

THE FIRST TO RISE

A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE, REINVENTION,
AND REDEMPTION



BIAGIO MAFFETTONE

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Author: Biagio Maffettone

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Dedication

For Those Who Held Me Up— My Family.

To my wife, **Sara-Jeanine**—your calm strength, your endless grace, and your belief in who I could become saved me in more ways than I can count. You were the mirror that showed me my better self. Your love was never loud, but it was always present, always unshakable.

To my children—**Nunzio, Maximo, Adira, and Alessandra**—you are my greatest purpose, the truest legacy I will ever leave. I see the future in your eyes and the best parts of myself in your hearts. Everything I built, everything I became, was for you. I hope my journey shows you that it's never about being perfect—it's about rising, again and again, no matter how many times life tries to push you down.

To my parents—**Nunzio and Maria**—your sacrifices are the foundation this entire story stands on. Papà, your silence was louder than any applause. You showed me that love is in action. Mamma, your tenderness was the compass that always pointed me home. You both taught me to be strong, to be proud, to never break even when bent. I carry your wisdom with me daily.

To my brother, **Raffaele**—you were my mirror, my partner, my anchor. You reminded me of where I came from when I started to forget. I never had to face a storm alone because you were always there, without question.

This book is for you. Because this life—this climb—was never mine alone.

“La famiglia è tutto.”
(Family is everything.)

Prologue

Before the Climb

Every rise begins with a reckoning.

Not the kind that arrives with applause or a title, but the kind that happens in silence—when you realize no one is coming to save you, and it's up to you to change your story. That's where I began. At the bottom, with nothing but will in my chest and pressure on my shoulders.

I wasn't born into fortune. I was born into fire. Into long days, thick air, and quiet sacrifices. Into a world where love wasn't spoken but shown in labor, in loyalty, in the way we showed up for one another even when we had nothing left to give. What I lacked in privilege, I inherited in purpose.

There was no straight path, no easy road. Only obstacles that tested everything I claimed to believe about myself. I was humbled. I was hardened. But I never stopped. I couldn't. There were people depending on me—people who had given everything just to give me a chance. I climbed because I had to. Because standing still wasn't survival—it was surrender.

This isn't the story of a man who had it all figured out. It's the story of a man who refused to be defined by where he started. Who carried his past like a torch, not a chain. Who made a promise to rise—and did.

If you're looking for perfection, you won't find it here. But if you're looking for truth—truth born in hardship, refined by struggle, and lifted by love—then you're holding it now.

This is for those who come from little but dream of more.

For those who were told to stay down.

For those who rise anyway.

Because the climb is hard.

But the view is earned.

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Section - 01

Roots and Foundations

Chapter - 01

The House Near the Tailor Shop



Me as a Newborn

If I close my eyes, I can still smell the faint scent of fresh fabric and hear the rhythmic hum of my father's sewing machine. The house near Nunzio's Tailor Shop in Peekskill, New York, was the world I knew. From the outside, it was just a modest two-family house, but to me, it was everything. That shop—its hum, its smell, its very essence—was where I learned the true meaning of family, hard work, and perseverance. It wasn't just a building; it was where my parents lived, breathed, and built a life for us.

The hum of my father's sewing machine was the soundtrack of my

childhood, its rhythmic click-clack echoing through the rooms, blending with the sound of scissors cutting fabric. Every day, without fail, I'd hear that steady rhythm—so constant and unwavering—that it became a part of me, ingrained in my memories like the heartbeat of our home. The shop wasn't just where my father worked; it was where our family thrived. It was where dreams were stitched together, quietly, one piece at a time.

I watched my father, Nunzio, with a sense of awe. He wasn't a man of many words, but his actions spoke louder than any words could have. Every day, he poured himself into his work—cutting, stitching, pressing, with a meticulous focus that left no room for distractions. There was a quiet intensity about him, a drive that was palpable even in the silence. It was the kind of work that demanded patience, attention to detail, and a deep sense of responsibility. As a young boy, I didn't fully appreciate the weight of his sacrifice, nor did I understand the toll it took on him. He never spoke of his past, the hardships he faced when he first arrived in America, or the long nights he spent working just to make ends meet. But I could feel it. I could feel it in the way he worked, in the quiet strength that radiated from him, in the way he carried the burden of providing for us without ever complaining.

Then there was my mother, Maria. She was the heart of our family. While my father worked tirelessly, she was there beside him, sewing with her own hands. She didn't speak much either, but her love wasn't expressed in words—it was in everything she did. The meals she cooked with care, the way she kept the home warm and inviting, the love she poured into every little detail. Her laughter, soft and gentle, was the thread that held us together, even when everything else felt uncertain. Where my father's love was shown in silent dedication, my mother's love was shown in warmth and comfort, in the way she made our home feel safe and nurturing. I never fully understood it back then, but now, as an adult, I realize that my parents' love for us wasn't always loud, but it was constant. It was unwavering. It was in every action they took, in every sacrifice they made.

My father's silence wasn't coldness; it was his way of showing love. He didn't need to say "*I love you*" because every hour he spent working, every stitch of fabric, every garment he crafted, was his way of saying, "*I love you*." And my mother, with her warmth and tenderness, showed love through the simple acts of care—preparing meals, making sure we were well, offering a quiet word of comfort when things got tough. Together, they created a home, a foundation that I would grow from, even if I didn't fully understand it at the time.

Back then, I took it for granted. I didn't see it as anything special. But now, with the clarity of time and experience, I see it for what it was—an extraordinary gift. My parents didn't just build a life for us; they created a legacy. They worked tirelessly, not just to provide for us materially, but to give us something deeper—a sense of purpose, a sense of worth, and a strong foundation built on love and hard work.

There were times when I resented their relentless drive. The long hours spent at the shop, the focus on work that sometimes overshadowed everything else, the times when I longed for their attention, for their time. I didn't understand why they seemed so focused on work—why it often felt like the shop came before everything else. I wanted more of their attention. I wanted to hear them say how proud they were of me, how much they loved me. But looking back, I realize their work wasn't just about earning a living. It was about creating a future for us, a future where I could stand on the shoulders of their sacrifices. Their commitment to us, though unspoken, was the strongest form of love they could give. Every long hour at the shop, every stitch in a suit, was a step toward something greater—a life that I would one day carry forward.

Their love, though silent at times, was the strongest force that shaped me. It wasn't something that was spoken loudly—it was in every action, in every gesture. It was the foundation of everything I am today. I now see that the work they did, the silent love they showed, laid the groundwork

for everything I would become. And I see that the greatest gift they gave me was not just the life they built for me—it was the values they instilled in me: the importance of family, hard work, resilience, and love.

In those moments when I felt the weight of their sacrifice, I didn't understand it. But now, I know they were teaching me how to rise. They were showing me that no matter how hard life gets, no matter how difficult the road, the key to overcoming it is to keep moving forward. They were the first to rise for me—my father with his quiet strength, my mother with her unspoken warmth—and they taught me that I, too, could rise. I, too, could face life's challenges with courage and resilience. I now understand that their sacrifices weren't just about providing for me; they were about teaching me how to rise, how to persevere, and how to make a legacy that would carry on through me.

And now, as I reflect on my own role as a father, I realize that the same responsibility rests with me. It's my turn to rise—for my children, for my family, for the future we are building together. I rise because I know they need me, and I rise because I know that every choice I make today will shape the future we leave behind. It's not just about providing a material life for them—it's about giving them the tools, the values, and the strength to rise on their own. It's about showing them, by my actions, that they too can face life's difficulties and rise above them.

I am so grateful for the foundation my parents gave me. It wasn't always easy, but it was always rooted in love. Their silent sacrifices, their hard work, and their unwavering belief in me are the greatest gifts they ever gave me. And now, I pass that gift on to my own children.

So, to my family, I say this: You are my legacy. You are the reason I rise every day. And I will always rise for you—just as my parents did for me.



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