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...

A Death in Calabria

Written by Michele Giuttari

Translated by Howard Curtis

Published by Abacus

All text is copyright © of the author

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

A Death in Calabria

MICHELE GIUTTARI

Translated by Howard Curtis

ABACUS

ABACUS

First published in Italy in 2009 by Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli
First published in Great Britain in 2010 by Little, Brown
This paperback edition published in 2011 by Abacus

Copyright © Michele Giuttari 2009
Translation copyright © Howard Curtis 2010

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

All characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

All rights reserved.
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-349-12309-7

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

Abacus
An imprint of
Little, Brown Book Group
100 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y 0DY

An Hachette UK Company
www.hachette.co.uk

www.littlebrown.co.uk

PART ONE



NEW YORK

Prologue



Saturday, 1 November 2003

Suddenly he heard the creak.

Someone had opened the heavy glass and wrought-iron front door of the building and was coming in.

He took off his glasses and rested them on the shelf of the doorman's booth. In front of him, a few yards away, he saw three police officers in their dark blue uniforms. One was wearing a raincoat. He was taller than the others, with a muscular physique. The doorman looked at them with eyes as dark as ink stains.

They were young, probably between twenty-five and thirty, and were walking past the sign that said ALL VISITORS MUST BE ANNOUNCED.

He waited.

'Good evening,' the officer in the raincoat said.

The voice was friendly enough. So was the smile.

'Good evening,' the doorman replied, looking at them with great curiosity, anxious to know why they were here. This was something new. In more than thirty years, he'd never seen three police officers entering this building together. Especially not at eight thirty in the evening.

'We're from the 17th precinct,' the same officer continued, unbuttoning his coat. 'We need to check something.'

The doorman nodded, then placed his left hand on a register with the word RESIDENTS on its black cover and with the other put his glasses back on. 'Who are you here to see?' he asked.

'Nobody.'

'I don't understand . . . I'm the doorman, I need to know who you're here to see, so that I can call up.'

'We know you're the doorman. Just behave and everything'll be fine. Don't move!'

This time it was another officer who had spoken. He was shorter than the first man, of average build, with an olive complexion. He had stepped inside the booth. And his tone of voice had been harsh, almost menacing.

The doorman opened his eyes wide in terror. A long-barrelled pistol touched his left side. It was as if an electric shock had coursed through his body: his heart leapt in his chest, and his legs began trembling. His insides turned to ice. Even his lips shook. He was paralysed. He'd only ever seen a gun in cop shows on TV.

'Don't get any bright ideas,' the shorter officer hissed in his ear, sitting down next to him on a stool, lowering the pistol and keeping his dark eyes fixed on him.

At that moment, there was a noise. The usual creaking. Someone was coming in.

The police officer jumped up, pulled his cap down over his forehead and put the index finger of his right hand on the trigger. But only for a moment. The newcomer was just a boy: no danger.

The elderly doorman was petrified, overcome with a whole mixture of feelings: consternation, incredulity, terror. Unusually for him, he started to pray. Big drops of sweat rolled down his forehead.

The smell of fear was in the air.

*

The elevator rose quickly. When the door opened on the nineteenth floor and they stepped out, they found themselves alone.

No sound. No voices, not even in the distance. No TV or radio noises. Only silence. The walls of the landing were white and the floor was covered with spotlessly clean blue carpeting. The lighting was dim.

The two officers stopped for a moment, exchanged knowing glances, then set off like athletes along the corridor to their right.

They soon came to the last apartment.

The muscular one pressed the bell. Once only. His companion had a dark complexion and several days' growth of black beard.

They did not have long to wait. A few seconds later, an eye looked out at them through the peephole. After another moment or two, there was a click . . .

The door slowly opened.

It was 8.36 p.m. in Manhattan.

1



Madison Avenue is one of the main thoroughfares of Manhattan. Situated between Fifth Avenue and Park Avenue, it is renowned as a street full of fashionable boutiques.

That Saturday evening, it was even more crowded than usual, despite the cold and the rain. The traffic was heavy and the pedestrians, wrapped tightly in their raincoats and overcoats, were hurrying along under their umbrellas, some with their coat collars raised, others with caps pulled down over their ears, and others with scarves around their necks. Many were on their way to Grand Central Terminal.

This wasn't just a normal Saturday.

The previous day had been Halloween, and all night the parade of witches, ghosts, skeletons and other macabre figures had wound through the streets of Greenwich Village. And the following day, Sunday, the 34th New York City Marathon was due to take place.

It was just after 9.25 p.m. that an elderly resident entered the building near the corner of East 42nd Street and Madison Avenue, in midtown Manhattan. It was the kind of apartment building where the rents were astronomical. With his right hand, the man was holding a little dog on a lead. As he walked into the lobby, he glanced towards the doorman's

booth, and saw the doorman with his head tilted on to his right shoulder.

What's he up to? the man wondered. *Is he asleep?* Puzzled, he went closer to get a better look. The light from the large crystal chandelier on the lobby ceiling was so bright, he had to screw up his eyes a little.

The sight that greeted him was a harrowing one.

The doorman's cheeks were covered in blood, his eyes were wide open, and his tongue was hanging from his half-open mouth. His uniform was spattered with blood, and there was blood in a bright pool on the marble floor.

He stood there for a few minutes in silence, stunned. Then he raised his left hand to his bony forehead, as if to wipe out the horror of the scene, but at that moment the little dog yanked at the lead, pulling him back into the present. He looked around. There was nobody in sight. He rushed to the elevator, repeating over and over, 'Oh, my God!'

The telephone began ringing just as Lieutenant John Reynolds was getting up from his chair to go home.

It was 21:50 according to the digital clock that stood on his tidy desk next to a framed photograph showing the lieutenant with his wife and daughter. It had been a tough day, full of muggings and robberies. Late in the afternoon, a mother had come in to report that her twelve-year-old daughter had been sexually assaulted. Probably by the same pervert who had been terrorising Manhattan teenagers and their parents for some time now. A difficult case.

He lifted the receiver thinking it was his wife wanting to know when he'd be home. But it wasn't her.

'Lieutenant Reynolds?' The voice was a woman's – the switchboard operator.

'Yes, what is it?'

He listened.

'I'll be right there,' he said, and slammed down the receiver. Then he put on his raincoat over his dark suit and hurried out. The expression on his face was a mixture of tiredness and irritation.

Arriving on the scene, he found the place swarming with NYPD patrolmen and detectives who had been alerted after the elderly resident had called 911.

They were talking among themselves about what had happened when Reynolds, still scowling, entered the spacious lobby.

'Here he is,' one of the detectives said, immediately breaking away from the group and coming towards him. 'Evening, Lieutenant.'

'Evening, Mike!'

John Reynolds was head of the detective squad at the 17th precinct. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, hard-faced man, his thinning hair almost completely grey. After thirty years on the job, he knew the criminal world of Manhattan like the palm of his hand. He was fifty-six, the oldest detective still working the streets. Others his age preferred sitting behind a desk giving orders. It was less stressful and you got more sleep. Reynolds was an exceptional investigator, one of the old school. There weren't many of his kind left.

Michael Bernardi, one of the rising stars of the detective squad, was head of homicide. He had been in the Times Square area when the call had gone out, and it had taken him only a few minutes to reach the scene of the crime.

'Any witnesses?' Reynolds asked.

'None so far, apart from the old guy who phoned,' Bernardi replied, pointing to a man standing not far from them, talking to a policewoman. Reynolds glanced at him. He was tall, so thin he was verging on the skeletal, and almost bald.

'It could have been a robbery that went wrong,' Mike went on. 'There are two bullet cases inside the doorman's booth. Small calibre – .22, I think.'

'Do we know the name of the victim yet?' Reynolds asked, rubbing his chin with his hand – a habitual gesture of his, almost a nervous tic. No hair grew on that part of his chin, thanks to an old wound received in a shootout with gang members in the Bronx.

'Bill Wells,' the policewoman said, approaching the two men with an open notebook in her hands. She was young, with long black hair gathered under her cap and not a trace of make-up on her face. She gave Reynolds a curious look: she knew him only by reputation. 'I checked out the name, Lieutenant. No priors. Completely clean.'

'Good work, officer.'

'Nothing's been touched, Lieutenant,' Bernardi said.

'Good. Let's wait for the medical examiner to get here. In the meantime, cordon off the crime scene and make sure no one comes in.'

The policewoman moved nimbly away. Reynolds went over to the doorman's booth, slowly walked around the body and stood looking at it for a while. Blood had gushed from the victim's head, transforming his face into a mask.

Then Reynolds had a word with the elderly resident who had discovered the body. The man's voice was so weak that he kept having to ask him to speak up.

'I took my dog out around eight for his usual walk in the park behind the Public Library, just around the corner here . . . Bill was at his post. He smiled at me as usual and waved. When I came back in, just before nine thirty, I found him in that position . . . I'm so sorry . . . He was a good man. I'd known him for years . . . I'm so sorry . . .'

All at once they heard footsteps. Someone was arriving in