

# **Donnie Brasco Study Guide**

**Donnie Brasco by Joseph D. Pistone**

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# Plot Summary

"Donnie Brasco" is the true story of Agent Joseph Pistone's six years undercover in the Mafia. Agent Pistone slowly and methodically gains the respect and trust of several high ranking wise guys in the Bonanno family and quickly finds himself up for membership in the Bonanno family.

Agent Pistone not only puts his life on the line on a daily basis for this operation, but he is also disconnected from his family during this time. Except for the occasional quick visit home, Pistone rarely sees his family. They are able to take one vacation together during these six years and when Pistone's wife is in a terrible car wreck, he leaves the job for several days to help her recover. During these six years Agent Pistone is forced to give up his own life for this job and his family is forced to live without him. Although a significant toll is taken on the family, Agent Pistone is able to keep his family together and safe.

Throughout his six years undercover, Agent Pistone not only gathers never before known information about the inner workings of the Mafia, but also helps his fellow agents work their Mafia cases in other states. At times Agent Pistone helps agents as far away as Milwaukee and Florida work their mob cases. Pistone and the Florida agent, Rossi, are able to fool the New York Mafia into a joint venture with another crime family in Florida—the opening of King's Court, which is funded by the FBI.

During this time Pistone cultivates close relationships with both Lefty Guns and Sonny Black of the Bonanno family. Agent Pistone begins his time in the Bonanno family as Lefty's right hand guy, but quickly after meeting Sonny Black is forced to bounce between the two with each wanting Pistone's loyalty. Agent Pistone is so trusted that Sonny Black promises to make Pistone a member of the Bonanno family. Agent Pistone is pulled from the operation before this can happen. In the end Sonny pays with his life for his devotion to Pistone. When the truth about Pistone's identity is revealed, Sonny disappears, then is later found dead—killed by a Mafia hit. Lefty is quickly put in protective custody so he can stand trial.

Pistone's time undercover changes the Mafia forever. Through the information he gathers, many top Mafia bosses are convicted of their crimes or killed for their association with Pistone. The rules for membership are also changed after Pistone; the Mafia makes sure that no other FBI agent will ever get this close again and live to tell about it.



# Chapter 1 -5

## Chapter 1 -5 Summary

### Chapter 1 The Whirlwind

"Donnie Brasco" is the story of FBI Agent Joseph Pistone and the six years of his life he dedicates to the infiltration of the Mafia. The operation starts out as a six month fencing sting, and quickly turns into a six year ordeal that ultimately brings down the heads of the Mafia families of that time. Agent Pistone not only gives the FBI never before known information about the Mafia, but also changes the way the Mafia operates forever.

FBI Agent Joe Pistone begins by recalling the six years he spends undercover in the Mafia. During these years Agent Pistone is living as Donnie Brasco, a jewel thief. During this first chapter Agent Pistone is testifying in the many trials of the mobsters he has been living with for the past six years. Many of them call him their friend and are now not only fighting for their freedom, but their lives as well. Some of the mobsters now have hits on themselves for bringing Pistone into the mob families. There is a hit on Agent Pistone, as well as his family, and they are in protective custody using different names.

Pistone testifies in several cases against different members of the Mafia. In the end, with Pistone's testimonies, the heads of all the mob families are indicted, jailed or dead. Agent Pistone describes how this operation has changed not only his life, but also his family's life forever. Pistone and his family are now living in a secret location. No one can know who he was or what he has done. He does, however, receive the Attorney General's Distinguished Service Award.

### Chapter 2 The Beginnings

Pistone gives background as to how he ends up undercover as Donnie Brasco.

Pistone goes to college for two years before he quits college to get married. He gets a job to support his new wife and growing family. He then returns to college to finish and get his diploma. Soon after graduating, Pistone gets a job with Naval Intelligence. He works here for several years then gets a job with the FBI.

Pistone's first assignment is to Jacksonville, FL. He works here for eighteen months and then Pistone is transferred to Arlington, VA. Agent Pistone stays in Arlington for four years. Pistone is then transferred to New York; this is where he will first play the undercover role of Donnie Brasco. Agent Pistone goes undercover with an informant to bust an auto theft ring that spans several states. The informant, Marshall, teaches Pistone how to steal cars and heavy equipment.

### Chapter 3 The Preparations



Since the theft ring is such a success the FBI decides to use Pistone to catch some members of the Mafia who are fencing stolen items. Pistone and his supervisor, Guy Berada, are working on their proposal for this undercover operation. They are making a budget for the six month operation and putting into place Pistone's new identity as Don Brasco. They decide to use the same identity as was used for the theft ring. They also decide to have an undercover agent in Florida work alongside Pistone. The agent's undercover identity is Joe Fitz.

Pistone and Berada go to Florida to talk to Fitz about helping in the operation. Fitz agrees, and the operation is called "Sun Apple." Now that all the details are taken care of and the FBI agrees to the proposal, the FBI begins getting rid of any trace of Agent Joe Pistone. No one outside of the operation will know that Agent Pistone has ever worked or still does work for the FBI. Pistone's desk is cleared out and all his papers are put into a safe location. There is no way anyone can trace him back to the FBI.

Pistone now takes on his new identity as Don Brasco. He buys new, flasher clothing. When Pistone goes to open a checking account he runs into trouble because he has no banking history, which the bank requires. Pistone tells the banker he just got out of prison and that he feels the man is discriminating against him because of his prison time. The banker finally agrees to open the account. Pistone soon finds an apartment and his new life as Don Brasco is complete. The only thing left is for Pistone to be seen around town and start making connections.

#### Chapter 4 Hitting the Streets

Pistone is slowly laying the ground work for his new identity. He needs to be seen at certain places where the fencers are. He is quietly and slowly having his face seen around these places, while not drawing a lot of attention to himself.

Pistone spends a lot of his time at Carmello's. In time he gets to know the bartender, Marty. Through this connection to Marty, Pistone begins to make a few Mafia connections. He also uses another undercover agent, Chuck to help his credibility around town. Pistone and Chuck help each other with their individual undercover cases.

Pistone spends a little time with his family during the first few months as Brasco. He has to be very careful not to be followed when going home. He has been seen in places where mobsters hang out, therefore the cops could be checking him out, as well as the Mafia itself could be checking into who he is. Either situation could mean the end of the operation. Sometimes Pistone only gets to have breakfast with his family. His first Christmas as Don Brasco, Agent Pistone almost misses seeing his family altogether. He only ends up spending a few hours Christmas morning with his wife and children before having to return to his life as Don Brasco.

Through his new connections, Pistone is introduced to Jilly Greca. Jilly owns a store that fences stolen clothing and other items. Pistone has now made his first fencing and Mafia connection.

#### Chapter 5 Brooklyn: The Colombos



Pistone begins spending a lot of time at Jilly's store with Jilly's crew. Jilly and his crew are fencing stolen items through this store and Pistone knows if he sticks around long enough he may be asked to help bring some of the stuff in. Pistone eventually begins giving advice on a few jobs to the crew. He is still setting up his credibility. He tells them about some of the "jobs" he has pulled off and offers to help sell some of the stolen things they have, but mainly he is just hanging around, letting them become comfortable having him around. They play a lot of cards, eat and talk about jobs. Pistone is not helping them pull off many jobs, but he is helping them unload the trucks. He only participates in the low threat jobs. He is always concerned about what it will look like when he finally has to testify in court against these guys.

Jilly finally gets "made" and Pistone sees the way the crew respect for Jilly changes after he is "made." They have had a certain amount of respect for him but now it increases. Jilly now answers to Charlie Moose of the Colombo family.

Not long after Jilly gets "made," two members of Jilly's crew get out of jail. These two guys, Frankie and Patsy, are in jail when Pistone starts hanging around at Jilly's. Now that they are out, they are suspicious of Pistone. Frankie and Patsy rob a house and the next day are showing off a diamond ring they took from the house. Pistone tells them it is a fake and Patsy gets mad. Pistone tells him to take it to a jeweler to make sure, but he is sure it is a fake. Patsy is even more angry and embarrassed when he learns that Pistone is correct; the diamond is a fake.

## Chapter 1 -5 Analysis

During the trials, Pistone and his family are in constant danger. The Mafia has put out a hit on him and his family. His lawyers try to keep his true identity a secret, but the judge rules against it. Now not only is his immediate family in danger but also his extended family as well. He has spent the last six years of his life with these mobsters and he knows what they are capable of, what they will do to his family to get to him. Pistone is doing everything possible to keep them all safe. His family has already given up so much for the sake of this operation. It has been hard on all of them. They have spent very little time together over the past six years and now they are forced to live in secret, fearing for their lives.

Somehow Agent Pistone manages to come out of this operation the same person he went in. He spends six years developing close friendships with people like Lefty, knowing that he will some day be testifying against them. His devotion to his job is what keeps him going. He always knows he is one of the good guys and what he is doing would make the world a safer place for everyone. He also knows that as close as he and Lefty are, Lefty would kill him in a heart beat if he ever found out Pistone was FBI.

When Pistone begins his undercover operation in New York it is supposed to be for only six months. At this time the FBI does not have long term undercover jobs. They usually just set up a sting and bust the people right at that time. Maybe a day or two operation, tops. This is the first time they are staying undercover for a long period of time. The FBI



choose Pistone for this operation because his operation with the theft ring is so successful and because he looks the part. Pistone is Italian and most of the fencers are Mafia. They use his Don Brasco identity because he is already known as Brasco by some of the thieves.

The FBI decides that his craft of choice should be jewel theft, because most jewel thieves work alone. This means less danger for Pistone. This also gives Pistone the flexibility to show the Mafia he is a money maker, without endangering himself anymore than need be. The FBI can also use confiscated jewelry that they can track later for the operation.

When Pistone leaves his family, he does not tell his wife the details of the operation. He is afraid she will worry too much about his safety if she knows he is working with the Mafia.

As Pistone begins his life as Brasco, he has to move slowly. If he tries to force himself onto the Mafia scene they will be suspicious of him. He spends his days going to the bars and clubs the fencers frequent. He does not ask any questions or try to talk to anyone. He just watches what is going on and sees who comes and goes from where. The process is very slow, but that is how things work with the Mafia. Too many questions equal FBI, as does being too eager, especially when you are an outsider.

Pistone has to be careful when visiting his family. Although he is not involved with any Mafia members yet, that does not mean they are not watching him. The cops could be watching him as well. When he begins his undercover work, any traces that he is FBI are erased; if the cops see him hanging around the same places as the Mafia they could decide to look into who he is. All they will find about him is his alias. If anyone follows him going home the whole operation could be over before it even begins. So when Pistone goes home he has to make sure he is not followed by anyone.

Now that Pistone has finally got in with Jilly and his crew, he has to be extra careful. Jilly's crew feels comfortable talking in front of Pistone about jobs and letting him unload the trucks and even participate in some jobs. They are beginning to trust Pistone and ask his advice. The jobs that Pistone feels are too dangerous he tries to talk them out of doing. For the most part he is successful, until Patsy and Frankie get out of jail. They do not trust Pistone because they know nothing about him; Pistone was not around when they went to jail so they never got to know him. He is just there, from out of nowhere, when they get out. The fact that Pistone embarrasses Patsy over the fake diamond does not help the matter any.

It is during this time that Pistone is introduced to Tony Mirra of the Bonanno family. This is actually the turning point of the operation. Up until this meeting, the only information Pistone is gathering has to do with fencing and very little to do with the Mafia. This meeting will lead to the partnership with Lefty. Had Pistone not met Mirra, the operation might have ended with only fencing convictions, instead of an almost total Mafia take down.



# Chapter 6-10

## Chapter 6-10 Summary

### Chapter 6 The Bonannos

Pistone arrives at Jilly's only to find that Frankie and Patsy are questioning his credibility. Patsy pulls a gun on Pistone and demands to know the name of someone in Florida who can vouch for him. Pistone plays the game and refuses to give him a name in the beginning. Pistone gets angry about the doubt in his credibility. When it is obvious that Patsy is not going to back down and Pistone has made the point that he is not going to give the name up easily, he gives Patsy a name; after a few hours Patsy learns the Florida connection backs up Pistone's story. Pistone knows he can not let Frankie and Patsy get away with this, so he punches both of them. Guido, one of the guys in Jilly's crew, breaks up the fight and tells them not to question Pistone ever again.

In early 1977, Pistone is introduced to Benjamin Ruggiero aka Lefty Guns by Tony Mirra. Lefty and Mirra are both connected with the Bonanno family. Pistone now has ties to two Mafia families, the Bonannos and the Colombos. He now begins splitting his time between Jilly's and Lefty. At this time it also becomes necessary for Pistone to spend time in Florida. The Florida end of the operation is not going as well as the New York end. Pistone travels to Miami to help Fitz, while at the same time adding credibility with his connections in New York.

Pistone is beginning to think he could do more good if he concentrates his time on the Bonanno family. His time with Jilly and his crew only involves fencing. Pistone talks to Berada about concentrating solely on the Mafia aspect instead of the fencing. Berada agrees that the Mafia would be a better target.

Pistone is now slowly limiting his time with Jilly and his crew in favor of Lefty and the Bonanno family.

### Chapter 7 Tony Mirra

In this chapter Pistone spends a lot of time explaining what kind of person can be successful in a long term undercover operation.

Pistone talks about being confident and sure of exactly who you are before going undercover, as well as remembering who you are while you are undercover. He explains that the undercover agent cannot forget he is playing a role. He explains the dangers of getting too comfortable in the role. Especially when you are surrounded by wise guys everyday; one wrong move and you are dead.

Now that Pistone has the OK to forget about the fencing and concentrate on the Mafia, he is spending most of his time with higher level mobsters like Mirra and Lefty. Pistone tries to figure out which of these two men can get him in good with the Mafia. Mirra is





the more dangerous of the two and Pistone feels he can do better with Lefty. Before Pistone has to make the choice, Lefty makes it for him. Lefty asks the family if he can mentor Pistone, with the family's permission. Pistone does not have to choose. He immediately begins working closely with Lefty.

Lefty has a gaming ring and soon has Pistone working for him. Pistone is quickly making a name for himself. Lefty is much more respected by the other wise guys than Mirra. Pistone's new relationship with Lefty is giving the FBI a lot of new, useful information.

The FBI knows that a lot of Sicilians have been coming to New York, but they are not sure what they are doing there. Pistone learns that they are there to help with drug deals.

### Chapter 8 Lefty

Agent Pistone now spends most of his time working for Lefty. Lefty takes him under his wing and teaches Pistone the rules of dealing with the Mafia. Lefty teaches Pistone how to act around the other wise guys, what to say and what not to say. The two are also becoming friends; at least, that is the way Lefty sees things. Pistone is introduced into Lefty's personal life as well. Pistone eats dinner a couple of nights a week at Lefty's house, with Lefty and his girlfriend. Pistone also gets to know Lefty's children, who are both grown. Lefty introduces Pistone to his son Tommy, who has a drug problem.

Pistone is worried that someone from Lefty's crew might follow him while he is visiting his wife and children, so he gets the FBI to move his family. His family is not happy about the move; Pistone has still not told his wife all the details of the operation.

Pistone tells Lefty he is going to California for a job. Pistone actually goes to California to help another agent, Tony Conti establish credibility. This works for a while but when the agent comes to New York for a job he almost blows his cover when an attorney recognizes him as an agent. Word later gets back to Lefty that Pistone was with an agent, but Pistone is able to convince Lefty that he only knew him briefly and the man knew nothing about Lefty. Lefty has not met this agent, so when he works with him later he is not suspicious.

Lefty comes to Pistone in California several times. Pistone tries to get Lefty hooked up with another agent who is trying to get into the vending machine racket in Milwaukee.

When Lefty's son Tommy is arrested for robbing and shooting at cops, Lefty turns to Pistone for help. This is just the break Pistone has been looking for, now he has a way to lure Lefty into the vending machine racket. As it turns out, the man Tommy robbed is a connected guy and now there is a hit out on Tommy. Pistone and Conti give Lefty money to help him pay off the family in exchange for Tommy's life.

### Chapter 9 Milwaukee



Lefty is now interested in the vending machine deal in Milwaukee. Pistone knows helping Lefty keep his son alive will be just what it takes to get him interested in the money he can make in the vending machine racket. Pistone and Conti are working with Lefty. The FBI hopes a relationship develops between the New York Mafia and the Chicago Mafia. The Chicago Mafia controls Milwaukee.

Conti's cover is as an old friend of Pistone's who hopes to open a vending machine business in the bars in Milwaukee. Problem is, the Chicago Mafia runs the vending machine business in Milwaukee. Conti is to act like he knows very little about the inner workings of the Mafia.

Lefty goes to his boss to OK a meeting between the Milwaukee boys, so they can bring Conti into the business. Lefty and the Bonanno family will take a cut of the profits and the Milwaukee boys will take half the profits in exchange for allowing Conti to put his vending machines in the bars.

Pistone has not seen his family in a few weeks and makes an excuse to leave Milwaukee for a short time. Pistone tells Lefty he needs to go see his girlfriend who has been in a car wreck. Lefty tries to talk him out of going because they are waiting for the call about when the meeting will take place. Pistone insists that he will only be gone a short time. He then calls his wife and makes the arrangements for her to pick him up at the airport.

#### Chapter 10 The Accident

When Pistone arrives at the airport it is not his wife who is waiting for him, but an FBI agent. Pistone learns that his wife was in car wreck on her way to the airport. He then rushes to the hospital. To make matters worse, his two oldest daughters are also in a car wreck leaving the hospital that same day. Although both girls are alright, Pistone realizes how little time he has spent with his family and that he almost lost them in two days.

Once he gets his wife home, he realizes what this case is costing his family. Pistone's wife and children want him to quit his job and stay home with them. He knows he cannot do this, too many people's lives depend on him returning to this assignment. For the first time since beginning this operation, Pistone tells his wife some of the details of the operation.

When he returns to Milwaukee, Lefty has already talked to both Mafia families and a final meeting is set up. Pistone arrives for the final meeting. Lefty wants Pistone to come to the meeting with him and Conti. As the days pass while they are waiting for the meeting to take place Pistone decides to return home again. Lefty is again upset that Pistone is leaving at this crucial time, but Pistone leaves anyway. He uses his girlfriend as an excuse again, but really he is taking his wife on a vacation.

The meeting between the Milwaukee boys, Lefty and Conti takes place while Pistone is on vacation. Everything is cleared by the Milwaukee boys for Conti to open his business. During the meeting Conti learns that while he, Pistone and Lefty were in the



hotel waiting on the phone call about the meeting time, the Milwaukee boys were looking for him. They did not know who he was, but they thought Conti was an informant and were going to kill him.

Lefty wants to set Pistone up with an apartment in Milwaukee. Lefty has Pistone oversee their end of Conti's business. Pistone agrees to stay in Milwaukee.

## Chapter 6-10 Analysis

Pistone is worried at this point because the name he gave to Patsy is the name of an informant. The guy is supposed to vouch for a "Don Brasco" if anyone ever calls asking, but you never know about an informant. He tries to talk his way out of giving the name but he knows that Frankie and Patsy have never trusted him and after Patsy pulls the gun, Pistone knows there is no way of getting off without giving the name. Now his life is in the hands of an informant. When the informant pulls through for him, Pistone knows he has to behave like a wise guy. No wise guy would let anybody get away with questioning his credibility. It is disrespectful and that is one thing the Mafia does not stand for, disrespect.

Once Patsy gets hooked up with Lefty he realizes what small potatoes Jilly and his crew are. If he stays with Jilly the only convictions he will get are fencing. Lefty on the other hand can open doors, big doors, into the world of the Mafia. After talking to Berada, they decide to go after the Mafia.

Once Pistone starts spending time with Mirra and Lefty he notices all the Sicilians in town. He soon learns that the Bonannos brought them over to help move drugs. This is new information to the FBI. They knew they were here, they just did not know why.

Pistone starts to see the benefits of Lefty over Mirra. Although Mirra is respected, Lefty can open doors and Lefty is less volatile. Pistone and Mirra do not always get along as well as Lefty and Pistone; and Pistone has already decided to stick with Lefty when Lefty tells him he has asked the family if he can bring him in to mentor. Lefty is very excited to teach Pistone the ways of the Mafia.

Lefty wastes no time taking Pistone into, not only his Mafia life, but also his personal life. Pistone spends a lot of time with Lefty's family. While Pistone does not feel any guilt about lying to Lefty about who he really is, he does feel guilt over lying to Lefty's family. Pistone feels they are innocent in the matter and knows they will be hurt when the truth comes out. However, Pistone feels that Lefty is to blame for the pain they will feel because he is the one breaking the law. Pistone is only doing his job.

The Chicago Mafia controls Milwaukee. They are said to be more violent than the New York Mafia. Conti and Pistone need Lefty's help because with Chicago controlling Milwaukee, anyone trying to get into the vending machine business will be killed. Lefty, being in the New York Mafia, can make phone calls to set up meetings between the two families. The two Mafia families then take a cut of the profits to allow Conti to open his



vending machines. As long as he pays the families he can safely run his business. This joint venture allows the FBI to gather information on both families for their case.

During all the talks and meetings, Conti tells Lefty that he thinks he is being followed and that someone is going to kill him. Lefty assures him everything is fine and that he will not be killed. When the meetings take place, the Milwaukee boys tell Conti that they did not realize he was who they were meeting and they have someone at his office right then waiting to kill him. They think it is very funny. Conti does not think this is funny at all.

After Pistone's wife has the wreck, he realizes what a toll his job has taken on his family. His wife has been raising his daughters alone, and his daughters do not feel like they even have a father. He finally shares the facts of his assignment with his wife. They try to reconnect with a vacation.



# Chapter 11-15

## Chapter 11-15 Summary

### Chapter 11 Frank Balistrieri

Frank Balistrieri is the Mafia boss in Milwaukee. Lefty has a meeting with Balistrieri and Conti and Pistone are asked to join them. They all go to Balistrieri's house for dinner. Lefty is very impressed to be invited to Balistrieri's house; in New York, you do not socialize with the Bosses.

Lefty, Pistone and Conti are introduced to all the mob guys in Milwaukee during this visit. Balistrieri has several diners and shows them around town. At one of these functions Lefty volunteers Pistone to run Balistrieri's bookkeeping operation. Later, when Lefty talks to Pistone about working for Balistrieri, Pistone refuses to stay and work with Balistrieri. Lefty has to rescind the offer. He is very upset with Pistone.

When Lefty and the boys return to New York, Balistrieri stops returning their phone calls. No one knows what is going on. It seems he is pulling out of the vending machine operation. Lefty and Mike both try to contact Balistrieri on several occasions but he refuses to accept the calls. The FBI is worried that Conti's cover has been blown and soon make arrangements for him to pull out of the operation. They decide he is going to say he is doing a job and then disappear. Pistone tells Lefty that Conti is going to help pull a high dollar art job and split the money with them. While Conti is suppose to be pulling the art job, Lefty reads in the paper about a big art theft and assumes this is Conti. Conti leaves the operation and it is believed by Lefty that he ran off with all the money. Before he leaves, Mike tells Conti the reason that Balistrieri pulled out of the agreement was because he never got permission from the Chicago Mafia to bring Conti in to the vending machine racket. The FBI still feel it is too dangerous to leave Conti in the operation.

### Chapter 12 Sonny Black

Back in New York big changes in the Bonanno family are happening. Carmine Galante is killed. He is eating dinner and is killed at his table. Everybody is now moved around, Sonny is the new captain of Mike's crew and Mike is demoted. Mike now answers to Sonny.

Not much has changed for Lefty and Pistone. They are still doing basically what they have always been doing. They are spending a lot of time in Miami and taking care of things at King's Court. Lefty wants to go sailing and so Pistone makes arrangements to get a boat called "The Left Hand." This boat is an FBI boat used in sting operations. Pistone tells Lefty the boat belongs to his girlfriend's brother and the brother lets him use whenever he wants to use the boat. Pistone uses this outing to introduce another agent to Lefty and the crew. The agent is Rocky.



Pistone is also still working with other agents to help them work on cases. These cases involve bringing Lefty and the Bonannos into jobs with other Mafia families and criminals. The FBI is trying to strengthen their case against the Bonanno family. During one of these deals Pistone and Lefty are trying to set up a drug deal with a Cuban banker. The banker backs out of the deal because he is afraid of "Donnie." Lefty thinks this is funny, because Lefty is the one with so many hits under his belt and yet "Donnie" is the one he is afraid of.

Pistone learns that Balistrieri knows that Conti was an agent. He travels to Florida to begin a new case with Agent Rossi. It will be similar to the one with Conti. They want to open a club called "King's Court." They are hoping Lefty will help them get the approval from Santo Trafficante. Trafficante is the boss in Florida.

### Chapter 13 King's Court

Now that Pistone and Conti have peaked Lefty's interest in the King's Court adventure, Sonny Black makes a trip to Florida to meet Pistone for the first time and check out King's Court. Sonny is impressed with the club and wants them to have a "Vegas Night" to see what the turn-out will be. Sonny sets up the Vegas Night and they pay off the local sheriff, Captain Donahue, to make sure the cops leave them alone.

Lefty has been asking Rossi to give him quite a large amount of money during all the trips he has been making to Florida getting King's Court ready for Sonny's visit. The FBI has been footing the bill the entire time and do not want to continue giving Lefty any more money. Pistone talks to Sonny about the money and Sonny tells him not to give Lefty anymore money. Sonny is starting to like Pistone and the two are becoming closer. Pistone, however, is trying to remain loyal to Lefty. He knows that Sonny is the bigger fish in the operation and he needs to get closer to him.

Sonny is working on getting a meeting with Trafficante about the Bonanno family moving some of their business to Florida.

### Chapter 14 Coldwater

In this chapter Pistone is discussing the pros and cons of wearing a wire. On the one hand so much information is being discussed at this point in the investigation that having it all on tape would be of great help to Pistone. The way it stands he has to remember all the details, dates, and names then give them to his contact every day or so. If he wears a wire, he always runs the risk of being caught and being killed on the spot. The other problem with the wire is in this day they are not reliable. Sometimes the wire works perfectly and other days they do not record anything. Pistone is already putting his life in danger just living with these men. He struggles with adding more danger to the situation when there is no guarantee the wire would even work.

Sonny wants to move Pistone to his crew and is going behind Lefty's back. Sonny makes plans to go to Florida without telling Lefty. Lefty is very angry, but there is not much he can do about it because Sonny is his captain.



Sonny is trying to work a deal with Trafficante to get into the dog tracks. He finally gets a meeting with Trafficante and the deal is made to open first with bingo then move on to the dog tracks. While they are in Florida, Pistone, Sonny and his crew see the sights of Florida. They visit the water parks, Disney World and shooting ranges. They are impressed with Pistone's shooting skills.

They get things ready for the bookkeeping and the bingo and Pistone finally meets Trafficante.

## Chapter 15 Drugs and Guns

When Sonny and Pistone return to New York, Sonny offers to let Pistone stay with him in his apartment. The first night that Pistone stays with Sonny he does not get much sleep. Sonny does not have air conditioning in his apartment and so they leave the windows open during the night. Pistone wakes up with an animal on him. Pistone thinks it is a rat and slings it across the room. Sonny hears the commotion and comes in the room to see what is going on, only to find out it is a cat that has come in through the open window. Sonny has a good laugh over this incident.

While staying together in the apartment, Sonny and Pistone talk about how Sonny got involved in the mob and about the power struggle within the Bonanno family. Sonny tells Pistone he wants to get more involved in selling drugs. Pistone and Rossi try to stall Sonny on this topic. Sonny and Pistone are getting closer every day. Sonny is beginning to see Pistone as family and on one occasion offers to give Pistone a ring that Pistone admires. Pistone refuses the ring.

Mirra has made the acquisition that Rocky is wire—meaning, he is an informant. Pistone tries to vouch for Rocky without sticking his own neck on the line for him.

Sonny and Pistone continue to spend a lot of time together and Sonny has decided he wants to make Pistone a "made" member of the Bonanno family. He also asks Pistone if Lefty is still hitting Rossi up for money, and tells Pistone not to give Lefty any money.

## Chapter 11-15 Analysis

Mike Sabella is Lefty's captain and involved in the Milwaukee deal. When Balistrieri all of a sudden pulls out of the deal with Conti and the New York guys, the FBI gets worried that Conti's cover has been blown. They start making plans to pull him out. They have to make sure whatever they do with Conti does not jeopardize Pistone's operation. Pistone is careful to never actually vouch for Conti with Lefty or Mike, but to always say he was alright back in the day; "you meet with him and decide for yourself." Finally, just before Conti is ready to leave the operation, Mike learns that the reason for Balistrieri's pull back has nothing to do with Conti. Balistrieri never got permission from the Chicago Mafia bosses to bring Conti into the vending machine business. The FBI still decides to pull him out of the operation. They make it appear that Conti is involved in a big time art theft and he disappears with the cash. Lefty is angry but Pistone's cover is safe.



When Galante is killed, Sonny Black takes Mike's place as captain. It is rumored that Sonny, along with the Sicilians, is involved on the hit on Galante. They believe that is the reason for Sonny's promotion. Mike is now demoted to the same level as Lefty.

At this point Pistone has not met Sonny Black. He has only heard the stories Lefty has told. When Sonny calls for Lefty after the hit on Galante, Lefty is sure he is going to be killed. This is usually the way a hit takes place. By someone you have known and trusted for years. They also tend to happen after a change in power. On this occasion, Sonny is only calling on Lefty to tell him that he will be answering to him from now on instead of Mike.

Agent Rossi out of Florida now works with Pistone to try to set up another venture similar to the one in Milwaukee. Since Conti is pulled out of the undercover operation, Pistone learns that Balistrieri did know he was an agent. It is a good thing he left when he did. This time the family the FBI is interested in is the Trafficante family. Pistone and Rossi are opening a club, King's Court, in Holiday, Florida. The FBI is funding the club and is hoping to get the Bonanno family to be partners with the Trafficante family. Sonny is very interested because there is next to no competition in Florida. They also have the local sheriff involved in helping keeping the cops from busting their club.

Sonny loves it in Florida and wants to get more businesses going in Florida. He is looking into dog tracks and bingo. They take a large group down for the weekend and enjoy the sites of Florida. Pistone enjoys this time as well and is surprised by how different they act on this weekend. He and Sonny are becoming closer friends.

When Sonny and Pistone go back in New York, Sonny offers to let Pistone stay at his apartment. This works well for Pistone as far as the case is concerned; the more time he spends with Sonny, the better. They are getting closer all the time and Sonny trusts Pistone and is opening up to him about the Bonanno family business. However, spending twenty-four hours a day with Sonny is also dangerous too; one false move and Sonny could kill Pistone.

Sonny has already made the decision to move Pistone from Lefty's crew to his own. Pistone can tell this as well, but he knows he cannot seem disloyal to Lefty. This is a tricky line to walk. Respect is such a major part of the Mafia's daily lives; Pistone can not disrespect Sonny by refusing to do what he is told, Sonny is a top captain. At the same time, Lefty is the one who brought him into the family to begin with; if he disrespects Lefty, what makes Sonny think he will not do the same to him if someone bigger comes along? In regards to the case, Sonny is who he needs to be close to, Sonny is the one who can open the doors. Right now all Pistone can do is keep them both happy, which will not be easy. Lefty is also aware of Sonny's motives. Lefty has no intention of giving up Pistone to anyone, not even to his captain.

As if trying to balance Sonny and Lefty is not enough, Pistone now has one more problem to face. Mirra has decided he should be getting a cut of the King's Court money because he is the one who first brought Pistone into the Bonanno family. He has made a "claim" on Pistone to the family boss. In these families the money moves up.





Everyone pays a percentage of the money they make to the person above them, all the way to the top. Although it is true that Mirra did make the introduction of Pistone to Lefty, Lefty is the one who asked the family if he could bring Pistone into the family and was told he could. Now Lefty and Sonny are prepared to fight, not just for Pistone, but also for the King's Court money.



# Chapter 16-20

## Chapter 16-20 Summary

### Chapter 16 The Raid

Back in Florida, they are having another Vegas night. All the crew from New York is down for this night. Sonny asks Rossi if everything has been taken care of and Rossi assures him that it has been. The cops show up and bust up the place and start arresting everyone. Pistone finally shows the cops his driver's license and is not arrested, but Sonny and Rossi are taken to jail. Sonny is furious and wants to know who the snitch is. They find out the sheriff they were paying off messed up and did not do what he was supposed to do. Now that the club is destroyed, and all the money from Vegas night is at the police station, Sonny is more determined to get serious with drugs. He is even talking about making drugs.

There is more moving around in the Bonanno family. Rusty is still in prison and they make Sally Fruits the acting Boss while Rusty is in prison. Sonny is promoted once again, this time to main captain.

Lefty hears about the "Left Hand" being an FBI boat. He asks Pistone about it, but Pistone denies knowing anything about it being a federal boat. He tells Lefty that if it were a federal boat then they must have outsmarted the feds, because the feds did not get anything on them and here they still are while the boat is in the paper as a federal sting boat. Lefty buys Pistone's explanation.

Mirra is still making claims on Pistone. He wants some of the money from King's Court. Pistone tells Lefty there is no way he is going to be with Mirra. Sonny and Lefty have both fought for Pistone and now they have to go to a "sit down" with the families.

### Chapter 17 The Sitdowns

Mirra is now making claims that Pistone is involved in drug deals. He even has Rocky the agent on his side, claiming he and Pistone did drug deals together. This is not condoned in the Mafia world. At this point the Mafia is still old school, and you can be killed if you are caught selling drugs. This does not mean mobsters do not sell drugs, it only means they make sure they are not caught doing so. Pistone does not know why Rocky is siding with Mirra in this matter; after all, Rocky is a cop.

Lefty is questioning Pistone about Rocky. Lefty wants to know who he is, where he came from and if he can be trusted. All the time Lefty is going to the meetings with Sonny, Mirra and the bosses. At any rate, Lefty is fighting for Pistone and his reputation.

Lefty and Sonny are trying to prove that Mirra was not "made" when he introduced Pistone to Lefty. If this can be proven then Mirra has no case because Lefty was a "made" guy then and therefore would take rank over Mirra.



It is never explained why Rocky turns on Pistone.

#### Chapter 18 The Hits

Now that the matter of Mirra has been settled, Lefty is ready to resume teaching Pistone the ropes. He has decided to take Pistone along on a hit. This will be the first time Pistone has been asked to go along on a hit. Pistone talks to his case agent to make arrangements about what to do in this situation. Pistone is worried that this could be a set up for him, that maybe he is the one who is going to be killed.

Pistone has gone home for his daughter's first communion when Lefty calls to tell him it is time for the hit. Pistone does not want to miss his daughter's communion but he knows he has to leave. He worries that the person being "hit" may be an innocent, and if this is the case he has to prevent it from happening. Pistone's wife and children do not understand why he has to leave and are once again angry with him. When Pistone arrives to meet Lefty, he learns that the hit is called off. Pistone is angry to learn he missed his daughter's communion for nothing.

Lefty goes to the final sit down, which lasts for five days. Lefty finally wins and Pistone stays with Lefty and Sonny. Mirra is not entitled to any of the King's Court money or Pistone.

Sonny disappears for several days. The FBI is not sure what is going on, but with all the changes in the Bonanno family as of late they are sure there is a hit going on. Lefty shows up days later and three wise guys are missing but no bodies are found. Sonny Red is one of the missing wise guys Lefty calls for Pistone to come talk to him. He tells Pistone that Sonny Red's son Bruno has a hit on him and that Pistone is suppose to carry out the hit.

#### Chapter 19 The Contract

Pistone is sent to Florida to find two of Sonny Red's crew and inform them that they now answer to Sonny Black. The men have fled because they fear that there is a hit out on them now because their boss was killed and now his son has a hit on him. The cops have found Sonny Red's body and confirmed that it was a mob hit. Pistone finds Maruca in Florida but the other man, Puma has disappeared. Pistone is supposed to be looking for Bruno in Florida, because that is where they think he has run to hide.

Sonny tells Pistone to come back to New York and look for Bruno; he does not believe Bruno is in Florida. The FBI is ready to pull Pistone out of the operation because they feel it is becoming too dangerous with all the changes in leadership. Pistone thinks he is close to being "made" and wants to stay in until that happens. The FBI discusses who they should tell first that Pistone is an agent; they agree that Lefty should be the one they tell. Agent Pistone insists that they tell Sonny Black first. They also are deciding which telephones to tap. They need to make sure they get as much information as possible from these guys after they find out about Agent Pistone.



Agent Pistone's job is now to gather as much information as possible in the short time remaining. Lefty tells Pistone that he has the contract on Bruno now. He also tells Pistone that the person who killed Sonny Red messed up, all the bodies were supposed to be chopped up and gotten rid of but somebody messed up. Now they are just trying to tie up all the loose ends quickly.

One of the guys in the crew is throwing a wedding for his daughter and the crew is all going. Everyone is worried that there may be a hit on Sonny at the wedding.

## Chapter 20 Coming Out

The undercover job is coming to an end and the only thing left to do is tie up the loose ends with Sonny. During the last week of the operation Pistone goes to Holiday, Florida to meet with Trafficante. Trafficante is not mad about the bust on Vegas night. He still wants a partnership with the Bonannos and Sonny to run business in Florida. When the crew is leaving Florida, Nicky, one of Sonny's guys, leaves some papers behind in the hotel room. Nicky asks Pistone to bring them back with him. These papers and address books are turned over to FBI to use in the cases against them. When Pistone says good bye to Sonny and the rest of the guys, he thinks this will probably be the last time he will ever see Sonny again. Pistone knows the chances are that Sonny will be killed for his involvement with Pistone when the truth about his identity is revealed.

Although Pistone has been playing a role for all these years and he knew how it would end, he has grown to care for Sonny. Pistone genuinely likes him as a person and thinks if only Sonny was in some other line of work they could have been real friends.

The FBI agents go to Motion Lounge and tell Sonny and Lefty that Pistone is a federal agent working undercover. No one believes them and Sonny waits ten days before calling the bosses to tell them what the agents have told them. There is a \$500,000 open contract put on Pistone. Sonny and the rest of the Mafia do not know Pistone's real name at this point. Soon after calling the bosses, Sonny disappears. A few days later his pigeon coops are taken off the roof of his apartment. This is when the FBI is sure Sonny is dead.

Sonny's girlfriend Judy asks to talk to Pistone and he agrees. He tries to convince Judy to move on with her life and away from the Mafia. He tells her Sonny is not coming back. She knows that Sonny is gone, and she tells Pistone that before Sonny disappeared he told her that he would not change the way he felt about Pistone because he was just doing his job and he did it well. Pistone tells Judy he always liked Sonny and that would never change.

Anthony Mirra is killed as well, but the FBI manages to get to Lefty before the Mafia does. He is kept in protective custody until his trial.

Sonny's body is later found and is proven to be the result of a mob hit.



## Chapter 16-20 Analysis

Things are moving fast since the decision about who Pistone belongs with has been made. Lefty disappears for a few days and the FBI is not sure what is going on. This usually means a hit is taking place. There is no way to know if it is Lefty who has been hit or is doing the hit. When Lefty is finally seen a few days later they are sure he was involved but it is never easy to prove. Pistone now needs to find out as much information as he can about who was killed, why and who did the killing without drawing any suspicion. Wise guys do not ask questions about hits, as a matter of fact they do not ask many questions at all. Most things are discussed in code or just understood. Asking questions is dangerous. Pistone has to hope Lefty brings it up to him.

When Sonny tells Pistone he is supposed to kill Sonny Red's son, Bruno, Pistone is worried. This is one of the things that has worried him from the start of the case. He has said he would not kill an innocent person or allow the Mafia to kill an innocent person. However if it comes down to his life or a wise guy's life, he will kill the wise guy. He says he will do this because the wise guys choose this life and know this is an option, the innocent do not. Now that the time is here and there is a plan, not a spur of the moment scenario, he is not sure.

Sonny has been talking for some time about putting Pistone up for membership in the Bonanno family. Now with all the changes in power, Sonny is ready to have Pistone "made." The FBI is very worried for Pistone's safety. The main guys in the Bonanno family are being killed off and they feel it is too dangerous for Pistone to remain in this operation. The FBI worries that Sonny has found out Pistone is an agent and is using being "made" to lure him to be killed instead. They are not sure what it will do to their case if Pistone is "made" member of the Mafia. Pistone feels he has already come this far, he needs to finish, but the FBI makes the decision to pull him out anyway. He now has only weeks to finish the assignment.

When Sonny and Lefty are told that Pistone is an agent, they do not believe it. Both men love Pistone like family and cannot believe he would betray them. They are going over everything they have done with Pistone for the last few years and cannot believe he is an agent. Lefty does not believe it until Agent Pistone testifies against him during the trials. Both men know that if it is true their lives are in danger. They are the ones who vouched for Pistone. They went before the families and fought for him when Mirra made the claim on him. When the bosses are told, a \$500,000 hit is put on Pistone. Luckily for Pistone at this point, no one knows his real name. They will have to wait until the first trial to find out who has been living with them for the last six years.

When Sonny disappears, Pistone knows what has happened, especially when the pigeon coops come down off the rooftop of the Motion Lounge. Pistone feels bad for Sonny, he truly did like him. Sonny brought this end to himself, however, for choosing to lead this lifestyle. Pistone talks to Sonny's girlfriend shortly before Sonny's body is found and tries to tell her to leave this life behind.



# Epilogue and Update

## Epilogue and Update Summary

### Epilogue

The epilogue gives the details of what happened to each of the major people involved in the case. Pistone tells who was convicted, indicted, how many years they will serve, if they were killed before trial and where their trial took place.

Pistone discusses, briefly, how his life will be after coming out of undercover. He talks about testifying and writing this book as well as being in the Witness Protection Program.

### Update July 1988

The update contains information since the release of the novel. Pistone talks about being in People Magazine and being interviewed by journalists.

Pistone tells how the Mafia has changed since his time with them. No longer can someone basically walk in off the street and be a made member of the Mafia. As a result of Agent Pistone, the proposed new member has to kill to become a member and two members have to vouch for knowing the person since childhood. He discusses different ways the Mafia has changed since his time with Sonny and Lefty. Most of the old timers are gone now and the new members see more money in the drug trade than the older ones did; it is not an unwritten rule anymore that drugs are to be avoided.

He talks about the questions people who have met him ask, mostly about Lefty. Pistone explains that although they were very close at the time, Lefty would not hesitate to kill him today if given the chance. The contract of \$500,000 still stands for the hit on Pistone.

Pistone and his family still live in secret, not able to talk about what he has been though or who they really are. Their families still worry about their safety, but he is still proud of the work he did and does not regret what he did.

## Epilogue and Update Analysis

Pistone gives up a lot for the sake of this case and so does his family. They not only give up the time they lose during those six years that they are apart, but they also give up who they are. Due to the dangerous nature of the people involved in these cases, the Pistones can no longer even use their own names. They are forced to live in secret, around people who will never truly know who they are or what they have sacrificed and are sacrificing for the sake of this case. As a result of Agent Pistone, the FBI now knows

things about the Mafia they might never have known and they have jailed men who would have not paid for the crimes they were committing on a daily basis.

Even after knowing what this case has cost him, Agent Pistone is still proud of the work he did as Donnie Brasco and says he would have done it again.



# Characters

## Joseph D. Pistone

Agent Joseph Pistone is the main character of this novel. In 1976, FBI agent Pistone leaves the life he has known as an agent to begin his new life as Don Brasco, jewel thief. He spends six years of his life undercover inside the Mafia world to help bring to justice several heads of the Mafia families. Agent Pistone's undercover role as Donnie Brasco fools even the top bosses of the New York Mafia.

The operation starts out as a six month fencing operation, but Pistone realizes this is bigger than fencing. The operation turns into a six year sting that will bring to justice some of the heads of the biggest crime families in New York, Florida and Milwaukee. Pistone slowly works his way up from Jilly Greca's fencing crew into the Bonanno family, working side by side with Lefty Guns. Lefty takes Pistone under his wing to teach him the ways of the Mafia and in the process get Pistone closer to the big bosses he needs to meet.

Agent Pistone gives up holidays and special occasions and daily life with his own family to live with the Mafia. He cultivates close relationships with Lefty Guns and Sonny Black, both of the Bonanno crime family. Although Pistone is close to both Lefty and Sonny and truly likes both, he never lets his feelings get in the way of doing his job. Agent Pistone never loses sight of what he is doing and why. He never forgets who he is when he begins this assignment and he works hard to make sure he is the same person when he comes out of the assignment. Agent Pistone's family often wants him to quit the operation and stay home with them, but he holds strong to the commitment he has made to the job and to the other agents who are counting on him. In the end Pistone and family make it through the assignment an intact family. The years are hard on them all, but they are still together.

During this operation, Agent Pistone works with other agents in other states to build stronger cases against organized crime. This is the first time that the FBI uses an agent for a long term undercover operation and it ends with more than one hundred federal convictions across several states.

Agent Pistone and his family now live in the Witness Protection Program because there is still a \$500,000 hit out on him.

## Benjamin Ruggiero

Benjamin Ruggiero, aka Lefty Guns, is Pistone's partner in the mob. Lefty is a "made guy" in the Bonanno family. He owns a social club in Little Italy, where the members of the Bonanno family hang out, play cards and make bets. Lefty is a bookie. He and Agent Pistone meet through Anthony Mirra. Until this meeting everyone calls Pistone Don, Lefty starts calling him Donnie and soon everyone else follows suit. Soon Pistone





is spending most of his time with Lefty. Lefty has genuine feelings for Pistone and takes Pistone under his wing to teach him the way things work inside the mob. Lefty vouches for Pistone on several occasions and in the end is hurt by what Lefty feels is Pistone's betrayal. Lefty is the only member of the Bonanno family who is close to Pistone who is not killed for their involvement with Pistone when the truth about Pistone's identity is revealed. The FBI is able to get Lefty into protective custody before the Mafia can carry out the hit against Lefty.

Lefty refuses to believe that Pistone is actually an FBI agent until Agent Pistone takes the witness stand against him.

## **Dominick Napolitano**

Dominick Napolitano aka Sonny Black is a member of the Brooklyn crew in the beginning of this novel. After the killing of this boss of the Bonanno family, Carmine Galante Sonny is made captain. Lefty and his crew now answer to Sonny.

Sonny and Pistone have a connection from almost their first meeting. Sonny is the one wise guy that Pistone actually likes. Sonny has a place called the Motion Lounge; he has a pigeon coop on the roof and an apartment on the top floor. During the last years of the undercover operation, Agent Pistone stays with Sonny in this apartment. Just before the FBI pulls the plug on the operation, Sonny tells Pistone he is going to put him up for membership in the Bonanno family.

When the truth about Pistone's identity is revealed to Sonny and his crew, Sonny does not believe that Pistone is an agent. Even after finding out it is true, Sonny still has respect for Pistone, the man he has come to love like a brother.

Sonny turns up missing and everyone knows the mob has had Sonny killed, but it is not until the handless body of Sonny is found on August 12, 1982 that the hit is validated.

## **Agent Anthony Rossi**

Rossi is the undercover agent out of Florida that works closely with Pistone during the last year of the operation. Rossi helps Pistone set up "King's Court" and get the Trafficante family working as partners with the Bonanno family to run King's Court. "Rossi" is the agents undercover name; his real name is never given to protect him and his family from the Mafia.

## **Jilly Greca**

Jilly is the owner of the ACERG store. He is a member of the Colombo family. He is the first wise guy that Pistone hooks up with in his undercover role as Donnie Brasco. Jilly gets killed in 1980, by members of the mob.



## **Guy Bereda**

Bereda is Pistone's supervisor during the Donnie Brasco operation.

## **Joe Fitzgerald**

Fitzgerald, also known as Joe Fritz, is an undercover agent with the FBI. His real name is never given. He works in Miami, FL and Pistone tries to help him with his case while undercover as Brasco.

## **Marty**

Marty is the bartender at Carmello's. Pistone uses his new found friendship with Marty to gain credibility with the mafia guys that are hanging around Carmello's.

## **Chuck**

Chuck is an undercover agent working the music racket in New York City. He and Pistone use each other's connections to help gain credibility for themselves.

## **Anthony Mirra**

Mirra is a "made guy" in the Bonanno family. He brings Pistone into the mafia world and introduces him to Lefty. In later years, Mirra tries to take Pistone from Sonny and Lefty, claiming that he brought him in and had a claim on him first. He loses and later is killed when Pistone's true identity is revealed.

## **Frankie**

Frankie is a member of Jilly's crew. He does not like Pistone.

## **Patsy**

Patsy is a member of Jilly's crew. He dislikes Pistone because Pistone points out that a ring Patsy has just stolen is a fake. When Pistone is proven correct, Patsy is embarrassed and even angrier with Pistone.

## **Mike Sabella**

Mike owns a restaurant called Ca Sa Bella in New York. He is part of the Bonanno crime family. In the beginning he is the captain of Lefty's crew. After Galante is killed, Sonny



Black takes his place and instead of killing Mike, they simply demote him. He is then under Sonny Black and on the same level as Lefty.

## **Philip (Rusty) Rastelli**

Rusty is in prison most of the time that Pistone is working this case. He becomes the Boss of the Bonanno family after Galante is killed. It is believed that he is behind the murder of Galante.

## **Carmine Galante**

Galante is the Boss of the Bonanno family until he is murdered during his dinner. The hit is believed to be carried out by members of his crime family.

## **Tony Conti**

Conti is an undercover agent working out of Milwaukee. He works with Pistone to bring together the Balistrieri and Bonanno families. Conti has to pull out of his undercover work when his identity is compromised.

## **Paul Castellano**

Castellano, aka Big Paul, is the Boss of Bosses. He is a member of the Gambino crime family. Although Pistone never talks to Big Paul personally, he is discussed frequently between crews. He also has to be consulted about certain jobs with the mafia families.



## Objects/Places

### Jacksonville, FL

This is where Pistone is first assigned after entering the FBI. He spends eighteen months working here with the vice cops

### Alexandria, VA

Pistone transfers here after he leaves Jacksonville. He lives here for four years.

### New York City, NY

In 1974, Pistone is transferred back to New York. He works on the Truck and Hijack Squad. This is where he begins his undercover work with the mafia.

### Camello's

This is a bar in New York. In the beginning of the mafia operation, Pistone frequents this bar to lay the ground work for his cover as Brasco. This is where he meets the bartender, Marty and gets introduced to Jilly.

### Cecil's

This is the bar where Pistone meets Mirra.

### ACERG

This is Jilly's store. It is his last name spelled backwards. This store is a front for Jilly and his crew's fencing operation. They sell some of the stolen merchandise in this store.

### Lefty's Club

No name is given for this club, but it is a social club on Madison Street in Little Italy. This is where Lefty and his friends spend most of their day.

### Motion Lounge

This is Sonny Black's place. It is a private club where Sonny and his crew hang out. It is a three story building with an apartment on the third floor and a pigeon coop on the roof.



Sonny allows Pistone to stay in the apartment whenever he wants. This is where Sonny is when the FBI tells him about Pistone being an FBI agent.

## **Holiday, FL**

This is where King's Court is located. Pistone spends a lot of time here taking care of business for Lefty and Sonny.

## **King's Court**

This is the club that Agent Rossi and Pistone open for Sonny. It is actually funded by the FBI.

## **Milwaukee**

Pistone stays in Milwaukee for a number of months helping a fellow agent work on a vending machine job. While here the two agents work to bring together the Bonanno family and the Balistreri family.



# Themes

## Sense of Duty

Agent Joe Pistone began his time undercover with a sense of duty to the FBI. He was an FBI agent and this was the job he was assigned. Throughout his six years undercover with the mafia he never wavered with his sense of duty. Even when he met people who were innocent to the situation and would be hurt when the truth of his identity came out, he never forgot why he was there or why it was important. Pistone even got close to some of the wise guys, like Sonny Black, but he never let this interfere with the job he was there to complete. Sonny was a good guy doing very bad and illegal things, and it was Pistone's job to stop him as well as others like him. Pistone's sense of duty was stronger than his connection to Sonny Black.

Agent Pistone spent most of his six years undercover away from his family. He was not guaranteed holidays, birthdays or other important events with them. He would come home only when it was safe to do so, and most times that would only be for days, if not hours at a time. When one of his daughters was having her first confirmation, he was forced to miss it because he was needed back in Florida. There was supposed to be a "hit" taking place, and Pistone felt it was his sense of duty to be there in case this "hit" could be stopped. Pistone's sense of duty did not always fall to his job however, when his wife was in a serious car accident, Pistone stayed with her for two weeks.

In the end, Agent Pistone's sense of duty led to several convictions of most of the heads of all the crime families across the United States.

## Loyalty

Loyalty is not only a theme in this novel but also within the mafia. Loyalty is what keeps you alive when you are involved with mob families. Pistone has to walk a fine line with these wise guys in order to maintain his cover and stay alive. He has to be loyal to the right people to avoid suspicion and keep the mob from finding out his true loyalty is with the FBI.

Loyalty in the mafia is a very tricky thing. As a wise guy you have to prove your loyalty to your mob family and the good of that family. Each wise guy has a captain they answer to, and that captain in turn answers to the head of the family. The wise guy has to balance his loyalty to his captain, while still remaining somewhat loyal to the other captains in the family. For example when Sonny Black's crew takes out Sonny Red's crew, most of Sonny Red's crew is worried they will be killed next, and for good reason. If Sonny Black did not feel that someone from Sonny Red's crew was loyal to him, he had them killed. However he Sonny Black felt they were loyal he made room for them on his crew. This was a common occurrence in mob family business.



These men killed each other very often for lack of loyalty, either to the family or to their captains. In most cases the person who kills you is someone you know and trust. Pistone is in a very precarious position; these wise guys have taken him in and have proven their loyalty to Pistone. Sonny and Lefty have not only vouched for him time and again, but they have fought to keep him in their crew. At one point Mirra makes a claim on Pistone, Sonny and Lefty stand up to the bosses to keep Pistone. Sonny even makes arrangements to put Pistone up for membership in the family. Even though they have only known Pistone for a few years they are loyal to him and believe he is loyal to them. Sonny and Lefty have so much trust in Pistone that they put their own lives on the line to vouch for Pistone. When Pistone's true identity is finally revealed the mob kills both Mirra and Sonny for bringing Pistone into the family. Lefty would have also been killed had the FBI not stepped in and protected him from his Mafia family.

Pistone may have not had the same loyalty to the mobsters as they had for him, but he was loyal to the FBI and his job. So much so that he sacrificed six years of his life to complete this job. He missed out on holidays and important events with his family because of this loyalty. He was loyal not just to the job but also to the other agents who were also undercover helping his case. Pistone knew it would be easy for him to back out of the job and make his family happy. He also knew that if he did he would be endangering other agent's lives, and the work he was doing would put many of these mobster in jail for a very long time.

In the end Agent Pistone's loyalty to his job convicted and jailed many top leaders in the Mafia across the country.

## Respect

Respect in the Mafia world is much different than it is in the world most of us live in. For the most part the wise guys are respected for the amount of hits they have completed, not their positive actions. The amounts of fear they instill in the other wise guys and connected guys, as well as the amount of money they bring into the family are also means of respect.

Tony Mirra was not liked for the most part within the Bonanno family but he was respected. He was respected for the fear he instilled in the other family members. Mirra was violent and unpredictable; he carried a large knife and was known to use this knife to kill other Mafia members. He was easily angered and could be your friend one moment and kill you the next. Mirra was treated with a great deal of respect because they feared him.

Lefty was respected because of the amount of hits he had carried out. Lefty was much easier going than Mirra and was better liked. Lefty was not a big money maker for the family, in fact Lefty had a gambling problem and lost more money than he made, but the hits he had made boosted his respect level considerably. The captains and bosses knew if they gave Lefty a contract it would be taken care of. He was respected.



Sonny Black was a big money maker for the family. His crew was always involved in deals that brought the family a lot of money. Although they never talked exact number of hits concerning Sonny Black, he was involved in the murder of Sonny Red and his two captains. All of these things equaled respect for Sonny. When it came time for wise guys to be promoted Sonny Black was always elevated to another position. He had not only the respect of his crew, but also the other captains and bosses.

Agent Pistone aka Donnie Brasco was respected very quickly by most of the wise guys he came in contact with because he followed all the rules. He did not ask questions and did what he was told. Pistone had so much respect from both Sonny and Lefty that they never questioned his loyalty to the family or to them. Even when Pistone was trying to stall a job or talk them out of pulling a job altogether, they respected him and his opinion, and never questioned his motives.

Pistone also had the respect of the FBI for putting his life in such great danger day in and day out. In the end Pistone still had Sonny Black's respect in spite of finding out the truth about Pistone's true identity. Sonny tells his girlfriend, just before he is killed by the mob, that Donnie just did his job, and he did it good.



# Style

## Point of View

This novel is told by the first person point of view of FBI Agent Joe Pistone. Agent Pistone relives his six years undercover inside the Mafia world. At times there is dialog between Pistone and other characters. All of the information given in this true life story comes from Pistone first hand knowledge of events. The impact of this point of view is felt often throughout the story; Agent Pistone not only gives the information of the case, but also how he is feeling and why he made certain choices.

This first person account of events adds a depth of understanding that could not be otherwise achieved. Through this point of view Agent Pistone is able to tell the story, as well as explain his inner thinking behind his actions. Pistone was living as a mobster and dealing with the Mafia bosses on a daily basis, and at times living with them, this point of view allows him to explain in detail the workings of the Mafia. As well as his feelings for deceiving these people who trust him. Pistone is able to clarify that although he feels guilt over the innocent people he is deceiving, such as Sonny Black's girlfriend and Lefty's wife and children, he knows this is part of his job and therefore something he must do.

Pistone's first hand account of his time with the Mafia lends to the creditability as well authenticity of this novel.

## Setting

The setting of this novel takes place mostly in New York and Florida. In the beginning Agent Pistone is in the New York City surrounding areas; Little Italy, Manhattan, New Jersey. He is meeting mob connections to help lend credibility to his undercover life. The mob family Agent Pistone eventually gets involved with is based in Brooklyn. This is where Sonny Black has his headquarters, and where Agent Pistone even lives for a short time while he is traveling between New York and Florida. Sonny has a three story building with an apartment on the top floor and pigeon coop on the roof. When the undercover operation is finally closed this is where the FBI agents go to tell Sonny about Pistone's true identity.

Pistone travels to Milwaukee early in the operation to help a fellow agent who is working a vending machine scam involving another Mafia family. Pistone stays in Milwaukee until the other agents cover gets blown and they have to pull the plug on the operation. Pistone then begins helping another agent, Rossi out of Florida with another case involving the Trafficante family. Pistone and Rossi work together for several years gathering evidence against the Bonanno family and the Trafficante family who have joined forces to run a club called King's Court in Holiday Florida.



## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel tends to be relaxed and comfortable. The sentences are constructed the way we commonly use today, allowing the reader to be completely immersed in the storyline. There is no need for rereading passages to understand the writer's intent. Although some of the lingo is hard to follow in the beginning, you quickly acclimate to these common communications between the wise guys. At times certain aspects of conversation, between two or more wise guys are difficult to understand, but Pistone quickly explains the 'reading between the lines' that is occurring. They are always worried about the cops listening to their conversations, so they speak a sort of code. The mob jargon and coded conversations, however, add to the authenticity of this novel.

The writer, at times, uses the language of the characters common speak to distinguish who is speaking. The mispronunciations of certain words by Lefty, such as 'yous' instead of 'you' add not only an illusion of being present for the conversation, but also an endearing connection to his character.

The overall effect of the language of this novel is comfortable and easy to follow, allowing the story line to flow easily.

## Structure

This novel is comprised of twenty chapters. Each chapter is numbered and has a title describing the main event of the chapter. The chapters are approximately twenty pages in length. There are no sub chapters or sub plots. This novel covers the years of 1976-1981. These are the years that Agent Pistone was undercover in the Mafia.

Agent Pistone walks a tight rope during these six years. He lives day in and day out with men who, although they trust and like Pistone, would kill him had they found out his true identity. Agent Pistone delicately balances his role as FBI agent and wise guy to become the first FBI agent to infiltrate the Mafia world, and ultimately bring down many of the top bosses of this time.

This novel contains an epilogue that gives the details of the outcome of the wise guys mentioned. It details if they were convicted, or if they were killed before being brought to trail. Agent Pistone has also included an update of his life since the trails. He discusses his feelings about the operation as well as his feelings for some of the wise guys he came to know during his time undercover.

This novel is not only interesting but also enlightening to the inner workings of the mob families. The story moves along quickly and is entertaining in its entirety.



## Quotes

"You gotta be a Eye-talian." Ch 2 pg 17

"You bust the fences, you wound the Mafia." Ch 3 pg 37

"That's the end of it about Don," he said. "I don't want to hear nothing else from nobody about Don not being okay," Ch 6 pg 90

"It's a risky business, You can get dirty, you can get killed." Ch 7 pg 112

"If you're a badguy, my job is to put you in the can: Simple as that." Ch 7 pg 115

"He was recommending a little Mafia IRA, back in 1977." Ch 7 pg 141

"No witness ever lived to testify against me." Ch 11 pg 208

"Aw, Tony, you didn't have to do this. You could have shared with Donnie and both give me the diamonds, that would have been enough." Ch 13 pg 253

"I didn't tell you how I was gonna beat you." Ch 15 pg 292

"Tony, as a wiseguy you can lie, you can cheat, you can steal, you can kill people-legitimately." Ch 18 pg 360

"I felt relief and discomfort at the same time." Ch 20 pg 396

"But it wasn't my rules; it was their rules that would kill him. I didn't write those rules." Ch 20 pg 397



## Topics for Discussion

What were two of the considerations of putting Agent Pistone undercover in the fencing ring? Give at least two reasons the FBI decided to use Agent Pistone.

How long was Agent Pistone originally going to be undercover with the fencing operation? How long was he actually undercover?

What happened early in this operation that made Pistone never put a wire in his car?

How did Pistone finally meet Lefty?

What were the differences between Lefty and Mirra that caused Pistone to pick Lefty over Mirra? Give at least three.

How long after Sonny meets Pistone does he take Pistone from Lefty? What is Lefty's reaction?

What is the name of the FBI boat Agent Pistone uses to entertain Lefty and his crew?

How did Lefty find out the boat was FBI and what was his reaction?

Give two examples of times when Agent Pistone's cover was almost blown.

What is Sonny Black's reaction when he is told that Pistone is really an FBI agent?

What was the reason the FBI decided to pull Agent Pistone off this undercover case?

Sonny Black, Lefty and Mirra were the three who brought Pistone into the mob family and vouched for him. Of the three which one was not killed and why?