

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Mario Puzo's
The Godfather's Revenge

Mark Winegardner

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About the Book

It is 1963 in New York, and things have never been better for the Corleones. They've taken out their Mafia rivals, and legitimised the Family. Outside the fortified building owned by Michael Corleone, newly undisputed Boss of Bosses, a parade of people - among them former mob rivals and an emissary from the Mayor of New York - wait to ask the great man for favours.

Only one thing remains to be done. The traitorous former Corleone capo Nick Geraci, who has powerful friends and far too much to say, needs to be brought in. But then, that night, everything changes. As fireworks explode over First Avenue, news arrives that Jimmy Shea, President of the United States and an old friend of the Corleone's, has been assassinated ...

About the Author

Mark Winegardner is the author of three acclaimed novels, including the bestseller *The Godfather: The Lost Years*.

ALSO BY MARK WINEGARDNER

FICTION

The Godfather Returns
That's True of Everybody
Crooked River Burning
The Veracruz Blues

NON FICTION

Prophet of the Sandlots
Elvis Presley Boulevard

AS EDITOR

Three by Thirty-three
We Are What We Ate
The 26th Man

Mario Puzo's

The Godfather's Revenge

Mark Winegardner

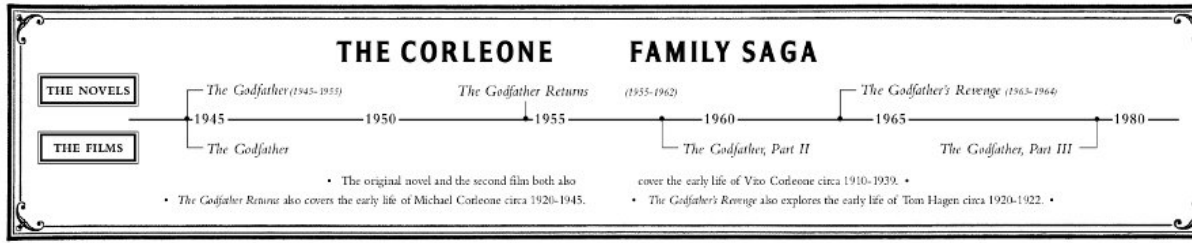


arrow books

Ancora una volta, alla mia famiglia

Men must either be flattered or crushed, for they will revenge themselves for slight wrongs, while grave ones they cannot. The injury, therefore, that you do a man should be such that you need not fear for revenge.

- MACHIAVELLI, *The Prince*



Cast of Characters

THE CORLEONE FAMILY

Vito Corleone: the first Godfather of New York's most powerful crime family

Carmela Corleone: wife of Vito Corleone and mother of their four children

Santino "Sonny" Corleone: Vito Corleone's oldest son (deceased)

Sandra Corleone: Sonny's wife, now living in Florida

Francesca, Kathy, Frankie, and Santino Corleone Jr.: children of Sonny and Sandra

William Brewster Van Arsdale III: Francesca's husband (deceased)

Tom Hagen: *consigliere* and (unofficially) adopted son

Theresa Hagen: Tom's wife and mother of their four children

Frederico "Fredo" Corleone: Vito's second-born son (underboss 1955-1958)

Michael Corleone: Vito's youngest son and the reigning Godfather of the Corleone Family

Apollonia Corleone: Michael's first wife (deceased)

Kay Adams Corleone: Michael's second wife (divorced)

Anthony and Mary Corleone: children of Michael and Kay

Connie Corleone: Vito and Carmela's daughter

Carlo Rizzi: Connie's husband (deceased), father of her two sons

THE CORLEONE FAMILY ORGANIZATION

(circa 1963)

Godfather

Michael Corleone (1954-)

Succeeded his father, Vito Corleone

Consigliere

Tom Hagen (1945-)

Succeeded Genco Abbandando, Vito Corleone's original *consigliere*

Vito Corleone (1954-1955) and Peter Clemenza (1956-1957) served briefly as *consiglieri*

Sotto capo (underboss)

Position currently vacant

Formerly Fredo Corleone (1955-1959); Nick Geraci (1959-1961)

Caporegimes

Eddie Paradise (1962-)

Regime started by Salvatore Tessio

In 1955, merged with Nick Geraci's *regime* (started by Sonny Corleone)

Richard "Richie Two-Guns" Nobile (1959-)

Regime started by Peter Clemenza

Clemenza succeeded by Frank Pantangeli, 1957

Other Significant Made Members of the Family

Al Neri: ex-cop; head of Family security rumored to be informal *sotto capo*

Cosimo "Momo the Roach" Barone: nephew of Sally Tessio; *soldato* under Geraci and now Paradise

Tommy "Scootch" Neri: *soldato* under Nobile; nephew of Al Neri

Renzo Sacripante: *soldato* under Nobile

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, LA COSA NOSTRA'S RULING BODY

(circa 1963; years on the Commission are in parentheses)

The Five Families of New York

Michael Corleone (1954-), boss of the Corleone Family
Succeeded Vito Corleone (1931-1954)
Paul "Fat Paulie" Fortunato (1955-), boss of the Barzini Family
Succeeded Emilio Barzini (1931-1955)
Osvaldo "Ozzie" Altobello (1962-), boss of the Tattaglia
Family (New York)
Succeeded Rico Tattaglia (1955-1961) and Phillip Tattaglia
(1931-1955)
Ottilio "Leo the Milkman" Cuneo (1931-), boss of the Cuneo
Family
Charter member of the Commission

Other known Commission members (at-large seats)

Carlo "the Whale" Tramonti (1931-), boss, New Orleans
Charter member of the Commission
Giuseppe "Joe Z" Zaluchi (1931-), boss, Detroit
Charter member of the Commission
Salvatore "Silent Sam" Drago (1954-), boss Tampa
Appointed to fill vacant at-large seat
John Villone (1963-), boss, Chicago
Succeeded Louie "the Face" Russo (1955-1961)
Frank "the Greek" Greco (1963-), boss, Philadelphia
Succeeded Vincent "the Jew" Forlenza, boss, Cleveland
(1931-1961)

OTHER ASSOCIATES, FRIENDS, AND BUSINESS PARTNERS

Judith Epstein Buchanan: Tom Hagen's *comare*
Deanna Dunn: widow of Fredo Corleone; Academy Award-
winning actress
Marguerite (Rita) Duvall: dancer, actress; believed to be
dating Michael Corleone
Johnny Fontane: singer and Academy Award-winning movie
star
Patrick Geary: United States senator from Nevada

Fausto Dominick "Nick" Geraci, Jr.: deposed Corleone underboss

Charlotte Geraci: Nick's wife

Barb and Bev Geraci: children of Nick and Charlotte

Fausto "the Driver" Geraci: Nick's father; former *cugin'* in Cleveland mob

Sid Klein: attorney; special counsel during the Red Scare; on retainer to Corleone Family

Joseph P. Lucadello (aka Ike Rosen): old friend of Michael Corleone's; CIA operative

Ambrose "Bud" Payton: former Florida senator; now vice president

Daniel Brendan "Danny" Shea: attorney general of the United States; James's brother

James Kavanaugh "Jimmy" Shea: president of the United States; Daniel's brother

Ben "the Phantom" Tamarkin: attorney and fixer for the Jewish syndicate, aka the "Kosher Nostra"

Agostino "Augie the Midget" Tramonti: Carlo Tramonti's brother and *consigliere*

Jack Woltz: CEO of Woltz International Pictures; former racehorse enthusiast

PROLOGUE

DRESSED IN A tuxedo and his ratty old fishing hat, Fredo Corleone, who was dead, stood before his brother Michael in the middle of the dark cobblestone street in Hell's Kitchen where they'd lived as children, a fishing rod in one hand and a naked woman on his arm. It was twilight. Fredo seemed poised between laughter and tears, which was heartbreakingly familiar. At the end of the block, the Eleventh Avenue freight train, which had long since been rerouted and dismantled, rumbled toward them but was still out of sight.

"I forgive you," Fredo said.

Blood began to pour from a wound in the back of his head.

Michael Corleone did not know what he was seeing, but he knew it wasn't a dream. He certainly did not believe in ghosts.

"That's impossible," Michael said.

Fredo laughed. "True," he admitted. "Only God can do that, right?"

Michael, on the stoop to their apartment building, felt nailed to the spot. There was no one else around. The woman was curvy and milky white, raven-haired, a little bit sheepish about being out in public like this but also brave, the kind of woman who didn't care too much about what other people thought.

"God," Michael said. "Right."

"You want to fish?" Fredo extended the rod, grinning. "Or do you want to fuck around?"

The woman stepped forward. As she moved through the mottled light, she changed into a rotting corpse, then back into Michael's very ideal of beauty.

“Let me know, huh?” Fredo said. “Contrary to what you may think, I can set things up. I know you’re lonely. I know you’re all alone. If not this, then something. I want to help you, Mike. I want you to be happy.”

“Happy?” Michael said. “Don’t you think that’s a little childish, Fredo?”

Michael immediately regretted saying this, but Fredo didn’t seem to take offense.

The woman kissed Fredo, and he kissed her back. At the end of his fishing pole, there suddenly appeared a tuna almost as big as Fredo himself. The tuna thrashed, then began to bleed, too, as if it had been both speared and clubbed. The naked woman looked at the fish and started crying.

“I keep getting confused,” Fredo said to Michael. “Why did I have to die?”

Michael sighed. Same old Fredo, even dead, in need of explanations for things he should have understood by instinct.

“I understand revenge and all that, but what happened to me compared to what I did—it don’t exactly balance out. It makes no sense. This ain’t exactly your eye-for-an-eye justice, Mike.”

Michael shook his head sadly. “Fredo,” he whispered.

“I’m not saying I didn’t fuck up, because I did.” Fredo was still bleeding, but slower now. “Those fellas I gave that information to, Roth and Ola and them? I told ’em things not knowing how they’d use it, but, to be honest with you, what’d I tell ’em that amounted to anything? When you’d be at home? Christ. There was only one road into and out of your place in Tahoe. A goddamned *babbuino* could have figured out when you were home. So when they tried to kill you, how was it *my* fault? As for the other things I told them that might’ve helped bring about peace, I understand it was wrong to go against the Family on that. But it’s also true everything that happened would’ve happened anyhow. With

or without me. Right? You know I'm right. None of it hurt the organization, made it any less strong than it was. On top of which, everybody outside the Family who knew about what I did? Dead. You had 'em taken care of, every last one. The only living people who know about it are you, Hagen, and Neri—and you're always talking about how you'd trust them two with your life. So they're no problem, right?"

"There's Nick Geraci." Awake, Michael wouldn't have said the vanished traitor's name aloud.

Fredo slapped the palm of his hand against his forehead. Blood sprayed everywhere. "Right! I think of him as dead, but you're right."

"I will avenge your death. You have my word."

"That's comical." He pointed to his wounded head. "Al pulled the trigger. You gave the order. You gave the order to kill Nick, too. You tried to sacrifice him, like in chess, like losing a knight or a bishop to cover up what's really going on. Except in chess, the bishop don't have no chance of swimming away from the discard pile and back on the board, changing its colors, and coming after you. So, sure, kill him. What choice do you have?"

The bleeding from Fredo's wound seemed finally to have stopped. He was drenched in blood. He whispered something to the naked woman, and she nodded but kept crying.

"At the time you did this," Fredo said to Michael, "neither one of us knew that Nick was behind it. You were certain you'd killed off everybody who knew what I'd done. What I want to know," he said, "is who you thought would've held it against you if you hadn't've killed me? Who'd've thought you were weak for showing me some mercy? *Name one person.*"

"Fredo, I—"

"I'm not angry, Mike. Far from it. What happened to me was my destiny and all that stuff Pop liked to talk about. On the other hand—and forgive me for saying this—it's hard to

imagine that Pop, under the same circumstances, would've had me *killed*, y'know? Look. What I'm trying to do is understand what's in your head. I know what's in your heart, OK? Your heart's obvious. But what goes on in your head, I gotta say, it's a mystery to me."

Hagen, Michael thought.

With a pang of clarity, he realized that Tom Hagen, his *consigliere*, had been the reason he'd done it. That's who'd have held it against him. Hagen, who both was and wasn't his brother, who was but wasn't exactly family. Who wasn't even *Italian* and therefore, strictly speaking, shouldn't know *anything*. And he knew *everything*. Tom Hagen was the link to Vito, the old man. It was Tom who kept the lines of communication open during the years Michael was in youthful revolt against his father and everything his father stood for. Hagen's job was to give Michael advice when asked, to resolve certain situations when dispatched, and he did so with great skill and greater obedience. Yet until now it had never clicked that it was Hagen's disapproval Michael most dreaded, Hagen's intelligence Michael most needed to one-up, Hagen's deceptive toughness Michael most needed to surpass, even if doing so meant going against his own nature. His own blood. After Michael and Fredo's last embrace, what had Fredo done? He'd put on his lucky fishing hat and gone to teach Michael's son Anthony to fish. And what had Michael done? He'd gone straight to his office: to do business, yes, but also to bust Tom's balls about his loyalty, which was never in question, and his mistress, which meant nothing, just to put him on the defensive. Why? So that Tom couldn't question him in the matter of Hyman Roth? No. It was about that long look toward Fredo and Anthony that Tom had taken as he'd walked into the room. About Michael's fear that Tom would disapprove.

This insight flowed through Michael Corleone like a deep breath. Yet he couldn't quite speak the answer to his bloodied brother's question.

“No, you tell *me*, Fredo. Since it’s so obvious. What *is* in my heart?”

“Oh, boy,” Fredo said. The naked woman shrank away from Fredo, ducked her head, and turned around a little, now clearly embarrassed. “That’s your problem in a nutshell, Mike, ain’t it? You don’t know your own heart.”

Michael folded his arms. He wanted to embrace his brother and tell him he was right about everything. But he couldn’t bring himself to do it. “Are you finished, Fredo? Because I have business I need to take care of.”

Michael struggled to remember specifically what the business was. Someone else’s problems, no doubt. The particulars of his day’s work now seemed strewn about in his head and just out of reach. The rump of that raven-haired woman suddenly struck Michael Corleone as the most beautiful sight he had ever seen. He imagined himself running his tongue along the curve of her wide and perfect hips. He shivered. He forced himself to avert his eyes. At the end of the block, the old train roared by, boxcars filled with the nameless dead.

“I have a warning for you!” Fredo shouted over the train. “But what’s the point? You wouldn’t listen to me, would you? Coming from me, you’d think it was a joke. You’d think it was bullshit. You’d never give it a second goddamned thought. You never give *me* a second goddamned thought, I bet.”

Fredo was mistaken: Michael thought about him all the time. He’d been wrong about Fredo. Michael had made betrayers out of other allies. Sally Tessio, Nick Geraci, on and on. Fredo wasn’t the only one, and he was probably the least valuable one, but it was Fredo who haunted Michael most.

“You were dead to me when you were still alive, Fredo,” Michael was horrified to hear himself say. “You think being dead changes anything? Nothing has changed. Go away, Fredo.”

Michael didn't mean a word of it.

He wanted to hear the warning, truly he did. Not that it stood to be a surprise. There was the matter of the Bocchicchios, that nearly extinct revenge-mad clan, who supposedly did not blame the Corleones for the death of Carmine Marino, a Bocchicchio cousin. There was the matter of Nick Geraci, the former Corleone *capo*, who had conspired with the late Dons of the Cleveland and Chicago outfits to trick Michael into killing his friend Hyman Roth and—just for spite—Fredo, too, who had eluded Michael's vengeance and was still out there, somewhere. There was the president of the United States, who owed his election to Michael Corleone and yet gave every sign of turning on him.

On and on; of such threats there was no end. Michael had a gift for anticipating trouble. What mattered to Michael wasn't the news Fredo had, because he was confident it would not be news. What felt important was that Fredo had come to deliver it.

The train was gone now and, somehow, so were the tuna, the fishing rod, and the luscious naked woman who was sometimes a corpse. Fredo turned and started walking away, a pink mist of blood obscuring the wound at the back of his head.

What was happening to Michael now might be perfectly logical. Some kind of hallucination, brought on by a diabetic reaction. He might even die. More likely, someone would find him, help him, give him an orange or a pill or a shot.

He called out to Fredo to wait.

Fredo stopped and turned to face him. "What do you want?"

Michael was on a gurney now, stable, heading for the emergency room. Al Neri—who shot Fredo with two slugs from a .38, at Michael's behest and without the slightest resistance from Fredo himself—hovered nearby, yelling about sugar to people Michael could sense but not quite see. There was a woman here, too, coming into view, in

Michael's own robe: Marguerite Duvall, the actress. Rita. She was sobbing. Her dyed red hair looked like a madwoman's. The robe gapped to reveal a dark nipple almost as big around as her small breast. Rita had been with Fredo, years ago, back when she was just a dancer in Vegas, back before Johnny Fontane had helped make her a star, back before she had that brief affair with Jimmy Shea. Fredo had even gotten her pregnant. Michael knew about that, and Rita no doubt knew that he knew, and they never talked about it. Michael *wasn't* lonely. There were friends and family he'd drawn near him, right in this building. And there was this woman, Rita. Michael tried to reach out to her. She smiled at him through her tears and muttered something in French. Then Al Neri told her to stand back, taking her by the arm and tugging her away from Michael.

"What do you want?" Fredo repeated. "I'm losing my patience here, kid."

Kid. Fredo never called him that. Sonny called him that.

Michael closed his eyes and willed himself to use reason.

A needle jabbed his arm, and Michael opened his eyes. The gurney was moving, and its wheels were squeaking, shrieking, and Rita's hand was on his arm and then batted away, and he somehow saw both the ceiling of his apartment rushing by and also Fredo on that dark street in his tuxedo, dabbing at his wound with a blood-drenched pocket square.

"You deaf?" Fredo said. "Answer me."

Michael felt as if he were living two lives at once, both equally real.

"I want you to wait, Fredo," he murmured. "That's what I want. I want you to stay."

"*Madonn'.*" Fredo backed away, angry now. "No, Mike. I mean, what do you *want*?"

"Nothing I can have."

Fredo laughed, mirthlessly. "And you call *me* dead," he said. "You got a lot to learn, kid. Give Rita and the baby a

kiss for me.” Fredo turned his back. In his bloody tuxedo and Mary Janes, he walked toward where the train had passed. Michael was falling through space now, in what must have been the elevator.

Rita and the baby? Rita didn't *have* a baby.

Michael turned his head, trying to get a last glimpse of his brother. Fredo was still walking away. From this angle, at this increasing distance, it looked to Michael as if most of his brother's head had been shot off. And then Fredo was gone.

BOOK I

CHAPTER 1

THREE BLACK CHEVY BISCAYNES—each carrying two armed men, squinting into the harsh sunlight, clench-jawed—rocketed single file toward New Orleans on U.S. Highway 61, that queen of American long roads. Highway 61 ran the length of the country, right through its engorged and corn-fed heart. Its terminus lay dead ahead. Alongside this highway, men of God have both sinned against us and died for our sins. At its crossroads, genius has been bought for the bargain price of a human soul. On nearby backstreets and dusty roads, the misfit children of shopkeepers, of ex-slaves, of unappreciated schoolteachers, have seen fit to assume aliases. Buddy, Fats, Jelly Roll, T.S., and Satchmo. Bix, Pretty Boy, Tennessee, Kingfish, and Lightnin'. Muddy, Dizzy, and Bo; Son, Sonny, and Sonny Boy. B.B., Longhair, Yogi, Gorgeous, and Dylan. Thus disguised, they left home on this very highway and unleashed America's strange, true voice on an unsuspecting world. At least one lowly truck driver traveled this road to his improbable destiny as king, at least one prostitute to hers as queen. Both died young, as the royals along Highway 61 reliably do—the king on his gilded throne and the queen on the road itself, her blood soaking into the blacktop. Along this highway, a nation's idea of itself died and was born again. And again. Over and over.

It was 1963. A Sunday, unseasonably hot for January. The men in the three black Biscaynes drove with the windows down and did not appear to be sweating or nervous. The New Orleans skyline loomed. The speed limit changed, and the drivers slowed down.

Ahead, on the left, a few miles shy of the end of the highway, was the Pelican Motor Lodge, where Carlo Tramonti

kept his office. No out-of-towner would have guessed that the nondescript cinder-block restaurant next door, Nicastro's (closed Sundays), served the best Italian food in the city. The best that money could buy.

The best food, period, was available every Sunday, a few blocks away, at Tramonti's plantation-style home, where Nicastro's gifted young proprietor/ chef—along with nearly every other man related by marriage or blood to Carlo Tramonti—was on this day sipping red wine and taking his leisure under a massive live oak that obscured any view of the house from the street. The house was white, lovely, in scale with the rest of the neighborhood. The backyard overlooked a swampy, magnolia-lush corner of one of the finest country clubs in New Orleans. Tramonti was the first Italian the club admitted; he'd been sponsored by the governor himself.

Children of all ages swarmed the yard.

A game of *bocce* had sprung up and become an excuse for good-natured taunting among the men. As usual, Agostino Tramonti—the smartest and shortest of Carlo's five younger brothers—came in for the worst of it. He had a talent for sports and games but took them too seriously.

From inside the house came the sharply barked Italian commands of Gaetana Tramonti, wafting into the midday haze along with the aroma of baking chicken, roasting sausages, and various simple sauces her chef son-in-law could imitate but never perfect. Gaetana was a stout Neapolitan matriarch, Carlo's wife of forty-one years. An army of bickering daughters and daughters-in-law did her bidding, exasperated in a way everyone here understood as love.

Carlo Tramonti strolled among his guests with a walking stick, kissing his grandchildren and tousling their hair, listening to the problems of his nephews and cousins. He looked like a Mediterranean shipping magnate, from his sun-bleached, perfectly trimmed white hair and double-breasted

navy blazer right down to his sockless, loafered feet. He was five-eleven, the tallest man here. He wore enormous black sunglasses. His aristocratic air had come gradually. He'd started out as a shrimp-boat hand and part-time bookie and risen through the ranks. In those days, the city's underworld was run by two warring factions, families who'd come from the same little town on the west coast of Sicily and whose grievances went back for centuries. Tramonti had negotiated peace and united the survivors of that negotiation into the clan he'd run for almost thirty years. No Family ever enjoyed better political protection or such a complete monopoly over its territory. No Family was ever less violent. The fear the Tramonti clan inspired was akin to the fear that the devout have of their God: a subservience to power and a form of love. To most people in New Orleans and throughout Louisiana, the Tramontis were the big black king snake that lived quietly under the house, dining on water moccasins, pygmy rattlesnakes, and disease-laden rats.

Carlo finally joined the *bocce* game. There was a gracefulness to his every fluid motion. His presence calmed his brother down. Augie Tramonti was a foot-shorter version of Carlo—same haircut, same tan, same custom-made clothes from the same tailor—except that he walked on the balls of his feet, bouncing, a man with too much to prove.

The pasta course was set out on long tables on the wraparound porch. The women called out to the men and the children to come eat.

It would of course be difficult to exaggerate the significance in most Italian homes of good food and big family meals, especially in New Orleans—the oldest Italian community in the New World, where the vigilante murder of innocent Sicilian immigrants was once ordered by the city's mayor and publicly condoned by the president of the United States, and yet where that Italian creation, the maffietta, was the city's true Communion host. The Tramontis were a

family, a New Orleans family, and meals like this kept them that way. No outsider could hope to understand how much the bounty now set before the Tramonti clan was both taken for granted and cherished. Carlo Tramonti made his usual toast, just a warm and simple "*La famiglia.*"

His family echoed him and drank.

The Tramontis set down their glasses. "*Mangiamo!*" Gaetano called out.

As she did, the men from the black cars appeared on the lawn, guns drawn.

Women and children screamed.

Carlo Tramonti got to his feet. He made no attempt to flee. Absurdly, he grabbed a steak knife and held it aloft. These men could not be cops. Tramonti owned the cops. Several shades of color had drained from his face. He looked down at his plate, at his wife's spaghetti puttanesca. He could not have expected anything like this would happen to him, in front of his family, on a Sunday afternoon, as he was about to eat.

"INS!" the lead agent shouted. "Immigration!"

Carlo Tramonti cocked his head, obviously confused. He'd been in New Orleans for almost sixty years, about as long as jazz and—certainly in the eyes of his family, at least—just as American. Even the Tramonti grandchildren must have imagined that the badges were fake.

Augie Tramonti—who, after the recent death of a trusted old uncle, had been promoted from head of the Family's drug-trafficking operation to *consigliere*—asked if he could look at the badges. The agents politely complied. He bit his lip, looked at his brother, and shrugged. Who'd ever seen an immigration agent's badge?

If they really *were* from the INS, it did explain quite a bit. They weren't cops or even FBI, and they probably weren't there to kill him. It explained how they got past the associates Tramonti had stationed out front. It explained

why they stormed the place, rather than the more subtle approach the CIA would probably have used on him.

Carlo Tramonti slowly set his steak knife down.

In fact, he had never quite managed to become an American citizen. By the time he was old enough to apply for citizenship himself, he was up to his sleepy-lidded eyeballs in various rackets that might have made the process difficult. But those same involvements had given him the means to avoid the issue altogether. Four years earlier, Carlo Tramonti had even testified before a subcommittee of the United States Senate—taking the Fifth Amendment sixty-one times—without the question of his citizenship ever coming to light.

The lead agent first asked him if he was *Señor Carlos Tramonti, from Santa Rosa, Colombia*. Tramonti stared at him.

Another agent said “*La Ballena*.” Spanish for “the Whale.” Other agents chuckled.

Nicastro, the chef, perhaps from years of hearing customers mispronounce Italian words, and surely also from the stress of the situation, blurted a correction: “*La Balena*.”

Other members of the Tramonti clan glared at him. No one called Carlo Tramonti by that nickname, not to his face.

Carlo looked only at Gaetana, at the other end of the table, standing now, hair damp with sweat, tears streaming down her round cheeks.

“I’d like to have my lawyer present,” Carlo Tramonti said.

“That won’t be necessary,” said the head agent.

Tramonti shrugged. Who can say what’s necessary?

“We just have a few questions for you,” the agent continued. “A minor matter. We’ll be finished in no time.”

“A minor matter can wait,” Carlo Tramonti said, “until Monday.”

“I’m afraid not.” The agent asked Tramonti to go get his passport and come with them.

“It’s at my office.”

One of the other agents produced a pair of handcuffs.

“There’s no need for that,” Carlo Tramonti said.

The agents handcuffed him anyway. “Procedure,” they insisted. They cuffed his ankles, too.

In Italian, Carlo Tramonti asked Gaetana to go get him some cash.

The agent in charge smirked. “No need for that, either.”

“My toothbrush, then,” Carlo said to his wife, still in Italian.

“No,” the agent said.

The agent’s colleagues seemed to enjoy marching Carlo Tramonti from the table, past a din of protest from his alarmed family, past the terrified faces of his grandchildren.

Carlo looked back over his shoulder at Gaetana and told her to, please, eat without him.

“We’ll be back in time for dessert,” Augie said, scrambling to his feet and following.

Augie told the agents that he’d meet them at the office. He nodded to another brother, one who ran several of their legitimate businesses—warehouses, parking lots, dog tracks, strip clubs—and who’d know the right lawyers to call.

Gaetana ordered her family to eat, as sternly as she would on any given Sunday.

“Your *procedures*?” Carlo Tramonti hissed as he was shoved into the backseat of one of the black Biscaynes. “Spite and humiliation, these are *procedures*?”

“I’m afraid,” the head agent said, “that in cases like yours, that’s an affirmative.”

The Pelican Motor Lodge was a clean, white cement rectangle of rooms surrounding a landscaped courtyard and a drained kidney-shaped swimming pool. The pool had a stockade fence around it. Tramonti kept his offices in a suite of four gutted, remodeled rooms in the far back corner, largely obscured by an artfully trimmed thicket of nandina.

The agents frog-marched Tramonti into the suite's reception area, where, weekdays, his sister-in-law Filomena answered the phone and screened visitors.

Carlo Tramonti's name did not appear on the thick door to his office. Instead, painted right onto it in large, flowing gold script, was an epigram: *Three may keep a secret if two of them are dead*. The lettering had been a birthday gift from his brother Joe—a painter of local renown, whose canvases (jazz scenes, Negro funerals, gators) sold briskly in the French Quarter and who was represented by a gallery there (which Joe also owned). He was also the man in charge of the Family's jukebox and vending-machine interests.

Inside, the paneled office walls sported several framed newspapers, yellowing and biased accounts of that *infamia*, the mob that had claimed the life of Tramonti's grandfather, among many others. The rest of the walls were all but covered with more than a hundred carefully arranged family photographs. The mahogany desk gleamed. The carpeting smelled new. Tramonti replaced it every year. There were no ashtrays here and, famously, no trash can. Carlo Tramonti supposedly found it distracting to conduct business in any room that was not perfectly neat, a compulsion that extended to trash cans, even empty ones.

The agent in charge of this charade asked Tramonti for his passport.

Tramonti sat down heavily in his leather desk chair. "I wish to have my lawyer present."

In the reception area, Augie Tramonti arrived, out of breath. Agents grabbed him by the shoulder and restrained him just outside the open door. Before he'd gone on to bigger things, Augie "the Midget" Tramonti, small as he was, had enjoyed a long, sadistic run as an enforcer. If dead men could tell tales, many would say they'd seen Augie look at them with the same cold contempt he now showed these agents.

“My brother’s not going to talk to you people without a lawyer.” Augie’s voice was raised but even. “So forget it. And he don’t like that, the smoking there. The lawyer’s coming.” When Augie Tramonti mentioned the lawyer’s name—a distinguished one in Louisiana for more than a century—it seemed to mean nothing to the agents, who continued to smoke.

The agent in charge took out a letter from Attorney General Daniel Brendan Shea and read it aloud. It accused Tramonti of being a citizen of Colombia, not Italy, as his work visa claimed. As evidence, the letter cited several trips to Cuba for which Tramonti was alleged to have used his Colombian passport. It cited the fact that Tramonti apparently had no Italian birth certificate (he was hardly the only person born in the Sicilian countryside in the nineteenth century who did not). It cited his lack of an Italian passport (it had expired under the reign of the hated Mussolini; Augie used his connections in Colombia to get a passport there for his brother). It alleged that Tramonti had used a “pattern of bribes and coercion” to keep his work visa current. “Because of this pattern of falsification,” the letter went on, it was “incumbent” on the INS to deport Tramonti to his “native Colombia.” Carlo Tramonti had never set foot in Colombia, but of course everyone here knew that. The cost of “said transportation” would be recovered by placing a tax lien on Tramonti’s home.

The agent in charge nodded. His associates started pulling out file and desk drawers, dumping their contents onto the carpeted floor. Carlo Tramonti reddened but did not speak.

“You need a warrant!” Augie called.

“We need you to kindly shut up,” the agent said, “sir. And, no, for an illegal foreign national, we don’t need a warrant. In matters of national security such as this, our only directive is to protect the American people.”

Carlo Tramonti closed his eyes and rocked slightly back and forth.