



# The Story of the Lost Child: Neapolitan Novels, Book Four

By Elena Ferrante



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Soon to be an HBO series, book four in the *New York Times* bestselling Neapolitan quartet about two friends in post-war Italy is a rich, intense, and generous-hearted epic by one of today's most beloved and acclaimed writers, Elena Ferrante, "one of the great novelists of our time." (Roxana Robinson, *The New York Times*)

Here is the dazzling saga of two women, the brilliant, bookish Elena and the fiery uncontainable Lila. In this book, life's great discoveries have been made, its vagaries and losses have been suffered. Through it all, the women's friendship, examined in its every detail over the course of four books, remains the gravitational center of their lives. Both women once fought to escape the neighborhood in which they grew up. Elena married, moved to Florence, started a family, and published several well-received books. But now, she has returned to Naples to be with the man she has always loved. Lila, on the other hand, never succeeded in freeing herself from Naples. She has become a successful entrepreneur, but her success draws her into closer proximity with the nepotism, chauvinism, and criminal violence that infect her neighborhood. Yet somehow this proximity to a world she has always rejected only brings her role as unacknowledged leader of that world into relief.

Ferrante is one of the world's great storytellers. With the Neapolitan quartet she has given her readers an abundant, generous, and masterfully plotted page-turner that is also a stylish work of literary fiction destined to delight readers for many generations to come.



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#### **Editorial Review**

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of September 2015: Elena Ferrante has been an under-the-radar phenomenon for a couple of years now: the pseudonymous, publicity-shunning Italian author of *Days of Abandonment* – one of my favorite novels of all time – and the three (until now) Neapolitan Novels is the go-to read for thoughtful, analytical women on at least two continents. But if the first three books made her a cult here, *The Story of the Lost Child*, the final volume of the Neapolitan books, is poised to make her a bona fide star.

Such widespread acceptance and popularity is only fitting, since the characters in the Neapolitan novels are not "fancy" women; they're for the most part not particularly educated, rich or sophisticated. What they are, always, is full of life and self-doubt and self-consciousness and ambition and love and hate and energy and sexuality. The new book, like the others, centers around the lifelong relationship between Elena and Lina – frenemies from long before such a word existed. *The Story of the Lost Child* chronicles what happens when the women renew their friendship after many years of estrangement; "One morning, I woke up and thought of her without hostility for the first time in a long while," as Elena says. Now they are beginning to face aging together.

That's the plot here, and it is essentially the plot of all of the Neapolitan novels: how do women grow and age, together and apart, how do they relate, how do motherhood, money and men intervene? But you don't read Ferrante for the plot; you read her for the sheer accumulation of detailed scenes and conversations, for its comings together and breakings apart, and for the way characters disappear and recur until the city in which they live becomes both a vast jungle and the original too-close small town. (Bonus: while it's probably best to read all four of these novels in the order in which they were published, you can come to book 4 fresh and get up to speed within pages.) Along the way, you also get a glimpse into the politics of 20th century Italy and some sly understanding of the publishing world. (Elena is a published author of some success.) Reading Ferrante is, in other words, both exhausting and exhilarating. The other day, an acquaintance said she loved these books so much she felt like standing on a street corner and handing them out to every woman she sees. I know the feeling. – *Sara Nelson* 

#### Review

"In Ferrante's fourth and final Neapolitan novel, she reunites Elena, the accomplished writer, with Lila, the indomitable spirit, in their Southern Italian city as they confront maturity and old age, death, and the meaning of life . . . This stunning conclusion further solidifies the Neapolitan novels as Ferrante's masterpiece and guarantees that this reclusive author will remain far from obscure for years to come." --Publishers Weekly (starred review)

"Inexorable seismic changes -- in society and in the lives of two female friends -- mark the final volume of Ferrante's Neapolitan series . . . The enigmatic Ferrante, whose identity remains the subject of international literary gossip, has created a mythic portrait of a female friendship in the chthonian world of postwar Naples." -- Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

"Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels . . . tell a single story with the possessive force of an origin myth." -- *Vogue*, praise for the series

"Elena Ferrante is one of the great novelists of our time." -- New York Times Book Review, praise for the author

#### About the Author

**Elena Ferrante**, author of *The Days of Abandonment, Troubling Love*, and *My Brilliant Friend*, among others, is one of Italy's most important and acclaimed contemporary writers. Her true identity is unknown.

#### **Users Review**

#### From reader reviews:

#### **Eloise Torres:**

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