



Omerta: A Novel (The Godfather Book 3)

By Mario Puzo

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Omerta: A Novel (The Godfather Book 3) By Mario Puzo

THE FINAL CHAPTER IN MARIO PUZO'S LANDMARK MAFIA TRILOGY

Mario Puzo spent the last three years of his life writing *Omerta*, the concluding installment in his saga about power and morality in America. In *The Godfather*, he introduced us to the Corleones. In *The Last Don*, he told the wicked tale of the Clericuzios. In **Omerta**, Puzo chronicles the affairs of the Apriles, a family on the brink of legitimacy in a world of criminals.

Don Raymonde Aprile is an old man wily enough to retire gracefully from organized crime after a lifetime of ruthless conquest. Having kept his three children at a distance, he's ensured that they are now respectable members of the establishment: Valerius is an army colonel who teaches at West Point, Marcantonio is an influential TV network executive, and Nicole is a corporate litigator with a weakness for pro bono cases to fight the death penalty. To protect them from harm, and to maintain his entrée into the legitimate world of international banking, Don Aprile has adopted a "nephew" from Sicily, Astorre Viola, whose legal guardian made the unfortunate decision to commit suicide in the trunk of a car. Astorre is an unlikely enforcer—a macaroni importer with a fondness for riding stallions and recording Italian ballads with his band.

Though Don Aprile's retirement is seen as a business opportunity by his last Mafia rival, Timmona Portella, it is viewed with suspicion by Kurt Cilke, the FBI's special agent in charge of investigating organized crime. Cilke has achieved remarkable success in breaking down the bonds between families, cultivating high-ranking sources who in return for federal protection have violated omerta—Sicilian for "code of silence," the vow among men of honor that, until recently, kept them from betraying their secrets to the authorities.

As Cilke and the FBI mount their campaign to wipe out the Mafia once and for all, Astorre Viola and the Apriles find themselves in the midst of one last war, a conflict in which it is hard to distinguish who, if anyone, is on the right side of the law, and whether mercy or vengeance is the best course of action.

Rich with suspense, dark humor, and the larger-than-life characters who have turned Mario Puzo's novels into modern myths, **Omerta** is a powerful epitaph for

the Mafia at the turn of a new century, and a final triumph for a great American storyteller.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Omerta, the third novel in Mario Puzo's Mafia trilogy, is infinitely better than the third *Godfather* film, and most movies in fact. Besides colorful characters and snappy dialogue, it's got a knotty, gratifying, just-complex-enough plot and plenty of movie-like scenes. The newly retired Mafioso Don Raymonde Aprile attends his grandson's confirmation at St. Patrick's in New York, handing each kid a gold coin. Long shot: "Brilliant sunshine etched the image of that great cathedral into the streets around it." Medium shot: "The girls in frail cobwebby white lace dresses, the boys [with] traditional red neckties knitted at their throats to ward off the Devil." Close-up: "The first bullet hit the Don square in the forehead. The second bullet tore out his throat."

More crucial than the tersely described violence is the emotional setting: a traditional, loving clan menaced by traditional vendettas. With Don Aprile hit, the family's fate lies in the strong hands of his adopted nephew from Sicily, Astorre. The Don kept his own kids sheltered from the Mafia: one son is an army officer; another is a TV exec; his daughter Nicole (the most developed character of the three) is an ace lawyer who liked to debate the Don on the death penalty. "Mercy is a vice, a pretension to powers we do not have ... an unpardonable offense to the victim," the Don maintained. Astorre, a macaroni importer and affable amateur singer, was secretly trained to carry on the Don's work. Now his job is to show no mercy.

But who did the hit? Was it Kurt Cilke, the morally tormented FBI man who recently jailed most of the Mafia bosses? Or Timmona Portella, the Mob boss Cilke still wants to collar? How about Marriano Rubio, the womanizing, epicurean Peruvian diplomat who wants Nicole in bed--did he also want her papa's head?

If you didn't know Puzo wrote *Omerta*, it would be no mystery. His marks are all over it: lean prose, a romance with the Old Country, a taste for olives in barrels, a jaunty cynicism ("You cannot send six billionaires to prison," says Cilke's boss. "Not in a democracy"), an affection for characters with flawed hearts, like Rudolfo the \$1,500-an-hour sexual massage therapist, or his short-tempered client Aspinella, the one-eyed NYPD detective. The simultaneous courtship of cheery Mafia tramp Rosie by identical hit-man twins Frankie and Stace Sturzo makes you fall in love with them all--and feel a genuine pang when blood proves thicker than eros.

This fitting capstone to Puzo's career is optioned for a film, and Michael Imperioli of TV's *The Sopranos* narrates the audiocassette version of the novel. But why wait for the movie? *Omerta* is a big, old-fashioned movie in its own right. --Tim Appelo

From Publishers Weekly

"The dead have no friends," says one gangster to another in Puzo's final novel, as they plot to kill America's top Mafioso. But Puzo, despite his death last year at age 78, should gain many new friends for this operatic thriller, his most absorbing since *The Sicilian*. The slain mobster is the elderly Don Raymonde Aprile. His heirs, around whom the violent, vastly emotional narrative swirls, are his three children and one nephew. It's the nephew, Astorre Viola, who inherits the Don's legacy and transforms before his cousins' astonished eyes from a foppish playboy into a Man of Honor, as he avenges the Don's death and protects his family from those hungry for its prime possession: banks that will earn legitimate billions in the years ahead. Astorre's change is no surprise to the few aged mobsters who know that, as a youth, he was trained to be a Qualified Man, or to the fewer still who know that his real father was a great Sicilian Mafioso. Arrayed against Astorre in his pursuit of cruel justice are some of the sharpest Puzo characters ever, among

them a corrupt and beautiful black New York policewoman; assassin twins; wiseguys galore, including a drug lord who seeks his own nuclear weapon; and, drawn in impressive shades of gray, a veteran FBI agent who imperils his family and his soul to destroy Astorre. Despite its familiar subject matter, the novel—which shuttles among Sicily, England and America—is unpredictable and bracing, but its greatest strength is Puzo's voice, ripe with age and wisdom, as attentive to the scent of lemons and oranges in a Sicilian garden as to a good man's sudden, bloody death. This is pulp raised to art and a worthy memorial to the author, who one last time makes readers an offer they can't refuse. 500,000 first printing; simultaneous Random House audio and large print editions; to be a film from Miramax. (July)

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From Library Journal

Puzo was a storyteller to the end, spending the last three years of his life writing *Omerta*, which in Sicilian means "honor." The final installment of Puzo's mob-related tales (following *The Godfather* and *The Last Don*), this fast-paced story is one of honor kept and broken, of Old World values and contemporary New World business/political ethos. When retired New York Mafia Don Aprile is assassinated on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral, the FBI, local detectives, rival families, and even his grown children are suspected. It falls on Aprile's adopted nephew Astorre to find the killers and see that "justice" is served. Astorre, who has been running a macaroni import company and has a passion for singing, must decide if and how to avenge the don's death and bring honor and security back to the family, which is on the brink of legitimacy. In his other novels, Puzo explored the moral unraveling of his key characters, and he does so again with the charismatic Astorre, a character with many contradictions and surprises. *Omerta* is written nearly as sparsely as a screenplay. It's as if Puzo knew he wouldn't be around to do that job also, as he did with *The Godfather* (winning an Academy Award in the process). Highly recommended.

---David Nudo, formerly with "Library Journal"

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