



Giacomo's Daughter

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The first in a trilogy, Giacomo's Daughter is a satisfying mystery with plenty of conflict and a killer final line.

The brutalized wife of a ruthless gangster takes matters into her own hands in Rosanna and Diana Savone's historical novel *Giacomo's Daughter*.

Sofia has spent all of her eighteen years under the thumb of controlling men: first her traditional father, Giacomo, and then her bootlegger husband, Max. Now, after months of being subjected to Max's cruelties, from which no one else was willing or able to save her, Sofia has had enough. Dark secrets are revealed and grotesque wrongs are avenged over the course of one explosive, unforgettable night.

Thanks to one impulsive decision, Sofia is dragged from her secure but stifling Italian neighborhood into the glitzy, violent world of 1920s Detroit. The city's economic and architectural advancements hide a thriving underworld of bootleggers, thugs, and assassins. Sumptuous wardrobes and gorgeous interior design form a stark contrast with the ugly people who inhabit them.

As made clear by the content warning, the story does not gloss over its darker aspects, including rape and domestic abuse. Tension builds from the very first chapter, as Sofia prepares for the fateful evening. It is obvious that she has plans beyond those she admits at the start—plans that Max remains oblivious to until it is far too late.

Characters' thoughts and motivations are spelled out in more detail than is necessary, slowing the story's pace, which otherwise reveals Sofia's story, and ultimate plan, bit by suspenseful bit. The overarching plot is straightforward, while the events that led up to it are filled with twists. Small moments, as of Max praying that an assassination will go well, round out the principal characters.

Sofia and Max each bring their own limited perspectives to the tale. Max sells himself as slick and irresistible, but the truth soon becomes clear: he is an egotistical brute who takes pleasure in insulting and controlling everyone around him. The extent of his depravity is revealed throughout the night, drawn out by Sofia's sensual but relentless coaxing.

Sofia, in flashback, knows more about the world from books than from lived experience, making her easy prey for Max's charms. But harsh reality, coupled with societal indifference and even antipathy towards her plight, forces her to learn to scheme and lie in her own defense. Sofia's lost innocence is a tragedy that not even her exquisite revenge can make up for.

The first in a trilogy, *Giacomo's Daughter* is satisfying on its own merits, with plenty of conflict and a killer final line. The subject matter is often upsetting, but the mystery aspects, Sofia's strength, and the promise of a new beginning save the story from its unrelenting grimness.

Giacomo's Daughter is a dark historical novel about how society so often fails its most vulnerable.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (April 8, 2020)

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