

BUMPING OFF FAT VINNY

Revenge is Sweet

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Through folds of facial fat, Vinny's pig-like eyes moved from face to face of the three people seated opposite his desk. Margaret, Danny and Maria returned his gaze.

"So," Fat Vinny said, "you expect me to buy into this story of yours that these two nameless mobsters Maria claims to know are willing to give up lots of inside information as long as they can remain anonymous? That's what you're asking me to believe?"

"Don't act like this is something out of the ordinary," Danny said, smiling, "it's not. Reporters and cops protect the identities of their sources and informants all the time. And they get a lot of good information that way. Look, Vinny, we're only willing to go this extra mile to accommodate you. As far as Margaret, Maria and I are concerned, the manuscript is complete as is."

Vinny's meaty hand reached for the unwrapped cigar on his desk, passed it under his nose and then glared at Danny. "I'm not concerned about reporters and cops; I'm only interested in what will benefit *me*. I don't like not knowin' who I'm dealin' with, not bein' able to check things out."

He turned his attention to Maria. "I want to know who whacked your husband. You say you don't know. Are these friends of yours going to tell us?"

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“Bumping Off Fat Vinny is a fun read! Morgan St. James and Dennis Griffin have created great characters that are easy to love or hate. On the top of the “hate list” for me was Fat Vinny, himself. He was a bad man and deserved to get whacked. What his would-be killers went through trying to get the job done makes for a highly compelling and humorous story.”

~Frank Cullotta, former Chicago Outfit associate and author of CULLOTTA and Hole in the Wall Gang.

*“I thoroughly enjoyed *Bumping Off Fat Vinny*. The plot is great and the characters are easy to relate to. I’ve had some experience with organized crime figures—including killers—and found the murder plots especially entertaining. My compliments to Morgan St. James and Dennis Griffin for producing a great read.”*

~Orlando “Ori” Spado, former associate of the Colombo organized crime family.

*“Knowing they’ve written the ultimate true crime story, Margaret’s and Danny’s hopes and fortunes are about to become reality. Yet, as with *all* great opportunities there are problems. Who would have thought those problems would come from the one person that would profit the most?*

This story is the dream of every author—knocking off their publisher!”

~Jon D’Amore, author of the bestseller
The Boss Always Sits In The Back

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A special thanks to our editor Fred Rayworth, for his patience and expertise. He was a pleasure to work with and taught us a lot.

DEDICATION

To all of the authors who have received what they felt were unwarranted rejections and wanted to do something about it. That is the beauty of being a writer. You can kill someone in print without worrying about spending the rest of your life in prison or receiving a lethal injection.

PROLOGUE

Los Angeles Times, Tuesday, April 5, 2011

By John Grant, Organized Crime Reporter

Tony “The Nose” Mancuso, the top mobster in Los Angeles, answered the knock on his door at around 8:00 p.m. last Friday night, and it wasn’t an April Fools’ joke. He is believed to have invited his guest into the living room. Seconds later, the visitor shot Mancuso once in the back of the head with a .38 caliber pistol, killing him instantly. After he fell to the floor, face down, his killer rolled him over and fired five more rounds into his face, nearly obliterating it. In fact, the damage was so great he had to be identified by his fingerprints, and it will be a closed-casket funeral. This is the theory being put forward by the police, based upon their preliminary investigation and the coroner’s autopsy report.

So what we have is an apparent Mob hit. The cops should have no shortage of suspects. It has been widely known that there were a number of crime figures and organizations that wanted “The Nose” eliminated for one reason or another. Take

Nose's ambitious underling Brutali Bonano, for example. He didn't agree with his bosses' management style and thought he could do a better job. Was he behind a hostile takeover? Or how about the Bloods? I've reported in the past that the gang wasn't happy about the amount of tribute Mancuso demanded for keeping his hands out of their drug operations.

The excessive violence used in the killing opens another possibility. But for his huge schnoz, Mancuso was considered handsome and had a swashbuckling image, much like the late Errol Flynn. Could the destruction of his face be a message from the husband or boyfriend of a woman he'd become too friendly with? Whoever pulled the trigger may have been sending a message. Because he certainly saw to it that the deceased gangster would as no longer be appealing to look at.

Yes, investigators will have plenty of avenues to pursue. One person who might be able to put the investigation on the right track is Mancuso's wife, Maria, but it's been rumored that she hasn't been seen around their home or anywhere else, for some time. According to the police report, she wasn't at the residence when officers arrived on Saturday in response to an anonymous call of shots fired. Was there marital discord? Is she being treated somewhere for a health issue? Nobody seems to know, or if they do, they aren't saying. I'm sure the cops want to talk with Maria. Maybe her late husband's associates would like to have a few words with her, as well.

The big question is, of course, who killed Tony "The Nose?" The second question is, where is Maria? If she can be found, she may very well have information that will be key in answering the first question.

ONE

June, 2015

Vincent Vitali, CEO of Vitali Publishing, opened the door of a compartment in the left pedestal of his fancy mahogany desk, pulled out an inlaid Spanish Cedar humidor and selected a Cuban cigar. He rolled it under his nose for a moment then, in one quick motion, clipped the end with his gold cutter.

Savoring the Havana, he tipped his leather desk chair back at a comfortable angle and actually managed to get his feet up on his desk. This was no simple maneuver for a guy his size, but he had learned that if he put his feet up, it made the people sitting opposite him feel insignificant.

Vinny tipped the scales at just over four hundred pounds, distributed evenly over his five-foot-seven frame, which had earned him the nickname Fat Vinny. As he sat there glaring at the man and woman seated across from him, he drew on the cigar and blew smoke in their direction. "You call this piece of

crap finished? It's not the book I thought it was going to be." He rubbed the cigar around his frog-like lips and let out a disgusted sigh.

Danny Garrett leaned forward, his body language tight.

"Well, you thought wrong, then. This is the book we signed a contract to write. We're willing to do some minor touchups, but you're the one who gave us the assignment. You sat in on the development meetings. Now you have the nerve to say it's crap? What exactly did you expect?"

Looking at Garrett, a former FBI agent with a string of successful books behind him, Vinny sensed he was not one to be bullied. The word was Garrett left the Bureau twenty years earlier after his cover had been blown, and he narrowly missed being taken out by a psycho mobster. Though from what Vinny heard, he was still a tough guy.

Danny's co-author Margaret Stanton added, "Look, Vinny, you wanted the memoir of a Mob wife; you got the memoir of a Mob wife and, I might add, our proofreaders thought it was really good. They want a copy as soon as it comes out. We've even spoken to producers of a few of the hot talk shows and there's a good possibility of national TV exposure. So what's your problem?"

"My problem is—" Vinny paused, trying to look menacing, not realizing to Danny and Margaret he probably wound up looking like a frog puffing on a cigar.

He continued, "There are no investigative interviews. Did you contact Tony's brother? There must have been bad blood there. Don't you hacks know "The Nose" stopped talking to him in '95? A confidential source told me the brother turned Mancuso in to the FBI. What about the Mob bosses his widow rags about in this piece of garbage? Did you even make an

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effort to contact them? The way it stands now, it's her word against theirs."

"Exactly! A *memoir* is a person's memory of events. This is what you asked for. Maria's *memoir*," Danny said.

Vinny felt a flush inch up its way from his neck to his face. He took his feet off the desk, leaned forward and snatched the thick manuscript from the desktop. Waving it at Danny and Margaret he countered, "Don't try to confuse the issue with this memoir bullshit. You listen to me, and you listen good. I want you to talk to the first wife. The one he supposedly beat to a pulp. The one *your* Maria Mancuso says in here—"

He stopped for a moment and opened the manuscript to a bookmarked page, held it up and read, "After he clocked me on the side of my head, I swore someday I'd pull a gun on him just like first wife Concetta did. She shot him in the foot. I'd aim higher."

He narrowed his eyes and continued to glare at the authors, then jabbed the page with a fleshy finger. "Why would anyone take her word for this? Who would believe this babe Concetta actually had the guts to plug a made man. Was there a police report? If there was, did you get a copy of it? Hearsay. It's all just hearsay. This whole damned thing. I want interviews—forget this fuckin' memoir business. Understand?"

After his tirade, Vinny threw the manuscript down with a thud and leaned back in his chair.

Fat Vinny delighted in the feeling of power over others, or as he called it, "the big impression." Cuban cigars were part of the picture. Wanting to show Danny he could get anything he wanted, he reached into the humidor and offered him a cigar. "Bet you never smoked one of these."

Danny smirked and said, "No I haven't and never will.

Thanks but no thanks. Don't you know how bad they are for your health?"

Vinny's fingers were in lots of pies including an auction business, a travel agency, a company that manufactured some kind of special glassware and stuff for the Las Vegas and Indian casinos, but nothing that gave him the prestige he wanted. He'd thought getting into the publishing business would make him look refined and give him what he craved, but this wasn't prestige. This was shit. *Who did this pissant think he was to talk to him like that!*

It had seemed so easy. He'd hired a few people to do book designs and formatting, and a guy who claimed he knew how to manage everything related to promotion, but actually knew little or nothing when it came to selling books. With Vitali Publishing now a reality, Vinny was sure it would give him a classy image. That's why he couldn't accept that his blockbuster exposé of the guy who'd knocked off a notorious Mob boss had turned into a fuckin' fairy tale cooked up by Tony 'The Nose's' widow.

His voice dripped venom as he hissed, "Have it your way. *Most* people would fall all over themselves for a chance to get their hands on one of these." He jammed the precious Cuban cigar back in the humidor. "Forget it. Let's talk about what you're here for. This fuckin' manuscript."