



Paolo Copparoni

# The Midlife Crisis



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**A1/A2**

*The Midlife Crisis*  
by Paolo Copparoni, translated into English by Ruth Stephens  
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Level A1/A2 Elementary English audio-book  
by Paolo Copparoni, translated into English by  
Ruth Stephens

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*listen to this story at <http://soundcloud.com/imparareinglese-com/sets/the-midlife-crisis>*

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## 1. Two Old Friends

Listen to this story at: <http://soundcloud.com/imparareinglese-com/sets/the-midlife-crisis>

Luca and Stefano are old friends from Bologna.

They share a passion for jazz, and from a young age dreamed of becoming professional musicians.

But now they are 40, and their lives are very different from those they imagined: Luca works in a bank, Stefano at the post office!

Stefano is married to Marzia, and they have a four-year-old daughter, Michela. Luca is married too, but he and his wife, Silvia, have no children yet.

The two friends love their families, and have safe jobs – perhaps a little too safe. Every day is similar to the one before.

Luca and Stefano are bored! They remember their youth and want to re-live the emotions and excitement they felt then.

Each day they become more unhappy. But what can they do about it?

### **Glossary**

share - condividere

dream - sognare

lives - vite

safe – sicuro

bored - annoiato

youth - giovinezza

excitement - eccitazione

become - diventare

### **Exercise**

True or False? (Vero o falso?)

1. Luca and Stefano are professional musicians.
2. They work at the post office.
3. Luca and Silvia don't have any children.
4. They don't like their jobs because they are boring.
5. They miss the excitement of their youth.

## 2. A Shared Passion

Listen to this story at: <http://soundcloud.com/imparareinglese-com/sets/the-midlife-crisis>

Every Sunday evening the two friends meet in Luca's garage to make music and forget their everyday lives.

Luca plays the piano, Stefano the drums.

They enjoy playing together but have become frustrated because many of the songs they want to play need more instruments. As they are, just the two of them, they can never play live.

"This is no good, Stefano," says Luca one evening.

"I'm tired of playing like this, just the two of us. It was ok at first, but if we really want to have a band, we need a singer and a bass player!"

"I know," replies Stefano.

"But with our jobs we don't have much free time. Perhaps we're being too ambitious?"

Playing in a band is a really big commitment..."

### **Glossary**

garage - box, garage

forget - dimenticare

drums - percussioni, batteria

play - suonare

together - insieme

frustrated - scoraggiato, frustrato

instruments - strumenti musicali

live - dal vivo

tired - stanco

just the two of us - solo noi due

at first - all'inizio

band - gruppo

singer - cantante

bass player - bassista

reply - rispondere

job - posto di lavoro

free time - tempo libero  
ambitious - ambizioso  
commitment – impegno

## **Exercise**

Put the sentences in order (Metti in ordine le frasi)

1. Stefano thinks a band would be a big commitment.
2. Luca suggests doing something different.
3. They are frustrated playing as a duo.
4. The two friends play music every Sunday in Luca's garage.
5. Luca is the pianist, Stefano plays drums.

### 3. The Bass Player

Listen to this story: <http://soundcloud.com/imparareinglese-com/sets/the-midlife-crisis>

Luca and Stefano have a problem:

“Playing music is our passion, Stefano, but we can’t go on like this.

We have to find other musicians, or give up.”

“You’re right,” replies Stefano.

“But listen, I have an idea.

My new colleague, Marco, plays the guitar....

Maybe he knows bass as well.

I could ask him if he’s interested.”

But persuading Marco to join a band is not an easy task.

“Come on, Marco, why not give it a try?” says Stefano

“We only play once a week. I’m sure you’d love our music!”

“No, Stefano, I told you, I haven’t played for a long time.

And I haven’t played the bass much – I’m not very good.”

“Well, come just once. Please! For a jam.

Then, if you don’t enjoy it, I won’t ask you again.”

To keep Stefano happy, the following Sunday evening Marco brings his bass to Luca’s garage.

He’s almost sure he won’t come a second time.

“OK, lets try ‘Autumn Leaves’” suggests Luca.

“It’s a jazz standard. Do you know it, Marco?”

“Yes, I know it.... OK, let’s try. But I’m not promising anything!”

Once the three of them start to play, things go well.

Better than anyone expected.

There seems to be a magic in the music.

And Marco plays the bass with talent.

By the end of the evening, all three of them are enthusiastic!

So Marco needs no persuasion to join the band.

## **Glossary**

go on - continuare  
find - trovare  
musician - musicista  
give up - smettere  
you're right - hai ragione  
listen - ascolta  
colleague - collega  
know - sapere  
interested - interessato  
persuade - convincere  
join - unirsi a  
task - compito  
give it a try - provare  
once a week - una volta alla settimana  
I'm sure - sono sicuro  
enjoy - divertirsi  
following - seguente  
let's try - proviamo  
suggest - suggerire  
promise - promettere  
go well - va bene  
expect - aspettare  
seem - sembrare  
enthusiastic - entusiasta  
need - avere bisogno di

## **Exercise**

True or False?

1. Luca asks his colleague to join the band as a bass player.
2. Marco says he isn't good on the bass.
3. Marco agrees to try one time.
4. They play 'Autumn Leaves'.
5. Marco agrees to join Stefano and Luca.

## 4. Singer Wanted

Listen to this story at: <http://soundcloud.com/imparareinglese-com/sets/the-midlife-crisis>

Luca and Stefano decide to place an advertisement on a musicians' website. Within a few days, e-mails begin to arrive. They organise some auditions, but nobody is suitable. The advertisement was a waste of time! One evening, the three friends meet in a pub to decide what to do. As they are having a beer together, a soul group starts to play. All three of them agree: the singer is fantastic! When the band takes a break, Luca, who thinks the girl has the most beautiful voice he's ever heard, asks if she will sing with his band. Her name is Laura. She's a student at the Conservatorio in Bologna. She suggests that Luca, Stefano and Marco join her for a jam session when the soul group finishes:

"We'll see how good you are. If you convince me, we can talk about your band!"

Marco and Stefano are worried at the idea of a jam session in the pub, in public! But Luca, always the most enthusiastic, encourages them. They agree to try.

Luca plays the first notes of "All the things you are" on the piano. Marco joins in with the bass. And Stefano, on the drums, begins to provide rhythm. At the right moment, Laura starts to sing... When the song ends there is loud applause! Laura is enthusiastic.

"So what do you call your band?" she asks.

"Well..." begins Stefano, a little embarrassed.

"How does Blue Vibes sound?" suggests Laura.

They all agree, it sounds great!

The band now has a name.

### **Glossary**

decide - decidere

place an advertisement - mettere un annuncio

within - entro

begin - iniziare

arrive - arrivare  
organise - programmare  
auditions - provino  
nobody - nessuno  
suitable - adatto, giusto  
a waste of time - perdita di tempo  
meet - incontrarsi  
together - insieme  
take a break - fare una pausa  
voice - voce  
heard - sentito  
how good you are - quanto siete bravi  
convince - convincere  
worried - preoccupati  
encourage - incoraggiare  
rhythm - ritmo  
at the right moment - al momento giusto  
applause - applauso  
embarrassed - imbarazzato  
sounds great - suona molto bene

## **Exercise**

Put the sentences in order

1. They organise auditions, but don't find anyone suitable.
2. They put an advertisement on a musician's website.
3. The singer in the soul group, Laura, is very good.
4. They jam with Laura, and choose a name for the band.
5. They meet in a pub to decide what to do.

## 5. The Blue Vibes

Listen to this story at: <http://soundcloud.com/imparareinglese-com/sets/the-midlife-crisis>

As before, The Blue Vibes play every Sunday in Luca's garage, but now there are four of them!

After a few weeks they already have twenty songs ready.

"Why don't we look for a place to play live, in front of an audience? We could check the bars and pubs in the center." suggests Luca.

"That's a good idea. We're more than ready" agrees Laura, happy with her role as singer.

But none of the places they approach in the center of Bologna are interested.

Summer is coming, and the pubs and clubs already have their program of events organised.

The members of the band are depressed.

"We can't wait another year!" complains Stefano.

"What about this idea..." suggests Luca,

"Let's organise our own event next weekend!"

"But where?" asks Stefano.

"Where do you think?"

Right here, in my garage!"

Laura is sceptical.

"What will your neighbours say?"

If it's noisy, they'll complain. They might even call the police!"

"We can start early, at aperitivo time." proposes Marco.

"Then we won't disturb anyone with the noise of our instruments."

"That's a good idea," agrees Luca,

"That way, we could invite the neighbours too!"

### **Glossary**

songs - canzoni

ready - pronti

why don't we..? - perché non facciamo...?

check - controllare

role - ruolo

none - nessuno  
depressed - abbattuto  
right here - proprio qui  
sceptical - scettico  
noisy - rumoroso  
complain - lamentarsi  
disturb - disturbare  
neighbours - vicini di casa

## **Exercise**

True or False?

1. There are now four members of the band.
2. No pub or club in the centre is interested in them.
3. They agree to wait until the next year.
4. Luca suggests organising an event in the garage.
5. They don't want to invite the neighbours.

## 6. The Event

Listen to this story at: <http://soundcloud.com/imparareinglese-com/sets/the-midlife-crisis>

The Blue Vibes invite all their friends to Sunday's event.

Luca's and Stefano's wives make lots of good things to eat, and drink!

So there's a big crowd to listen to the music.

Everyone loves the music, and compliment the musicians and the singer.

"I really enjoyed it," says Paolo, a colleague of Stefano and Marco.

"You were brilliant!"

Because of this enthusiasm, the Blue Vibes decide to play every Friday, and to invite different people.

Students begin to come to hear the music, so soon the Blue Vibes are well-known throughout the city.

They begin to get invitations from venues in the center of Bologna to play on weekday evenings.

But Stefano and Marco are worried about the effect on their families, and on their jobs!

The four friends hold a meeting to decide what to do.

Should they start to play music professionally? Or continue in Luca's garage?

### **Glossary**

friends - amici

wives - mogli

crowd - pubblico

everyone - tutti

compliment - fare i complimenti

really - proprio, veramente

brilliant - splendidi, meravigliosi

soon - presto

well-known - noto

throughout - ovunque

venue - luogo di incontro

weekday - giorno feriale

effect - effetto

hold a meeting - tenere un incontro  
professionally - di professione

## **Exercise**

Put the sentences in order

1. People are enthusiastic.
2. They invite all their friends to the event.
3. They decide to play every Friday.
4. Lots of people come.
5. Stefano and Marco are worried about the effect on their jobs.

## 7. The Meeting

Listen to this story at: <http://soundcloud.com/imparareinglese-com/sets/the-midlife-crisis>

Laura loves singing, so wants the band to accept the proposals to play in the city's pubs and nightclubs.

But she's young – still a student!

For the others it's more difficult.

Luca thinks that this is their only chance. They are now 40 – they may never have another opportunity like this!

"I'm sorry," says Marco, "I love playing in the band. But I have to think of my family. And I already have a job."

"It's difficult for me, too!" replies Stefano

"I'm too tired to play in the evenings after work. And I don't want to give up my job. It's too risky!"

Luca is very disappointed.

He tries to persuade Marco and Stefano:

"This is a unique opportunity for us.

It's our one chance to become real musicians.....

Please. We can't stop now!"

Stefano and Marco look at him.

They don't seem happy, but they've made their decision.

### **Glossary**

others - altri

chance - occasione, possibilità

risky - rischioso

disappointed - deluso

unique - unico

## **Exercise**

True or False?

1. Laura doesn't want to sing more often because she's too young.
2. Luca wants to take the opportunity.
3. Marco and Stefano don't want to risk their jobs and families.
4. Luca is disappointed.
5. Luca tries to persuade his friends.

## 8. Different Roads

Listen to this story at: <http://soundcloud.com/imparareinglese-com/sets/the-midlife-crisis>

Stefano and Marco decide to leave the band.

They are now happier with their old lives because of the wonderful experience with The Blue Vibes.

But Luca and Laura start playing together as a duo, in the evenings at pubs in the centre.

Soon they are contacted by a professional musician, who invites them to join his band for a national tour.

Luca accepts without hesitation, and leaves his job at the bank!

The tour is a fantastic experience. When it's over, Luca decides to form another band with Laura, who is finishing her studies at the Conservatory.

Luca met many other musicians on the national tour, so it's easy to find others to join the new band.

His dream finally becomes reality!

### **Glossary**

leave - lasciare

happier - più contento

wonderful - meraviglioso

accept - accettare

form - formare

easy - facile

dream - sogno

reality - realtà

### **Exercise**

Put the sentences in order

1. A professional musician invites them to join a national tour.
2. Luca and Laura begin playing as a duo.
3. Marco and Stefano leave the band.
4. Luca leaves his job at the bank.
5. Luca and Laura form another band.

## **Solutions**

### Chapter 1

1. F 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. T

### Chapter 2

4. 5. 3. 2. 1

### Chapter 3

1. F 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. T

### Chapter 4

2. 1. 5. 3. 4

### Chapter 5

1. T 2. T 3. F 4. T 5. F

### Chapter 6

2. 4. 1. 3. 5

### Chapter 7

1. F 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. T

### Chapter 8

3. 2. 1. 4. 5