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Gentile Sig.ra Franchi,
Le invio l'articolo uscito ieri.

Grazie ancora per la Sua intervista, e le faccio gli auguri
per l'uscita del libro.

Migliori saluti,
John Follain

'Black Widow' hounded Gucci heir, then had him shot
John Follain
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WHEN Paola Franchi found out that her fiancé Maurizio Gucci, a member of the Italian fashion dynasty, had been shot she knew who had killed him.

"I thought straight away it was on the orders of his exwife, Patrizia Reggiani. She was crazy for vendetta. She'd been threatening Maurizio ever since she found out that our relationship was a lasting one," said Franchi, an interior designer and former model.

Fifteen years after Gucci's murder in the entrance to his office in Milan, Franchi has described in a book, *Broken Love*, how the couple were hounded by Reggiani, dubbed "the Black Widow" because of her love of black magic.

The murder, ordered in 1995 by Reggiani — who once declared: "I'd rather cry in a Rolls than be happy on a bicycle" — brought to a head a feud that had divided the family-run leather goods business.

The Guccis had a history of rivalry. At one board meeting, a member of the family had his face scratched and then sued the company. Another was jailed for tax evasion after his son betrayed him. Maurizio, the grandson of [Guccio Gucci](#), founder of the empire, sacked close relatives before he was himself thrown out.

The book describes how Reggiani, who had long been separated from her husband, persecuted Gucci after he started dating Franchi in 1990. Gucci and his wife divorced four years later.

"It was a status thing.

Reggiani feared she could no longer call herself 'Signora Gucci' — she wanted to hold on to that even after the divorce," said Franchi.

Whenever the couple went to stay at Gucci's chalet in St Moritz the phone would ring. "I know you're having fun, but I need money, not the pittance you gave me last month," Reggiani would tell him.

In the summer of 1991, as they entered their room at the luxury Eden Roc hotel in Cap d'Antibes, Gucci's mobile rang. It was Reggiani, again demanding money. She sent Gucci tapes on which she had recorded a series of threats: "Bastard, you've ruined my life but I'll make you pay. I want you dead," ran a typical message.

She demanded the chalet and his 215ft yacht, the *Creole*.

"I was scared," said Franchi.

"I suggested to Maurizio that he get a bodyguard but he brushed the idea aside. He thought Reggiani was all talk."

Gucci knew his former wife used a fortune teller to cast spells on her foes and he found a clairvoyant to protect him and Franchi.

On the morning of March 27, 1995, Gucci, 46, walked into his office lobby and was shot four times from behind. Reggiani's entry in her diary that day read "paradeisos" (the Greek word for paradise). The week before, she had written: "There is no crime that cannot be bought."

Franchi told police of her suspicions but detectives pursued other leads before finally arresting Reggiani and her accomplices two years later.

Reggiani is serving a 26-year sentence for ordering the shooting. Her jailed accomplices included a hired hitman and a getaway driver.

Franchi insisted she felt no hatred for Reggiani. "I think that rancour and vendetta kill you, so it's better to just get on with your life," she said.

As for Reggiani she is occasionally given permission to leave prison and has been spotted strolling through Milan.

Asked about this, Franchi sighed: "I try not to read things and to stop my friends telling me they saw her. For me, she's dead."

Maurizio Gucci, with fiancée Franchi and, inset, Reggiani