



## The Gangster (An Isaac Bell Adventure)

By Clive Cussler, Justin Scott

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**Turn-of-the-century Detective Isaac Bell takes on the upstart leader of a vicious crime organization in this novel in the #1 *New York Times*–bestselling series.**

It is 1906, and in New York City, the Italian crime group known as the Black Hand is on a spree: kidnapping, extortion, arson. They like to take the oldest tricks and add dynamite. When a coalition of the Black Hand's victims hire out the Van Dorn agency to protect their businesses, their reputations, and their families, Detective Isaac Bell forms a crack squad and begins scouring the city for clues. And then he spots a familiar face.

The stakes grow ever-higher, with the Black Hand becoming more ambitious, and their targets more political. If Bell can't determine the role played by the face from his past, the next life lost could be one of the most powerful men in the nation.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

#1 *USA Today* bestseller

*Globe and Mail* fiction bestseller

*Toronto Star* fiction bestseller

*Maclean's* fiction bestseller

### Praise for *The Gangster*

“Cussler has written another wonderful historical thriller. The action is fast and thoroughly enjoyable.” —  
*Library Journal*

“This latest Bell thriller combines a vivid historical environment with a top-notch story and enjoyable, realistic characters. Bell, the detective whose nimble intellect often gets him out of tight situations, is one of Cussler’s most engaging protagonists, and the series...remains fresh and exciting — *Booklist*

“Fascinating and suspenseful plot” --

### Praise for the Isaac Bell adventures

“The Isaac Bell series continues to tell compelling stories. Tidbits of history are sprinkled throughout the narrative, and it’s fun to filter out fictional characters and events from historical facts.” —Associated Press

“Cussler and Scott have written another wonderful page-turner. This is historical action-adventure fiction at its rip-roaring best!” —*Library Journal* (starred review)

“As always in this series, the novel is very exciting, with excellent pacing and some very well-drawn characters. Cussler is a perennial A-lister, popularity-wise, and his Isaac Bell novels are the pick of his prodigious litter.” —*Booklist*

“The seventh page-turner featuring indomitable detective Isaac Bell—great fun from one of the better Cussler series.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

#### About the Author

**Clive Cussler** is the author or coauthor of over fifty previous books in five bestselling series, including Dirk Pitt®, NUMA® Files, *Oregon*® Files, Isaac Bell, and Sam and Remi Fargo. His nonfiction works include *Built for Adventure: The Classic Automobiles of Clive Cussler and Dirk Pitt*, and *Built to Thrill: More Classic Automobiles from Clive Cussler and Dirk Pitt*, plus *The Sea Hunters* and *The Sea Hunters II*; these describe the true adventures of the real NUMA, which, led by Cussler, searches for lost ships of historic significance. With his crew of volunteers, Cussler has discovered more than sixty ships, including the long-lost Confederate ship *Hunley*. He lives in Colorado and Arizona.

**Justin Scott**’s novels include *The Shipkiller* and *The Man Who Loved The Normandie*; the Ben Abbott detective series; and modern sea thrillers published under the pen name Paul Garrison. He is the coauthor

with Cussler of seven Isaac Bell novels. Scott lives in Connecticut.

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1

Little Sicily, New York City

Elizabeth Street between Prince and Houston

“The Black Hand Block”

The Black Hand locked twelve-year Maria Vella in a pigeon coop on the roof of an Elizabeth Street tenement. They untied the gag so she wouldn't suffocate. Not even a building contractor as rich as her father would ransom a dead girl, they laughed. But if she screamed, they said, they would beat her. A vicious jerk of one of her glossy braids brought tears to her eyes.

She tried to slow her pounding heart by concentrating on the calmness of the birds. The pigeons murmured softly among themselves, oblivious to the racket from the slum, undisturbed by a thousand shouts, a piping street organ, and the thump and whirr of sewing machines. She could see through a wall of wooden slats that admitted light and air that the coop stood beside the high parapet that rimmed the roof. Was there someone who would help her on the other side? She whispered Hail Marys to build her courage.

*“ . . . Santa Maria, Madre di Dio,  
prega per noi peccatori,  
adesso e nell'ora della nostra morte.”*

Coaxing a bird out of her way, she climbed up on its nesting box, and up onto another until she glimpsed a tenement across the street draped with laundry. Climbing higher, pressing her head to the ceiling, she could see all the way down to a stretch of sidewalk four stories below. It was jammed with immigrants. Peddlers, street urchins, women shopping, not one of them could help her. They were Sicilians, transplanted workers and peasants, poor as dirt, and as frightened of the authorities as she was of her kidnappers.

She clung to the comforting sight of people going about their lives, a housewife carrying a chicken from the butcher, workmen drinking wine and beer on the steps of the Kips Bay Saloon. A Branco Grocery wagon clattered by, painted gleaming red and green enamel with the owner's name in gold leaf. Antonio Branco had hired her father's business to excavate a cellar for his warehouse on Prince Street. So near, so far, the wagon squeezed past the push carts and out of sight.

Suddenly the people scattered. A helmeted, blue-coated, brass-buttoned Irish policeman lumbered into view. He was gripping a baton and Maria's hopes soared. But if she screamed through the wooden slats, would anyone hear before the kidnappers burst in and beat her? She lost her courage. The policeman passed. The immigrants pressed back into the space he had filled.

A tall man glided from the Kips Bay Saloon.

Lean as a whip, he wore workman's garb, a shabby coat and a flat cap. He glanced across the street and up the tenement. His gaze fixed on the parapet. For a second she thought he was looking at her, straight into her eyes. But how could he know she was locked inside the coop? He swept his hat off his head as if signaling someone. At that moment, the sun cleared a rooftop and a shaft of light struck his crown of golden hair.

He stepped into the street and disappeared from view.

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The thick-necked Sicilian stationed just inside the front door blocked the tenement hall. A blackjack flew at his face. He sidestepped it, straight into the path of a fist in his gut that doubled him over in silent anguish. The blackjack, a leather sack of lead shot, smacked the bone behind his ear and he dropped to the floor.

At the top of four flights of dark, narrow stairs, another Sicilian guarded the ladder to the roof. He

pawed a pistol from his belt. A blade flickered. He froze in open-mouthed pain and astonishment, gaping at the throwing knife that split his hand. The blackjack finished the job before he could yell.

The kidnapper on the roof heard the ladder creak. He was already flinging open the pigeon coop door when the blackjack flew with the speed and power of a strikeout pitcher's best ball and smashed into the back of his head. Strong and hard as a wild boar, he shrugged off the blow, pushed into the coop, and grabbed the little girl. His stiletto glittered. He shoved the needle tip against her throat. "I kill."

The tall golden-haired man stood stock still with empty hands. Terrified, all Maria could think was that he had a thick mustache that she had not seen when he glided out of the saloon. It was trimmed as wonderfully as if he had just stepped from the barbershop.

He spoke her name in a deep, baritone voice.

Then he said, "Close your eyes very tight."

She trusted him and squeezed them shut. She heard the man who was crushing her shout, again, "I kill." She felt the knife sting her skin. A gun boomed. Hot liquid splashed her face. The kidnapper fell away. She was scooped inside a strong arm and carried out of the pigeon coop.

"You were very brave to keep your eyes closed, little lady. You can open them now." She could feel the man's heart pounding, thundering as if he had run very far, or had been as frightened as she. "You can open them," he repeated softly. "Everything's O.K."

They were standing on the open roof. He was wiping her face with a handkerchief, and the pigeons were soaring into a sky that would never, ever be as blue as his eyes.

"Who are you?"

"Isaac Bell. Van Dorn Detective Agency."

2

"Greatest engineering feat in history. Any idea what it's going to cost, Branco?"

"I read in-a newspaper one-hundred million doll-a, Mr. Davidson."

Davidson, the Contractors' Protective Association superintendent of labor camps, laughed. "The Water Supply Board'll spend *one-hundred seventy-five* million, before it's done. Twenty million more than the Panama Canal."

A cold wind and a crisp sky promised an early winter in the Catskill Mountains. But the morning sun was strong and the city men stood with coats open, side by side on a scaffold atop the first stage of a gigantic dam high above a creek. Laborers swarmed the site, but roaring steam shovels and power hoists guaranteed that no one would overhear their private bargains.

The superintendent stuck his thumbs in his vest. "Wholesome water for seven million people." He puffed his chest and belly and beamed in the direction of far off New York City as if he were tunneling a hundred miles of Catskills Aqueduct with his own hands. "Catskills water will shoot out a tap in a fifth-floor kitchen—just by gravity."

"A mighty enterprise," said Branco.

"We gotta build it before the water famine. Immigrants are packing the city, drinking dry the Croton."

The valley behind them was a swirling dust bowl, mile after mile of flattened farms and villages, churches, barns, houses and uprooted trees that when dammed and filled would become the Ashokan Reservoir, the biggest in the world. Below, Esopus Creek rushed through eight-foot conduits, allowed to run free until the dam was finished. Ahead, lay the route of the Catskills Aqueduct—one-hundred miles of tunnels bigger around than train tunnels—that they would bury in trenches, drive under rivers, and blast

though mountains.

“Twice as long as the great aqueducts of the Roman Empire.”

Antonio Branco had mastered English as a child. But he could pretend to be imperfect when it served him. “Bigga hole in ground,” he answered in the Vaudeville-comic Italian accent the American expected from a stupid immigrant to be fleeced.

He had already paid a hefty bribe for the privilege of traveling up here to meet the superintendent. Having paid, again, in dignity, he pictured slitting the cloth half an inch above the man’s watch chain. Glide in, glide out. The body falls sixty feet and is tumbled in rapids, too mangled for a country undertaker to notice a microscopic puncture. Heart attack.

But not this morning. The stakes were high, the opportunity not to be wasted. Slaves had built Rome’s aqueducts. New Yorkers used steam shovels, dynamite and compressed air—and thousands of Italian laborers. Thousands of bellies to feed.

“You gotta understand, Branco, you bid too late. The contracts to provision the company stores were already awarded.”

“I hear there was difficulty, last minute.”

“Difficulty? I’ll say there was difficulty! Damned fool got his throat slit in a whorehouse.”

Branco made the sign of the cross. “I offer my services, again, to feed Italian laborers their kinda food.”

“If you was to land the contract, how would you deliver? New York’s a long way off.”

“I ship-a by Hudson River. Albany Night Line steamer to Kingston. Ulster & Delaware Railroad at Kingston to Browns Station labor camp.”

“Hmm . . . Yup, I suppose that’s a way you could try. But why not ship it on a freighter direct from New York straight to the Ulster & Delaware dock?”

“A freighter is possible,” Branco said noncommittally.

“That’s how the guy who got killed was going to do it. He figured a freighter could stop at Storm King on the way and drop macaroni for the siphon squads. Plenty Eye-talian pick and shovel men digging under the river. Plenty more digging the siphon on the other side. At night you can hear ‘em playing their mandolins and accordions.”

“Stop-a, too, for Breakneck Mountain,” said Branco. “Is-a good idea.”

“I know a fellow with a freighter,” Davidson said casually.

Antonio Branco’s pulse quickened. Their negotiation to provision the biggest construction job in America had begun.

\*\*\*

A cobble stone crashed through the window and scattered glass on Maria Vella’s bedspread. Her mother burst into her room, screaming. Her father was right behind her, whisking her out of the bed and trying to calm her mother. Maria joined eyes with him. Then she pointed, mute and trembling, at the stone on the carpet wrapped in a piece of paper tied with string. Giuseppe Vella untied it and smoothed the paper. On it was a crude drawing of a dagger in a skull and the silhouette of a black hand.

He read it, trembling as much with anger as fear. The pigs dared address his poor child:

*“Dear you will tell father ransom must be paid. You are home safe like promised. Tell father be man of honor.”*

The rest of the threat was aimed at him:

*Beware Father of Dear. Do not think we are dead. We mean business. Under Brooklyn Bridge by South Street. Ten thousand. PLUS extra one thousand for trouble you make us suffer. Keep your mouth shut. Your Dear is home safe. If you fail to bring money we ruin work you build.”*

"They still want the ransom," he told his wife.

"Pay it," she sobbed. "Pay or they will never stop."

"No!"

His wife became hysterical. Giuseppe Vella looked helplessly at his daughter.

The girl said, "Go back to Signore Bell."

"*Mr.* Bell," he shouted. He felt powerless and it made him angry. He wanted to hire the Van Dorn Detective Agency for protection. But there was risk in turning to outsiders. "You're American. Speak American. *Mr.* Bell. Not Signore."

The child flinched from his tone. He recalled his own father, a tyrant in the house, and he hung his head. He was too modern, too American, to frighten a child. "I'm sorry, Maria. Don't worry. I will go to Mr. Bell."

### 3

The Knickerbocker Hotel was a hit from the day John Jacob Astor IV opened the fifteen-story Beaux-Arts building on the corner of 42rd and Broadway. The great Caruso took up permanent residence, three short blocks from the Metropolitan Opera House, as did coloratura soprano Luisa Tetrazzini, the "Florentine Nightingale," who inspired the Knickerbocker's chef to invent a new macaroni dish, *Pollo Tetrazzini*.

Ahead of both events, months before the official opening, Joseph Van Dorn had moved his private detective agency's New York field office into a sumptuous second floor suite at the top of the grand staircase. He negotiated a break on the rent by furnishing house detectives. Van Dorn had a theory, played out successfully at his national headquarters in Chicago's Palmer House and at his Washington, D. C. field office in the New Willard Hotel, that lavish surroundings paid for themselves by persuading his clientele that high fees meant quality work. A rear entrance, accessible by a kitchen alley and back stairs, was available for clients loathe to traverse the most popular hotel lobby in the city to discuss private affairs, informants shopping information, and investigators in disguise.

Isaac Bell directed Giuseppe Vella to that entrance.

The tall detective greeted the Italian contractor warmly in the reception room. He inquired about Maria and her mother and refused, again, an offer of a monetary reward beyond the Van Dorn fee, saying good-naturedly, but firmly, "You've already paid your bill on time, a sterling quality in a client."

Bell led the Italian into the working heart of the office, the detectives' bullpen, which resembled a modern Wall Street operation with candlestick telephones, voice tubes, clattering typewriters, a commercial graphophone and a stenographer's transcribing device. A rapid-fire telegraph key linked the outfit by private wire to Chicago, field offices across the continent, and Washington, where the boss spent much of his time wrangling government contracts.

Bell commandeered an empty desk and a chair for Vella and examined the Black Hand extortion letter. Half-literate threats were illustrated with crude drawings on a sheet of top quality stationery.

Vella said, "It was tied with string around the stone they threw in the window."

"Do you have the string?"

Vella pulled a strand of butcher's twine from his pocket.

Bell said, "I'll look into this, immediately, and discuss it with Mr. Van Dorn."

"I am afraid for my family."

"When you telephoned, I sent men to 13th Street to guard your home."

Bell promised to call on Vella that afternoon at Vella's current construction site, an excavation for the new Church of the Annunciation at 128th Street in Harlem. "By the way, if you notice you are being followed, it will only be that detective, there." He directed Vella's gaze across the bullpen. "Archie Abbott will look out for you."

The elegantly dressed, redheaded Detective Abbott looked to Vella like a Fifth Avenue dandy until he slid automatic pistols into twin shoulder holsters, stuffed his pockets with extra bullet clips, sheathed a blackjack, and loaded a shotgun shell into his gold-headed walking stick.

\*\*\*

Isaac Bell took the Black Hand letter to Joseph Van Dorn's private office. It was a corner room with an Art Nouveau rosewood desk, comfortable leather armchairs, views of the sidewalks leading to the hotel entrances, and a spyhole for inspecting visitors in the reception room.

Van Dorn was a balding Irishman in his forties, full in the chest and fuller in the belly, with a thick beard of bright red whiskers and the gruffly amiable charm of a wealthy businessman who had prospered early in life. Enormously ambitious, he possessed the ability, rare in Bell's experience, to enjoy his good fortune. He also had a gift for making friends, which worked to the great advantage of his detective agency. His cordial manner concealed a bear-trap swift brain and a prodigious memory for the faces and habits of criminals, whose existence he took as a personal affront.

"I'm glad for any business," said Van Dorn. "But why doesn't Mr. Vella take his troubles to Joe Petrosino's Italian Squad?"

New York Police Detective Joseph Petrosino, a tough twenty-year veteran with an arrest and conviction record that was the envy of the department, had recently received the go ahead from Commissioner Bingham to form a special squad of Italian-speaking investigators to fight crime in the Sicilian, Neopolitan and Calabrese neighborhoods.

"Maybe Mr. Vella knows there are only fifteen Italians in the entire New York Police Department."

"Petrosino's got his work cut out for him," Van Dorn agreed. "This 'Black Hand' plague is getting out of control." He gestured at a heap of newspaper clippings that Isaac Bell had asked Research to gather for the boss. "Bombing fruit stands and burning push carts, terrorizing poor ignorant immigrants is the least of it. Now they're tackling Italian bankers and businessmen. We'll never know how many wealthy parents quietly ransomed their children, but I'll bet enough to make it a booming business."

Bell passed Van Dorn the Black Hand letter.

Van Dorn's cheeks reddened with anger. "They actually address the little girl! What scum would frighten a child like this?"

"Feel the paper."

"Top quality. Rag, not pulp."

"Remind you of anything?"

"Same as the original ransom note, if I recall."

"Anything else?"

"First class stationery." He held it to the light. "Wonder where they got it. Why don't you look into the watermark?"

"I already put Research on it."

"So now they're threatening his business."

"It's easy to make an 'accident' at a construction site."

"Unless it's a feint while they take another shot at his daughter."

"If they do," said Bell. "They'll run head on into Harry Warren's gang squad. Harry's blanketed 13th Street."



Van Dorn showed his teeth in a semblance of a smile. “Good—But how long can I afford to take Harry’s boys off the gangs? ‘Gophers’ and ‘Wallopers’ are running riot, and the Italians are getting bolder every day.”

“A dedicated Van Dorn Black Hand Squad,” said Bell, “would free your top gang investigators to concentrate on the street gangs.”

“I’ll think about it,” said Van Dorn.

“We would be better fixed to attack the Black Hand.”

“I said I’d think about it.”

\*\*\*

Isaac Bell strode uptown from the 125th subway station through a neighborhood rapidly urbanizing as new-built sanitariums, apartment blocks, tenements, theaters, schools and parish houses uprooted Harlem’s barnyards and shanties. He was a block from 128th Street, nearing a jagged hill of rock that Giuseppe Vella was excavating for the Church of the Annunciation, when the ground shook beneath his feet.

He heard a tremendous explosion. The sidewalk rippled. A parish steeple swayed. Panicked nuns ran from the building, and Convent Avenue, which was surfaced with vitrified brick, started to roll like the ocean.

Bell had survived the Great Earthquake in San Francisco only last spring, awakening suddenly in the middle of the night to see his fiancée’s living room and piano fall into the street. Now, here in Manhattan, he felt his second earthquake in four months. A hundred feet of the avenue disintegrated in front of him. Then bricks flew, propelled to the building tops by gigantic jets of water.

It was no earthquake, but a flood.

A river filled Convent Ave in an instant.

There could be only one source of the raging water. The Croton Reservoir system up north in Westchester supplied New York City’s Central Park reservoir via underground mains. The explosion in Giuseppe Vella’s excavation—an enormous dynamite “overcharge,” whether by miscalculation or sabotage—had smashed them open. In an instant, the “water famine” predicted by Catskills Aqueduct champions seemed unbelievable.

A liquid wall reared out of Convent Ave and raced down it, tearing at first-story windows and sweeping men, women and horses around the corners and into the side streets. Its speed was startling, faster than a crack passenger train. One second Isaac Bell was pulling the driver from a wagon caught in the ice-cold torrent, the next, he himself was picked up and flung into 127th Street. He battled to the surface and swam on a foaming crest that swept away shanties the full block to Amsterdam Avenue.

There the water careened downhill, following the slope of the land south. Bell fought out of the stream and dragged himself upright on a lamp post. Firemen from a nearby station were wading in to pull people out.

Bell shouted, “Where are the water gates?”

“Up Amsterdam at 135th.”

Bell charged up Amsterdam Avenue at a dead run.

A third of a mile north of the water main break he found a sturdy Romanesque Revival brick and granite castle. The lintel above its iron doors was engraved Water Department. A structure this big had to be the main distributing point for the Westchester reservoirs. He pushed inside. Tons and tons of Croton water were surging up from a deep receiving chamber into four-foot diameter cast iron pipes. The pipes were fitted with huge valve wheels to control the outflow to the mains breached seven blocks away by the explosion.

Bell spotted a man struggling with them. He hurtled down a steel ladder and found an exhausted middle-aged engineer desperately trying to close all four valves at once. He was gasping for breath and looked on the verge of a heart attack. “I don’t know what happened to my helper. He’s never late, never misses a day.”

“Show me how to help!”

“I can’t budge the gates alone. It’s a two-man job.”

With the dynamite explosion no accident, thought Bell, but a coordinated Black Hand attack to blame Giuseppe Vella for flooding an entire neighborhood, the extortionists must have left the helper bloody in an alley.

“This one’s frozen.”

Isaac Bell threw his weight and muscle against the wheel and pulled with all his might. The old engineer clapped hands on it too, and they fought it together, quarter inch by quarter inch, until the gate wheel finally began to turn with a metallic screech.

“Godforsaken Italians. I warned them again and again not to use too much dynamite. I knew this would happen.”

\*\*\*

As soon as they closed the last gate, Isaac Bell raced back to Vella’s excavation.

The streets were littered with the corpses of drowned dogs and chickens. A dead horse was still tied in a wrecked stable. Trolleys had stalled on their tracks, shorted out by the water. House and business cellars were flooded. A hillside had washed away and fallen into a brewery, and the people who had lived in the upended shacks were poking in the mud for the remains of their possessions.

An angry crowd was gathering at the excavation site.

Bell shouldered through it and found Giuseppe Vella barricaded in the board shack that housed his field office.

“Russo ran away.”

“Who is Russo?”

“Sante Russo. My foreman. The blaster. He was afraid those people would blame him.” Bell exchanged a quick glance with Archie Abbott, the Van Dorn shadow he had assigned to protect Vella. Abbott had managed to station himself near the door, but he was only one man and the crowd was growing loud.

“But it wasn’t Russo’s fault.”

“How do you know?”

“Russo ran to me a second after the explosion. He said he found extra dynamite in the charge. He disconnected the detonator. But while he was coming to tell me, it exploded. The Black Hand reconnected the wires.”

Policemen pushed through the crowd.

Bell said, “Soon as the cops calm them down. I’ll escort you home.”

The cops pounded on the door. Bell let them in.

They had come for Vella. Accompanying them was an angry official from the city’s Combustibles Department. He revoked Vella’s explosives license for the job on the spot and swore that Vella would be fined thousands by the city. “Not only that, you reckless Wop, you’ll lose the bond you had posted in case of damage. Look what you did to the neighborhood! 125th Street is almost washed away and you flooded every cellar from here to 110th !”

Isaac Bell issued quick orders to Archie Abbott before he accompanied Giuseppe Vella home. When they got to 13th Street, he confirmed that Harry Warren’s detectives were keeping an eye on the man’s home. Then he went to his room at the Yale Club where he changed into dry clothes and oiled his firearms. He was retrieving the soaked contents of his pockets and smoothing a damp two-dollar bill, which would dry no worse for wear, when it occurred to him what the high quality paper that the Black Hand letter had been written on reminded him of.

“Mr. Bell,” the hall porter called though his door. “Message from your office.”

Bell slit the envelop and read a one-word sentence written in the boss’s hand. “Report.”

\*\*\*

Bell got there just as New York Police Department Captain Coligney was leaving Van Dorn's office. They shook hands hello and Coligney said, "Take care in Washington, Joe. Good seeing you, again."

"Always a pleasure," said Van Dorn. "I'll walk you out."

Back in sixty seconds, he said, "Good man, Coligney. The only captain Bingham didn't transfer when he took over—presumably recalling that President Roosevelt boomed his career back when he was Police Commissioner."

Van Dorn threw papers in a satchel and cast over his shoulder, "A flood, Isaac. Set off by an overcharge explosion of dynamite on the premises of our client Mr. Vella, who hired the Van Dorn Detective Agency to protect him. By any chance could we call it a horribly timed coincidental accident?"

"Sabotage," said Bell.

"Are you sure?"

"If a water department assistant engineer had not failed to show up for work at the main distribution gates, they could have stopped the water almost immediately. Archie Abbott found the poor devil in the hospital, beaten half dead. That makes two 'horribly timed' coincidences."

"Then how do we convince clients that the Van Dorn Detective Agency can protect them from the Black Hand?"

"Same way you had Eddie Edwards drive gangs from the rail yards. Form a special squad and hit 'em hard."

"We've already discussed your Black Hand Squad. I'm not about to commit the manpower and frankly I don't see the profit in it."

"Very little profit," Bell agreed freely. The fact was, ambition aside, Joseph Van Dorn cared far more about protecting the innocent than making a profit. All Bell had to do was remind him of it. "The Black Hand terrorize only their own countrymen. The poor folk can't speak English, much less read it. Who can they turn to? The Irish cop who calls every man 'Pasquale'?"

"Forgetting," growled Van Dorn, "that it wasn't that long ago Yankee cops called us Irish 'Paddy'—But Mr. Vella and his fellow business men speak near perfect English and read just fine."

"Those are the Italians we have to persuade not to forever link the Van Dorn Detective Agency to the Great Harlem Flood of 1906."

"I am not in a joking mood, Isaac."

"Neither am I, sir. Giuseppe Vella's a decent man. He deserves better. So do his countrymen."

"We'll talk next week." Van Dorn started out the door. "Oh, one more thing. How would you feel about taking over the New York field office? Lampack's getting old."

"I would not like that one bit, sir."

"Why not?"

"I'm a field detective, not a manager."

"The heck you're not. You've ramrodded plenty of squads."

"Squads in the field. Frankly, sir, if you won't give me a Black Hand Squad, I would rather you appoint me Chief Investigator."

"I'm Chief Investigator," said Van Dorn. "And I intend to remain Chief Investigator until I can appoint a valuable man who is sufficiently seasoned to take over—have you made any headway with that paper?"

"I have an agent on Park Row, canvassing the printers, stationers, and ink shops."

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

**Carmine Adams:**

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity intended for spend your time. Any person spent their own spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open as well as read a book eligible The Gangster (An Isaac Bell Adventure)? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have additional opinion?

**James Robinson:**

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