

**The letters that
changed everything**

The letters that changed everything

A short story of Duo

– Duodecimo Conti –

duodecimo



Release date: January 3, 2022

Most recently updated: January 3, 2024

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Ai for duodecimo project, based on prompts.

This book is for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it.

ISBN: 978-1-5658-1231-4

Copyright ©2024 Duodecimo Conti

Printing house: duodecimo

Publisher: duodecimo



Testimonials

I was completely transported to this small Italian village in the 70s. The author's detailed descriptions of the typography shop made me smell the ink and hear the rhythmic sounds of the printing press. The relationship between Duo and Marina felt authentic and sweet, while Salvatore's character reminded me of my own grandfather – stern but full of wisdom. A beautiful meditation on tradition, progress, and finding one's place in a changing world.

– Elena Bianchi, Literature Professor at University of Taintee

As someone who worked in traditional printing during the 70s, **this novel hit close to home.** The technical details about typography are spot-on, and the author perfectly captures the anxiety we all felt when digital printing began to emerge. But more than that, it's a story about how some traditions don't need to die – they just need to evolve. Duodecimo's journey from apprentice to innovator is both inspiring and realistic.

– Thomas Wright, Retired Master Printer

What started as a coming-of-age story **turned into something much more profound.** Through Duo's eyes, we experience not just his personal growth, but the transformation of an entire craft and community. The scenes in the typography shop are so vivid, and the romance subplot is beautifully woven into the larger narrative about preserving tradition while embracing change. I couldn't put it down!

– Maria Rossi, Book Reviewer for Il Messaggero

Once again to Renu

*Beneath endless skies,
Footsteps weave tales through mountains,
The world whispers love.*

- duodecimo

Contents

Testimonials	3
1 The Village of Ink	9
2 Latin Mambo	13
About the author	21

1



The Village of Ink

The narrow cobblestone streets of Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi wound their way through clusters of stone houses like ribbons of text across a weathered page. For Duodecimo Conti (Duo), named whimsically by his librarian father after the book format, these streets had always felt like home. But in the summer of 1975, as he watched the morning sun cast long shadows across the village square, something felt different. At eighteen, he had just completed his studies at the local school, and the future stretched before him like a blank sheet waiting to be printed.

His mother wanted him to pursue university in Naples, like his older sister had done. But Duo's heart belonged to the village, to its rhythms and traditions, to the smell of fresh bread from Signora Rossi's bakery, and most of all, to the mysterious typography shop that had fascinated him since childhood.

Tipografia Antico stood at the corner of Via Roma, its windows displaying wedding invitations and business cards arranged with meticulous care. Inside, ancient printing presses loomed like sleeping giants, their metal arms frozen in mid-gesture. When Duo pushed open the heavy wooden door that morning, the small brass bell announced his arrival with a cheerful tinkle.

The letters that changed everything

“Ah, young Conti!” Salvatore Marino, the master typographer, emerged from behind a Heidelberg Windmill press, his hands stained with ink. “Finally decided to stop staring through my window?” His eyes crinkled with amusement beneath thick glasses, and Duo felt his cheeks flush.

Learning the art of typography proved both more challenging and more rewarding than Duo had imagined. Each morning began with cleaning the types, arranging the tiny metal letters in their cases with reverence. Salvatore taught him to feel the different weights of paper, to understand how ink would behave on each surface, to hear the rhythm of the press and know when something wasn’t quite right.

“Typography,” Salvatore would say, “is not just about putting ink on paper. It’s about giving words their voice, their character, their soul.”

As summer turned to autumn, Duo discovered an old manuscript hidden in the shop’s cluttered basement. Written in faded ink, it detailed the history of printing in their region, dating back to the early 16th century. The more he read, the more he felt connected to generations of printers who had come before him, their fingers stained with the same ink, their dreams pressed into the same papers.

Late at night, he would sometimes imagine he could hear the ghosts of old typographers shuffling through the shop, discussing fonts and layouts in whispered voices.

Marina Rossi, the baker’s daughter, began stopping by the shop more frequently that fall, ostensibly to order new menu cards for her father’s bakery. Each visit lasted longer than necessary, and Duo found himself looking forward to her appearances, the way she would lean over his shoulder to watch him set type, her dark hair falling forward to brush against his arm.

When she finally asked him to design her personal stationery, he spent hours selecting the perfect font, a delicate Garamond that seemed to capture her essence on paper.

The Village of Ink

News began reaching the village of new printing technologies emerging in the bigger cities. Photocopiers, electronic typewriters, and whispers of computers that could compose entire pages without a single piece of metal type. Salvatore dismissed these innovations with a wave of his ink-stained hand, but Duo couldn't help wondering about their future.

One evening, a traveling salesman arrived with glossy brochures advertising modern offset printing equipment. The photos showed clean, efficient machines that promised faster production and lower costs. Duo watched Salvatore's face carefully as he flipped through the pages.

Winter brought a sharp decline in orders. The local newspaper, their steadiest client, switched to a printer in Naples with newer equipment. Wedding invitations, once their specialty, were increasingly being ordered from catalogs. Salvatore grew quieter, spending long hours in his office with the account books.

Duo began taking on odd jobs in the evenings, helping at the bakery and making deliveries, determined to keep the typography shop alive.

The turning point came unexpectedly. A famous author, seeking solitude to write his next novel, had rented a villa in the village. Fascinated by the old typography shop, he commissioned them to print a limited edition of his latest work. The project required all their skill and artistry, combining traditional techniques with innovative designs that Duo had been quietly developing.

Word spread, and soon other artists and collectors began seeking them out, drawn by their reputation for craftsmanship and attention to detail.

As spring returned to Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi, Duo designed and printed what he considered his masterpiece: a marriage proposal to Marina, set in multiple typefaces, each paragraph telling their story in a different style. He printed it on paper he had handmade himself, using flowers from the village square pressed into the pulp.

The letters that changed everything

Marina's answer came in the form of a hand-written note, slipped under the shop's door: a simple "Yes" that meant more than any printed word ever could.



By the summer of 1976, Salvatore began talking about retirement. The shop had evolved, finding its niche in fine art printing and specialized editions, while still serving the daily needs of the village. Duo and Marina had begun planning changes of their own, ways to honor the traditions of typography while embracing selective modernization.

"You understand now," Salvatore said one evening, as they cleaned the presses together, "why I was so resistant to change at first? It wasn't the machines I feared losing. It was this - the soul of the craft."

On his wedding day, Duo stood in the typography shop early in the morning, before the ceremony. The invitations he and Marina had designed together were his finest work yet, each one slightly different, printed on paper they had made by hand. They represented everything he had learned about both typography and life: the importance of tradition and innovation, of patience and precision, of leaving your mark on the world one careful impression at a time.

Looking around the shop, at the ancient presses and cases of type that had become as familiar as his own reflection, he knew he had found his true calling. The world might be changing, but here in Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi, in this small typography shop, there would always be a place where words were crafted by hand, where letters danced across pages like memories, where stories were printed not just with ink, but with love.

2



Latin Mambo

This second book chapter contains a random number of latin words to make-up the whole book.

And this is a blockquote that shows how it would look in a real book.

— duodecimo

Donec a tincidunt felis, vitae pellentesque tellus. Nulla nec nunc ac ipsum ullamcorper placerat nec quis magna. Fusce vulputate, odio sit amet posuere vulputate, enim dolor facilisis metus, sed tristique urna ligula ut metus. Aliquam dictum ultrices ipsum, sit amet pulvinar felis sollicitudin sit amet. Maecenas justo augue, lacinia et faucibus molestie, sodales ut augue. Ut quis risus et diam tristique aliquet. Donec dignissim venenatis nisi, vitae fermentum purus posuere vel. Fusce ornare, justo sit amet lacinia convallis, libero mauris tempor mauris, id varius lacus lacus sed est. Nullam porttitor euismod enim, et elementum magna iaculis ac. Aenean molestie sapien ex, sollicitudin aliquet dui faucibus non. Donec rhoncus vulputate urna. Sed sed nibh ut odio viverra bibendum nec vitae orci.

Interdum et malesuada fames ac ante ipsum primis in faucibus. Duis malesuada hendrerit nunc, non fringilla turpis aliquet ac. Duis semper, mi vitae mollis fringilla, risus sapien fringilla

The letters that changed everything

neque, sed dignissim enim dolor nec turpis. Aliquam accumsan fermentum felis in egestas. Duis lobortis metus ut risus ultricies tempus. Sed sed tempus quam, nec congue eros. Proin sit amet mi purus. Sed ullamcorper sit amet nisl ac pretium.

Morbi est ipsum, placerat ornare lobortis id, condimentum eget metus. Fusce placerat sit amet sapien ac cursus. Aenean porttitor vulputate consecetur. In tristique scelerisque sapien, ac euismod est lobortis nec. Nullam sit amet tempor mauris, molestie faucibus ante. Interdum et malesuada fames ac ante ipsum primis in faucibus. Duis lacinia feugiat tellus vitae dapibus. Phasellus maximus augue id tortor pellentesque bibendum.

Nulla vehicula luctus diam, et lobortis ante aliquam a. Vestibulum imperdiet enim non varius tempus. Nam auctor justo ligula, et sagittis libero bibendum lacinia. Nulla posuere lectus quis orci efficitur eleifend. Duis semper turpis at elementum sagittis. Nulla id convallis ante, a aliquam massa. Ut aliquam neque in velit fringilla faucibus. Aliquam ac turpis erat. Morbi mollis lectus vel suscipit dapibus. Morbi bibendum quam quam. Morbi in est risus. Sed imperdiet condimentum est. Morbi varius turpis enim, quis interdum libero tristique sit amet. Sed euismod arcu lacus, sit amet bibendum risus blandit sed.

Curabitur vel venenatis eros, ac aliquet tortor. Quisque erat enim, viverra consequat massa non, euismod laoreet ligula. Sed metus ligula, imperdiet blandit lectus at, venenatis auctor nisl. Donec at diam ut mauris tincidunt dictum ac eu leo. Donec eget mauris nec augue eleifend laoreet. Vivamus tempus mauris eu mauris vulputate pharetra. Curabitur augue quam, hendrerit eu ligula quis, consequat tempus quam. Mauris at faucibus urna.

Donec consequat, metus ut aliquam rhoncus, est turpis consecetur ex, non sagittis nisi quam eget ex. Integer mattis faucibus justo, vel interdum ante imperdiet vel. Etiam sit amet ipsum non eros elementum accumsan sed sed dui. Nam quis vehicula tortor, ut finibus tortor. Donec aliquam sapien quis dapibus dignissim. Suspendisse nisi velit, luctus in justo nec, lobortis tempor turpis. Ut aliquam eros in metus pharetra, ac dictum

Latin Mambo

felis rhoncus. Proin sed nisi vehicula, auctor felis in, interdum risus. Cras dignissim, ligula consectetur faucibus faucibus, orci urna interdum sem, id accumsan ante diam non leo. In posuere, enim sed porta tempor, arcu libero accumsan tortor, at tempor sapien lectus non est. In hac habitasse platea dictumst. Fusce eu eros ultricies, luctus ligula lacinia, commodo libero.

Donec non laoreet ex. Maecenas pellentesque nunc ante, quis vehicula ipsum luctus non. Cras quis ex sagittis, ultricies leo in, viverra nisi. Phasellus interdum fringilla nisl non sagittis. Curabitur bibendum fringilla sollicitudin. Nam hendrerit volutpat libero et lacinia. Etiam et pulvinar felis, eget pretium quam. Integer at odio tempus, consequat enim vel, maximus orci. Curabitur finibus metus ac massa aliquam, vitae accumsan arcu tristique. Fusce dolor nisl, ultricies non urna non, ullamcorper tempus nisi. Sed efficitur dui leo, tempor feugiat mauris ullamcorper a. Donec ultrices turpis nibh, eget sodales orci lacinia quis. Proin commodo egestas fermentum. Sed condimentum luctus tincidunt.

Mauris suscipit, augue sed eleifend posuere, ante lacus tristique nulla, ac aliquam tortor lectus et enim. Donec blandit, orci vitae rutrum scelerisque, quam purus pellentesque nunc, quis gravida lectus leo ut elit. Vivamus condimentum ut purus vel imperdiet. Morbi accumsan sodales gravida. Fusce bibendum convallis ligula ut varius. Integer consectetur vestibulum ex, ac feugiat leo. Nulla at diam bibendum, ullamcorper libero non, malesuada lorem. Interdum et malesuada fames ac ante ipsum primis in faucibus. Vivamus lobortis imperdiet arcu. Vestibulum bibendum ex nec fringilla cursus. Proin gravida porta volutpat. Aliquam tempus, purus eu finibus sollicitudin, dolor nisi malesuada massa, eu rutrum massa turpis sed mauris. Quisque et sollicitudin velit. Interdum et malesuada fames ac ante ipsum primis in faucibus. Morbi eget velit purus.

Sed non metus ac urna varius hendrerit. Nullam egestas tempus tempor. Morbi ut aliquet lacus. Ut iaculis urna ut ipsum pellentesque bibendum. Pellentesque varius purus sem, nec lacinia

The letters that changed everything

mi ultricies vitae. Quisque id malesuada odio. In tincidunt sodales eros nec pellentesque. Vestibulum in turpis id tellus porta dictum. Nam ac tempus nulla.

Proin malesuada nibh eros, ac viverra ex pellentesque in. Suspendisse potenti. Quisque efficitur eu dui et finibus. Proin scelerisque leo non ligula ornare, a varius urna viverra. Donec malesuada mi ac augue malesuada, eget rutrum leo feugiat. Maecenas convallis dui vitae diam sollicitudin, vel laoreet nisl elementum. Quisque condimentum enim ligula, non vehicula ante scelerisque at. Sed id fermentum enim.

Etiam id massa in diam dapibus scelerisque. Nulla rhoncus quam id justo vulputate fringilla. Curabitur sodales et est eu tristisque. Orci varius natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. Ut ac auctor felis, semper aliquet sapien. Sed id pharetra magna. Mauris dui lorem, suscipit non bibendum sed, ornare eu ipsum. Nullam nec ultrices nisi, vitae lacinia odio. Curabitur quis nisl turpis. Curabitur dui urna, vestibulum et nisl sed, aliquam condimentum lorem. Donec justo sem, condimentum vel ante ac, condimentum tristisque arcu. Vivamus feugiat sapien a odio dapibus, a gravida massa cursus.

Donec nec venenatis mi. Etiam mattis magna non sodales finibus. Integer cursus id arcu vel tincidunt. Duis non viverra sapien, et faucibus risus. Integer at erat sollicitudin, aliquet dui consetetur, congue orci. Aliquam vulputate nec dui ut pellentesque. Mauris et risus ut lectus efficitur semper in eget nulla. Morbi sodales diam eu urna maximus sollicitudin. Etiam non ante nisl. Suspendisse elementum urna nisl, nec pellentesque leo bibendum vitae.

Aliquam dignissim est et est aliquam cursus. Curabitur vestibulum ligula et faucibus volutpat. Quisque efficitur vel odio quis aliquet. Integer gravida, sapien a dapibus porttitor, sapien mi varius lorem, a dapibus nisi neque vitae ex. Sed eu semper est, et facilisis neque. Nulla id nunc sed dolor tempus luctus. Fusce commodo lobortis eros, in porta nulla suscipit id.

Donec ut mauris tortor. Cras lacinia, ante et fermentum hendrerit, tortor felis efficitur sem, et ullamcorper eros orci ut justo. Praesent maximus ligula nulla, vel faucibus neque imperdiet eu. Suspendisse consectetur arcu in purus pharetra tempus. Donec eleifend augue vitae orci posuere, id molestie nunc venenatis. In quis tellus non eros varius dictum a ut justo. Morbi eu mauris eros. Curabitur orci purus, bibendum sit amet tincidunt ut, tincidunt mollis lacus. Cras efficitur felis dolor, et porta ipsum congue eget. Nunc vulputate odio felis, sed porta metus rutrum eu. Duis pharetra tincidunt lectus, sed rutrum erat tincidunt nec. Maecenas libero enim, auctor a diam quis, porta fermentum dolor. Etiam lobortis iaculis auctor. Quisque sed lacus enim. Sed consectetur efficitur leo sed lobortis. Aenean ullamcorper elit sed dui luctus malesuada.

Donec pulvinar ullamcorper arcu id pulvinar. Aliquam lobortis mi eget tempus rutrum. Praesent aliquet semper est quis eleifend. Duis quis congue ex, eu dapibus nulla. Vestibulum tincidunt placerat semper. Curabitur non tempus diam. Nulla magna risus, laoreet et interdum dignissim, faucibus vel odio. Pellentesque suscipit viverra metus non mattis. In condimentum sed magna ac laoreet. Phasellus purus mauris, dignissim a placerat vel, sodales nec lorem. Sed a turpis eu erat dictum facilisis nec quis orci. Pellentesque sodales eros non augue congue, non imperdiet orci feugiat. Sed ac lorem et neque tempor euismod nec in risus. Suspendisse potenti.

Maecenas efficitur aliquam turpis nec pharetra. Phasellus feugiat nec tortor a mattis. Mauris porta ligula nunc, non varius purus consequat ac. In nec cursus leo. Vivamus ac metus diam. Phasellus vitae elit porttitor, sollicitudin augue in, interdum mauris. Ut nec ipsum a orci congue lobortis vel vitae nisl. Aliquam vel facilisis felis. Nullam viverra justo ut venenatis commodo.

Ut ultricies fermentum magna, eu auctor ante luctus a. Phasellus rutrum sollicitudin consequat. Morbi pretium est a nunc blandit, vel pharetra velit molestie. Fusce ullamcorper turpis at purus

The letters that changed everything

tempus auctor. Pellentesque nunc orci, egestas non semper vitae, porta nec lectus. Morbi mi mi, imperdiet id lacus nec, pretium volutpat sapien. Cras commodo vestibulum erat nec lacinia. Donec eleifend in massa quis malesuada. Curabitur lacus justo, mollis ut facilisis a, auctor vel urna. Nam blandit rhoncus vestibulum. Nulla quis feugiat metus, id eleifend leo. Sed ultricies ante sem, at ultrices massa hendrerit ut. Suspendisse eleifend eget nulla nec tincidunt. Vestibulum et condimentum nunc. Sed pharetra vel dui vitae ornare. Curabitur id urna faucibus, vestibulum tortor non, porttitor nisi.

Suspendisse lorem eros, elementum at varius eget, aliquet a nulla. Integer placerat id sem nec viverra. Mauris nec nisi consectetur, interdum diam in, imperdiet felis. Nam lacus nulla, ullamcorper id lacus non, vulputate imperdiet felis. Pellentesque nec convallis orci. Mauris eu erat nec mauris feugiat vehicula at id mauris. Donec ut urna dictum lacus aliquam rutrum. Duis aliquet egestas est, ut convallis massa feugiat ac. Cras rutrum venenatis libero, quis ornare sem finibus eget. Praesent turpis sapien, faucibus id porttitor quis, imperdiet sit amet magna.

Cras a libero nulla. Vivamus vitae eros accumsan, ultrices ante sit amet, mattis enim. Ut sed sodales purus, ac aliquam lorem. In tincidunt scelerisque est vel pharetra. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent consequat justo dignissim ipsum maximus, ac consequat odio hendrerit. Donec aliquam nulla et metus imperdiet vulputate. Maecenas aliquam euismod nibh quis semper. Maecenas laoreet molestie rhoncus. In dictum, ex ac convallis euismod, massa velit ultricies ex, vitae vehicula mauris nunc ac nunc. In dolor erat, tempus sit amet turpis sit amet, vulputate porttitor sem. Vestibulum vel mollis nunc.

Donec dictum scelerisque enim, in blandit arcu efficitur quis. Vestibulum non pretium ipsum, id pharetra lectus. Donec quis elit id leo commodo luctus eu a libero. Cras nec orci magna. Nunc efficitur, dolor sed tempor rutrum, eros quam vulputate ligula, at commodo dolor est non nulla. Fusce consequat com-

modo aliquet. Fusce ligula magna, ultricies sed mattis eu, aliquam et nisi. Pellentesque viverra purus quis risus elementum, quis semper odio tincidunt. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Donec nisl ex, vulputate id sem ac, suscipit condimentum lorem.

About the author

Duodecimo Conti is a name that carries an air of mystery and charm, fitting for an author whose works dance effortlessly between reality and imagination. Born in a small, unnamed Italian village in the shadow of rolling vineyards, Conti often claimed to have spent his early years conversing with shadows and chasing echoes in the hills. This enigmatic upbringing, he said, gave him a deep appreciation for life's transient moments—a theme that would echo through his literary creations. While the specifics of his birth date and parentage remain obscure, some speculate that his pseudonym, “Duodecimo,” refers to the twelfth-born in a large family, though this has never been confirmed.

Conti's writing style defies categorization, blending poetic prose with sharp philosophical insights. His debut novel, *The Letters that Changed Everything*, weaves a surreal tale set against the backdrop of the mid-1970s when traditional typography began facing competition from modern printing methods. Critics praised the book as both a literary masterpiece and a mind-bending puzzle. The novel's unexpected success catapulted Conti into a fleeting spotlight, though he was known for shunning public appearances. Preferring the company of books and moonlit walks, Conti claimed he found inspiration in "the gentle chaos of ordinary lives."

Though much of Conti's bibliography remains shrouded in obscurity, one recurring theme in his work is the concept of "journeys within journeys." In *The Cartographer's Dream*, for example, he tells the story of a mapmaker who realizes the maps he draws reflect not the external world but the inner landscapes of those who use them. The novel's blend of magic realism and existential musings left readers spellbound, though some critics called it impenetrably dense. Conti dismissed such critiques, suggesting

that "not all readers are meant to follow the same path."

Beyond his books, Duodecimo Conti left a legacy of riddles and fragments that continue to intrigue scholars and fans alike. His personal journals, discovered decades after his death, contain sketches, half-written verses, and cryptic notes about "parallel lives." Some interpret these as hints to a grand, interconnected narrative spanning his entire oeuvre, though others view them as playful red herrings. Whatever the truth, Conti's refusal to explain his intentions has only deepened the fascination surrounding his work.

To this day, Duodecimo Conti remains a symbol of literary enigma. His works are celebrated for their ability to transport readers to realms both familiar and foreign, while his reclusive nature ensures his mythos endures. Whether seen as a genius, a trickster, or both, Conti's stories invite readers to look beyond the surface of the written word, into the labyrinthine depths of their own imagination.