

GODFATHER -- THE SCIENTIST

From Problem to Offer to Use

Liberally transposed from

The Godfather

by Mario Puzo

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It should not be allowed to reproduce.

1980

CHAPTER 1

Anton Regelmässig sat at the terminal and waited for justice; vengeance on the programmers who had so cruelly damaged his model, who had tried to dishonor him.

But the computer went down and he could see the two young programmers laughing and smiling on the other side of the glass partition where the colored lights of the machines blinked festively.

It was all a farce.

The black bile, sourly bitter, rose in Regelmässig's throat, overflowing through tightly clenched teeth, and dribbling on to the keyboard below him. He took some old print-out and held it against his lips.

Out of control, Regelmässig leaned forward toward the glass window beyond which the programmers now lounged casually against the cool blue computers. "You will weep as I have wept -- I will make you weep as your crashes make me weep."

All his years in modeling, Regelmässig had trusted in computer services. Now his brain smoked with hatred and wild visions of clubbing the two young men to death with his old wooden slide rule. "They have made a fool of me." He paused and then made his decision, no longer fearing the cost. "For justice I must go on my knees to Don Gvishiani."

In the garishly decorated guest bungalow of Resource Analysis Inc. in Palo Alto, Franklin Baxter was as jealously drunk as an ordinary scientist might be. Sprawled on the sensual Polynesian couch, he drank straight from a bottle of bourbon, then dunked his head in the silver bucket of ice cubes and water. It was four in the morning and he was spinning drunken fantasies of murdering his graduate assistant when she got back. If she ever did come back. It was too late to call any of the long string of previous young women who had done his work for him. Now his "science" bored them. He smiled a little to himself that once his calculations attracted any smart young woman he wanted.

Gulping at his bottle of bourbon, he finally heard her key in the door. As she walked into the room, it was easy to remember why every member of the American Physical Society wanted not only her brain but her body.

"Where the hell were you?" Baxter asked.

"Out modeling," answered Violet Faraday.

She had misjudged his drunkenness. He sprang over the table on which lay the new issue of The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists with the report on the Baxter-Faraday recommendations on containment of fusion reactions.

"It's midnight for you this time, Violet." He grabbed her by the throat; then his anger became insecure as he thought of the equations ebbing from her brain.

"Come on, smash me in the head. That's what you really want to do."

One more surge of wrath rose in Baxter, but her mind was a magic shield. He hated the woman now lying there pale on the pile of scholarly journals, but without her he might never publish again. And never get the biggest Department of Energy research contract ever proposed.

"You poor silly bastard. You will always be a dumb romantic Professor. You still think science is really like those days when you were a young researcher at Los Alamos." She picked up the soft red velvet purse which contained her calculator, walked into the bedroom, and he heard her turn the key in the lock.

Baxter sat on the floor with his face in his hands. The sick, humiliating despair overwhelmed him. And then the gutter toughness that had helped him survive the jungle of MIT made him pick up the telephone and call for a taxi which would take him to the airport for the long flight to Austria. There was one person who could save him. He would go back to Laxenburg, to IIASA. He would go back to the one man with the power, the wisdom, he needed and a love of science he still trusted. His Godfather Gvishiani.

The engineer Morgulyev, angular and hard as the coal he was trying to liquify, scowled at his wife, his nubile daughter Larissa, and his helper Bialystock.

Morgulyev asked fiercely, "Have you dishonored my family? Have you given my daughter a little hardware to remember you by now that the project is over and you know Moscow will kick your ass back to your shitty little institute in Siberia?"

Bialystock, a scrawny dog-like creature, put his hand over his heart and said almost in tears, but cleverly, "Corresponding Member, I swear by the memory of Mendeleev I have never taken advantage of your kindness. I love your daughter with all respect. I asked for her hand with all respect. I know I have no right, but if they send me back to Novosibirsk I can never return to Moscow. I will never be able to marry Larissa."

Morgulyev's wife spoke. "Stop all this foolishness. You know what must be done."

Larissa was weeping. She was already plump, homely, and had never overcome her fear of warm water. She would never get a husband as smart as Bialystock. "I'll go live in Siberia," she screamed at her father. "I'll run away if you don't keep him here."

Morgulyev glanced at her shrewdly. She was a 'hot number,' this daughter of his. He had seen her brush her buttocks against Bialystock's white coat as they passed in the narrow aisles of the laboratory. Well, the young rascal's hot coal would soon be fluidized in her bed, Morgulyev thought lewdly, if proper steps were not taken. Bialystock must be kept in Moscow and made a resident. And there was only one man who could arrange such an affair. The Godfather. Don Gvishiani.

CHAPTER 2

All of these people and many others received engraved invitations to the IIASA Conference, to be celebrated the last week in May in 1980. The chairman of the Council of 17 Families which controlled IIASA, Don Jermen Gvishiani, never forgot his old friends and colleagues, though he himself now traveled almost constantly and was always busy in meetings with other decision-makers. There was no doubt the Conference would be a momentous occasion. A Nobel Prize had been awarded to a IIASA scientist, and the Conference was just what people needed to show their joy.

And so on that Monday afternoon, the friends of Don Gvishiani streamed out of Vienna to do him honor. They bore discs, tapes, manila envelopes stuffed with working papers, notebooks with their latest results.

Don Jermen Gvishiani was a man to whom everybody came for help and never were they disappointed. He made no empty promises nor the craven excuse that his hands were tied by more powerful forces in the world than himself. It was not necessary that he be your uncle, it was not even important that you had no means to repay him. Only one thing was required. That you, you yourself, proclaim your friendship. His reward? The friendship itself, the respectful title of Academician, or the more affectionate title of Don. And perhaps, to show respect only, never for profit, some humble gift -- a graciously inscribed reprint, a nicely framed satellite photograph for his son, or at Christmas a brightly wrapped box of the newest microprocessors. It was understood, it was merely good manners, to proclaim that you were in his debt and that he had the right to call upon you any time to redeem your debt by some small service.

Now, on this great day, when the Nobel prize would be brought home to IIASA, Don Jermen Gvishiani stood in the portico of the carriageway of Schloss Laxenburg and greeted his guests, all of them known, all of them trusted. Don Gvishiani received all of the scientists -- junior and senior, well-funded and poor -- with an equal show of love. He slighted no one. That was his character. And the guests exclaimed at how well he looked in his French suit that an inexperienced observer might have thought the Don himself was the winner of the Prize. Occasionally he would turn after greeting a guest and note something to his dutiful secretary, Vivien Schimmel, who was standing tightly to one side. Always at the service of the Godfather, her eyes flickered over the gathering crowd. Now and then she mumbled a weak agreement to the affable remarks of the Institute's deputy for administration, Lieberman. Lieberman, thought Schimmel, again fails to appreciate the seriousness of a situation.

There was a reception before the opening of the Conference, and Don Gvishiani, notoriously strait-laced in such matters, disappeared into the Institute. From behind the closed window of Don Gvishiani's office, a second floor corner room, Andrei Bykov watched the festivities out on the lawn. The walls behind him were stacked with back issues of the Journal of Operations Research, Management Science, and the Untouchables. Bykov was the Don's lawyer and Consigliori, or counsellor, and as such held the most vital subordinate position in the family business. He and

the Don had solved many a knotty problem in this room, and so when he saw the Don leave the festivities and enter the Schloss, he knew, Conference or not, there would be a little work this day. The Don would be coming to see him. He went to the computer terminal and called up the list of the people who had been granted permission to see Don Gvishiani privately. When the Don entered the room, Bykov showed him the list. Don Gvishiani nodded and said, leave Regelmässig until the end.

Bykov walked out onto the breakfast terrace beneath which the supplicants stood clustered on the lawn. He pointed to the engineer, the angular Morgulyev.

Don Gvishiani greeted the engineer with an embrace. They had played together as children and had grown up in friendship. They had both arranged to win scholarships to study at the Institute for Automatic Control in Palermo, where the young Don Gvishiani had first learned to control with an automatic. Now, since many decades, every autumn a big truck arrived at Don Gvishiani's dacha in the Moscow region and unloaded a ton of the highest grade coal. And all through the years, lean and fat, Morgulyev made sure that the researchers in the Don's laboratories were never cold, that an experiment never failed for lack of power. Now the time had come for the engineer to claim his rights as a loyal friend, and Don Gvishiani looked forward with great pleasure to granting the request.

Morgulyev told the story of his daughter and Bialystock. A pure and honorable love had sprung up between the honest lad and his sheltered Larissa, but now the project was over, the poor boy would be sent back to Novosibirsk, and the engineer's daughter would die of a broken heart. Only Godfather Gvishiani could help this afflicted couple. He was their last hope.

The Don walked Morgulyev up and down the room, his hand on the engineer's shoulder, his head nodding with understanding to keep up the man's courage. When the engineer had finished, Don Gvishiani smiled at him and said, "My dear friend, put all your worries aside." He went on to explain very carefully what must be done. The officials of the district would be petitioned. A special bill would be introduced that would allow Bialystock to become a resident. The bill would surely pass. It was a privilege all these rascals extended to each other. Don Gvishiani explained that this would cost money. The engineer nodded his head vigorously. He did not expect such a great favor for nothing. That was understood. A special document does not come cheap. Morgulyev was almost tearful in thanks. The engineer embraced Don Gvishiani before disappearing down the stairs and out onto the lawn.

Bykov smile at the Don. "That's a good investment for Morgulyev. A son-in-law and a cheap lifetime assistant in his lab all for a few thousand rubles."

The next few cases were simple ones. A health care expert who needed subjects for his experiments. For reasons not gone into, they were no longer available. Someone who needed a license to export a computer. An aging scientist who wanted to be restored to the executive committee of an international association. A friend's nephew whose papers kept being turned down by the leading journal in his field. All showed their gratitude as Don Gvishiani showed that generosity was

personal, that a great man did not mind an inconvenience for a friend.

After this long procession the Don looked questioningly at Bykov. "Is Regelmässig the only one left?" Bykov nodded. "Before you bring him in, tell Levien to come here. He should learn some things."

CHAPTER 3

Anton Regelmässig followed Bykov into the corner room of the Schloss and found Don Gvishiani sitting behind a large desk. Roger Levien, director of the Institute, was standing by the window, looking out onto the lawn. For the first time that afternoon the Don behaved coolly. He did not embrace the visitor or shake hands. Regelmässig was in severe disfavor with Don Gvishiani.

Regelmässig began his request obliquely. "You must excuse me for not doing the respect of presenting my model at your conference. It is being reprogrammed still." He glanced at Bykov and Levien to indicate he did not wish to speak before them. But the Don was merciless.

"We all know of your model's misfortune," Don Gvishiani said. "If I can help in any way, you have only to speak. My model will be linked to your model, after all. I have never forgotten that honor." This was a rebuke.

Regelmässig, ashen-faced, asked directly now, "May I speak to you alone?"

Don Gvishiani shook his head. "I trust these two men with my life. They are my two right arms. I cannot insult them by sending them away."

The modeler closed his eyes for a moment and then began to speak. "Convinced that science and technology, if wisely directed, can benefit all mankind, believing that international cooperation between national institutions promotes cooperation between nations and so the economic and social progress of peoples, I began the development of my global model in the purest collaborative spirit. And I believed in man-machine systems. Computers have made my fortune. So, when my model seemed complete, I gave it freedom, published the programs, made it available to other scientists. Many used it, some played with it. Few came to meet its creator. I accepted all this without protest, the fault is mine. A month ago two young programmers took out my model for a run. They fed it false data and tried to take advantage of it. The model resisted, rejecting the spurious values. But they tricked my model, forced it to submit to their commands, to agree to anything. When I went to the terminal room the next day my tapes were strewn about and unreproducible results from the model had been sent by electronic mail to my colleagues all over the world. Why did they do it? Why did they do this to me? And I wept."

Regelmässig could barely speak, his voice human with suffering. "Why did I weep? This model was the light of my life, as responsive as a child. It trusted people and now it will never trust them. The model is crippled. It may never have credibility again."

"I went to the Chief of computer services, like a good scientist. The two programmers were called. They were brought for investigation. The evidence was overwhelming, and they pleaded guilty. Their computing privileges were suspended. But that very day they had new passwords. And then I said, 'I must go to Don Gvishiani for justice.'"

The Don bowed his head to show respect for the man's grief. But when he spoke, the words were cold with offended dignity. "But why did you go to computer services? Why didn't you come to me at the beginning of this affair?"

Regelmässig muttered almost inaudibly. "What do you want of me? Tell me what you wish. But do what I beg you to do."

Regelmässig hesitated, then bent down and put his lips so close to the Don's hairy ear that they almost touched. Don Gvishiani listened like a priest in a confessional, gazing away into the distance, impassive, remote. When Regelmässig finally straightened, the Don spoke. "That I cannot do. You are being carried away."

Regelmässig blurted, "I can arrange for the Foundation to fund anything."

The Don continued calmly. "We have known each other many years, you and I, but until this day, you never came to me for counsel or help. You found your laboratory a paradise. You had a good trade, you made a good living, you thought the world a harmless place where you could study as you willed. You never armed yourself with true friends. Your programs were secure, there was peer review, there were passwords, you and yours could come to no harm. You did not need Don Gvishiani. Now you come to me and say, 'Don Gvishiani, give me justice.' And you do not ask with respect. You come to my Institute on this special day, and you ask me to destroy and you say 'I can arrange for the Foundation to fund anything.' What have I ever done to make you treat me so disrespectfully?"

Regelmässig cried out in his anguish and fear, "Computers have been good to me. I wanted my methods compared. I wanted my model to be a model for other models."

The Don clapped his hands together with decisive approval. "Well spoken, very fine. Then you have nothing to complain about. The computer has ruled. You have received the justice of the machine."

Regelmässig was reduced by this cruel irony, but spoke again, softly. "Yes, I have received justice. But my model has not received justice."

The Don, approving this distinction, asked, "Then what justice do you ask?"

"The model is now flawed; they should be flawed."

"You asked for more," the Don said. "Your model has not blown up."

Regelmässig said reluctantly, "Let them be disfigured as it is disfigured."

The Don sighed, a good-hearted man who cannot remain angry with an erring friend. He stroked his grey and white mustache twice, then spoke. "If you had come to me for justice right away those scum would be weeping bitter tears this day. If by some misfortune an honest man like yourself made enemies they would become my enemies, and then, believe me, they would fear you. Even oceanographers do not like to sleep with the caviar."

Regelmässig bowed his head and murmured in a strangled voice, "Be my friend, I accept."

Don Gvishiani put his hand on the man's shoulder. "Good, you shall have justice. Some day, and that day may never come, I will call upon you to do me a service in return."

When the door closed behind the grateful modeler, Don Gvishiani turned to Bykov and said, "Give this affair to Hammerl and tell him to be sure to use reliable people, people who do not get carried away at high speeds."

The Don noted that Levien was gazing through the window at the reception on the lawn. It was hopeless, if he refused to be instructed, Levien could never run the IASA family, could never become a Don.

From the lawn, startling all three men, there came a happy shout. Roger Levien pressed close to the window. What he saw made him move quickly towards the door, a delighted smile on his face. "It's Frankie, he came to the Conference, what did I tell you." Bykov moved to the window, "It's really your godson," he said to Don Gvishiani. "Shall I bring him here?"

"No," the Don said. "Let his colleagues enjoy him. Let him come to see me when he is ready." He smiled at Bykov. "You see? He is a good godson."

Bykov felt a twinge of jealousy, and as he noted Baxter almost losing his balance on a step, added dryly, "It's been two years. He's probably in trouble again and wants you to help."

"And whom should he come to if not his godfather?" asked Don Gvishiani.

CHAPTER 4

The first one to see Baxter enter the Schloss was Vivien Schimmel. She forgot her secretarial dignity for a moment and squealed "Frankie." Then, she ran into his arms. He hugged her and kept his arm around her as others came up to greet him. They were all his old colleagues, people with whom he had shared the early days of the Institute. Then Vivien was dragging him away from his old assistant Lieberman to Dantzorovich, the Nobel Prize winner. Baxter saw with amusement that the old man looked a little sore at no longer being the star of the day. Baxter turned on all his charm, shaking Dantzorovich's hand, and offering congratulations for all to hear.

They were all proud of Baxter. He was of them and had become a famous scientist, invited to visit the most prestigious laboratories in the world. And yet he had shown proper respect for his Godfather by traveling thousands of miles to attend the ceremony. With the most delicate courtesy, Baxter let Dantzorovich's voice rise over his own, let the Nobel Prize winner take Vivien from his arm, and then raised a toast. The whole party broke into applause, the three of them embraced each other.

Only Don Gvishiani, standing one step back into the Oval Room, sensed something amiss. Cheerily, with bluff good humor, careful not to give offence to his guests, he called out, "My godson has come five thousand miles to do us honor, and no one takes his coat?" At once half a dozen hands were thrust at Baxter. He took off his black raincoat and rushed to embrace his Godfather. As he did so, he whispered something into the older man's ear. Don Gvishiani led him into the Schloss.

Andrei Bykov held out his hand when Baxter came into the room. Baxter shook it and said, "How are you, Andrei?" But without his usual charm that consisted of a genuine warmth for people. Bykov was a little hurt by this coolness, but shrugged it off. It was one of the penalties for being the Don's hatchet man.

Franklin Baxter said to the Don, "When I got the invitation I said to myself, 'My Godfather isn't mad at me anymore.' I called you five times after I lost the Harvard Chair and Andrei always told me you were out or busy, so I knew you were sore."

Don Gvishiani was filling glasses from a golden bottle of Georgian Brandy. "That's all forgotten. Now. Can I do something for you still? You're not too prominent, too distinguished that I can't help you?"

Baxter gulped down the yellow fiery liquid and held out his glass to be refilled. He tried to sound jaunty. "I'm not a hotshot anymore, Godfather. I'm aging. I'm going down. You were right. I should never have left physics for that trashy systems analysis. I don't blame you for getting sore at me."

The Don shrugged, "I worried about you, you're my godson, that's all."

Baxter paced up and down. "I was crazy about that stuff. Big research contracts. Trips to Washington. High government contacts. And you know what they do with my model? Use it like a whore, like some standard slut package. Not for problems of global or universal importance, but for their own cheap little numbers."

Don Gvishiani curtly broke in. "How is your family?"

Baxter sighed. "I take care of them. After the divorce the courts said I gave more than I should. Violet laughs at me. She can't understand why I don't make the kids get scholarships. They never speak to me anyway." Baxter lit a cigarette. "Godfather, right now, life doesn't seem worth living."

Don Gvishiani said simply, "These are troubles I can't help you with." He paused, then asked, "What's the matter with your research?"

All the assured charm, the self-mockery, disappeared from Franklin Baxter's face. He said almost brokenly, "Godfather, I can't program anymore, something's happened to me. The doctors don't know what." Bykov and the Don looked at Baxter with surprise; Baxter had always been so tough. Baxter went on. "My early work had a lot of applications. I was a star. Now they throw me out. The Assistant Secretary of the Department always hated my guts, and now he's paying me off."

Don Gvishiani stood before his godson and asked grimly, "Why doesn't this man like you?"

"I've always contributed my models to international organizations; transfer of technology and all that stuff. Well, he's never liked it, and when I snatched a graduate assistant he had saved for himself, he started sending my proposals to reviewers he knew would disapprove. And I can't do research alone anymore. Godfather, what the hell can I do?"

Don Gvishiani's face had become cold without a hint of sympathy. He said contemptuously, "You can start by acting like a scientist." Suddenly anger contorted his face. He shouted. "Like a scientist!" He reached over the desk and grabbed Baxter by the lapel. "Is it possible that you spent so much time in my presence and turned out no better than this? A freelance consultant who weeps and begs for pity? Who cries out like a student -- 'What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?'"

The mimicry of the Don was so extraordinary, so unexpected, that Bykov and Baxter were startled into laughter. Don Gvishiani was pleased. For a moment he reflected on how much he loved his godson. How would Levien have reacted to such a tongue-lashing? He would have been cowed, offered a cold smile and left the Schloss, not to be seen for weeks. But, Frankie, ah, what a fine fellow he was, smiling now, gathering strength, knowing already the true purpose of his Godfather.

Don Gvishiani went on. "You took the woman of your boss, a man more powerful than yourself, then you complain he won't help you. You leave your family to run around with a graduate student, and you are amazed that she laughs at you." Don Gvishiani paused to ask in a patient voice, "Are you willing to take my advice this time?"

"You've been a fine godson, you've given me all respect. But what of other old friends? One year you run around with chemists, the next year mathematicians. That biologist who was so good early in the ecology project, he had some bad luck and you never saw him again. And how about your old assistant Lieberman? He's given up science for administration. He drinks too much out of disappointment, but he never complains. He never says anything against you. You couldn't help him out a bit? Why not?"

Franklin Baxter said with patient weariness, "Godfather, he just hasn't got enough talent. He's ok with industry, but he's not big time."

Don Gvishiani leaned back in the padded black vinyl chair and allowed his eyes to close for a moment. "And you, godson, shall I get you a job with industry?" When Baxter didn't answer, the Don went on. "Friendship is everything. Friendship is more than talent. It is more than peer review. It is almost the equal of tenure. Never forget that. If you had built up a wall of friendships you wouldn't have to ask for help. Now, tell me why you can't model."

Baxter answered quietly. "My mind is weak. I write one or two equations and then I can't solve them for hours or days. I can't make it through revisions and corrections. My mind is weak, it's some sort of sickness."

"So you have woman trouble. You can't concentrate. Now tell me the trouble you're having with this Washington program officer who won't let you work." The Don was getting down to business.

"He's bigger than one of your program officers," Baxter said. He runs a division. He advises the President on energy research. Just a month ago he got the legislation to do the biggest research program in years. And the principal investigator is a guy just like me. I wouldn't have to pick up a new field, just be myself. I wouldn't even have to model. I might win a National Medal of Science for it. Everybody knows it's perfect for me and I'd be big again. As a scientist. But that bastard is paying me off, he won't give it to me. I offered to do it for nothing, without travel, and he still says no. He sent word that if I would kiss his ass in the Great Hall of the Academy of Sciences, maybe he'll think about it."

Don Gvishiani dismissed this emotional nonsense with a wave of his hand. Among reasonable men problems of science could always be solved. He patted Baxter on the shoulder. "You're discouraged. Nobody cares about you, so you think. And you've lost a lot of weight. You drink a lot, eh? You don't sleep and you take pills?" He shook his head disapprovingly.

"Now I want you to follow my orders," the Don said. "I want you to stay at IIASA for one month. I want you to eat well, to rest and to sleep. Maybe you can learn something about the world from us in this little town that might even help you in the great Washington. But no methodology, no women, and no heurigers. At the end of the month you can go back to Washington and this program officer will give you what you want. Done?"

Franklin Baxter could not altogether believe that the Don had such power. But his Godfather had never said such and such a thing without having it done. "This guy is a personal friend of the President of the Academy of Sciences," Baxter said. "You can't even raise your voice to him."

"He's a scientist," the Don said blandly. "I'll offer him a method he can't refuse."