

# **THE CIPOLLINIAN**

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Ariana who was now weeping uncontrollably.

*Don't hurt my son. He's my life, my all!* She screamed.

*How did she know about this operation? How many leaks or traces were left in Taormina? In Catania? Was this operation as tight as the investigators had thought? Should the Carabinieri be prepared for a combat with other probable members of the gang coming to the rescue?*

Agatha had many questions for her crew, and no one could answer. Olivia and Claudio did not fly to Bari. So, nobody knew what to say and there was a moment of panic and anxiety.

*When Ariana started to talk, they realized though there had been a leak, she acted alone and that they still needed to keep all their attention and resources on the gang in the bank. The criminals would make their exit soon.*

In all their operations, the Gianluigi brothers had never killed anyone, and they had never been involved in violent combats. They were always armed but never had reasons to fire a round. All that would change soon.

The masked men in the bank got all they wanted. They were perfectionists in every way. They reached the bank vaults from points beyond the alarm system. It was remarkable. They planned their escape as the boot of the SUV was loaded with bank notes worth several millions of Euro.

When they emerged from the driveway that led to the car park, there was nothing in their broadest imaginations that suggested to them that the security forces had surrounded them. The Carabinieri lined the streets, combat ready.

Just before the robbers emerged, Ariana ran from Donaldoni and she tried to make a scene as she dashed towards the entrance to the parking lot but she was promptly stopped by the officers. She was eventually driven away by

an officer in one of the military cars. Yet another officer drove Ariana's personal car away as an exhibit for investigation.

The robbers were met with torrents of gun shots as they emerged from the parking lot. It was a shock they were most unprepared for. But survival is a natural instinct. So, their natural instincts took over and they fired back as confusion enveloped them in their SUV.

Two of them got hit almost immediately as their car continued to surge forward. But the car soon came to a halt because Piero-the driver got hit. Two members of the gang dived out of the car. Leo was the first. He had no gun to fire back anyway, so he crawled to safety, so to say. Juliano also crawled out of the car leaving behind Piero whose head now hung over the steering wheel and another occupant beside the driver. Both were unconscious. Mario was the last to jump out of the car.

The robbers took up different positions in the parking lot and soon ran out of ammunition to fire. It was an unexpected gun battle for them. Juliano and Mario threw their guns down to indicate they surrendered. There were blood traces to their hiding spots. They would all have been killed if they hadn't run out of ammunition and surrendered.

Piero died before the paramedics arrived. He took a shot to the chest and hit his head hard on the steering wheel. Juliano was unable to move when he surrendered. He sat at the back seat but got hit by a bullet on the side. He also got shot in his shoulder before he dived out of the vehicle.

When the gun shots became intense, Leo had perched at the back. He had no gun to fire and was the first to dive out of the car. He gave himself up. It appeared he fractured a bone when he jumped out of the moving car.