Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

You loved your last book...but what are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

The Devil You Know

Written by Louise Bagshawe

Published by Headline Review

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

The Devil You Know

Louise Bagshawe



Copyright © 2003 Louise Bagshawe

The right of Louise Bagshawe to be identified as the Author of the Work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in Great Britain in 2003 by Orion Books Ltd

This paperback edition published in 2008
by HEADLINE REVIEW
An imprint of HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP

1

Apart from any use permitted under UK copyright law, this publication may only be reproduced, stored, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, with prior permission in writing of the publishers or, in the case of reprographic production, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Cataloguing in Publication Data is available from the British Library

978 0 7553 4061 3 (B format)
978 0 7553 4062 0 (A format)

Typeset in Meridien Roman by Avon DataSet Ltd,
Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Headline's policy is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP
An Hachette Livre UK Company
338 Euston Road
London NW1 3BH

www.headline.co.uk

Prologue

The sun beat down on the hills. Count Cosimo Parigi wiped his brow as he stood looking down on the town of San Stefano in Umbria. The familiar grey stone turrets, left by the Normans, and the red terracotta-tile roofs shimmered in the haze of the baking glare. It was August, and anyone with any sense had left town. The cool water of the azure Mediterranean sea and the light breeze on the lakes to the North called the Italians to their annual *vacanze*. This year, more than ever, most people had left. The war had just ground to a halt and a defeated (or 'liberated', depending on which propaganda you bought) Italy was picking itself up from the dust. It was time to recoup, to snatch at the strands of a normal life.

For most people, that was, but not for him.

Cosimo felt no lethargy, no exhaustion. He was driven, and he had a vision. He looked out at the rolling hills and forests and he wanted to ride through them. Brand new railway tracks that would glitter under the burning sun. An engine for Italy, to bring it out from the ashes of war.

He was a second son, which meant he was an irrelevance. The faded old *palazzo* of the Parigi family, mounted on the crest of a hill overlooking San Stefano, was going to pass to his brother Giuseppe, il Principe Giuseppe Parigi. Giuseppe was the heir, and that was

set in stone. He would inherit the farmland that no longer offered riches, the meagre rents of the cottages they owned, the crumbling palace. Cosimo was expected to live in a small house somewhere on the estate, to assist with the farming, and generally to keep his head down.

But he had no interest in being forgotten, like other second and third sons before him. Cosimo wanted more, and he had an idea how to get it.

His parents and brother had not approved when he told them. Here he was, dressed in the overalls of a peasant, working with his hands in the August sun. He was surveying the land, taking samples of the soil, imagining a new, better route for the railway that had been smashed into useless smithereens by the Royal Air Force. When construction of the railway was done, he, Cosimo, would turn to the roads. All across Italy people still travelled by horse, or donkey and cart.

This was unacceptable in 1946. It was a new world, and Italy had to be fit for it. Cosimo was already talking to bankers in the ravaged city of Milano. He was drawing up his plans, he was going to do his part.

His future was as glorious as the landscape before him.

Cosimo Parigi had drive and intelligence. He also had a good idea. Railway executives and state bureaucrats called him 'il typhoon' – the hurricane. He blew through meetings, objections, and regulations. By 1950, Parigi Railways had been established, and it was thriving.

His parents died in 1951. They had never approved of what their younger son was doing. Trade! For a Conte di Parigi! It was unthinkable. But their natural laziness, and their desire to enjoy *la dolce vita* in their last years, had kept them silent. The old Prince wanted only to tend to his vines and taste the first pressings from his olive trees.

Young people like his son did crazy things, *Madonn*'. But he would grow up and get over it.

Cosimo wept for his mother when she died, and again for his father when, unwilling to endure life without her, he followed her to the family crypt in less than a month. His sorrow was lessened, though, because of his parents' advanced years, because his company was racing ahead, and because he had a new bride on whom to bestow his sudden wealth. Donna Lucia di Parenti was the daughter of another noble family, and marrying her was the one thing Cosimo did that Giuseppe, the new Principe, approved of.

'Congratulations, my dear brother,' he said to Cosimo in the rich, plummy tones he affected when speaking as the head of the family. Archbishop Fanti had just united Cosimo with his new Contessa in the chapel of the Palazzo, beneath the gaze of the busts of his ancestors, and the angels and saints carved in glorious Renaissance marble. Cosimo actually would have preferred another venue, a church in Rome, perhaps even St Peter's – nothing was good enough for his Lucia – but Giuseppe had insisted they be married from the Palazzo, and Cosimo had given way. In a matter like this one, it did not hurt. Family tradition, and all that.

'Thank you, Giuseppe,' Cosimo said. He smiled at Maria, Giuseppe's meek little wife, who was cradling Roberto, the new heir, in her arms. 'The little one is quiet today, it must be a good omen.'

Giuseppe looked at his sleeping son. 'You also will have children.'

'We hope so.'

'And may your first child be a boy,' Giuseppe said solemnly.

'Thank you,' Cosimo acknowledged, trying to suppress the thought that Giuseppe really could sound like a pompous ass sometimes.

'When the honeymoon is over, call upon me at the Palazzo. We have much to discuss,' Giuseppe told his brother.

'I will,' Cosimo promised, although he had no intention of keeping his word. Parigi Railways was about to become Parigi Transportation. He was taking over a cement-mixing and laying company. New *autostrade* were planned across the peninsula, and Cosimo was going to be a part of it. After the honeymoon, he would be flying to Switzerland for discussions with a consortium of investors . . .

Giuseppe sat brooding in the dusty halls of his once-spectacular home. The years rolled by pretty much as they had always done; some years the wine harvest was excellent, and he could repair a roof or two, other years it had blight or drought and he was out firing workers and raising rents. The Parigi estate was, under his stewardship, much as it had been for generations beforehand.

He resented it bitterly.

Cosimo, the little upstart, had founded a firm using *his* family name. He was making billions of lire a year. He had modern cars, an estate, an old, but beautifully restored villa outside of Rome. But was he, Giuseppe, not the elder brother? That money should be *his*.

He spoke of it incessantly to the Principessa.

'What belongs to the House of Parigi belongs to the Principe, *cara*,' Giuseppe told her. And Maria nodded her head and continued to embroider, for that was her hobby, and she had long since got out of the habit of listening to her husband.

But he had an audience. Four-year-old Roberto was playing with his toy wooden train while his father spoke, and the words sunk in. Consequently he grew up loathing his upstart uncle Cosimo. Over and over, his

father would lift the boy on to his knee and tell him of his inheritance.

'You are to be Prince of the Parigi,' Giuseppe told his son. 'All this is yours. You must never lose the rights of the family.'

Roberto nodded gravely. He worshipped his father. That is, until that spring day, when he was six years old . . .

'Is the Count prepared?' Giuseppe asked of the nanny. She bobbed a curtsey.

'*Si, Principe*.'

'Very good,' Giuseppe said, regarding his son as she placed him on the back seat of the Bugatti. The little Count Roberto was bundled up against the slight March wind; a true Italian, he was ultra-sensitive to cold. Maria was in the hospital with suspected tuberculosis, and Giuseppe had bills mounting. He did not trust his son to be alone with peasants, and he had decided to take him with him on this vital errand.

Roberto bounced up and down with pleasure as his father slid the car into gear and out of the courtyard of the Palazzo, down the ancient, windy road that led into San Stefano. From there, they would take a new road, one Parigi Enterprises, as the company was now called, had helped build, to their destination.

'Where are we going, Papa?' he asked.

'To see your uncle Cosimo,' Giuseppe said.

'Why, Papa?'

'I have very important business, Roberto. Now you will be a good boy when we arrive, won't you? You will go and play with some toys.'

'I will,' Roberto lied. He had no intention of missing this. His beloved father was about to set Uncle Cosimo straight, and Roberto couldn't wait to hear him do it.

*

Little Roberto stepped out of the car and regarded his uncle's house as his father took his hand.

'What do you think, Roberto? It is very pretty, no?' Giuseppe asked him. 'Of course, it is not as fine as the Palazzo.'

'No, Papa,' Roberto agreed solemnly, even though he was lying. He was taking in Uncle Cosimo's villa, and he thought he had never seen anything so fine. The building was old, with glorious ochre walls and sprays of climbing roses, white and yellow, but it was not crumbling like their palace; the tiled roof was new and perfect, the drive was gravelled, the stables perfect, like something out of the magazines his mother read. Roberto saw new and better cars in the garage; fountains which were working, not lined with moss; gardens which were professionally tended, lawns which were neatly clipped.

Roberto was a young boy, but he knew instinctively that the villa was worth five times as much as the wreck they lived in. How fine that his father was here to demand their family rights! His father was the elder brother. Roberto examined the house with a covetous eye. He would like to play here. One day, his father said, the whole estate would be his.

'Come along,' his father said, tugging Roberto out of his reverie.

They walked towards the door, which was opened by a butler in uniform, but before he could say anything Cosimo had run out to meet them.

'Giuseppe! *Caro*.' He kissed his brother warmly on both cheeks, hugging him. 'And Roberto. How big you have grown.' Roberto hung close to his father, but Uncle Cosimo bent down and gave him a solemn handshake, which he liked. 'Are you thirsty? Would you like a lemonade? We have Coca-Cola and chocolate biscuits.'

Roberto's mouth watered. They never had American Coca-Cola at the Palazzo. But already he was starting to

feel resentful towards his uncle. He wanted to wait until Uncle Cosimo had given his father his due as head of the family, then he would drink his Coca-Cola.

'No thank you, I am not thirsty.'

'Maybe later, then. But come in, come in.'

Cosimo led them through a wide corridor hung with artwork and lined with antique Roman busts into a large kitchen filled with modern appliances.

'We can talk here, Giuseppe. Roberto, would you like to go and play in the nursery?'

Roberto looked at Papa, who nodded.

'Yes, Uncle Cosimo.'

'I will send for the nurse,' Cosimo said. 'Our Luigi is only two, and he's napping right now, but we have many toys for bigger boys.'

'I do not want the nurse, Uncle Cosimo,' said Roberto. 'I like to play by myself without my nurse.'

Cosimo laughed and ruffled Roberto's hair. 'He's independent, Giuseppe! Very well, she will just show you to the playroom.'

A nanny in a blue pinafore materialised and whisked Roberto away. He saw his uncle Cosimo close the kitchen door behind him.

The nursery was splendid, Roberto thought jealously. His infant cousin Luigi, who was sleeping – good, because Roberto had no interest in seeing him – was lying in a bedroom several rooms away and the nurse told him to play freely, because he would not wake his cousin up.

'Thank you,' Roberto said gravely, 'you may go.'

The nurse stared at him but left without saying anything, closing the door. Roberto wanted to run back down the corridor and listen at the kitchen door, but he decided to wait a few minutes, to be sure the servant woman was not hovering . . .

*

'But, Giuseppe!' Cosimo struggled with his amazement. His brother was stuffy and pompous and stuck in the ways that had kept the Parigi fortune declining for the last two hundred years, but he loved him and did not want to hurt him. Laughing at him would be the absolute worst thing he could do. 'I have made this money, myself, and you and Father did not approve.'

The Prince shrugged. 'We were wrong, and I see that now. But the fact remains, you must cede control of the majority of the company to me, as is only right and proper. I am the—'

Outside the door, Roberto smiled fiercely. He pressed his little ear to the keyhole, keeping the other open for the nanny or other intruders. Now his papa was telling Uncle Cosimo!

'—head of the family?' Cosimo's patience snapped. '*Madonna!*' He shook his head and crossed himself, regretting the outburst. 'You have a title, dear brother, one I care nothing for and never wanted. The world is changing. I am not a feudal vassal! I owe you nothing, nothing! You amaze me. You do no stroke of work, then arrive and demand . . . demand my estate, the estate of my son? You live in the twentieth century! Are you insane?'

Giuseppe scowled. 'You refuse to do your duty, then?'

'By not finding work, selling off the dead wood, revitalising the Palazzo, perhaps you have failed to do yours.' That hit home, and Cosimo saw the hurt on his big brother's face. He clasped him by the shoulder. 'Ah, come now. We must not fight. You have your way and I have mine. You need money?'

'I need nothing. I am *owed* . . .'

Cosimo cut him off. 'Let us end this now. You have no legal recourse, or you would already be in the courts.'

This was true; they both knew it, and Giuseppe's face clouded with frustration. 'I have a duty to you, of course,' Cosimo went on, 'one of love . . . tell me what you need, and I will provide you with an allowance.'

Giuseppe hesitated, surprised. 'You will?'

'I will. Do you think I would let my brother and nephew want for anything? Let us fix the Palazzo together. But I will draw up the budget,' he added hastily, 'and I will take a look at your books, and send you an allowance for your family.'

Giuseppe struggled now. He wanted that money so badly he could taste it. But his pride was still there.

'I cannot have some stranger look at the fortunes of the Parigi,' he said stiffly.

Cosimo sighed. 'I will do it myself, brother. I am a Parigi too.'

Giuseppe weakened and fell. His brother was disarming him. He had expected blackmail and shame to work; he had not expected this kindness. For all his arrogant hauteur, Giuseppe Parigi was fundamentally lazy. He wanted an independent income, preferably one he controlled . . . but he would take one somebody else controlled if need be. Unexpectedly, a blissful future arose before him; he would live as should an Italian nobleman, and he would not work, and the Palazzo would be heated, restored, warm like this place, with no more rain leaking through the rotting roof beams . . .

'Cosimo.' He moved forward and embraced his upstart brother. 'You have a good heart, *fratello*. I accept . . .'

Roberto was already stumbling down the corridor towards the nursery, tears in his eyes. He brushed them away and gulped down air. His papa had done nothing, had let Uncle Cosimo run all over him. He hated his father, hated Uncle Cosimo . . .

He barrelled into the nursery and saw the nurse there looking for him.

'Did you get lost? Were you looking for the bathroom?'

'No,' Roberto muttered.

She was carrying a tray with a big ice-frosted glass full of black Coca-Cola, with ice cubes chinking enticingly. 'Maybe you are ready for this now, little *Conte?*'

Roberto looked at the Coca-Cola. He could not resist. He took it, but he burned with shame.

'Thank you,' he mumbled.

'You miss Papa, no? But he is coming back soon,' said the nurse.

Roberto turned to the wall so she would not see his red eyes. He drank the Coca-Cola. It was delicious.

'Leave me alone,' he said.

She withdrew, thinking he was a little brat. Roberto cared nothing for her feelings. She was just a servant maid. He wondered what he would say to his papa on the way home. Probably nothing.

Papa! He despised him . . .

Luigi never forgot the first time he saw Mozel.

She was running through the market square in Cortona when Luigi saw her. It was difficult not to. She was clad in green, black and silver, and her full skirts trailed behind her like her black hair. She was also clutching a string of sausages, and she was hurtling towards him, screaming curses at her pursuers.

Luigi laughed and took them in: a fat butcher, waving his knife and bellowing curses of his own, followed by his assistant, a child, equally tubby, crying for his father. *Madonna*, but she was a beauty. Her cheekbones were high and haughty, her hair curly and luxuriant, and she had an incredible figure that the loose gypsy clothing did not completely hide.

Well, of course, Luigi thought, I am a fine upstanding citizen of the Republic and must do my duty. He sidestepped swiftly into the path of the oncoming female who crashed into him, spitting and squealing and trying to get away, but Luigi had her by the arms in his strong grip. He was seventeen, and brawny like his father.

'*Grazie*,' the butcher huffed. 'Thank you, my friend. You have caught the witch. Filthy gypsy witch!' he yelled at her.

The wildcat in Luigi's arms struggled and snarled in Romansh, baring her teeth.

The butcher took a wary step back.

'You hold her, my friend, and I will fetch the police. A night in the cells should cool her off. Thievery,' he said malevolently, 'is a very serious matter. As for you, I will give you a discount on a nice side of lamb. Very good with salt and rosemary.'

Luigi said seriously, 'Come now, you do not wish to have the young woman arrested?'

The butcher's face turned sour. 'You do not see those sausages? The magistrates have had enough of the gypsy filth, stealing everywhere, polluting the town . . . *basta*!'

'These sausages? Fine-looking sausages,' Luigi admitted. He took out his wallet and slowly extracted a hundred-thousand-lire note. 'Does this cover them, do you think?'

The butcher made to snatch the money, greedily, but Luigi held it out of reach. 'And it also covers the entire unfortunate incident, no?'

The man hesitated, hovering between covetousness and loathing. 'Who are you, *Signore*?'

'I am Count Luigi Parigi,' Luigi said.

The butcher blinked in surprise. '*Scusi*, Don Parigi,' he said, taking the money and withdrawing, followed by his now bawling child.

Luigi looked at his prisoner. Up close she was even more sensational. As well as the cheeks and hair there were full red lips, a slender nose, and the most amazing, incredible pale grey eyes, almost silver, like a wolf's, shaded by long, dark lashes. Mesmerised, he let his grip slacken. She instantly wrenched herself free and strode away from him, in a flounce of skirts and a jangle of her coin necklace.

'Wait,' Luigi barked.

She spun around to face him. 'You want something, *gajo*? A gypsy blessing? For saving me?'

He didn't like her tone.

'Maybe a kiss,' Luigi said.

The woman rolled her eyes. 'The *gaje* think we are all for sale. I am an honest woman.'

Luigi laughed. 'The butcher does not think so, Signorina.'

'That fat fool,' she said contemptuously.

'Tell me your name,' he said.

'I know yours.' The wolf-eyes narrowed. 'Count Luigi Parigi. It rhymes.'

'What were my parents thinking?' he responded, and for the first time she smiled. Her whole face lit up, and Count Luigi, sole son and heir of Count Cosimo Parigi and one of the richest men in Tuscany, fell hopelessly, finally, and without any possibility of reprieve, in love with her.

'My name is Mozel,' she said.

'That's a strange name.'

'Not to my people,' she said confidently. 'It means "blackcurrant".'

'You are very beautiful,' Luigi said.

'That's true,' Mozel agreed, tossing her hair and laughing.

'Let me buy you lunch,' he said.

Mozel agreed. Her father would not like it, of course,

but her father was not here. And after all, she had gotten away with the sausages.

Roberto never forgot the instant he laid eyes on Mozel.

It was the crowning moment of his humiliations. His father had died early, of a heart attack. Roberto's mourning had not been very deep. He had despised his father ever since, as a child, he had heard him crawl to accept Cosimo's handouts. Ever since that day, his father had taken the handouts from the junior branch of the family. The Principe and Principessa had lived quietly, in comfort, with every modern convenience in their restored palazzo, but as far as Roberto was concerned, they had lived as slaves.

He had vowed revenge. But he was cleverer than his father. Roberto was not going to bluster in and challenge his enemies until he was able to defeat them.

He had embraced his weeping uncle Cosimo at the funeral.

'I'm so sorry, *caro*.' Cosimo hugged him close. 'Nothing can ever replace the loss of your papa.'

'Nothing!' Roberto said, weeping himself. 'But at least I have you, Uncle. I want to come and work at Parigi Enterprises, to be close to the family.'

'My boy,' Cosimo had said, smiling through the tears, astonished, 'that is wonderful. It will be wonderful to have you close.'

Close he had become. Roberto, the latest Prince of the Parigi, had set himself to learn anything and everything about the company. Not the business; he was not interested in that. Instead, Roberto noted who the smart managers and consultants were. That was the extent of success, hiring smart people. His interest was in seeing who was paid off, how the bribes worked, who was close to whom, who were the people Cosimo Parigi trusted.

Roberto had a grave charm to him that rendered him a favourite in the boardroom. And he took special care to get close to his cousin Luigi.

Roberto believed that risks should only be taken when necessary. His uncle had contracted hepatitis C after an operation for a skiing accident in an unsanitary mountain hospital, and his health was shaky. Luigi was a playboy, a daredevil who enjoyed not merely skiing, but tearing through the winding hills on his *motorino*, hang-gliding like Sean Connery in *James Bond* – there was even one occasion when he jumped from an aeroplane with a parachute. Cosimo's wife was unable to have any more children . . . well . . . Roberto was the beloved nephew. There would be no need to rock the boat.

But then there was that day in May when everything changed, when Roberto's long-lusted-for inheritance was snatched from under his nose. Luigi came home with tales of a woman, not of a noble Italian family, not even a foreigner of good breeding . . . but a *gypsy*.

The woman was barely a person. Gypsies were lower than the lowest Italian peasant, they were witches and dirty thieves.

Roberto had enjoyed a good laugh.

'Luigi! That's funny.'

His cousin's eyes flashed with that headstrong spark. 'I am not joking, Roberto.'

'Not joking! But you must be. It would be a misalliance . . . your blood . . .'

'My blood is hot,' Luigi grinned, 'that's all that matters, don't you think? It's the Seventies, bro. She's something else, too. Smart . . . sexy . . . just wait until you see her. You'll forget all about that antiquated shit . . .'

Roberto had gritted his teeth, smiled, and said, 'Of course.'

*

When he was introduced to Mozel, he hated her. Hated her wild beauty. Hated her fearless spirit. She called him 'Roberto' at once, never 'Principe', not even the first time.

'I expect you found it hard to adjust?' he'd asked her pointedly, as the family sat by the fire in the drawing room of Cosimo's town house in Rome.

'No, Roberto. My people are used to adjusting,' she said. '*Bi-lacio raklo*.'

He suspected that was an insult in her barbarous tongue from the way her eyes danced.

'Will you wait to have children?'

'No. I want as many as possible,' Mozel purred. 'Luigi must have heirs.'

Her wild white eyes bored into his. Witch, Roberto thought, wretched witch. She made him want to squirm and wash himself. So now, the fortune due to him would be in the hands not just of his juniors, but of half-breed gypsies.

It would not be. He was more than a match for the wild-eyed little tramp his foolish cousin intended to marry.

'That sounds wonderful,' Roberto assured her. 'You bring the wedding date forward. That way you can get started right away.'

Luigi gave him a grateful wink. It was good to have his cousin change his mind. Theirs was a tight, close family; he wanted nothing to alter that.

The wedding was appalling. Roberto had to stand there in the pews of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli in Rome, the traditional and romantic church at the top of the Campidoglio, watching his cousin, a count of the Parigi, unite himself to gypsy scum. The shame of it almost made him feel faint as he stood there in his morning suit,

with a crisp red rose as a boutonnière, and realised he was sharing the pew with members of her dirty unwashed tribe, her family. Contessa Mozel Parigi! It was not to be borne. And Uncle Cosimo actually approved. The man had no honour at all. Maybe my grandmother deceived my grandfather, Roberto thought, taking comfort in the idea. That would mean that Cosimo and Luigi were not Parigis at all.

The gypsy wench wore red. Red! It was their tradition, she had told him, the bride wears red to symbolise her virginity. And so she stood there in the church in a huge silken gown, as open and full and red as the poppies scattered across the Roman forum, carrying a bouquet of ivory roses, and wearing a wreath of them in her long, dark hair.

She was beautiful. She was sexy. He wanted her.

And she knew it, too, the little minx, with her laughing eyes flickering over him as he watched her hungrily when the family were together. She called him names in her strange pidgin language, and muttered to herself when he passed her by. Witch things, Roberto thought. How he hated her, and hated Luigi for tainting the family name and honour.

But Roberto had a remedy. He had made his plans. It only remained to put them into effect.

Cosimo lived long enough to see Mozel full with child, but he died before she gave birth. Luigi was inconsolable, and Roberto managed to put on a decent show of grief for his cousin, now his boss, sole owner of the Parigi fortune. Uncle Cosimo left it all to his son, nothing to speak of to Roberto, the Principe – not even a small minority stake. Instead, his will had contained an emotional letter of love, saying that he had thought of Roberto as another son, and which Roberto had thrown into the fire.