

BUMPING OFF FAT VINNY – Book 4 in Revenge is Fun Series
SAMPLE CHAPTER

TWO

Not a word was spoken on either side of the desk, while hostility hung in the air like a gun waiting to be fired. The standoff continued for a tense ten minutes, each side firmly committed to keeping their mouths shut, as though the one who talked first would be the loser.

As the minutes passed, Fat Vinny continued to slide the cigar around his lips, licking the tip until he was certain the soggy La Gloria Cubana looked utterly disgusting to Danny and Margaret. The only sound was the whoosh of the ceiling fan directly over Vinny's head. He kept the fan swirling at high speed, because he perspired like a pig and the fan cooled him. He never wore dark shirts, afraid the inevitable patches of sweat under his arms would destroy the illusion of power.

Finally, Vinny broke the silence. "So, after I throw this piece of junk in the garbage, when am I gonna get my book with all the interviews? I say start with the brother first. If you can crack him, he probably has a load of information. Names, even contacts. This book is gonna nail what really happened to Tony 'The Nose'. The—whadda ya call it, um, *mystique*, about how he got wasted and who done it—that's still hot. I thought you guys were gonna go *deep*, since no one ever nailed who ordered the hit on Tony. Word is it was never sanctioned. I'm lookin' for a best seller, and instead you bring me a broad's sob story."

Vinny squared his shoulders. Then, glaring at Danny like a sarcastic teacher, he taunted, "So, Mr. Hotshot FBI has-been, did ya ever think maybe the brother himself mighta got arrested once or twice?" He tapped his forehead. "Ya gotta use your noggin in this business."

He took a deep breath before firing the next salvo. He pointed a stubby finger adorned with a garish three-carat diamond ring at the two authors. "I'll bet you two jokers never checked that out."

"Why would we?" Danny said through clenched teeth. That's not what the book is about."

Vinny threw his arms in the air. "I hire what I think are smart, professional writers to do my book, and what happens? You gotta depend on a thinking man, like me, to tell you

what's supposed to be in it."

When Margaret tried to answer, the raging publisher shouted, "Did ya ever think maybe Sammy Mancuso's brother Tony set him up to take a rap for him? Upstanding businessman like Sammy—who would ever suspect him? Maybe Sammy was so pissed off he blabbed to the FBI, or maybe he was the one who ordered the hit. You ain't got the dirt that sells a book. Who cares about a broad that Tony 'The Nose' roughed up? So what if she says she had to run for her life? Whadda readers want? They want to read the kinda stuff like *I'm talkin' about.*"

Margaret grabbed the handles of her Louis Vuitton purse as if she was getting ready to walk out, but Danny put a cautioning hand on her arm, and she let go of the handles.

She sat in the chair, her posture as rigid as a steel bar, lips set in a thin line of fury. Danny said in very measured tones, "Just who do you think you are to talk to us like that? You're asking for something we never agreed to do."

He glanced at Margaret, as though seeking confirmation. "You contacted us because you read our last book and liked it. You said Maria Mancuso had a story to tell and you wanted us to write it. It's in the contract. We always talked about it being her story. Her life with Tony. You saw the outline. Now this demand to investigate the murder of Tony 'The Nose' comes out of the blue? Get this straight. We're not going to do the kind of investigative reporting you're talking about. For what? To write a book you didn't request until now?"

Margaret added, "Look, you hooked us up with Maria, gave us a book to write, and that's what we did. Get this through your head—it's done! Maria's story pulls at the heartstrings. She's one brave woman, and there isn't going to be a reader who isn't mopping up their tears as they read. Not only that, but she's ready to bare her soul in public to promote it. If you wanted investigative reporting, you should've contacted some hotshot reporters. Not award-winning authors like us."

He tried to cut her off by raising one pudgy hand. "But—"

"But, nothing, Vinny. You have an obligation to publish what we brought you. Like we said, we'll do minor changes or edits, but we sure as hell aren't going back to square one to write a book that isn't the one we agreed to do."

If there was one thing Fat Vinny didn't like it was a pushy, wiseass broad. He felt another hot flush travel from his double chins toward his receding hairline. *Damn. My face is probably the color of a ripe tomato.*

"You just made a big mistake, *Girly*. You don't talk to me like that and get away with it." He balled his right hand into a fist and raised it in her direction. Even though he wore a huge white Guayabera shirt that day, one of those loose jobs with bands of embroidery down the front, he felt perspiration patches developing under each armpit. Wheezing, he struggled for breath as droplets of sweat inched down his face.

Danny stood up and grabbed Margaret's arm. He hauled her out of the chair, and said. "Vinny, this meeting is over. We're not getting anywhere. We'll talk more when you calm down." He turned on his heel and guided Margaret toward the door.

"You dare to turn your back on me, you pissant? You don't do that to Fat Vinny. You're gonna be sorry. Wait until you see what happens to this shitty manuscript."

Margaret and Danny walked out, the door slamming with a resounding "thunk" behind them.

His massive body quivering in rage, Vinny took the manuscript and threw it into a drawer in his file cabinet, banging the drawer shut. "Them high-falutin' writers. I'll show 'em, and that dumb broad Maria, too." He opened the file that held the contract for the book and zipped through it.

One thing he could do was tie up the story. He could sit on it for at least eighteen months, and they wouldn't get one more penny until it was accepted. Then he could drag his feet in publishing it. Not only that, but if he didn't accept what they submitted, they'd even have to return the advance he'd given them. Oh yeah, he'd teach them.

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