

# READING GUIDE

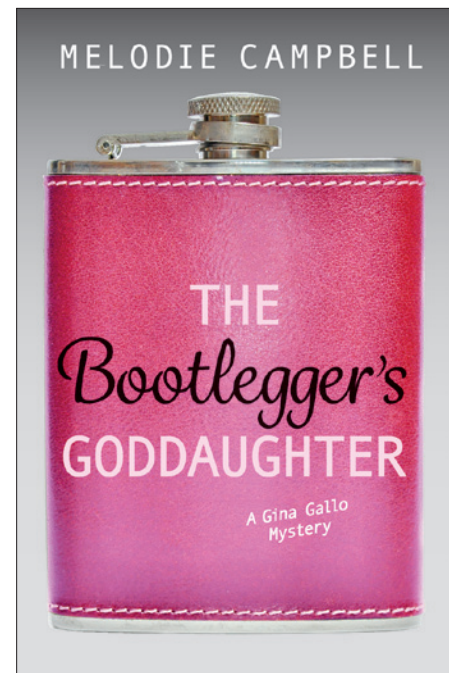
## THE BOOTLEGGER'S GODDAUGHTER MELODIE CAMPBELL

Reading level: 3.0

Interest level: Adult

Themes: the mob, organized crime, reluctant sleuth,  
hijinks, moonshine, retirement home

978-1-4598-1413-4



### Summary

*The Bootlegger's Goddaughter* is the fifth in the Goddaughter series. Gina Gallo is in her hometown of Hamilton, and it's three days before her wedding to football-star-turned-journalist Pete Malone. As usual, Gina is trying to stay as far away from the family mob business as possible, but circumstances keep dragging her back in.

The story kicks off with Gina answering a phone call from her interior designer cousin Nico. He has called to tell her that a big winter storm is on its way and that Gina's mother may have trouble arriving from Florida in time for the wedding. While they talk, a skinny young thug steals Gina's bags. She gives chase, but doesn't catch him. She calls Nico to come and pick her up, and the two of them head to Gina's jewelry store so she can pick up her extra set of keys. While there, Gina's cousin and store manager, Tiff, tells her that their aging great-aunt Zia Sophia has seen a crow in her native Sicily—a bad omen just before a wedding. Gina dismisses it as just a ridiculous superstition.

Uncle Sammy calls Gina and Nico down to the chicken coop, a lakeshore cottage often used as a transition point for contraband materials. Gina discovers that the family is now bringing in machines that are specially rigged to accept the family's counterfeit bills. Sammy gives her back the bags that were taken during the mugging earlier in the day, explaining that the kid was new to the job and hadn't been properly trained by Mario, a cousin who Gina considers a brainless goon. Gina is dismayed that the kid is dumb enough to mug a member of the mafia.

Pete calls and informs her that he's going for lunch with her uncle Vince—the godfather—for a talk before the wedding. Gina sees it as a good sign that Pete is being accepted into the family. After she and Nico leave the chicken coop, Mad Magda—one of the family's oldest and most skilled criminals—calls, explaining that her husband Jimmy has just had a heart attack while doing a job. Magda asks them to take over while she takes Jimmy to the hospital. Nico agrees, and together they drive to where Magda and Jimmy abandoned a midsize transport on the side of the road. Gina discovers the truck is full of gin, and realizes that the family has reentered the bootlegging trade.



RAVEN BOOKS *an imprint of*  
ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS  
www.rapid-reads.com • 1-800-210-5277





Gina drives the transport, following Nico to the drop-off point, which turns out to be a small strip mall. There, Nico introduces his friend Danny, who Gina initially takes to be a man but later learns is a woman, and seemingly Nico's love interest. While Gina uses the washroom to give them space to talk business, two armed men steal the transport truck and take off. Nico, Danny and Gina pursue the truck to a donut shop, where they take it back. But the men spot them and shoot at them as Gina and Danny race off with the truck with Nico close behind. They drive down the highway for a few miles, then Danny offers to take the truck back to the drop-off point.

Gina heads back to Hamilton, where Pete is looking forward to his bachelor party, and drops Nico off at the party venue. She drives home, where she is confronted by Spence, a high school admirer who now works as a cop. Spence hauls Gina in to the station on suspicion of hijacking, gunfire and probable illegal activity. She calls Paulo, her lawyer cousin, and is quickly joined at the police station by her indomitable Aunt Miriam. Miriam knows some of Spence's dirt from his adolescent days, and between her and Paulo, Gina is easily sprung from detention.

The next day, Gina's best friend, country singer Lainy McSwain calls, excited to be arriving from Las Vegas soon and serving as Gina's maid of honor. Later, at Pete's apartment, Pete shows Gina the gift Uncle Vince gave him for the wedding: a Glock 9mm handgun. Looks like he's *really* in the family now. Gina leaves Pete's place intent on going to the reception hall to fill out cards for the guest tables, but Sammy calls and demands she and Nico report to the chicken coop as soon as possible. Sammy is shaken up by Gina's close call with the truck-stealing thugs. While they are at the chicken coop, Nico checks in with Mad Magda, who has put cousins Bertoni and Lou on a job that neither Nico nor Sammy seems particularly keen to explain to Gina. Sammy pushes them out the door, exhorting Nico to check in on Bertoni and Lou: chances are they're going to do the (mysterious) job wrong.

Gina and Nico drive to the reception hall, where Gina demands the truth of what's going on. Nico admits the family has been brewing an old family recipe for grappa and bootlegging it across the border, sponsored by Uncle Vince and managed by Magda and Jimmy.

At the hall, Gina is thrilled with how Nico has decorated the reception hall in advance of the wedding. As she greets some of the elder women in the family in a specially prepared bridal room, Nico interrupts and asks her to come downstairs with him. He has discovered a problem with the still, which Bertoni and Lou are supposed to be watching over. Bertoni and Lou, however, are dead drunk, and haven't been doing their job.

Gina immediately spots danger in the still room: the still is bubbling over and ethanol is leaking across the floor in the direction of a propane burner. Together with Nico, Gina sounds the alarm and clears the building of all who were inside. They get out just before the still blows, but the wedding reception is ruined by the explosion and the subsequent dousing by fire crews. In the end, Gina and Pete decide to ditch the whole family fiasco and elope to Las Vegas—at least they can celebrate their marriage with Lainy in attendance.





### Questions for Discussion

1. In chapter 2, when Tiff tells Gina of great-aunt Zia Sophia's vision of a crow just a few days before Gina's wedding, Gina blows it off as a crackpot omen. What is your stance on omens? Do you think the universe gives us signals in various forms?
2. Gina lives life on all eight cylinders, working through crises with humor and grace. What other character in books or movies does she remind you of?
3. What do you know about how counterfeit money affects a country's economy?
4. Why does Gina so frequently ask people not to explain or give her information when it comes to the family's business?
5. When Gina and Nico are talking at the chicken coop in chapter 4, Gina's phone rings. It's Pete. She asks if Nico minds her taking the call, and he says he doesn't. How has cell phone etiquette changed in the 10-15 years since these devices have gone mainstream?
6. When Gina meets Nico's friend Danny, she learns that she (Gina) is growing a reputation as a class-A criminal. She finds this information distressing. As you see it, why is it so important for Gina to distance herself from her family's business and not get a "reputation"?
7. In *The Bootlegger's Goddaughter* Gina gets mugged, discovers crooked counterfeit-bill detection machines at the chicken coop, drives a semi-trailer full of illegal booze, gets repeatedly shot at, and is hauled in to the police station—and that's just in the space of a single day. Make a timeline of the entire story with as many details as you can.
8. Gina is relatively hands-off with the wedding planning, preferring to allow other members of her family to organize the grand party. When she walks into the Forum with Nico, for example, she is delighted by the way he has decorated the space for her wedding. How is Gina different from many other brides in the lead-up to her wedding?
9. When she talks with Pete, Gina frequently shades the truth, or conceals information from him. Talk about the challenges that this brings to a marriage or a romantic partnership.
10. Many generations are involved in Gina's wedding—and in her life in general. How is this different from the way most families operate nowadays? List the advantages of having greater intergenerational support and involvement. What are the disadvantages? Should we, as a society, aspire to create greater family cohesiveness?
11. As you see it, what does our society's fascination with mob drama spring from?
12. Given she is penning a book called *Burglary for Dummies*, it's debatable whether Gina truly wants to be uninvolved in the Hamilton mafia's doings. If Gina really, deeply wanted to get away from the family business, what would she have to do?
13. Does Gina make the right decision to forget about the family and instead elope to Las Vegas?
14. As you see it, what is the central theme of *The Bootlegger's Goddaughter*?
15. Can you think of a different title for this book?

