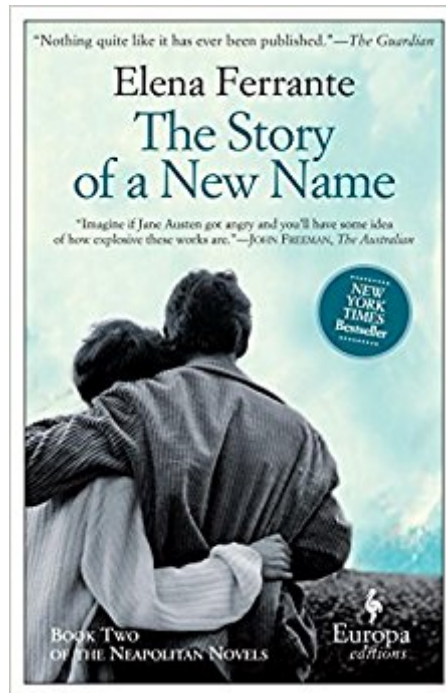


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The Story Of A New Name: Neapolitan Novels, Book Two



Synopsis

The second book, following last year's *My Brilliant Friend*, featuring the two friends Lila and Elena. The two protagonists are now in their twenties. Marriage appears to have imprisoned Lila. Meanwhile, Elena continues her journey of self-discovery. The two young women share a complex and evolving bond that brings them close at times, and drives them apart at others. Each vacillates between hurtful disregard and profound love for the other. With this complicated and meticulously portrayed friendship at the center of their emotional lives, the two girls mature into women, paying the cruel price that this passage exacts.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I turned off the phone, locked the door - two days of intense bliss. THE STORY OF A NEW NAME is part two of Ferrante's masterful trilogy and it DOES NOT DISAPPOINT! The writing is brilliantly lyrical and relentlessly candid, the focus is intensely personal, but the sweep of the story is vast. We track Lina and Elena, now beyond childhood, into young womanhood -- lovers, husbands, children, accomplishments and tragedy as they discover sex and romantic love. In the vein of Garcia Marquez and Bellow, the intimate stories refract into detailed murals of a society, a nation. I can't think of a writer working today more adept at turning a story with shock, at making the reader gasp. Great, great, great. And the release date for part three is WHEN??????

I loved the first book, *My Brilliant Friend*, and didn't believe it could get better, but it does! The drama

of the two teen-age girls is more painful, more heartbreaking, and perhaps hard for some to take. But their strength and beauty shines through, and we get to learn more about the history of post WWII Italy. Some of this may be difficult to follow for those who are unfamiliar with Italian political and intellectual life. But if you've read some Gramsci, you'll eat it up. It also deals with issues that are virtually universal among young women growing up all over the world. The book deals with frankly and insightfully with the challenges that teenage girls face as they grow into women, sexual, intellectual and political. It's feminist writing that doesn't wave any banners or slogans or propose any easy answers; it presents us face to face with the real challenges. Finally, I think Lila is one of the greatest heroines I have ever encountered, I love her every step of the way. It's all so personal and heart-felt, it's hard not to believe that much of it is based on the anonymous writer's own life. After all, the narrator is named Elena, and becomes a writer. But don't let the hype over the author's identity distract you: read these wonderful books for their own merits.

The Story of a New Name (which is called, simply, *My Brilliant Friend*, Volume II, in Italy), continues the epic saga author Elena Ferrante began in 2012 with the publication of *My Brilliant Friend*, set in postwar Naples. In *The Story of a New Name*, she continues the lives of these same characters as they move into the 1960s. Over fifty individual characters from nine families appear in the novel, making the "Index of Characters and Notes on the Events of Volume I," at the beginning of the book, not just helpful, but necessary. Elena Greco and Lila Cerullo, who met as children and rivals (and sometimes enemies) in the first volume, epitomize the changes occurring in Naples in the aftermath of World War II, with education being the catalyst for many of these changes. Lila, however, decides as a young teen to end her schooling and help with her father's business, while Elena continues. Passionate and temperamental, Lila constantly alienates those around her, and, with her eventual marriage, she has the financial resources to buy what she wants, whenever she wants, and the ability to use her position for personal payback for old grudges. Her husband has allied himself financially with the Solara family, camorrist criminals who are far more organized than Stefano's father was, making some of her own activities risky for her husband. Her only real friend is Elena, but that relationship is complicated by Elena's own obligations regarding school, and, more importantly, by the fact that Lila has no idea what it takes to be a real friend. Elena escapes most of the tumult that Lila leaves in her wake when she departs from Naples for more schooling. Her own numerous love interests constantly compete for time with her academic commitments, and when she is at home in Naples, she wearies of Lila's imperious demands. Conditioned by her own insecurities and her academic challenges, Elena is unable to relax and come to know herself as a

person independent of her culture, though she recognizes that "class" and her ability to find new opportunities outside Naples are all connected to her education. As she faces her uncertain future, she becomes a fascinating study. Perhaps her new opportunities in the wider world will become the focus of the final volume. With more than eight hundred pages in the first two volumes, this trilogy is truly epic in length, and in its depiction of Naples in the aftermath of war, primarily in *My Brilliant Friend*, it adds epic themes and ideas. In this second novel, however, the initial interest in these repeating characters from postwar Naples may begin to wane for some readers as the novel focuses more on the minutiae of the women's daily lives - small details and not grand epic themes - especially concerning their turbulent, often violent, love lives. The tears and scenes of recriminations, which we see wasted on the novel's men for whom the "rules" of behavior do not apply, may become wearisome for some readers, and the novel may begin to feel claustrophobic, more romantic than epic in its focus.

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