

Cannaregio confrontation

by Sandra Davies

I woke to the sound of a cell phone buzzing... at least that what I thought it was at first, before realising that it was the doorbell. Ten past nine — on a *Saturday* for Christ' sake — whoever it was couldn't possibly be anyone I knew — *or* who knew me! I pressed the button on the entry phone

'Yes?'

'Penny?'

'... Yes ...'

'Get down here, now And let me in.'

'Wha-a ? Who is this?'

Obviously someone who knew at least my name, and he repeated

'*Avanti cara!* open the door.'

Still unrecognisable, but such command in the voice I did as I was told, running barefoot down the bare wooden stairs, dusty but too worn to be splintery, me scruffy but sufficiently decent, thanks to my preference for white cotton Victorian style nightdresses.

I turned the key and pulled open the door, the cool early morning air rushing in, only to find no-one there, just the two old men I had christened Marco and Polo, after the one of the district's more famous residents, having their usual early morning conversation beyond the capped-off well head, but taking a couple of steps out I saw him, leaning on the wall to my left, his face pale, but still recognisable.

He turned his head

'Penny — I'd've known you anywhere, nightdress or no,' and he laughed. 'It's taken what, five years, but I've found you at last.'

'Guido. Christ, *Guido*. You'd better come in ...'

Headed back up the stairs my mind was in a tumult — was it really wise to let this man into my home, into my life again? He always *had* been able to command me, until that last time ... And had he tracked me down with the intention of telling me, forcing me to listen to the truth — a truth I'd been running from for perhaps too

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long?

Once in my flat again I paused and he caught me up, panting more than slightly and I turned and looked at him again. Saw immediately that whatever *my* preferences, he *needed* to confess, because his time was running out, and he'd be dead soon, certainly before the two old men in the Campo below.

