

Last of the Good Guys

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Extract

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I **Uncle Tony**

Tony Bolzani was the fifth born of eleven children and the last born in Sicily. In 1937, when Tony was just a young boy, my grandfather, Guido, took his young family and went to America in hopes of finding a better life. That ‘better life’ consisted of a small apartment and seventy hours a week working in the shipyard. The hard work didn’t bother my grandfather. He saw it as a way to ensure a stable life for his children and, most importantly, their education. In school Tony excelled and my grandfather had high hopes for him.

Then at the age of sixteen Tony heard the call of the streets. I can only compare it to the sound of a dog whistle: most people can’t hear it but those that do are pulled away from their lives and their souls in the hope of finding recognition, riches and power. It’s a life that only few survive.

Tony greeted the call with enthusiasm. Like many young soldiers, he started his new life with great vigour. However, unlike most other recruits, he became a good earner quickly, using his sharp mind, good looks, and natural charm to pull off profitable scams that paved the way to

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what seemed like a sure and fast rise to the top of his crew. When Tony was twenty-one, he hijacked a truck full of televisions out of LaGuardia Airport. The weather was bad that night and it snowed heavily. When he was just two blocks from the warehouse where he was supposed to deliver the goods, he hit a patch of ice, lost control of the truck and crashed into a tree. The impact knocked him out and when the cops arrived he was still behind the wheel, unconscious. He woke up in the hospital later that night, handcuffed to the bed.

When he went to court, the district attorney offered a deal: plead guilty and get three to five years in Sing Sing for theft of a motor vehicle, or plead innocent and face a possible twenty years for hijacking if found guilty. Since Tony was still in the truck when the cops arrived, his lawyer advised he plead guilty and he did. Upon sentencing, the judge took account of Tony's young age and clean record and gave him a choice: take five in the big house or enlist in one of the armed services. Tony chose the army. These types of deals were common in the 1950s and 1960s, and usually giving a young man a second chance was the best thing for everyone concerned. But in the case of Tony Bolzani it was a bad mistake.

When he arrived at the recruiting centre, Tony, like all recruits, took an IQ test to determine where he'd best be placed. To their surprise, he scored 188, twenty-eight points above the level of genius. After Tony finished boot camp he was sent to take a series of psychological tests. He did well and the army decided he was an ideal candidate for special operations and 'black operations'. They put him through

one of the most intense training regimes any man can endure.

He was educated in the art of war and assassination, taught to be one of the finest tuned killing machines. And this is how a Brooklyn thug, after four years of successful missions, ended up in a Third World airport, ready to complete one last mission. He was met by two CIA liaisons: Robert Stockland and David Simms. They quietly greeted him and led him to a waiting car which took him off to a safe house outside the centre of the city. Tony was then informed that they had to sit and wait for word from higher up, which could take a couple of weeks. Tony, Stockland and Simms sat and played cards for almost two weeks, during which time they formed a solid base for a long-term relationship. It turned out that the three men shared a common trait: they all hated to lose.

Stockland, who was in charge of all the operations that he and Simms worked on together, lorded it over Simms with no care for his feelings. His plan was to advance as far as possible as fast as possible, no matter how many Dave Simms he had to step on to get there. The only problem was this: men like Robert Stockland and David Simms aren't naturally gifted, they have to cheat and play dirty to get anywhere, which, with regard to their common culpability in any of their rogue enterprises, left them wide open to each other's subterfuge. This inharmonious partnership left them both in stalemate. They were like Siamese twins joined at the hip, with two minds vying to control one pair of legs.

Unlike Stockland, Simms was prepared to play the waiting game. He figured that Stockland might have the upper hand at the moment, but the odds were in his favour

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that Stockland would fuck up at some point in the game, which was when Simms would cut off his head and claim total control.

It took them only a couple of nights playing cards and drinking whisky to size up the new kid on the block. Tony had already made a name for himself as a brilliant executioner and he made no secret of his plans for his future – as soon as his time was done, he'd be straight back to civilian life; the military could 'go fuck their mothers'. The twins saw a lot of potential in having a guy like this on the outside and they wanted to make friends.

Tony, who read both guys on the first night like a dime novel, knew that having a couple of rogue agents on the other side of the fence could be very profitable. So he lay back on the intensity and let them feel like they were picking his brain, but he'd actually got two land sharks hooked and he was gently reeling them in. 'Come into my humble web and rest,' the spider said to the tired fly.

Finally the orders arrived and the details needed to be worked out. Tony's mission was to assassinate some poor bastard and leave it to Simms and Stockland to make it look like a coup attempt, perpetrated by an internal compartment of the target's regime.

As usual Tony worked out the details for the hit alone. He credited his perfect success rate to this one principle. From the beginning of his career he had never followed the plans laid out before him. Normally this would have led to a long, fruitless term in some far-off military base in the middle of nowhere, or the brig. But not in Tony's case; he simply explained the flaws in the so-called intelligence reports and mission plan. Fatal flaws that he proved would

have resulted in disaster. That, along with a track record of successful missions, gained him total control in every facet of his future operations.

After careful consideration, Tony concluded that this particular mission would be easy, with success an absolute sure bet which would leave him with a perfect track record. This mission in particular was the most sensitive to date and its success would open any doors he wanted in the world of military intelligence, an opportunity most guys would kill for. But Tony didn't have any desire for that kind of future. His future was back on the streets in the city that he called home; a home that he planned on making his personal kingdom when he got out of the military.

After considering all the angles, Tony decided on a strategy. He formulated a plan that was perfect except for one flaw. Tony saw it clearly, and with his help Stockland would see it too. If he stuck with this plan he could get as close to success as possible without succeeding at all.

Now why would he want to fail? Because success made his future plans much harder to achieve. If he did this thing right, the government could spend months or even years making offers and threats that would make it almost impossible to go back to civilian existence and engage in the plans he'd set out for himself. If he failed, his superiors would be disenchanted and Stockland would get to say 'I told you so', which would give him a false sense of superiority over Tony.

Tony liked that part the best; let the guy you're controlling actually believe that you're being controlled by him. Machiavelli could have learned something from Tony. But Machiavelli was a novice when it came to the art of war. His

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ideas were not conceived in the mystical pool of imagination and creation, which only true genius can spawn, but in the dirty waters of plagiarism. He took ideas from the Far East written thousands of years before and rewrote them in a way that would imply they were his own.

Tony knew this, which was why he always went to the source when it came to understanding an idea or an issue that he deemed important to his future plans. Tony's ideas and thoughts, right or wrong, immoral or vile, were always spawned in the pool of imagination and creation, using others' thoughts and ideas as stepping stones, building blocks and a psychological exercise room. Strength comes from within.

This last operation and its outcome took place when 'the boys' were just that, boys. I only mention it to illustrate how the partnership of these three men came into being. This is the story of how the bishop, Tony, controlled the king and queen, Stockland and Simms, and finally the boys – the seven pawns that would play such a unique role in a most deadly game.



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The Italian Four

Brooklyn isn't the best place to grow up but it isn't the worst either. By the summer of 1970, a few months before I turned fourteen, I was out of my father's house and on my own, which I preferred. My father and I didn't see eye to eye and spent more time knocking each other around than being civil to one another. Not to mention, my father's house wasn't exactly what you'd call big, and with three sisters and two baby brothers, there wasn't much room and even less privacy. I was the oldest, with two sisters close behind, and I couldn't deal with all the shit that comes with that particular scenario, so I left.

Well, I guess it wasn't that abrupt. I guess the problems that led to my early departure began a few years earlier. I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that most of the kids that I hung with had fathers that were either in prison or dead. Not to mention they were all older than I was. So when it came to going to church or school when I was supposed to, I'd find it easier to play hookey and run with the crowd. There were so many things changing in the late sixties, how could I not go on those amazing expeditions

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into the concrete jungle? Vietnam protests and the hippie generation in full bloom were just a train ride away; we were all drawn into that new world emerging before our eyes just over the East River in Manhattan.

At first my father tried talking to me, explaining the importance of school and the church, but I wasn't interested. Then he tried setting strict regulations and made me come to the shipyard to work with him every weekend. I did that for two summers before I left. I began to resent my father and sometimes we would argue and I'd just leave the shipyard, but soon the arguments became heated and he started knocking me around a bit.

It started with just the occasional slap, but became much worse after I delivered my first retaliatory punch. The last three or four months I was with him we had a couple of real bad scraps that left a lot of unsettled tension between us and a few more scars on my face. Then in August of 1970 he slapped me and I let off with a right punch that actually rocked him harder than he expected.

He volleyed with a shot to the face that broke my nose and sent me to the ground. I suppose I should've stayed there, down on the ground, I was just as guilty as he was in the whole affair, but my temper got the best of me and I grabbed an oak plank, got up and hit him across the side of his head. He went down and out.

I didn't wait around for him to get up. I went straight home where I found my mother waiting at the front door holding my baby brother. She was crying. She had just got off the telephone with my dad and knew the situation.

'Marco, are you all right?' The concern was for the blood that was still on my shirt and my swollen, broken nose.

‘Yeah, I’m fine,’ I said in a detached tone as I walked by her and into my small room.

She followed and watched as I started to pack a small bag with the few clothes that I owned.

‘Where will you go?’

I shrugged my shoulders. ‘I don’t know. As far away from him as I can get, I suppose.’

My mother cried, lost for words and unable to choose between the son she loved and the husband who tried so hard to provide for his family. She turned and went out to the kitchen and put the baby in his high chair. She returned with a small wad of cash in the palm of her hand. She walked over to me as I was pulling the strings that tightened the old duffel bag Tony had returned from the service with.

‘Here. It isn’t much . . . it’s everything I have from the cookie jar.’

I took the money and gave her a hug, trying not to let the torrent of tears that were welling up inside flow. ‘Thanks, Mom. Don’t worry about me, I’ll be fine.’

‘Maybe you can stay with your cousin Tommaso for a couple of days. I’m sure everything will be fine then. We’ll all sit down and talk.’

I grabbed my bag and slung it over my shoulders. ‘I’m not talking to him any more, Mom. I hate him and he hates me.’

This of course just made my mother cry even more. She followed me to the door and watched me walk out into the cold, hard world. I didn’t know where I was going, but I knew I’d never go home again, and I didn’t.

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I started hanging with the local bugadha full time. In the beginning there were twelve of us, but my cousin Tommaso Capaccioni, Giuseppe Giaconi, Cristobal Maggio and I were the closest. We spent a lot of time together making plans for our glorious futures in the crime world.

Next door to Tommaso's house stood an old building that used to be a corner store owned by his grandparents who had died. Tommaso's father, who married my father's sister, refused to sell it and kept it empty. This became our hideout, and no one outside our circle of four was allowed in; it also doubled as my first home away from home. When I left my father's house, the clubhouse and TC were the first stop on my shortlist; TC didn't hesitate in letting me stay.

It wasn't bad really; the décor was shit, but the living room had a couple of big couches and two comfortable armchairs. Towards the back was a dividing wall that led to the kitchen and bathroom. Just before entering the rear kitchen area was a large, wooden oval table. It would have been the dining table for normal people but we never used it as such. That table was where we spent most of our time, playing cards, drinking wine and discussing business. The only meals we ever ate at it were takeaway hero sandwiches, pizzas or the ever coveted takeaway Chinese, a real favourite among the immigrant Italian men who found themselves making a living on the wrong side of the law.

At first it was just Tommaso, Giuseppe, and Cristo who hung there. I was a few years younger than the others and TC didn't let me take part in any of the illegal activities until I turned fourteen, just a few months after I left home.

Tommaso didn't let me in the gang because I was his cousin; he recruited me, as well as the others, for two reasons.

One: we all had fathers or uncles that were legendary gangsters. Two: we had no fear of the streets or the danger that pervaded them. There were a lot of 'turf'-related shake-downs going on in those days, and if you wanted to move freely you had to walk tall and take what came your way. We had all proved ourselves at a young age – you only have to stomp on a handful of wannabes before the word gets out.

I'm sure a lot of Tommaso's motivation for the gang came from his burning desire to become a wise guy, but his father, who was a respected member of the Cosa Nostra, put the word on the street about his son. If anyone involved Tommaso Capaccioni in any part of the rackets, they would pay with their lives.

Salvatore Capaccioni had big plans for his son: college, law degree, then run the family business on the safe side of the game. But Tommaso's ideas were different. His plan was to handpick the best of the lot and start his own crime family. Not anything as big or powerful as the Cosa Nostra, but a small handful of young men who would build their empire on the new frontier: drugs.

Tommaso Capaccioni, a.k.a. Top Cat, or 'TC' as I called him, was more like a brother to me. Being almost five years older and one of the toughest guys in the neighbourhood, TC tended to look after me and teach me things. I never questioned him. He made his 'bones', first hit, by the time he was twenty-one, and he didn't do it for the money – he didn't get any for it. TC did it because he believed people should have respect for certain things.

This guy Vinnie was from our neighbourhood and he was a real piece of shit. He'd made his bones but he wasn't a made guy and he was real pissed off about it. He was a

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twisted fuck, he'd come down on anybody that 'needed it'. Vinnie regularly went to this local store where Joey Dagostino worked; it was his mom's store and he was a decent guy. But when Vinnie's bill got up to two thousand dollars and it became clear that he wasn't going to pay it, Mrs Dagostino shut Vinnie off and told him he wasn't welcome in the store any more.

Vinnie decided he was going to have to teach her a lesson so he shook down Joey. Vinnie got carried away and turned Joey into a vegetable for life. Then, just to be a hard ass, Vinnie burned down Mrs Dagostino's store, leaving her totally broke because all the money she'd saved was hidden in the store and destroyed in the fire. As a result, she was unable to take care of her crippled son.

Now you're probably wondering why anyone would do that. Well, Vinnie's thing was pushing people around, people who didn't have protection or the ability to retaliate.

Now we all figured it was Vinnie, but no one wanted to get involved because Vinnie was a loose cannon and you never knew what was coming next. But TC figured the guy had no respect and had to be dealt with.

One rainy night, after a couple of months had passed, TC called Vinnie and told him he'd got a line on a small arsenal of stolen guns and ammo, and if he was interested, to meet him in one hour in an out-of-the-way neighbourhood. TC gave him the address and told Vinnie to bring ten thousand dollars in cash. Vinnie got the money and showed up at the designated spot.

TC got into Vinnie's car and said, 'You got the green, Vinnie?'

'Sure I do,' was all Vinnie said.

TC gave him the address and they made the ten-minute trip without any conversation. The address TC gave Vinnie was a very dark street behind a park.

TC pointed to a house and said, 'There's the place, park over there.'

Vinnie backed into the spot and shut the car off. As he reached for the keys, TC put a bullet in Vinnie's temple.

With all the rain, no one saw the flash. With a silencer, no one heard the shot. TC put his gun away and went through Vinnie's suit jacket pockets and found the money. He not only found the tenGs, he found seven thousand more in Vinnie's right front pants pocket. It was wet and stank of piss but sevenGs is sevenGs.

TC sat there for a minute and smoked a butt and looked around to be sure no one had seen him. When the stench of Vinnie's bowels got really bad, TC got out of the car and locked the door then walked half a block away to a stolen car that Giuseppe, Cristo and I were waiting in. Even though TC knew that we'd never talk, he wanted us all to be there to pick him up; it made us accessories to murder, and less likely to talk.

Later that night, TC put the seventeen thousand dollars into an envelope and dropped it into Joey's mom's letterbox with a note inside that read:

Dear Mrs Dagostino,

I'm sorry about Joey. I know it's not much, but here's a little something to help you get the store open again.

Yours truly,

Vinnie

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P.S. I would have given it to you in person, but I'm dead.

P.P.S. I'm sorry if the money smells like piss but I lost my bladder when the bullet tore through my frontal lobe, but it's still legal tender.

After Joey's mom reopened the store, she always had a special smile and hug for TC. I think she knew that TC was Vinnie's judge, jury, and executioner. TC would have been a legendary gangster, but ironically enough his father's attempts to keep him out of the Mafia catapulted TC down a violent path that would dead-end at a young age. If Tommaso couldn't be part of the mob, he'd surely be an independent operator who would demand respect.

Giuseppe Giaconi, a.k.a. GG, was fourteen and I was thirteen when we had our first real knockdown fight, one of many to come. We were already close friends and spent a lot of time together. While TC and Cristo were honing their skills as potential gangsters, GG and I, both upset that the two older boys wouldn't include us, made our own plans and shared our dreams with each other.

We were about the same size, but he was a little bit tougher at that time. One day I called him a faggot for wearing the white dress shoes he always wore – his father was a wise guy making real money and was grooming his son for the job. I was jealous, I guess. My father worked in the shipyard and I was lucky just to have shoes. So, I called him a faggot, and with that a two-hour fight ensued with no real victor, but I was the worse for wear.

After that fight we became inseparable, more like brothers really. We always competed for the best looking girls and tried to outdo each other when it came down to earning the respect of TC and Cristo. For all our similarities, we were very different; GG had a sense of security that had always eluded me, he tended to take things for granted. He was a small boy who had no fear of the dark, the boogie man or five guys with baseball bats. I suppose he got it from his dad, who was a hard-hitting wise guy who took no prisoners; but he adored his son, and he made sure GG had the best of everything.

From as far back as I can remember, long before adolescence, G wanted to be just like his dad, and always tried to impress him. When he got on his first baseball team, he tried his hardest to be a starter, but the coach didn't think he was ready to be a starter, so when he didn't start the first game, his dad put a word in the coach's ear. After that, G started every game for the next three years. So as the little boy grew, he just kept trying as hard as he could; if it wasn't good enough, tell Dad. Don't get me wrong, it's nice to have a dad go to bat for you, but you shouldn't count on it.

As far as G was concerned, he was invincible. Like I said, when I was thirteen, he was fourteen, and there was a lot of racial tension in the city. So one day we're heading home from school and we cross paths with four Puerto Rican kids, probably our age, and they want to beef with us. We didn't think twice. The biggest one pushed me first and I kicked him in the balls, a dead shot, and he went down for the count. From there it was three on two and G and I made easy work of them. When they were limping away, G just kept running his mouth and one of the kids yelled back,

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‘We’ll be back, man, you’ll see.’ The fact that we were still ten blocks from our neighbourhood and had a couple of cuts on our faces should have been enough to let it go and get out of harm’s way, but not for G, he was determined to wait for them. I think he really believed they wouldn’t come back. So we waited. I knew it was stupid, but I didn’t want to lose face.

About twenty minutes passed and my nose had stopped bleeding, I was calling it a day.

‘G, come on, let’s get out of here, I have to get home.’

‘Yeah, all right . . . I told you they were faggots.’

As we turned and headed back towards our neck of the woods, three of the original four and six more came out of a side street. They had backtracked and came up on us from the opposite direction. Before we knew it, they were on us and it was only minutes before we were on the ground catching boots in the face and ribs. The only thing that came to my mind was to make a move on the biggest one of the gang. He was just to my right and kicking me. I got my feet firm on the pavement, which opened me up for direct kicks to the ribs, then let out a loud roar and lunged for him.

As I married my body to his, I grabbed his balls and the momentum of my body sent him sprawling backwards. The upside was it stunned everyone there and gave G a chance to run for help. Once I was on the big guy, no one butted in, they let us go. I grabbed the kid by his hair and started banging his head on the pavement; I felt like I might get out of this thing if I could just knock the kid out. Well, it might have been a good idea, except that the big guy grabs a discarded Knickerbocker bottle out of the

gutter, smashes the bottom, and sticks it into the side of my hip. Now I figure I'm fucked, but it actually worked in my favour. As soon as the others see all the blood, they panic and run. I rolled off the big kid and he got to his feet and followed the rest.

By the time G and a handful of the gang found me, I was back on our own turf and on the home stretch, limping towards the clubhouse. I had a broken rib, a broken nose and a hell of a hole in the side of my hip. G's face was a bit fucked up and he had some body bruises, but he wasn't too bad.

When I got out of the hospital, I had nineteen internal stitches and thirty-six external stitches. I never cried once and took the beating in my stride. G caught a lot of shit for running off; I got all the respect for standing, even if I did get the shit kicked out of me.

G didn't learn anything from that whole episode. His dad sent a few young street punks into the other guy's neighbourhood and they kicked some ass – big fucking deal. There has to come a point in any man's life when he realises that all actions have consequences and Daddy can't bail you out, and sometimes, when the odds are stacked against you, you have to suck it up and walk away. If you can't walk, you give it your all and hope for the best. Maybe if G had learned something that day he'd still be alive today.

And let's not forget about Cristo. I can't start this story without a little introduction to Cristobal Maggio, a.k.a. Cristo, or Face, which is what most people called him. He got the name Face because of his looks. His features weren't delicate but chiselled and stoic. There was something about

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him that made men fear him instantly and women crave him just as quickly. It wasn't his size that captivated people – he was six foot three with a barrel chest – but his face; it was as impassive as a stone wall.

When I think of Cristo, and I often do, I remember the good times we had, and I choose to forget the bad. One night, when I was about eighteen, Cristo and I went to this fraternity party at one of the out-of-town colleges where he knew some girls. That wasn't the only reason for going though. We were trying to expand our distribution points and colleges are a great outlet for drugs. So anyway, we spent a couple of hours 'doing business', then had a few drinks and talked to the chicks.

As it turned out we got two of the best lookers in the joint and asked them if they wanted to go to our place for our own little party. They were all for it. So we say our goodbyes to our prospective clients and head for the door with our two honeys at our side, where we're met by a wall of jock-type jerks blocking the way out. So this big Joey Jamoke says to me, 'Where the fuck do you think you're going?'

'I'm going home. What the fuck's it to you?' I said without an ounce of emotion.

And he says, 'Not with them,' and he nods to the two chicks with us.

Now I know two things these fucks don't. One, I've got a 9mm with a full clip holstered under my jacket in the event this thing gets ugly. Two, even more lethal, I've got Face behind me. So I say, 'Says who, fuck face?'

So Joey Jamoke crosses his arms over his chest, spreads his legs a little, and real tough like he says, 'Me and my fifty-

two brothers, that's who.' He nods towards the wall of fraternity guys surrounding him.

I casually turn to Cristo and say, 'Hey, Face, this guy's got fifty-two brothers.'

Cristo, who doesn't show any concern, says, 'Fifty-two brothers? Geez, Marco, his mother must be a real fucking whore.'

Well, that's all it took. Joey Jamoke punches me in the face and busts my lip, I rally with my palm to his nose from the side, which puts his nose about an inch to the left and him out cold.

I figure it's gonna get hairy, but almost instantly Cristo lets out this roar like a lion and grabs the two guys closest to him by the neck and slams their heads together, rendering them fucked, and then proceeds to work his way into the crowd, punishing anyone in his way with a barrage of punches that would have cowed the hardiest of men. It's not just Cristo's ability to hurt people that scared the crowd, but the violent force, like that of an erupting volcano.

It wasn't even two minutes later and I was standing over Joey Jamoke, frozen, mesmerised by Cristo's onslaught. That's when they all backed off and left Cristo by himself amidst the bodies on the floor. He can see that no one wants to toe the line with him, but he's pissed off now and he doesn't want to let it go. So he kicks this guy that's lying on the floor and holding his broken nose. It's enough to knock the guy out.

Cristo yells, at the top of his voice, to the bunch of guys standing up by the wall, well away from the door now, 'Come on, you bunch of faggots, after I finish here I'm gonna go fuck that whore mother of yours in the ass! So

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what are ya gonna do about that? Nothing, that's what you gonna do, because you're the biggest bunch of pussies that I ever met. But I'll tell you what. I'm gonna be back here next Friday on business. If any you fucks got the balls, you come see me and we can finish this. Actually, if you can't wait until Friday, come over to Brooklyn and look me up. I'm on Broadway, just ask around for Cristobal Maggio, you'll find me.'

The chick that was with Cristo looked horrified and backed into the crowd. But the chick that was with me had real nerve, she just walks over grabs my arm and says, 'Shall we?'

So we left and Cristo drops us at my place. He didn't say a word on the way home. He just drove the car and quietly hummed to the radio. I don't think it bothered him that his chick didn't go home with him. For him, this night was already a good one.

The first two summers, 1971–2, we spent most of our time pulling two-bit scams. Then, at the end of the summer of '73, we made a connection that would change our lives forever. These Micks on the other side of town were moving a shit load of reefer, about a hundred pounds a week of Panama Red at two to three hundred dollars a pound, depending on the quantity bought, with about \$150 per pound profit. Now that's only \$15,000 profit, not much by today's standards, but then it bought a modest house or seven brand-new Chevy Malibus, or 2.5 new Cadillacs, and that was per week. So we saw the tremendous potential the Micks had to offer, to get to where we wanted to go, not to mention, with our help, we could triple it. And so this is

how it started. A series of events that would lead to an inescapable reality. Could we have changed it? Could I have changed it? Yeah, sure, no one was putting a gun to our heads and making us do it. Do I wish I had changed it? Every day for more than twenty-five years I've dreamt about the possibilities that could have been for all of us.

I guess it comes down to this: we knew we were doing something wrong, but we were young and independent, getting more and more addicted to that life with each successful business deal.

We were surrounded by guys who were the real thing, bank robbers and murderers. Compared to them we were just a couple of small-time hoods who weren't making any real noise. I don't think any one of us would have continued down that path if we'd known ten per cent of what was coming later, and I guess that's how people fall into pitfalls every damn day.

We'd all change our past to some degree if we could. And we'd all avoid the minefields ahead if we knew where they were. But we don't, the future's a grab bag, some people pull the million-dollar lottery ticket at the age of twenty, others get leukaemia. Everything else in between, it's just life.