

BOOK 2: FALL OF AN EMPIRE

Prologue

June 1993

“Get these assholes to stay back,” Deputy Police Chief Chuck Johnson barked at the rookie cop who’d had the misfortune to be on the night shift when the call came in. The youngster, Salvatore “Sunny” San Marco, was a wet-behind-the-ears kid they all called Sunny down at the precinct.

Johnson hadn’t made much of an effort to get to know him—getting too familiar with beat cops rarely ended well. He gave the small crowd a hard stare, wondering what the hell they were doing out at such a late hour, gawking in New York Harbor.

It was past two. Johnson should have been home with his wife. Instead, he was staring at the naked, mutilated corpse of a young woman with her face sliced off and her hands missing. Nearby, another body—a man with the back of his head blown out—lay sprawled along the dock.

Medical Examiner Joe Fitzsimmons was matter-of-fact. “She’s been dead no more than two hours. Lividity is just setting in.”

Johnson groaned at Fitzsimmons’s bluntness. The scene screamed gang-related. He’d seen it before, mostly in Chinatown.

When Fitzsimmons pulled a driver’s license from beneath the body, he claimed it belonged to **Jen Mo-Li**, Chinatown’s most wanted fugitive. Too neat, Johnson thought. Bodies didn’t just lie on top of their IDs. But Fitzsimmons was convinced.

As for the second victim, Johnson recognized him immediately—Enrico “Rico the Pox” Corrozzio, son of a Mafia consigliere. His presence alongside Mo-Li’s supposed corpse meant one thing: tensions between Chinatown’s gangs and the Italian mob were about to explode.

Among the onlookers, **Jonathon “Big D” Luen Dang**, leader of the Mott Street Tigers, slipped quietly away. With Mo-Li gone, he saw opportunity.

Chapter One

January 10, 2020

“Hello, Jen,” Petey Mo-Li said through the crack in the apartment door. “Aren’t you going to let me in?”

Jen Mo-Li froze. Her younger brother, absent for twenty-seven years, stood on her doorstep as if no time had passed. “I’m sorry, you must be mistaken”

But Petey pushed his way inside, grinning. “Do you think I wouldn’t recognize you?”

Inside the apartment, Jen’s two children, Julia (“Jewel”) and Tony, eyed the unexpected guest. Jen brushed off the tension, introducing Petey as an “old business acquaintance,” and hustled him into her office.

Petey’s shock at Julia’s beauty was obvious. She was the image of her mother, tall and stunning, with long black hair and deep brown eyes.

Once alone, Petey revealed why he had come: “It’s the old man. He’s dying.” Their father, Ming Sen Mo-Li, the ruthless patriarch who had banished Jen from the family decades earlier, was on his deathbed.

Jen’s bitterness surfaced. “He told me he wished it had been me who died, not Danny. And then he handed the family businesses over to you.”

Petey tried to smooth things over, but his true motives soon came clear—he wanted money. He pitched a shady business scheme, and when Jen refused, he shifted toward veiled threats, reminding her that others—like Enzo DeCarlo and the Italians—might be very interested to learn she was alive and back in New York.

Jen stayed calm but firm. “You need to stay away from us, Petey. Call me when the old man dies. That’s all.”

After pushing him out the door, she leaned against it, shaken. Petey wasn’t as stupid as she’d thought. He knew too much about her past, her children, and her connection to Enzo. If word got out, both the mob and the FBI would come for her.

But beneath the fear, something else stirred in Jen—a hunger long buried. The time had come to face the DeCarlo family, to settle old scores, and to plan for the future.