

The Good, the Bad, or the Ugly: You Decide

Excerpts from *The Passion of Elena Bianchi*

by Lenny Cavallaro

I present a few excerpts from various volumes of the saga, and some may find these obscene, “over-the-top,” or worse. I hope that such readers will nevertheless consider waiting until release of the forthcoming “expurgated” edition, probably by late 2023. I invite them to fill out the contact form on this site, and I shall by all means advise them of that publication when it becomes available.

Others may find the material most interesting. As I have noted in an earlier blog—and in interviews—these books are truly *not* about kink, and the heroine is able to transcend the pain of the curse only because of the physical pains she has endured as a masochist. Thus, the sadomasochism is a necessary implement for her spiritual growth.

When one has read the entire series, it will become clear that the novels are not intended as a manual for deviant behavior. On the contrary, they teach the messages of forgiveness, letting go of anger, spiritual growth, and—dare I say it?—family values.

In this light, then, I present a few excerpts from the saga, below. I should append that the protagonists are Giovanni (the pianist) and Elena (the violinist). Most of the narrative is set in Italy.

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First Excerpt: Maria’s Story (from Volume One)
[NB: Maria is the mother of Elena.]

[While some might correctly use the adjective, “sadistic,” to describe the captain, I must note that the scene below has nothing to do with consensual sadomasochism, and that the German is far more a psychopath than a sadist!]

...Maria hesitated, took some water, and began. “Elena, I have never told you very much about my life. You know only that I had no family except my brother, Bruno, who was also your godfather, that I was orphaned during the War, and that your father died before you were born.

“We didn’t talk much about religion while you were growing up. You were baptized and made First Communion, but never gave either of those things a second thought.

“Now I must tell you the rest of the story. My parents and I were not Catholic. We were instead a Jewish family, originally from Rome. We survived the passage of the Racial Laws in 1938, though I believe the wealthier members of the family had already fled at that point, since very few of us remained.

“Of course, I was only four years old, far too young to understand what was going on, and altogether unconscious of the Hell that would soon break out across Europe. I had a fairly happy childhood, all things considered, and I actually showed considerable aptitude for music. I was already studying violin in 1943, when—“

Maria paused, sipped some water, and continued. “A few weeks before Rosh Hashanah, the Germans invaded Italy. Even then, though we had heard rumors about deportations, we did not sense the danger. However, in March of 1944 the horrors struck home. “I was still nine, and my name was Anna at the time. My sister, Naomi, had just turned 13.

“As you may know, that was when a bomb attack by our partisans killed some number of Germans, and the occupiers retaliated by killing more than ten times that number of civilians, including many Jews.”

“The Ardeatine massacre,” I mumbled. [Here “I” = Giovanni—ed.]

Maria looked up. “Yes, but not just in the caves. They ... There were only thirteen of us in the extended family. We were not political and certainly not involved with the partisans, but the Germans needed no excuses. We were all rounded up—my parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, everyone. Other Jews suffered the same fate. Some were murdered in their homes; some were sent away. If any of my relatives made it to the camps, I suspect they never came back.

“A lieutenant, an Italian, led the troops that invaded our house. He paused when he spotted me and Naomi. I was actually hiding behind her with my hands over my ears, trying to drown out my mother’s shrieks as she was dragged off without us. I heard gunfire and would later be told that she and my father had been murdered.

“The lieutenant smiled at us and called us pretty girls. ‘My captain can save you. If you come with me, I will take you to him. If not, you must go with the others, and you will be killed,’ he told us.

“I started to scream that I wanted my mother, but my sister put her hands over my mouth. ‘Quiet, Stupid! Do you want to die? Have you not heard what is going on?’ She turned to the officer. ‘Please, take us to him,’ she said.

“Thus, we were brought to new horrors. This captain—I never learned his name—was an inhuman monster. The lieutenant had told us that his superior officer, who had two daughters about our ages, might spare two beautiful young girls for their sake. He was wrong. They began to speak in German. Then the lieutenant asked if they could speak in Italian, ‘so that the children can hear us.’

“The captain snarled, ‘You are an idiot! You would show mercy to an inferior race, enemies of the German and Italian people, and from a family possibly involved with killing more than thirty members of the SS! You are a disgrace to your uniform. Take them out in the yard right now and shoot them.’

“The lieutenant paled, but stood up straight and saluted. This brought a smile to the face of the captain. ‘Wait!’ he shouted, still speaking Italian, though with his vile

accent. 'Perhaps we can spare one of them.'

"The lieutenant was surprised, but mumbled his thanks. 'Which one?'

"The captain glowered at us. 'Let us see which one is prettier!' he declared. 'I would like the vermin to undress and stand in front of me.'

"The lieutenant swallowed and told us to go in front of the captain and take off our clothes.

"I started to cry and scream that it was not proper. Naomi shook me and marched over in front of the captain's desk. She began to remove her clothing. I ran next to her and slowly started to take mine off.

"The captain stared at her, and a wild look came over his eyes. 'Turn around!' he commanded her. She did as ordered, and by this time I was also quite naked.

"He gave my pre-pubescent body a cursory glance, and then returned to my sister. 'What do you think, Lieutenant? The breasts are certainly budding, and she has some hair where a woman should. Pretty, isn't she?'

"The lieutenant agreed.

"The captain asked the lieutenant if he had studied ancient Rome. The lieutenant said he had not. The rest made no sense to me at the time, but when I was much older, I read some history books, which gave me a reasonable idea of what they might have said. I shall guess their conversation ran along these lines:

"The captain explained that Jesus Christ was crucified during the reign of Tiberius Caesar, and I distinctly remember that he mentioned 'Caesar'! I believe he continued, 'Well, in the Rome of Tiberius, they had a law, and I think it was a good one. They would not execute a virgin. Of course, the emperor found a brilliant way around this law. He ordered his soldiers first to rape the virgin, even if she was a child of five years old, and *then* execute her. Clever, don't you think?'

"Once more the lieutenant swallowed. 'But why would they need to execute a child of five, Sir?' he asked. I remember thinking that I was almost ten.

"The captain smiled, and the gold in his teeth shined. 'The child might well be innocent, of course, but if the father were guilty of some crime against the emperor, she would have to be disposed of. Nevertheless, Tiberius sought to respect the law, so he made sure the child was no longer a virgin. This is what happened to the teenaged daughter of Sejanus, when that fool tried to seize power from Tiberius. Clever, as I said.'

"My sister's eyes revealed her horror. I became frightened also, although I must admit I didn't even know what 'rape' or 'virgin' meant. I would soon learn.

"I could see that the lieutenant was trembling. 'Yes, Captain, but we are not living in ancient Rome, are we?'

"The captain pounded his fist on the table. 'You are stupid, even for an Italian!' he screamed. 'We are in Rome, and we must do as the Romans do, and as they have done in the past. Do you understand me?' He said something after that in German.

"The lieutenant responded in that guttural tongue.

"The captain stood up and walked toward us. My sister held her ground defiantly, while I cowered and inched backward.

"He grabbed my sister by the shoulders and spun her around. 'You may rape this young woman, or you may rape the child; it is all the same to me. The one who is not a virgin you will then shoot, and I swear to you by my love of almighty God and my loyalty to the *Führer* that I shall spare the other one, simply because it amuses me to do so.'

"The junior officer began to cry. 'I cannot, Sir. I cannot even...do it...get hard.'

"The captain was unmoved. 'It is nearly time for the Jewish Passover, and I believe they have a custom, do they not? They release one prisoner and condemn the other, or something like that?' He burst out in laughter. 'You will do as I ordered. Otherwise, I shall have them both executed and, as our friend Pilate would say, I wash my hands of it. Their blood—the blood of both of them—be on you, and your children, and your children's children, as the Gospels teach us, *nein?*'

"I do remember that he stared right at me, oblivious to my terror and shame. 'You see, I am a deeply religious man,' he told me solemnly. 'In fact, at one time I thought to become a clergyman. If you Jews studied our *Bible*, perhaps you wouldn't get yourselves into so much trouble.' At this, he laughed again.

"Then the Captain turned back to the lieutenant. 'I give you one hour, Lieutenant. If they are both virgins after that much time, you will be demoted, and I shall have both executed. Now take one of them and be a man yourself, or find someone to do the job for you. Even a bumbling Italian can be a credit to his uniform!'

"The junior officer was in tears, as was I. My sister held her head high, but I could see that she was trembling with fear.

"A few minutes later the lieutenant looked up and asked, 'Where?'

"The captain motioned to a door behind him to the left. 'And for God's sake, have one of your men take the sheets out of there when you are finished!' he snapped.

"The lieutenant approached my sister. 'I am so sorry,' he declared. But

nevertheless, he and another soldier grabbed her by the arms and led her toward the back room.

“I went numb. I heard the captain yell in German, and then I remembered two guards came over and dragged me toward that same room. I began to cry, and the captain came over to me grinning hideously. ‘You will live, little one, but first you will see how filthy and disgusting your sister is, even for a Jew.’ He may have called her a whore, also, but I would not have known the word. He barked something in German to the guards, who brought me inside.

“The lieutenant, for all his earlier tears, somehow proceeded to rape my thirteen-year-old sister in front of me. Her screams drowned out my own. When he got off of her, I could see that she was bleeding. I screamed even louder and tried to turn around as though to run away, only to see the captain standing in the doorway, smiling broadly and clapping his hands.

“By now, the lieutenant had pulled up his trousers. The captain barked orders in German, and two guards grabbed my sister, while another pair carried me after them. We went outside to the courtyard—keep in mind that it was late March and quite cold, and I was still naked—and the lieutenant took out his pistol and shot my sister in the head. He then sank down on his knees and made the sign of the Cross.

“The rest of us went back inside. ‘Put on your clothes, *Signorina*,’ the captain commanded me. ‘You will live, but you will carry this memory with you for the rest of your miserable Jewish life, and then you can take it down to Hell. I shall call a nun to take custody of you.’ He laughed hideously.

“I do not remember much of what happened after that. The nun brought me to a convent, and they must have decided Rome was too dangerous for me, because we soon left, probably moving toward the parts of Italy occupied by the Allies. Somehow, I ended up in a convent school in Naples, where I was given the name of Maria, baptized, and eventually confirmed, though I had no belief in any sort of god after what I had seen.”

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[Second Excerpt: A True S/M Scene (from Volume Two)]

[This second excerpt is a less-than-gentle scene between Elena and Giovanni. It depicts sadism: true, loving sadism. This arises after her return from a nearly two-week session with a psychic healer, Serena.]

She clapped her hands with joy and gave me a hug. Suddenly she shuddered, and then she stepped back and looked me in the eye. “But first, Giovanni, I need pain. Now! Quickly! Please!”

She dashed into the bedroom. By the time I had followed her in, she had already

taken out various objects, all familiar, with one exception. I swallowed nervously as I beheld the array of weapons.

“What is that?” I asked, pointing to a fearsome-looking flogger that looked metallic in the poor light.

“Oh, just another thing for you to use.”

“That much is obvious, but I want to know what toy I’m playing with,” I said sternly.

“It was a gift,” she giggled.

“From whom?”

“Angela. When Marcello left, I was devastated, so she had this beauty made out of an automobile brake cable! It hurts dreadfully. She was the only person who used it on me, and I was the only person she used it on, so when my birthday came around, she gave it to me as a present!”

By this time I had grabbed the instrument. I could certainly imagine how much pain it could deliver, and the thought of using it caused me to stiffen.

Elena noticed the bulge in my trousers almost immediately. “You see, Giovanni. You *want* to use it on me, don’t you? You couldn’t use it on anyone else, either. You know how special it is, and you sense how much it will make me cry. But just remember: this one is for my ass and thighs only. Do not try it anywhere else, not even on my shoulders.”

Her fever was contagious, and in an instant I was as crazed as she. “Take off your clothes!” I commanded, even as I began to tear off my own. She gave me a warm hug, kissed me gently, and stripped.

My lust was so powerful that for a time I thought about using that toy against her breasts and labia, as I had with the cane. However, Elena’s instructions were unequivocal, and I knew I could punish those parts of her anatomy with other implements.

The atrocities I inflicted on her that evening went beyond anything we had done previously. After spanking and then whipping her belly almost to the point of breaking skin, I used the regular flogger on her labia and breasts. I then attached clothespins on the breasts and metal clamps on the traumatized nipples and ordered her to stand up, bent over the bed. I punished her ass and thighs with hand and strop, until I felt ready to bring the moment to a crisis (if I may parody Eliot). At that point, I removed the clothespins and clamps, and went to work with the cable. The excruciating pain in front was probably sufficient for any but the hard-core masochists, but Angela’s whip was

absolutely overwhelming. She screamed and whimpered almost at once, but I couldn't get a "yellow" out of her. Amused by the challenge—not at all annoyed—I began to work the blows more seriously. She was now crying badly, and her tears excited me even more. A powerful blow brought out a "red," and just in the nick of time, as I had broken skin and little droplets of blood began to form. This was too much for both of us; she spasmed in orgasmic bliss, while I almost did the same. Overcome by lust, I turned her around, pushed her onto the bed, and plunged in, reaching ecstasy almost instantly.

For a while we just lay there, unable or unwilling to separate. Eventually I pulled out, and she got up—still trembling in pain—and walked toward the bathroom. I sprang up to assist her.

"You are going to be sore tomorrow, my love," I predicted.

"Yes, but it will be such a wonderful pain, Giovanni. However, we really must get some salves on me."

Her front was not too bad, all things considered, but her ass and thighs were in terrible shape. "I drew blood in several places," I told her, touching the areas lightly.

"I know!" she replied, with deep affection in her voice. "You should probably clean the areas with alcohol first. It will sting a little, but it will also disinfect. After that, some light pressure will make it stop bleeding. That happened with Angela almost every time, also, so I'm used to it."

Easier said than done! Unfortunately, the bruises were so deep that even the slightest pressure was painful. However, eventually the bleeding had stopped, and we soon returned to the bed for more aftercare.

I went to the kitchen to get her some water, and when I returned I noticed a few fresh bloodstains on the sheet. I called these to her attention, and she smiled.

I comforted her for perhaps another fifteen minutes, at which point her hands found their way to my penis. Her touch soon sufficed to stiffen me again. "Fuck me again, Giovanni, very hard—as though you were angry!" she commanded.

And I? Unthinking brute that she had made me, I promptly thrust in to the hilt. However, my weight on top of her was more than she could handle. She actually gave me a "yellow" before asking me to reverse our positions.

This was actually a new experience for us, since she had never before gone on top with me. I wondered how well she would be able to work from the "above," but I soon found that she knew what she was doing. She gave herself a hefty number of orgasms while impaled upon my pike. At length my own crisis beckoned, and I discharged into her again, bellowing like a lunatic in bliss.

We both blacked out, with Elena collapsing on top of me. When I opened my eyes, I awakened her gently with kisses and suggested we shower together and then try again to stop the bleeding, and after that I insisted on applying the salves once more.

She was truly in bad shape. This was the worst beating I had ever given her, and as she soon assured me, one of the worst she had ever absorbed.

“Why did you want to take so much pain tonight?” I asked.

She smiled. “It wasn’t what I ‘wanted,’ but what I ‘needed,’ Giovanni. Why do you think Serena told me to leave a day early? True, I was learning rapidly, and perhaps I had completed everything for our first session. However, she can ‘read’ me, and she probably sensed my need was building. If I did not get pain soon, my need would be excessive, and I would suffer actual injury.”

I finished applying the second round of salves and gave her a playful slap on the wrist. “You are out of your fucking mind,” I told her. “Now, let’s get some sleep.”

* * *

[Third Excerpt: Abuse (from Volume 4)]

[The third excerpt comes from the next volume, about 35 years later. Their daughter, Naomi, confides in their friend, Angela, and explains what happened to her. This scene of pure abuse—again, **not** S/M—is loosely based on misadventures someone shared with me. Again, the setting is in Italy.]

Well, he pretended to think it over, and then he told me he would agree, as long as we could start really getting into it, and that’s when he started talking about getting me “beyond the pain,” which he said would be absolutely fantastic. He took me out to dinner Thursday night and told me he had a surprise for me: something I had once asked him about. He had rented a dungeon for Friday afternoon, and he promised to take me out to a great restaurant for dinner afterward.

At first I was reluctant to go—not because I was afraid, but because I would need to skip orchestra rehearsal. Since I’m associate concertmaster this year, the maestro would not be happy, but Enrico insisted that he had already paid for the dungeon, which was quite expensive, and I had never even seen a real one before.

Well, we drove out to Frascati, where there was a dungeon in what looked like a pretty seedy neighborhood. We went straight to the office, and the manager had us sign all sorts of legal papers. He explained that these were for the owner’s protection. They stated that we were both there of our own free wills, and that we agreed to indemnify him and declare him not responsible for any injuries either of us might sustain. He then gave Enrico the key to a windowless cabin in the back, which he said was also an anechoic chamber. Enrico asked what that meant, and I explained that it was effectively soundproof and probably a great place to record music.

When we got in, I began to tremble. The structure had comfortable mats on the floor and walls, but it also had some scary things: a St. Andrew's cross, canes, clamps, floggers, whips, and more.

Enrico and I undressed, and he told me he wanted to keep my face off-limits. "I don't want you walking around with black eyes," he explained. "At least not yet, but maybe next time."

I told him that I appreciated his gesture, but when I mentioned safe words, he just laughed. "There are no safe words, bitch," he hissed. Then he grabbed me by the hair and wrestled me to the floor.

"Next time I'll rub your face in the mats!" he vowed, twisting my arm behind my back. "Now, who's the boss?"

He had hurt me before during play, but he had never been violent with me. Oh, he was a good sadist, the best Top I had ever had. But he always respected my safe words, and there was a certain underlying gentleness about him. Suddenly, that was all gone.

I begged him to let go of my arm. "I play the violin. I can't bow without my right arm!" I pleaded.

"Pain is a mental state," he declared, reminding me of what we had talked about during the summer. "I am going to bring you to a place beyond the pain, and you will love me for it," he promised.

Mercifully, he released the arm, but only to drag me by the legs over to a shelf with cudgels and solid canes. "Get ready, Bitch! This is going to hurt!"

I began to cry, plead, scream, beg for mercy, and yell "rosso" at the top of my lungs. He simply kept punishing me. I tried to get away, but he tackled me and quickly pinned me to the floor.

"Your tits will have to pay for that!" he snarled, grasping them savagely. He then yanked me to my feet and twisted my right arm again. I screamed; he led me over to a table with rope. "You can submit and let this happen, or I'll break your arm. What's it going to be?" he asked, twisting even harder.

I suddenly realized he was a complete psychopath, and that he actually would break my arm if I didn't surrender. "Okay, okay! Do whatever you want!" I sniffled.

He ordered me to repeat what I had said but add, "Master." I was shaking by this point, much more from fear than pain; I complied with his demand.

He tied me face-first to the cross and began to whack me quite hard in the ass and the backs of my legs with a solid cane. He usually did a decent "warmup," starting with a spanking, but this time he simply started where we should have finished. By the time he was through, I didn't think I would be able to stand, but then he reached for a short whip and began to punish my upper back.

"Look how gentle I am!" he commanded. "Notice that I'm staying away from your kidneys. That's because I want to guide you through the pain, but with the utmost safety."

I tried to walk when he untied me, but I couldn't. I fell, and he spat on me and called me a lazy whore. I tried to get up, but my legs were still trembling.

All of a sudden he grabbed me and pushed my back up against the cross. "Good girl!" he shouted, smiling viciously, securing my arms and legs again. "Now we're making progress!"

He grabbed the cane and worked my thighs mercilessly, outside and inside as well. I screamed, I cried in pain, but he grabbed me by the throat and told me to shut the fuck up. "Just for that," he roared, "I'll have to back off your thighs a bit."

I gasped a "thank you," but he simply whacked my shins with the cane instead, causing me to shriek in agony.

"You're welcome!" he assured me with a cruel laugh.

He grabbed my tits and twisted them even harder. He even whacked my labia with the cane, and then he finished by whipping my stomach. Several of the shots strayed onto my ribs.

Suddenly, his voice became very gentle. "Uh-oh. We're going to have to stop now. I've broken skin in a couple of places, and I don't want you bleeding. You don't mind if I call the scene off, do you?" he asked politely.

I thanked him through my tears, and he kissed me on the lips. "Good girl!" he declared. "You will make a great slave."

"Thank you," I sobbed. "Will you untie me, please?"

Well, he said he would, but then he stopped short. "You shaved your pussy last night, like a good slave, didn't you?"

I nodded my head, as the tears poured down my face.

"But it makes you look like a fucking whore!" he cried out, with disgust in his voice. He walked over to his pants and took out the gel pen. "If you want to shave like a

whore, you must be marked as one!” he insisted. That was when he wrote “putana” on my lower belly.

He set me free, but threw me on the floor, which was unnecessary, since I could hardly have stood anyway. He had a huge hard-on by now, and he plunged right into me, even though I was completely dry. I screamed; he came, and we just lay together like that for a couple of minutes. Then he kissed me very tenderly.

“Okay, we should get washed up,” he suggested. He helped me to my feet and half-carried, half-dragged me to the shower stall, where he somehow bathed both of us while holding me up. All the while he kept complimenting me, telling me how he had never had a slave do so well in her first session, and how we would go much further the next time.

I told him I wasn’t hungry and asked him just to drop me off. He drove me back to my place and helped me inside. He kissed me very gently and said he’d call me the next day, but I told him not to bother and asked him to leave.

“You’ll feel so proud of yourself by tomorrow that you’ll be begging for more,” he assured me. Then he left without incident.

The next morning I was in excruciating pain, which was why I called you...”

* * *

[[Fourth Excerpt: Giovanni helps the *Don* deal with a problem at the casino in the USA (from Volume Three)]

[Giovanni has become an associate of the Camorra (the Neapolitan Mafia). While some may tend to romanticize the idea of the “Mob,” we see a far less attractive picture in this final excerpt. Giovanni has discovered *how* a small group of players are defeating the “house” so handily: with special eyeglasses.]

Two days later, the four vultures hit the *Don*’s casino. During the course of the evening, one of them went to the restroom, and as he was walking out, the *Don*’s men asked him to step into their office.

One can only imagine the terror this poor kid felt, as four beefy thugs prepared to interrogate him. Perhaps they asked him about his favorite card games, where he went to school, how often he went to church,...and then all of a sudden someone snatched the glasses off his face. It took the “investigators” less than a minute to discover a remarkable technology. These glasses did not correct myopia or astigmatism, but they gave the wearer the ability to see through the playing cards to what lay on the other side! In other words, in blackjack they already knew the card that the dealer had given himself (face-down), and they could even see the top card coming out of the boot. In three-card poker, they knew what the dealer had instantly!

Needless to say, the punk turned canary in a hurry, sang a beautiful song, and blew the scam wide open. An Israeli engineer working in the USA had developed these glasses, and their “bosses”—“a couple of Russian gangsters from New York”—had done the rest. For a huge sum (in cash) they “bought” the inventor’s notes and all four of the prototypes, and (naturally) disposed of his body. They then found presumably “perfect” players to execute the scam, coached them in the games and a very safe betting system, and showed them how to use the glasses to immense advantage. If a blackjack dealer has a nine showing and a seven in the hole—particularly with few picture cards out—the odds favor the player, not the house. Still, few people would want to bet against the house with a nine showing and (under the same circumstances) the strong likelihood he has a picture card face down. With three-card poker, once the cards were dealt, a player was free to drop out if the dealer had a better hand or bet the sure winner, taking pains to lose some smaller bets, just to avoid suspicion.

Luca’s people didn’t even need to break any fingers. Their hapless victim reported that both masterminds were actually right there in the casino, as they had been on each prior occasion, playing roulette. It turned out that they made the smallest possible wagers on either red or black, killing time until the people they had hired were ready to cash out. The punk identified them on the monitor screen.

Luca was somewhat vague about what transpired thereafter, but apparently his security team, big bruisers who now donned police uniforms, quickly gathered up everyone, relieving the players of their glasses and ill-gotten gains. They then brought them down to a basement office right in the building. The four punks got off with a warning and were told they had been banned from the casino. I’m sure they took off with their tails between their legs.

The other two were whisked away in a van to a location more suitable for interrogation. The masterminds were somehow “persuaded” to hand over the late engineer’s papers.

“These big shots were a couple of smart-assed Russians, Dimitri and Uri. They must have gone to school in the fucking gulags; they thought they were tough guys. We needed to know whether they were working for themselves or for someone else. They both said they worked for themselves, but we decided to ask Uri a little more carefully. He repeated what he said the first time, so Guido cut off one of his fingers.

“He started screaming, ‘Fucking dago cock suckers! I’m telling you the truth!’

“Now Guido turned to Dimitri. ‘I cut off his finger with this,’ he told him, holding up the bloody garden shears. ‘He don’t say nothin’, so I’m gonna use it to cut off your dick.’

“Well, Dimitri, he started to cry like a baby and told the same story. ‘I swear to God it’s just the two of us,’ he screamed. Then he explained how they murdered the

Israeli inventor, took back their cash, and walked off with the blueprint and prototypes. He also told us where to find the papers.

“It’s amazing how much a man will talk when you make him see reason, Giovanni. Anyway, we went inside their shop—their ‘front’ was a little package store in the nearby suburbs—and opened the safe with the combination Dimitri gave us. Sure enough, the blueprints were there, exactly as promised. We also took all the cash.”

I nodded. “So, you put them out of business?”

The *Don* smiled. “Giovanni, we didn’t even know what their business was yet. That was the next riddle for us to solve.

“Our men came back in less than two hours. We had wrapped up Uri’s hand, so he wouldn’t bleed out, but we were not through with Dimitri. We asked him what the big plan was.

“The stupid Russian looked scared. ‘What do you mean, big plan?’ he asked. ‘We hit your casino every couple of weeks, and that’s all.’

“Guido, he’s a hothead, and he now cut off one of Dimitri’s fingers. Then he turned to Uri and ordered two other guys to pull off Uri’s trousers.

“Uri screamed that he would tell us everything. He explained that they knew the casino kept cameras on, so we had to know they were killing us. They wanted to try to negotiate the sale of the glasses for a huge lump-sum payment. If we didn’t agree, they would take it to ‘some Mafia guys’ they knew. ‘But you have everything now,’ he cried. ‘We can’t possibly bother you again. Please let us go.’ And this brave Russian looked ready to piss himself.”

Luca drew a great sigh and shook his head.

“Unfortunately, I am not sure what happened after that,” he continued, “but I believe they expressed an interest in deep-sea fishing.” He made the sign of the Cross.

I did not ask any more questions, and I didn’t feel particularly guilty that I had even more blood on my hands.

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END OF EXCERPTS