



DANIEL Silva

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES*
BESTSELLING AUTHOR

An
Inside
Job

DANIEL
Silva

An
Inside Job

A NOVEL



HARPER

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Dedication

As always, for my wife, Jamie, and my children, Lily and Nicholas

Epigraph

Beauty perishes in life but is immortal in art.

—Leonardo da Vinci

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Cast of Characters

GABRIEL ALLON • Art conservator, retired spy

CHIARA ZOLLI • Tiepolo Restoration Company

IRENE AND RAPHAEL ALLON • Children of Gabriel Allon and Chiara Zolli

ELENORA SAVIANO • Principal, Scuola Primaria Bernardo Canal

CESARE FERRARI • Commander, Art Squad

LUCA ROSSETTI • Art Squad officer

COLONEL BAGGIO • Carabinieri officer, Venice

COLONEL MANCINI • Carabinieri officer, Florence

MASSIMO RAVELLO • Medical examiner, Venice

LUIGI DONATI • Supreme pontiff, Roman Catholic Church

FATHER MARK KEEGAN • Papal private secretary

ALOIS METZLER • Commandant, Pontifical Swiss Guard

CARDINAL MATTEO BERTOLI • *Sostituto*, Vatican Secretariat of State

ANTONIO CALVESI • Chief conservator, Vatican Museums

PENELOPE RADCLIFF • Apprentice conservator, Vatican Museums

DONATELLA RICCI • Conservator, Vatican Museums

ALESSIO TOMASSINI • Head of security, Vatican Museums

OTTAVIO POZZI • Security guard, Vatican Museums

ESTEBAN RODRÍGUEZ • Director, Vatican Press Office

VERONICA MARCHESE • Director, National Etruscan Museum

GIORGIO MONTEFIORE • Leonardo scholar, Uffizi Gallery

MARTIN LANDESMANN • Swiss financier

INGRID JOHANSEN • Professional thief, computer hacker

AMELIA MARCH • *ARTnews* magazine

JULIAN ISHERWOOD • London art dealer

SARAH BANCROFT • London art dealer, former CIA operative

CHRISTOPHER KELLER • Field agent, Secret Intelligence Service

OLIVER DIMBLEBY • London art dealer

NICHOLAS LOVEGROVE • British art consultant

NILES DUNHAM • Curator, National Gallery

JEREMY CRABBE • Bonhams, London

SIMON MENDENHALL • Christie's, London

GEOFFREY HOLLAND • Director, Courtauld Gallery

PETER VAN DE VELDE • Dutch art dealer

STÉPHANE TREMBLAY • French art consultant

JACQUES MÉNARD • French art crime detective

FRANCO TEDESCHI • SBL PrivatBank, Lugano

NICO AMBROSI • Piedmont Global Capital, Milan

MARKUS VOGEL • Executive Jet Services, Zurich

ALEXANDER PROKHOROV • Russian oligarch, art collector

TERESSA SIMONETTI • Florentine noblewoman

SALVATORE ALVARO • Camorra assassin

Preface

Luigi Donati was introduced in *The Confessor*, the third book of the Gabriel Allon series. He was then the private secretary of Pietro Lucchesi, who chose the pontifical name Paul VII. Donati was elected pope in the dramatic conclave that followed Lucchesi's death. In my fictitious version of the Vatican, the papacies of Joseph Ratzinger and Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the supreme pontiffs Benedict XVI and Francis, did not occur.

Part One

Sfumato

1 San Polo

The straight-backed wooden chairs in Dottoressa Saviano's anteroom were instruments of torture. Chiara, try as she might, could find no arrangement of her limbs that provided even a moment of comfort. At present she sat with the erect carriage of a dancer, with her hands folded atop her knees and her feet together on the scuffed wooden floor. The *dottoressa's* secretary had cast several admiring glances at Chiara's stylish pumps—and at her stylish husband as well. She was used to women staring at Gabriel; he was still impossibly handsome. He also happened to be one of the world's finest art conservators, which conferred upon him an unwelcome local celebrity. Chiara managed the restoration company that employed him. For better or worse, they were among the most prominent couples in Venice.

Their young twins, a boy named for the painter Raphael and a girl called Irene, attended a public *scuola primaria* a few minutes' walk from the family's apartment overlooking the Grand Canal. Dottoressa Elenora Saviano, the school's principal, had asked Chiara to drop by her office at 2:00 p.m. to address a matter of the utmost urgency, the nature of which she had refused to discuss over the *telefonino*. The *dottoressa* had insisted, however, that Gabriel attend the meeting as well, for what reason she declined to say. The implication was that the undisclosed problem was serious. Chiara was confident she knew the identity of the culprit.

The secretary stole another glance at Gabriel, who pretended not to notice. He was scrolling through the headlines on his new iPhone, a replacement for the device that was damaged during a recent visit to the west of England. His

chair was identical to Chiara's, and yet he looked the very picture of contentment.

"What's your secret?" she asked.

"I spend all day on my feet in front of paintings. This is a welcome change of pace."

"What about your back?"

"I swallowed a few of my little green friends before I left the apartment."

Chiara turned her head toward the anteroom's only window. It overlooked the school's central courtyard, which was deserted and darkened by shadow. There was a climbing apparatus and a space for games involving balls, but otherwise the students were left to their own devices during recess. Such was the existence of children in Venice. They played in the *calle* or the *campo* and afterward went to the *pasticceria* for a sweet. It had never occurred to Chiara, a Venetian by birth, that children might live any other way. When she was a young girl, she had loved her enchanted city of canals and bridges and ancient churches filled with art. Occasionally she went to the Giardini Pubblici for a bit of peace and quiet. But for the most part the only flora she saw were the six trees in the Campo di Ghetto Nuovo, the broad square in Cannaregio where her ancestors had lived for centuries.

She awakened her phone and discreetly checked the time. The ever-vigilant secretary noticed nevertheless.

"I'm sure it won't be much longer, Signora Zolli."

"We were told—"

The secretary's phone rang before Chiara could finish the thought. It seemed the *dottorressa* would see them now. And only fifteen minutes later than promised.

She received them with a doge-like solemnity while seated behind her desk. She was a short woman of perhaps fifty with the figure of a wine barrel. Her hair was pulled back severely from her face. Oversize spectacles magnified a pair of unblinking eyes.

They settled first on Gabriel. "Is it true, Signore Allon?"

"Is what true, Dottorressa Saviano?"

“That you have received a commission to restore the Titian in Santa Maria della Salute.”

The painting, *The Descent of the Holy Spirit*, hung above one of the basilica’s chapels. The Tiepolo Restoration Company, under Chiara’s capable leadership, had been awarded the contract to conduct a long-overdue cleaning of the canvas—with the proviso that the work be carried out by none other than the renowned director of the firm’s paintings department. A story to that effect had appeared the previous week in *Il Gazzettino*. Of course it was true, thought Chiara. Everyone in Venice knew it was true.

Gabriel’s reply was more diplomatic. “As a matter of fact, I began work on it yesterday.”

“Is it your first Titian?”

Chiara counted slowly to ten while her husband, with admirable forbearance, explained that he had restored numerous paintings by Titian and his workshop. He might have added that he had restored the Bellini altarpieces in San Zaccaria and San Giovanni Crisostomo, one of the Veroneses in San Sebastiano, and a Tintoretto in dell’Orte. And then, of course, there was Caravaggio’s magisterial *Deposition of Christ*, one of several paintings he had cleaned clandestinely for the Vatican Museums. As it happened, his old friend was now the supreme pontiff. Not surprisingly, Gabriel neglected to mention that as well.

“Might I impose on you for a small favor?” inquired the *dottor*essa.

“How small?”

“I was wondering whether you might agree to show the children how you go about restoring a painting. We won’t stay for long. Perhaps an hour or two.”

Gabriel, with a glance, requested Chiara’s assistance.

“I’m sorry, Dottor

essa Saviano, but my husband never allows anyone to observe him while he works.”

“And why is that, Signore Allon?”

Once again it was Chiara who supplied the answer. “He believes the great artists of the Venetian Renaissance deserve to have their work presented in

the best possible light. He opposes any public display of paintings in a damaged state.”

“He doesn’t want to spoil the illusion?”

Chiara frowned. “Surely this isn’t the reason you wanted to see us.”

“I wish it were so.”

Copies of the children’s files lay on Dottoressa Saviano’s desk. She set aside Raphael’s—the boy was a math prodigy who was now studying with a tutor at the university—and opened Irene’s instead. Chiara steeled herself for the worst.

“Your daughter is a remarkable child, Signora Zolli. I have been most impressed by her academic performance, not to mention the speed of her assimilation.”

Chiara raised an eyebrow.

“I was just pointing out that Irene is somewhat new to Venice.”

“But her mother is not. The Zolli family has been living here since the fifteenth century.”

“But your children were born abroad.”

“They are as Italian as their classmates.”

The *dottoressa* sighed. They had reached an impasse. “Perhaps we should begin again.”

“Yes, let’s. What seems to be the issue?”

“Irene is a natural leader. Even the older students look up to her. But I’m afraid she holds rather strident political opinions for one so young.”

“Since when is having an opinion a problem?”

Dottoressa Saviano opened Irene’s file and extracted a single sheet of paper. “Copies of this were posted throughout the school three days ago. We have reason to believe that Irene was responsible.”

“What is it?”

“See for yourself,” said Dottoressa Saviano, and handed over the document. It was a call for a one-day student strike to protest the Italian government’s inaction on the issue of climate change. “I have to admit, it’s

extremely well written for a child of her age. Or perhaps you had a hand in its drafting.”

“I didn’t.”

“Does Irene have a computer at home?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Perhaps you should monitor it more carefully.”

Chiara handed the document to Gabriel. He smiled as he read it.

“You find it amusing, Signore Allon?”

“Quite.”

“I don’t. Not in the least. Evidently your daughter has managed to convince nearly the entire student body to boycott their classes next Wednesday. They plan to march through all six *sestieri* and stage a rally in the Piazza San Marco.”

“What would be the harm? In fact, it might actually do some good. The young have a right to be worried about their future.”

“The current government does not see it that way. The education minister is of the opinion that global warming is a hoax perpetrated by the political left.”

“There’s a lot of that going around.”

“If the boycott goes forward, there will be serious consequences.”

“For whom?”

“Your daughter, for one.”

Gabriel returned the document. “And what if we were able to find an elegant solution to the problem?”

“What did you have in mind?”

“I prefer not to negotiate with myself.”

“That’s where we’re different, you and I.”

“How so?”

The *dottoressa* smiled. “I never negotiate.”

* * *

Gabriel's opening position was that the protest march would take place on a Saturday rather than a weekday, that there would be no disruption of classes and no further posting of flyers on school property, and that none of the participants, including the organizer, would be punished in any way. In exchange, the organizer's father would agree to allow a small delegation of students to observe him carrying out one of the most important restorations undertaken in Venice in many years.

"The delegation," countered Dottorressa Saviano, "will consist of the entire *scuola primaria*."

"Out of the question."

"And the visit will be two hours in duration, giving you sufficient time to deliver a lecture on the Renaissance in Venice before commencing your demonstration."

Gabriel sighed. "Done."

"Not quite."

"What now?"

"A number of our students have shown artistic promise. I feel that with the proper instruction . . ."

Chiara began to object, but Gabriel placed a hand on her forearm. "I'd love nothing more. How soon can we start?"

"I'll leave that to your discretion, Signore Allon." The *dottorressa* returned the flyer to Irene's academic file, then, upon further reflection, consigned it to the rubbish bin. "I know you're terribly busy."

Chiara managed to smile as she bade the *dottorressa* a pleasant afternoon, but her anger boiled over downstairs as she followed Gabriel into the street.

"The nerve of that woman."

"She was a worthy opponent, I have to admit."

"She's an extortionist. And you, for some inexplicable reason, surrendered without a fight."

"There was a method to my madness."

"You were trying to protect your daughter?"

"I suppose I was."

“Talk about madness,” murmured Chiara.

“She’s spirited. There’s a difference.”

Thirty minutes remained until the end of the school day, so they walked to Bar Dogale in the Campo dei Frari and ordered coffee. The counterman served Gabriel’s with *un’ombra*, a small glass of white wine. Chiara requested one as well.

“What are we going to do with her?” she asked.

“The *dottoressa*?”

“Your daughter.”

“Enjoy every minute we have with her.”

“That’s easy for you to say.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means that, for understandable reasons, Irene has you wrapped around her finger. Therefore, despite her frequent misbehavior, you have never once disciplined her.”

“Why would I want to do a thing like that?”

“Tell me something, Gabriel. Do you think your daughter is a *normal* child?”

“Of course not. But neither is her brother.”

“Or her father, for that matter,” added Chiara quietly.

“Let’s hope Dottoressa Saviano doesn’t find out. Otherwise she might have second thoughts about taking me on as a part-time art instructor.”

“Have you taken leave of your senses?”

“It’s something I’ve wanted to do for a long time.”

“Teach?”

Gabriel nodded.

“Why not teach at the university?”

“They won’t have me. Unlike you, I don’t possess an advanced degree from an esteemed institution of higher learning.”

The truth was, Gabriel had no degree at all; he had abandoned his formal study of art to undertake a mission of vengeance for his country’s secret