

The Storm

**A Story of Reincarnation in the
Golden Era of Film and Music.**

**By
Michael DuBasso**

The Storm: A Story of Reincarnation in the Golden Era of Film and Music.

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Dedicated
To the one I love
Jenny Marie Charlotte

Most Beautiful Butterfly

In Peru, there was a mountain range called La Malanese.
Very high up in that range was a rain forest
Where the walnut trees grew,
And in these trees lived Exandu, most beautiful butterfly
In the world,
And she had never been seen by man.

In the village below La Malanese lived Miguel, and his
Dream was to catch the elusive Exandu.
As Miguel grew to manhood, he knew it was his destiny to find
This love of nature and bring it down to his village.
Never had anyone seen this
Most splendid myth.

And one day with the sun's rays just rising,
Miguel arose as by call of God and ascended the mountain,
And in the middle of the rain forest there was a glow
Of ethereal light, and in the middle of the light
Was Exandu, and Miguel took her, for
She was life itself.

In his descent, the glow of her life consumed
Miguel, and he felt love for all mankind.
And as he neared his village, Exandu's glow faded and a
Great sadness was in Miguel's heart, as he realized
He could not possess the
Beautiful butterfly.

In the village under La Milanese lives an old man
Who sits in the sun each day and smiles.
The villagers love the old man, as he exalts the very
Richness and love of life they would all like
To feel. The old man is especially loved by the children, as
He tells them of the story of Exandu, of how he captured
The jewel of life —

The old man, having seen this most
Beautiful butterfly and felt its glow
Ebbing as he brought it down
The mountain, had freed her,
Knowing, had he kept her, she would have died.
Miguel wanted Exandu to live.

He could not possess her and thus freed her.
No one can be possessed, only loved and let go.



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Preface

The Storm is a novel about four intriguing people: Jean Delacroix, Marie Savoie, Vanessa Daniells, and Tristan Taylor. Born on two continents, my principals have fascinating lives, which will entwine in an exciting manner. My novel tells first the life of each person to a certain point before they become greatly involved with each other. However, to introduce you to each briefly, I have taken a day in their lives, interestingly enough the same day, so you can come to understand the adventure you are about to begin.

Reincarnation was made popular to some by the 1956 novel *The Search for Bridey Murphy*. Other books have been written since then about the subject. My novel is based on incidents that occurred in my own life, starting with a near-death experience at age seven, when I nearly drowned at Lake Elsinore in California. As I was underwater, memories of my short life passed in front of me. I went through a vortex, not of water but a passageway with unearthly lights. I was rescued at that point, and since that day have seen and experienced extraordinary visions. I wish to bring some of these experiences to my readers in my novel, *The Storm*.

**INTRODUCTION:
JUNE 26, 1955**

Jean Delacroix – Saint Moritz, Switzerland

Chateau Delacroix

The structure lay on top of the mountainside like some great edifice created for a god. Quite large for a chateau and too small for a palace, it nevertheless was an imposing sight. A dark-gray granite citadel with turrets, towers, and enormous rooms, too many to consider counting. Corridor followed corridor on five levels, most filled with museum furniture and spectacular works of art by European masters: some landscapes, many portraits of the rich and famous or notorious characters of centuries past, long departed to resting places, mostly forgotten by current generations. In places, the corridors reeked of different odors, some strange and unpleasant, perhaps from the mildew of ancient tapestries, old and far too valuable to clean, or furniture paddings also giving forth their ancient odors. The interior could be quite frightening; the chateau was dimly lit, and tomblike silence prevailed. The relatively large staff of servants was devoured in the maze of corridors.

A modern elevator had been installed that led to all floors. The chateau's four imposing corner turrets were really large suites designed for different functions. The largest housed the master living area on the fifth floor. The elevator could reach that level only with a special key. There the elevator door opened into a foyer. The small entrance astonished the few allowed into that area. A green marble floor and walls—carved from the same quarry that had yielded the sarcophagus for Napoleon—gleamed under a sparkling chandelier. Mirrors in beautifully carved ebony frames hung on the walls, and a large alabaster stand held dozens of antique walking sticks, each a conversation piece in its own right. The entry doors were clear glass allowing visitors a glimpse into the apartment and its awesome living room, a room from a time past when money could truly produce works of art only found in museums any longer. Visitors of common means would never conceive, though earning great income for modern times, that it would take a lifetime of wages to furnish just a tiny part of that one room. Beyond the living area were other rooms, one of them occupied that glorious, sunny day in June.

Jean Delacroix stared at himself in the intensity of the makeup lights. Still in his thirties, he smiled at the image reflected back from the sharp light of the mirrors. Dark gray-blue, piercing eyes were set in his oval face. He had a wide nose and a large but well-formed mouth. A dark mole rested alongside his right brow, the brows full and as black as his hair, which he wore shortly cut. He was not handsome by any means, yet not unattractive. His body was in great physical shape—sinewy muscles from hours of workouts and a dark tan from what little sunlight he exposed himself to daily. He made up for that with his cosmetics company's artificial tanning oils, applied daily by his servants.

Jean knew deep in his soul his physical attributes did not make him attractive; the power radiating from his very being made others both admire him and, at the same time, feel intimidated in his presence. He looked again at his reflection with satisfaction before leaving the master bathroom.

Walking through the bedroom, where exquisite oil paintings by the French masters hung in proficiency on each wall, Jean considered momentarily the madness of one person owning such art. In reality, each masterpiece should belong in the greatest of the French museums, not in a private home. At one of the large open windows, he stood in silence, admiring the spectacular view as the sun set behind the mountains of Saint Moritz. The sky was a blaze of orange. The lights in the village below twinkled with the very life Jean felt as he reflected on another gratifying day.

Jean was the richest man on planet Earth, and that by far. He had taken the Delacroix Empire and expanded it as no predecessor had. Not since the day the great Napoleon had cut the original deal with his ancestors had the Delacroix fortune risen to such heights. That he was eccentric, that he wanted to share the planet with no living person, he admitted, and he thought about those he knew hated him, envied him, even wanted him dead. Well, to hell with all of them, the countless imbeciles who walked like ants around him. Jean beamed at those thoughts as he anticipated the excitement coming in the next few hours.

The girl would be waiting in one of his guestrooms. Jean had seen her momentarily before ascending the elevator to his special bedroom suite. She was magnificent, resembling a legendary Amazon; taller than he, very young and very blonde. Jean started an erection but paid no interest to that as he threw on a brilliant-red satin robe.

The room Jean used for his sexual fantasies was located in a basement area of the immense chateau. At one time, the long, narrow

domain was used for storage, but Jean had converted it to a gymnasium complete with weights, workout equipment, and climbing ropes attached to a ceiling twenty feet from the floor. Against one wall of the gym was a gun collection consisting of rifles and handguns, the latter used for practice almost daily. The walls were entirely covered with primitive art, mostly the works of Henri Rousseau. Ultraviolet lighting was used to enhance the paintings and the mood of the action that took place there. A spacious dressing room with wall-to-wall makeup mirrors adjoined the gym. High-intensity lights, all on dimmers to adjust the concentration of light on the mirrors, were used while putting on makeup and the costumes Jean used on those *special occasions*.

Jean entered the gymnasium and locked the steel doors. Only he and two trusted servants had a key to that room. He pulled the robe closer around himself and turned on the heating system. Somewhere deep in the chateau, the near-silent generators would soon fill the large room with warmth. His slippers rustled softly against the hard linoleum floor as he entered the makeup room. Jean turned on the lights to their maximum capacity. He removed his robe and stared briefly at the image looking back. Moving quickly to a huge eighteenth-century armoire, he opened the carved doors and carefully examined the costumes neatly hung inside. After ten minutes, he stood back, not finding anything his mood called for.

Next to the armoire was an antique Queen Ann chest of drawers. Jean slowly opened each drawer, smiling occasionally at one item or another he had used on a previous occasion. Then he remembered the special package that had recently arrived from Georgetown, Guyana. It lay to the side of the chest, unopened, its burlap paper covering showing several South American stamps. He opened the package silently and marveled at the new costume inside. A tight-fitting bodysuit made entirely of anaconda skins—soft, with brilliant shades of green, orange, and black that glistened in the intensity of the lights. He donned the costume, covering his face with its wonderful skin hood. He could see only his eyes then as he admired his reflection. With a sharp awakening, he realized his dark blue eyes were not in sync with the colors of the snake skins.

Makeup tables spanned the length of the room and held every possible chemical and color used for making up the human face and body. He opened a small chest that held his contact lenses. Inside, he examined shade after shade of colors, many tinted to the eye colors of

living animals. He tried on various hues and finally smiled at the dark green-and-yellow eyes in the mirror.

Jean paused a moment, glancing at an old wooden desktop cabinet. Christie's had auctioned the cabinet in London years ago. It was the talk of the sale, and much bidding was anticipated from the strange museums that catered to the bizarre. Madame Tussauds wax museum boasted they would pay any price for the cabinet and its special contents. In the end, an anonymous bidder hammered down the lot for the monstrous sum of £100,000. Jean, of course, was the bidder.

The cabinet had once been the personal property of the Marquis de Sade. Taking a small silver key from his pocket, Jean opened the cabinet. He picked up several of the instruments inside, caressing their handles. With a light, lingering touch on their sharp edges, he returned them to the cabinet. They were stainless steel surgeon's scalpels, all used by the marquis to torture and mutilate his victims – many of them boys and girls – before he killed them. Closing the cabinet, he exited the room.

Back in the gymnasium, Jean opened an ancient elm-wood armoire containing the control system of his music center. Selecting a favorite soundtrack, he turned the system on. Jungle music emanated night sounds with a cascade of waterfalls constantly in the background. With another control system, Jean dimmed the ultraviolet lights to a low glow, pitching the room into near blackness. The paintings came alive with Rousseau's magical animals, which seemed to follow him around the room. Jean looked about and smiled in ecstasy.

Jean turned on the intercom and called his trusted servant. "George, I'm ready for her . . . what is her name . . . oh yes, Melissa. Very good. Bring her to me now, and please, make sure you secure the door. You may go back to the village until I call you."

Two waist-high counter chairs stood in the center of the room. They were made of steel, with their metal struts loosened purposely so that when one stood on the chairs, they wobbled slightly. Jean smiled, an erection again starting, which pleased him immensely. Unconsciously, he rubbed his penis and testicles. The coming events would be magnificent.

There was a brief flash of light as the outer door opened. George closed it after the girl entered, the sharp snap of the locks echoing through the calm of the jungle music. The semidarkness and quiet resumed as Jean walked up to the girl. He spoke softly. "My dear Melissa, how very beautiful you are. Madame Alexandra has instructed you about my . . . habits?" The girl tilted her head slightly,

and smiled broadly at Jean. "Excellent. Please step out of your robe and let me feel your body against mine."

The money Jean would pay her was ten times a normal fee. That figure did not count the gift he usually gave his willing accomplices. It was rumored he paid his girls in diamonds, just as the shah of Iran did. But Jean always got his money's worth.

The girl came into Jean's arms. He held her tightly as he contemplated the sexuality of her long body. Both smiled as he softly stroked her. A small scar on her shoulder interrupted an otherwise near-perfect figure. He recognized at once her rather clumsy attempt to appear sophisticated with the overuse of makeup. Jean always forgave that in the young and the naïve; if the girl was asked to return, he might teach her the arts of makeup and dress. He gently touched the scar, wondering what accident had befallen her, and in that moment, his erection came to life.

"Melissa, I'm going to blindfold you now, and we will have intercourse in an unusual position. I will tell you what I'm doing to you so you will not be frightened." He led her, blindfolded, to the two chairs. "I'm going to lift you up on a chair, Melissa. The chair will not be steady. Don't be concerned. I will hold you very tightly as I make love to you. I will first engage you in front of me. I will then enter you anally and consummate in that position before we take a brief rest. Don't worry about the chairs. I won't let you fall."

Jean lifted the girl onto one chair and climbed onto the other. He reached up and grabbed one of the climbing ropes suspended from a steel bar in the ceiling. Taking the end, which had been formed into a noose, he lowered it over her head. The rope was made of a soft silk, and Jean talked to her soothingly. "I'm placing a collar around you, Melissa. Don't move now."

Reaching up again, Jean took a second rope and placed it over his head, tightening the noose. Gently he reached over and tightened the girl's noose but not so tightly that she would become uncomfortable. He took a few moments to melt into his surroundings. His erection then was enormous. He had always felt endowed by the gods with good fortune and control of his glands, and he paused to absorb the enchanted surroundings.

The paintings even more alive, Jean felt his innermost being swept into the magical world he had created for his pleasure. The girl's body melted into his. She gave a small cry of pleasure as he entered her, and he held her very tightly as he began the sacrament. The ultimate pleasure on the planet was flirtation with the greatest ecstasy of life and

the finality of death. Jean smiled broadly, knowing that with one false move, both would die. They would hang in ignominy with their bodily poisons running from them if he lost control.

Jean's mind raced with thoughts of his own existence, the purpose of life. Control. Was that not what living was about? Was that not what heightened the sexual act to its maximum excitement, the escalating pleasure of intercourse in combination with the threat of instant death? That extreme form of masochism was practiced long ago by another, the master of all S&M, the Marquis de Sade.

Jean ground himself into the girl, the sweat pouring from his body and hers. Ten minutes passed, and his body screamed for an ejaculation. Jean slowed himself and came out of the girl. He turned her around and entered her tight ass slowly, holding back the burning semen that wanted to erupt into her.

A quick thought of what Jean would give the girl for the performance briefly entered his mind. A wave of passion swept over him as never before. She was breathing hard and seemed to be enjoying the encounter as much as he. He wanted to do things to her he had never dared before. Wild thoughts entered his mind—dark imaginations.

Jean looked away briefly at the paintings, so alive then that he imagined he had been, in another life, the painter Henri Rousseau. His imagination took him to another place, and he abandoned rational thought. The tigers were looking back at him, communicating with him, pleading with him to become one of them. Wild thoughts went through Jean's mind. His male core was on fire, and he forced himself into the present. Jean pulled back, turned the girl toward him, and pressed himself into her young breasts.

Without warning, the girl reached up and removed her blindfold. That startled Jean; no other had ever dared to do that before. She ran her hand along his snakeskin costume and glanced about the room, stopping at Jean's neck. Her hands moved to the noose about her own neck, and her eyes widened. Her body stiffened. Pushing away from Jean, she screamed and struggled against him, at the same time pulling at the rope around her neck.

Jean's powerful arms held the girl in check for a few moments, but her youthful strength, along with her flailing, resulted in both chairs falling away. Jean and Melissa dropped sharply a few inches, and the nooses cinched tightly around their necks. They hung, struggling against the ropes. The harder Jean fought, the tighter his noose became.

The oxygen was going from his lungs, from the blood flowing into his heart.

They were moments from death when an urgency overcame the mind of Jean Delacroix. He had survived the German occupation of France and the Holocaust. His life could not end yet. By force of will, he reached for the rope with his powerful hands, lifted his strong feet above him and wrapped them in the rope, slowly pulling himself toward the ceiling. The pressure shutting off his air eased as he climbed. He gasped for breath and continued climbing until he reached the steel bar from which the rope hung. He jammed his feet between the bar and the ceiling and pulled up, causing greater slack in the rope. Instantly, Jean loosened the noose and tore it from his neck. Not waiting to slide down the rope, he dropped to the floor.

Jean landed twenty feet below, both legs collapsing under him. A sharp crack and the searing pain in his left leg let him know he had broken it. Using a great force of mind, he stood up. Placing one chair upright, he climbed on top, ignoring the pain from his broken leg. He lifted the girl and removed the noose from her neck. Jean lost control then, and the chair collapsed, bringing them down in a heap.

Jean held the girl tightly and stared into her lifeless eyes. A smile crossed his face. Even with the pain of a broken leg, he felt a wave of sexual pleasure as never before. Jean had not wanted the act to end that way. But fate had provided him a new sensual experience. His leg was throbbing, but so was his maleness amidst the insanity. He bent over the girl and lifted her against him gently, then tightly, then erotically. How long he held her and what he did to her, he would not remember. Those moments would consciously be erased from his memory. His body had gone into shock; shock from the broken leg, but mostly from the experience.

When he completed his perverse acts, Jean hobbled to the private phone directly connected to a chalet in Saint Moritz. It was time for his most trusted employee to take over. He dialed the four-digit code.

“George Saint-James here, how may I help you?”

“Wolf, come here at once. I’m in the gymnasium. We have a problem. I need you.”

Marie Savoie – Paris

Marie Savoie, at thirteen, was so striking in appearance that it was difficult for her to walk the streets of Paris alone. Men would stop and stare at her, in most cases their looks betraying more than a passing interest. She was mature for her age, with a petite figure. Dark auburn hair, worn very long and slightly wavy, framed a diminutive face with large, sparkling brown eyes. Her long lashes, full mouth, and small nose were aligned in near-perfect symmetry. Standing just above five feet tall and always tastefully dressed, she was admired by men and women alike.

Marie lived with her mother, father, and grandmother in a beautiful apartment complex near the site of the famous old Bastille. Grandmother Catherine had snow-white hair that cascaded to her waist. With auburn hair in her youth just like Marie, she too had been favored for her looks. She still appeared regal with soft, sparkling black eyes, and lived solely for her Marie, whom she spoiled enormously.

On a warm June day in Paris, Marie was enjoying one of her favorite pastimes. She and her grandmother had spent the entire day wandering the Tuileries Garden and park before taking a long, enjoyable lunch nearby. Marie ended the meal by feeding the pigeons, which waited near all the outdoor bistros for any tidbit that might enable them to survive another day. She noticed the annoyance of the bistro owner as he eyed her with obvious distaste for attracting the birds. When he turned his back, she coyly stuck out her tongue, to the dissatisfaction of her grandmother.

Catherine scolded her quietly. “Marie, the birds need to eat, but you can’t tempt them into the bistro. They poop everywhere, and the patrons might step into it or, God forbid, even sit in it.”

Marie, who would go through life with much humor and her own coy rules, smiled irresistibly at her beautiful grandmother before responding. “Yes, Grandmother Catherine. I know you’re right, as always. I’m going to the toilet, dearest, and then we can leave.” Marie rose up and, carefully making sure she was not noticed, lifted a rather large piece of fresh pigeon poop from the ground with a napkin and smeared it on the owner’s chair as she went to the rear of the little restaurant. As she walked toward the back, the owner, not having seen her maneuver, scowled again at her. Marie displayed her sweetest smile at him and sauntered past as if nothing had occurred.

That night, Catherine came to tuck Marie in bed. It was a favorite time for both. Making sure her father was in another part of the house,

Marie begged Grandmother Catherine to tell again the ancient story of their family history. She could not hear enough about it. Marie's family was descended from Louis XVI of France. Marie was in reality a princess, a descendent of Marie-Louise de Savoie, the Princess de Lamballe, first-lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette. They had all died in the French Revolution.

After Marie-Louise's death, her son and his children prospered in Austria. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a son returned to France, at the same time changing the family name to simply Savoie. "Late in his life, on a cold October day," Grandmother would tell Marie, "a daughter was born of that family. That was you, my darling. Marie Louise. Named after our famous ancestor. And just like her, you are quite beautiful." Uncannily, on Marie's right breast was a small birthmark resembling a rose.

In spite of her son's admonishments, Grandmother Catherine described what had happened to Princess Marie-Louise de Savoie, her imprisonment. She had studied a detailed history of the princess's family, and over the years had reiterated the fateful story so many times that Marie knew it by heart. Soon, Marie fell into a deep sleep and the dreams came. Often the dreams were the same and very frightening. In her dream, she heard Grandmother's voice reciting the familiar story; and as Marie sank into a deep sleep, she became Marie-Louise de Savoie, Princess de Lamballe. The vivid dream took her to a cold winter morning, August 4, 1792.

Paris – August 4, 1792

La Force Prison, Number 2, Rue du Roi de Sicile, was located on the left bank of the Seine River in the Paris district of Saint-Paul. Marie-Louise de Savoie, lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette, was half-dragged out of her filthy cell and led to the courtroom of the French Tribunal. It was there that the aristocracy were interrogated. At precisely 1:00 a.m., having been awakened from a deep sleep, Marie-Louise was brought before the president of the Revolutionary Tribunal, the famous journalist Jacques René Hébert.

Upon Marie-Louise's arrival, René scowled and asked, "Who are you?"

Marie-Louise felt the blood drain from her face. Had her imprisonment of six months killed the spirit in her? Her response at first was weak. "I am Marie-Louise, Princess of Savoie."

René sneered at her and continued. "What was your position in the palace?"

Marie-Louise thought hard. Surely the man knew of the fierce loyalty she had given the king and queen even after they were incarcerated. The Tribunal had ordered her to be separated from them upon their arrest. One could only assume they had hoped to alienate Marie-Louise against the monarchs, to use her rejection of the royal family as an example. "I was in charge of the queen's household."

René looked at the princess, approaching her closely. She was seated in an old wooden chair. She no longer cared about the deterioration of her appearance during her imprisonment. Once beautiful to look at, she must resemble a streetwalker. She would never become accustomed to the increasingly foul odor of her unwashed body, and she noticed with some degree of satisfaction that René brought his hand to his nose as he neared her. With a disgusted look, he walked away from the princess. Better a stench without than a stench within, Marie-Louise thought.

Walking over to his desk, René picked up a gold snuffbox, took a pinch of the white powder, and inhaled deeply. Turning again to Marie-Louise, René asked, "Were you aware of the conspiracies at court on the tenth of August?"

"If there were conspiracies, I had no knowledge of them."

René approached once more, maintaining a certain distance. He faced her directly and raised his voice to a shriek. "If you wish to live, swear to love liberty and equality, and to hate the king, the queen, and all that was royalty! Do so and you are free to go."

A strong wave of calm swept over Marie-Louise as if a great weight had been removed from her. She responded, "I would willingly swear the oath of loyalty to the New Republic, but I cannot swear the other. I shall always be loyal to my king and queen." She sat taller and raised her chin.

René's mouth fell open, and he leaned forward. "Do you not know what this means? It will be your death." He straightened and turned his back to her. "I will give you thirty days to consider taking the oath." Calling on one of the guards, he instructed the man to take Marie-Louise back to her cell.

As Marie's dream neared its conclusion, she stirred in her sleep. It was the ending of the dream that terrified her. Marie's father had admonished Grandmother Catherine many times not to upset her with the real story of the long-dead princess. Grandmother's voice told the story as it unfolded. "Thirty days passed . . ."

La Force Prison – Paris September 3, 1792

The dungeon of La Force Prison was pitch black at night and dimly lit during the day by a few smoky torches in the stinking corridors. Starving prisoners, many beaten badly during the day, cried out in their misery. Rats the size of cats prowled the passageways at night, eating the flesh of those too helpless to fend them off. Those were the sounds and smells of a world gone mad.

Marie-Louise sat on the damp floor of her cell, contemplating the fate of France. The most creative men and women were locked up in the prison, and the lunatics were in charge of the asylum. History was repeating itself. Since time began, civilizations had prospered, then a period would occur when the masses rose up against the powerful and wealthy, and took control. It had happened in Rome, but unlike Rome, Louis had not provided the people with "bread and circuses." Marie-Louise sighed. Perhaps if he had, the French aristocracy might have survived.

Marie-Louise and her identical twin sister, Françoise, had been described once as two of the most beautiful women in France. Marie-Louise had come to dislike the word beautiful, when so addressed by an admirer. When not wearing a silver wig, her long dark-brown hair glowed with natural radiance. She possessed a classic face with sculpted features, small nose and mouth, tiny ears, and large brown eyes that could make any man fall in love on sight. On her right breast was a birthmark resembling a tiny rose.

When she was arrested, she was given no change of clothes, and the once-elegant gown she wore, originally sewn with enough salt-water pearls to ransom a nation, was all but destroyed. The pearls had been stripped from her on the first day of the Revolution, leaving the dress in tatters. Only her undergarments kept her from freezing to death at night, and they were filthy

after six months. She loathed the stench of her unwashed body and others in nearby cells.

The High Court of the People had special plans for her. She had been Marie Antoinette's favorite and loved by Louis XVI, as well. It was rumored that Marie-Louise's only son was not by her husband but the king himself. Thankfully, their son had been whisked away by a Swiss guard of the court and was safe in Austria; thoughts of him kept her alive. She dreamed and prayed of being spared from the madness of France so she could reunite with him, and the king and queen. Certainly they dared not kill the reigning monarchs.

The guards came for her. They mocked her, addressing her as the favorite bitch of the king and queen. The guard in charge kicked her in the back. "Well, yur ladyship, the king and queen await yur pleasure, along with our favorite doctor, Dr. Guillotine. He has a special gift for ya today. Come, me love, yur to see the sunshine in the park. You even get a horse ride to the lovely square we knows you been waiting fer. But first Citizen Hébert will see you, before yur executed."

Marie-Louise looked up at her tormentor in silence. The burly man's leering face was scarred, probably from a terrible knife fight. He had hardly any teeth, and those that were left were black. He reminded Marie-Louise of the gargoyles that decorated the Notre Dame Cathedral.

The guards led Marie-Louise through the dark corridors of La Force. As they passed the main entrance, she heard a mob outside chanting, "More, more, more," but she had no comprehension of what that meant. Inside the courtroom, the shuttered windows made the room dark, even with the wall torches and candelabras burning. The smoke was almost unbearable, as there was no place for the fumes to escape. The windows could not be opened that special day because of the clamor outside.

Marie-Louise was seated again in the wooden chair and left alone with René Hébert. He walked around her, again maintaining some distance, and greeted her coldly. "Ah, the royal consort of our beloved king. I have been busy this day meeting one royalist after another. And now I have before me again Marie-Louise de Savioe. Your associates have had the sense to plead for mercy. Have you also come to give your pledge of loyalty to the new government? It would please me to provide you the depth of compassion I have extended to them."

Marie-Louise was certain those people must have been desperate. She could only imagine the severity of his "compassion." She looked up at René. "I pledged my allegiance to France but will not forsake my king."

René bellowed for one of the guards to return. The ugly man who had brought Marie-Louise to the courtroom appeared. "Bring out the other de Savoie bitch now."

Francoise was brought into the smoky room, disheveled in the same manner as Marie-Louise. She appeared frightened beyond imagination and was crying uncontrollably. Francoise rushed to Marie-Louise and embraced her. They had not seen each other since Marie-Louise's arrest.

René's mouth formed into a crooked smile, and he crossed his arms. "How touching." Marie-Louise ignored his sarcasm. He yelled at her then, getting her full attention. "Your sister has taken the oath of allegiance! Tell her, Francoise!"

Francoise whispered that she had and begged Marie to do the same.

"This is your last chance," René said forcefully. "Swear an allegiance to France and disavow the monarchs. Do it at once or face your death."

Marie-Louise held her sister in a tight embrace. "I love you as my own soul, but I can never betray my king."

René smiled broadly, exposing his yellowed teeth. "So be it, my dear." Calling two burly guards, he ordered them to escort her to the massive oak doors leading to the street. The doors were opened, and only then did Marie-Louise realize the manner in which her life would be lost. Strewn across the street were dozens of dead bodies, all mutilated grotesquely. She cried out in horror as she was forced to walk on top of the corpses. When she fainted, her remaining clothes were ripped from her body. She awoke naked amidst howls of laughter from the mob. Mercifully, one man in the crowd struck a savage blow to her head, killing her instantly.

Grandmother Catherine's voice completed the tale. Many in the mob pierced the princess's pale flesh with pikes and lances as a ritual to prove they were in favor of her death. At noon, her head was cut from her body and taken to a nearby tavern, where drinks were ordered in celebration of her desecration. The leaders took a vote of the mob, who decided to place Marie-Louise's head on a pike and take it before Marie Antoinette. However, several of the women present demanded that the head be cleaned and the hair given a coiffure first. After that was accomplished, the delirious mob escorted the gruesome remains under the windows of the king and queen of France, principally to remind the monarchs of what was in store for them.

Marie awoke with a start, focused on something from the stories Grandmother Catherine had told her. History had never recorded what happened to the twin. Sitting up in bed, Marie looked out her window at the dark night and wondered what fate had befallen Francoise de Savoie.

Francoise de Savoie October 1, 1792

Four weeks to the day after Francoise had lost her sister, she was awakened by two guards. One of them handed her a blue dress of plain fabric and a wooden pail filled with clean water. He told her to clean herself and change clothes. As she did so, they laughed mockingly at her. When she was finished, they escorted her outside into the light, which was at first blinding. The day was frigid, and the wind made her shudder. The sky, though, was a clear blue. A solitary dove glided in the air above her.

Another abhorrent guard pulled Francoise into a horse-drawn cart and held her up for the crowd to see along the procession. The cart carried her to an area adjoining the Tuileries Garden. The crowd jeered Francoise. The guard rasped in her ear, "Ayre you flattered now, missy? No worry, these folks pay kind regards to all the noble guests we brings this way."

When they reached the courtyard, the guard guided Francoise up a wooden flight of stairs to the top and left her standing for all to see. Suddenly, the light faded, all sound ceased, and she looked directly into the deep blue of the sky, toward the heavens. The crowd roared, but she heard nothing; she had found the peace she needed so desperately, as she sincerely believed she was soon to be reunited with Marie-Louise. Some sense told her death was not the end, only a beginning.

The executioner pulled Francoise down onto the curved block of the guillotine. The blade was released, and Francoise saw a great flash of light, as if the very heavens had opened, revealing the sun in enormous intensity. She felt herself spinning in a dark vortex, but without becoming dizzy. Momentarily, she could not feel anything, as if she did not exist. Slowly, feeling returned; breathing, an awareness of her body.

The vortex ceased, light returned, and with no warning, she found herself sitting in a field of yellow wildflowers. She looked about and discovered she was in a veritable sea of brilliant yellow daisies. Green mountains appeared in the distance, and as she stood, thousands of brightly colored butterflies rose from the flowers and blocked her vision. The butterflies lifted her sprit to the heavens, and she entered another vortex. From a great distance, a voice called out, "Vanessa. Vanessa Daniells, it's time to come home. Your father's packing the car. Come now, we'll be late."

Vanessa walked toward her mother. That day had been special, her seventeenth birthday. The following day, she would start a career in film, having landed the starring role in *Where Is Achilles*. The fabled Bond Studios had selected her from thousands of young girls who auditioned. Vanessa unconsciously pushed up one of the straps that held her dress, briefly revealing on her right breast the tiny birthmark resembling a rose.

Tristan Taylor and Vanessa Daniels – Hollywood

Tristan Taylor drove south on Rodeo Drive, lost in thought about the audition he had just performed for a role in *West Side Story*, a new Broadway musical. Final casting would be in four weeks in New York.

The production was holding preliminary auditions in every major city in the United States. The producers had been advertising a search for fresh talent never seen on Broadway. Tristan was almost eighteen, looked twenty-one, and was a local prodigy who had spent two years in Rome studying opera. He was a marvelous tenor with natural but unexploited talent.

The young singer was handsome. Tristan stood over six feet tall with strong masculine features. The slight crook in his nose and his chiseled facial contours reminded one of a young Roman general. His lively deep-blue-green eyes were wide apart, with a twinkle that promised a zest for life. His mouth was full and sensitive with a dimple on his lower lip. There was a certain feeling in the way Tristan easily smiled, the way the corners of his mouth trembled ever so slightly when upset. In time, Tristan would attract the most beautiful women in the world.

Always soft and shiny, his wavy dark-brown hair had gold sun streaks that glistened in the warm California sun. He wore his hair long, a cascade of curls resting on his tanned shoulders, something not done in the fifties. It was a bit unruly around his forehead such that, in moments of passion while performing on stage, he would push the damp curls away from his temples. One day, women in the audience would wish they could do it for him in the privacy of their dreams.

Tristan's skin was a golden brown from spending time at the beach. He maintained a healthy physique by surfing, running, and lifting weights, as Maestro Paulo Nolanza, his voice teacher, had stressed diet and gymnastics to keep his young singers in good health and attractive appearance. The aspiring singer worked continually to maintain an attractive image. The amalgam was of pure innocence that would prove to be a fatal combination for the opposite sex. All parts perfectly formed, begging, by the gods, to be held and kissed.

Over the wheel of his red '49 Ford convertible, Tristan glanced to see what California beauties might be in front of Jax's, a fashion clothing store for women. Some of the most beautiful and sophisticated women in the world came to that store to be fitted in tight slacks that

would show off all their curves. Returning his attention to the road, he just had time to slam on his brakes before hitting a pink Cadillac convertible. Tristan thought he would avoid contact, but it was not to be. His front bumper collided with the rear of the Caddy, breaking its parking lights. Noting a young woman was behind the wheel, he jumped out to apologize.

Tristan recognized her instantly – Bond Studios’ brightest star, Vanessa Daniells, his favorite actress. What he would give to just tell her how much he adored her. He had just read about the twenty-two-year-old actress entering into her third marriage, to an older but wealthy European aristocrat. Her screen image was breathtaking, but in person, she appeared even more so. She had blue eyes – no, violet – in a heart-shaped face; deep, full lips colored ever so slightly in a pretty shade of pink; and intense black, slightly wavy hair. She wore pale-yellow Jax’s slacks, white bobby socks, and sneakers. A pale-tan linen shirt with buttons open at the top revealed a superb cleavage. The total image was breathtaking; she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

When Vanessa’s eyes met with the young driver who had hit her car, she instantly took over. She recognized Tristan Taylor as having performed at the Horn the previous weekend. Vanessa had gone with a girlfriend to see the aspiring opera singers perform at the Santa Monica landmark. Taylor had stood out among them with his rich tenor’s voice mixing classic opera with modern pop and Broadway tunes. His boyish charm and charisma had turned her on almost at once.

Vanessa studied him then, noticing the instant childlike infatuation reflected in his eyes. Then something awoke deep inside her. There was something else in the young man. His spirit. She slowly became aware that the life he radiated was familiar, as if she had met him before. Vanessa was into an occasional affair if the person was very special. The young man seemed that and more. So young, so naïve and undeveloped. Even so . . . perhaps he could carry on a conversation. *How delightful. I’ll pretend I never saw him coming.*

“Please, Miss Daniells,” Taylor stammered, “I’m so sorry about hitting you. I’ll pay any damages.”

Vanessa looked with amusement at the handsome young man. He appeared near her age, yet the electricity that took over her was dangerous on occasion. Well, why not? All she had to look forward to over the coming weekend after a grueling week on the set of her new

film were Baron Holstein's frantic calls about the details of their pending marriage. Everyone in Hollywood, including Louella, was yelling, "Marry the man. You'll be set for life." Yes, she did want the financial security the marriage would bring, yet . . .

Having just celebrated her birthday, Vanessa was on top of the world. A new studio contract, a fabulous home given to her by her studio for completion of her last film, *My Father's World*, and soon a marriage into one of Europe's wealthiest families. Her attorney had just worked out the financial arrangements for the marriage. A ten-million-dollar trust had been set up for her, free of any encumbrance, in exchange for any claim she might make if the marriage failed.

Giving Tristan one of her winning smiles, Vanessa said, "Forget it. My studio will pick up the cost. Come join me for a bite. I'm famished." Which, of course, she was not. Tristan was turning her on with his boyish look. Vanessa was feeling very horny over the past months and had found no outlet for her frustrations. During the current filming of *Lions*, she had thought her leading man, Carlos Montoya, was interesting, and had hoped he would pursue her. As it turned out, he was more interested in Tab Brown, the director. "You haven't told me your name, young man, and how old are you?"

"My name is Tristan Taylor, and I'm twenty-one," he said, not convincingly, "and I know who you are from your films, Miss Daniells."

Well, he was at least eighteen, and that meant no statutory rape. She smiled again and responded, "I like to be called Vanessa." Sensing Tristan's shyness, she reached out and took his hand.



Tristan's sexual experiences were not what one would consider enlightening. They had consisted of either inexperienced young ladies or one of the over-the-hill gang that followed his limited singing career. None had taught him much in the art of love—the younger ones from lack of experience, the older from just wanting a young lover to perform the basic act so they could rush back home to husband and family. He had one wondrous affair in Rome, but it had ended painfully.

Tristan gazed into Vanessa's eyes, lost in that amazing shade of violet. *She's in love with me.*

"What are you doing this afternoon, Tristan, and if you aren't busy, come see my new house. If you're hungry, I'll fix you something there."

They took the Cadillac, Vanessa driving and really turning on the charm. She made small talk, but with an incredible smile and flirtatious glance. Vanessa talked mostly about her work as they drove north from Bundy Drive to Sunset Boulevard and east to Benedict Canyon. On a small knoll north of Sunset, her home lay just behind the Beverly Hills Hotel. The comfortable house rested on one-half acre of ground, not terribly large but very comfortable, especially for a single person. It had been designed for the studio star.

Entering through a marble hallway, they stepped down into a large living room. Taking Tristan's hand, Vanessa led him through the house to an enormous master bedroom. Thick white carpets covered all the floors. The bedroom had a heart-shaped bed covered entirely in pink. The immense bathroom contained a large step-down marble bathtub the size of a miniature pool.

Tristan was not paying much attention to the tour; he had fallen in love and was like a little puppy wanting to please its wondrous master. Vanessa ran a fingertip down Tristan's arm. "Come," she said, taking his slightly trembling hand. "Let's have a glass of wine to celebrate our meeting today." She took him back into the living room and poured two glasses of California Chardonnay. Tristan did not normally drink, but took the pretty crystal glass and raised it as she did.

Vanessa led Tristan to the sofa and gazed at him. He melted into her glance. Tristan knew nothing of eye contact, nothing of the control one can have over another. Silently, they sipped their wine. As Vanessa refilled his glass, Tristan reached out instinctively and pulled her to him. Her eyes never left his, and she smiled, but there was something powerful behind that smile. He hesitated. Then he pulled harder, but she leaned away, still smiling.

"Come, Tristan. We need to bathe first." He followed Vanessa through the bedroom to that fabulous, inviting pool. As Tristan drained his second glass of wine, she turned on the faucet then filled the bath, adding her favorite fragrances. Vanessa reached up and unbuttoned his shirt. Her hand moved over his chest and back. Tristan grabbed her. Again the smile and the push. He reached out wanting to undress her, but that was not to be.

Tristan felt completely dominated by Vanessa, not daring to offend her in any way. Her dominance was also a pleasure, one he had never experienced in that manner—her authority, the enormous waves of sexual desire. He let them encompass him. She could do whatever she wanted.

Vanessa removed her blouse and slacks and kicked off her shoes. Turning her back to him, she removed her bra and panties then stepped into the bath. The warm, clear water hid nothing. Again she smiled, that time inviting. Tristan removed his clothing and stepped in. She moved next to him, and again he reached out to hold her. She slapped his face so hard he could feel a welt rise up.

“No, Tristan. Don’t touch me now. You’re unshaven and you’ll scratch my face with your chin. Let me shave you first.” On the edge of the tub was a fresh razor and soap. She slid next to him and shaved him, twice. He never moved. She took a small vial of clear liquid and applied it to his face. Using the fine oil, Vanessa shaved him a third time, all the while moving her pointed breasts against his body as his maleness expanded.



Vanessa was enjoying herself immensely. All her special lovers got shaved, and only if she really cared for them. She never felt cheap or promiscuous, as she was only attracted to extraordinary men, a premonition of sorts leading her into each new affair. She cared deeply for her lovers, enjoying the game of domination and control. It made sex much better, and never in her life had she lost a man.

Massaging Tristan gently, Vanessa continued to contemplate her personal philosophy. She would have in her life whomever she chose, and continue the relationship for whatever length of time suited her. She occasionally thought she was in love and had consummated that feeling in marriage. No marriage had worked out so far, and she wondered if one ever would. Vanessa once confided to a close friend, “I feel like a free spirit not bound to this earth with any human relationship in any permanent manner. I’ll live my life dedicated to all my friends and lovers. I will always be loyal to those loyal to me, and any man who on occasion might fall from grace and need me, I’ll always be there for him.”

As they stepped out of the bath, Vanessa studied Tristan. He was quite handsome and obviously worked out. His upper body was tight and his long, well-formed legs strong. She ushered him to the pink bed. “Tristan, I’m going to tell you what I want. If you’re a good little boy, you can make love to me. If not, we will just be friends. I want you to kiss me gently, nothing else.”



Tristan dreamily gazed at Vanessa, seeing that incredible body he had fantasized about when watching her films. Her iconic face showed no signs of makeup. Her body appeared well toned and . . . her beautiful eyes controlled every move he made. As he reached for her, he noticed on her right breast a small birthmark. *How strange. It resembles a rose.*

When Tristan kissed Vanessa, his body turned to fire. That was his first kiss of consummate passion. All before were as nothing; there had never been the kind of warmth that was coursing through his body, his mind. His temperature even elevated, an experience he would have only one other time in his life, far away in another country, another time, with another woman destined to pass through his life.

Vanessa was the teacher, Tristan the willing pupil. And she did teach well. The caress of her lips, lightly, oh so lightly at first, a gentle exploration of the mouth, the taste of each other. Her fingertips gently caressed his hands, neck, face. A soft touch of nails, gently, then stronger, but never too hard. As Tristan started to lose control, to accelerate his feelings toward the final ecstasy, Vanessa whispered to him, broke the spell a bit, and taught him the blissful art of prolonged love.

For the first time in his life, Tristan just allowed the control, commanding his body to flow with Vanessa's. Everything was in slow motion, but the excitement was building; their bodies were in complete sync, intensifying for the next step in the lovemaking. Gently she pushed him down. Taking his hand, she showed him all the wondrous and secret ways a woman likes to be loved and caressed. Tristan followed every instruction leading to the final intimacy.

Vanessa pulled Tristan slowly to her, into her, never allowing his eyes to leave hers. He understood not to build to a climax without her eyes telling him, without her body telling him the rhythm she wanted. At long last and in perfect harmony, the lovers relinquished themselves to the ultimate ecstasy, only to begin again.



Vanessa woke at 5 a.m. Their lovemaking had gone on through the night, and Tristan was asleep. He had been eager to please, as she knew he would be. She allowed herself a gratified smile. Tristan had virtually no experience but made a fine lover. The gods had certainly smiled down on them with that little test of finding each other. She considered a continued affair, but her pending marriage and financial security

were too important to jeopardize. Vanessa would just make sure she could stay in touch.

Going to the dresser, Vanessa opened Tristan's wallet to look for his address. His driver's license was there, and she stifled a sob. He was almost eighteen, *almost!* In California, intercourse under eighteen was considered statutory rape. Vanessa's film career, as well as her pending marriage, could be finished. She resisted the urge to shake Tristan awake and confront him.

As surely as all Vanessa's previous lovers had, this young man had simply fallen for her, hopelessly and without thought of any consequence. Her panic subsided, and she went into the living room. The sun was just pushing the darkness aside, and Vanessa looked out the large plate glass window. Without warning, a vision appeared.

Vanessa saw Tristan. Where had she known the handsome young man? As the moments passed, she realized she had known him in another life; he was a kindred spirit from a faraway past, another time and place on the planet.

Vanessa had received visions since she was ten. They normally were harmless, perhaps she would see someone surprise her with a gift before it happened. She occasionally would see her mother or father, even when they were out of town. The premonitions were always preceded by the dimming of any light, natural or artificial. All sounds would cease. She had told her mother once about the visions and was reprimanded as being mentally deficient, a daydreamer. Her mother talked of special doctors and hospitals if her fantasies continued. Vanessa never mentioned them again, and so far most of them were not disturbing.

The vision of Tristan was terrifying. Vanessa rushed into the bedroom, packed a small garment bag, and quickly left a short note for him. She drove to the studio and entered her private cottage, used as a residence while shooting during the day. Her thoughts drifted back to Tristan Taylor. "I won't think about this anymore," she told herself. "He'll be all right. I know it."