

THE
DEAD GONDOLIER
and other crimes of Venice



NOEL GRAY



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to Laura

The Dead Gondolier

“Maresciallo!” yelled an impatient voice on the intercom, “my office, immediately.”

“Yes, Sir,” said Pio Scampi, rising from his chair and slowly walking down the corridor to the office of Captain Paolo Foscarini, the head of the Venice Carabinieri.

“Take your time, Maresciallo,” snapped Foscarini when Scampi finally arrived. “Here,” he ordered, handing a file to the most experienced man on his force, “take charge of this. And don’t tread on anyone’s toes doing it,” he sniped. His subordinate had a genius for upsetting the wrong people.

Scampi ignored the comment. The Captain was not himself these days. Getting divorced was never easy. Scampi saluted and went back to his office. He slumped in his chair and studied the file’s contents. A gondolier, Amadeo Despotti, had been found at first light the day before, floating face down near the Canale Rio Della Croce in Giudecca, the spine shaped island directly opposite Venice. The body was several meters from a gondola tied to mooring rings at the mouth of the canal. Despotti had drowned. The boat was later identified as belonging to the dead man. Scampi stared at a photograph of the corp-

se: a healthy, good-looking boy, not unlike countless others of his profession. Too young to be dead, and now too dead to ever become old.

Scampi pressed a button on his intercom. “Rullo, come here for a moment, please.”

“Yes, Sir,” screamed Gino Rullo. Seconds later the subordinate officer dashed into Scampi’s office, eager to discover the reason for the summons.

“Read this preliminary report and tell me what you think?” said Scampi. “And please, don’t shout the barracks down. I’m old but my hearing remains young.”

Books by Noel Gray

Fiction:

War Of The Web - *Book 1: Battle of the Clouds*

Virtual Crimes

Fy-Sy Fables - *C olonising C reativity*

The Dead Gondolier - *and other crimes of Venice*

Hiding From Time

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(a story for lonely children)

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Non-Fiction:

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Dr. Noel Gray is an independent, international scholar and freelance writer. He has written extensively on the philosophy of geometry, the kaleidoscope, and numerous other subjects relating to science and technology. His fictional works often blend together several literary genres: magical realism, fables, mythology, science fiction, and crime. He is also a pioneer in the new genres: Fy-Sy, and Sotto Realism. He is currently compiling, *The Deranged Dictionary of Fictive Science*. He lives in Italy.

The Dead Gondolier
and other crimes of Venice

A collection of twelve stories set in Venice and nearby islands.

Each tale involves a different crime, and factual information about the city and its history are woven into every plot. The main character, Pio Scampi, is a Carabinieri officer who spends most of his time thinking about food. He is generally assigned the more difficult or strange cases, and his team of detectives do most of the legwork, usually based on circuitous questions he raises about the crime under investigation. The detection techniques employed are more psychological than scientific and the crimes themselves reflect the specific character of the city and its inhabitants.