a message to his mother: "Hi Mom, today I turn forty and I wanted to thank you for all the beautiful birthdays you gave me as a child. I love you."

After a few minutes he receives a call. It's his mother crying with joy. They talk for half an hour and Simone tells her about his quiet day and Carla's sweet gesture.

When he **hangs up**, Simone feels **grateful**. Today he discovered that for him a perfect birthday doesn't have to be noisy or full of people. It can be made of small moments of human warmth and simple sweetness.

Comprehension Check

1. How old does Simone turn? a) Thirty-five years old b) Forty years old c) Forty-five years old d) Fifty years old
2. How does Carla discover it's Simone's birthday? a) Another colleague tells her b) She reads it on the office calendar c) She sees his ID card fall from his wallet d) She discovers it on social media
3. What does Simone buy after work? a) A chocolate cake b) A traditional pastiera c) Sicilian cannoli d) Vanilla ice cream

4. Who does Simone write a message to? a) His best friend b) His sister c) His mother d) His boss
5. What does Simone discover at the end of the day? a) That he still hates birthdays b) That he prefers noisy parties c) That a perfect birthday can be simple d) That he wants to move from Lecce

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-b, 4-c, 5-c

13. The Dirty Laundry

The **apartment building** washing machine on Via Santa Maria in Pisa has been running for three hours. Marco waits in the **hallway** with his **basket of dirty laundry**, checking his watch every two minutes. It was supposed to finish at four, but it's already five-thirty.

Sofia arrives, the neighbor from the second floor. She also carries a basket of **laundry** and seems **irritated**.

"Excuse me, how much longer?" asks Sofia with a dry tone.

"I don't know," responds Marco. "Someone put on a very long program. Probably Luigi from the first floor. He always uses the delicate cycle program that lasts hours."

Sofia **huffs** loudly. "It's the third time this week! We can't continue like this. We all have the right to use the washing machine."

Marco nods. He's also **fed up** with the situation. He works all day and can only do **laundry** in the evening. Waiting hours in the hallway isn't fair.

Finally the washing machine stops. Marco and Sofia look at the closed door, waiting for someone to come get the clothes. Ten minutes pass. Nobody arrives.

"Enough!" exclaims Sofia. "Let's open the washing machine and put the clothes in a **bag**. That way he'll learn to respect schedules!"

Marco hesitates. He doesn't like touching other people's stuff, but he understands Sofia's anger. He opens the washing machine and finds elegant women's clothes: silk **blouses**, expensive skirts, lace **bras**.

"They're not Luigi's," whispers Marco, **embarrassed**.

Just then he hears footsteps on the stairs. It's Giulia, the girl from the third floor who studies medicine at the university. She has red eyes and looks very tired.

"Oh no! I'm so sorry!" says Giulia, seeing the scene. "I had a very difficult exam and came home exhausted. I fell asleep and forgot about the washing machine!"

Sofia **crosses** her arms. "Giulia, it's the third time! We can't go on like this."

Giulia starts crying. "I know, I know. It's a terrible period. I study sixteen hours a day, work to pay for university, and my mother is sick. I can't **manage** everything."

Marco looks at Giulia and feels his heart **soften**. He knows that exhaustion. He also studied while working and knows how difficult it is.

"Listen, Giulia," says Marco gently. "Let's do something. Let's write a schedule for the washing machine. That way everyone knows when they can use it and there are no more conflicts."

Sofia looks at Marco surprised. She wasn't expecting this **reasonable** proposal.

"Also," Marco continues, "we can create a group to **notify each other** when we forget stuff in the washing machine. It happens to everyone to be distracted."

Giulia stops crying and smiles shyly. "That would be fantastic. Really, I didn't want to create problems."

Sofia also relaxes. "Okay. Let's try with the schedule. But we all need to be more careful."

Half an hour later, the three apartment residents are sitting around Marco's table with paper and pen. They divide the week into **time slots**: Giulia will have the morning to study better, Sofia the early afternoon, Marco the evening.

"What do you say if we also have a monthly apartment building meeting?" proposes Sofia. "Maybe we can solve other small problems before they become big ones."

Marco and Giulia agree. What started as a **quarrel** over the washing machine has transformed into a new friendship and an intelligent solution for living better together.

Comprehension Check

1. Where does the story take place? a) In a public laundromat in Pisa b) In an apartment building hallway in Pisa c) In Marco's apartment d) In the building courtyard
2. Why did Giulia forget the laundry in the washing machine? a) She was on the phone with her mother b) She went out shopping c) She fell asleep after a difficult exam d) She had to go to work
3. What does Giulia study at university? a) Engineering b) Medicine c) Economics d) Literature
4. What solution does Marco propose? a) To buy a second washing machine b) To create a schedule and a WhatsApp group c) To call the building administrator d) To prohibit long programs
5. How does the story end? a) The three continue arguing b) Giulia moves to another apartment c) Marco and Sofia become a couple d) The three become friends and find a solution together

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-b, 4-b, 5-d

14. Unexpected Guests

Davide and Marta arrived in Sardinia two days ago for a quiet vacation in the rented house near Porto Cervo. The villa is small but **cozy**, with a **terrace** that looks out over the **turquoise** sea and a garden full of **olive trees**.

It's Saturday morning and they're having breakfast on the terrace when they hear a **deafening** horn. A red sports car stops in front of the villa. Four elegant people get out with expensive **suitcases** and designer **sunglasses**.

"Here we are!" shouts a blonde woman with a **shrill** voice. "What a wonderful place! Roberto, get the suitcases from the **trunk**!"

Davide and Marta look at each other confused. They weren't expecting anyone. Davide comes down from the terrace and approaches the group.

"Good morning," says Davide politely. "I think there's a **misunderstanding**. This villa is occupied."

The blonde woman laughs loudly. "No way! We're Claudia and Roberto from Milan! We booked this villa for the weekend! Look, I have the confirmation on my phone!"

Claudia shows Davide her phone. **Indeed** there's a reservation for "Villa Azzurra" in Porto Cervo. But Davide and Marta rented "Villa Marina," precisely the villa where they are.

"I'm sorry, but you need to check the **address**. This is Villa Marina, number 15. Villa Azzurra should be at number 25," says Davide patiently.

Roberto, a tall man with a **mustache**, checks the GPS. "You're right! Claudia, you got the address wrong again!"

But instead of leaving, Claudia looks at Davide and Marta's villa with bright eyes. "Listen, according to the photos we saw, this villa is much nicer than ours! It has a better view and the garden is **gorgeous**! Why don't we do something? Let's join forces! You two and us four together! It'll be so much fun!"

Marta also comes down from the terrace, feeling the tension growing. "I don't know... We had planned a relaxing vacation..."

"But relaxing what!" interrupts Claudia. "Sardinia is for having fun! Tonight we're going to the Porto Cervo nightclubs!"

Roberto has already started **unloading** the suitcases from the car. "Claudia is right! We'll be perfect neighbors! We brought French wine and Russian caviar!"

Davide tries to stay calm. "Listen, we appreciate your hospitality, but we really wanted to be alone..."

"Absolutely not!" exclaims Claudia. "In Sardinia nobody stays alone! It's against tradition! Right, Roberto?"

Just then a taxi arrives and an elderly couple gets out with **straw** hats and cooler bags. They're the real owners of Villa Azzurra, who came to check because Roberto and Claudia never arrived.

"Gentlemen from Milan!" shouts the elderly gentleman. "We were waiting for you! Your villa is ready! We prepared the refrigerator with local products: Sardinian cheeses, **cured meats**, and pane carasau!"

Claudia and Roberto look at the elderly man, then look at Davide and Marta's villa, then again at the elderly man. Finally they understand they have to go.

"Okay, okay," says Claudia with a dramatic **sigh**. "But we're inviting you out dancing tonight anyway! You can't miss the aperitif at **sunset!**"

After everyone leaves, Davide and Marta return to the terrace and **burst out** laughing. "What an adventure!" says Marta. "Maybe we should go dancing, just to see what happens!"

Davide smiles and **pours** more coffee. "Welcome to Sardinia, dear. Where planned tranquility always becomes an unexpected adventure!"

Comprehension Check

1. Where is Davide and Marta's villa located? a) In Milan near the center b) In Sardinia near Porto Cervo c) In Tuscany near the sea d) In Sicily near Palermo
2. Why do Claudia and Roberto stop at the wrong villa? a) The GPS is broken b) They confused Villa Marina with Villa Azzurra c) They want to visit friends d) Their car has a problem
3. What does Claudia propose to Davide and Marta? a) To exchange villas for the weekend b) To call the police c) To join forces and spend the vacation together d) To look for a hotel in the city
4. What kind of vacation did Davide and Marta want? a) An adventurous vacation b) A quiet and relaxing vacation c) A vacation with many parties d) A cultural vacation

5. Who finally resolves the situation? a) Davide who calls the police b) Roberto who checks the GPS c) The real owners of Villa Azzurra d) The building doorman

Answers: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

15. Class Cancelled

Alessia arrives at the University of Padua at nine in the morning for the Medieval Philosophy class. She studied all night for today's seminar on Saint Thomas Aquinas. She carries **notebooks** full of **notes** and three heavy books in her **backpack**.

In front of the **assembly hall**, she finds Marco and Giulio, two classmates. Marco looks worried and is reading his cell phone with a serious expression. Giulio instead **leans** his **back** against the wall and **yawns**.

"Hi guys!" says Alessia **approaching**. "Are you ready for the seminar? I did incredible research on the theory of knowledge in Thomas!"

Marco looks up from his phone. "Bad news, Alessia. Professor Martinelli sent an email half an hour ago. The class is cancelled. He has the flu."

Alessia feels her heart **sink**. "All that effort for nothing. When will we make it up?" she asks hopefully.

"Probably next week," responds Marco. "But it's not certain. It could also be **postponed** until after Easter vacation."

Giulio stops yawning and smiles. "Perfect! A free **morning**! I can go back to sleep. I didn't sleep a wink last night because of Mathematical Analysis."

"How can you be so calm?" exclaims Alessia. "We have an exam in three weeks! Every class counts!"

Marco looks at both with a **thoughtful** air. "You know something? Maybe we could **take advantage** of this morning to really talk. When was the last time we chatted without hurry?"

Alessia **reflects**. It's true: they always run from one class to another, study in the library in silence, greet each other quickly in the hallways. They know almost nothing about each other.

"Shall we go to the university café?" proposes Marco. "We'll get a cappuccino and talk. Today we won't **accomplish** anything productive anyway."

They **head** toward the café. Along the way, Marco confesses he feels lost: "I don't know if I'm making the right choice with Philosophy. My father would like me to study Economics. He says you can't eat with philosophy."

Giulio nods understandingly. "I have doubts too. I study Literature but I wonder if it will be useful for anything..."

Alessia listens to them and feels she's not the only one feeling confused. "I'm afraid I'm not smart enough. Sometimes I read things five times and don't understand. What if I'm not **suited** for university?"

At the café, sitting around a round table, the three continue to share their insecurities. Marco talks about the weight of family **expectations**. Giulio speaks about the social pressure to find a job immediately. Alessia confesses the impostor syndrome that **torments** her.

While they talk, they discover they have much more in common than they thought. All three love reading, dream of traveling, and are afraid of the future. But all three also have a passion for humanities subjects, **despite** the difficulties.

"You know what?" says Alessia after two hours of conversation. "Maybe this morning was more useful than the class on Saint Thomas. I learned more about you and about myself."

Marco smiles and raises his glass of orange juice. "To our friendship and the courage to face doubts together!"

Giulio and Alessia also raise their glasses. When they leave the café, they feel lighter and less alone. Sometimes the most important lessons happen outside the classrooms.

Comprehension Check

1. What subject does Alessia study? a) Mathematical Analysis b) Medieval Philosophy c) Economics d) Greek Literature
2. Why is the class cancelled? a) The professor is traveling b) The classroom isn't available c) Professor Martinelli has the flu d) There aren't enough students
3. What does Marco's father want? a) For him to study Philosophy with more commitment b) For him to change universities c) For him to study Economics d) For him to find a job immediately
4. What is Alessia afraid of? a) Not passing the exam b) Not being smart enough c) Not finding work after university d) Disappointing her family
5. Where do the three students end up talking? a) In the library b) In the university hallway c) At the university café d) In the assembly hall

Answers: 1-b, 2-c, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

Thank You & What's Next?

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