

The Gemini Contenders

By *Robert Ludlum.*
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Dead of night, Salonika, Greece, December 1939. A vault is being moved from its ancient monastic hiding place to protect it from the Nazis. It is loaded on a train for shipment to northern Italy. There, a rich and powerful *padrone*, Savarone Fontini-Cristi, one of the leaders of the anti-Fascist movement, will safeguard it. In the vault is a document that could rock the foundations of the civilized world and change the destiny of mankind. Its implications, it is hinted, could make the holocaust pale by comparison.

The *padrone* does his job well. The vault is cleverly concealed. But those connected with the episode are doomed—suicide and murder claim all but one. Only the eldest son of the *padrone*, Vittorio, who knows nothing of the train

from Salonika, eludes death. Enter British Intelligence. They want the vault and smuggle Vittorio into London in order to get at it. Instead, all they get is a puzzled man who proclaims genuine ignorance. Skeptical but powerless to unravel the enigma without him, they change his name to Victor Fontine and recruit him into His Majesty's Secret Service as a stalking-horse. He is hunted, haunted, used and abused, all in the name of uncovering the vault and its sinister secret. He marries, has twin sons (the Geminis), and survives torture and near death to settle successfully in America. There the mystery of the vault and its contents continue to plague him.

Three decades pass. A dying Victor discovers the key to unlocking the secret. His deathbed charge to his sons is to find the vault. In so doing, he unwittingly pits the Geminis against each other and the secret is unleashed upon the world.

The secret? Absolutely within the realms of authenticity and fascinating to contemplate.

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