

**Fabio Genovesi**

**CADRÒ, SOGNANDO DI VOLARE**  
**I Will Fall While Dreaming Of Flying**

**Translation by Olivia Jung**

## Chapter 2

### *Postcards from the world*

Receiving a postcard was still normal in 1998.

But not today. If you ask a shopkeeper for a postcard, they look at you weird. The more serious, pragmatic ones just shake their head and serve the next person. The kinder ones – or those who don't have another customer to attend – think about it for a second, rummage through a long-forgotten drawer, and sometimes they come up with a small deck of moldy postcards: the photos on them are in black and white or in glaring colors, with town squares full of old Cinquecento, Alfetta, or Bianchina Innocenti cars. Because historical city centers weren't closed to traffic back then. Just like postcards no longer exist nowadays and, if you really want one, you are stuck with one of those.

But they are, in fact, beautiful. Buy one, write *Best wishes* on it, and put it in the mail: those receiving it are going to be a little befuddled for a moment, as if they were walking down the street and suddenly found themselves next to a carriage. But then they give into the embrace of the past, which is warm and smells like your things.

A distant past, and yet it was yesterday. That is why there it wasn't weird when my mother yelled that I had received a postcard on that day of 1998.

I went into the kitchen to pick it up. It came from Spain. There was a photo of a matador and a bull charging a red cloak, which was made out of a real piece of fabric glued onto the picture.

The postcard came from my friends in Seville. They were my best, and perhaps only, friends. They were there for university on an Erasmus program and, now that I had passed my last law exam, I would be joining them in three days.

My mom, my dad, and my aunt said it was a good idea, like this I could relax a little. I replied that I was going there to do some library research for my thesis, which I was already in the process of writing. No time to unwind, no tomfoolery, just like my friends who were there to study and that's it.

I took the postcard from my mom's hands, I turned it over, and there was their message for me:

*Hey dumbass!*

*When are you coming?*

*There's a party here every evening, every night's a racket! We drink a ton, we're drunk now! And pussy galore, pussy for everyone! Even Rino got some!*

I leaned on the table to support all the shame that was dumped on me in front of my parents.

Even though they were much less embarrassed than me about certain things: sometimes, when I was little, mom and dad would hug each other and start kissing in front of me, and they wouldn't stop. When I asked them to cut it out, mom would tell me to hush because kisses are the most beautiful thing in the world.

“Don’t talk, Fabio, kiss!”

“But who am I to kiss since I’m alone?”

“I don’t know, kiss your hand.”

“What do you mean? What’s the point of kissing your hand?”

Then dad detached himself from her for a moment. “It makes a lot of sense. You’ll see, in a few years, that hand will give you a lot of loving satisfaction!”

He looked at mom in his arms, mom looked at him, and the two of them burst into laughter. She called him *dummy*, he called her *dummy*, and they both called me a ball-buster.

And maybe they were right. But I always got embarrassed with them about certain things, even when I was a kid and wasn’t doing anything. Not to mention that day, with the postcard that talked about alcohol and sex with strangers.

Who knows if they even read it before they called me. I tried to surmise it from their eyes, but I couldn’t bring myself to look at them, nor could they look at me. The only difference was that they were trying not to laugh.

So I ran to my room and cranked up the volume of my stereo. Then, I read the card again.

I could hear the voices of Sergio, Michele, and Gianluca, drunk voices from the depth of a mind-blowing night, and I couldn’t stay in my room any longer. It was as tight as a cell. I think there are few prisons in the world with cells as small as my room, maybe just in North Korea or in some parts of Africa. So, more than a jail, it felt like being closed in a phone booth. Which is another thing that doesn’t exist anymore, just like postcards. But this was back in May 1998, and all of that still existed at the time. I read those giant words over and over in my teeny tiny room, half of which was occupied by my suitcase, already packed and waiting on the floor.

Because I was finally about to leave.

I had never been to Seville before, but I thought it was a warm place, so I packed a bunch of T-shirts and summer things. And a wool sweater, just in case. Folded inside the sweater, I placed a twelve-pack of condoms.

I bought them from a pharmacy in Querceta, one town over. I avoided going to the one closer to home because my mom and aunt were always there; every time I went in, the pharmacist always asked me to give them her regards, so it would have been embarrassing. But I needed those condoms. Or at least I hoped I would have needed them. I had read somewhere that you can’t find them in Japan. I mean, they exist, but they are a smaller size so, when you put one on, it’s too tight. Maybe it was the same in Spain, or maybe theirs were too loose, who knows.

All I knew was that I was at peak levels of inexperience. I was twenty-four years old, but I was still a rookie when it came to sex, and I couldn’t afford to deal with the disadvantage of weird foreign condoms. So that is why I bought some before my departure.

Now I was more convinced than ever that it had been a good idea, because the postcard mentioned something unbelievable: even Rino was able to score! So there really was some for everyone. There really was an enormous wave of divine justice in Seville that broke down the sharp gates of virginity so that everyone could run toward love.

The situation was really perfect. I had been dragging my great shame of being so inexperienced since middle school, and from then on it was a constant chasing, catching up, getting information, accumulating an endless series of theories, and an exhausting lack of practice. It became more severe and embarrassing with every year that went by. So being able to recover in Seville was a great prospect: such a faraway place, foreign girls who might be a little

disappointed, but it's not like you would then run into them in the streets of your hometown, where they would tell all their girl-friends, who would then tell your guy-friends.

No, everything was perfect in Seville, perfect. I might have even underestimated the number of condoms I would need, twelve might not be enough. Maybe I should have gone back to Querceta to get more.

I remember that I was thinking just that the following morning. I was sitting in my room and there was nothing to do, so I could have gone immediately. That afternoon, instead, there was the first stage of the Giro d'Italia, and the only thing I regretted about this Spanish adventure was that I wouldn't be able to follow the rest of the bicycle race.

I swear I was in the process of getting up to head to the pharmacy when, in that very moment, my mom called out "There's another postcard!" and I darted to the kitchen.

Another one? I wondered what my friends could have added, what didn't fit in yesterday's card. Orgies, drugs, bank robberies? I didn't know, but I didn't want my parents to know either, so I ran over and tore the postcard from her hands.

This one, however, was different. It didn't have a photograph: it was grey on both sides. My name was printed on it, but it came from the military district.

I didn't want to be conscripted in the military, so I had opted for being a conscientious objector. And, as it turns out, they had granted my wish: I was expected to leave in a week.

Not for Seville, but for my community service.

For an entire year.

On top of the Apennine Mountains.

In a retirement home.

For priests.

I told my parents, who were there in the kitchen. And, I swear, my dad just replied:

"Well, at least you won't miss the Giro d'Italia."