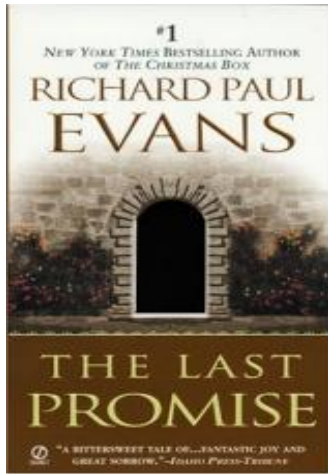


# The Last Promise

by Richard Paul Evans

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## About the Book

When Eliana, still called Ellen by her close friends back in America, moved to Italy the future was bright with promise. Tuscany held magic in its sprawling vineyards, great food, and centuries of art. It was a life of the senses, perfect for a blossoming, talented young artist such as Eliana. Her family and friends back home all thought she had made the right choice in following her heart, and the man she fell in love with and married, back to his native country. In America, Eliana's story was that of a fairy tale.

But in Italy, in the small, rustic village nestled in the Chianti countryside, Eliana found her husband to be a very different man. Over time he distances himself from her, leaving Eliana to care for their young son, struggling with the asthma that threatens to take his life.

Although she longs for the romance she'd known in America, Eliana is happy as a mother and with the time she spends with her child; yet when fellow American, Ross Story, a deeply thoughtful man with a mysterious passion for art, arrives at the same villa, a chance encounter causes Eliana and Ross to look at their lives anew. And with their discovery that individuals may change and grow, they can never forget that the bonds of family last forever.

In **The Last Promise** Richard Paul Evans spins a passionate, bittersweet tale about the fantastic joy and great sorrow life can throw our way. Rich and complex as a vintage Chianti wine, **The Last Promise** is in the end an uplifting, all-too-human tale about the magnificent power of true love.

## Discussion Guide

1. How important to the story is the setting of **The Last Promise**? Could the story have been set somewhere else, or do you feel the story is unique to its locale?

2. Discuss the role of art in the lives of Eliana, Maurizio, Anna, and Ross. What, if anything, does each give and derive from art in his or her life? How would each of these characters define the concept of beauty?
3. Do the Italian characters in **The Last Promise** treat the American characters differently than they do each other? Do you think this is true in life as well as literature? How do different cultures respond to visitors? Does your opinion change when the word "visitors" is replaced by the word "tourists"?
4. In addition to bonds of love, the bonds of family play a crucial role in **The Last Promise**. Compare and contrast the relationships of Anna and Maurizio and Ross and Stan.
5. The story of the Vestal Virgins recurs throughout **The Last Promise**. How reflective is that story of Eliana's life?
6. Richard Paul Evans uses Italian proverbs to limn the theme of each chapter. Were there any proverbs you identified strongly with? Any you disagreed with? Are there some that apply exclusively to Italian life, or are they universal?
7. The love of a mother for her child is one of the strongest forces in nature. Discuss the mother-child relationships in **The Last Promise**. How is the relationship between Eliana and her son different from the relationship between Eliana and her mother? How about Maurizio's relationship with his mother?
8. Does what **The Last Promise** tells us of Maurizio's father explain Maurizio's attitude about his own son, Alessio?
9. How important are food and wine to **The Last Promise** and to your understanding of Italian life? Does it speak more to character or nationality that Ross is willing to cook and Maurizio is not? How about Eliana's occasional yearning for American foods? Do they reflect on greater desire?
10. Everyone at Rendola seems to like Eliana, but why does everyone (except Maurizio's own sister) side with Maurizio against Eliana when her relationship with Ross comes to light?
11. Ross tells Eliana that "love doesn't give second chances." Do you think this is true? How is this borne out, or not, in the story, in regard to Ross, Eliana, Anna, and Maurizio?

## Author Bio

Richard Paul Evans is the #1 *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of more than 40 novels. There are currently more than 35 million copies of his books in print worldwide, translated into more than 24 languages. Richard is the recipient of numerous awards, including two first place Storytelling World Awards, the *Romantic Times* Best Women's Novel of the Year Award, and is a five-time recipient of the Religion Communicators Council's Wilbur Awards.

Seven of Richard's books have been produced as television movies. His first feature film, *The Noel Diary*, starring Justin Hartley ("This Is Us") and acclaimed film director Charles Shyer (*Private Benjamin*, *Father of the Bride*), debuts in November 2022. In 2011, Richard began writing Michael Vey, a #1 *New York Times* bestselling young adult series that has won more than a dozen awards.

Richard is the founder of The Christmas Box International, an organization devoted to maintaining emergency children's shelters and providing services and resources for abused, neglected, or homeless children and young adults. To date, more than 125,000 youths have been helped by the charity. For his humanitarian work, Richard has received the *Washington Times* Humanitarian of the Century Award and the Volunteers of America National Empathy Award.

Richard lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, with his wife, Keri, and their five children and two grandchildren.

## Critical Praise

The Tuscan setting of this new novel by the author of **The Christmas Box** is as beguiling as its heroine...Those who enjoyed *The Christmas Box* are in for another treat.

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