

MARIO GIORDANO

# COTTON

## FBI

THE BEGINNING



BASTEI ENTERTAINMENT 

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# What is COTTON FBI?

Your name is Jeremiah Cotton. You are a small-time cop in the NYPD, a rookie that no one takes seriously. But you want more. You have a score to settle with the world. And anyone who calls you “Jerry” will be sorry.

A new time. A new hero. A new mission. Experience the birth of a digital cult-series: Cotton FBI is the remake of JERRY COTTON, the most successful series of German novels with more than one billion copies sold, and it tells an entirely new story in e-book form.

Cotton FBI is published twice a month, with each episode a self-contained story.

# The Author

**Mario Giordano**, was born 1963 in Munich, studied psychology in Düsseldorf and writes novels for adults old and young as well as screenplays (his credits include *Tatort*, *Schimanski*, *Polizeiruf 110*, *Das Experiment*). He lives in Cologne.



# **The Beginning**

## **Mario Giordano**

Translated by Frank Keith

BASTEI ENTERTAINMENT 

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# Prelude

You are running on and on and on ...

This, in particular, is what's haunting you night after night. Going down the whole length of South Lexington, and then taking a hard right onto 26th Street, into the deep shadows between the closely-spaced brick buildings with their fire escapes.

You remember the tourists taking photos of the fire escapes — as if they didn't exist in any other place. *What's so great about fire escapes?* you ask yourself. And then you've forgotten about the brief encounter, the fire escapes, and the tourists, because you run on and have no time to concentrate on anything else. You will remember all that much later, and when you do, you will remember every damned detail of that morning, each and every night from now on.

In that moment, you hardly notice anything else around you. The scenery just whooshes right past you without leaving even a scratch on your memory. The coffee shops, seedy real-estate agencies, and the cockroach-infested delis, too; the closed-down medical-supply businesses, the garbage men hollering something after you, and all the other people you swerved around and bumped into ... all this seems like a mere daydream. It is all so trivial to you during those fleeting moments.

You simply keep on running. Your legs hurt and your lungs are burning, but you still have enough strength to run two or three blocks and maybe even more. If you have to, you'll run all the way to Timbuktu to catch that black dirtbag. So what are a few city blocks?

You will not let this crook get away with that wallet. And when you've got him then you'll still have enough strength left over to beat the shit out of him if you have to.

Four hundred and fifty-three dollars is what it contains — that's all you have. You wanted to buy some cool clothes, clothes you can only find in New York City; a new pair of pants and some sneakers, a gift for Meg ... something really nice ... perhaps a ring if there's enough money.

But maybe there'll be no spending spree with the money now, because that dirtbag in front of you has it, and he is damned fast. He'll get away if you don't catch him soon. So what now? Give up and listen to Dad's I-told-you-so story?

Never!

You went on a lot of hunting trips with your dad when you were growing up and you always liked it, until it came to the shooting part. Though you can handle a weapon just fine, and you're actually pretty good with that old Browning, your problem has always been putting yourself in the position of the prey. You always have to try to imagine what it would be like to be hunted down. That's how you've learned to sense that moment when fleeing turns into panic. And it seems like that jerk, barely twenty yards ahead of you, has reached that point. He no longer has a clear plan for where he should run. It is fear alone that is driving him onward. You can tell it from the way he keeps glancing back at you. It is now simply a matter of who is in better shape.

So, onward your feet carry you. The crook veers off to the left onto 2nd Avenue, and then to the right after that, onto 26th, going straight for two blocks, crossing over onto Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive. Along the four-lane highway that runs parallel to the East River, the morning traffic crawls like a huge metallic worm, pressing cars and people into the city.

And what does this son-of-a-bitch who has your money do? He simply runs right across the busy strip of concrete.



Every night you remember how he weaved between the cars as if it were nothing, and how he bounded over the concrete barrier running down the center of the highway and then sprinted on towards the river. And you go after him, because giving up is not an option — not when the end seems so near.

It is odd, but you remember every detail of this morning. It was a mild late-summer morning with the promise of another hot day. The air was crisp and clear. You were wondering at how clean the New York air was. You had imagined everything differently, but it was your first time in this city that never sleeps.

Gosh, New York City! Two days ago you arrived here from Grinnel, Iowa, with your parents to visit your sister. You are a country boy, a hick from a small town in the Midwest; a flat and empty nothingness that seems to consist of nothing but rows of corn ... a place that was just a wild and desolate prairie a hundred and eighty years ago. A land of grass and buffaloes, of untouched nature, and the hunting grounds of the Iowa and Sioux tribes. Today, it is basically nothing but a huge cornfield.

In high school, you are just an average student who fails to meet his full potential — your teachers keep saying. Meg thinks it's because of your fiery temper, which gets the better of you, like a thunderstorm you cannot avoid. You've been dating Meg for a year now. She's a pretty girl, uncomplicated, and with a laugh that is downright infectious. She's good for you, your mother told you.

The way things look, you'll be marrying her after you graduate from high school and take over your father's outdoor sports store. The store is a sure thing; there's always fishing and hunting being done. You simply didn't have Laura's drive; she wanted to go to college — to get away from Grinnell. Laura, the one who had always striven to accomplish better things. She's been with the PR section of Brodmann & Campbell for about a year now. You don't

even know what PR stands for. All you know is that your sister works in a fancy office overlooking Lower Manhattan. The sound of this is enough to make you puke.

But, if you are honest with yourself, as you listen to the freight trains rumble by slowly at night — *thudadum, thudadum, thudadum* — then you feel just like Laura. That there's something missing. That this isn't all there is. That your place in life lies elsewhere — anywhere, just not in Grinnell, Iowa. You simply had no idea where this would be, until two days ago.

Now you do. And this is where the problem lies. This is why you had that argument with Dad last night, all the crap with the money, the running ...

Just because of Laura.

Laura has a small apartment in Queens, on the corner of 40th Street and 47th Avenue. There are worse neighborhoods. The building is a plain brownstone at the edge of an industrial area. It's a railroad apartment building, and the apartment itself is merely a hallway with two rooms and a bath — a place in which Uncle Caleb would've suffocated. And when your mom saw the kitchen, her eyes teared up.

Well, it doesn't matter. Nobody has to tell you that New York is an expensive place. At any rate, there are four people living in that apartment for the next few days, which naturally means stress. You spent the first two days simply walking around Manhattan with Mom and Dad. The three of you had been looking at everything, and that's when it dawned on you: This is it. New York City — your city. Now it seemed crystal clear. Last night you told your parents that you would move to New York after high school. Your decision was made. Of course, this caused problems, especially with Dad. What would become of the store? What about Megan? Your parents told you that this was nothing but one of your hair-brained ideas again ... all the usual parent talk ...