

CHAPTER 13 – SCOPELLO SICILY. ITINERARY. SUN, SEA and SEX.

*23 04 2022 Saturday. Frank calls Jaquie
to arrange a trip to Scopello, Sicily.*

Frank shows up at Cafe Discorso. He sits down for his usual breakfast. He finishes breakfast and calls Jaquie. Jaquie answers the phone.

“Hi Frank. Where are you?”

“Usual. Cafe Discorso. Breakfast.”

“Oh Frank I am so pleased you called. You had me worried.”

“About what?”

“You said you were reflecting. It’s not like you. Sounded as if I had depressed you and I felt responsible.”

“Nothing further from the truth. You’re shooting this afternoon?”

“Yes still on Versace.”

“And all day Sunday. It’s for the US market. Some big wigs coming from America and I have to be there all day.”

“Okay, I don’t want to interfere with your work. Call me on Monday. Better still if you are free why don’t you join me for lunch at 1.00 at the hotel.”

“I am free all day Monday, so I can be there at 1.00.”

“Okay we will discuss our trip to Scopello. Don’t sharpen your claws till then.”

“I like your sense of humour Frank.”

“Va bene. Ciao bella.”

“Frank, that sounded so beautiful in Italian. You have to speak to me more often in Italian. See you Monday.”

Ivan sms’s Johnny. “Bugatti at Cafe Discorso.”

Frank seems relaxed. Orders San Pellegrino. He walks out and sips it outside. Admiring his Bugatti and all the people stopping to marvel at this mechanical wonder. What a treasure. But nothing beats Jaquie.

He gets in the car and goes for a drive by himself. Many a head turn to see him taking off. Actually he feels embarrassed by the attention. So he drives very slowly indeed making sure he is not showing off.

He drives aimlessly along the country lanes, then off to Sassuolo admiring the beauty of the Emilia-Romagna country side. He made sure he doesn't hit a patch of loose dirt or gravel and ends up at Santino's again or with some other saint in heaven.

So he drove very responsibly and stopped three times on the way. He was practising getting in and out of the car, testing his sciatica, how he gets out, where and what to lean on in order to straighten himself. Depressing he thought but better than being six feet under.

And he decided to take the stick with him on the trip to Sicily. God, what a massive macho ego blow. A long and depressing phrase he couldn't even bare saying it. Hence his favourite acronym MMEB.

He decided to cut the agony and tell Jaquie about the sciatica. He was sure that she was a mature enough woman and understands. After all, we all get old. That would take a bit of pressure off his mind. He felt relieved immediately, as if the sciatica had suddenly disappeared.

4 Fingers calls Jaqueline and she answers the phone.

"Yes Johnny."

"What's happening."

"He's back. I will see him Monday for lunch at the hotel. I am going out for a shoot now. Anything else?"

"No. I told you not to worry. Okay Jaqueline?"

"I have a feeling you're not coming clean with me."

"All is fine. Believe me. See you."

Johnny ends the call.

"Idiota. Stronzo."

25 04 2022 Monday. Chapter 13
Section Break

Jaqueline lunches with Frank. Asks about his trip and reflections while away.

Jaqueline walks in the hotel at 1.00. Frank was waiting for her. Frank's eyes lit up.

He stands up to meet her. She gives him the usual kiss on his neck. He, on her hands.

"So how have you been? Did you reflect?"

"Yes I spent a lot of time thinking. On my own."

"What happened?"

"Well I will give you a rundown. I arrived in London and took a cab to my apartment in Kensington. That's my official residence. And I called Gino from there."

"Was he surprised?"

"Of course he hadn't seen me for a few months."

The waiter came along. They ordered ham, cheese and tomato sandwiches and San Pellegrino.

"So I went to the office in our Kensington Showroom. I saw Gino. He was worried."

"Why?"

"Well. Not sure. But on the day before, I dined at Umberto's Restaurant. The owner is Sicilian. Same age. The meal and wine were on the house. I left a contribution for his local Sant'Agata chapel. His church is few miles from Kensington. We go a long way."

"I take it, he calls you Frankie, correct?"

"Sure he is like family. He told me Gino was there and looked sad. Umberto asked him 'Why'. It's *you* he said."

"Gino must be a very caring person."

"So back to where I was. I went and saw Gino in his office. We hugged. He thinks I am in danger with this fast car. Maybe also I could befriend somebody with obscure motives. A lady."

"And?"

"He looked very skeptical. I mentioned your name. And your character. And told him not to worry."

“Did he believe you?”

“Gino is a very precise object. Like a perfect set of calibrated scales. He balances every word and analyses every statement. So I think the scales only tilted one way. He needs convincing.”

“I understand that. Is that all? Did you discuss business?”

“He told me the sales are a bit down on last year due to Coronavirus but nothing to worry about. We both agree on that.”

“Then what happened Frank?”

“I felt I wanted time to reflect. I tried to relax. I walked to Kenington Gardens. Ever been there?”

“No, I heard they are wonderful. But there is so much I have not seen in London.”

“So I went there about 3 times. Looked at the people. Little finches flying. Ducks in ponds. I sat always on the same bench. The fragrance of the flowers was out of this world. And I wondered what perfume you have been using, and which flower it was derived from. But everytime I turned to ask, you were not there.”

“Frank you are breaking my heart. Really please stop. This is getting heavy.”

“Okay the next day I drove to High Wycombe, stopped there and had a sandwich and a beer and then back home. That’s just about it. Now I am here.”

“Did you come to any conclusion?”

“I am not sure. You’re the judge.”

“I am happy to be with you, the way your are. I am not looking for money, your possessions, or a macho man. At this stage in my life I feel comfortable with an older man who for once does not seem to want to jump in bed with me. Not till he gets to know me well. I am sincere.”

“Oh, Jaquie. That’s so cute. It’s so much you. You are showing your real heart. Unless you are a super actress.”

“Much better in modelling than acting. But there is an actress in me I have to admit. I vary the acting and use it sparingly. But I will not do that to your disadvantage. That, I will guarantee you.”

“There is something else.”

“Yes Frank.”

“I spent some hours running in my new toy. On long distances, I have a problem.”

“Toilet breaks?”

“No No. My sciatica comes back from time to time. So I carry a stick. I don’t pretend I am a Usain Bolt anymore. Actually I have never been, not even remotely. Is that a problem for you?”

Jaquie was surprised and burst out laughing.

“Why should it be. You are not tall, black and handsome like Usain. You are Frank Costanzo. I know who you are. You know my moves I am sure. And I know yours. God gave us eyes to observe. We all get old Frank. We have to enjoy what we can with what we have for the time that is available to us.”

“You are so understanding. I am so relieved. Let’s finish our sandwiches. Back to our trip. I am thinking Thursday and Friday driving, spend a day touring in Scopello and back. 6 days. Can you get that time off.

“I am sure I can work something out. I can get some time off that I can claim as annual leave, even though I work under a separate contract.”

“On the way to Sicily, we will stop in Sorrento, Naples. Hotel Regina Vittoriosa. Then we cross the Straits of Messina on a Ferry. On to Palermo and Scopello. I will work on the plan.”

“Sounds not only marvellous but romantic Frank. I look forward to that.”

“I will let you go and continue with your work and see if you can get the time off.”

“Frank, thank you.”

They stand up.

“Jaquie. Can I kiss you?”

“Not on my lips, neck only.” And laughs.

They part.

26 04 2022 Tuesday. Chapter 13
Section Break

*Frank writes the details of the Scopello
trip. Calls Maria della Chiesa.*

The next day

Frank gets up and orders breakfast in his hotel room. He finishes breakfast and starts thinking of a plan.

He needs to plan a couple of stops on the way. But he needs to get his house in Scopello in some shape. He has not been there for well over a year. He decides to call Maria della Chiesa. She can prepare his flat.

He scribbles a note with an idea of times.

Thursday	28 04 22	Departs Modena
Friday	29 04 22	Arrives in Sorrento
Saturday	30 04 22	Leaves Sorrento
Sunday	01 05 22	Arrives Scopello
Monday	02 05 22	Leaves Scopello
Tuesday	03 05 22	Back in Sorrento

"Maria Bongiorno."

"Chi e'?"

"Sono Franco. Franco Costanzo."

"Oh Frankie. How are you?"

"Bene Grazie."

"I need a favour."

"I am coming to Scopello this Sunday. 1st May. Primo Maggio."

"Okay I let everybody know. We will have a feast."

"No no no. You have to be quiet."

"Why?"

"The doctor tells me I need peace and quiet."

"Capisco. Pace e silenzio. Bene."

"You still have the keys to the house."

"Si."

"Okay. Ascoltami."

This Wednesday, Venti Sette, you go open the house. Get some fresh air in the house from the sea. Make the house feel Al Fresco. Tidy a bit, sweep and vacuum. Get a gardner to pull the weeds from the front and make it more presentable. Then fresh sheets on the bed and fresh pillows."

He pauses.

In the fridge, put butter, 2 bottles of milk, best Sicilian marmalade and 2 bottles of Chianti and the best local wine from Sicily. Also some local honey. And some fruit. I like figs.”

“But figs not ready. Too early. Wait till June.”

“I forgot. Make sure we have fresh bread and coffee. Fresh jar of coffee Lavazza, Peline, Nescafe. It doesn’t matter. And Cassata Siciliana. Finally. Fresh Flowers. On Sunday morning ... Primo Maggio. A nice local arrangement. Make sure nice and fresh. Pay more if you need. On the Primo Maggio.”

“Capisce. Oh Frankie do you have a new signora?”

“Maria, I have been widower for 7 years. I met a friend. She is very delicate, like a fresh flower.”

“Oh no no no. Dio Mio. I think I understand. You are naughty boy Frankie. But we love you.”

“Let me think. Young lady? Milk full cream or Skimmed.”

“Good thinking Maria, one Skimmed one full Cream.”

“I understand, do you want me to repeat what you told me.”

“No need. But don’t forget the Cassata Siciliana.”

“Ah you still have a sweet tooth. Naughty boy.”

“Okay Frankie, I will give you all receipts for everything.”

“Not necessary. Listen.”

“Above the bed there is a picture of Jesus with a red bulb always with red light on. Turn electricity off.”

“Get on the bed. Careful ‘Bilancio’. Balance okay? Pull the picture out a little towards you. Behind the picture there are five envelopes. Marked 1000 euros, 500 euros and three with 250 euros each. You take the 1000 euros.”

“Too much money. I will give you change. You already give money to Sant’Agata Pescatore.”

“That’s okay. You take the money. You spend. You keep the change.”

“So I take one envelope 1000 euros. 4 other envelopes no touch.”

“That’s it.”

“So, 4 envelopes no touch ... and one big one I take.”

“Yes, okay. Look you can also take another envelope 250 Euros.”

“Ah, molto obbligata. We have hard times at the moment in Scopello. As usual.”

“Remember, put the fresh sheets **AFTER** you have been standing on the bed.”

“Of course Frank, I don’t want you or the signora to smell my slipper.”

“Thank you Maria.”

“Tell me Frankie, is this a secret?”

“Yes Yes Yes. Nobody knows. You, me. And signora. Only three of us.”

“Okay. Nobody knows. Only 3 people. I will tell nobody. Not even my son Fra Angelico.”

“Brava.”

“Can I ask one more question?”

“Certo.”

“What is her name?”

“Jaqueline.”

“Not Italian? French?”

“Origin French.”

“Must be beautiful like Bridgette Bardot.”

“Let me see. Maybe 28 ...29.....30.....31..... 34. How old Frankie? When I meet her I will give her a big kiss, Frankie.”

“28.”

“Una Bellezza, I am sure. Grazie and Ciao.”

“Ciao.”

Maria crosses herself.

“Madonna. Like a fresh flower. Eh. 28 ... Still a baby. Must be beautiful.”

“Well I hope he is happy. I can ... not wait to see them holding hands.”

“I don’t know. In Sicily everything is a Secret. Omerta. Cannot speak. Not even to Don Ciccio.”

Ivan (spying with satellite) sms’s 4 Fingers. Bugatti still parked in hotel. No Alfa.
