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The Moretti's - A Different Family Dynamic

Chapter 80

Monday Late Afternoon – Law Offices of Howard Cohen, Esq. – 24 February 2003

Howard Cohen's law offices were located in the Flat Iron Building on 5th Avenue between East 22nd and 23rd Streets. His offices were on the top floor of the oddly shaped building that is considered an architectural masterpiece by native New Yorkers and those into architecture in general. The building's first claim to fame is its designation as the first skyscraper built in the city. At 285 feet, it is dwarfed by the likes of the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, and others; it is considered the first building to use steel structure to hold up its façade. Its shape, that of a flat iron, caused concern during its building that it would not be able to hold itself up. The second claim to fame is more a cultural fable than fact, although a lot of New Yorkers would debate the issue. Because of its location and shape, the building is supposed to cause eddies of wind on 23rd Street which in turn caused women's skirts to fly up exposing their legs and lingerie. Many young men would gather around the building to ogle the bare legged ladies and the local New York Constabulary would move them away by calling them, "23 skidoo."

Through his relationship with the managing real estate agency, Howard Cohen's offices took the entire top floor of the building. The law firm specialized in corporate and international law and had seventy-five attorneys billing at an average hourly rate of five hundred dollars. Howard and three additional attorneys worked for his main client – the Moretti Family. The work was paid for by an annual retainer that far surpassed the billings of all the other seventy-five attorneys. On occasion, it was necessary for the firm to deal with criminal issues and each of the attorneys on the Moretti family account had strong foundations in state, federal, and international criminal law.

Howard Cohen's office was situated at the narrow end of the floor and looked north toward the Empire State Building and Madison Square Park. He sat behind his three hundred year old English Barrister's desk reviewing documents concerning the impending takeover of an American brewery by a European multi-national corporation. He smiled when he thought about the number of blue collar Americans that would freak when they found out one of America's largest distillers would no longer be American owned. Precisely fifteen minutes before the hour his intercom sounded to announce the arrival of Apollonia Moretti and Ming Zheng. He closed the file dealing with the takeover and placed it in the center draw of the desk and locked it. When interrupted by other litigants and their litigations or general business issues Howard Cohen kept the case file he needed to return to in the locked center drawer of his desk.

He pressed the button to disengage the electronic lock on the door to his office. He stood and awaited the entrance of Apollonia and Ming. Howard Cohen watched Apollonia Moretti walk up to his desk with an air of total confidence and superiority. The small Oriental woman followed betraying her secondary submissive role in her

relationship with the woman who called him to begin the process of finding her innocent of all criminal and civil charges.

"Howard Cohen, how nice to see you," said Apollonia as she offered her hand which Howard took, shook, and released. "How long has it been?" she asked rhetorically.

Howard disregarded her rhetorical question and asked, "So, how are your mother and father? It has been awhile since I spoke with either of them."

Smiling nicely because she had to learn to keep her loathing and hatred in check when speaking of her parents, "The family buried my mother this morning in a private ceremony. Lucia passed away a week ago today."

The color in Howard's face drained at hearing the news. "I'm so sorry. I enjoyed a wonderful friendship with your mother. I'm saddened by the news. May I ask what happened? I mean I knew she wasn't ill."

Apollonia grew serious and Howard saw it. "This now falls under attorney/client privilege and puts you on notice that you will be breaking the law." Apollonia did not wait for a response from Howard, "Last Monday night in the great room of my house, I snapped my mother's neck. Yes, Howard, I murdered the deviant bitch. Were you privy to her sickness?"

"Sickness?" said Howard in a very small voice knowing he was obligated to report the capital crime to the police.

"Yes, sickness," said Apollonia. "My mother had this thing about disemboweling children for her sexual pleasure. When I discovered pictures and videos I confronted Mario. It was his responsibility to rid the Moretti family of this monster. He did nothing about it. I did."

"And your father?" asked Howard. "What of him?"

Maintaining her outward calm, but seething inside, Apollonia said, "Mario is fine. I do not acknowledge him as my father. He still lives in the big house at the end of Columbus Place. He will live there until he dies. Mario Moretti is no longer the head, leader, or whatever else you want to call his position within the Moretti family and all their enterprises."

"Ok, Apollonia, I'll bite. Who?" asked the shaken attorney.

"I am Mr. Cohen. Three times in the long and glorious history of the Moretti family women have held the reins of power. I am the fourth. Last Thursday I solidified my position of power when I shot and killed my Uncle Umberto to prove I had the cogliones. The remaining Moretti men, per my instructions, removed their clothing and kissed my feet."

"You know I am obligated to call the police. You have admitted to two capital murders and you were stupid enough to do it in front of Mrs. Zheng. Not really a very intelligent move on your part," said Howard.

Apollonia stood and paced from her seat to the other end of the triangular shaped office. When she reached the wide end of the room she turned, smiled from ear-to-ear, and said, "Mrs. Zheng didn't hear a thing Howard." She strode back to her seat and stood with her hands on the top of the back, "Mrs. Zheng will never divulge the contents of anything that is said in this room or any room for that matter. You do your legal due diligence, Howard. I will end up in prison sure as my pussy has no hair on it and you'd love to see me and Mrs. Zheng make passionate love while you sit stroking your pathetic cock. Whatever made you think I would not have put my ducks in a row Howard?"

Howard Cohen sat dumbfounded. The man he knew for over forty years allowed his wife to perpetrate heinous crimes on children for her sexual pleasure. He didn't want to believe what Apollonia just told him. His stomach was churning at the thought of a woman getting off disemboweling children. "You need to tell me that you

found everything. That includes the safe that is buried in the floor of the wine cellar in the basement of the main house.”

Now Apollonia was caught between a rock-and-a-hard-spot. She had no idea that another safe was hidden below the floor of the wine cellar. Quick thinking, “I have found everything, Howard, the safe in Mario’s closet, the one hidden in the alcove on the third floor, and the safe in the wine cellar. I also know all about you and your legal team.”

The look on Howard’s face was proof enough her lie was closer to the truth than the outright lie it was concerning the safe in the wine cellar. Howard Cohen, Esquire in concert with or while performing legal obligations for the Moretti family had some skeletons in his closet and he knew Mario had documents to protect the Moretti family but not Howard Cohen. It took a moment for Howard to recover and after he did, “I will assume you will want to keep our relationship, Apollonia.”

“I’ll take that under advisement Howard,” said Apollonia. “Now, what is the status of our little problem?”

“We’re waiting for the Detective Lawson. He’s bringing the statement for Mrs. Zheng to sign declaring she knows nothing about nor was she actively involved in her husband’s untimely death. If Lawson wants to be a prick, he’ll not bring the paperwork and make us go to Manhattan South, but, I believe he knows the lay of the land,” said Cohen as he eyed Apollonia wondering if she was as good in bed as she was controlling the world around her.

Ming piped up, “What about the bust?”

Howard Cohen’s face changed to a hard stressful visage. “That is going to be a problem.” He held his hands up so Apollonia would not interrupt him. “The Assistant D.A. is being a total prick. The quantity of drugs makes it a major case and he wants his pound of flesh. We’ve had a few conversations and he’s not budging even if Mrs. Zheng could give him some names of dealers up the feed chain. I wanted to go around him, but one of my associates said that would not work because he is a rising star in the Manhattan District Attorney’s office. I’m trying...”

Staring hard and cold into Howard’s eyes, Apollonia asked, “What is his name?”

Howard thought for a moment which told Apollonia that he did not really have knowledge of the Assistant D.A. “Mathews, Mark Mathews, that’s it.”

Apollonia reached in her pocketbook, retrieved her PDA, and entered the name. She sat in thought for a moment, and said, “This Mathews is not and will not be a problem, Howard. I’ve fast tracked the case and it will be adjudicated by Judge Walter Hillman. I’m betting that by Friday morning this whole heroin bust will have disappeared. All you have to do Howard is what you always do. Just be the competent attorney of record and let the Moretti back channels work its magic.”

The buzzer sounded to announce the arrival of Detective Lawson. Howard pressed the button to release the electronic door lock to allow the detective to enter. In walked a five foot eight-and-a-half inch, slightly overweight man of some forty years. He carried a manila envelope in his right hand and like the cop he was kept his scruffy tan trench coat on over his two hundred fifty dollar bargain basement suit. Howard smiled and pointed to a third chair that was on the side of his desk facing the West Side of Manhattan.

“Well, well,” said Detective Lawson as his introduction, “what do we have here? Mr. Howard Cohen, Esquire, Mrs. Ming Zheng, and one very beautiful lady. Let me introduce myself, I’m Detective Lawson, and you?”

Apollonia did not stand, offer to shake his hand, or make an effort to be pleasant. “Apollonia Moretti, detective.”

“Ah, Apollonia Moretti, the woman who told me she wasn’t going to call the Chief of D’s,” said Detective Lawson, his sarcasm spewing out in his words. “Should I be afraid of you?”

Before Apollonia could react, Howard Cohen interjected, "Lawson, you fuckin' idiot, why are you stirring the pot. She told you and I told you no one called Egan. We have a deal. Now why don't you just take your sarcasm and your bullshit and stow it. Give me the original copy of the statement so I can review it before Mrs. Zheng signs it."

"Whoa, there counselor," said Lawson, "since when does a mighty Moretti have to have an interlocutor speak for them." He turned and faced Apollonia, "I had my balls squeezed and I don't like the pain that comes from having my balls squeezed. Especially by the Chief of D's. I have the statement, but it is my decision not the Chief of D's whether or not I let Mrs. Zheng sign. So, I'll ask again, should I be afraid of you?"

Howard Cohen shook his head in desperation, but knew he had a snowball's chance in hell to stop the gathering level five tornado that would blow into the room and explode momentarily. Ming Zheng looked into Apollonia's eyes checking for the black cloud that presages her explosion. She knew she had to do something to quell the impending storm. She reached for Apollonia's leg, put her hand on her knee which was enough to break her stare at the detective, and rubbed it gently. The simple act of touching her lover's leg was enough to break the rising tsunami of anger. Howard Cohen saw the petite Oriental woman's face go from concern to quiet relaxation in a matter of seconds."

"Afraid of me, detective," mimicked Apollonia. "Not me, detective, but the Moretti family. Oh, we're not Mafioso, the Black Hand, or shit like that. But, we do have our fingers into things that would make your head spin and your balls ache as they're squeezed because of your insipient and sarcastic attitude towards Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Zheng, and me. If you want me to, I will call the Chief of D's private cell phone right now and explain the situation to him. Then I promise you tomorrow morning you'll be standing behind the Property Clerks window in your blues passing papers for your buddies to sign so you can retrieve boxes of evidence as they laugh at you for being such an asshole. Take your bravado and shove it up your ass, Detective Lawson. Give Mrs. Zheng's attorney the agreed upon document so we can sign it and be on our way."

Apollonia reached into her pocketbook, retrieved her phone, flipped it open, and began to dial. She looked at the detective and saw the reaction she wanted. Detective Lawson flinched and handed the typewritten statement pages to Howard Cohen for his review and approval.

The entire review, approval, and signing took a whole ten minutes. Copies were made and the original departed with Detective Lawson who had a new appreciation for Howard Cohen, Apollonia Moretti and the Moretti family in general. Once he was out of the office and the door was closed, Apollonia stood and hugged Ming. They didn't kiss much to the chagrin of Howard Cohen as his sexual peccadilloes dealt with sitting and watching two beautiful women make love to one another. He had no desire to take part, just to sit with his average sized cock in his hand – masturbating.

"Howard, there are some documents I need for you to prepare for Ming," said Apollonia as she returned to her chair.

Curiosity was all over Howard's face, "And what would those be, Apollonia?"

She looked at Ming and then back to Howard, "Legally change of her last name back to her maiden name - Li. And, a legal name change for her boys to her maiden name. Create a will naming the boys beneficiaries in equal parts. Name me the executrix. Create a living will stating that no code blue efforts will be expended trying to save her life. Then I want you to set up three offshore accounts and three local accounts one in each of their names. Naturally, Ming will be the trustee for the boy's accounts. I will be named also just as a backup. Fund the local accounts as follows, two million for Ming and one million for each of the boys accounts. Fund the offshore accounts each with ten million dollars each. Transfer the money from the Columbian and Bolivian accounts."

Howard Cohen did not bat an eyelash when he heard and noted what Apollonia requested, but he did have a problem, "You know I have to talk to your father about this, Apollonia,"

"No, you don't Howard. You seem to forget my father ceded his authority to me. Which means you'll have to contact all the banks and brokerage houses to make a change of ownership before you can facilitate my monetary requests. Like I just told that asshole detective, if you want, I'll call Mario and he can tell you himself. If you had

attended yesterday's ceremony, you would have seen my father standing naked with two pink sissy tubes encasing his cock and stretching his balls which I know you know their meaning when worn by a former Moretti man. Of course, I could just take you by the scruff of your neck and toss you out the window to bounce on 23rd Street which would make a mess of things. I'd have to explain why your fingerprints are all over the .32 caliber Beretta that killed Umberto Moretti and explain why you murdered him."

Howard smiled and with a modicum of fear in his voice, said, "So, you've wrested control of the family from your father. You weren't bullshitting before. You are very devious, Ms. Moretti. I'm going to assume that nothing changes between the Moretti family and my law firm."

"Only if you want it to change, but I think the consequences are worse than continuing," said Apollonia. "The only difference between Mario and me is I'm more of a psycho than he ever was. So, when will the accounts be changed and when will Ming have her maiden name back?"

"You know how many accounts have to be changed?"

"Yes, don't take me for a fool, Howard," replied Apollonia.

Calculating in his head all the time zones he replied, "Conservatively, four to five weeks at a minimum. I'll do the U.S. accounts first."

Apollonia stood, reached for Ming's hand, looked Howard Cohen squarely in the eye, and said, "Press the electronic door release. You have two weeks from the moment I depart your office to make all the banking and brokerage changes. I will be available to sign documents at your behest. I'll expect that Ming will have her maiden name back within the next ninety days."

Howard Cohen, Esquire knew from the look on Apollonia's face he had a new task master. He pushed the button to release the lock, sat down, picked up his phone, and called his three associates so they could begin the process.

Once outside the Flat Iron Building, Apollonia took Ming around the shoulder and pulled her close to her side. Ming hadn't said anything to Apollonia concerning the change of name or the money. What she really wanted to do was place either hand palm up and cup Apollonia's hairless sex. The simple act of cupping her sex would have sent the message Apollonia needed to hear or feel. Instead, she looked up at the strikingly beautiful Italian woman and said, "Thank you, Apollonia. Thank you." Where upon she leaned her head into Apollonia's body and looked down to the ground assuming her submissive position to her lover. Apollonia took her right hand and gently placed it on Ming's head which sent her Apollonia's your welcome message.