

VICTORIA
GOTTI

*The
Senator's
Daughter*

A Novel

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

THE SENATOR'S DAUGHTER

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This book is dedicated with love to my parents John and Victoria, who together have always given me the courage, hope, and strength to continue on.

To my children, the gifts in my life, Carmine, John, and Frank; for the unconditional love, joy, and happiness they have brought me, convincing me there is no greater love than that of a parent for a child.

Carmine, for your support, love, and dedication: I will always be there for you. To my siblings, John, Peter, and Angel—I love you all—and my brother Frank and my daughter Justine, the angels who've passed through my life and live forever in my heart.

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Victoria Gotti

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

—*Lord Byron*

PART ONE

The Hit

L A T E M A Y - E A R L Y J U N E

1

The bloodthirsty, the perverse, and the merely curious: all crowded the entrance of DeCiccio's Restaurant for a view of the corpse. As far as Debra Gova knew, the corpse still lay inside, where it had fallen.

She threaded her way through the crowd, just another eager bystander until she ducked under the yellow ribbon that blocked entry to the popular restaurant. Then people noticed her—a plain woman with short brown hair, wire-frame glasses, and a slender body not endowed with curves.

Gova nodded to a cop in uniform, who opened the door for her. She stepped quickly inside, into the middle of a murder investigation, the last place she wanted to be on the Thursday before Memorial Day weekend.

The restaurant seemed almost as familiar to her as her own kitchen. In recent years, the place had become a lawyer hangout, a favorite haunt of the courthouse crowd. Just two days ago, Gova had enjoyed the arugula special, a cappuccino, and *biscotti*. Most of the *biscotti* still sat in her

refrigerator. You never had to worry about the anisette flavored biscuits getting stale and hard. They started out that way.

Crime scenes, on the other hand, grew stale pretty fast. People trampled the evidence or outright destroyed it while attempting to help the victims. Worse, the overly ripe victims tended to be stuffed under a bed or in a car trunk for a couple of weeks. Thank God for small favors; Joe Sessio had been dead less than an hour.

When word of the murder had reached her office, Gova had hesitated only a moment before she tagged the case a Priority One, the equivalent of an assassination of a political figure. All available resources would be used in gathering evidence and hunting for suspects.

Ironically, her office had been trying to put Sessio away for the past several years. As the leader of the largest dock union in Boston, Sessio had long walked the thin line between organizer and racketeer. Gova's office felt he'd crossed that line a few too many times and went after him. Unfortunately, he already had been acquitted in one case, but another trial was pending. At least, it had been pending until an hour ago. Now, irony upon irony, her office would be expending every effort to capture and prosecute the individual who had put him away permanently.

Forensic technicians hustled around, busily dusting for prints at a table near the front of the restaurant. But most of the activity took place at the rear of the room, where a pair of legs protruded from under a table. She headed in that direction, but stopped when she saw a man with a short neck and a wide girth, his back to her. She recognized him before he spoke; it would be difficult to mistake Charlie Schultz, the chief detective at the 13th Precinct, for anyone else.

Schultz faced three young men wearing standard busboy attire, white uniforms with long, white aprons. The men had their backs against a wall near the swinging door leading into the kitchen.

"What is this, Chicago? What is this, 1919? Guy takes a couple slugs to his mug at point blank range, in a restaurant in broad daylight, middle of town, and no one saw a thing? C'mon."

Gova started to call out a greeting when Schultz suddenly stabbed a finger at one of the men, a guy with a ponytail and a stud in his ear. "My name's Schultz. So what's your name, punk?"

"Schultz." The kid grinned at the detective.

In a flash, Schultz's open hand slammed the side of the kid's head. He yelped and grabbed his ear.

Great, Gova thought, battering a witness at the crime scene. The city could be sued for several hundred grand for this kind of macho, tough-guy crap.

"But his name *is* Schultz. Billy Schultz," one of the other busboys said.

Schultz ignored the kid and turned to see who had witnessed his assault. His face, with that square jaw and pale skin now flushed with excitement, reminded Gova of some character actor down on his luck. Schultz had to be pushing sixty, she thought, but looked as if he could still defend himself in a street fight. His gaze stopped on Gova, but he didn't look too concerned. His mouth swung into a mocking smile as he walked over to her.

"Well, hello there, Ms. Attorney General." His smirk widened. "I mean, Ms. Gova."

"That's getting old, Detective."

A couple of months ago, *The Boston Globe* had profiled Gova after her office had succeeded in prosecuting several police officers who had provided protection for a fencing operation. The case had proven her power to overcome the notorious "blue line," the unwritten code of honor that kept officers from testifying against other officers and made it extremely difficult to prosecute corruption in the department.

The article had compared her to the President's Attorney General, putting her on the fast track toward a higher office. She knew that Schultz meant his remark as a compliment, but suspected it also acknowledged the indisputable comparison between her looks and the "plain Jane" Cabinet member.

Although the Attorney General had twenty years on Gova, they shared more than similar appearances. Gova also loved her work, her life centered around it. She had almost no social life.

"So what's going on here?" she asked. "Why'd you hit that kid?"

Schultz clearly didn't find Gova's presence intimidating, which annoyed her. "Hey, I'm just doing what his mother shoulda done. These clowns don't want to be witnesses. They're afraid."

"Maybe they didn't see anything."

"Listen, the chef told me there's another busboy, a black kid, who just happened to disappear about the same time as the murder. No one saw him leave. No one saw nothing."

He gestured to a couple of uniforms, and they moved in on Ponytail, who still clutched his left ear with both hands and moaned about a busted eardrum. Schultz had him hauled out of the restaurant.

"The kid'll get a free ride to the hospital," he said quietly to Gova. "He'll get a few dollars, maybe a couple of tickets to the Celtics will end up in his pocket. Everybody goes home happy. More or less."

"Not me," she replied.

In spite of the well-publicized effort to root out corruption in the police department, Schultz conducted himself as usual. She considered him one of the last of a breed she would be happy to see go extinct. She often wondered if he had any respect for her at all.

"What? You don't approve of the old-school style? The fact is, Ms. Gova, sometimes you gotta nudge these punks to get anything outta 'em. That's the way it is, that's the way it's always been."

"Spare me the history lesson, Detective."

Schultz touched her shoulder lightly, and when he spoke again, she heard self-pity in his voice. "I gotta tell you. When we was all guys, it was easier. But now we got you women cops, women detectives, women lawyers. Even women DAs like yourself. It's not as easy as it used to be."

Gova stiffened, glanced at his hand; his arm dropped to his side and he smirked again. "So it makes it hard, you know what I mean?"

"Not really. Why don't you spell it out for me?"

He waved his hand impatiently. "Aw, hell. You lawyers are all alike. Never mind."

Schultz turned back to the other two men and addressed the one who had spoken to him.

Jerk, she thought. But Schultz had clout and she couldn't very well order him off the case, not without paying for it. If she went after him, made an example of him, it would backfire. Any further efforts to prosecute police officers or even file a complaint would look like overkill. It would work against her. She had to deal with the situation as it existed.