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The Moretti's - A Different Family Dynamic

Chapter 128

Friday Morning – The Law Offices of Howard Cohen - 7 March 2003

Seated in Howard Cohen's office on the top floor of the Flat Iron Building were Jon Parks and Roger Whittingham. The meeting was called by Jon Parks to discuss the establishment of the Moretti DNA laboratory. Neither Howard nor Roger was prepared for the meeting, but Jon insisted that it be held this morning. To make it happen, Howard had to clear his morning calendar and piss off a couple of good clients. Roger Whittingham had to move his morning workout to the late afternoon which underneath it all he preferred because the possibility of meeting a single available female at that time of day was much better. On the coffee table in front of the couch were two carafes of black coffee, fresh bagels still warm from the bagel bakery, Philadelphia brand cream cheese, Swiss cheese, and a serving plate of expensive hand carved nova smoked salmon. The three men enjoyed a good portion of the food before they started to discuss the topic of the meeting.

"Gentlemen," said Jon Parks, "I have some news and I think we need to make sure that we want to move forward with Ms. Moretti's plan."

"Didn't you mean data," asked Roger, "and not news?"

Howard interjected, "And why wouldn't we move forward with Ms. Moretti's plan? She did authorize any and all expenditures; like this wonderful spread of bagels, cream cheese, and very expensive imported smoked salmon."

Jon had his mouth around the last portion of his bagel, cream cheese, lox, and a slice of Swiss cheese when the question of news or data was asked by Roger Whittingham. He also paused when he heard Howard counter the need to look at any of the costs associated with the establishment of the DNA laboratory. Instead of spitting out the morsel of food, Jon held up his hand, waved it, and made the other two participants wait until he chewed and swallowed his next to last bite of his morning meal. When he was finished, he turned to Roger, "Listen asshole, I don't need your sarcastic input in the form of a question. You may be an attorney and a former Navy Seal too boot, but if I remember correctly a ninety pound sprite of a woman put you in your place by nearly emasculating you with a thirty-eight." He paused very well knowing the gun was a thirty-eight, comically questioned his knowledge, and continued, "Or was it a nine millimeter. So, you can respect me and what I've done or you can listen to me call Ms. Moretti and tell her what an asshole you are. Your call." He said nothing concerning Howard's comment about the cost of establishing the lab.

Howard Cohen immediately put a stop to their childishness, "Listen you two, I don't have time for your teenage bullshit. Jon, what do you have?"

Parks made his point by picking up the last morsel of bagel, placing it in his mouth, chewing at a leisurely pace, and when he thought he made his point, he swallowed. To add to his pretentious display of childishness, he reached for his cup of black coffee and took his time finishing the cup. After his performance, he reached for his beat-up attaché case, placed it on his lap, opened it, and pulled out two manila folders. He returned the attaché case to the floor and with the manila folders on his lap said, "Gentlemen, the median cost for Ms. Moretti to establish a state-of-the-art DNA laboratory is approximately twenty-five million dollars. That does not include building space whether it be owned or leased. I have in these folders information pertaining to the minimum space, machinery, and personnel she would require. At a minimum she would need one hundred fifty thousand square feet of space that can be subdivided into biology, chemistry, toxicology, latent fingerprint, firearms, and trace evidence sections of the main laboratory. Additionally clean rooms, office space, and employee locker rooms will have to be outfitted. The amount of equipment and their sophistication immediately causes concern because of the amount of education and on-the-job training required of the personnel. My estimate from breaking ground to completion of the lab is a minimum of two years. There is an eighteen month to two year wait on three of the four most important chemical analysis machines."

Howard reached for his coffee cup and just before taking a sip said, "A few strategic phone calls will put the Moretti family in play with any and all of the manufacturers. Money will move us to the top of the delivery list. Always has and always will. So, aside from the delivery issue, what is your point, Jon?"

With his eyes wide open, an incredulous look on his face, Jon replied, "Twenty-five million at the minimum. I know the Moretti family has some money, but access to twenty-five million in cash without having to go to a bank or sell some assets. That kind of money will definitely open the eyes of the Internal Revenue Service or the Federal Reserve. What are you saying, Howard?"

"Twenty-five million is chump change, Jon," said Howard. "Everyone thinks that Bill Gates, T. Boone Pickens, and other mega-billionaires are the wealthiest people on this planet. The Moretti family makes them look like paupers in comparison with their wealth. The reason you have no knowledge of their holding is that it is all private and held very close to the vest. I can count on one hand the number of family members who have complete knowledge of their holdings. They keep their wealth under the radar and any purchase of public property is held by a myriad amount of interlocking holding and shell companies. It would take the IRS your remaining lifetime plus a hundred years to strip away the covers that hide their wealth. What I need from you is a number. That number needs to have the supporting details in appendix form. You tell me she needs one-hundred fifty thousand square feet of space, then take the time to layout the space. Place the equipment in the space and detail anything else that is required. Do you have a problem, Jon?"

"I do," replied Jon shaking his head from side-to-side. "First, where are we going to find that amount of available space in a matter of days? And, I'm not an architect. I have information gleaned from the Internet, but I do not have the ability to lay out a complete laboratory. Tell me to find a fuckin' homicidal manic and I know I can accomplish the task. This is way above my abilities and pay grade. I'm not ashamed to say so."

Howard knew when a man was opening his soul to another. He sat back, rubbed his chin for a moment, nodded his head, and said, "Ok then. Why don't we table this until I have a chance to speak with Ms. Moretti? Given the time frame and the costs associated, I think it would be best to give her what we know and let her direct our efforts. Jon, can you have something for me by two this afternoon?"

Relieved, somewhat, Jon Parks said, "Yes, but could I get a desk and someone here to help me put it together? I can list the requirements, but you must have personnel here that can make it look all pretty and legal like."

Howard chuckled, "Yes, Roger will help you."

Roger Whittingham did not speak or show any form of physical displeasure at being told by his boss to help the retired detective. Jon nodded, stood, and said, "Well, let's get the show on the road."

Howard returned to his desk, pressed the button to release the automatic door, and watched as the two men departed his office. Once the door was closed and locked, he picked up his private line, pressed a speed dial number, and waited for the call to be answered. Three rings later he heard a voice at the other end say a simple, 'Yes'.

"Any news?" asked Howard.

"The grand jury has gone into session," replied the voice. "One of the Assistant District Attorney's is presenting evidence that is making the supposition that they should indict for first degree murder."

Howard rubbed his cheek. He knew from previous grand jury encounters that the District Attorney's Office would be doing anything and everything to make his client out to be a low-life criminal. He wondered if it would be better to have his client, Mario Moretti, testify instead of waiting for the proverbial axe to drop. "Thank you. I am going to keep in contact on a daily basis. I'm feeling an indictment is bound to show up within days."

"Just remember to call the same time every day," the voice said. "I have too much to lose. Like my pension."

"Have I ever hurt you?" said Howard. "Just remember who is paying for that beautiful house on the Jersey shore. Speak to you tomorrow."

Howard Cohen hung up without waiting for a reply. His contact at the Nassau County Criminal Courts gave him more than enough information for him to expect an indictment for murder against Mario Moretti. His other open criminal case was not proceeding very fast. The Manhattan District Attorney was playing games and had not empaneled a grand jury to hear the case against Dr. Joshua Goldsmith. Howard knew there was a judge in the criminal courts that was under Apollonia Moretti's thumb and he had a good idea who it was. So he would not make matters worse or open a can-of-worms, Howard decided to seek council from Ms. Moretti concerning her brother-in-law's murder case. Howard wanted to call to Ballston Spa, but knew better. He had to suppress his desire to find out if there was any activity surrounding the untimely death of Elizabeth Goldsmith.

The next call Howard Cohen made was to a wonderful Madam who would send two eighteen year olds to his pied-a-tare in the city so he could watch them eat each other's pussy as he masturbated. He would not touch or fondle them. They were there for the sole purpose of giving him something to watch as he jerked his cock to what he hoped would be several mind blowing orgasms. They arranged for the girls to arrive at his apartment in time for a nooner and as she did every time she tried to have him enjoy his time masturbating while watching two underage girls which he declined. He put the phone back in its cradle, leaned back in his leather chair, put his hands behind his head, and smiled at his wasted morning and the bulge in his pants. Howard reconciled in his mind the amount of money his company received from the Moretti family as compared to his other clients and put aside any fear of losing any or all of the clients whose appointments were cancelled that morning. Thankfully, he had a cadre of attorneys that could resolve any and all legal issues and battles.