

All the Right Angles

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Giovanni and Mariangela Moretti walked hand-in-hand along Grove Street, an April sunset hovering in the sky. The orange vibrance winked from beside the tallest bank building, reflected in the mirror-like windows of twenty-one stories.

The couple had eaten dinner at Moz Uberuaga's hole-in-the-wall restaurant-one of the few long-time business still hanging on. Moz was a native Idahoan and a Basque with a spicy personality to match, and his Firehouse Café served the best french fries in town.

"It's a nice evening," Mariangela said, her fingers tucked safely in Giovanni's own.

They both took in the surroundings, but Giovanni looked with a contractor's eye, and a quest to revitalize the past.

Giovanni gazed at the brick buildings lined up before them on either side of the street. Many store-fronts were deteriorating, the "clinker" bricks prominent with their eggplant coloring against the faded gray mortar. Years of cold winter conditions, followed by baking summer heat had left the buildings weathered. The street was narrow, only two-laned. When deliveries were made, traffic had to skirt around the trucks, their caution flashers blinking reminders that not that many deliveries were made to this section of town anymore.

The old marketplace diverted off of the main commerce part of downtown. This area had once been home to a thriving candy factory, single screen movie theater, and a Mexican restaurant. The department store on Main had closed, in its place came a pool hall where the police were called to bust up closing time fights.

"It sure has changed around here," Mariangela said with a sigh, her gaze sweeping across the boarded up window-front of the old florist. "I remember when Rosebud's had the best red roses in town."

Pausing, Giovanni frowned at the graffiti marring the closed up entry. "I bought a lot of anniversary bouquets here."

"Now everyone goes to that big discount florist up on the hill."

Over dinner, Giovanni had discussed his reasons for wanting to take on this renovation project. But his wife had reservations, and they'd reached an impasse over dinner. He let it go, not bringing it up throughout the rest of their meal or dessert.

But now Giovanni spoke with quiet firmness, his Italian accent more prominent than usual as he said, "Angela, this is why I want the project so badly. I *need* to bring the old downtown back so our children's children can enjoy what we once did."

Mariangela nodded, but with a wistful acceptance of what was and not what should be.

"It's too difficult, if not impossible, for Moretti Construction to get bonding on a project of this size." She gave his fingers a loving squeeze. "I know how badly you want it, but Giovanni . . . we can't."

Giovanni wasn't as complacent. He still had a heart filled with hope-if not feral determination.

Giovanni and his wife had discussed the Grove Marketplace renovation a hundred times. With an influx of new businesses coming into town, the growth opportunities were huge. An outside developer had tagged the Marketplace for a complete new look from the ground up, including a five-story parking structure and a four-star hotel.

The deterioration and decline that began nineteen years ago when the super-mall opened five miles away, would be resuscitated with an architecturally pleasing overhaul. A multiplex theater, as well as chain restaurants and upscale shops were planned.

He'd been waiting all his life to do a job like this.

Born in Naples, Italy, his heart still swelled with pride for the Old Country, and all he had learned apprenticing as a carpenter. He'd come into the world in 1935, during oppression and war, but Italy had given him strength and resistance.

So had his beautiful wife of forty-four years. The moment he set eyes on Mariangela Castelluccio wearing a dark skirt and nylons with heeled shoes,

Giovanni had been enamored. After a whirlwind courtship, Mariangela had been eighteen when he'd married her. At twenty-one, Giovanni had been ready to settle down, but not in Naples. There were too many laws governing his choices. A tangle of statues, rules, norms, regulations and customs for the small businessman to follow. He wanted to make a better life for his wife by what the Americans called "free enterprise."

So he'd come to this country trained by the best in Naples, a legacy from carpenters who had handed down their craft to him, making Giovanni Moretti the guardian for future generations.

Giovanni wanted to do for Boise what Italy had taught him-and that was to breathe a life and soul back into what had once had energy and verve. He could save the downtown that was a wasteland of empty buildings, failing businesses and dusty ghosts of glory days past.

"Do you want to get an ice cream at Maggie Moo's?" Mariangela asked, apparently trying to sway his pensive mood. She knew what made him happy, even the simplistic of things like a bowl of vanilla with toffee bits.

He swallowed tightly with emotion, his love for her filling his chest and giving him a soft ache in his heart. "In a minute."

Giovanni held Mariangela's hand, her fingers slight in his grasp and her gold wedding band warm from her body heat. She smelled like his favorite perfume, spring flowers and a hint of garlic that seemed to always be on her hands no matter how much lemon dish soap she used. She didn't like that she smelled like an Italian kitchen; he loved the scent that was uniquely her.

At the age of sixty-two, his wife looked better than ever. Her raven's black hair barely shone with threads of silver. He'd always thought she had the prettiest brown eyes he'd ever seen-their color was a warm hue of walnut and golden-honey. Time had not faded the sparkle in them, the love for life and family.

Their marriage had always been good, but they had had their struggles. Early on, Mariangela hadn't been pleased with him when he'd left her behind in Italy to get settled in America. As soon as he sent for her, he promised they'd never be apart again-and they hadn't. He had never left her at home without him, even when the babies had come and he had building conventions and business trips. Mariangela brought the kids and they swam in a motel pool or visited a local attraction.

Giovanni was truly blessed and he couldn't remember what life was without his wonderful wife by his side.

However, in recent months, there had been a growing wedge of tension pushing between them-all his doing. He accepted the blame. But he wanted the project so very badly, and Mariangela wanted him to retire.

Over cappuccino the other morning, she'd said, "But Giovanni, you don't need to be up at five o'clock in the morning anymore. You're seventy-two. You shouldn't be going up and down ladders or ducking under scaffolding. You've got a bad back and your ankles are starting to give out."

He hadn't spoken anything to the contrary. She was right. His darling Mariangela usually was. She was the cement of the family, the foundation of reason and common sense that kept him glued together-emotionally and physically. But in this instance, he just couldn't let the Grove Marketplace rest.

Throughout the years, Moretti Construction had completed some very significant jobs, but never anything over the top. He'd lived in Boise long enough that he wanted to leave his mark in a big way-something that would be a long-term testament to Moretti Construction's craftsmanship pride.

"We should take a trip to Italy and visit home, Giovanni." Mariangela's gentle words broke through Giovanni's thoughts, bringing him back to reality.

"Yes . . . we should." He cupped his wife's face with his hand, his fingers callused and rough. "But, *bella mia*, first I'd like to get this job."

He could see the disappointment in her gaze, perhaps mixed with a small flicker of ire. He'd been pushing for this too long and she was at her limits with him. Even so, he couldn't help it.

In an almost exasperated tone, Mariangela said, "But we aren't qualified to get the bonding-you said so yourself. It'll be an uphill battle. We just aren't big enough." A compassion in her brown eyes warmed his heart, her fingers squeezing his with a time-old reassurance he'd come to treasure. "Our life isn't going to change if you don't get the Marketplace-we'll be okay."

Deep down, he knew her words to be true. Of course they'd be okay. This wasn't about their livelihood. The financial state of Moretti was just fine.

For Giovanni, the Grove Marketplace had everything to do with sharing his talents for others to enjoy. To do his best, to leave his mark on a piece of Boise that would stand tall for many years to come.

For that, Giovanni couldn't let this rest.

He stroked his wife's cheek, her skin soft beneath his roughened thumb. For a second, she closed her eyes, leaned into him and he felt her love seep inside the work-hard muscles of his body.

He almost wanted to back down, just to please her and make her happy, but he couldn't. There was so much more to this than he could ever explain; he couldn't fully explain it to himself. The desire to press forward was so strong, he blocked out caution and reason, even the quiet pleading in his wife's gaze to let it go.

With an ache in his chest, he took her hand and brought her down the street to the alleyway. Looking at his wife, he smiled with mischief, then stepped into alley and took her into his arms.

Giovanni planted a big kiss on his wife's soft lips and she sighed against him.

"I love you, my angel," he spoke against her mouth.

"I love you more." Her voice sparkled and gone was the earlier tension. "Maybe we should forget the ice cream and go home."

He grinned. "What ice cream?"

Even after forty-four years of marriage, they still had that honeymoon passion.

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The high heels of Francesca Moretti's black leather pumps clicked over the sidewalk. She spoke into her cellphone, her conversation carried out on autopilot because she'd had this exchange before. The generic responses she gave could have been uttered in her sleep.

Momentarily, Francesca grew distracted by a sleek summer-white suit displayed in the window of Solara-a high end fashion store. The neckline was plunging and required a sophisticated blouse beneath, while the cut of the skirt was fitted at the hips.

"Hmm," she murmured as her brother, Mark, went on about how Dad was wanting everything done yesterday on the jobsite and the crane had only just arrived from Seattle by rail car and the first section was assembled. They only had so much time and the track hoes had broken ground and-

"Do you think I look better in white or black?" she asked with a smile, knowing it would irk Mark to change the subject when he was going good on a venting spree. She didn't mean to be facetious, but they'd worked on countless construction jobs together and it was par for the course that something would go wrong, not be ready when promised, or one of the trades would get red tagged for faulty subcontracting and not pass inspection.

But if Francesca thought she'd put a spoke in her brother's wheel, she should have reconsidered. They'd bantered too many times and given each other too much affectionate grief.

"Black gives you that don't-mess-with-me-look for when you're moody."

She was about to say she was rarely moody, and that observation was a figment of his warped male imagination, but she let his comment go since, after all, she had egged him on.

He mentioned in a casual tone, "So I heard that Legacy got another bid for a seventeen story off of Idaho Street."

Now that gave Francesca pause and she no longer cared about a white suit in a shop window. "No." The word came out in a mix of sigh and awe.

Legacy Constructors was headquartered out of Seattle, owned and operated by Kyle Jagger-a man who'd reinvented his father's billion dollar company into a fresh and innovative construction company to be reckoned with after Parr Jagger's death nine years ago. Kyle was the type of man who took little for granted, was ambitious and gave off the impression that he deserved to be at the top. Francesca had never met him. She'd formed a long-standing opinion on what she'd heard her father say about Kyle and plain-old industry gossip.

Conversations in construction trailers gave out more hearsay than a beauty salon so she really shouldn't take what she heard as verbatim. Even so, one did form preconceived notions about certain higher up people, and Kyle Jagger was as high up you could get.

Legacy was Moretti's biggest competitors in the region. While Moretti stuck closer to home, venturing only as far as an occasional job in Utah or Oregon, most of their work remained in Idaho. They had the pick of projects in the surrounding Idaho area. Legacy had sites throughout the Pacific Northwest. But one job they hadn't gotten was the Grove Marketplace. That one belonged to Moretti.

Francesca remembered the day her dad had gathered the family at Robert's restaurant. Her brother had opened a neo-traditional Italian ristorante eleven years ago, replicating the time-honored family recipes that Francesca had grown up on. A food critic for the *Idaho Statesman* had written, "If you want Italian food that sings like Pavarotti, Pomodora is the only place to eat-*presto!*"

In grand fashion, Dad had ordered a bottle of the best Chianti, then raised his glass to toast everyone at the table. There'd been her older brother, Giovanni "John", who was the family lawyer. He was the rock, the one everyone could go to settle a dispute, whether the quarrel was simple or complex. The family's heart broke for him when his wife, Connie, was killed in a car accident leaving him to raise a son and daughter on his own.

Her second oldest brother, Robert, and his wife were foodies. Their mission in life was to load your plate with more food than you could possibly consume in a week, much less one meal. He and his wife, Marie, had opened Pomodoro, then started having babies. They were up to four-all girls with inky black hair and doe-like brown eyes.

Mark, her youngest brother had come solo. He was by far the most handsome of the three boys, yet he never acknowledged how good looking he was. It was comical to be out with him and watch women practically walk into streetlight poles while gawking at this thick dark hair, brooding brown eyes and firmly set mouth. Mark was the rugged type, the guy who looked great in a torn up flannel shirt and a tool belt. He worked the labor end of the family business, not wanting any part of paperwork or contracts. Although he'd offered valuable in-put in the bidding process.

That night when her father had announced Moretti would be doing the Grove Marketplace, Francesca couldn't have been any happier. She'd prayed for this for her father. He wasn't getting any younger and she knew how much he wanted the project.

"So when does Legacy break ground?" Francesca asked into the cellphone, reeling herself back to the present and continuing her walk toward Pomodoro

which was on 9th and Bannock. Wednesday nights after work were reserved for meeting her three closest girlfriends at the ristorante for dinner. If she weren't in the mood for her brother's *killermanicott*, she might have canceled—because she wasn't in the mood to hear about the latest bachelor of the day. Her friends, all of whom were actively dating, made it their mission in life to hook her up.

"The next few weeks. Kyle's going to be on the job overseeing everything."

Kyle Jagger rarely ran jobs outside of Seattle. He had a great crew who made sure everything got done. The fact that Kyle was going to be personally involved with this latest job secretly impressed Francesca. Although she'd never admit to that. She tried to keep a reasonable business-sense about her, give compliments when they were due and keep overt accolades to herself—especially when they were felt toward the competition.

She did tend on the side of perfectionism and expectations, notably toward herself. That came from maintaining a perfect 4.0 when she'd attended Oregon State University and graduated with a degree in architecture. She'd expected nothing less than the best from herself and to be overly patted on the back for what she considered something that was required of her—she just didn't need the extra kudos.

"I had a thought, Franci." Mark broke into her recollections, his tone humorous. "If you ask Kyle out for coffee and find out all his trade secrets—I'll buy you whatever you just saw in Solara's store window."

"How'd you know I stopped at Solara?"

"Because I heard you breathing like a sprinter—all hyper and excited about something and that means one thing: clothes."

Francesca frowned. She wasn't a clothes horse, but she did like to dress nice. She rarely wore slacks to work. She kept a half dozen pairs of heeled shoes beneath her desk in the corner brownstone office she had above Idaho Street. Just because she was an architect didn't mean she had to be frumpy. She enjoyed style and flare, had a figure that could fit into almost anything . . . so why not?

She felt a crease mar her forehead as dawning spread through a sour smile. "I will not ask Kyle Jagger on a date to pry trade secrets out of him. You do it."

"I don't date."

"Neither do I."

"Tell that to the date squad."

With that, Francesca cringed. The date squad was comprised of Erin-a CPA, Jordan-a marketing analyst, and Lily-a mortgage broker. When they couldn't set her up, they combined their efforts and tried to find single women for her brother, Mark.


"Do you want to join us? We're eating at Pomodoro's and I'm not sure I'm up to another match-maker session."

"How can it be a match-maker session when you never go out with any of the guys they sacrifice?"

"I don't have time."

"Me either. I can't remember the last time I went out."

"Well, you should make time, Mark. You've got a lot to offer the right woman."

"Uh-a lot to offer'-isn't that crap reserved for guys named Marvin?"

Franci caught her lip with her teeth to keep from laughing. "Well, I'm here. Wish me luck."

"You don't need it."

The line clipped short as Francesca pulled the door open to her brother's restaurant. Its decor was classic Italian: red-checked tablecloths, straw-covered Chianti bottles on every table, and a faux grape arbor with mini-lights hung from the ceiling. The rich smells of garlic and tomatoes assaulted her, causing her stomach to growl.

Striding inside, she made her way to the girls' table, three sets of gazes fastening on her, smiles bright and broad, and knowing gleams beaming from the corners of eyes.

Oh great. They had a prospect in mind for her.

Why did she suddenly feel as if she were entering a slaughter house?

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Kyle Jagger barely landed his Piper Malibu at the Boise Airport, made a quick pit-stop at a downtown condo he'd bought because it had been economical to invest in property than rent during the time he'd be in Boise on the project, then he headed for City Hall at Main and Capital. The permit office was on the second floor and Kyle needed to file something today. The high-rise Legacy was doing was pretty straight forward, but paperwork still had to be in order even for a no brainer.

Dead-tired from a 7:00am meeting, bumper-to-bumper traffic to Sea-Tac on the I-5, then a one hour wait for weather clearance, Kyle had to concede that he'd had a gorgeous flight over the Cascade mountains at 18,000 feet. He always packed a Gott cooler and stainless steel Thermos that his father had given him when he'd been in college. Depending on his mood, he either drank hot coffee or icy cold diet cola while in the cockpit.

While driving the pick up truck he kept at the airport extended parking, Kyle rubbed the grit from his eyes; then he felt the bristle of beard on his jaw. He was sure he looked like hell, but whatever. He wasn't here to impress anyone.

As soon as he filed the paperwork, he was going to Moz's Firehouse Cafè for a home-cooked meal and a lookover at the Grove Marketplace.

That job should have been Legacy's, but the developer had picked Moretti. If Giovanni wasn't such a personable guy, Kyle might have been royally torked and tried a few things to sway the masses and influence them in his direction. But still-Moretti could be nice as Sunday supper and that didn't balm the loss in Kyle's book. Legacy had really wanted that project.

Kyle punched the button on the elevator, catching a glimpse of his muted reflection in the mirrored sheen of the doors. He wore jeans and a t-shirt, briefcase in hand. His dark brown hair was windblown from the open cockpit window as he'd taxied in thirty minutes ago.

The bell chimed and the doors opened. He stepped inside and hit the second floor button while thinking how good a cold beer on tap sounded with a cheeseburger. Kyle had a stomach that could digest anything-he had to. In the last eight odd years since his divorce, he'd eaten at more restaurants than he'd ever been in a grocery store. He could cook, only marginally. He had no time

nor inclination. It was much easier to sit and order, then read through his latest set of plans or scroll through e-mails on his laptop.

The permit office had carpeted floors, rows of cubicles and low counters where blueprints could be spread out and read. There was a high countertop for the check in receptionist. The room was fairly modern and comfortable.

Due to the late hour, nobody else was here except for a woman who wore a skirt just above the knees, with a trim jacket that fit her slender back perfectly. She stood ahead of him, one hip slightly cocked and the toe of her right foot slipping in and out of her high heeled pump while her left leg bore the brunt of her weight-which was slight at best. The shape of her calf was killer. She must work out. He couldn't help watching the way her foot absently moved in and out of that shoe.

"We gave you the building plan," the woman said. "Can't you check again?" Her manicured toes toyed with the front of her shoe, her feet appearing smooth and well-taken care of. She didn't wear nylons and he found that incredibly sexy.

Leaning her elbows onto the counter, she slipped her purse off her shoulder, dug through it and came out with a cellphone that was ringing.

"Hello?" she answered, then listened for a few seconds before cutting in, "Uh, that would be a no. I told you I'm not interested. I don't care what he looks like."

"How old is he, Franci? If you don't want him, I might be interested. My last date was a major dud. He called his mother three times-she was watching his cat while he was out with me. Whoever heard of a cat sitter for a couple of hours?" The clerk, who must have been in her mid-thirties, stopped looking for whatever it was the skirted woman had asked her to retrieve. With an eagerly expectant look on her fresh face, she waited for a verdict from the woman.

Franci put her hand on the receiver. Kyle could almost see the indifference flow through her muscles while stating to the clerk, "Lily wants to set me up with Carl Murphy, a man on the faculty of BSU."

"What does he teach?"

"I haven't asked. Not interested."

"Wait, I think I know him. He's a chemistry teacher. He graduated from Centennial in 76. He's got to be fifty years old. He's ancient. What's Lily thinking?"

Clearly these two women were old friends that they could go on about some unsuspecting guy like this.

"Lily," Franci said, "I'm at the permit office. I have to go. There's a huge line-"
" At that moment, she glanced over her shoulder as if to invent a long line behind her. But there was only him.

When her rich brown eyes met his, and he noted the way her black hair contrasted against her olive skin, Kyle couldn't readily explain the feeling of recognition. He felt as if he knew her, but he couldn't recall their meeting. She was very familiar. The eyes, the nose. That mouth.

"I have to go," she said in a muffled voice, turning back to the clerk. She flipped the phone closed, then straightened while slipping her foot back into her shoe, standing taller and with a stiff thrust of her shoulders as if she now meant business.

"Patty, I need that permit in order." She grabbed her purse, ready to leave. "Can you just do it and call me tomorrow?"

"I'll see what I can figure out."

"Thanks."

Franci came toward him, obviously trying not to meet his gaze but unable to pull that one completely off without a hitch. She did drag her eyes to his, stare, then pause a moment. She licked her lips as if to say something, then stopped herself with a shrug. She kept right on walking toward the exit and he tracked her as she left.

At the clerk's window, Kyle couldn't help asking, "Who was that?"

Patty gave him the once over as if she were a cat and he a prime piece of tuna. Then with a sigh, as if she realized she were fishing out of the wrong ocean, she said, "Francesca Moretti."

Moretti. Kyle took a second glance at the exit, hoping to catch Francesca before she'd completely disappeared. Too late. She was gone.

No wonder she'd seemed familiar. She looked just like her father-a man he knew well. Perhaps too well.

He wondered what Francesca Moretti would think if she knew the lengths her father had gone in order to ensure he landed the Grove Marketplace.

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Giovanni Moretti wore his shirts Hawaiian style-he didn't tuck the tails in. He'd preferred to let the hem flow around his middle and disguise the ample size of his stomach. He was a big man-he admitted to weighing two-hundred-and-forty pounds, but he was probably closer to two-hundred-and-eighty. At 6'2", he was evenly distributed. He liked to think of himself as solid, but his doctor told him he was in dangerous territory. *Croca-nada!* There was no way he was giving up cheese and pasta.

Decades ago, Giovanni bought a used construction trailer that was now held together by patches and memories. Today he could easily afford to buy a newer one, but he enjoyed the well-worn feel of this trailer.

It was inevitable that each jobsite ended up with muddy ground from a water truck or a hard rain. The grooved soles of steel-toed boots collected pockets of gooey dirt, dropping chunks onto the trailer linoleum as various foremen came in to talk to him. Once in a while, Giovanni swept but the gritty floor was a reminder of jobs past. Then there were the familiar smells that had absorbed into the paneled walls. Blueprint ink, the garlic from the lunches his wife brought him, the culmination of sweat after a long day, the leather from his son's tool belt when he dropped it onto a desk so he could sit and talk over a cup of coffee.

These were comforts to Giovanni and he liked them. In this trailer, many deals had been put together, history had been made. He'd brought Mark here when he was a baby. Francesca had studied for high school exams on the desk in the corner. The place was cluttered and dingy, dark and needing new flooring. Even so, Giovanni found peace and satisfaction here. This was where it all began for Moretti Construction. To Giovanni, this trailer was a second home.

He sat behind his desk, papers stacked a foot thick. He had rolled blueprints, spread out blueprints, planning and zoning reports, appraisals, and a cluster of other things that, to the average guy, would appear to be a scattered mess of complete disorganization. But for Giovanni, he knew exactly where everything

was, when each bill was due, what a report meant, and how he had to fix a mistake-should something need fixing.

Giovanni worked well in this method. This was his habit, his way of doing things. Nobody understood that-accept Franci. His baby girl. When she'd been born after three sons, he'd thanked the good Lord for blessing him with a daughter. She was the light in his eyes, the smile on his lips. He'd spoiled her when she was little, buying her a new dress for Mass when she wasn't expecting it. He recalled the day of her Confirmation, wearing that white organdy dress with the veil and wreath on her thick crown of black curls. She walked with measured steps, just the way they'd practiced, holding her candle and approaching the altar. He'd never been more proud.

She'd developed into a bright and beautiful young lady. At thirty-four, she'd accomplished more than he had his entire lifetime and he found his chest puffing with pride whenever he thought about all that she had done for the community . . . about all that she could still do. She was ambitious. And fearless. He loved that about her. Perhaps it was growing up with three older brothers that taught her never to be afraid of anything. She plunged in without looking-and at times, he'd worried about her. Like when he'd taken the family on a vacation and Franci was just out of diapers. She jumped into a motel pool-the deep end-without fear that she'd drown. He'd been halfway out of his lounge chair when he saw her legs scissoring and her arms thrashing in the water to stay afloat, something she'd seen her older brothers do.

Ever since then, Giovanni learned not to hold his daughter back, but let her go. He'd watched her swim through high school, graduate with honors, then continue on to college. Sometimes she put too much pressure on herself. With chagrin, he realized she got that from him. He expected a lot from himself. It was the Italian way-to exceed personal expectations. Perhaps that had rolled off to his children, although Robert was the most laid back of the bunch, happy to be in the kitchen and creating new flavors for the family to try. Robert with his four daughters rarely broke a sweat or got addled about anything. His wife Marie, God love her, was a pagan of patience. Nothing fazed her. She smiled all the time. His son's house was one of good-natured chaos.

Now if only he could see Mark and John settled and happy with women in their lives. And Francesca with a great man.

Poor John had had a good wife . . . a woman who had been his oldest boy's heart. But she was taken from them in a car accident, leaving John

devastated. Only this year had he begun to move forward without long evenings of quiet sadness, even though he had the children to raise.

Mark, on the other hand-his number three son was as easy-going as they came. He looked like Giovanni's ancestry, a walking definition of "Moretti" and Napoli-Naples. The boy, rather the man his son had turned out to be, was nothing short of an Italian Adonis. Women followed him like sheep to a herder. Mark had had several girlfriends in his life, but nothing really serious. He'd never lost his heart. He did lose his head in construction, though. He could spend hours building something and forget about time and everything around him. He had the Moretti hands, "the gift" to make something from nothing.

Giovanni heard the last bubbling perks from the coffee-maker that sat on a short filing cabinet. He had sugar packets, and that fake stuff he kept on hand for contractors who didn't want the calories. And cream. The real thing. Nothing powdered. Giovanni loved a good cup of bold-roasted coffee, heaped with cream and just a half-spoon full of sugar. And, of course, a sweet-dough pastry for breakfast. Since he was somewhat watching his waistline, he'd packed a banana along with Mariangela's hazelnut cinnamon rolls.

He was drinking a cup when the trailer door opened and Franci came inside with the permits he'd needed from the City Hall.

"What an ordeal this turned out to be," she sighed, juggling a briefcase and the permits, her leather purse straps thrown over her shoulder. "But I got them."

"I knew you would." Giovanni rose and cleaned off the chair seat for her. He set the papers and envelopes from the chair on the corner of his desk-he'd get to them later. Mariangela never understood why he hadn't hired a secretary to work in the trailer, to answer the phone, to sort and file the paperwork. Simply put, he didn't need the intrusion. He was hands-on, liked doing things his way or no way.

Franci sat in the chair, crossing her legs over one another. She wore a fitted white suit and black pumps. "You get yourself something new?" he asked. His daughter was high-fashion and he wondered if all those Mass dresses he'd bought her as a little girl put the bug in her to almost always wear a skirt or dress now.

Glancing down at the stylish jacket and skirt that fit her figure perfectly, she met his eyes. "I got paid on the Carmichael building remodel. They loved the drawings-giving me a bonus because I went the extra mile."

"You look good."

"Thanks, Dad. You don't," she added bluntly.

"Never mix your words, do you, Franci?"

"No." She waited for his reply.

Truth be told, he hadn't been feeling up to snuff lately. He'd been having some heartburn. He wasn't one for popping anti-acids but now he always carried a roll in his pants pocket. He was trying to watch his spicy food in-take, but it didn't seem to make much of a difference. He attributed his recent lousy feelings to the stress of the job and dealing with the developers.

But even worse, having to make that phone call to-

"You just look over-worked and tired. How're you feeling?"

"Good."

"Why don't I believe you?"

"I don't know." He changed the subject, began talking about the project and what needed to be done. He was enlightening her with the details on the crane's progress when his daughter suddenly cut in.

"Mark told me Legacy got a seventeen story and Kyle Jagger's in town running it."

Giovanni didn't let on that the mention of Kyle's name put a squeeze on his heart and caused it to tattoo out a strenuous beat. "I think the building will be a great addition to Boise. That hole in the ground has been sitting for a year. It's about time somebody took on the project and Legacy will do a great job."

"No doubt . . ." Franci mused, her eyes clouding over as if she feel into deep thoughts. He couldn't guess what she was thinking so he didn't try.

But after ten minutes of her being distracted as they went over a set of plans, he finally asked, "What's on your mind?"

She pursed her lips, sighed. "I saw someone in the permit office last night and he's been on my mind and it just is been a little irritating . . . that's all."

"Who'd you see?"

"I don't know. Some . . ." She shrugged, rolled her eyes as if she were annoyed with herself, or perhaps a reaction she might have had, ". . . some guy."

Giovanni smiled, almost hopeful. His daughter hadn't had a serious relationship in years. There had been two men that he knew of who had captured her heart. Paul DiMarco at Oregon State. He'd thought she was going to marry Paul, but she hadn't. Instead, she announced one day that he wasn't for her and she'd wished him the best. Giovanni had met the guy a few times, thought he was nice enough.

The second man had simply been known as Eduardo. She'd dated him when she'd studied in Naples after graduating from college. Their courtship had been whirlwind, and Giovanni had even worried she might do something like have an impromptu wedding and not include the family. But she hadn't. She'd come home from Italy, not wanting to talk about the break up. Not even Mariangela could get Franci to say much about Eduardo.

Inwardly, Giovanni sighed. It would take quite the fellow to get, and to keep, his daughter's interest. And even then, he'd better be secure because Francesca Angela Moretti could be a little heavy-handed with expectations.

"What made the guy catch your attention?" Giovanni asked, taking a sip of coffee.

"Nothing. Nothing really," she added swiftly. She shook her head as if to shake off the thought. "I don't know why I even brought it up. I think the date squad is getting to me. I actually thought about letting them fix me up to get them off my behind. Maybe. I don't know. I'm pretty picky."

"He'll have to pass my inspection," Giovanni added with a wink.

His daughter smiled. "Well, it'll be very hard to measure up to my dad."

A broad grin caught on Giovanni's mouth. He sure loved his daughter. She'd always be his little girl.