

The Glass Dagger

All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published in Great Britain by
Petan Publishing
64 Skipton Road,
Ilkley,
West Yorkshire, LS29 9HA.
info@petanpublishing.co.uk
www.petanpublishing.co.uk

First published July 2006
Reprinted November 2006
Revised Third Edition October 2008

Copyright © Peter Cooke 2006

Peter Cooke has exerted his moral rights

This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is entirely coincidental.

Paperback ISBN 978-0-9553418-8-5

This book is printed on FSC compliant paper stocks using digital printing technology to minimise wastage

The Glass Dagger
First Adventure of the Glassmaker Series

by

Peter Cooke

Petan Publishing

The Glassmaker Series

Book One
The Glass Dagger

Book Two
The Crystal Ship
Out October 2008

Part One

London & Venice

1557 – 1567

Historical Characters

Elizabeth I - (September 1533 – 24 March 1603) Queen of England and Ireland from 17 November 1558 until her death, sometimes referred to as The Virgin Queen, Gloriana, or Good Queen Bess, Elizabeth was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor dynasty, succeeding her half-sister, Mary Tudor.

William Cecil - 1st. Baron Burghley, (13 September 1520 – 4 August 1598), Principal Secretary of State (1558–1572) and Lord High Treasurer from 1572.
Sir Francis Walsingham - (1532 – 1590), French Ambassador, Principal Secretary (1572 – 1590)

Roberto Ridolfi - (1531-1612) Count of Ridolfi di Piazza family, Florentine banker.

Mary Stuart - (December 8, 1542 – February 8, 1587) was Queen of Scots (the monarch of the Kingdom of Scotland) from December 14, 1542, to July 24, 1567, daughter of Mary of Guise. Mother of James (19 June 1566 – 27 March 1625) who succeeded Elizabeth I. as James I

Marie de Guise - (November 22, 1515 – June 11, 1560) Queen Consort of James V of Scotland and the mother of Mary, Queen of Scots. She was Regent, or Governor, of Scotland 1554–1560.

Thomas Howard - 4th. Duke of Norfolk, (1535 -1572.)

Robert Dudley - 1st Earl of Leicester, Master of Horse To Elizabeth I(1533 – 1588)

Robert Devereux - 2nd. Earl of Essex, (1566 - 1601)

Guerau de Spes - Spanish Ambassador to the English Court.

John Lesley - (1527 – 1596) Bishop of Ross, Scottish Roman Catholic supporter of Mary Stuart.

All other characters depicted in this book are fictional as are the events involving them.

Chapter One

Giam Bellini wiped the sweat from his eyes, not for the first time that morning, and fed more alder and willow billets into the ravenous mouth of the furnace. Peering intently through a window in the furnace he examined the molten glass inside the fire clay pot for any signs of bubbling; it had been heated for several hours now and was a quiescent, brilliant mass.

The dazzling surface was difficult to distinguish from the gleaming sides of the paele itself, but Giam's now experienced eyes knew the mass of liquid glass was ready for working. Signalling to the waiting feeder that the glass was ready, he moved round to the front of the furnace where it was slightly cooler, sat down on the bench against the wall and composed himself for the coming test.

Giam's real name was Giacomo, but only his tutor ever called him that; unless he was in trouble. At thirteen, he was tall for his age, with a sturdy athletic build. Wiping his forehead again, he frowned as he thought about his coming trial. He'd been learning the art of glassmaking from his grandfather, Antonio Luciano, Master of the Luciano Glass-works, for the past two years. It had taken him months just to understand the language of the Works. Now he was about to be tested on the skills he had learned and he must satisfy his grandfather that he knew them well enough to be allowed to help the Capos.

Waiting impatiently for his grandfather to arrive, he looked around the room. In the golden glow of the furnace, apprentices were hurrying to serve the Capos, the experienced glass-blowers of the Works, and to Giam's mind the best in Murano. There were six of these at present and their job was to see that, as far as possible, each piece of glass was finished to perfection.

From the first time he'd been allowed to help in the glasshouse, Giam had felt at home. Even the sweltering heat of the furnace room had not deterred him. Luca Ridotti, an apprentice a couple of years older than himself, strolled across to Giam carrying a blow-iron. 'Best of luck in the test,' he grinned. 'I'm sure you'll pass easily.' Giam grinned back. Luca was always friendly and he was very skilled, often acting as foot maker for the Capos. 'I wish I could be so sure,' he replied with a grimace. 'Grandfather won't show me any favouritism. I'll have to be perfect if I'm going to be allowed to make a real glass.'

'Don't worry; you'll be all right. At least you know he's fair, which is more than you can say for some,' said Luca, indicating, the Chief Capo, Marco Baffo. He was a man with a short temper and long ears.

'Ridotti! Are you going to be all day getting that bowl done?' Baffo bellowed. 'Stop chattering and get on with it! As for you, Bellini, stop holding up my feeders, or you'll get my boot up your arse!'

Luca winked at Giam. 'Right on cue; I'd better get on, or his highness will bust a gut; best of luck Giam, nil desperandum!' And with a cheery wave he hurried off to the furnace.

At that moment his grandfather came striding across the room.

'Ready, young Bellini?' he asked in his usual brisk manner. When Giam replied that he was, Antonio led him to a vacant glassmaking Chair. 'In the last two years, you have learned about the different tools we use to make glass. Now I need to see if your skill with words is equal to your skill with your hands. I want you to make a glass. You will act as Capo; I'll get an apprentice and he and I will act as your team.'

Looking to get a little support, Giam pleaded with his grandfather. 'Could we have my friend Luca, please, Master Antonio? I've worked with him before.' 'I don't see why not,' agreed Antonio. 'Baffo seems to have finished the batch he's making and they're just cleaning up at present.' He walked across and had a brief word with Baffo and then came back with Luca. Standing in front of Giam they looked at him expectantly. For a moment Giam started to panic, but with an effort of will he took a deep breath and sat down in the Capo's chair. 'We'll make the same glass that Marco has just made. Luca you will do the gathering and making the foot. You Patron will assist as required.' Busily arranging the tools, Giam missed the small smile on his grandfather's face. Taking a blow-iron from its rack Luca hurried to the furnace. Rotating the blow-iron in the paele, he gathered a blob of molten glass on the end and was just about to carry on when Antonio motioned for him to pass it to Giam. 'You make the foot, Bellini.'

Accepting the blow-iron from Luca, Giam began to roll the molten blob on the smooth, highly polished surface of the flat iron marver. Occasionally blowing down the tube to distend the still molten mass into the shape of a bulb he quickly achieved the shape he required. When he was satisfied he held it out for Luca to drop a small knob of molten glass on to the end of the bowl. He passed the blow-iron to Luca, 'Reheat this please, Luca,' he said briskly and with a grin Luca hurried to the glory hole and after reheating the glass handed it to Giam.

Quickly drawing the reheated blob into a stem, Giam left a small blob at the end. His grandfather took it from him and gathered a small amount of molten glass over the blob and then held it while Giam shaped the foot with a pair of wooden clappers. Picking up a pontil, a rod slightly thinner than, but similar to the blow-pipe, he attached it to the middle of the foot. Luca handed him a moistened piece of iron and Giam touched the bowl with it and then gave a hard tap on the blow-iron. This caused the bowl to crack completely round its circumference.

Quickly reheating it, Giam skilfully removed the surplus glass from the rim, using the pucellas as shears, then inserting them inside the bowl he opened them, rolling the blow-iron along the arms of the chair until he was satisfied

with the shape. Passing it to Luca with a sigh of relief he detached the pontil with a sharp tap and told Luca to put the completed glass into the oblong fire-clay tunnel in the top part of the furnace to anneal. He looked anxiously at his grandfather searching for any sign of approval, but his face was inscrutable. Without any comment Antonio asked, 'What does anneal mean?'

'The top of the furnace is warm and allows the molten glass to cool down slowly. If it cools too quickly, stresses are formed in the glass and it cracks easily. This is called crizzling and annealing stops this happening.'

Just as Giam was thinking that the questions would never end, Antonio gave a small smile. 'That's about right,' he said in grudging approval. 'That was quite well done. I think you're just about good enough to work with one of the Chairs now.'

Luca, who had overheard this comment, looked at him in surprise. 'Begging your pardon, Master Antonio, but I can't tell the difference between the one Giam made and the ones that the Chief has just done.'

'Perhaps that's why you're not a Capo yet, young Ridotti,' Antonio Luciano said sternly, but there was no malice in his voice. Luca turned away, a broad grin on his face.

While Luca started to clear up, Antonio led Giam out into the fresh air and they sat on the billets of wood near the canal-side. It was refreshing after the heat of the furnace room and they sat in companionable silence. Eventually his grandfather broke the mood. 'I didn't say too much inside,' he confided, 'it doesn't do to praise too much. But you did well. You've also a loyal friend in Luca Ridotti. It's good to have friends at work, Giam, you might be thankful for them one day.'

'I already am, grandfather,' Giam said. 'Luca's helped me a lot over the last year.' His face took on a wistful look. 'I wish I had more friends outside of work though. I don't get to meet other boys very often, especially since Lunardo Carreras moved to Venice. I only see him occasionally now.' Lunardo was the son of his father's friend, Enzo Carreras, a shipwright. They were firm friends and were always getting into some scrape or other. Giam pushed him into the canal on their last day together, but Lunardo soon got even; when Giam offered his hand to pull Lunardo out he'd pulled him in too. Giam smiled at the memory.

'You have to study,' said his grandfather. 'There's a lot you must know as a noble.'

'But I spend so much time studying,' Giam said plaintively, 'and I don't get to meet other boys now I've had to leave the Academy.'

About a year earlier the Senate had passed a law which stated that if a nobleman married the daughter of a glass-maker, any child of the union would be treated as being of noble birth. This was to recognise the rising

importance of glassmaking to the Venetian economy. The aristocracy, usually referred to as the Old Families, had opposed it. The Orseolis and Cornaris and their ilk, with lines going back to the founding of Venice, saw this law as diluting their noble stock. Giam had benefited because his mother was the daughter of the glassmaker, Antonio Luciano, President of the Guild. She had died from the sweating fever five years earlier, when Giam was eight.

'I understand why your father insists on a tutor. All the sons of the nobility have live-in tutors. But Eduardo should make sure you get to mix with people of your mother's class, too.'

'It's not too bad, grandfather. I'm not bothered about meeting sons of the nobility. Those I've met are mostly very arrogant and treat me as an inferior. My tutor keeps me busy most of the day, but at least my father lets me come here in my spare time and that's what makes it all worthwhile.'

Giam thought wearily of his days filled with the learning of Latin, Law, Dissertation, French, English, Seismographic, Dancing and Writing under the strict eye of Il Docente Giorgio Alessandro, but then he smiled and said, 'He does at least let me study the history of glassmaking, if only to help my Latin.'

'I'm afraid all of the sons of nobility have to study these things, Giam. Having your name in the Libro d'Oro is more than just a line of handwriting in a book.' His grandfather couldn't keep the pride from his voice. 'It gives you a standing in Venice that I could never have, no matter how good a glass-maker I am.'

'I never wanted to be a noble, grandfather. I just want to be as good at glassmaking as you are. I really love it and to make that glass today gave me a wonderful feeling.'

Antonio smiled. 'You'll have to work very hard, then.'

'It won't be for lack of trying' said Giam earnestly, even though he knew his grandfather was joking. 'I just hope that being a noble doesn't prevent me from achieving it.'

'Come on then lad,' said Antonio gruffly, 'enough of this daydreaming. Go and give Luca a hand to clear up and I'll have words with you later.'

Four years later an excited Giam, holding a tall goblet in his hand, burst into his grandfather's office. 'I've done it, grandfather! I've designed my first new glass...' His voice tailed off in confusion as he realised that Antonio Luciano was not alone. Seated to one side of the desk was a pair of richly dressed visitors. The man, hawk-nosed and bald, wore a long black silk robe with wide sleeves, ornamented with a double row of buttons. A black triangular cap often worn by Senators topped his matching doublet and hose. Around his neck he had an elaborate catenina d'Oro; the heavy gold chain was a sure sign he was a wealthy merchant. The woman, obviously his wife, wore an embroidered red velvet cloak over a matching red day dress. Giam made a hasty bow and placed the glass on the desk.

'Please excuse my grandson Giacomo, for his bad manners,' said Antonio before Giam could apologise. 'He's a little overexcited.' Turning to Giam, he introduced the visitors. 'Senator Dalle Fornaci and his wife Signora Foscarini-Dalle Fornaci; they are considering the purchase of some stem ware from us.' As Giam made a formal bow, the Signora began examining his new goblet with great interest. The bowl was a simple round funnel festooned with flowers around the rim in diamond-point engraving; the stem having a central boss engraved into a lion-mask.

She turned to her husband and held up the glass. 'This is very unusual! I like it very much.'

The Senator also examined the glass with interest. 'It is different from your other glasses, Master Luciano. We were hoping that by coming direct to you, we might obtain a style that was a little out of the ordinary. I think this glass will do very well. It's the right size for our needs and will make an excellent talking point at our next dinner. How soon can you let us have ten of them?' Giam beamed ecstatically, but his grandfather quickly brought him down to earth. 'First of all, Giacomo Bellini,' he said sternly and Giam winced at the use of his full name. 'You will apologise to Senator and Signora Fornaci for your lack of manners. And secondly,' he held his grandson's disconcerted gaze for a long moment and then, unable to keep the pretence up any longer, he gave a broad grin, 'you'd better tell me how soon you can make ten more.'

Chapter Two

Sunlight streaming through a gap in the curtains finally woke Giam. Shielding his eyes from the glare, he squinted blearily around the room. He'd not heard the Campanile bell, but from the angle of the sun it was well past sunrise. Springing out of bed he washed quickly, splashing water from the jug into the bowl and over the polished surface of the toilette stand. Throwing wide the curtains he stepped out on to the balcony, blinking in the strong sunlight, fumbling with the buttons on his linen shirt and fastening his breeches. The Canale Degli Angeli was already teeming with activity. Gondolas were plying for trade and people bustled along the Fondamenta San Venier that ran

alongside the canal; Murano, the glassmakers' island of Venice, was open for business. Giam gave an appreciative sniff as the smell of burning wood mingled with the salty, brackish odour of the canal. He loved the smell; it brought back memories of a childhood spent watching his grandfather, Antonio, blowing glass.

Drinking in the busy scene he failed to notice the gondola sculling round the corner of the villa to the side steps until a familiar voice hailed him from below. 'Hey Giam, aren't you going to Luciano's this fine morning?' Looking down, Giam saw Angelo Robusti, the gondolier, who often took him to the glass-works. 'Oh, hello Angelo, I've overslept; can you come back for me in about a half hour?'

Angelo held up a package wrapped in a cloth. 'Take your time, it looks like being busy today, so I may as well eat my breakfast now, while I have the chance.'

Giam gave a cheery wave and hurried to finish dressing. Brushing his thick, black curly hair into a more acceptable state, he surveyed the results in the mirror. It's a good job Giorgio Alessandro can't see me, he thought, I'd be sure to get a lecture on the perils of vanity. With a mocking salute to his image, he picked up his sword, belt and scabbard and strode downstairs. His father was just leaving the kitchen looking at some papers. He was so engrossed he almost walked into Giam. 'Ah, Giam,' he said with a start, 'there you are, at last.'

'I'm afraid I overslept, father. It's a good job I don't work in the Arsenale, the half-hour after the Campanile bell is long gone!'

'No matter,' was his father's preoccupied reply. 'I've already eaten and I'm going to my study now.' And away he went leafing through the documents again.

Giam made short work of his meal. As he ate, he thought about his father. For several weeks now, he had been withdrawn and aloof. This had begun shortly after an argument about Giam's future. His father thought the time was right to discuss a career for Giam now that he'd completed his studies. The discussion had not gone well.

It started amiably enough. After the evening meal his father suggested a stroll in the cloistered courtyard, which with its large central fountain, was pleasantly cool after the heat of the day. Eduardo raised the subject of a career and suggested that Giam should follow him into politics. Giam, intending to make a light-hearted comment, had managed to offend his father by insulting politicians in general. Before he knew it, a furious row broke out. Eventually, Giam apologised for his comments. 'I really am sorry, father. I went much too far.' True. He had never intended to make so much fuss, but things had a habit of getting out of hand when he argued with his father. Only a few days ago he'd gone to see his father in an effort to resolve the matter. Eduardo was in his study going through some documents; probably

some business for the Senate. As he waited for him to finish writing, Giam looked around at the book-lined shelves. On the small occasional table in the corner by the window stood a goblet and Giam gave a start of surprise. He recognised it immediately. It was his most recent design.

Before he could gather his thoughts, his father looked up. 'I'm rather busy at the moment, Giam, can you be brief?'

When Giam began to explain his mission, Eduardo cut him off mid-sentence, saying it was not the right time for such a discussion. He promised they would meet soon and Giam had left, feeling frustrated, having neither resolved the situation, nor found out why the glass was in his father's study. Although Giam wanted to find out the reason for his father's distraction, he was already late, so he set off for the side entrance. Unusually, the Villa San Venier had three entrances. The main entrance at the front, was on the Canale Degli Angeli and lead to a paved inner court. This in turn led into the atrium, from which a staircase, its walls lined with family weapons and armour, mounted to the second storey. The rest of the ground floor was used as a warehouse and display room for the Luciano Glass-works. In the street on the right-hand side of the villa, a door and staircase led to the main apartments on the first and second floors. Giam much preferred to use the other exit on the left, which led to a small staging on the side canal.

Leaving through this door, he jumped into the waiting gondola and barely had time to sit down before Angelo headed out into the Canale Degli Angeli. The gondolier chattered away about a Masque that had been held at the Casa Da Mula the previous evening, but Giam was only half-listening. He was concerned about his father. Something more than the argument was bothering him. There were all these papers he was studying. Giam thought it might be something to do with the glass-works. His grandfather had visited the villa several times recently and the two of them had been in deep conversations. And there was his new goblet in the study. Why was it there and how had it got there? Before he could come to any conclusion, they glided under the Ponte Vivarino, the main bridge of Murano and turned into the Rio Dei Vetrai that led into the heart of the glassmaking district. Here the air was thick with sparks as apprentices fed the insatiable furnaces their daily diet of alder and willow. Standing up for a better view, he returned the affable waves of his friendly rivals, at the Alla Sirena and Al Lion Bianca Glass-works. Arriving at Luciano's, he paid Angelo, giving him a little extra for his patience and then set off to find his grandfather.

Later, sitting in Antonio's office, he was pleased to see that his grandfather's face, which had been pale and gaunt the day before, now had a much healthier glow. He had coughed a lot that day and Giam was sure he'd seen blood on his kerchief Antonio pointed to a tall drinking goblet with a lion-head boss on the stem. 'Do you remember this glass, Giam?'

Giam examined it carefully. 'It's the first glass I designed, isn't it? Antonio nodded, 'Do you remember the day it first went on to the Luciano list?'

'Of course I do! I still remember the incredible feeling when it cooled without any crizzling. I burst into your office and interrupted your meeting with a Senator and his wife.'

They laughed together at the memory and then Antonio became serious. 'Do you know, Giam, that over the last few years you've created eight of our best-selling pieces?'

'Was it as many as that?' Still, spread over four years, I suppose it's not so many.' He regarded his grandfather thoughtfully; it wasn't like him to reminisce like this. Giam placed the glass on the desk. 'I don't imagine for one minute that this glass is the real point behind this conversation,' he said studying his grandfather. 'What's on your mind?'

Antonio smiled sheepishly. 'You know me too well!' He stroked his beard thoughtfully. 'As you know, I was sixty-one last April and my health has been poor lately. I'm thinking of retiring and handing the business over to someone else.'

Not Marco Baffo, Giam thought immediately, I doubt whether he has grandfather's business acumen and he's not popular with the men. Antonio continued. 'Your father told me some time ago he was hoping you would follow his example and join the Senate. I have no doubt, my dear Giam, that you would make a good career in politics, but politicians are two a penny. Anyone can hold forth about the price of bread; not many are given the skill to work in glass. In my opinion, there's only one career for you: Fattori and Master Glass-blower of the Luciano Glass-works.'

Giam was dumbfounded. 'What about Marco Baffo?' he said at last, despite his earlier misgiving. 'He's been your senior glass-blower for over ten years! Wouldn't he expect to be next in line?'

Antonio snorted. 'He's had every chance to show his worth. He's not the man for the job.' He put an arm round Giam's shoulders and regarded him proudly. 'I believed you had glassmaking in your blood from the very first time you blew a glass. It was as natural as breathing. Then, when you started creating new glassware, I knew it for sure.'

'I wish I was so sure,' Giam said, 'but won't being a noble make it impossible?' 'Impossible, no – difficult, yes. To be Fattori will be difficult, certainly, but you're more qualified than anyone to be Fattori of Luciano's. You didn't realise it, but all those routine jobs you didn't like, stocktaking, ordering supplies and keeping the order book up-to-date, were to train you as a Fattori. As for glass design, you have a natural talent for it. Please give this some serious thought.'

His grandfather's praise gave Giam immense pleasure; but more than this, the idea itself was gathering momentum. He rehearsed the title in his mind; Giacomo Bellini, Fattori and Master Glass blower of one of the most influential

Glass-works in Murano; no, in the whole of Venice. He'd been wondering what to do with his life and now he was being offered the thing he most wanted. He knew that now. More than anything he wanted to work with glass, that strange malleable substance that could be blown into such fantastic shapes. But persuading his father to accept the idea was another matter entirely.

'What about my father? He's never going to accept me being Fattori.'
Antonio had another surprise for him. 'That's where you're wrong, my boy. Your father and I have come to an understanding. Surely you must have realised I wouldn't have made this offer without discussing it with him?'
Realisation flooded over Giam - his father's moods; no wonder he'd been distracted and didn't want to talk about a career. 'So that's why you've had all those meetings with father,' said Giam and then gasped as another thought struck him. 'The glass. Of course. That's what it was doing in father's study! You took it to show him my latest design.'

A smile crossed Antonio's face. 'That was the thing that tipped the balance. He still has misgivings, but he'll tell you about them himself tonight. I'll be joining you for dinner and we'll thrash the whole thing out. Be prepared, though. Your father will only agree to you becoming Fattori for a trial period, of say, six months. You may think this isn't fair, but you'd be wise to accept it, or he'll not agree to it at all.'

Later that evening, after a splendid meal, Giam, his father and grandfather sat in the main sitting room, its walls decorated with silken tapestries brocaded with silver and hung with weapons, armour, and family relics. Eduardo explained his fears to Giam.

'Many of the Old Families have never accepted the law which gave you noble status. None of them have ever worked. The opponents of this law could use the fact you work as sign you're not a noble and therefore, an excuse to lobby the Senate for your removal from the Libro d'Oro. I've spent many weeks going through the detail of the law and taken the best advice available. While it doesn't say you can't work as a Fattori, it doesn't say you can either.'
'I thought you were still angry that I didn't want to take up politics,' Giam exclaimed.

Eduardo smiled ruefully. 'I can see that's how it might have seemed. But I haven't given up on you entering politics, you know.' He pursed his lips. 'Your grandfather and I have gone over this idea many times. In fairness I must tell you that I still have many reservations, but your grandfather has the highest opinion of your ability and your designs are very impressive. Against my better judgement, but out of respect for your grandfather's wishes, I'm prepared to let you act as Fattori.'

He held up a hand to stop Giam's expressions of gratitude.

'But only for a trial period of six months mind,' he continued quickly, 'I must have your promise that if you can't make a success of it in that time, you'll

accept the legal path to the Senate I've mapped out for you.' He proffered his hand. 'I told you I hadn't given up on politics,' he said with a broad smile. 'Do we have an agreement?'

Without hesitation Giam grasped the hand and shook it enthusiastically. 'We have indeed, father,' he said, as Antonio looked on in delight. 'If I can't make a success of Luciano's in six months, I'll give politics my best try. You have my word on it.'

Later, as they walked in the cloister of the inner courtyard to take some air, Eduardo gave Giam one final warning. 'You must understand what this means. There will be many nobles who'll despise you, not for who you are, but for what you represent. The nobility owe a considerable part of their wealth to glassmaking, if only as investors. Money and the power it buys is what they most admire. Beware of these people. Take great care in your dealings with them. They wield immense power and make very bad enemies. And to them, anyone who's different is an enemy.'

With this warning ringing in his ears, Giam said goodnight and hurried off to his room with his mind full of ideas for promoting the Luciano Glass-works. The following morning was sunny and humid. Giam rose early. Too excited to stay in bed any longer. He felt just like a child looking forward to a treat. After a small serving of bread washed down with a glass of wine, he hurried down to the Glass-works.

His grandfather insisted that he must make the announcement to the workers, not Giam. 'I know them better than you and I want them to accept my decision willingly. However, I expect Marco Baffo will have a lot to say and it will be better if he says it to me.'

As Giam had expected, the men were stunned by the announcement. For the most part though, they accepted Antonio Luciano's decision and agreed to give Giam the benefit of the doubt. The one exception, as expected, was Marco Baffo. He'd always assumed that he would be Luciano's successor. Giam had once heard him bragging about it to his friends; enjoying the prestige his prospective elevation to Master had given him.

'Why have you done this to me, Antonio? Haven't I served you faithfully for the last ten years? You made me your Chief Capo because I'm the best. Isn't that right?' He said turning to the other Capos for support. When they failed to spring to his defence, he became further incensed.

He turned on Antonio, 'You chose Bellini because he's your own flesh and blood.' He pointed at Giam. 'Young Bellini's too inexperienced. At the first sign of trouble he'll go running back to his father.'

'I don't deny that you're good, Marco,' Antonio said quietly, when Baffo's tirade subsided, 'but you don't have the skill to design new styles. In ten years, you haven't produced even one. Giam is exceptional at design. Eight of his designs are our best sellers and his peak is yet to come. I believe in

time, he'll become one of the finest glassmakers that Murano has ever produced.'

There were loud murmurs of agreement among the men at this statement. Looking significantly towards Marco, Antonio made a final telling point. 'Without Giam's skill we will stand still. If we stand still, we stagnate; if we stagnate, we die. The glass industry needs new young blood. That's the way of things and why I tell you with all my heart.' He paused dramatically to let the full weight of his words sink in. 'Giam is the only one qualified to be Fattori, so Fattori he will be from this day forth.'

Luca Ridotti, Giam's friend from his apprentice days and now a Capo in his own right, came forward to show his loyalty. Several of the others, taking their lead from Luca, wished Giam success and assured him of their full cooperation. But Marco Baffo stormed back into the Works with a final furious scowl at Giam. For his part, Giam resolved to do all he could to have a good working relationship with him. The last thing he needed was a feud. It was a daunting prospect to have so many men and their families dependent on him. The Fattori not only controlled the glass-works, he controlled the lives and fortunes of the workers too.

Seeing his hesitation, Antonio put a reassuring arm round his shoulder. 'Come on, Fattori, there's much work to be done. You can't stand around here all day. You've a business to run.' He handed him a well-thumbed official looking document. 'This is my copy of the Matricola of 1441, issued by the Council of Ten. It contains all the rules for running a glass-works, including sales, taxes and relations between glassmakers and other workers. Learn it well, for if you follow the rules it lays down, you can't go wrong.' Giam glanced at it quickly. 'At least it's written in plain language and not full of official verbiage.'

Antonio smiled. 'It's not too bad now. Not since they altered it. The original was difficult to follow. This was written in the vernacular so that people could use it properly,' he grimaced, 'not that the rules aren't difficult to stick to at times. Now, there are documents to be read, signed and witnessed. You'll also need to go over the order books and make decisions about production. So, the sooner we start, the sooner we'll be done.'