

Excerpt

Chapter 10

As Peter Romanus looked out the window from his country estate in Arezzo, onto the vine-covered hills outside his private office, five men were gathering in a secret location outside of Pesaro. They were not to be told the Grand Master would be watching and listening on closed circuit TV.

Each of them was flying in this morning. They had been contacted only two weeks ago by Thomas, the Grand Master's right-hand man, informing them of the meeting and to rearrange their calendars. Two weeks was short notice for men in their position, but the request had come directly from Peter. They knew better than not to attend.

Angelo Acciaiolio, owner and CEO of Mediaset, the commercial television empire in Italy had just arrived at the location given to him by Thomas. He was a handsome man in his early fifties. The navy Armani pinstripe suit he wore was tailor-made to fit his toned body perfectly.

"Silvio, I didn't expect to see you here." Silvio Berlusconi had been going through some documents and had not noticed Angelo enter the room.

"Buon giorno Angelo, I landed about an hour ago and was driven straight here."

"I didn't know if anyone else would be coming. Good to see you my friend," said Angelo as he placed his hand on Silvio's shoulder. "Or should I call you prime minister? I hope you were happy with our coverage of your campaign?"

They gave each other a knowing glance, implying a secret. There was no question, that his TV networks would not be favorable towards Silvio and his run for office. P2 was pulling the strings.

The next Prime Minister was also in his fifties. He was a nice looking man, tall and slim and very charismatic, an excellent trait for the role of the next leader of Italy. His wife Sophia was an elegant, self-assured, and beautiful woman. They were the perfect power couple.

Angelo continued, "Do you think anyone else will be attending?"

Before Silvio could respond, in walked General Orazio D'Amato, Head of the Military Intelligence Service (SISMI). Orazio nodded to both men and headed in their direction.

Angelo and Silvio looked at each other concerned by the general's attendance. Silvio whispered under his breath, "What's he doing here?"

Miles away seated comfortably at his desk, Peter smiled to himself. He could hear every word being said.

“It’s good to see both of you,” said Orazio, not meaning a word of it.

General D’Amoto was not a large man but the men under his command did not question his authority. He spent most of his time listening and observing the people around him. He sensed that Angelo and Silvio were questioning his presence at the meeting.

More voices could be heard entering the room. They turned to see who else was attending the meeting.

In walked Vingenzo Parocchi, director-general of Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, the largest bank in Italy. Vingenzo was instrumental in all three of their lives. His financial backing was critical to their careers. Walking next to Vingenzo was Thomas. The two men were engaged in a heated discussion. A third man dressed in the unmistakable black cassock, with a red silk sash and the pectoral cross-suspended from a cord of scarlet and gold silk hung from his neck, listened in but said nothing. It was the newest initiate, Cardinal Franco Cavallari from the Vatican.

Cardinal Cavallari was head of the department at the Vatican that oversees religious congregations of men and women. The department was investigating the Legion of Christ and the sexual allegations and charges of the misuse of funds, by the founder of the order.

There were also allegations being directed against Pope Benedict XVI; that he knew of some of the wrongdoings and had done nothing about it. The scandal was seriously affecting the worldview of the Vatican, if it was corrupt beyond repair.

Whatever Thomas and Vingenzo had been discussing had come to an end. They were now standing in front of the other three men who were already present in the room. Thomas now spoke to all five men.

“Gentlemen, thank you for rearranging your schedules. Everyone invited is now present, if you would please show me your proof of membership.”

Each man wore the same ring given to him upon becoming a member of P2. When rotated on the finger, it revealed what might be mistaken for a scar. At the end of each initiation ceremony and after the swearing of the oath, each new inductee received a tattoo of the head of a cobra.

“Thank you. Please take a seat and we will begin the meeting shortly. I must make one call before we start.”

He disappeared into the next room and closed the door quietly behind him.

Hundreds of miles away Peter’s phone rang, the screen showed it was Thomas.

“I see everyone has arrived. Have they each brought the materials I requested?”

“Yes, they have each presented me with a disk and hard copy as requested. The disks have already been put in the vault and an electronic copy has been sent to you. The hard copies will be used during the meeting then shredded afterwards,” added Thomas.

Peter continued, “Before the meeting commences remind them; although they are each in powerful positions, they are not to forget who placed them there.”

Thomas had been with Peter from the beginning as his propaganda minister and he knew not to disobey Peter Romanus. He had seen what happens to those who had over the years. He would not make the same mistake.