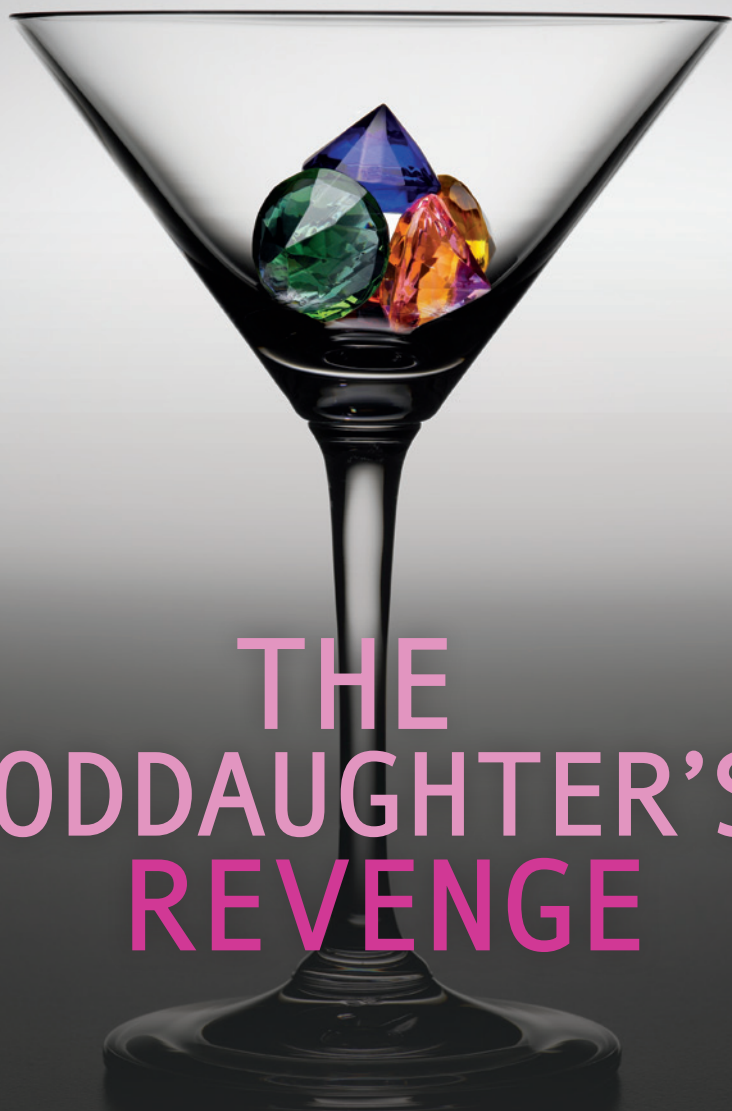




RAPID READS

MELODIE CAMPBELL



THE
GODDAUGHTER'S
REVENGE

ADVANCE READING COPY



When Gina Gallo takes a week's vacation, she leaves her jewelry store in the hands of her cousin from New York. Everything should be fine. After all, cousin Carmine is a certified gemologist. But Carmine is also in the Mob. When Gina returns to work, she soon discovers that her cousin spent his time switching real gems for fakes in the jewelry of some of her best customers. With her reputation on the line, what's a mob goddaughter to do? Steal them back, of course!

Melodie Campbell achieved a personal best this year when Library Journal compared her to Janet Evanovich. Melodie got her start writing comedy. Her work has appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, *Star Magazine*, *Canadian Living*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail* and many more. *The Goddaughter's Revenge*, a follow-up to *The Goddaughter*, is Melodie's fifth published novel. She lives in Oakville, Ontario, and can be found at www.melodiecampbell.com.

This is an advance reading copy of the uncorrected proofs and is not for sale.
Changes may be made to the text before publication, so all quotations for review must be checked against the final bound book.

ADULT FICTION

Publication October 2013

9781459804876 PB • \$9.95

9781459804890 EPUB • 9781459804883 PDF



RAVEN BOOKS *an imprint of*

ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS

www.rapid-reads.com • 1-800-210-5277

THE GODDAUGHTER'S REVENGE

ADVANCE READING COPY

MELODIE CAMPBELL



RAVEN BOOKS

an imprint of

ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS

Copyright © 2013 Melodie Campbell

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Campbell, Melodie, 1955-
The goddaughter's revenge / Melodie Campbell.
(Rapid reads)

Issued also in electronic formats.

ISBN 978-1-4598-0487-6

I. Title. II. Series: Rapid reads
PS8605.A54745G632 2013 C813'.6 C2013-901925-1

First published in the United States, 2013
Library of Congress Control Number: 2013904965

Summary: When Gina discovers that someone has been switching real gems with fakes in the jewelry of her best customers, she takes matters into her own hands.



Orca Book Publishers is dedicated to preserving the environment and has printed this book on Forest Stewardship Council® certified paper.

Orca Book Publishers gratefully acknowledges the support for its publishing programs provided by the following agencies: the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund and the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and the Book Publishing Tax Credit.

Design by Teresa Bubela
Cover photography by Getty Images

ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS
PO Box 5626, Stn. B
Victoria, BC Canada
V8R 6S4

ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS
PO Box 468
Custer, WA USA
98240-0468

www.orcabook.com
Printed and bound in Canada.

ADVANCE READING COPY

*For Dave, who has gamely put up with my
whacky Italian family for decades.*

CHAPTER ONE

Okay, I admit it. I would rather be the proud possessor of a rare gemstone than a lakefront condo with parking. Yes, I know this makes me weird. Young women today are supposed to crave the security of owning their own home.

But I say real estate, shmeel estate. You can't hold an address in your hand. It doesn't flash and sparkle with the intensity of a thousand night stars. It will never lure you away from the straight and narrow like a siren from some Greek odyssey.

Let's face it. Nobody has ever gone to jail for smuggling a one-bedroom-plus-den out of the country.

However, make that a ten-carat cyan-blue topaz with a past as long as your arm, and I'd do almost anything to possess it.

But don't tell the police.

* * *

Pete was sitting in my back office at Ricci Jewelers, poring over a tray of diamonds. Really nice diamonds. You could buy a whole condo building with those rocks.

"I like the big pear-shaped one. How much does that cost?"

"Too much," I said. "I'd be afraid to wear it. Might get mugged, you know?"

Pete looked over at me and raised one eyebrow. "By your own family?"

I grimaced. He had me on that one. Who was likely to mug the goddaughter of the local crime boss?

I sighed. "It's still too much." I swished a stray lock of hair behind my shoulder.

Pete pushed back from the table. He leaned back in the chair. His big hands went behind his head and linked there. I felt the familiar zing as his hazel eyes met mine.

"You know, this is rather like taking coal to Newcastle. You can buy any ring you want in your own store. Maybe I should buy you a car as an engagement gift."

I smiled at the quaint expression, then shook my head. "No sir, you're not getting out of this. Aunt Miriam always says you're not engaged until you've got the ring. So choose something, buster."

He smiled back and his eyes twinkled. "You choose something, gorgeous. We should do this together. Your budget is thirty thousand."

My jaw dropped. "Holy cannoli, Pete—how much do newspaper reporters make?"

A faint knock at the door made us both turn. It was Tiffany, my shop assistant. Her goth getup was somewhat alarming to many customers. Her face right now was even more alarming, and I don't mean from the piercings.

I signaled to her. She used her key to unlock the door.

"Sorry to interrupt," she said, "but you really need to see this."

She motioned toward the retail end of the store.

I stood up, grabbed my keys and walked around the desk. "Come see me in action," I said with a smile.

"I'd like to, but I really have to get back. Got a deadline." Pete sprang easily from the chair to his full six-foot-two height. I love to watch him move. He used to be a quarterback and has that perfect combination of strength and grace. Unusual in a big guy.

Pete turned around at the door. "You like the pear shape, right?"

"Oh yeah," I said. Who doesn't?

"How much is the big pear-shaped one?"

I met his eyes. They were smiling, just like his mouth.

"Twenty-four thousand," I said.

"Sold," he said. Then he grabbed me before I could pass through the door.

* * *

A minute or so later, Pete put me down. I was breathless. He waited for me to pass through the doorway and then shut the door behind us. It locked automatically. Then he continued out the store to the street beyond. I had to stop myself from running to the window to watch as he sauntered out of sight.

Instead, I drew my eyes back to the waiting customer.

An ultra-slim woman with shellacked red hair stood at the counter.

“Good morning, Mrs. Harris. How can I help you?” I said.

She smiled nervously. “The stone in my ring is a little loose. Can you fix it?”

“Of course,” I said. A perfectly normal request and nothing to cause Tiff concern. I waited.

She held the ring out to me. I knew it, of course. A beautiful oval sapphire, surrounded by diamonds. Very Princess Di-ish. I’d sold it to her husband two years ago as an anniversary gift.

I held the ring between two fingers.

Mrs. Harris continued. “I had it in two weeks ago to get it appraised and cleaned. That nice cousin of yours from New York—the one who was here while you were away—did it for free. But then I noticed it was moving a bit. The stone, I mean.”

I stared at the center stone. My mouth went dry. I reached for my loupe on the glass countertop.

I heard my voice, strained but controlled, say, "I can fix this, Mrs. Harris. Leave it with me. I'll phone you when it's ready."

Minutes passed. I didn't hear her leave the store. But when I looked up, Tiff was staring at me funny.

"Well?" said Tiff.

"You were right. It's a goddamn fake."