



My Brilliant Friend: The Graphic Novel

Chiara Lagani

Elena Ferrante

Mara Cerri, Illustrator

Ann Goldstein, Translator

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Two friends share their dreams and troubles in Chiara Lagani and Mara Cerri's graphic novel adaptation of Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend*.

Elena and Lila have known each other for decades, so Elena is not surprised when Lila goes missing. Over the course of their long friendship, they fought, got into trouble, watched dreams come and go, and pushed each other farther than they ever would have gone alone. But in spite of Lila's cleverness, drive, and ruthless streak, freedom proved more elusive than she ever expected.

Lila, a bright girl stifled by her unsupportive parents, takes her frustrations out on Elena with cutting remarks and cruel gestures. But even when they hate each other, the girls are never far apart, bound by what they have in common: their shared terror of Don Achille, a mysterious neighbor shrouded in frightening rumors; their changing bodies; and their desire to escape their insular, oppressive neighborhood.

A muted palette and faded colors evoke a sense of unhappy nostalgia similar to looking at a water-stained photograph. The scenes of Elena's summer in Ischia are rendered in bright blues and yellows—a stark contrast to the terrible event that befalls her there. Frequent close-ups of people's faces show subtle but deep emotions during intense moments.

The story culminates at Lila's wedding. The occasion she anticipated as her long-sought escape route to a better life turns sickening because of betrayal, which is depicted with minimal text and stark shades of white, black, and yellow. But as the opening pages show, hope does not vacate a person's life: it merely waits for the right moment to break free.

My Brilliant Friend is a graphic novel about the ups and downs of a lifelong, life-changing friendship.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September / October 2023)

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