

For Italian food, the best place in town was Giorno's on the Hill. The man in the back corner wearing a shiny suit and red tie was enjoying his Bucatini con Guanciale Saporito. He didn't want to be disturbed right now. When he saw the guy coming his way, he took another bite and stared him down like a lion warning off a jackal. The intruder nodded and raised his hand and then took a seat at the bar to wait. He would simply have a beer and let the man enjoy his meal.

Red Tie mopped up his plate with a piece of garlic bread. He took a sip of wine and finally motioned the jackal over to the table.

"Whatcha got?" he asked as the guy sat down opposite him.

"It's a matter of professional courtesy. I'm here to ask a favor for a friend. A guy I know wants a grease ball done out in the soybeans. Seems a certain lawyer got into the drug business without knowing what he was doing and dragged my friend's kid into it. Cops bust it up, and the shyster makes like a rabbit, leaving the kid hanging. It's important he goes. You know anybody who might find this guy and help my friend out?"

Red Tie leaned back and considered the proposition. He pressed his fingertips together and pursed his lips. "Maybe. Maybe not," he said. "Is this a business deal or personal?"

"My friend can handle the fare, no problem," said the jackal. "For you, it's business. For him, it's personal, if you know what I mean."

"Maybe we can work something out," said the man with the red tie. "Where?"

"Raleigh, middle of the state," said the jackal.

"I know the place," replied Red Tie. "Who's the target?"

"Guy named Stilton. Garrett Stilton. He's a gimp. People call him Tiltin' Stilton," said the jackal. "A lousy lawyer and a worse criminal. He's the kinda guy gives us all a bad name."

Red Tie absorbed this information. "So he skipped town?" he asked.

"Yeah. Two, maybe three days ago," said the jackal. "He left in a hurry, so he probably left a trail."

Red Tie crossed his legs and poured the rest of the carafe of wine into his glass. Then he swirled it around before swigging it all down.

"I got a guy could do something on that. Say ten bills, unless it gets complicated," he said.