

CHAPTER 1

Naples

1969

Her eyes swollen with crying, fourteen year-old Rosetta Baldacci watched the men in the room intently. Was one of them her father's killer, she wondered.

Seated around a large oak table, eating, drinking and discussing various business projects, were a dozen men - all of them related to her by blood or marriage. The fragrance of the orange and lemon trees in the grounds of the villa drifted in through floor-length windows, mingling with the smell of rich spicy food. Everything about the room, from the ornate ceiling to the crimson damask wallpaper and highly polished furniture, indicated opulence. The air was full of the sound of loud confident voices, with Rosetta's grandfather, Don Martelli sitting in state at the head of the table.

She sat curled up in an old leather armchair in the corner of the room, her sun-tanned face haggard with weeks of grief, despair and sleeplessness. Rosetta's delicate beauty and small stature gave the impression of vulnerability, bringing out people's protective instincts. Like most young girls, she was learning to use these assets to her advantage, particularly with the men in her family and the boys in the district. The reality was quite different. Under the illusion of vulnerability existed a steel core of determination and a toughness to match, with a sharp brain that instinctively made use of any knowledge she acquired. Only her grandmother knew this and fully understood her, and this had created a bond she did not have with anyone else.

Rosetta's world had been turned upside down by the murder of her father, but gradually the weeks of desolation, depression and anger had brought about a certain transformation. Shafts of light began to penetrate the darkness, and a new

understanding of the world around her had taken shape. The family's history, the mysterious 'Meetings' and her grandfather's instructions and advice all began to make some kind of sense. With each new insight, the once happy-go-lucky child had grown into a solemn teenager who craved vengeance.

Who had killed her father? *Why* had he been killed? Rosetta remembered every detail of that terrible day. He was away at a Socialist conference in Rome and she hadn't seen him for nearly a month. He'd rung the night he got back to say he would be late picking her up at her grandparents' the next morning - for some reason he had to go to his office first. Impatient to see her father, she had begged her grandparents to let her go and meet him, and reluctantly they had agreed. One of the Don's men had dropped her off at the office.

Rosetta had her own key and let herself in full of excitement, settling down in a shabby old armchair to wait for her papa. Looking around she reflected on how unimpressive the office was. It consisted of two small, grubby rooms and a toilet; the large oak desk had seen better days and was littered with papers and all sorts of odds and ends. What her father needed was a secretary. "Maybe I could do it!" she thought, imagining herself in a well-appointed outer office where important clients would be waiting to see her father. "You may go in now, Senator Filippo!" she said aloud, waving the imaginary senator though.

Suddenly, the door burst open and three men charged in, one of them grabbing hold of her as she jumped to her feet. "Who are you? What are you doing here?" he shouted.

"It's the Baldacci kid - give her to me!" snapped the second man.

"Do you want me to get rid of her, Boss?" asked the third.

"No, you idiot, just the father! Have a look round!" A chill of fear ran down Rosetta's spine as this second man roughly turned her to face him. He was taller than the other two and seemed to be in command. Bending down, he thrust his face to within inches of hers. "Is your father here, Girl?" he asked menacingly.

Determined to be brave, Rosetta remembered all the times she had heard her grandfather lecturing his men. ‘Stay calm whatever the situation and take in every detail. When in doubt, hold back - and use the brains God gave you,’ he would say.

“Answer me, Girl!” the tall man shouted.

Scared half to death but trying to keep calm, she stared back at him, taking in the colour of his eyes, the shape of his head.

“Answer me!” he shouted again.

Rosetta couldn’t help wincing, but looked him steadily in the eye with all the courage she could muster. The tall man recoiled. Something about this girl seemed to touch his very soul: the defiant stance, the coldness of the deep blue eyes, the lack of fear - all gave the impression of hidden power. She was only a child, but he felt instinctively that she was a threat. Maybe he should kill her. But no, his instructions were clear: ‘only the father.’

“No one,” said the thick-set man coming out of the toilet.

“Where is he then?” the thin one asked anxiously.

“Don’t panic! The appointment was made for twelve-thirty - he’ll be here soon,” replied the tall one.

Simone Baldacci was walking on air as he made his way from the station towards his office. The Central Committee in Rome had given him its blessing: he was now Chairman of the South Naples Communist Party and had been elected Regional Officer for the whole of the Naples area. His father would have been proud of him. With these new powers he would be able to do things his father had only dreamed about, and the sacrifices he and his family had made would soon bear fruit. His father, a life-long Communist, had been killed by the Nazis; Simone’s mother, frail at the best of times, had struggled to bring him up but had somehow managed to give the boy a good education. He had lost his wife in a car accident and his daughter going to live with her grandparents had hit him hard.

Suppressing his grief, he had thrown himself into working for the Party, in which he soon became a prominent figure.

Over the last two years, as well as helping the Student Movement to get itself organized and plan demonstrations, he had encouraged the local factory workers to strike for better wages. But this was just the beginning: soon the already decayed Capitalist system would fail completely, and then he could turn his attention to the rotten politicians and the criminal gangs that ran the city. Ironically, it was through his own corrupt father-in-law that he had come to understand why so little ever changed for the working class. Now he would fight this cancer in society with all the means he could. He was planning to set up a newspaper exposing the lot of them, and he had accumulated the funds to recruit more full time officers and get ready to fight the next Election. Having championed the poor for the whole of his adult life, he now had the means to bring down their oppressors. He would pay them all back, especially his father-in-law.

Rosetta tried to take in everything she could about the three men, noticing a small star in a circle tattooed between the thumb and forefinger of the one holding on to her. The other two took up position either side of the door; although different in build and looks, they seem to have the same mannerisms and Rosetta got the impression they were related.

Suddenly the door opened. Struggling wildly, Rosetta tried to scream, but the man holding her clamped his hand over her mouth so tightly she could hardly breathe. Her father walked in and then stopped in his tracks. He opened his mouth, but before he could say anything two shots rang out. Fighting for breath, Rosetta could only watch in silent horror as her father sank to his knees, his arms stretched out towards her. There was a look of utter disbelief on his face and he tried to say something, but only blood came out.

Simone Baldacci crumpled to the floor as his life drained away. The thin man walked over and kicked him in the face.

Rosetta's grandmother came over and placed some food on the small table next to the chair. "Try to eat something, Little One," she said, bending down and kissing her gently on both cheeks. Rosetta gave a weak smile, but didn't even look at the food: nothing was of any interest to her now except the one burning question on her mind. Meanwhile, her aunt and grandmother fussed around the men at the table like a pair of old mother hens with their chicks - bustling in and out of the kitchen as if their lives depended on it; putting more wine and food on the table as and when needed.

Rosetta stared absent-mindedly out of the window and saw two young men of about twenty, one taller and much darker than the other, nervously walking up and down the garden path. The taller one stumbled over a raised flag stone and nearly fell into a rose bush, making Rosetta smile for the first time in weeks. The dark haired young man was like a Greek god, with bronzed skin and dark eyes, and it occurred to her that this was the first time she had ever seen Danio Gallucci on his own. All the girls in the district were in love with Danio, flocking around him wherever he went, like sparrows dancing around a tree in the evening sky. Worst of all he had eyelashes that any girl would kill for. It was so unfair that a boy should have eyelashes like that! She thought.

Danio Gallucci was wondering why he had been summoned to the villa. As far as he knew he had not offended or done anything to anyone, and the more he thought about it, the more nervous he became. For Danio life was terrific. He had an excellent job in one of the more fashionable stores in the centre of Naples. The wages were good, he was able to meet plenty of girls, and he was out on the town most nights. He loved the thrill of the chase, losing interest once the girls' defences were breached - with some it was only a matter of days, others would

take weeks. He was no fool though, and despite being a Catholic he always - or almost always - used contraceptives. Girls were constantly trying to get him to settle down, to the point where he was amazed at how many different ways they came up with to trap him into marriage. All his male friends said he should go into films, and he had decided to do just that.

The other young man, Lapo Rossi, was totally opposite. He always undertook any task with a kind of grateful pleasure, and for this reason he was well liked and respected. Stockily built, with powerful arms, he had done a number of low paid jobs. Lapo was nervous too, but not in the same way as Danio: it was an excited nervousness because he knew this day could change his whole life. He had just got married and needed to earn more money. His wife was a cousin to one of the Martelli family, and if he played his cards right, there was every chance of a good job. The old man had given them the cash for a flat as a wedding present, which had come as a complete surprise to Lapo and his new wife, and in one of the envelopes of money there was a note telling him to come to the villa when he got back from honeymoon.

Rosetta loved the ancient villa with its high walls and paved walkways. The large gardens were filled with palms, yucca and lemon trees, and on either side of the winding pathways scented rose bushes filled the air with their heady fragrance. Her favourite spot was the swimming pool, neatly placed in a corner of the garden, the fish-head fountains in the wall beside it sending cascades of water all along one side of the pool. The villa itself, with its large yellow rooms and oversized windows, had always given her a sense of freedom and security: now everything felt different and forbidding. The house had been built in the eighteenth century as a holiday retreat for a noble family from Rome at a time when the Bay of Naples had been a fashionable area, but when tastes changed many villas fell into disrepair. Her grandfather had acquired this one for a song and soon restored it to its former glory. At the same time, he had made the villa into an impregnable fortress for the family.

“Danio Gallucci has arrived. He’s waiting outside,” Uncle Marco announced.

“Send him in,” replied her grandfather.

“Go get him!” Marco told a newcomer at the table, who jumped up as if he’d been shot and darted obediently out of the room. Rosetta turned her attention back to the other men and waited with bated breath, knowing that each one of them had a reason to have hated her father. Rosetta had always loved to watch and listen to her grandfather and seemed to draw strength from him. Ever since she could remember she had heard him outlining grand plans of one kind or another, and he had a way of making everything so interesting. A discussion would take place around the table, during which he would listen carefully to everyone's suggestion or proposal. Then he would give his decision or instructions in between mouthfuls of food. No one ever questioned or argued with her grandfather - except, that is, Uncle Marco, who would occasionally offer another solution. Grandfather would always listen very intently before pointing out with great care exactly why his plan of action was the better one.

When she was little Rosetta used to sit on his knee during these meetings, being fed from his plate and sometimes ‘included’ in a family discussion. Most of the time she had no idea what they were talking about. Trying to imitate her grandfather, she would shout, “I have listened to all your suggestions. This is my decision!” banging her hand on the table, which he only did when he was angry with someone, and the men in the room would laugh and clap with delight. When she felt too old to sit on his knee Rosetta had taken to sitting in the leather chair in the corner. What fascinated her most was the power her grandfather had over everyone and the effortless way he seemed to solve their problems. Now, for first time in her young life, she fully understood what was about to take place.

Danio entered the room and Rosetta’s heart skipped a beat, her young body shuddering with the first stirrings of womanhood. He’s so beautiful, was her first thought, followed paradoxically by a chill of fear. “You sent for me Don Martelli,” said Danio formally.

“Indeed I did,” replied her grandfather, and there was a long uncomfortable silence as he stared fixedly at the young man standing there. Danio looked from the Don to the men around the table and began to shake, but then Marco handed him a large bundle of money.

“What is this for, Don Martelli?” he asked nervously.

“For your wedding to Mara Palumbo... or your funeral. The choice is yours: now go and decide!” All the colour drained out of young man’s face. He looked at the bundle as if he’d never see money before, then turned round and walked slowly out of the room.

Danio was loved by everyone not only for his looks, but because he had such a kind nature and would do anything for anyone. His only fault was his womanizing - appropriately enough considering that in days gone by Gallucci, or ‘little rooster’ was a nickname for a man known for his sexual prowess, and a bit of a show-off! Mara Palumbo had been one of his many conquests. With uncharacteristic carelessness he had got her pregnant and then refused to marry her. The girl’s mother had come to Don Martelli and asked for something to be done about it. Now Rosetta sighed with relief - she knew that everyone would talk Danio into getting married.

Rosetta had always adored both her father and grandfather, believing that they both did all they could to help other people. Now she knew differently: her father had been everything these men weren't, believing passionately that it was everyone's duty to help those in need. She had known that he was a committed Socialist who cared for his fellow men, working tirelessly on their behalf, but had never fully understood what that meant until the funeral. Factory worker after factory worker came and told her little stories of her father. How he’d not only helped them get better wages, but also helped their families into a better flat, or lent them some money. Students told her how he’d found them accommodation or work, and so many worn down women and old men expressed their sadness at the loss of her father. The out-pouring of love from these poor people had made

her look with fresh eyes at the men she had grown up amongst. Her father was genuinely loved and gave his help freely, but these men only wanted power. They used fear to get it, always extracting a high price in exchange for any 'help' they might give. In the weeks following her father's death Rosetta's emotions swung from disbelief to desolation, depression and helplessness. Then her world was thrown even further into chaos by the shocking revelation that the two men she loved the most had in fact hated each other. Finally came a sort of acceptance, but with it an ever-deepening anger began to take hold. Who could have dared to take the life of such a kind and loving man?

"Lapo Rossi is waiting, Papa," Marco said, and the Don ordered for him to be sent in. When Lapo entered the room he stood at the far end of the table like some humble dog hoping for scraps.

"I have received good reports about you Lapo. Everyone speaks well of you," said the Don.

"I am honored and grateful that you have taken such time and trouble over me," Lapo replied.

"Well, you are a serious young man who does the right thing," the Don said with a smile. "We value these qualities, and since you have married a distant relative of my wife, we welcome you into the Martelli clan." Everyone clapped.

"Sit next to Aldo," invited Marco. "He will be your mentor. Do all he asks of you - learn from him!"

"I thank you all for this honour, and I pledge loyalty to the family!" declared Lapo solemnly.

After a suitable pause the Don spoke again. "Aldo, I want you to go to all the construction sites and remind the men to vote for Deputy Leone."

"And make sure their relations vote for him as well," added Marco.

"This is important, Aldo" the Don stressed. "There's a big government contract coming up, and I want to make sure the Family gets its share."

“Just remind them if they don’t vote for Leone, they’ll be out of a job,” put in Marco.

“But how will we know if they’ve voted for who we want?” asked Aldo.

“Marco, you explain,” said the Don.

“Easy! You find out from the Electoral Register.”

“How? I don’t see how. All you’d get is who enrolled to vote, not who they voted for.”

Marco smiled. “Look we have lots of building workers who live in two particular areas, right?”

“Yes,” Aldo said, looking puzzled.

“Well, it works like this. If I have two hundred workers, Deputy Leone should get two hundred votes from them, and at least fifty percent of the votes from their relatives and fifty percent from their friends. Then I go and check how many votes Leone got.”

“It’s that simple?”

“But yes!” smiled the Don, and the meeting moved on to the next item on the agenda.

“We will soon need to diversify, Papa,” began Marco. “All the businesses are doing well.”

“Yes,” replied his father. “I have been giving this matter some thought, and I have decided that what we need is an expert financial adviser. I propose we take on the Marcini Company.”

“I’m not sure I like the idea of other people having knowledge of the family’s affairs,” Marco said.

“They will only deal with any *legitimate* companies we take over.”

“All the same, I’d feel happier if we had someone in the family in the company, Papa.”

“Good idea. Is there anyone interested in business or finance?”

Aldo Martelli spoke up. "My wife's younger brother is at Naples University studying accountancy. He's in his final year, so he'll soon be looking for a job."

"Excellent. Marco, tell the Marcini Company they have a brand-new partner! And Aldo, ask your brother-in-law to come and see me!"

"I'll go and see him tonight."

"Now, is there anything else?" the Don asked.

"No, I think that covers everything, Papa."

With that the meeting ended, and the room erupted into a crescendo of chatter.

Rosetta unfolded herself from the comfort of her favourite chair and approached the group of men. Looking directly at her grandfather she spoke in a loud, solemn voice. "Don Martelli, I ask you for justice! I want those responsible for my father's death to be dealt with. You are my Guappo and this I demand of you," Slowly and dramatically she held up a photo of her father and kissed it. "In this way, Papa, I drink the blood of the men who killed you. I invoke 'Sangue Chiama Sangue'!"

'Blood Calls to Blood!' Rosetta was declaiming the words that could only be silenced by blood spilt in a Revenge Killing.

CHAPTER 2

In the Justice Department across town a freckle-faced young girl of the same age as Rosetta was also waiting patiently for a meeting to end. Today she would take the first step towards her goal: to destroy the organizations that had spawned the men who killed her father.

Teresa Caporaso's normally sparkling green eyes were dull with pain, and she reached for her handkerchief as memories of her father's death surfaced yet again. In the last few days before it happened he had become very withdrawn, staying

up into the early hours, and the night before his murder she found him sitting at his desk staring at a list of names.

“Traitor! Traitor!” he was muttering to himself.

“Who’s a traitor, Papa?” she’d asked, looking over his shoulder.

Riccardo Caporaso nearly jumped out of his seat. “Just ..er.. just talking to myself, Sweetheart,” he replied, hastily stuffing the paper into his pocket.

“You look worried, Papa. Is everything okay?”

“I’m fine - a bit busy at the moment that's all, Sweetheart. How about me and you going out for dinner tomorrow?”

“Oh, I’d love that, Papa!”

The following evening, all dressed up, she had stood at the window of the flat watching out for her father’s arrival. Riccardo Caporaso was one of the top detectives in the Naples Police Department. Dogged and incorruptible, he was highly regarded by some of his superiors and thoroughly unpopular with certain others. His father had been a police officer before him, passing on his passionate belief in justice, and Riccardo had made many enemies. That was why judge Montagna had asked him to join a special team. They achieved moderately good results to begin with, but never managed to convict anybody of real importance. Too many times the team's plans came to nothing: every time they got close to getting answers, or were about to arrest an prominent individual, the target managed to get off or disappeared, sometimes turning up dead.

For quite a while Riccardo had suspected there was someone passing information from the inside, and now he knew it for sure. During months of painstaking work he had set a trap for each member of the team, which involved giving them dud information. Now he had conclusive proof and intended presenting it to the judge when he got back from Rome.

As he drove up to the yellow painted block of flats he could see his daughter at the window, and he got out of the car and waved to her to come out. Teresa

excitedly waved back and ran to the front door. In her excitement she missed the lock with her keys as she went to secure the door behind her, but finally managing it she hurried on down the corridor towards the main entrance. Momentarily blinded by the sun as she went out, she stood still for a few seconds.

“Come on!” shouted her father, “Come on!”

At that moment a motor bike with two people on it came roaring round the corner. Shots rang out, and her father turned and tried to draw his gun. The bike sped by with the man on the back firing continually and Riccardo fell to the ground, covered in blood. Teresa screamed and then felt a sharp pain in her arm. She fell back against the door, slid to the floor and just sat there staring at her father in disbelief. Within minutes Police cars came screaming to a halt, and then someone placed a blanket over her shoulders and gently picked her up.

Teresa watched the busy receptionist directing people to the appropriate doors, fascinated by how many different phones she was coping with. The sombre busts of various famous Italians looked down on her from their alcoves in the walls of the spacious room - giving her the decided impression that they knew something she didn't! The Palace of Justice with its beautiful colourful frescoes of Biblical scenes on the walls and ceiling seemed to emphasise the power and majesty of the law. Teresa shuddered as she looked around: eagle-eyed armed Police officers watched everyone coming and going, and the windows with their closed steel shutters intensified an atmosphere of menace and confinement. Suddenly two heavily armed Carabinieri emerged from an adjoining room, smiling together.

“The judge'll be needing a big box of tissues this time!” said one of them, and they strode cockily out into the hallway laughing at their little joke.

The door to the room they'd just left swung further open, revealing the judge, another man and an obviously distraught woman dressed in black.

“I know my husband knows something about it. He was the only one my son ever accused of killing his father, and there has been no word or sighting since. I *know* he’s dead - he would never leave without telling me! I need to know where they buried my Camillo!” and she began weeping hysterically.

The judge handed her a tissue. “Make a statement, Signora Fani! We can’t do anything unless you make a statement.”

“That’s right!” agreed the other man. “We have no evidence to arrest your husband unless you give us a statement.”

“If you *do* make a statement implicating your husband, then we can act,” the judge told her.

“No, no! I have my other sons to think about. Get hold of one of those Mafia thugs you have in jail and make them tell you where they buried my son!” she shouted, blowing hard into the tissue.

The judge handed her another one. “For your own sake, Signora, and for the sake of your children, I *implore* you to make a statement!”

“No, no - they will kill my other children too,” she shouted, running hopelessly, blindly from the room. “Lazy, cowardly fools the lot of you! You don’t care about finding my son’s killer - you don’t even know how to do your jobs!”

Camillo Conti’s father had been a Camorra boss in the northern area of Naples and had moved into contraband cigarettes. Things began to deteriorate in the clan when they started to sell to smaller groups in the area and then lost their monopoly. Certain of the clan members were becoming increasingly dissatisfied, a major row erupted and Umberto Conti was killed in an ambush by the Police soon after. Borolo Fani, his father’s Second in Command, married the widow, and it was whispered that he had engineered the ambush to do so.

As Camillo grew up he became more and more rebellious, and in his teens he fell out with his stepfather. Foolishly he went about threatening to avenge his father’s death on his eighteen birthday. The day before his birthday he went to work at the construction site as usual and was never seen again. As the weeks passed Doda

Fani knew her son was dead. Unable to rest, she had taken to going to the magistrates every week, demanding to know what they were doing about it.

Everything went quiet in the Reception area, and a few minutes later, Doda Fani came back. "I am sorry, I am so sorry! I am just a mother who has lost a son," she said apologizing to everyone. Then she left, a broken woman.

A bell sounded and Teresa looked at her watch: it was ten minutes since Signora Montagna had left her there.

Teresa had no living relatives, and Judge Montagna and his wife had collected her from the hospital and taken her to stay at their country villa near San Giorgio a Cremano. She didn't want to go back to the flat, the memories were too painful, and she didn't have any close friends to confide in or even just chat to. She had always been a bit of a loner - always dashing home after school to make sure her grandmother was alright. When her grandmother became too ill to do anything but wait to die, she took on more responsibilities - cooking, cleaning and washing. Now for the first time in her young life she had nothing to do but think. At the funeral she had realised how alone she was. To her it seemed an unusually cold, formal affair, with everyone dressed in uniform and the politicians and police officers making speeches. She viewed each and every one of them with a critical eye, knowing that one was a traitor and wondering who that traitor might be.

In the Montagnas' villa to the south of Vesuvius Teresa felt safe, the beauty and tranquillity of the place helping to heal her tormented little soul. Day after day she would sit quietly sobbing under the lemon trees and staring across at the mountains and the sea. In the following weeks though, in the midst of despair, loneliness and anger at the unfairness of it all, she began to develop a new sense of purpose. She thought long and hard about her father's work, coming to the conclusion that the best form of revenge would be to finish what he had started. The villa was heavily guarded by the Carabinieri and she was very much isolated from the outside world. Sometimes though, the old gardener would sit with her,

sharing his lunch and telling her stories about the history of the place. He seemed to know when she needed company and when she didn't. She found a new strength within her when he talked of God and the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius. The story stirred her imagination and even gave her hope for the future.

In May 1855, the gardener told her, the mountain had erupted and the lava began to move slowly towards the town. The parish priest at the time allowed the locals to seek sanctuary within Santa Maria Del Principio, where they invoked the protection of Saint George and Mary the Immaculate. A holy statue was placed in between the town and the slowly approaching lava, and amazingly when the lava reached the outskirts of the town it stopped. In celebration of their miraculous escape, the parishioners of Santa Maria Del Principio held a procession in the presence of the Cardinal of Naples, Sisto Riario Sforza.

The day before her visit to the Palace of Justice Teresa had been sitting under her favourite lemon tree when Signora Montagna came down the terrace towards her. "Do you feel up to seeing the judge, Dear?"

"Yes, there is something I would very much like to ask him."

"I will arrange it!"

"Could I visit my father's grave first?" Teresa asked, her eyes and face still sore from weeping.

"Of course, Tesoro!" said the Signora, putting her arms around her.

Standing over her father's grave a feeling of pure rage filled Teresa's whole being. "I will destroy those responsible, Papa!" she said out loud. Pricking her finger with a thorn on the single rose she carried, she let the blood drip onto the grave. "I swear by this spilling of my blood, Papa," she declared, "that I will avenge the spilling of yours! I will wage a war on the Camorra until they are destroyed. This I vow on my life."

“You may go in now,” the Receptionist said.

Startled out of her reverie, Teresa made her way across the marble floor and into one of the most beautiful rooms she had ever seen. The ceiling and walls were covered with stunning frescoes depicting famous battles and scenes from the Bible: it seemed more like an art gallery than a magistrate's office. At one end was a large desk with a number of ornate chairs in front of it and an unusually fancy filing cabinet against the wall behind. In the centre of the room were three armchairs and a leather sofa where the judge was sitting with a strikingly good looking man. They both stood up when Teresa came into the room.

“This is the brave young girl I was telling you about, Senator Romano,” said the judge, moving towards her.

Lorenzo Montagna looked older than his forty-five years, but with his greying hair and broad shoulders he cut an imposing figure. One of the most respected prosecuting magistrates in the city of Naples, he was a strong believer in the Rule of Law and one of the city's few champions against corruption. For the last two years he had been trying to break the connection between the Camorra groups and the corrupt city officials. So many of those in the Justice Department were in league with crooked politicians and criminals, that Montagna had found himself steering a very difficult course. That was why he had got together a group of people who felt the same as he did - a small team of unusually ‘clean’ police officers, politicians and magistrates.

“Come and sit down, Signorina!” said the judge, taking both her hands in his and guiding her to a seat next to the senator, “We have much to discuss.”

At just forty-one, Michelangelo Romano was one of the youngest members of the Senate ever elected. His influence was considerable, his interests wide and varied and he was a key member of Montagna's team. Tall, athletic and immaculately dressed, he had the classic chiselled features and sculptured body of a work of art by his famous namesake. Moreover, he was from one of the richest and most influential families in the country. The Romanos owned businesses, land and

property all across Italy, including large textile factories in and around the Naples area.

“Your father was one of the bravest men I ever knew and the team will sorely miss him,” said the senator looking distressed.

“Have you been well looked after?” the judge asked sympathetically.

“Yes thank you!” replied Teresa. “Your wife has been very kind, and your villa is beautiful.”

“Good, good! I’m sorry I haven’t been able to welcome you at the villa myself, but my time is taken up at the moment with a very serious case.”

“Yes,” added Romano. “We are trying to find out exactly who killed your father.”

“I have asked to see you today,” said the judge, “to discuss your future. I don’t know if you’re aware, Teresa, that your father asked my wife and me to be your guardians in the event of his death.”

“All my father said was that he *had* made arrangements in case ...in case the worst happened.”

“Of *course* I don’t want to try and dictate to you, Teresa, but Antonia and I would genuinely like to help and be here for you, if that’s okay.”

“My father always said you were a wise person, and I really trust you, Signor Montagna.”

“Lorenzo, please! Now, is there anything you need to do? Anything you want to ask?” and he put a comforting arm around her shoulders.

“Please tell me - do you know who killed my father?” and Teresa, despite her best efforts, began to cry.

“All we do know at present,” said the senator, “is that your father was investigating links between certain politicians and the Camorra. We believe he may have got too close to the truth.”

“I’m almost certain,” put in Montagna, “that he was about to bring me evidence. He rang me in Rome and told me he had something important to show me when I got back.”

“Do you know if he kept any papers in a special hiding place?” Romano asked.

Turning to the judge, Teresa ignored the senator’s question. “There is something I would like to ask you.”

“Go ahead!”

“My father said the only people who could destroy the Camorra were the Prosecution Magistrates. Is that true?”

“Yes, it is - if the politicians allow us,” the judge said bitterly.

“Right! Well, I want to be one.”

Montagna was momentarily taken aback. “My dear, this is one of the most dangerous jobs in Italy today! Are you sure you’ve thought it all through?”

“Papa knew I wanted to study law, and he tried to warn me of the dangers involved in fighting corruption. All the same, I intend to finish what my father started, and *nothing* will stop me!”

“It will mean many years of study.”

“I swear I will devote my life to this cause,” replied Teresa earnestly.

The judge thought for a moment. “I have a niece teaching at a private school in England. Would you be willing to go there?”

But how will that help me become a magistrate?” asked Teresa.

“I think it would be safer for you away from here, and you’ll need a decent education to go into law. Then, when you reach eighteen - if you agree - I can enrol you in the Academy of Law.”

“I’ll do whatever it takes, Lorenzo!”

“Are you happy to stay with me and my wife at the villa while I make the arrangements, or is there somewhere else you’d rather be?” the judge asked.

“Oh, I’m more than happy at the villa!”

“Excellent, Teresa! Now, I’ll arrange for a car to take you back - and I’ll see you again before you go.”