

Emilia Nowak
MAGN I F I C A™

GIOCO

for my Parents and Sister

I

Felix San Banksa, an aging gangster, sat in an armchair in the back of his office. He was browsing the newspaper, but not reading it at all. Instead, he was busying his mind to get rid of a strange feeling, a premonition about oncoming changes. He waved his left leg nervously as he sat with it crossed over his right one.

Finally, he uncrossed his legs and began tapping his toes on the floor. He couldn't stand it. He stood, taking the newspaper with him, and hurried through the bedroom, straight to the toilet. He needed to ease the malicious call of nature as quickly as possible. Tossing the newspaper on one of the shelves, he grabbed a gray roll of toilet paper and tore off a few pieces, then arranged them meticulously around the toilet seat. Then he began to take off his pants. He had to fight a bit with the buttons as he hopped nervously from one foot to the other. He sat down.

Satisfied, Felix reached for the newspaper from the shelf, opened it again, and began to read. He sat for a moment and finished the session with satisfaction. After flushing the plentiful result of his efforts, he pulled his trousers up, then went to the window and opened it halfway. He walked out and slammed the door shut behind him.

The bothersome premonition, however, remained and was about to see the light of day. The boss walked back through the bedroom, whistling under his breath. A few steps before entering the office, he heard a loud greeting.

"Good morning, sir!"

"Well, I suppose it will come out soon," he said aloud to himself, going back in and looking the man up and down.

II

A messenger stood in the doorway. Felix felt that this man held in his hand the answer that would satisfy all his curiosity. He approached the messenger and took the scrap of paper without a word. The abashed informant left, ignoring the malicious joker with the confidential letter in his hand. San Banksa went to the desk, threw his creased newspaper on it, and sat down, resting his legs on the desktop for comfort. He began to read silently:

Règgio Di Calábria, 9 February 1930, Italy

This is an appeal to the other ruling houses in the south of Italy, which I send to the hands of all the fathers who keep order in our beloved country.

With unspeakable bitterness and pain in my heart, I inform you of the misfortune that fell on the house of San Giovi last Tuesday, around noon. An inexplicable accident occurred at the intersection of San Vivero and El Cabo. As a result, a businessman, the head of the house of San Giovi and my husband, died tragically.

I cannot understand why he died. I do not know why, and I suppose one of you knows more than I do. For years I have endured bravely at my husband's side and have managed to get to know all the laws and rules that govern the south. I am tired of this

swamp that has surrounded me and my relatives. I am washing my hands of it here and now. I do not want to be another victim of your businesses, which I suppose may happen soon.

I'm disgusted with everything, so I have decided to leave the San Giovi family. I'm going west, where your dirty hands will not reach me.

My husband's funeral will take place in four days. Everyone who still has a bit of honor left, will appear at the Main Cemetery at noon and it will be your last chance to say goodbye to Geoffrey.

Margarett San Giovi

Naturally, this message did not make a special impression on him. So he tried to return his eyes once more to the more interesting lines, the ones he found most important. As the butler entered the room, San Banksa finally found and read aloud, "I do not know why, and I suppose one of you knows more than I do." He laughed to himself. I know, he thought, but I won't say.

The butler, surprised by the utterance from his master's mouth, cocked his head inquisitively. His emphatically searching eyes and strange facial expression were immediately noticed.

"What the hell are you looking at?" San Banksa demanded. "It's not my doing! Although, in fact, it could have been me. Nothing interesting's been happening lately." He tossed the paper carelessly onto the desk. "Besides, the families haven't been around for years. I wouldn't dare get rid of old Geoffrey." He waved his hand several times in the air, pushing away all suspicion. "Karl, pour me a neat whiskey."

The butler walked to a small bar near the wall and quickly made a drink. Then he went to the boss, handed him the liquor, and dared to ask after stepping to the side, "Why did the old man have to die?"

"You don't know what's going on? It's always about one thing," San Banksa explained, grabbing a thick wad of banknotes lying next to him. He held it close to his nose and enthusiastically inhaled the scent of money.

III

The news from the embittered widow Margarett also reached the house of Donald Co Cafalat, falling directly into the hands of the elegant, dignified boss. He immediately read it in his office. He almost always sat in the office unless he was away from home. There was always someone around him, unlike in the case of San Banksa, at least a private butler or several bodyguards. He hated being alone, maybe because he liked to be admired. A single admirer was enough for him. Certainly this Narcissus wanted to show off his Italian suits, of which he bought more almost every day.

He stepped away from the window for a moment, interrupting his devotion to something interesting behind the glass. Stroking his extravagant tie with his left hand, he took the letter from his faithful butler and returned to his place in front of the window. He analyzed the note in his mind. Finally, with slight resignation, he began to talk to himself.

"Poor, stupid San Giovanni. Who sets the burial day of the deceased on the thirteenth? It brings bad luck. I suppose she wants a quick and happy journey to the west."

The smiling butler, however, asked from a distance, "Will we honor the late San Giovanni on Friday, sir?"

"Why not? Poor Geoffrey. This is certainly Felix's doing." He left the window and mused for a moment. "Iset, get the car ready. We're going shopping. I need to buy a nice suit. Many from the south will come down for the event."

"Naturally, sir."

IV

The last to receive the information about Geoffrey's unexplained accident was Victor El Caballo, the most careful of all the surrounding businessmen. This gangster with a cowboy's soul spent most of his life at the ranch. He loved horses, or at least he said so. A traditionalist, he had inherited this ranch from his father, who got it from his father, who got it from his—and so it went for more than six generations.

When the sad message was delivered, he was closing the low gate of the fence surrounding the equestrian paddock. He noticed a messenger coming toward him with a raised hand and a wad of paper. El Caballo unfolded it and read it immediately. He took off his cowboy hat and understood quickly that it would be necessary to put aside all pleasures and prepare for an unexpected funeral.

Thank you for reading!

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